

Track III

Reading Mentor Program for Lower and Upper Elementary Students

Many elementary schools have Reading Mentor Programs where 4th, 5th and 6th graders are paired with pre-K or Kindergarten students. In preparation for Read for the Record, you might be inspired to start a Reading Mentor Program in your school. Below, the Pearson Foundation has summarized what we feel to be a basic outline of a good Reading Mentor Program. However, many variations of reading mentor programs exist, and we encourage you to develop your own program based on what works for your students.



Experts agree that the most successful Reading Mentor Programs, and those with lasting effects, meet at least once a week for an entire school year. If you are unable to meet for the entire school year, try to commit to as long a program as possible. However, meeting at least once a week is key to establishing consistency and trust between the younger students and the mentors.

To get you started, the Pearson Foundation has created Reading Guides for the first four Read for the Record books: *The Little Engine That Could*, *Ferdinand*, *Corduroy*, and *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. These guides will give your mentors direction about how to read to young children, including key vocabulary for each book, tips for reading to English learners, and a page-by-page guide of questions to ask the children to enhance the educational experience and help them get the most out of the books. These Reading Guides are located in the resources section.

- *The Little Engine That Could* Reading Guide
- *Ferdinand* Reading Guide
- *Corduroy* Reading Guide
- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* Reading Guide

Implementation Steps

The following implementation steps are simply suggestions. Feel free to use your imagination, expand on these activities, be creative and have fun!

Prior to starting this program, be sure to seek permission from your Principal and Superintendent. Once you have approval to start a Reading Mentor Program:

- 1) Promote your program around the school to recruit mentor students. Have an informational meeting over a lunch period or after school where you talk to students about the program and about the time commitment involved.
- 2) Talk to students about what it means to be a mentor. Did any of them have mentors growing up? How did that experience affect their lives? Are they familiar with other mentoring programs in their community? Have any of the students mentored children in the past? What was that experience like and what effect do they think it had on the children?
- 3) With your students, determine which grade level they'd like to work with. We recommend working with Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd or 3rd graders. Share with your students the Tips for Reading to Younger Children at the end of this section.
- 4) Once grade level(s) are agreed upon, discuss with the principal and participating teachers the scope of the program, the number of students involved, and the time frame.
- 5) After gaining consensus, ask to set up a meeting with the principal, participating teachers, and student mentors. Together, discuss:
 - **Goals and Expectations:** What you each hope to gain from the program
 - **Timeline:** The timeline of the program, including the day of the week and time of day for the reading mentor meetings

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- **Background and Ice Breakers:** Ask teachers to share a little about their students with your student mentors: Are they shy around older kids? Do they have tips for the student mentors to help them “break the ice” with the younger students? Consider having a reading mentor party on the first day of the program so the younger students have a chance to meet and get to know the mentors, and vice versa. As an ice-breaker activity, go around the room and ask each student (including the mentors) to tell the class the title of their favorite book.
 - **Mentee Classroom Curriculum and Themes:** Ask the teachers to share a little about their curriculum with your student mentors: What themes are they covering this year? What books will the children be reading this year? Can the student mentors have access to the books in advance so they can familiarize themselves with the books and practice reading aloud?
 - **Mentor-Mentee Pairing:** Will the student mentors be paired with one, two, or three younger students? It would be great if the teachers could provide each mentor with the names of their students in advance so that they will know their names prior to the first meeting.
 - **Tips for Reading to Younger Children:** Share with the teachers the Tips for Reading to Younger Children at the end of this section. Are there additional tips or strategies that the teachers have for the student mentors?
 - **Scheduling:** Discuss exactly what the elementary school teachers would like the student mentors to do with the children. For example, if the Reading Mentor Program is 35 minutes, should the student mentors spend the first 5-10 minutes asking the students questions about the book they are about to read; 15-20 minutes reading the book; and 5-10 minutes discussing the book after the reading? What other activities do the teachers think the student mentors could work on with the children?
 - **Expectations:** What is expected of the student mentors? How should they dress on reading mentor days? Are there certain types of clothes or colors that are restricted at the elementary school? Be sure the student mentors understand and respect those rules.
- 6) Encourage student mentors to reach out to local media such as radio stations, television network affiliates and newspapers to promote the Reading Mentor Program. The community will be inspired by what you and your students are doing!

The following resources correspond with this activity:

- Resource 1.15 – Press Release Template – Present Tense
- Resource 1.16 – Press Release Template – Future Tense
- Resource 6 – Team Planning Form

Tips for Reading to Younger Children

- Ask students if they have read this book before. Do they know what the story is about? Can they predict what the story may be about based on the title or the art work on the cover of the book?
- Take a picture walk through the book. Flip through the pages and talk about the illustrations. Based on the illustrations, can the students predict what happens in the story?
- If there is a key vocabulary list for the book, go over those words and their meanings before reading the book. When you come across a word that is new to the students, explain to them what the word means and try to use it in another sentence to help them better understand the meaning.
- As you are reading, ask students about characters or events in the book. For example, in *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, the caterpillar eats a lot of different foods. What foods do the students like to eat?
- Take turns retelling parts of the story and ask students to predict what they think might happen next. Ask questions that begin with the words *what*, *where*, *when*, *why* and *how*. For example, “*Why* did the caterpillar have a stomach ache?” Wait for the students to respond. Give them plenty of time to think about their answers!
- Reread the book to deepen the students’ understanding of the words and concepts.

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- Make sound effects. Use different “voices” for different characters. Read with expression!
- Take turns reading every other page.
- After the first reading, buddy up with another group and reread the book together. Then have the students give an oral “book report.” Did they like the book? Would they recommend it to a friend? Why or why not?
- Help the student make connections. Have they read other books that had similar characters? For example, if you are reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, you might ask the students if they have ever read a book about caterpillars. Help student make connections to other texts, to themselves, and to the world around them.
- Talk about the illustrations and ask students to tell you about what they like about the illustrations (What makes them different? What is the caterpillar made of?)
- Be enthusiastic! Show that you are excited about reading and your mentee will become excited, too.

The following lesson plans correspond with this activity:

Middle School Lesson

- Lesson 5 – *Get Ready for Reading Day*

High School Lesson

- Lesson 5 – *Get Ready for Reading Day*

Track III

Reading Mentor Program for Lower Elementary and Middle/High School Students

In preparation for Read for the Record, you might be inspired to start a Reading Mentor Program in your district. Below, the Pearson Foundation has summarized what we feel to be a basic outline of a good Reading Mentor Program. However, many variations of reading mentor programs exist, and we encourage you to develop your own program based on what works for your students.



Experts agree that the most successful Reading Mentor Programs, and those with lasting effects, meet at least once a week for an entire school year. If you are unable to meet for the entire school year, try to commit to as long a program as possible. However, meeting at least once a week is key to establishing consistency and trust between the younger students and the mentors.

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- *The Little Engine That Could* Reading Guide
- *Ferdinand* Reading Guide
- *Corduroy* Reading Guide
- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* Reading Guide

Implementation Steps

The following implementation steps are simply suggestions. Feel free to use your imagination, expand on these activities, be creative and have fun!

Prior to starting this program, be sure to seek permission from your Principal and Superintendent. Given the time commitment, would your Principal be willing to give the participating student mentors credit for their service? Once you have approval to start a mentor program:

- 1) Promote your program around the school to recruit mentor students. Have an informational meeting over a lunch period or after school where you talk to students about the program and about the time commitment involved. Be sure to discuss transportation issues: How will students get to the elementary school every week?
- 2) Talk to students about what it means to be a mentor. Did any of them have mentors growing up? How did that experience affect their lives? Are they familiar with other mentoring programs in their community? Have any of the students mentored children in the past? What was that experience like and what effect do they think it had on the children?
- 3) With your students, determine which grade level(s) they'd like to work with. We recommend working with Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd or 3rd graders. Share with your students the Tips for Reading to Younger Children at the end of this section.
- 4) Once grade level(s) are agreed upon, contact the elementary school principal to discuss the Reading Mentor Program. Discuss with the principal the scope of the program, the number of students involved, and the time frame.
- 5) After getting permission from the elementary school principal, ask to set up a meeting with the principal, participating teachers, and your student mentors. Together, discuss:
 - **Goals and Expectations:** What does each participant hope to gain from the program? Are there individual goals and group goals and how do they differ?

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- **Timeline:** What is the program timeline, including the day of the week and time of day for the Reading Mentor meetings?
 - **Background and Ice Breakers:** Ask teachers to share a little about the mentees with student mentors. Are they shy around older kids? Do they have tips for the student mentors to help them “break the ice” with the younger students? Consider having a reading mentor party on the first day of the program so the younger students have a chance to meet and get to know the mentors, and vice versa. As an ice-breaker activity, go around the room and ask each student (including the mentors) to tell the class the title of their favorite book.
 - **Mentee Classroom Curriculum and Themes:** Ask the teachers to share a little about their curriculum with student mentors. What themes are they covering this year? What books will the children be reading this year? Can the student mentors have access to the books in advance so they can familiarize themselves with the books and practice reading aloud?
 - **Mentor-Mentee Pairing:** Will the student mentors be paired with one, two, or three younger students? Could the teachers provide each mentor with the names of their student mentees prior to the first reading mentor meeting?
 - **Tips for Reading to Younger Children:** At the end of this section there are suggestions for reading to younger children. Are there additional tips or strategies that the teachers have for the student mentors?
 - **Scheduling:** Discuss exactly what the elementary school teachers would like the student mentors to do with the children. For example, if the Reading Mentor Program is 35 minutes, should the student mentors spend the first 5-10 minutes asking the students questions about the book they are about to read; 15-20 minutes reading the book; and 5-10 minutes discussing the book after the reading? What other activities do the teachers think the student mentors could work on with the children?
 - **Expectations:** What is expected of the student mentors? How should they dress on reading mentor days? Are there certain clothes or colors that are restricted at the elementary school? Be sure the student mentors understand and respect those rules.
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Tips for Reading to Younger Children

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- As you are reading, ask students about characters or events in the book. For example, in *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, the caterpillar eats a lot of different foods. What foods do the students like to eat?
- Take a picture walk through the book. Flip through the pages and talk about the illustrations. Based on the illustrations, can the students predict what happens in the story?
- If there is a key vocabulary list for the book, go over those words and their meanings before reading the book. When you come across a word that is new to the students, explain to them what the word means and try to use it in another sentence to help them better understand the meaning.
- Take turns retelling parts of the story and ask students to predict what they think might happen next. Ask questions that begin with the words *what, where, when, why* and *how*. For example, “*Why* did the caterpillar have a stomach ache?” Wait for the students to respond. Give them plenty of time to think about their answers!

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- Reread the book to deepen the students’ understanding of the words and concepts.
- Make sound effects. Use different “voices” for different characters. Read with expression!
- Take turns reading every other page.
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- Lesson 5 – *Get Ready for Reading Day*

High School Lesson

- Lesson 5 – *Get Ready for Reading Day*