

Chapter 1

The Book Buddies Tutoring Framework

Book Buddies is a one-on-one tutoring framework for primary-grade struggling readers featuring individualized, structured lesson plans based on ongoing assessment. It can be employed in school and university clinic settings, by individual tutors, and by parents or caregivers who wish to give a child a boost. In a school or university clinic, lesson plans are written by experienced reading teachers, usually reading specialists, who train tutors and supervise them during each lesson. Tutors are primarily volunteers; university students; and school personnel, including teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals (teacher assistants). Tutoring sessions are scheduled for 45 minutes, generally twice a week. For those children facing serious reading challenges, including *dyslexia*, or English language learners who are learning to speak English at the same time they are learning to read, we recommend daily lessons. (We italicize glossary terms throughout the book where we think a definition could be helpful.)

In this chapter we offer an overview of the Book Buddies framework and address its history, along with supporting research.

Early Intervention and One-on-One Tutoring Programs



Children who struggle in learning to read in the primary grades continue to do poorly in subsequent grades if additional literacy interventions are not implemented immediately (Clay, 1985; Elliott & Grigorenko, 2014; Juel, 1988; Vellutino, Fletcher, Snowling, & Scanlon, 2004). In fact, research shows that children who are not reading on grade level by the end of third grade usually fail to meet grade-level expectations for reading skills in future years (Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1996; McNamara, Scissons, & Gutketch, 2011).

This grim reality has led to additional efforts to provide structured, research-based interventions to supplement classroom instruction. Many of these efforts have involved one-on-one tutoring largely because of the positive results obtained from longitudinal research (Vellutino & Scanlon, 2002; Vellutino et al., 1996; Vellutino, Scanlon, Small, & Fanuele, 2006) and the demonstrated effectiveness of one-on-one

instruction as part of a multi-tiered approach to early intervention (Wanzek et al., 2018; Wanzek & Vaughn, 2007). The instruction in these evidence-based interventions targets language components that are fundamental to reading development:

- *Phonological awareness*, or awareness of speech sounds, especially *phonemic awareness* (or *phoneme awareness*), which is the conscious awareness of individual *phonemes* within words. A phoneme is the smallest unit of speech in a language system (e.g., the /c/ in *cat* and the /sh/ in *ship*).
- Sound–symbol associations and the *alphabetic principle* (how alphabet letters map to speech sounds)
- Word identification and *decoding* strategies that build on the sound structure of spoken words and their spelling
- *Phonics* and spelling (letter patterns within and across *syllables*)
- *Morphology* (base words and affixes)
- *Semantics* (word meanings)
- *Syntax* (word order, parts of speech, grammar, and sentence mechanics)

These components align with the criteria spelled out in the International Dyslexia Association’s primer on Structured Literacy (Cowan, 2016). Importantly, in addition to teaching these elements directly, the evidence-based interventions provide ample opportunity for students to apply the skills while engaged in meaningful reading and writing activities.

While there is no evidence to support one specific structured intervention program over another (Shaywitz, Morris, & Shaywitz, 2008), there is evidence to suggest that interventions including these language components are superior to non-language-based interventions, such as those based on visual perception or motor skills (Aaron, 2012; Joshi, Treiman, Carreker, & Moats, 2008; Post & Carreker, 2002). Interventions that are structured explicitly to teach word identification and decoding strategies within a comprehensive, language-based curriculum benefit all students, especially those who struggle with reading, including those with dyslexia (Elliott & Grigorenko, 2014).

Different reading interventions package these language-based components within broader categories for ease of planning and implementation. The Book Buddies lesson plan is organized into four general categories: *rereading*, *word study*, *writing*, and *new reading*.

Book Buddies



Book Buddies addresses the language components in three lesson plans—for emergent, beginning, and transitional readers—that are arranged into four basic areas:

1. *Rereading* involves rereading previously read texts or reading easy text to increase confidence and fluency, to build a firm concept of word in text, and to solidify automatic word reading skills.
2. *Word study* includes phonological/phonemic awareness instruction, alphabet

and sound–symbol association, and phonics/spelling. Foundational language concepts like *phonology*, or the study of speech sounds, and the alphabetic principle are built upon and expanded as we teach children how the English spelling system represents various speech sounds in basic syllable structures, or spelling patterns like CVC (consonant–vowel–consonant) and CVCe (consonant–vowel–consonant plus silent *e*). Word study also includes instruction in morphology—for example, how meaning is represented through the spelling of *inflectional morphemes* such as the *s* for plural endings and the *-ed* for past tense.

3. *Writing* involves the application of foundational reading skills in writing along with instruction in syntax, including sentence structure, grammar, and mechanics. Writing can also enhance and extend reading comprehension.
4. *New reading* on the child’s reading level is introduced at the end of each lesson. Reading new material provides practice in the application of word recognition, decoding, and phonics knowledge. It also provides the context for instruction in semantics, including word meanings and word usage, as well as the building of concepts and vocabulary. Over time, new reading selections increase in difficulty, adhering to a systematic, logical progression.

Explicit, Systematic and Cumulative, and Diagnostic

Cowen (2016) states the teaching principles that guide Structured Literacy instruction as *explicit, systematic and cumulative, and diagnostic*. The Book Buddies framework fundamentally embraces all these principles.

Explicit

Specific instructional activities within each of the Book Buddies lesson plan components are designed to explicitly, or directly, teach the foundational concepts through continuous student–tutor interaction. These explicit activities include *multi-sensory* teaching. Children see written letters and words while simultaneously saying and writing them to enhance memory and learning. They also engage in manipulating phonemes and letters as they learn sound–symbol associations through direct instruction in phonics and spelling. Teachers have long recognized the power of “see, say, write” because learning to read and spell requires making associations between speech sounds and visually distinct letters. The Book Buddies lesson plan provides lots of opportunities for students to have, in the words of Margaret Byrd Rawson, their “writing hands, eyes, ears, and voices working together for the conscious organization and retention of their learning” (International Dyslexia Association, 2000).

Systematic and Cumulative

Book Buddies lessons are built around the logical progression of written language and presented in a systematic and cumulative fashion. The scope and sequence of the curriculum begin with the easiest, most foundational concepts and build to more difficult concepts, with each learned concept informing the next. This instructional procedure can only work if there is a diagnostic component to the intervention, as only careful

and ongoing assessment can indicate what students already know, understand, and can do—and what they need to learn next.

Diagnostic

At the start, the diagnostic component of Book Buddies allows tutors to decide on the best “point of entry,” based on assessed needs. Book Buddies offers three different lesson plans: the emergent, beginner, and transitional plans. While all three lesson plans are structured, they are adaptable to individual needs demonstrated by performance on the Book Buddies literacy assessment.

Table 1.1 shows how the Book Buddies lesson plans’ instructional components correspond to the Structured Literacy components described by the International Dyslexia Association’s primer “What Is Structured Literacy?” (Cowen, 2016).

As shown in Table 1.1, instruction of these language-based components, as appropriate for the reader, is fluid throughout the Book Buddies lesson plan. For example, syntax instruction happens in the reading, writing, and word study sections of the lesson plans; sound–symbol association instruction happens throughout the plans. This is because the parts of each plan work together as a structured whole.

A Note about Phonics Instruction

Research studies have consistently demonstrated the effectiveness of systematic phonics instruction for beginning readers (Brady, 2011; de Graaff, Bosman, Hasselman, & Verhoeven, 2009; National Reading Panel, 2000; Spear-Swerling, 2019). Superior results come from phonics programs with a planned sequence of instruction that moves logically from easier to more difficult skills, as presented in the Book Buddies framework. While there is no question about the superiority of systematic phonics instruction, there is still confusion (and controversy) at the granular level of sound–symbol instruction. Should systematic phonics instruction emphasize individual grapheme–phoneme correspondences only? Or should the instruction also include attention to larger phonological units such as *onsets* (beginning consonants, consonant blends, and consonant digraphs) and *rimes* (the spelling pattern constituted by the vowel and the letters that follow). In other words, should decoding of the word *top* be taught only as *t-o-p*, or is there a time and place for teaching it as *t-op*?

Some studies conducted since the publication of the National Reading Panel report (2000) have shown results in favor of phonics instruction that emphasizes individual grapheme–phoneme correspondences (e.g., Johnston, Watson, & Logan, 2009).

Others have reported outcomes showing that instruction of larger spelling chunks within the onset and rime is equally as effective (Christensen & Bowey, 2005; Walton & Walton, 2002). Missing from this debate is what we know about the development of phonological awareness and children’s parallel understanding of how the spelling of words represents the sounds of speech.

We know, for example, that very young children grasp larger units of speech sounds, such as syllables and rhymes, more easily than individual phonemes. This is why phonological awareness instruction for emergent readers typically progresses from becoming aware of larger speech sound units before progressing to smaller ones such as phonemes (Invernizzi & Tortorelli, 2013). And we know that before children even understand what a printed word is (as opposed to a syllable or phrase), and

TABLE 1.1 How Book Buddies Aligns with Structured Literacy Components

Structured Literacy components	Book Buddies components
<p>Phonology: The study of speech sounds. <i>Phonological awareness</i> includes the conscious awareness of the sound structures within spoken words, including syllables, rhyme, and phonemes (the smallest unit of speech sounds). <i>Phonemic awareness</i> is the ability to consciously identify individual phonemes.</p>	<p>Addressed in the alphabet, language play (emergent plan), and word study (all plans) sections of the Book Buddies lesson plans. Includes multisensory activities in rhyme, syllables, beginning sounds, and individual phonemes within words.</p>
<p>Sound–symbol association: Mapping individual phonemes to letters (graphemes) and vice versa. Includes the <i>alphabetic principle</i>: the ability to segment individual sounds within spoken words and match letters to each one while spelling.</p>	<p>Addressed in all areas of the Book Buddies lesson plans with a heavy emphasis on the application of the alphabetic principle in both reading and writing.</p>
<p>Syllables: Units of spoken language that consist of a vowel that may be preceded and/or followed by several consonants. Syllable awareness helps readers decode and spell unfamiliar words. There are predictable spelling patterns within syllables such as CV, CVC, CVCe, CVVC, and others, such as r-influenced patterns.</p>	<p>The scope and sequence of Book Buddies word study systematically addresses the spelling patterns of the most common syllable types, including CV, CVC, CVCe, CVVC, and r-influenced patterns. Syllable awareness is taught within the language play piece of the emergent lesson plan; the spelling of syllable types is taught in the word study sections of the beginning and transitional plans.</p>
<p>Morphology: The study of morphemes, the smallest unit of meaning in a language. Morphemes in written English include base words and affixes. Morphological knowledge helps learners read and understand the meaning of words.</p>	<p>Book Buddies addresses the spelling of singular and plural nouns (a form of inflectional morphology), words with multiple meanings, homophones, and the spelling of present and past tenses of irregular verbs. Morphology is taught in the word study sections of all the lesson plans and applied in the reading and writing sections.</p>
<p>Syntax: The structure of sentences including word order, parts of speech and grammar, and other mechanics of written language. Knowledge of syntax helps learners make sense of reading and writing.</p>	<p>Book Buddies addresses syntax through the reading and writing sections of all three lesson plans. Syntax is also addressed in the word study section of the lesson plans where students are asked to compare and contrast words by parts of speech and to construct sentences with word-bank words.</p>
<p>Semantics: Knowledge of the meaning underlying words and how words are related to each other and to overarching concepts.</p>	<p>Book Buddies addresses word meanings in the word study, writing, and new reading sections of all three lesson plans through such activities as concept sorts, vocabulary instruction, the study of homophones, and completion of various graphic organizers.</p>

where printed words begin and end, they have trouble segmenting the individual phonemes within words (Flanigan, 2007; Mesmer & Williams, 2015; Morris, Bloodgood, Lomax, & Perney, 2003). Berninger's Multiple Connections Model (Berninger, 2008; Berninger, Lester, Sohlberg, & Mateer, 1991) has demonstrated how children connect the phonological attributes of words, syllables, and phonemes to the representation of those attributes in spelling as their word knowledge grows in response to instruction.

So, while learning to read in an alphabetic writing system like English absolutely requires an awareness of individual phonemes and how these phonemes map onto let-

ters and letter combinations, there is also evidence to support the teaching of larger spelling chunks at certain points in development as well.

Book Buddies builds on this developmental perspective and offers three distinct lesson plans depending on children's degree of phonemic awareness, their attainment of the alphabetic principle, and their spelling development. The emergent reader plan focuses on foundational print skills, including how words are made up of syllables, onsets, and rimes, and how letters mark the beginning sounds of syllables and words. The beginning reader plan focuses on individual phonemes, letter-sound correspondences, *and* letter clusters within closed-syllable types (e.g., CVC and CVCC), and the transitional reader plan focuses on spelling patterns within additional syllable types (e.g., CVCe, CVVC, and *r*-influenced), base words, and simple inflectional morphology.

Book Buddies and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

A multi-tiered reading intervention framework involves evidence-based instruction based on assessment and regular progress monitoring of students, beginning with how well they succeed in regular education classrooms—the first tier in a multi-tiered approach. The approach may be referred to as a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS), response to intervention (RTI), or positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS; National Center on Intensive Intervention, 2020). The most common model offers three tiers, with instruction becoming more intensive at each level. Across tiers, groups become smaller and duration and frequency of instruction increases.

An individualized program using diagnostic assessment to plan instruction, Book Buddies takes a problem-solving approach to literacy instruction. It is flexible enough to support an expanded lesson plan and scheduling beyond 2 days a week. As such, the Book Buddies instructional process fits with the data-based individualization that guides a multi-tiered intervention framework, and it can be employed in both a second- and third-tier intervention. As a twice-weekly, 45-minute, one-on-one intervention, Book Buddies works ideally in the Tier 2 model but can be used at Tier 3 depending on who is doing the tutoring and how often. As a more intensive Tier 3 intervention Book Buddies would be increased to daily lessons. Here a professional teacher, usually a reading specialist or special educator, would likely act as tutor. The lesson plans can also be extended to include additional activities as suggested in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Book Buddies Background and Research



Volunteer and Paraprofessional Tutorials

Over the last few decades, given the growing number of children who have needed additional literacy support and the reality of budget constraints, many school districts have been forced to consider less expensive means of providing early intervention (Invernizzi, Rosemary, Juel, & Richards, 1997; Wasik, 1997). Programs using community volunteers as tutors, including university students and paraprofessionals or teacher assistants, have provided one source of help. There is a long history of research conducted on such programs, starting in the 1990s.

Studies reported significant gains for children in the Howard Street Program, in which the tutors were volunteers (Morris, Shaw, & Perney, 1990) and Next Steps, a program using teacher assistants to implement the Howard Street model (Brown, Morris, & Fields, 2005). Students tutored by teacher assistants in another program, Partners in Reading, also showed significant gains (Miller, 2003). Juel's cross-age tutoring program using university student athletes as tutors yielded positive results as well (Juel, 1991, 1996).

The Book Buddies Tutorial

Book Buddies was the first large-scale model to mobilize hundreds of community volunteers in an alternative one-on-one intervention. Book Buddies was developed as a joint effort by the Charlottesville City Schools, the University of Virginia, and the community of Charlottesville, and was adopted in 1992 as part of the school division's long-range plan that all children read independently by third grade (Invernizzi, Juel, & Rosemary, 1996).

The community volunteers teach from a lesson plan prepared by reading specialists and are trained and supported on-site throughout the year. Analyses of the program have revealed the growing efficacy of the program. Children with more than 40 sessions have significantly outperformed children with fewer than 40 tutoring sessions on most pre- and posttest gain scores, and on both outcome measures of text reading and word recognition. Effect sizes for gains in word recognition have been considerably higher than effect sizes reported for other tutorials using paraprofessionals and volunteers (Invernizzi et al., 1997).

The gains over the years have demonstrated that a tutorial featuring two 45-minute sessions of one-on-one tutoring per week for a minimum of 20 weeks, conducted by a trained community or student volunteer under the supervision of an experienced reading teacher, can be an effective and affordable alternative intervention for children at risk for reading failure.

Further Book Buddies Research

In 1997 Book Buddies was replicated in four schools in New York City's South Bronx. Volunteer tutors recruited by the Experience Corps were trained by University of Virginia researchers. In a year-long study conducted at one of the schools, Book Buddies students showed significant gains at midyear, significantly surpassing students in an untutored group on measures of alphabet knowledge, word reading, and passage reading. A second group, tutored during the second half of the year, showed dramatic gains at the end of the year. End-of-year testing on both groups indicated no distinguishable differences between the two groups (Meier & Invernizzi, 2001).

Nearly 10 years later, in 2006–2007, independent researchers at Washington University in St. Louis and Mathematica Policy Research in Princeton conducted a study of the effectiveness of Experience Corps' New York City Book Buddies model. By this time the program had spread to 16 elementary schools in four boroughs. First and second graders in six of those schools became the basis of the study. Nearly all the students were minorities, and 15% were English language learners. Study results showed Book Buddies students scored significantly higher on the posttest measures than the control group did (Gattis et al., 2010).

Keys to Success for Book Buddies Tutorials

One key to the successful efforts using paraprofessionals, university students, and volunteers is likely the training and close supervision given to the tutors. In his analysis of five studies of one-on-one tutoring programs using noncertified tutors, Morris (2006) found the programs' effectiveness to depend largely on the "amount and quality of guidance" from the supervisor (p. 351). In all the programs referenced here, the tutors were trained and carefully supervised, with the volunteers in both Howard Street and Book Buddies supervised on-site during every lesson. Juel's tutors were students in her reading course.

Wasik (1998), in her review of effective volunteer tutoring programs, cites the importance of training and supervising tutors whose lesson plans are prepared by knowledgeable reading teachers. Wasik also stresses the critical importance of a structured lesson plan that includes rereading familiar material to build fluency; word analysis in both isolation and context; writing; and reading a new, slightly more difficult text. These elements are all essential components of the three Book Buddies lesson plans (found in Appendices A.1, A.2, and A.3).

A volunteer tutorial offers one model of an affordable, alternative form of early intervention that can help meet the needs of struggling readers. Book Buddies started as such and has proven highly effective. But the framework is not limited to school-based volunteer and paraprofessional tutorials. It is also appropriate in university clinic settings, for tutoring by trained individual tutors outside schools, and at home by parents and caregivers.

In whichever setting Book Buddies is employed, a key requirement is a point person, or *coordinator*, who is knowledgeable about reading instruction and can oversee organizational and instructional aspects of the tutorial. Another key requirement is collaboration between the people who interact with the child to be tutored. Teachers should collaborate with other teachers, the tutor, and parents. University clinic providers should collaborate with teachers, the tutor, and parents. Parents should collaborate with teachers and, if appropriate, university clinic providers.

In the next chapter we get into the nuts and bolts with a how-to guide for building a Book Buddies tutoring program.