

The value and significance of Open Books programs goes far beyond personal experience and the important but ultimately mechanical skill of being able to read. With reading and literacy, basis for communicating, advancing one's intellectual life, being able to express oneself, comprehending a world larger than oneself — all of the factors so essential to the fully realized human being — **how in the name of wisdom can we doubt the value of the programs that Open Books so creatively makes available to those who might otherwise fall behind?**

ANN A.  
Open Books Volunteer  
Schiller Elementary School



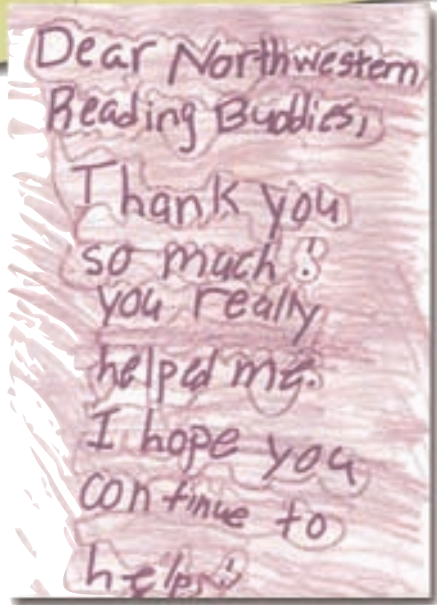
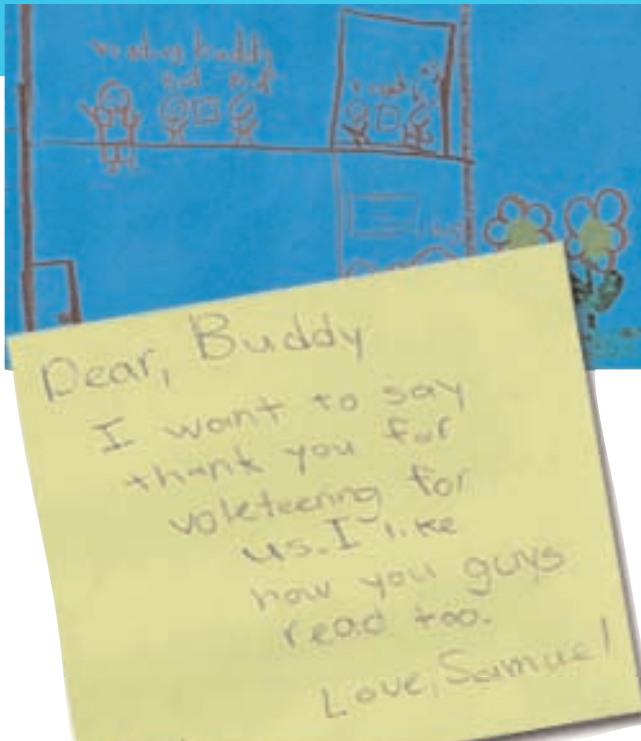
[www.open-books.org](http://www.open-books.org)



A Reading Mentor Program for  
Elementary School Students

Presented by





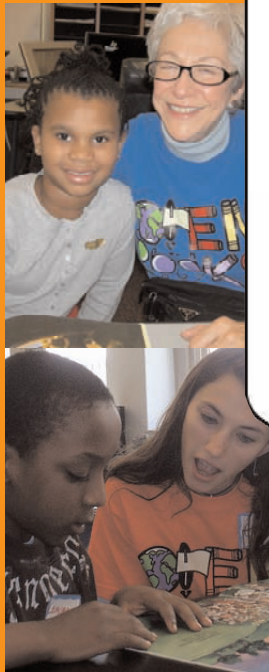
## Welcome to the wonderful world of Open Books!

We would love to bring our reading mentor program, **Open Books Buddies**, to your campus in the 2009-10 school year.

This year, Buddies provided more than 5,000 hours of reading practice and support to students in 10 Chicagoland schools.

Read on for all the details on how it works and how to apply!





Each Monday, you visit and the volunteers read and listen to our children read to them. **The students look forward to Mondays.** We do not have adults who are available to be "reading buddies" to our children. **Our school has been deeply touched and enriched** by the programs and experiences you have given us.

**BARBARA KARGAS**  
Principal  
Goethe Elementary School



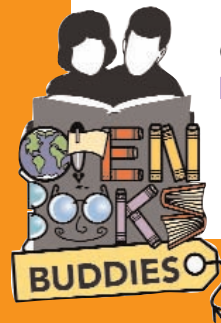
## WHAT IS Open Books Buddies?

Open Books Buddies is a **weekly one-hour program** that allows students to work one-on-one with a trained, supportive mentor to help **boost reading skills such as fluency and comprehension.** Mentors also promote school attendance, academic performance, positive behaviors, and more.

Each week, a Big Buddy and a Little Buddy pair read together in 30-minute segments. This allows each volunteer mentor to work with two students over the course of the academic year.

The Big Buddy's job is to be a coach and role model whose **love of books is contagious and life-changing** for the Little Buddy. Adults listen enthusiastically as students read aloud, take turns reading tougher books, show ways to figure out unknown words, and model expressive reading. (Silly or dramatic voices are highly encouraged!)

Open Books also provides **new books for students to keep and resources for schools and teachers.**



Since October of 2008, some of **our most economically disadvantaged families** have been able to benefit from the homework help and reading assistance that the **Reading Buddies volunteers provide**. Our students need steady, committed adults in their lives. Open Books helps us expand this circle of committed adults for our students while helping them increase their reading skills.

**KATE CICHON**  
**Program Manager**  
**Perspectives Charter School**



## Why Is Open Books Buddies **NEEDED?**

**One-on-one reading and discussion are key to a child's learning and development.** But 61% of low-income families have no children's books at home and 37% of adults in Chicago could not read a kid's book to a child if they had one. In Chicagoland classrooms, a teacher may rarely or never get time to read one-on-one with each of 30+ students.

The Open Books Buddies program directly addresses those challenges by providing **fun, caring readers and unforgettable, engaging books where they are needed most.** Studies show students who receive one-on-one reading help significantly outperform their peers on **comprehension, word recognition, reading accuracy, and spelling.**



It was great to spend quality one-on-one time reading with my Buddies and see their response to the opportunity; one of them told me, "I've been waiting for this all week." I could not put it better myself.

**STEVE T.**  
**Open Books Volunteer**  
**Schiller Elementary School**



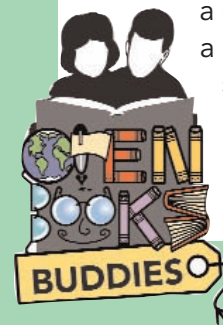
## How Does Open Books Buddies **WORK?**

**Schedule:** The Buddies program may be held during lunchtime (approx. 12 noon – 1 pm) or after school, depending on the partner school's needs.

**Students:** Open Books Buddies is available to students in grades 2 and up, and each site includes an average of 20 students. If the program is conducted during school hours, students can be pulled from one teacher's class or up to 4 classes.

**Site Leaders:** Each school is assigned an Open Books site leader, who receives an intensive training before the school year begins and maintains regular communication with volunteers, teachers, administrators, and Open Books staff.

**Big Buddies:** All volunteers attend an on-site orientation at Open Books, sign on for a minimum of one semester to ensure a committed relationship with their students, and are cleared through a background and ID check.



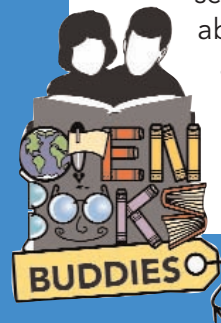
## Partner Schools PROVIDE

- A **room** that is conducive to reading. (Libraries or empty classrooms work best!)
- **Access to books** on participating students' reading levels.
- A **coordinating teacher or administrator** who will attend the orientation and communicate with Open Books via e-mail and phone during the school year.
- A **commitment** to avoid scheduling field trips, assemblies, and special events during the Open Books Buddies time, whenever possible. If a schedule conflict arises, the coordinating faculty member should inform the Open Books site leader immediately.



## Open Books PROVIDES

- Colorful **buttons** for every student and volunteer, as well as **folders and reading logs** which pairs use to chart progress and share success stories and concerns about vision, hearing, or learning disabilities with teachers and administrators.
- A minimum of **5 new books for each student to read and keep**. Little Buddies "earn" each book by reading it aloud to their Big Buddies for 3 weeks in a row.
- One-on-one **reading practice** to students who need the most help. If conducted during the school day, the program also provides teachers **precious time** for differentiated instruction for higher readers while struggling readers are spending time with their Open Books mentors.
- A special **orientation** at the beginning of the school year where educators will learn about the spectrum of resources available to participating schools. Food, drinks, and **resource materials** are provided.



## What Does Open Books Buddies COST?

For a full academic year of Open Books Buddies programming, schools contribute a stipend of **\$2,500** (less than 30% of the actual program cost). Open Books covers the rest.

With an average of 20 students participating in 26 sessions, schools end up contributing **about \$4 per session per student**. By comparison, tutors in Chicago charge \$30-\$60 an hour. The 5+ new books for each student and the many additional resources provided make Open Books Buddies an unbeatable value!

As a nonprofit organization, Open Books understands that times are tight. If the stipend cannot be funded by the school budget, your campus can try using DonorsChoose.org, asking a local business or community group to sponsor the program, and/or holding a community fundraiser (BBQ, bake sale, book swap, yard sale, etc.).



## WHY SHOULD You Have Open Books Buddies?

Becoming an Open Books partner school means more than just the Buddies program!

- Partner schools receive a **10% discount at the Open Books store** (opening in 2009).
- Open Books helps connect a variety of **outstanding literacy partners** with Buddies campuses.
- During the 2008-2009 school year, Open Books donated **thousands of additional new and used books** to Buddies campuses.
- Open Books has conducted **end-of-year read-a-thons** for Buddies campuses, provided **incentives and rewards** for participants, welcomed classes for **creative writing workshops** at our office, helped families get **library cards**, and **MUCH MORE!**





## Get started now!

[buddies@open-books.org](mailto:buddies@open-books.org)

312.475.1355 x116

[www.open-books.org/programs](http://www.open-books.org/programs)

The students I work with lag somewhat behind their classmates in reading ability and I am not sure that they get enough much needed **individual attention** in the classroom. Whenever they struggle with a word, I am ready to provide encouragement and support. As a result, **my "buddies" have become more competent and confident readers.**



Perhaps as important are the **relationships I have developed with the students.** After talking with them, I've learned that their circumstances do not afford much interaction with positive role models. I'd like to think that through my time with them each week, the students gain a **trusted friend who can offer valuable life lessons and broaden their perspectives.**

**MARKO D.**

**Open Books Volunteer  
Kingsley Elementary School**