



Reading Buddies & Book Clubs

Program Resource Guide for Volunteers



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OKLAHOMA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS MISSION:

Every day, Oklahoma City Public Schools will ignite a passion for learning in every child, invite families to engage, and inspire respectful and trusting relationships with our diverse community.

OKLAHOMA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOUNDATION MISSION:

To advance excellence, advocate for equity, and build strong community support for Oklahoma City Public Schools.

READOKC MISSION:

To instill the love of reading in the students of OKCPS and in our community

READING BUDDIES & BOOK CLUBS MISSION:

Expand and enhance the Reading Buddy and Book Club Programs in the Oklahoma City Public School District in order to improve students' attitudes toward reading.

I. District Overview

Oklahoma City Public Schools (OKCPS) is a multicultural district serving thousands of students all over the Oklahoma City metropolitan area. For the most current Statistical Profile, please visit www.okcps.org.

II. ReadOKC Goals & Objectives

As a ReadOKC Volunteer your goals are to:

- Spend consistent time with students to increase self-esteem, foster self-motivation, and promote responsibility.
- Assist in improving students' attitudes toward reading with the ultimate goal of helping students increase their reading proficiency.

III. ReadOKC Volunteer Program Models

READING BUDDIES	BOOK CLUBS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Serve at Elementary Schools• Meet each week that school is in session, September through March• Volunteers mentor and read with the same group of 1-4 students for 30-45 minutes on a set day and time each week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Serve at Middle and High Schools• Meet each week that is in session, September through March• Volunteers mentor and lead reading discussions with the same group of 5-7 students for 30-45 minutes on a set day and time each week.

These models are general guidelines that may be adapted with the approval of the school principal.

IV. Volunteer Application Process

All prospective volunteers are required to submit a volunteer application. There is no fee or charge to the volunteers. The Oklahoma City Public Schools Board of Education believes in maintaining an adequate level of safety and security in all schools and sites of the Oklahoma City Public School district. Therefore, before entering a school or site to volunteer, each potential volunteer must first complete the Volunteer Application and receive district approval annually. In order to protect applicant identity, paper applications are no longer provided nor processed by the district.

1. Complete the online volunteer application at:

<https://www.okcps.org/volunteers>



Note: If you are volunteering with a group, list your group's name under the organization category on the application.

2. Once the application has been submitted, a confirmation of receipt email will be sent to the applicant.
3. The application may take 5-10 business days to be processed.
4. Once the application has been processed, the applicant will receive an email notification of approval or denial. Denied volunteers are not permitted to enter any school or district facilities to volunteer.
5. Volunteers are required to review the Volunteer Handbook at <https://www.okcps.org/VolunteerHandbook>
6. In order for the district to maintain and ensure up-to-date background check records, all volunteers must submit a new volunteer application at the beginning of each academic year.

V. Volunteer Guidelines

1. Expertise: Volunteers do NOT need to have an education background or degree. If you can read at a 6th-grade level, you can help a child read! Volunteers are there as facilitators—to support students as they practice their reading.
2. Gifts: Your gift of time is valuable. We ask that no monetary gifts or in-kind gifts be given.
3. Confidentiality: No volunteer should be permitted to access, review, disclose, or use confidential student information, or participate in conversations in which confidential student information is discussed. Volunteers are held to the same standards of Code of Conduct as district staff and must observe all Board of Education policies.
4. Code of Conduct: Volunteers should always be supervised by at least one district employee. Keep in mind, volunteers act as role models in appropriate dress, language, and behavior.
5. Volunteer/Student Relationship: For the protection of all, relationships between volunteers and students must be kept appropriate at all times. Continuing a relationship with students outside of school activities is not permitted. Volunteers should not give money, gifts, or medication of any kind to students.
6. Appropriate touching such as handshakes, high fives, an arm or hug around a shoulder are the only safe and friendly ways to touch a child. For some children, or for some cultures, even these gestures may be unwelcome. No child should be subject to unwelcome touching, no matter how well intended. If a child ever inappropriately touches you, please inform a staff member right away. Volunteers are role models for students. Conversations with students and staff should demonstrate respect for others and avoid language that may be perceived as discriminatory, profane, sexist, or offensive.
7. Non-Discrimination: No student or staff person should ever be treated differently, spoken to disrespectfully, or denied services on the basis of sex, race, religion, disability, age, creed, color, national origin, sexual orientation, or marital status. In addition, school personnel or volunteers cannot encourage or promote religious beliefs by class activities, comments, or invitations to their place of worship.
8. Suspected Abuse or Neglect: Reasonable suspicion of abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, or illegal and/or dangerous activities should be immediately disclosed to staff.
9. Photography: Photographing students is prohibited at all times, unless it has been approved by Communications and/or Community Relations.
10. Discipline: Any discipline of a student should be left to a staff member. Never touch a child in anger or grab or chase students. Physical punishment is never permitted. If a child becomes unmanageable, find the nearest staff member.
11. School Safety Plan: In the event of an emergency (fire, tornado, etc.), volunteers should be familiar with the Safety Plan of the building and should follow the directions of the school ReadOKC Volunteer Coordinator and other staff.
12. Prohibitions: OKCPS administrators reserve the right to suspend the visitation privileges of any person(s) who may threaten the peaceful and orderly operation of the school system's environment.
13. Liability: The District cannot provide any type of health insurance to cover illness or accident incurred while serving as a volunteer, nor is the person eligible for workers' compensation. Community Partner Groups are required to provide certificate of insurance naming Oklahoma City Public Schools as an additional insured at the request of OKCPS Risk Management.
14. Cultural Awareness: We want to ensure we provide the highest level of compassion, care, and quality for our diverse student population while making them feel comfortable and welcomed. OKCPS recognizes that diversity embraces race, ethnicity, gender, religion, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and disability.

VI. Roles and Responsibilities

VOLUNTEERS

- Be a consistent volunteer. Students look forward to reading with their assigned volunteer and enjoy seeing them at the scheduled times. Anticipating this time has even increased some students' attendance rates.
- Keep communication lines open and report any concerns to the school ReadOKC Volunteer Coordinator.
- Follow school protocol and rules.
- Keep information about the student confidential.
- Keep comments made in the presence of students positive.
- Always have volunteer identification visible.

COMMUNITY PARTNER CONTACT

- Each Community Partner shall assign a Community Partner Contact who will communicate directly with the school ReadOKC Volunteer Coordinator and be responsible for the following duties.
- Identify ReadOKC volunteers and ensure they complete the OKCPS volunteer application process before meeting with students.
- Maintain an accurate record of current volunteers and their volunteer times.
- Alert ReadOKC Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible if you know a volunteer will be absent.
- Communicate with ReadOKC Volunteer Coordinator regarding any challenges that arise.

SCHOOL READOKC VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

- Each school shall determine which ReadOKC Volunteer Program Model is preferred and which days and times ReadOKC volunteers may come to the school. Each school also shall assign a staff ReadOKC Volunteer Coordinator who will communicate directly with individual volunteers and Community Partner Contacts and be responsible for the following duties.
- Maintain up-to-date school information and share it with Community Partner Contact.
- Identify students to participate in the program. In general, identified students should be no more than a few reading levels behind. Students reading far below grade level likely need a more targeted intervention than what a volunteer is likely to be able to provide. Match volunteers with students.
- Communicate with Community Partner Contact, OKCPS Community Relations staff, and OKCPS Foundation regarding any challenges that arise.

OKCPS COMMUNITY RELATIONS TEAM

- Conduct ReadOKC Volunteer orientations with the OKCPS Foundation Team
- Assist with end-of-year Reading Buddies Program evaluation.
- Strengthen partnership relationships as needed.

OKCPS FOUNDATION TEAM

- Recruit and connect Community Partners with schools interested in participating in ReadOKC Programs.
- Conduct ReadOKC Volunteer orientation with the OKCPS Community Relations Team
- Assist with determining placement of volunteers at participating schools.
- Assist with end-of-year Reading Buddies Program evaluation.
- Strengthen partnership relationships as needed.

VII. Equity OKCPS

VISION FOR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

Educational equity is defined as making decisions strategically based upon the principles of fairness, which includes providing a variety of educational resources, models, programs, and strategies according to student needs that may not be the same for every student or school with the intention of leading to equality of academic outcomes.

OKCPS recognizes our responsibility to eliminate past, present, and predictable barriers to student success by ensuring that all students have access to ambitious instruction from educators with high aspirations, to the needs-based allocation of resources (people, time, money), and to the support and advocacy needed to engage in high-quality and empowering learning opportunities regardless of their race, income, or other social factors.

EQUITY PROTECTION FOR STUDENTS

In OKCPS we reserve the right to protect the hearts, minds, and feelings of our students. As part of our equity framework, we ask that volunteers adhere to the dimensions of empowering rigorous content, student supports and interventions, and positive and inviting school climates. All programming for the district must strive to uplift and promote the needs of all students regardless of their race, identified needs, zip code, or any other social factors that may be present. As we invite volunteers into our buildings, we do so with the confidence that all students are welcome to attend programs offered in their schools unless otherwise stated in the application and MOU.

EQUITY PROTECTION FOR SCHOOLS

In OKCPS we reserve the right to protect the positive and inviting school climates that exist in our schools. We welcome individual volunteers, groups, and organizations into our building communities with the confidence that all partners have the best intentions towards our students. Any program that is perceived to be in conflict with providing empowering rigorous content, that does not provide equitable student supports and interventions or diminishes the quality of the school climate may be asked to cease operations. Building administrators reserve the right to request program outcome information to ensure that students are thriving as a result of their participation.

VIII. Social-Emotional Support

ReadOKC integrates mental, social and emotional well-being practices into reading and literacy programs. By doing so, the ReadOKC initiative can significantly enhance the support provided to students and create a nurturing environment for both their academic and emotional growth.

“We know that our students’ mental, emotional and behavioral well-being is intricately intertwined into our objectives as a compassionate and dedicated district through our EmbraceOKC mental health plan,” said says Armisha Harrison, MSW, LADCMH-S, Director of Mental Health at Oklahoma City Public Schools (OKCPS). “When students possess skills such as empathy, emotional management, and problem-solving, it can help support a foundation that equips them to engage with reading materials, better comprehend texts, and connect with the characters and themes. When students connect with the material they are reading, they develop a positive learning experience with reading, which helps shape them as the future citizens of our communities.”

While the primary focus is on promoting reading and literacy, we recognize that students and families may encounter various challenges, such as traumatic events, the impact of a pandemic, environmental factors, and so much more. If you come across a student experiencing difficulties, here are suggestions for providing support:

1. **Create a safe and welcoming environment:** Foster an atmosphere where students feel comfortable and supported. It's important to encourage open communication and provide a safe space to express their emotions or concerns.
2. **Offer individualized assistance:** Recognize that each student’s needs may differ. Provide personalized support and guidance based on their specific challenges and circumstances. Tailor your approach to meet their unique needs, and reach out to the school ReadOKC Volunteer Coordinator for guidance as needed.
3. **Practice active listening:** Take the time to listen to students and validate their feelings. Show empathy and understanding, allowing them to express their emotions without judgment. This can help build trust and rapport, making it easier for them to open up about their experiences.
4. **Foster resilience and coping skills:** Encourage students to develop resilience and coping strategies to navigate challenges effectively. Provide them with tools and techniques to manage stress, build resilience, and promote their overall well-being if you are comfortable doing so. For additional guidance, reach out to the school ReadOKC Volunteer Coordinator.
5. **Connect with resources:** Familiarize yourself with available resources within the school and community. If you believe a student could benefit from additional support or resources, please relay that information to the school’s ReadOKC Volunteer Coordinator, school’s principal, counselor or mental health provider.

Additionally, resources like the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/>) can provide helpful information and tools for promoting emotional health.

IX. Reading Buddies – Session Guidance

The following information is intended to support Reading Buddies by providing an overview of how students learn to read and what the Reading Buddy can do to help support students' positive attitudes toward reading.

Gough and Tunner (1986) described our ultimate goals of reading comprehension as the product of decoding and language skills as seen in the formula below. It is essential to have both the ability to read words and the ability to understand language in order to comprehend text. As students become proficient in these areas, they become fluent readers who use less brainpower for decoding and more for comprehension.



DECODING

What is it?





Decoding is the ability to use letter-sound knowledge to sound out an unknown word.

Decoding includes:

- An understanding of individual sounds (phonemics awareness)
- The ability to link sounds to letters and spelling patterns (phonics)

How Can I Help?

Steps for Reading New Words

-  Look at the Word
-  Find sounds, chunks, or syllables that you know.
-  Blend sounds together.
-  Think about if the word makes sense.

FLUENCY

What is it?

Fluency refers to accurate, expressive reading without conscious effort. Good fluency allows readers to focus on comprehension. Students become fluent readers through extensive practice with reading and recognizing word patterns.

How Can I Help?

- **Repeated Reading** - Have students reread the book. When reading longer books, have students reread a particular passage or chapter.
- **Choral Reading** - Read the book or passage aloud together so you are reading with one voice.
- **Partner Reading** - Take turns reading parts of the book. The reading tutor could make some intentional mistakes to allow the student to play the role of coach/mentor. This would increase confidence in reading and provide the student with an opportunity to see reading fluency from a different perspective.

LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

What is it?

Language Comprehension is the ability to derive meaning from spoken words when they are in sentences or text. Language comprehension requires having background knowledge and vocabulary as well as an understanding of how words are put together to make meaning.

Struggling readers frequently opt for simple books, so they may not have experience with higher-level texts that provide vocabulary, background knowledge, and longer, more complex sentences.

How Can I Help?

Before Reading:

Help students establish a purpose for reading the book and activate background knowledge relating to the book. Ask questions such as:

- What do you think this book will be about? What makes you think that?
- What do you think will happen?
- Why do you think the author wrote this book?
- What genre is this book?

During Reading:

Help students connect events or information in the book by asking questions and having the student summarize periodically. Define unknown vocabulary and support students in decoding words. Ask questions such as:

Fiction

- Who is the main character and what do they want?
- What has happened so far?
- What do you think will happen next? What makes you say that?
- How has the character changed? What caused that change?

Nonfiction

- What is the author trying to teach you?
- What details are important in this book?
- How do the text features (pictures, diagrams, headings, etc.) help you as a reader?
- How did the author organize this information?

After Reading:

Help students review the important events or ideas in the book. Have them retell or summarize main ideas and themes. Have students answer questions by giving evidence from the text. Ask questions such as:

Fiction

- Is this how you thought the story would end or were you surprised? Why?
- Did the character learn a lesson in this story? Did you learn a lesson from reading this?
- If you wrote a story like this, what would your story be?

Nonfiction

- What did you learn from the book?
- What was the neatest/craziest/most interesting detail you read?
- What will you do with the information you learned?

Most importantly, HAVE FUN! Your goal is not to teach them how to read. Build a relationship with your new buddy and enjoy reading books together. Choose books about things they like to read about and talk about the book just like you would in your own book club. Your time will pass quickly, so make the most of it!

X. Book Clubs – Session Guidance

PURPOSE

The Oklahoma City Public Schools Foundation Book Clubs give students a chance to connect with a trusted adult through authentic reading opportunities. Students will engage in meaningful conversation with peers and their book club leader. By participating in a reading group, students are able to grow in not only their reading abilities, but their social skills as well. It gives students a chance to be involved in something outside of the classroom. It allows students to have a mentor to connect with as readers, thinkers, and human beings.

GETTING STARTED

Choosing a Book

Give students some choice when it comes to deciding on a book club book is important. Ask students what topics, themes, genres, or specific titles may interest them.

A fantastic resource for your book club selection would be the school's librarian. They would be able to guide you to what's available, appropriate, and how to acquire the books.

Create a Name

One step in building a closer connection with your group would be to create a name for the club and possibly choose a mascot. This will help students to get excited about the weekly meeting.

Basic Ground Rules

Rules are never fun, but they are necessary for things to run smoothly. With your group, design some rules that everyone can agree to. This should be 2-3 rules such as no interrupting others while we are discussing or being respectful when we share out.

What to do?

During Book club it is ideal to break up your time between activities. Teens attention spans are short. Split time between reading aloud (taking turns), discussing the book, or doing a creative activity.

Asking Questions

Helping students build background knowledge and comprehension skills is an added plus of book club. Asking questions before, during, and after reading is crucial. Examples are below:

- What do you think will happen?
- Why do you think the author wrote this book? What has happened so far?
- How has the character changed? Why did they change?

Plan Activities

Book Club isn't always about reading and discussing. It is about engaging with each other and connecting over similar interests. Students would enjoy activities outside of reading their book aloud or discussing it. Some ideas of activities are:

- Create Bookmarks
- Bring snacks from the book
- Design playlists the character's may listen to
- Collage about the character's thoughts/ struggles/ strengths
- Write an alternate ending or event- Sharing out

XI. Communication

If you have a concern that is not addressed by the school's ReadOKC Volunteer Coordinator, please contact the OKCPS Community Relations Office or OKCPS Foundation.

OKCPS

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**Thank you for your participation.
The role you are playing is changing a child's life forever!**