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UTILIZE VOLUNTEER HELP IN YOUR READING PROGRAM

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“A job for everyone and everyone with a job.” If each child in your classroom is to work up to his full potential, this adage applies to the students in your classroom and to anyone who offers you volunteer help, the same way it applies to efficiency in business.

Teaching is the teacher’s business. She must have skills that are pragmatic as well as creative. Many teachers are going back for graduate work. Like doctors, they need to continue learning to keep pace with today. The teacher must know how to diagnose her students’ academic needs and plan procedures so that needed learning can take place. That does not mean she should refuse to let others help her.

The value of volunteer help is just beginning to be realized. Parents who do volunteer work in the schools are the school’s best allies when problems of criticism, vandalism, and millage arise. They have worked in the schools. They have become involved. They are soon sold on the needs of the schools. They observe first hand the dedication of the teachers and the awesome task of helping each child really learn.

Volunteer workers can help in many ways at your school but the purpose of this article is to suggest how they can upgrade your reading program. If you spend some time now planning how you could utilize the services of a volunteer, you will be able to take advantage of this opportunity when it presents itself. Otherwise you might shake your head and say, “No, I’m much too busy with my program to plan for another person in my classroom.”

Last year eight volunteer Mini-Teachers* and two Teacher’s Aides offered to help in my third grade. The Mini-Teachers came twice a week for twenty minutes. The Teacher’s Aides each came one morning a week for two hours. Two definite plans of action evolved:

- Plan I*
1. The teacher diagnoses needs of each student.
 2. The teacher works out corrective procedures to meet the needs.
 3. The teacher instructs the volunteer helper in the tech-

* Mini-Teachers—Older students in the school who volunteer to help younger students for short periods of time when they are free from scheduled activity of their own.

niques best suited to their abilities and the children's needs.

4. All students in the room are put into small groups of three to four students with a volunteer in charge.
5. The teacher moves from group to group monitoring the progress and giving guidance to students and volunteers as needed.

- Plan II*
1. The teacher diagnoses a common need for all students.
 2. The teacher sets up a procedure with the volunteer to fill this need on a one-to-one basis.
 3. Each student in turn meets with the volunteer.

Plan I was used mainly with the Mini-Teachers and Plan II with the Teacher's Aides. However, they are interchangeable.

The students helped in planning their own work. For example, everyone wanted to read aloud. It was therefore planned that everyone would read aloud to our Teacher's Aide on Thursday. Early in the year they read selections from their basal readers. Next they read material on their level selected from the SRA Laboratory. The volunteer could see their progress from week to week as they changed levels and colors. Late in the year the children read library selections and books which the children had written. The only requirements for this volunteer were to be a responsive listener and to supply unknown words in this manner: First, she would give them the beginning syllable and if that was not enough, the whole word. No long pauses or sounding out were permitted. This was a "Reading Performance" time, and the children really enjoyed it.

Our Tuesday Teacher's Aide helped with the SRA Reading Laboratory. At the beginning of the year we found that some of the third graders were still reading at first and second grade levels. They were having a great deal of difficulty getting started on independent work in the SRA Laboratory. A *SRA Helper Folder* was prepared for the Teacher's Aide and together with the teacher it was gone over step by step. The instructions were:

1. Have the student read the story to himself, asking any words he does not know.
2. Have the student read the story to you aloud.
3. When the student does not know a word quickly, give him the

sound of the beginning syllable. If he still does not know the word, tell him without hesitation or further sounding out.

4. Make certain the student knows all the words on "How Well Did You Read" page. Have him read in context any words that bother him.
5. Have the student read each question aloud telling you the answer he thinks is right.
6. Important—have the student find the sentence in the story that proves he is right.
7. On the back page of the folder show the student how to make the sixteen word combinations. Have him pronounce the word combinations. Have him circle the good words and cross out the nonsense words.
8. Student should copy the good words onto his answer sheet.
9. Student should read the final four questions aloud and tell you the word he thinks is correct.
10. Student should find the sentences in the story that prove his answers are right.

This technique was used both by the teacher and the Teacher's Aide until all the children were absorbed back into the independently working group. Later Mini-Teachers were taught to use this SRA Helper; and, when children fell behind on their individual laboratory work for any reason, they were again given special attention.

The Mini-Teachers helped children in small groups in sessions which were designed to build proficiency in a certain reading skill. The first drills were simple ones: Sight Words, Sight Phrases, and Consonant Lotto. As the students made satisfactory gains on these first three activities they moved on to Vowel Lotto, Verb Forms, Contractions, Homonyms, Synonyms, and Antonyms. Self-prepared cards may be used for all of these, but we used commercially made material for all but the contractions.

MATERIALS USED

Dolch Popper Words, Set I
Dolch Popper Words, Set II
Dolch Syllable Game
Dolch Consonant Lotto

Dolch Vowel Lotto
Dolch Read and Say Verb Game
Milton Bradley Homonym Poster Cards
Milton Bradley Synonym Poster Cards
Milton Bradley Antonym Poster Cards

The Contraction Cards which we prepared proved to be very helpful. First we printed the contractions on the front of large white poster cards with the two root words on the back. These were printed with felt pens. The cardboard had a white glazed surface and were given to the school by a nearby paper company. Small 3" by 5" cards were prepared with one set having the two root words and the other set having the contractions. The children had two games to play. If they had the cards with the two root words, they had to place the correct little cards on the correct large contraction card. If they were not sure of their answer, the large card had the answer on the back. If they had the small cards with the contractions on them, they had to place them on the large card having the two root words.

The children soon devised a game whereby teams tried to match words and contractions with great speed and accuracy. The teacher or volunteer timed the effort. If errors were made, they were subtracted from the total score. The team having the highest number of contractions correct in the shortest time was the winner.

Volunteer Aides in the classroom can be helpful. There *is* a job for anyone in your classroom if you are prepared.