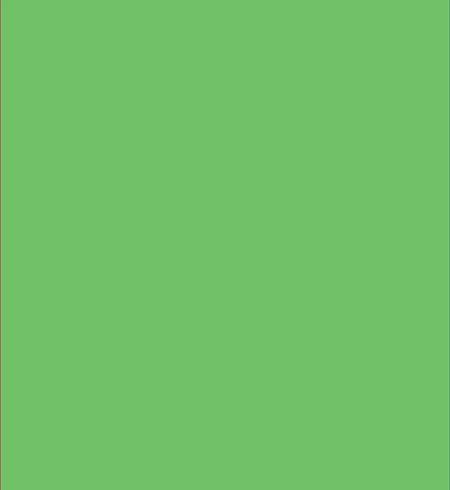




BOOKMates

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Henry H. Nadell & Marjorie Nadell Schneider



IMPACTING OUR COMMUNITY





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MISSION STATEMENT

BookMates is a social justice program of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Southern New Jersey and the Catholic-Jewish Commission. The mission of BookMates is to offer at-risk children a rich one-on-one literary experience. This nurturing connection encourages in youngsters a love of reading and provides them with a solid foundation for success in school and beyond.

THANK YOU

I personally want to express my deepest gratitude to all the BookMates, volunteers, supporters, and staff who have enabled BookMates to grow, thrive, and continue to help at-risk children throughout South Jersey. Your commitment to this program has helped to create so many special bonds and relationships enriching the lives of countless children.

Within these pages you will read about various experiences from readers sharing their personal BookMates stories. The impact of this program reaches beyond the students; it is also rewarding and gratifying to all the volunteers. In the testimonial section you will read what various teachers, administrators, and actual BookMate students are saying about the program.

I would like to give a special thank you to Joan Wechter for her time and dedication in putting this book together.

I hope you enjoy this keepsake book as much as I enjoy working with each of you every day!

Rhonda Shevrin
BookMates Director

IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT

the late Leonard Fein
*National Founder of the
Jewish Coalition for Literacy*

IN APPRECIATION

the late Henry “Buddy” Feinberg
Initiator of our local BookMates program

IN APPRECIATION

Alan Respler
*Whose leadership helped to coordinate the founding of our
BookMates program*





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“There are many little ways to enlarge your world.
Love of books is the best of all.”
- *Jacqueline Kennedy*

DEDICATED TO

Co-Founder, Our Friend and Inspiration
Dr. Judith Nadell

Thank you for sponsoring BookMates through Townsend Press
in Memory of your beloved parents:
Henry H. Nadell and Marjorie Nadell Schneider



Judith Nadell,

the epitome of

Leadership • Connection with Children • Intelligence • The World of Books and Learning • Love
Poise • Caring • Generosity • Community • Gentleness • Compassion • Culture • Strength • Creativity

BookMates is much more than a warm, fuzzy, soon-to-be forgotten intervention. Even if time with a student is brief, it can be transformative; it can open the youngster up to a world of promise and bright prospects. Here's an example from my own experience.

—Dr. Judy Nadell

Four years ago, I was matched with Alondra, a kindergartner from Mexico, who was referred to the program because she was shy and withdrawn. A slip of a child, Alondra had big, soulful eyes that filled with tears when she talked about her mom who was back in Mexico.

When Alondra and I read, I pulled our books out of a black canvas tote, onto which I had pasted the words the “Magic Book Bag.” Hoping to open Alondra up, I talked with her a lot, not just about books in the “Magic Book Bag” but about her sparkly new sneakers, about a squabble she had with her brother, about the pizza she enjoyed the night before. And you guessed it; after a while, she began to interact much more easily, becoming almost a little chatterbox.

We read together for two months. Then it was winter break, and Alondra returned to Mexico to be with her mother. I never saw her again.

That was four years ago. At the beginning of this year, I learned Alondra was back in Camden. I asked the school to see if she would like me to visit. The answer was yes, so I went to school to say hello. Within seconds of meeting, Alondra handed me an envelope. Inside was a gummy drop in the shape of a heart and something even sweeter, the beautiful drawing to the left.

This lovely drawing is, I believe, the perfect emblem of the power of the BookMates mission.

At the left, we see Alondra, hand raised in a gesture of greeting and self-declaration: quite different from the withdrawn child of earlier years. Certainly our work together wasn't responsible for that transformation. But maybe our connection—like the one all BookMates have with their little friends—was a factor in helping her emerge with such bountiful confidence.

On the right, we see none other than yours truly, looking impossibly young, blond, and curvaceous. In my hand? The “Magic Book Bag.”

Alondra has drawn the two of us meeting in her school hallway. At one end of the hallway is a Christmas tree, representing the time of year the two of us last met. At the other end of the hallway? A beaming sun and a cloudless sky.

Radiant sunlight, a clear blue sky: What wonderful symbols for the sense of possibility BookMates sparks in young children.



LOVED REALLY EVERY BOOK

By Karyn Lightstone

I was excited to start my first year as a BookMate volunteer. I thought it would be an interesting and, possibly, a rewarding venture as I began my retirement. Being a school secretary, I was always around children and already missed the interaction.

From the first day that I met the students, my new BookMates, I was impressed at how eager they were. Each week they became more open and talkative. Their faces would light up when I picked them up in the classroom. As we walked to our little table in the hallway, they would tell me about their week, their activities and what books they had read.

The more we read, the more engrossed they became. They were so funny and imaginative. They often made up stories of their own. When we finished a book and reviewed it, Dylan actually made himself a character in the story. Not a small part, mind you, but one of the main characters.

If you are familiar with *The Magic Tree House Series*, you will recall that the characters, Max and Annie, traveled to new lands. Dylan was tucked inside Max's backpack and helped out as an adventure unfolded. The imagination of an eight year old is awesome!

The end of the school year came way too fast. I bought the BookMates bookworm and a book for each of the four children I read to, and I presented the gifts to them. Much to my surprise, two of the boys wrote thank-you notes to me. I was not expecting this and was overwhelmed.

I will share a small part of what one boy wrote:

"I loved all the books you read to me. I thought there was (sic) funny ones and super cool ones. The book I loved the most was really every book."

So, I think that says it all. It doesn't matter what book you read. It's the reading of the book to a child that makes an impression and an impact.

A USEFUL, HELPFUL, SATISFYING ACTIVITY

By Carol Copper

Having been retired for a number of years, I sought a useful, helpful and satisfying activity in which to become involved. BookMates satisfied that need. I read to one child at a time who has been selected by the teacher. My reward is that I get hugs and hear statements like, "Reading is my favorite thing." I use both books supplied by BookMates from *The King School Series* and others I have collected over the years.

Since I have been at the same school for many years, former students greet me in the hall, long after they have left me. They ask, "Do you remember me?" I answer, "Of course, I do."

"Reading should not be presented to children as a chore or duty.
It should be offered to them as a precious gift."

- *Kate DiCamillo*

BOOKMATES HAIKU

By Jill Croft

Haiku 1

Hello, who are you?
Getting to know each other
Let's read, talk and play.

Haiku 2

I come to your class.
We meet, talk and read, connect.
Helping each other.

Haiku 3

Who are you? Who cares?
Give and take, give me a break.
BookMates are rockin'!

ENCOURAGEMENT, MORAL SUPPORT AND SPECIAL ATTENTION

By Patricia Galie

Tyler was in the second grade when I was assigned as his BookMate. His teacher Ms. Libetti told me how anxious he was about everything. Tyler was so worried about making a mistake that he did not want to participate in class. One day when I came to read with him, I had to wait while the class finished a timed math fact quiz.

When Tyler came to read with me at our table in the back of the room, he looked like he was about to cry. "I never finished!" he blurted out. I tried to ease his frustration by telling him that getting the answer right is more important than being fast. Then I pulled out a new Word Search puzzle from my bag. He smiled because he was so good at them.

He really liked the "cool books" that I brought each week that his teacher didn't have in the classroom. A book about magnets interested him. He also enjoyed a book about lizards since he had just gotten one as a pet.

In my ten years as a BookMate, I've found that I come each week not just to read, but to give encouragement, moral support and special attention which makes each student shine. Tyler is now a more confident student who reads and participates well.

"Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body."

- *Richard Steele*

A SAD PREDICTION

By Victoria Schwarzschild

I was reading the book *How* by Kathie Billingslea Smith with my eight year old BookMate. Joey knew I was in my late 80s. We were reading about the longevity of animals: a mouse - two years, a dog - thirteen years, an elephant – sixty years, a tortoise – over a hundred years and so on. We discovered that a human's lifespan was approximately 75 years. Joey looked at me with sad eyes and exclaimed, "Mrs. Vicky, you are going to die soon."

I shared this anecdote with the teacher and the whole class, and we all had a good laugh.

WORDS TO REMEMBER

By Marcia Brown

"Remember to be a *mensch*," Mr. Grossman would gently remind each child I took out of his classroom for our weekly BookMates session. Then when we returned, this teddy bear of a man would ask each student, "Did you show Mrs. Brown appreciation?"

I was so impressed with this big man who taught Camden kindergartners and treated everyone with respect. He made me feel so appreciated. We developed a friendship over the many years I worked with his students. I followed this creative teacher from Forest Hill School in Camden to the nearby Early Childhood Education Center. On Tuesday afternoons I'd come into his classroom, spot his chart of "Robust Vocabulary Words" and hear the other five-year-olds call out, "Take me!" I think that made my two students feel special and happy to take my hand and head for the library where we read.

Mr. Grossman paired me with an adorable, bright boy named Jeffrey. His family speaks Spanish at home and Jeffrey has a stutter which makes communication more difficult. I bought some *Skippyjon Jones* books to read to Jeffrey since Skippyjon is a little Siamese cat who thinks he is a fearless Spanish-speaking, superhero Chihuahua, El Skippito.

Jeffrey liked helping me with the pronunciation of the Spanish words, and he loved the series. He could remember the details of the stories I read from previous weeks, and he found Skippyjon Jones videos on his computer at home. I enjoyed our conversations because Jeffrey was so attentive and made observations and connections I sometimes missed. It was easy for me to choose what to give him before winter break. I chose a Skippyjon Jones doll and books. He was thrilled.

Soft-spoken and sweet, this boy continued to amaze me. Once while we were reading, Jeffrey looked out the library window to see the sun's yellow orb. He turned to me and stated matter-of-factly, "The sun is a mass of incandescent gas." Since then, I connect the sun and Jeffrey's pronouncement which never fails to make me smile.

AN OPEN LETTER TO MY YOUNG BOOKMATES

By Zese Brick

I truly enjoyed reading with you. You were very eager to read and learn. You all did a great job!

Remember what I told you from the beginning? Never say or be ashamed or embarrassed that you can't read as well as another child. Remember to sound out the word if you can't figure it out. Go back to the beginning of the sentence or the previous one to see if context will help you.

Remember, we all have problems. I help you to read better. You help turn the pages for me because my hands are so bad. We do for each other. Together we make a good "Daily Double."

Have a great summer. Remember to read. Reading puts "smarts" in your head.

GABRIEL BREAKS OUT

By Millie Stern

Gabriel and I walked down the hall to the room where we would read together. He spoke only in soft, one or two word answers to questions I asked. His demeanor stayed the same throughout our session. He did want me to read to him and slowly he would select one of the books I spread across the table.

As the weeks went on, Gabriel became a little more relaxed in our reading room. But as soon as we left that room, he again became quiet and withdrawn. His teacher shared that he was this way in the classroom as well.

As time continued to pass, I could see him brighten up when I came to get him. He began to reach for my hand as we walked down the hallway, instead of my always taking the initiative. He knew the alphabet well and began to point out simple words. He did not want to color or play any games, but preferred my just reading to him.

As we moved into the second half of the year, Gabriel became a little more playful. We read a story about an airplane. I made a paper airplane and we had fun flying it and chasing it around the room. I saw him go up to other children when we returned to his classroom. How delightful it was to see him speak to others!

About a month before the end of the school year, Gabriel and I were having a fun session which had become our usual thing and Gabriel told me something in confidence. He had a girlfriend in class.

Nu, who says love doesn't conquer all?

AN ACTIVE IMAGINATION

By Carolyn Jacobs

Ethan was a young man with extensive attention issues. He could barely sit still with me for a few minutes to read a book. He had a unique and most active imagination. He had actually been on the *Titanic* when it sank; he had giant tarantulas in his backyard; his cousin Buck Rogers had been frozen in space for 500 years, and over spring break, Ethan fought a three-headed hydra. I could not wait for Monday mornings when I would find out what other tall tales Ethan had in store for me.

In spite of his inability to concentrate, Ethan obviously knew a great deal about a wide range of subjects, mostly in the sciences. He found fascinating the books about insects, spiders, satellites, space stations, trains, tornadoes, hurricanes and earthquakes that I found to read and share with him. He kept me on my toes. I spent time wandering the non-fiction aisles of the Cherry Hill Public Library, looking for topics that might keep his interest for our thirty minutes per week.

Ethan was a reluctant reader, afraid to try even a book with very simple words. It was not till we discovered the *Elephant and Piggie* books that he became involved. He read *Elephant* in the gray word balloons, while I read *Piggie*. How exciting it was that we could read interactively!

Slowly his reluctance began to dissipate and he became a much more comfortable and competent young reader.

NINE YEARS LATER

By Amelie Harris-McGeehan

I have participated for seven years at the Billingsport Elementary School in Paulsboro. Those years taught me so many things and reinforced the value of the one-on-one experience with each student and the importance of reading to and with children.

A few months ago I came out of a local store in Woodbury and was greeted by a young teenager. She said to me, "Hi, didn't you read to me when I was little at Billingsport?"

I studied her face, recognized her, and replied, "Yes, I did. How are you?"

"Okay," she answered. "Remember that book we made that you gave me?"

"Yes, I do."

"I still have it!" she smiled.

I couldn't believe it. It had been so great to see her. She and the other students I read to were only about five at the time. About nine years had passed and that book was still significant to her.

WHO IS YOUR BEST FRIEND?

By Chris Torello

Adriana, one of five siblings living in Camden, was my BookMate when she was in second grade at Veterans Memorial Family School. She is a bubbly, happy, beautiful child with long, curly, dark hair. We had been reading together for about five months. We shared laughter and conversation about her family and the stories we were reading together.

One day we started reading *Bootsie Barker Bites*. It is a story about two little girls whose mothers want them to be friends. After a number of nasty incidents, it's clear that Betsy doesn't know how to be a friend. She is mean and hurtful.

Adriana was totally absorbed in the story. At its conclusion, I decided to start a gentle chat about friends, and her friends in particular. I asked, "Who is your best friend, Adriana?"

Here comes the shocker. She looked me directly in the eyes and answered, "You are, Miss Chris."

I was stunned. I smiled and turned my head away to wipe my eyes.

PARENTS AND PRINCIPAL APPRECIATE BOOKMATES

By Florence Brown

As the 2015 school year came to an end, I met with the principal of the Twin Hills School in Willingboro to explain why I might not be returning the following semester. I reviewed my fourteen years at the school where I had the opportunity to meet with the parents of my many students.

They expressed their gratitude for my helping their children develop a love of reading. The parents appreciated that I sent home a framed copy of each child's completed Reading Rainbow and Bookworm sheet showing each book read.

The principal declared that she was aware that many adult BookMates positively impacted students over the years and could not imagine not having them in the school.

I told her that my health might not permit me to return in the autumn. She gave me a hug and thanked me, expressing the hope that she would see me the following school year.

NO YEAR IS EVER THE SAME

By Becky Siman

I have been a BookMate since 2004, and no year is ever the same. It had been a long time since I was in an elementary school and I was struck by how safe and secure and cheerful the buildings were, even though the structures were aging.

When I started, visitors could walk right into the building. A few years later, we had to be buzzed in. I have been in schools during fire drills and, more recently, for practice lock downs. I've discovered that getting under a kindergarten table is no easy feat. So much has changed about security since I first became a BookMate.

One thing that doesn't change much is the students and their need for the one-on-one with an adult and the reading that brings us together. For thirty minutes a week, I love those children unconditionally. Sometimes they talk about what is troubling them in the classroom or with other students, but when they are finished their thirty minute session, they are usually skipping down the hallway. I am frequently struggling to keep up with them.

One of my most satisfying experiences came at the end of the year when the teacher told me she thought I had made a difference with her student. She admitted assigning to me a very difficult child who at the end of the year was paying much better attention and had been moved into the top reading group. Who knows why our connection worked so well that year, but I am glad that it did.

The children have been so varied in their personalities. Some like to snuggle in to read books, some can barely sit still, and I am challenged to capture their attention with reading.

Sometimes I have to read to my students in the library where we have access to educational programs on the school computers. Other times, I use low tech game books I purchased that have fun activities, such as: mazes, find the object, and rhyming words. They love the low tech as much as the high tech.

I also enjoy playing the card game Fish with the students. They have to learn to read (or maybe memorize) the characters on the cards. Somehow, I usually manage to lose at the game – much to their delight.

Last year, I had the opportunity to work with children whose first language was not English. A friend told me about a downloadable program called StarFall. I put it on my iPad and found it to be a great help to the children. It enables them learn the English words for common objects. I recently played it with my three-year-old nephew who was delighted with the graphics and the music. I highly recommend it.

I think BookMates is a wonderful program for the adult readers as well as the children. We continue to learn from one another and, hopefully, each of us is better for the experience.

“Reading is a discount ticket to everywhere.”

- *Mary Schmich*

QUIET CONVERSATION WINS THE DAY

By Faye Berlin

I have been a BookMate for fourteen years, and I usually read to one child at a time in half hour sessions during my one hour weekly visit to the school. This year I have been reading to four children individually during my now two hour weekly visit to Stuart School in Willingboro.

I added one girl to the original group when the teacher, who received a new student that was having adjustment problems, asked me to include her. The unhappy girl had been screaming off and on during the day. Before I could add her, the first day of the session, there was a fire drill. I went up to her and asked if she would like to join another girl from her class and me and read stories together.

She was quiet during the session and, when leaving, asked if she could come again. I continued to read to both girls in the same session and the teacher told me the girl's adjustment to the class had improved. I believe the BookMates experience contributed to her turnaround.

FRIENDS CAN BE OF ANY AGE

By Jennifer Beck

My opportunity to read to elementary school children has proven to be enriching for both me and my BookMates. First, the obvious, the kids get so much out of our sessions. I definitely notice the progress the kids make in reading and writing from the start of the school year to the end. It is also rewarding to see them blossom both as readers and individuals during our one-on-one time together.

Secondly, I find that with the education I receive from my young BookMates, I can hold my own in conversations about Iron Man, Transformers, Ninja Turtles and other such topics I can only assume are regularly discussed on the playground. You can say that being a BookMate has significantly increased my "street cred" among the kindergarten set.

Finally, I value the special connection I am able to make with these kids. Friends can be of any age, and I am pleased to think of all my BookMates as treasured friends.

SUCH A SWEETNESS ABOUT THEM

By Carla Cozzi

I want to say how much I enjoy my little friends at Harker-Wiley School. They are so happy to see me each week! They have such a sweetness about them.

We read many books together, but sometimes we just talk. That, in itself, is a precious time. Harker-Wiley School is a happy, stable environment.

IT'S ALL IN THE PERSPECTIVE

By Linda Friedman

In my fifth year as a BookMates reader, I can look back fondly at happy, sweet times with first and second graders. I am not a teacher by training, but as a mom and grandmother, reading to children comes naturally.

I always ask each child if he wants to read or have me read. Usually, the choice is to share the reading. This session is supposed to be enjoyable for them as they learn to read and love reading, so I never let them stumble on a word for too long. One little girl from Camden always wanted to sound out words syllable by syllable. Each time I told her she had the syllable right, she looked straight into my eyes and said a big "thank you." She was an excellent reader in first grade!

Some children need to have someone listen to them practice reading and some need to learn what reading sounds like. I always try to adjust to their needs.

When I walked to our reading room with one first grader, I was loaded down with my coat, book bag, and other items and taught him that he should hold the door for me. One particular day I thanked him for holding the door. He said, "That's okay. I like helping old people." I don't think I'm old, but it's all in the perspective.

By Christmas, I usually know what they like to read and I buy them some books to take home which they always seem to appreciate. I love hearing how much they liked their books!

VARIED EXPERIENCES WITH EACH BOOKMATE

By Jane Belli

Although I have been reading to the children for about ten years, my procedures have been diversified due to the needs of the children and their ability to comprehend.

This year my students are in Special Education. Ibn is eight years old and reads only prepositions, but he looks forward to our sessions. He really tries and is slowly making small strides. Ibn is just happy to receive the one-on-one attention and always tries to finish his classwork so he is ready to join me.

Zayah is younger but quite adept at sounding out the words and can sometimes read a full sentence. At times she is reluctant to join me and only wants to read one book. She absolutely loves *Fancy Nancy*. I bought her the book for Christmas and she was thrilled. Her eyes lit up.

Many of the children do not have the necessary support at home for many reasons. It could be a language barrier, a one parent household or the family simply doesn't have the time to give the child individual attention.

SILLY SALLY TO AWESOME ANTWON

By Sally Zeiberg

Antwon was my first BookMate buddy, and I was fortunate to read to him every Wednesday for three consecutive years. Antwon was very quiet, and I had trouble finding books to capture his interest.

Each week I wondered if I were making any difference. Six weeks later, I read the book *Silly Sally* by Audrey Wood. It's a rhyming book about Silly Sally who makes friends as she travels to town - walking backwards and upside down! It was the first book that Antwon responded to. He laughed so hard at each page. When I questioned him about what was so funny, he said, "Ms. Sally, Silly Sally looks just like you with red, curly hair!"

That book opened the door to Antwon's love of reading. I talked to him about authors and illustrators and, eventually, we wrote a book together called *Awesome Antwon*. Antwon happens to be a fabulous illustrator. He likes rhyming books and search and find puzzles as well. *Wacky Wednesday* by Dr. Seuss became his second favorite book since we met every Wednesday.

BIOGRAPHIES IMPACT STUDENTS

By Florence Brown

During my fourteen years at Twin Hills School in Willingboro, I have exposed my students to a wide variety of books. On one occasion, Michelle asked me if I had any biographies. For our next session, one of the books I brought was about Madam C.J. Walker.

Sometime later, I was invited by Michelle's teacher to a presentation for parents during which each student in the class portrayed an historic African American icon. Much to my surprise, Michelle portrayed Walker and another of my students portrayed Louis Armstrong, the subject of another book we had read together.

I was overwhelmed by their performances and later presented each of my students with several books about other historical figures.

THE POWER OF A HUG

By Sharon Weingart

I have been a BookMate for three years now and each year is just as gratifying as the year before. We all have busy schedules and some days it does feel like a chore to get there. However, once I get to see the face of my BookMate light up when I open the classroom door, it is all worth it.

I have one student this year named Neil who greets me with a hug every week and after our session is up, he will give me another hug good-bye. If by chance he forgets to hug me, he will run back down the hall to make sure I get one.

MEANINGFUL MEMORIES

By Merrill Freedman

The children we are reading to might be underprivileged, but that does not mean they are not intelligent, some exceptionally so. Several years ago I was reading to a first grader. His parents were both in prison, and his teacher thought he would benefit from reading with a male BookMate.

The little boy spoke barely above a whisper, but unlike the others, he asked if he could read to me, rather than me to him. When he read, his voice rose and was clear as a bell, but the grade level books held little interest. The next week I brought a more advanced book for him to try. He read fluently, so I continued to bring more and more advanced books. One day he sat across from me, rather than beside me. I opened a book about Barack Obama, which the young man began to read from the opposite side of the table. He smiled warmly at me and said "I love to read upside down."

Another memory involves a second grade boy, very big for his age, who loved listening to me read stories. But some mornings he had a hard time staying awake. I once asked if he could get to sleep earlier. He said he couldn't because there wasn't enough room on the floor.

He was a very good boy who sometimes got in trouble. But over the years, I saw him often and heard from his teachers. He always greeted me with respect, but like an old friend. He smiled when it must have been difficult to smile, and I frequently wished he were my own son.

JOSE COMES TO SCHOOL NOW

By Laura Gottlieb

When I was introduced to my BookMate Jose, his teacher told me he misses a lot of school and is extremely shy. The first day I struggled to get a smile or even a word out of Jose.

The next few times we were together, he started to warm up, but then he missed a few weeks of school. I thought that this would be a terrible setback. However, I was so surprised that when I saw him again he started crying - not sad, but happy tears.

He was overwhelmed with emotion; he was so excited to come read with me. Jose jumped out of his seat and ran to hug me! He smiled from ear to ear and, all of a sudden, he started talking and sharing stories with me.

He has become quite the animated chatterbox now. It is wonderful to experience his adorable personality. He has not missed a Tuesday in several weeks, and he tells me it is his favorite day of the week. It is my favorite day also.

It is amazing that in a 30 minute time period, once a week with a child, we BookMates can have such a profound impact.

A PASSION FOR SERVICE

By Tara Beck, *Rowan Medical Student*

BookMates has been an amazing opportunity for us, as first-year medical students, to step out of the library, take a break from our textbooks and instead enter a world of imagination and creativity by reading with students of the JFK Elementary School. This experience not only allows us to inspire the students to read, but reminds us of our passion for service - the main reason many of us chose to enter the medical profession. I think that this program reflects RowanSOM's commitment to improve the overall health of the community, starting with a child's academic well-being.

BookMates has been great! The school and the kids are wonderful. It really is the highlight of our week! Thank you!

APPREHENSION FOLLOWED BY ENTHUSIASM

By Rose Bergman

I have been a BookMate volunteer for three years now. Meeting with the children has been a heartwarming experience. I felt apprehension at first, but that was soon followed by enthusiasm. If I have to miss a week, the children are so disappointed. When I return, they want to know why I wasn't there because they miss me.

Some of my students are reading chapter books, something they had never done before. I am so proud of them, but, more importantly, they are proud of themselves.

CONNECTING WITH CHILDREN AFTER RETIREMENT

By Christi Tallent

This is my second year of reading for the BookMates program. It is fulfilling to continue to connect with children after retirement, and I can see the difference it makes for the children with whom I work.

Each child is unique and brings his or her own issues and joys. Among the five children who have been my BookMates, a couple have overworked, single parents who just aren't able to take the time to read to them. One, the youngest in a large family, has anger management problems in class and, in addition, has a physical disability and craves one-on-one attention. Another has difficulty processing words and letter sounds, but works valiantly to overcome these issues. Another comes from an immigrant home where not much English is spoken.

Through reading to the children, playing letter sound games, encouraging the formation of sentences that chronicle the story, I find that each child shows progress and is proud of the things he or she is able to do.

BookMates is a wonderful and valuable program for giving these young students a little bit of extra attention in the area of reading that can pay large dividends as they go through their school lives.

MY BOOKMATE LESSON

By Sheree Herubin

As a new BookMate, I looked forward to my Tuesday visits to my kindergarten class. My teacher was always cordial when I entered, but we rarely spoke about the progress of my BookMates because she was always busy teaching.

My young BookMate was a quiet little girl who was big for her age. She seemed sad one day and then she told me that her father called her a horrible name. I was dumbfounded. I could not believe that a parent would do that. She was a sweet kid and seemed competent with her reading skills when we worked one-on-one and I always tried to compliment her. I felt like I was able to bring a smile to her face.

At the end of the year, I was blown away when the teacher told me that she would not be promoted to first grade. I replied that she seemed competent at everything we did together. The instructor explained that she struggled to answer questions in class.

I only wished that I had known of this as I would've encouraged her even more. To me, this was not about her ability but her lack of confidence and self-esteem. I am hoping that this girl continues to receive positive reinforcement that will help her to build her self-confidence. I wish I had known that I could have requested her again another year.

Lesson learned: Ask questions.

REWARDING, INSPIRING EXPERIENCES

By Sharon Hoffman

Being a BookMate for the last five years has been rewarding and inspiring in so many ways. I have met funny, adorable, shy, and lovable kids. I feel I get as much pleasure reading with the young students as I hope they get from my coming to Clara Barton School.

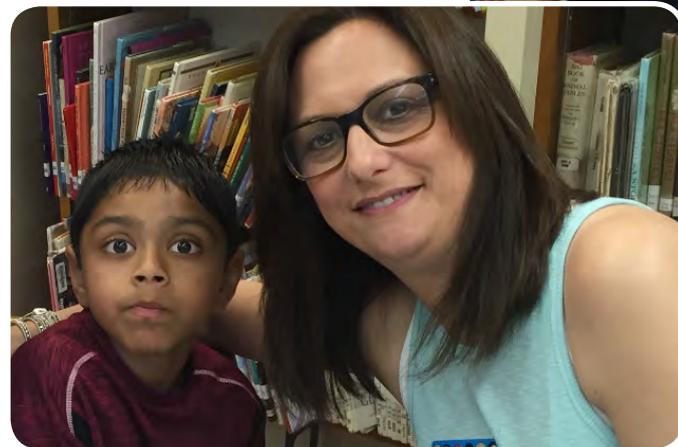
Walking in the halls, I see some kids from years before who are growing and maturing. One in particular always runs over to me and gives me a big hug. I have had two sisters that are as different as day and night. They both loved telling me stories about their family and I felt like I knew them all, even their pets.

I only hope other communities have similar programs; it's so important.

EXCITED ABOUT THE BOOKS

By Beverly Glass

I am having a wonderful experience this year with a little girl who was often extremely quiet when we first started reading together. Slowly, as I got to know the kind of books she liked to hear, I was able to encourage her to speak to me about the stories. Little by little, she would even initiate the conversation. And now she speaks to me like any other child, excited about the books and telling me what she likes and does not like. It's been a very rewarding experience for both of us!



READING LED TO WRITING

By Steve Hochman

I was lured into BookMates by Dorothy and Harold Minkoff. They are such good souls that I knew if they were doing it, it had to be something worth doing. I started reading to two children. One was eager to read; the other eager to get out of the classroom.

The more I did it, the more I learned that the more they did, the more they learned. So we turned reading into a game. I challenged my little BookMates to follow closely along as I read. I suddenly stopped and whoever read the word I stopped on first earned a point. The competition led my BookMates to read bigger words, have more fun, and gain more confidence in their ability to read.

Reading to two children at a time turned into reading to three and then occasionally to the entire class. Eventually, reading together led to writing together. The highlight came when three very special BookMates and I dreamed up a book, wrote and published it. We then “performed” an excerpt from our book, *Bet You Can NOT Eat Just One*, at the 2014 BookMates Appreciation Night.

The audience was composed of hundreds of delighted adults, including: BookMates volunteers, educators, the Mayor of Camden, and a table filled with the family members of the three young authors, all glowing with pride.

You might think the bright lights and the pressure would shake the first graders. Nope. They killed! The children’s self-esteem and confidence grew that night for sure. With confidence, children can conquer the world or, at least, live mostly happily ever after. So, yeah, do Learn, Challenge, Achieve, and Earn Confidence. That’s my BookMate’s story and I’m sticking to it.

THE BOOKWORM - A REWARD AND ENCOURAGEMENT

By Roberta Youngkin

I have utilized the bookworm handout for several years as a reward and encouragement for reading with me. Using construction paper in several colors, each child is given his/her own bookworm onto which he/she places stickers to record the books we read together.

By the end of the school year, the whole sheet of construction paper is full of stickers. In June the children are always surprised that we read that many books.

“From your parents you learn love and laughter
and how to put one foot before the other.

But when books are open,
you discover you have wings.”

- *Helen Hayes*

A TECHNIQUE TO BUILD WORD RECOGNITION

By Dorothy Minkoff

Take one book being read that session and select about ten words that are repeated two or more times. Print these words on heavy paper and cut them apart. After reading the story, scramble these letters and have the child form the words from the book. Place these letters in a box or envelope and continue the process with each session, adding to the collection of letters and words.

CHALLENGE FOR THE “LONGEST BOOKWORM EVER!”

By Lina Shane

I have been using the bookworm template to give the students a visual on how many books they have read during the school year.

We write the title of each book read in the circles and, at the end of the school year, we make the longest bookworm possible. When I first started to do this, I attempted to let the students cut out and paste the segments on the poster board. This became too time-consuming, so now I cut the shapes and often even paste them for the younger students.

On our last day together, whether it is a regular reading day, or the Volunteers Tea held in my school, I give the students time to decorate their bookworms. I provide the crayons and stickers. If necessary, I may ask the teacher for a little more time for this project.

Not only do we have fun, but it is a very good visual for them. Each year I challenge the students to make the “longest bookworm ever!” So far, it’s working.

READ ABOUT THE STUDENT’S INTERESTS

By Carol Raditz

One of the boys with whom I read was interested in various areas of science. Therefore, many of the books I chose to read with him dealt with animals, sea creatures, mountains, volcanos, deserts and others. Reading these non-fiction selections with my BookMate, I found that I learned as much as my student.

I WON’T GIVE UP!

By Steve Mucha

I am 94 years old and I won’t give up! I love BookMates and these kids! Unfortunately, I am slowing down. Macular degeneration makes it practically impossible for me to read. So my wife, BookMate Carol Copper and I have developed a new plan so that I can stay helpful as a BookMate.

Now, I am playing and singing children’s songs on my autoharp. Two at a time, the children sit around a table and join me, using a variety of percussion instruments. They also get a chance to strum the autoharp. The principal comes in sometimes and enjoys the scene. It is fun for all of us!

ADULT MALE MENTOR ROLE

By John Khanlian

Depending on circumstances, each week I arrive at Garfield East, the front office staff may tell me to meet my students in a different location. We have read in the textbook storage room, the science classroom, the assistant principal’s office, the cafeteria and other places. One locale that is kind of fun is the music room. It is really more like a large closet that has a piano, a couple of folding chairs, music stands on which we place the books we are reading, and shelves that hold a variety of musical instruments. The students are always curious as to what lies inside the cases.

I see my BookMate role to be an adult male mentor to the children, not just a reader. Sometimes, for instance, I’ll bring a simple jigsaw puzzle or a seek-and-find challenge for us to share during part of our time together. I play the piano and pick out tunes and chords by ear. Therefore, when we meet in the music room, I always reserve 5-10 minutes for some songs. Their favorites include: “Old MacDonald Had a Farm,” “Bingo,” and “The Itsy Bitsy Spider.”

I let them choose a bongo drum or other simple percussion instrument off the shelf and we play duets and sing together. They are able to keep good rhythm to accompany my piano playing and seem to really enjoy this activity. One of their favorite songs is “ABCDEFG.” They also like “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.” I was able to show them that the tunes for both of those songs as well as “Baa, Baa, Black Sheep” are all the same. They thought that was pretty neat!

TECHNIQUES TO SHARE

By Phyllis Weber

One of my students loves animals and seems artistic. I shared with her some of my drawings of animals which are on my iPhone. She seemed to enjoy that experience.

I type a list of all the books I read for each student including authors’ names and give it to the students for their parents. At the same time, I give them books as a gift at Christmas and at the end of the school year.

GOLD MEDAL AWARD STICKERS

By Patricia Galie

I found the Reading Rainbow was a big hit with my little BookMates. My students colored in it for every five books we read together. These youngsters enjoyed coloring and counting throughout the school year.

Reaching the top of the rainbow by reading twenty-five books meant my students took home a book of their choice to keep as well as a gold medal sticker proclaiming, "You did it!"

THEIR OWN MINI JOURNALS

By Joanne Mitchell

For the past five years, I have been reading to three students within a one hour session. I break the time into twenty minutes per kindergartner. From the beginning of the year, I record with each student each book we read in a very special mini journal.

After we finish, every student gets to pick a sticker or two to place in their journals. I also try to have a picture to color, one that relates to the books we read each session. After we complete twenty books, we make a bookworm to cut out and use as a bookmark.

At the end of the school year, I give them each this special journal to take home, along with their book gift to share with parents and caregivers.

MOTHER GOOSE WEARS COSTUMES

By Audrey Litto

The children at J.F. Kennedy School in Berlin are so receptive. I have been asked many times by my BookMate's classmates if they can have a turn reading with me. Luckily, my cooperating teachers have welcomed me into their classrooms toward the end of each school year, to present a Mother Goose program that I have created.

For many years I have been collecting Mother Goose books in a variety of forms. I have some very modern volumes and some as old as I. Their sizes range from very large to less than half inch square. I also have accumulated a collection of dolls and props that represent the Mother Goose characters. I use many of these to help illustrate each verse as I read.

My traveling buddy, a stuffed animal named Mr. Gander, instructs me to go into a special bag and put on the Mother Goose dress (aka - a flannel nightgown), a cap and glasses. And wah-la! Mother Goose appears and proceeds to read, sing and tell her tales. (I purposely transform in front of the children as I have found that costumes sometimes frighten or intimidate young children.) All of the children enjoy the props and books and are eager to sing and participate.

This appears to be a great way to end our year, and makes it a little easier for me to say good-bye to my special BookMates.

CREATING A BOOK OF SIGNIFICANCE

By Amelie Harris-McGeehan

Each of my students receives two things from me at the end of the school year: a book I purchased for them and a book we made together. During each reading session I would allow 5-10 minutes for the child to make a drawing, using crayons, markers, and occasionally water color paints which they especially loved. I would encourage them to create a picture that had to do with the story we had just read. We sat together while the child created and I jotted down comments in my notebook for the teacher to know.

I explained to each little BookMate that I would keep their pictures to make something special and would give it to them later on. Frequently, during the year the students would ask to see them and I would pull them out of my folder and we would view them and remember the stories we had read together. Each drawing had the book title, the date, and the child's name.

Near the end of the school year, I took all of their drawings to a store where each page was laminated. Pages were organized and the book was bound with a front and back cover. Each book contained a handwritten note from me with positive and encouraging words. Each note applauded the child's efforts, both as a reader and an artist. The second page listed every story we had read together with a date to enable the child and any adult in their house to associate the drawing with the story. Following that were pages and pages of the child's drawings.

I covered each book in beautiful wrapping paper with each child's name on it. I brought the gifts to my last BookMate meeting where they were opened, and the students joyfully relived our reading time together.

SOME CRAFT TECHNIQUES

By Rhoda Lander

I have been giving out stickers for a few years. I present them in the form of a book on one sheet of folded computer paper. The student writes the title of the book and under it puts the selected sticker. When the book is filled out, the BookMate can review at home the books that we read together.

I also write down on a 3x5 card the words that the young BookMate originally pronounced incorrectly. We review these words each week. If I have a kindergartner or a first grader, I often let him color or draw something about the book.

My one-on-one time with my BookMate buddies is something I look forward to each week.

CREATIVE APPROACHES

By Leslie Dwarin

At the first meeting I attended for BookMates, a woman spoke about how she connected with the students with whom she was reading. She talked about the parts of the book and how they related to the students. She spoke of the title, the spine and so forth.

I thought that was creative, so the first time I met with my students, I used the same approach. These first graders were fascinated by the comparison. They were then interested in what I was reading to them.

Last year I tried something different. I used the *I Spy* books to break the ice with my three students. This series is much more interactive than just reading to them. They loved it. I brought a new book in the series with me at least once a month to our sessions and used it as a bonus.

For the past two years I have stayed in the classroom after my reading sessions with the children. I help Mrs. Alcamo wherever she needs me. She had other children read to me; sometimes I check their writing. This enables me to make a real connection with all of the children in the classroom, not just my specific BookMates. Each year I look forward to meeting new students.

DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER

By Judy Stein

One of my first sessions involved a book I have owned since I was a little girl. It has been loved by me, my kids, and my grandkids. As you might expect, the volume is not in very good condition.

I placed this book in with several others that my students choose from on their reading day. My students never picked that book, so I selected it and told them we were going to read it because it was one of my favorites.

It is called *The Great Big Noise* and offers the opportunity for the reader to make many loud and funny noises and then to have the student try to guess what is making the noise. I really get into it and the kids love it! They love it so much that now I read it to the whole class. The laughter and the happy faces fill me with joy.

After we finish reading the story, we have a short discussion about not judging a book by its cover. The kids enjoy the discussion and most are able to participate.

FROM CLIP ART TO SINGING

By Merrill Freedman

I often have trouble remembering people's names. One day while reading to first graders, I said that instead of reading a book, we were going to write one. The first thing I asked was for them to spell their names. Then I began asking questions which I quickly wrote down along with their answers.

My questions included: Who are your favorite superheroes?

Which one would you like to be?

What would you do if you were a superhero?

What would you like to be when you grow up?

For the most part the children gave obvious, but good answers.

When I arrived home, I typed their answers, added clip art, and placed a cover page up front that had a title and author's name. Inevitably, the children loved it. They had written their own book!

I have been with the same teacher for the six years I've been with BookMates, and she knows just how I can be of help. Often, she'll give me a word list that the child must learn. It was not a surprise that the children did not find this their favorite thing to do. One day I did something a bit different; I sang the list. After singing it a couple of times, I asked the children to join in. They got it!

The BookMates program is so much more than just helping students to read. It is about showing these youngsters that someone cares enough to take the time to help them. Students need some attention, some love and a big hug to help them succeed.

DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES FOR DIFFERENT GRADES

By Gail Rubenstein

I'm currently in my third year with BookMates, and this year I read with five children in grades K-2 in both Camden and Runnemede. It's always such a joy to see how they improve over the school year and how their confidence grows.

I read to the kindergarten students while they color or draw. I ask them to identify simple words and ask them questions about the story to make sure they are paying attention. When I am with older children, they read to me and when I see they are losing steam, I take over.

I make sure to identify and explain any words with which they are not familiar, and I help them sound out bigger words. After we finish the page, I have them read it again and, most of the time, they are flawless. I always give them high-fives and I distribute stickers or pencils. Many times as we finish the book, I have them write their name in it and give it to them for a job well done! I love BookMates!

ALWAYS ENGAGED AND PARTICIPATING

By Susan Baskies

My experiences as a BookMate at Barclay have been great! I am seeing two preschool students for thirty minutes, and then another two during each hourly visit. I coordinate with the teacher about what the other children are doing in class, so I can reinforce the concept.

Usually, I present 3-4 books to the children and each child gets to pick one for us to read. Next, I do a craft project to reinforce the concepts.

The books - *Flip and Flop, Penguins, Peek a Boo Penguins*

The craft: making penguins with cotton balls, enforcing counting and who, what, where questions

The books - *Learn Your Shapes, I Have Shapes, The Shape of Things*

The craft: making houses with shape forms, reinforcing the concepts of labeling shapes and colors, and matching shapes

The kids greet me when I enter. They are engaged and participate the entire time. Even though they are not readers, they describe the pictures, answer questions and share their own experiences.

I sometimes give stickers at the end of our sessions for good listening, good talking and good work. Everyone gets praised throughout the sessions.

CELEBRATING BOOKMATES WITH VARIOUS ACTIVITIES

By Jean Lombardi

As a retired elementary teacher, I am happy to share my love of children's books with my second grade BookMates at Vets School in Camden. In addition to reading with the children, I've done many activities during my nine years as a BookMate.

Creative writing, including mini books and poems

A presentation on author and illustrator Jan Brett for second grades

A word box to review sight words

A monthly reading of a story to the whole class with a follow-up activity

Books purchased for each student in the class

A celebration in March of Dr. Seuss' birthday with a story and fun activity for the whole class

I am passionate about BookMates and I look forward to reading with my students each week.

HARD WORK CULMINATES IN FUN CRAFT

By Debbie Hochberg

I got involved with BookMates six years ago when my daughter chose to do a Mitzvah Project with BookMates. As part of her Bat Mitzvah experience, my daughter organized a book drive; she delivered all of them to Forest Hill School in Camden. When I saw how excited the children were to receive so many books for their library, I knew I had to get involved with BookMates, as it is such an amazing program.

I agreed to be a BookMate, reading with a disadvantaged youngster each week. Having no formal training as a teacher, I was naturally nervous about my first meeting. Just as children might worry if others will like them, I was concerned that my little buddies would not enjoy reading with me. So, I thought really hard about what my own kids liked to do when they were in 1st and 2nd grade, and remembered that they always loved doing arts and crafts. I decided that each week I would plan a small art project to complete with my students upon concluding our book. I hoped that the kids would like my idea of reading and crafts.

My first week of reading was a huge success! Together, my buddies and I read a cute story about the members of our family, and then each drew a picture of family to share with one another. The story was great and we ended on a positive note, opening up dialogue with one another and sharing a little bit about our lives.

That success encouraged me to find meaningful and memorable projects to go along with the stories we read together each week. Some of the students' favorite projects were folding paper and cutting their own snowflake after reading a book about snowmen and folding and decorating a paper airplane after reading books about modes of transportation. After a few weeks, my students were eager to listen and read the books because they knew that their hard work would culminate in a fun craft. Their reward was the project, but my reward was watching them grow as students and young people!

One of the most memorable and touching interactions I had was with a little girl in first grade. We were reading books about nature for Earth Day, and I chose to do a recycling craft project. I brought in a brown paper bag to make a puppet, and then explained that it could be recycled into a lunch bag on another day. The little girl was so excited because she never had a lunch bag before. She said, "Now I can bring my lunch in like everyone else." It dawned on me at that moment that this little girl likely received free lunches, and in her mind, if she had a brown bag, it meant that there would be a lunch in it. I wish I had brought a snack for her to put into the bag so that she could bring it to school proudly like her classmates. It was an eye-opening experience for me.

I have had a wonderful experience volunteering as a BookMate and I look forward to the time I have with my students each week. I enjoy watching them grow during the school year, always so proud of what they learned, and eager to share their new experiences. I love that they look forward to reading each week, and have a positive connection between reading, creating and sharing with a friend. I believe that all of the children have learned from spending time with me, but I can honestly say that I have learned from reading with them as well.

USEFUL FOR COMPREHENSION AND RETENTION

By John Khanlian

I was able to use successfully a technique demonstrated at a BookMates follow-up training workshop held at the JCC in March of 2015, using *Stone Soup*.

After we read the book together, I took five cards that ask Who?, What?, Where?, When?, and Why? and I placed them face down. We then took turns selecting cards and asking each other the questions about the story.

I went first in order to demonstrate how it was done, and tried to begin with really easy questions. For example, "What were some different foods that went into the soup?"

"Where did they put the stone and other ingredients?" When it was the kids' turns, they sometimes got confused about the kind of thing each word means. Sometimes they asked a "Who?" question for something that required a "What?" response. I helped to clarify the differences.

We were able to get into more sophisticated thinking skills, when, for instance, I asked them, "Why did Max and Molly tell the villagers that the soup tasted delicious when they just put the stone into the boiling water?" I followed up this question with, "Do you think it really tasted good before they added the other ingredients?"

I think the five W's strategy helps kids with reading comprehension and retention of the basic elements of the story. As a take-away from reading this particular book, I made copies of the recipe for *Stone Soup* in poem form in the back of the volume and gave it to the kids to take with them.



"Oh, magic hour, when a child first knows
she can read printed words."

- *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn, 1943*



WORDS OF PRAISE



Mayor Dana Redd
Police Chief Scott Thomson



Marcia Toub,
Past BookMates Chairwoman



Names of people Starting on the left -
Sally Zeiberg, Debbie Hochberg,
Laura Colligon, Lillian Halden, Patricia Lahn
and Judy Stein

“You can find magic
Wherever you look.
Sit back and relax
All you need is a book.”
- Dr. Seuss

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Mayor Dana Redd
Camden

The BookMate volunteers are so compassionate, with big hearts, generosity and spirit. As Mayor of Camden, this means so much to me. The BookMates are making a difference each time they connect with a young person. Reading is the foundation of a child’s education and each adult BookMate serves as an important resource in helping the child to succeed.

GRATITUDE

Superintendent Paymon Rouhanifard
Camden City School District

We’re grateful to BookMates for connecting adult volunteers with our students to help improve literacy in schools across the city. Our students look forward to these valuable opportunities to engage with the volunteers and read one-on-one.

LEADING AND GUIDING

Gloria Martinez-Vega
Principal, Sumner Family School

The BookMates program has always been important to us. The more our young scholars are read to, the better their comprehension and vocabulary and the greater their desire to continue to read.

The strong partnership of the Mayor’s office and the Camden County Police Department have made the BookMates program even more impactful. Our scholars and staff know the police officers by name and the developing relationships can grow into success on many levels. My experiences have shown me that our youngsters feeling safe and supported is a prerequisite for their learning.

I am so grateful to the police officers and the Mayor’s Congress of Camden. I appreciate our relationship with the BookMates program for their dedicated leading and guiding of our scholars to success.

SUCCESS IN OUR SCHOOL

Kerry A. DiSimone
Elementary Supervisor, New Albany School, Cinnaminson

The BookMates program is a success! Thank you so much for bringing the program to us! We hope it will stay in place for the future.

I asked the teachers if they had any comments or suggestions. Here are a few I received.

.....

I am very happy with the program. The kids look forward to it and it is great for their self-confidence. Ms. Levine also came into my class in December to read a Hanukkah book and discuss the holiday with the whole class.

My BookMate has been awesome, a true asset to the class! The girls love Ms. Stern and she has them both reading and writing original books.

I have Mr. Hochman and he has been wonderful. He goes above and beyond every Thursday with my kids. They are always very excited to read or write with him and his creativity really inspires them. He has been amazing and I appreciate all that he does.

My boys seem to really enjoy going to read with Ms. Downey. My other students want their turn.

VERY REWARDING FOR MY STUDENT

Kari Passarella
First Grade Teacher, Grace Downing School, Runnemede

The BookMates experience has been very rewarding for my first grade student Marilena. She looks forward to reading with her BookMate Ms. Gail every Tuesday. When Ms. Gail enters our classroom with her friendly smile, I know there are many other students in my room who wish they could have that valuable one-on-one reading time.

Ms. Gail is a warm, caring and friendly person who encourages her students to love reading. The BookMates experience has been very meaningful for my first grade students.

UNIQUE WAYS

Gloria Brownlee
Special Education Teacher, Henry H. Davis Family School, Camden

The BookMates program is inspiring and rewarding. The volunteers have a unique way of imparting the joy of reading to children. It is awesome to see children enthusiastic and eager to read. To make a difference in a child's life is worth it all. BookMate volunteers should be in every elementary school.

AMAZING FIRST EXPERIENCE

Ashley McGuriman
Second Grade Teacher, Davis Elementary, Camden

This is my first experience with BookMates, and, so far, it has been amazing!

On the second day of school, I had a student approach me after I read a story to the class. She told me she really liked when I read aloud and informed me that she wasn't a good reader. I told her that we would have hundreds more opportunities to read together and promised her that by the end of the year, not only would she be a better reader, but that she would enjoy it as well.

Madalyn doesn't have a great deal of support at home, so I knew this task was in my hands.

When I was asked about BookMates, I had no doubt as to whom I wanted to choose. Madalyn was so excited, even though she tends to be shy. She just wanted to be selected as a young BookMate.

Since she started with her BookMate, Ms. Gail Rubenstein, she has fallen in love with the program, and I've seen a real change in her attitude about reading.

This week Ms. Rubenstein presented Madalyn with a copy of *Pinkalicious* and told Madalyn to practice reading it. Every day this week, she has sat with a friend reading that book and giggling.

BookMates and Ms. Rubenstein have been great aides in sparking Madalyn's love of reading. She went from a shy, insecure reader to an excited and enthusiastic student who wants to keep practicing. Thank you, Gail!

DEAR MR. DRUCKMAN,

Thank you for reading to me. And I like when you read a book to me. My favorite book was *Ish*. I will miss you in school.

Love, Sherlin

DEAR MRS. KARRMANN,

She is our BookMate. We love her. She always has a smile on her face and she loves to read books to us! Sometimes she gives us books, stickers, and fancy pens. She never misses a day with us. We have fun together!

Love, Carolyn and Leyla

YOU HELPED US GROW

By Charles Street Students, *Palmyra*

We love Mrs. DeVries! She greets us with a smile and a kind word every time she visits. She reads to us and we get to read to her.

Mrs. DeVries has helped us grow in our independence and self-confidence. She brings us little treats and books. She gives stickers and pencils to the whole class.

“YOU COME” - DEDICATED TO OUR BOOKMATES

By Kathy Spencer, *Site Coordinator, Harper-Whyllie Elementary School, Pemberton*

You come, and sit
In our little chairs
In our drafty, noisy hallways
Working around our schedules, shows and assemblies.

You come, and read
To our little people
One or two at a time,
Bringing books and pictures, poems and prose.

You come, and we learn
From your generosity
About dedication, determination,
Caring, compassion and joy.

You come, and our children
Learn new stories.
But, more importantly, they learn
The joy of words and ideas, and of language and love.

Thank you for your gifts of time and talent.

DEAR BOOKMATES ORGANIZATION

By Mrs. Schipper
First Grade Teacher, Charles Street School, Palmyra

We would like to take this opportunity to thank your group for providing a BookMate to our class this year. We had the pleasure of having Mrs. Cohn read to a student in our first grade class. Kim eagerly waited for Tuesday afternoons to arrive. She knew that is when she would be able to share a smile and even a treat with Mrs. Cohn.

During the celebration of Passover, Mrs. Cohn was kind enough come to all three sections of our first grade and tell us a story about this holiday. As an additional treat, she gave each student a yummy macaroon cookie.

Thank you again, Mrs. Cohn, for adding to the joy of learning!

MANY THANKS TO OUR BOOKMATES

By Ronda Lomberg, *Reading Specialist, BookMates Specialist,
BookMates Site Coordinator - Thomas Paine International Elementary School*

For the last fourteen years, BookMates have been invited to read with the kindergarten, first, and second-grade students, and occasionally an older student who speaks a different language at the Thomas Paine Elementary School in Cherry Hill. But the name of this group, BookMates, is misleading. The adults who volunteer once every week aren't just "readers" of books. These BookMates also share their experiences, discuss the children's interests with them, and talk to the students about meaningful events in the world, holidays, friendships, family, and core values. The BookMates individualize and learn about the children. They are unthreatening, don't provide grades, and don't criticize the children if they have difficulty reading or learning. The BookMates support the children, encourage them to learn, and make their time together enjoyable. The students look forward to their BookMates day. When their day arrives, the children skip down the hallway. Their BookMate makes them feel special, valued, and important.

Some students who have a BookMate speak another language at home. It is vital that these ESL (English as a Second Language) students have many experiences speaking and reading in English at school. Two years ago, an ESL student who only spoke Hebrew learned a great deal of English from his BookMate, Shirley. She drove to the JCC Library and borrowed books in Hebrew for him to read in his native language. He especially loved *The Harry Potter Series*. Shirley also taught him about sports in the United States, the Olympics, and they swapped stories about their families. At the end of the school year, the boy returned to his native land, and Shirley agreed to come visit him in Israel. Wow! That fourth grade boy will never forget his BookMate and the exceptional experiences she provided!

Sometimes, the BookMates will bring stories that the children requested and a follow-up craft or a newspaper to discuss a current event. Our new BookMate volunteer, Marcia, brings a dry erase/magnetic board each week to review vocabulary. She shares pictures of her grandchildren, and her students feel like part of her family.

One BookMate, Sue, put a picture of her students on sticks and included each child's picture in her photographs while she was away on vacation. When she returned, she made homemade books with her students, using their pictures on each page in the various countries that she traveled. The children felt as though they went to the countries she visited as well.

All of the BookMates bought books for their students. Many of these children never had their own books. Another BookMate, Leslie, sends the classroom teachers an email synopsis of her interactions with the children, books they enjoyed, and their improvement in fluency and reading accuracy. One BookMate, Francis (called "Bubbe" by her students) brought her dog to school. The dog was trained to sit quietly and listen to stories.

BookMates are friends, teachers, and caring individuals, dedicated to help young children with literacy and enjoy learning. Many thanks to all of our BookMates who enriched the lives of our Thomas Paine children: Pearl, Shirley, Sharon, Joanne, Rhoda, Marcia, Donna, Rose, Jennifer B., Jennifer S., Leslie, Fran, Betty, Helene, Roberta, and Ellen.

PACER PROGRAM



This partnership between the City of Camden, the Mayor’s Community Congress, the Camden County Police Department Metro Division, and BookMates will match police officers and members of the Community Congress with kindergarten students in Camden.

By working with the Camden County Police Metro Division and members of the Community Congress, it is our desire to provide these students not only with a specially trained reading partner, but also with a mentor, role model and trusted resource.

POLICE CHIEF SCOTT THOMSON

The single greatest investment for the future is our children, and as society’s guardians, we know that the time we are spending with kids today will pay tremendous dividends in the future in many ways.

ASSISTANT CHIEF ORLANDO CUEVAS

The program facilitates an organic relationship and mutual respect with our young citizens which has the potential to last a lifetime.



“Books are the plane and the train and the road.
They are the destination and the journey. They are home.”

- Anna Quindlen

IMAM FAHEEM LEA, MEMBER OF MAYOR'S COMMUNITY CONGRESS - CAMDEN

Frederick Douglas once said, "Once you learn to read, you will forever be free." Reading to these children in the BookMates program is a means of empowerment and development for the future of these children.

OFFICER DAVIS #453

I love the program because the time with the children is the highlight of my week. It makes me happy when the children are excited.

OFFICER BAGBY #445

The reason I do BookMates is because I want to help the students in my community learn how to read.

OFFICER HOLMES #9904

The reason why I enjoy participating in BookMates is because it gives the officers an opportunity to teach the students to be confident and love reading.

OFFICER SHIRK #147

The reason I do BookMates is because I enjoy reading with the students. I believe we build a bond that can last a lifetime.

OFFICER CANTONA #9910

I enjoy being part of the BookMates program. I want the kids to have the first interactions with us officers as someone who reads books with them and helps them develop and grow. I have kids of my own; I love reading books to kids.

OFFICER B. RIVERA #196

It's an honor to be part of the BookMates program. I enjoy being able to help in teaching the children of Camden City how to read and to recognize the author and illustrator of the book. I also enjoy the opportunity to create a bond between the kids from the city and the Camden County Police Department. Thank you!

OFFICER CARDOSO #341

The reason I'm involved with BookMates is so a bond between the children and officers can be established early for the right reasons. A good reading foundation early in life is a great foundation for younger children to grow up and become great men and women.

OFFICER CAFFARCHILLI #221

This program is great to spend time reading with the children. After the first day you build a bond with the students. It also shows the children we are here for them if they ever need help.

REBECCA L. EASTMAN, ED. D.

Kindergarten teacher, Sumner Family School

The kindergarten students love the BookMates program! Each of them looks forward to reading with a police officer. They are building memories and community cooperation that will last a lifetime.

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE CHIEF

Dear Chief,

First, let me congratulate you on the fine job you are doing as leader of the Camden County Police Department. I was a 60 year resident of the city and have been a security officer at Bonsall School Annex for the past 25 years.

But, Chief, this letter is not about me. It is about the fine officers from your department who participate in the BookMates program every Tuesday and Wednesday. Your officers come to the door eager to interact with our children as if they were their own. The children often ask me, "Are the cops coming today?"

Whoever came up with the idea of police officers reading with kids should be commended. Had this program been in place 20 years ago, there is a strong possibility Camden would be totally different. Children interacting with police at an early age would have helped them have a great outlook on police during their teenage and adult lives.

Again, I say those officers participating in BookMates should be commended.

Sincerely,

Willie Smith
Pennsauken, NJ

.....
"Books are uniquely portable magic."

- *Stephen King*



A HIGHLIGHT OF THE YEAR

By Sandra Poulton, 7th grade Language Arts Teacher, Harrington Middle School, Mt. Laurel

Several years ago, I was fortunate enough to be approached by two of my students' parents to participate in a program called BookMates. For years I had been conducting my Writers' Workshop on fiction writing by teaching the qualities of children's picture books and having my students analyze and evaluate popular children's literature. The workshops always culminated with my students writing and illustrating their own picture books. The books were always beautiful and well written, but there was one problem. The books were meant to be shared with children, but we didn't have a way to reach our intended audience. This is where BookMates came in to save the day. The BookMates program has given my students the audience that they needed, young children with the desire to read.

The benefits of reading aloud to children are undeniable. Reading aloud to children increases their knowledge of the world, their vocabulary, their familiarity with written language, and develops an interest in reading. The BookMates program promotes the values of reading to both the middle schoolers and their beloved BookMates. For the past four years, my seventh grade students have had the opportunity to share their love of both reading and writing with young students in Willingboro and Camden. The rewards have been amazing!

My middle school students are always a little nervous about having to read to restless youngsters, but typically end up gaining as much as their BookMates from the experience. They all love to spend time hanging out and getting the opportunity to bond over books.

The opportunity to participate in the BookMates program is one of the highlights of the year for Harrington students. Those who participate grow as writers and readers and enjoy spreading their love of reading and writing to the young children they get to meet. All of my students especially enjoy the fact that they give the books that they have worked so hard to create as a gift to their special BookMate friend. They spend countless hours making sure that the characters they create, the theme of their stories, and the illustrations that they choose will be an inspiration and something to be treasured by their new friend.

As for me personally, I feel that the BookMates experience has made me a better teacher. Watching my students interact with their new little friends fills me with a sense of pride and always melts my heart. I know that I am helping make memories for both my students and the young children we get a chance to meet. My middle school students are kind and generous. The BookMates program offers them the opportunity to show local communities how much they care about literacy and to promote a love of reading to children who are, for the most part, just learning to read themselves.

Creating life-long readers is what I believe the BookMates program accomplishes. All involved benefit from participating in BookMates!

"Books make great gifts because they have whole worlds inside of them."

- Neil Gaiman

WHAT BOOKMATES HAS MEANT

By Lillian Halden, *English Language Arts Teacher, Grade 8, Rosa Middle School, Cherry Hill*

This spring marks the sixth year that my learning community students at Rosa International Middle School are participating in BookMates. That means more than 600 of my students have participated in this incredible literacy program overseen by the Jewish Community Relations Council. BookMates started as a program that paired adult readers with school children in underprivileged areas. The program was expanded to include an 8th grade component. That is how Rosa students are involved.

My students have spent the past three months doing BookMates work that will culminate with a visit on May 27, 2016, to our partner school, the Forest Hill Elementary School in Camden. Simply put, each of the 8th graders makes a storybook that he/she presents to a young child at Forest Hill. However, the program and the process are anything but simple. The 8th graders canvass and examine dozens of storybooks and complete hours of preliminary work, including involved analysis, to understand what makes an excellent children's book. The students make the commitment to excellence, understanding that what they produce will be a gift of words to a young child. Many of the final products of the 8th graders probably could be actually published; they are that good.

My 8th graders come to see their involvement in BookMates as their responsibility to make the world just a little bit better by sharing the joy of reading with a younger student from a background far less privileged than theirs. Moreover, each of my students also creates accompanying literacy-based activities to share with their BookMates on the day of the visit.

When the Rosa buses pull up to Forest Hill on that special spring day, the young students are waiting for the big kids. As the 8th graders enter the school, each is paired with a young child and off they go to share the most important gift of all – time. During the morning of the visit, each 8th grader is focused on his/her child, presenting the special gift of an original book as well as activities that highlight the joy that accompanies reading.

The interaction between the Rosa students and their young BookMates is truly heartwarming. The 8th graders demonstrate respect and caring toward their young charges who respond in kind to the big kids with whom they form a quick and endearing connection. When it is time to say goodbye, the big kids and the little kids are reluctant to part.

Back at Rosa, the comments from the 8th graders hit similar themes: the joy of giving not only a tangible gift of a book that took a great deal of effort to make, but the satisfaction of making a little person happy just by being present. Many of the Rosa 8th graders who have participated in the program say it is the best thing that they have done to date.

I am extremely grateful to Rhonda Shevrin, BookMates Director, for her support of my school's involvement with the BookMates program. Her daughter Carly was a part of our first BookMates group. BookMates has been a labor of love that has been a privilege and joy in which to participate.

BOOKMates

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