Neighbour to Neighbour KIDS CAN SUCCEED

Reading Tutor Program

2012-2015 ST. MICHAEL READING PROGRAM ANALYSIS

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As a cornerstone of our education and a hallmark of learning, reading is a top priority for teachers, parents, students and all participants in our education system. There is a wide-spread assumption that the lack of basic reading ability in younger students will persist and influence their progress throughout their schooling. There are numerous studies that back up this belief (Carter, 1984; Cooley, 1981; Foorman, Francis, Shaywitz, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1997; Kennedy, Birman, & Demaline, 1986). Scanlon's (2005), article provides hope for these young (first grade) struggling readers as she reports there is data to verify early intensive reading interventions (one-to-one) can improve reading outcomes for children struggling with reading.

There are a number of remedial reading programs for school boards to enact, but the cost may be prohibitive. Even when school boards and schools have the resources for programs, they may lack the time, training and personnel to implement them. One possible solution to this problem is to incorporate volunteers in the school to assist with low level readers (Ritter, Barnett, Denny, Albin, 2009). Slavin (2011), commented further by explaining the cost savings for using volunteers and paraprofessionals is equivalent to helping more students for the same cost as using professionally trained personnel to teach a targeted few.

Volunteer community based services have offered a plethora of assistance for various needs. The Hamilton Mountain (a colloquial term for communities above the escarpment in the south end of Hamilton) is well served through the programs, services, and resources offered by Neighbour to Neighbour Centre.

"I feel the students benefit from having one-on-one time with an adult that can focus on their needs. I think all their confidence has increased due to encouragement and positive reinforcement." - **Tutor**



How We Started

Resource Counselors at Neighbour to Neighbour Centre reported that many clients discussed the need for literacy assistance for their children. In response to this need, Neighbour to Neighbour developed a tutoring program with the help of a small group of educators and community members in addition to a generous grant from the Halo Foundation. In 2003, the program was piloted with three retired teachers and 15 students at R. A. Riddell School. The outcomes from the pilot were positive, resulting in higher reading levels for the children and an increase in their self-confidence.

Branching Out

Building on the success of the 2003 Reading Tutor Program pilot, 2004-2005 saw an increase in volunteers from three to 23 and the number of students supported went from 15 to 70. R.A. Riddell School continued to participate, but the additional volunteers permitted the program to expand to George L. Armstrong School. Since then, the program has partnered with schools in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) and the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board (HWCDSB). During the 2014-2015 school year, the program assisted 229 students in 14 schools. This was achieved through the efforts of 114 volunteers on the frontline, with the students, as well as in supporting roles.



The success of the pilot prompted the development of a more formal program. The resultant goals of the program became:



Each of the three goals has a direct link to the Ontario Arts Curriculum. They are particularly relevant as the Ministry's aspires to, " build on existing links with their local communities and create new partnerships... These links are especially beneficial when they have direct connections to the curriculum." (2009 The Ontario Curriculum Grade 1-8: The Arts).





Staff support for the Neighbour to Neighbour Reading Tutor Program is provided by the Director of Educational Programs and the Tutoring Coordinator. Volunteers for the program include: Educational Consultants*, Team Leaders, Tutors and Project Assistants.



*Educational Consultants have a background in education and are retired/OCT teachers.



Professional Development

The Neighbour to Neighbour Reading Tutor Program is moderately structured. Volunteers are required to attend in-service training and there are specific instructions to follow during tutoring sessions. Although there is a very distinct process for the reading session, the tutor also has the freedom to tailor a session to engage the student. This is important since Handerhan (1990), commented that tutors who employ a variety of techniques are more effective. One of the goals of the program is to foster a love of reading and in order to meet this objective a volunteer may modify their approach to reading with individual students.

New volunteer tutors must participate in the following learning prior to working with students.

- \Rightarrow Neighbour to Neighbour Policies and Procedures 0.5 hrs
- \Rightarrow The basics of tutoring, Tutoring Techniques 2.0 hrs
- \Rightarrow School Tour and Policies 0.5 hrs
- \Rightarrow Mentoring session with an Educational Consultant- 2.0 hrs as required

Ongoing Training

A mandatory in-service is provided at the beginning of the school year for all returning tutors to review key concepts and best practices. In addition, Neighbour to Neighbour endeavors to enhance the tutoring experience by providing professional development on many levels. These learning opportunities address not only techniques and strategies that support the students, but also personal awareness of how we all learn. These meetings provide an opportunity to interact with other volunteer tutors and share experiences and best practices.

During the school year additional workshops/ seminars are available for tutors. Examples of some topics include comprehension strategies, fluency, word games, Brain Gym, making connections, "a good reader is a good thinker", and VAK learning styles (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic.)

Tutor Responsibilities.

- \Rightarrow Attend one school, once a week for approximately 2 hours to work with 4 students.
- \Rightarrow Attend training, orientation sessions, meetings and workshops
- ⇒ Follow program policies, procedures and instruction provided by the Neighbour to Neighbour Educational Team
- ⇒ Complete program evaluations, maintain confidentiality and participate in Success Celebrations

Program Details

Admission Requirements

Students are selected by teachers at their allotted schools, in accordance with the following criteria:

Are in grades 1 through 3

5

- Must be reading below grade level, but have shown the ability to progress and would benefit from oneon-one help
- Have not been identified as needing professional intervention
- Must have parental consent to participate in program

Program Model

Eligible students receive tutoring twice a week for 15-30 minute sessions. Tutors work in pairs and usually there are two tutors for each student. For example, a student may get tutored on Tuesday and Thursday. One tutor will consistently see the student on Tuesdays and the other on Thursdays. A tutor is typically assigned four students. The number of tutors at a school is dependent on the number of students in the program. Each school has a Team Leader who serves as a liaison between school personnel, tutors and the Director of Educational Programs. Educational Consultants are also available for issues regarding instructional practices. These consultants facilitate seminars and workshops, but are readily available if needed.



Tutors volunteer approximately two hours of their time each session. This provides them with 15-30 minutes to see a student. At the beginning of the school year, the Director of Educational Programs meets with school administration to go over the partnership agreement, student criteria and to ensure that the school has appropriate space for materials and tutors.

Tutors usually have access to school resources. However, the Neighbour to Neighbour Reading Tutor Program also provides a vast number of fiction and non-fiction levelled books. Each student is provided with a log book that records the name of the book read, the date, types of strategies used in the session, fiction or non-fiction, and a small section to communicate with their tutor partner. In addition, tutors are provided with general stationary supplies, small white boards, flash cards, dictionaries, pens, post-it notes, etc. The students are given blank bookmarks and at the end of each session choose a sticker to add to it as a reward. The students become increasingly motivated as their sticker collection increases.



Neighbour to Neighbour reading tutors follow a model during their tutoring session. The session is broken down into 3 sections; before, during and after reading. Below you will find a basic outline of that model.

Before Reading

The tutor will take the student through a picture walk prior to reading any text. This involves looking through the book, but not reading the text. Looking at the pictures activates prior knowledge and helps to make predictions. At this time the student will also state whether they think the book is fiction or non-fiction.

During Reading

The student is reading and using decoding and comprehension skills. He/she is encouraged to use seven tools when he/she encounters difficulty.



For fiction books, students are asked to retell the story using first, next, then and finally. If the book is non-fiction, students are asked about the topic, to state 5 facts and then to reflect using the statement "I wonder..."

An Unique Opportunity

In October 2012, Neighbour to Neighbour reading tutor program was provided a list of potential students by St. Michael's Special Education Resource Teacher. All the students were in Grade 1 and were reading at level 0 or 1, which means their reading ability was accessed at the beginning of kindergarten and below. (See Fig. 1 for complete scale).

The reading tutor program allows each school to choose any configuration of students in grades 1-3, as long as they meet the criteria for admittance. Historically, students submitted for programming are all reading below grade level but to varying degrees. Typically, only a quarter of the students admitted into the program are significantly below grade level. Neighbour to Neighbour had never encountered this situation before and learned that there were no other resources available for these students. After some consultation with the Educational Consultants and St. Michael staff, Neighbour to Neighbour

r		Grade	Levels	-	
-	к	1	2	3	PM Benchmark
1					1
2					2
;					3-4
-					5-6
					7-8
-					9-10
					11-12
۱					13-14
1					15-16
-					17-18
-					19-20
1					21-22
-					23
2					24
					25
)					26
۱					27
-					28
2					29

Fig. 1 PM Benchmark Reading Levels

agreed to admit the students into program. Scanlon (2005), postulated that children who experience early reading difficulties lack: phoneme awareness, letter name and letter-sound knowledge, understanding of the alphabetic principle, and familiarity with the purpose and conventions of print. The students poised a challenge to the tutors as most did not know their letters and/or sounds, so were not reading words or sentences. Support for the tutors included highlighting the benefits of reading to this group and consistently modelling expectations for the students. These are tutoring techniques are employed in the program, just not to the extent that they were required to be used with the St. Michael students. By June 2013, all the students were reading at a level consistent to levels normally seen by Neighbour to Neighbour for admittance to the program in grade 2. At the final meeting, St. Michael and Neighbour to Neighbour staff agreed to continue the relationship with this same group of students over the next two years. Both parties felt that this arrangement would not only provide consistent support for the students, but also provide the opportunity to examine the outcomes of the program on a deeper level.

Indeed, three years of outcomes from the St. Michael's program has led to changes in Neighbour to Neighbour tutoring policies and procedures and aligns with educational studies on intervention programs.



"If you keep reading you will do better at it." - Student



Fifteen students in grade one were admitted into the program in October 2012. This group was comprised of ten boys and five girls. Four of the students were English Language Learners (ELL), two boys and two girls.

Of the initial 15 students enrolled in the program, 10 students remained over the entire three year period. (See Fig. 2).

Two of the 15 students participated for only the 2012-2013 school year, one moved out of the school community during the 2012-2013 school year and two students moved during the 2013-2014 school year.

Student	+ \\/E		M/F	N4/E		N / / E	ELL	Start	Mid	End	Start	Mid	End	Start	Mid	End
	1V\/ F	CLL	2012-2013	2012-2013	2012-2013	2013-2014	2013-2014	2013-2014	2014-2015	2014-2015	2014-2015					
1	М		0	4	7	7	9	13	13	16	19					
2	М		0	5	7	7	7	14	14	21	22					
3	М		1	5	9	9	11	13	13	19	23					
4	М		1	5	6	6	9	15	15	19	23					
5	F	Y	0	0	6	6	6	8	8	8	9					
6	М	Y	0	1	7	7	15/16	17	17	20	23					
7	F		0	4	8	8	16	23	23	26	29					
8	М		0	2	5	5	6	7	7	9	11					
9	М	Y	0	3	5	5	19/20	22	22	26	27					
10	F		0	4	5	5	8	9	9	12	18					

St. Michael Students' Reading Levels 2012-2015

Fig. 2 Original Numeric Reading Scores for Group 1

The main focus of the results pertain to the ten students who participated for the entire three years. These ten students will be referred to as Group 1. Comments about trends seen with the other students will also be mentioned. The five students who participated during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, referred to as Group 2.



Success Celebration from 2012-2013

Reading Assessments

There are a number of reading programs that school boards use. For assessment purposes the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic School Board (HWCSB) employs the Nelson Education PM Benchmark Program. This program encompasses a global approach to reading. It encourages the use of many skills to develop reading, rather than a single-focused method. The data collected for this report has been taken from school assessments that were administered by teachers. Although there are three reported results, beginning, mid and end, the scores from the previous year were used as the starting scores for the current year. Thus, the end results for the 2012-2013 school year are the same as the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year. The data shows the progression of reading skills by the majority of students. The PM Benchmark consists of a variety of fiction and non-fiction books that are levelled from 1-30. Figure 1 displays the levelled range for a typical student in each grade. It is evident from the chart that reading levels overlap. For the purposes of transferring numerical scores into grade level equivalents, the overlapping levels have been removed (Fig. 3).

Grade	PM Benchmark Levels
Kindergarten	1-6
Grade 1	7-16
Grade 2	17-23
Grade 3	24-27
Grade 4	28-29

Fig. 3 Adjusted PM Benchmark Reading Levels

Using this as a guide, Figure 4 displays the adjusted levels that were specified for each grade level.

"My daughter loved the program. The people are wonderful. Thank you." - **Parent**

Student	M/F	M/F	ELL	Start	Mid	End	Start	Mid	End	Start	Mid	End
			2012-2013	2012-2013	2012-2013	2013-2014	2013-2014	2013-2014	2014-2015	2014-2015	2014-2015	
1	М		<k< td=""><td>K</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>2</td></k<>	K	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	
2	М		<k< td=""><td>К</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>2</td></k<>	К	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	
3	М		K	K	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	
4	М		K	К	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	
5	F	Y	<k< td=""><td><k< td=""><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td></k<></td></k<>	<k< td=""><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td></k<>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
6	М	Y	<k< td=""><td>К</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>2</td></k<>	К	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	
7	F		<k< td=""><td>К</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></k<>	К	1	1	1	2	2	3	4	
8	М		<k< td=""><td>K</td><td>K</td><td>K</td><td>K</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td></k<>	K	K	K	K	1	1	1	1	
9	М	Y	<k< td=""><td>K</td><td>K</td><td>K</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>3</td></k<>	K	K	K	2	2	2	3	3	
10	F		<k< td=""><td>К</td><td>К</td><td>К</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>2</td></k<>	К	К	К	1	1	1	1	2	

Fig. 4 PM Benchmark Grade Equivalent Reading Scores for Group 1

The students in the Group 1 cohort made tremendous gains. In a couple of months all but one of the students' scores had improved. Looking at the initial reading scores, eight of the 10 students were reading below a kindergarten level and two were reading at a low kindergarten level (Fig. 5). Within a couple of months, all ten students reached the benchmark for kindergarten readers. By the end of the 2012-2013 school year, seven students were reading at a grade one level and three at kindergarten (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5 2012-2013 Beginning and End Reading Levels for Group 1

By the end of grade two (2013-2014), the majority of students were reading at a grade one level; however, three of the students were reading at grade two level (Fig. 6). Consequently, during the grade 3 school year (2014-2015), six of the remaining ten students were reading at a high grade 2 or grade 3 level. One student had surpassed grade level expectations and was reading at a grade 4 level (Fig. 7).



Fig. 6 2013-2014 Reading Levels

Group 2

Group 2 was observed for two years throughout the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. This group of students consists of 5 students who were admitted at various times between January 2013 and March 2014. (Fig. 8, 9).

Student	M/F	Status	Start 2012-2013	Mid 2012-2013	End 2012-2013	Start 2013-2014	Mid 2013-2014	End 2013-2014	Start 2014-2015	Mid 2014-2015	End 2014-2015
1.1	м	New Jan-13	_	К	1	1	1	2	2	3	4
2.1	М	New Feb-13	-	К	К	К	к	к		IEP	
3.1	м	New Oct-13	-	-	-	К	1	2	2	3	4
4.1	F	New Oct-13	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	2	2
5.1	F	New Mar-14	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	2	3

Fig. 8 PM Benchmark Grade Equivalent Reading Scores for Group 2



Fig. 9 Group 2 Beginning and End Grade Equivalent Reading Scores 2013-2014

At the end of the 2013-2014 school year four out of five students showed progress in their reading scores. In comparison to Group 1, these students made similar, if not more remarkable gains. In May 2014, one student regressed in their reading and an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) was created for the student. In October 2014, the Neighbour to Neighbour Reading Tutor Program was informed that the student was no longer eligible for the program based on the program's admission requirements.

Of the remaining four students, two students had advanced to a grade one reading equivalent and two were reading in the grade two range. The students' success continued in the second year of participation (2014-2015) at which point one student was reading at a grade two level, one at a grade three level and two students surpassed grade level expectations and were reading in the grade four range. (Fig. 10)



Fig. 10 Group 2 Beginning and End Grade Equivalent Reading Scores 2014-2015



Success Celebration 2013-2014



Student Growth

Both Group 1 and 2 had students who did not improve as much as other participants. This observation is in line with Scanlon's (2005) article, that reported 15% to 20% of students who receive remedial support continue to have difficulties. She further supports this statement by referencing Berninger and Abbott (1994) and Torgensen et al (1999) who "characterized these children as treatment resisters. They are, of course, the children who are ultimately identified as learning disabled and require special education services (Scanlon, 2005)." Among the 15 students (ten in Group 1 and five in Group 2) who were in this analysis, one received an IEP and two had only reached a grade one reading level despite three years of one-on-one support. This amounts to 20% of participants who are still struggling with reading and may require a more thorough assessment by Education Professionals.

"One-to-one attention at their reading level helps them to deal with challenging reading words in a supported environment. This seems to give them confidence to keep trying." -Tutor





The Neighbour to Neighbour Reading Tutor Program is not designed to support or aid in the identification of students with special needs. However, the very act of providing remedial support for struggling and emergent readers sometimes provides an opportunity to notice treatment resisters. This information can then be shared with teachers and administrators and assist in providing evidence for additional learning resources for a student.

The reading levels of the participants corroborate the effectiveness of using volunteers to improve reading scores for students who demonstrate reading difficulties in early grades. Whereas numbers represent an objective measurement, equally important are the subjective opinions from people involved with this program. The Neighbour to Neighbour Kids Can Succeed 2014-2015 Annual Report states a number of positive comments made by administrators, students, teachers, parents, and tutors. One such comment included, "Our tutors help us improve the reading levels of at risk students. This is a significant factor. Recent information contained in the Spectator (city newspaper) indicated that reading levels have improved at Eastmount much better than anticipated based on the demographics of the school. N2N is part of this success."

"Thís program has enhanced my students' abílíty and confídence when readíng " - **Teacher**

Final Thoughts

Since the program's inception in 2003, it has provided one-on-one literacy support to more than 2000 students. The cost of such personal one-on-one intervention with students can be prohibitive to implementing a remedial reading strategy that has proven results (Wasik and Slavin, 1993). Even when literacy support is provided by volunteers, students still demonstrate gains. Although, the number of students included in this report is small, Ritter, Burnette, and Albin (2009), examined small studies and reported, "Although many of the individual studies, standing alone, do not show significant program effects, the overall effect is relatively large and statistically significant ..." The results contained in this report have not been statistically analyzed, but supports the assumption that overall the success obtained by these students was due in large part to the work and attention given by the volunteers.

"I think one of the successes I have had this year is when a student told me that she felt her reading had really improved and that she wasn't embarrassed or scared to read in front of people anymore."

- Tutor



Success Celebration 2014-2015

Success Celebrations



Grade 1 2012-2013

Grade 2 2013-2014



Grade 3 2014-2015



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