

Students tutoring other students yields improved reading scores

by Lisa Cullen



Eighth-grader Misha McKay tutors Shayla Colon, 6, on reading and comprehension as part of the successful R.E.A.D program at Santa Maria School. – PHOTO BY ANNA FOSTER/JM

Reading recently became easier and more enjoyable for younger students at Santa Maria School thanks to the R.E.A.D. program, which helps youngsters improve their readings skills.

The Reading Excellence And Discovery (R.E.A.D.) Program

was introduced at the Zerega school several years ago, and has improved the literacy skills of the younger students involved in the program.

"Thanks to a Patron Program, children in kindergarten through second grade have a chance to practice their reading fluency and comprehension skills outside of the classroom," explained Mark Sicari, a public interest fellow at Santa Maria. The R.E.A.D. program gives literacy-troubled students in kindergarten through second grade the opportunity to be tutored by trained seventh and eighth grade students.

R.E.A.D. resumed at Santa Maria, located at 1510 Zerega Avenue, in early January, when interested students, both tutors and tutees, volunteered to participate in the program. Kindergarteners to second graders were tested at the beginning of the academic year to determine if they needed the extra help with their reading skills. Students who qualified to participate were chosen based on those who showed they would benefit most from the program. "What is great about the R.E.A.D. program is that it gives the students the positive reinforcement they need to feel sure about themselves as readers," said first grade teacher Claude Trouillot.

The students who qualified were given the option of entering the program, as it is not a requirement of the school.

The tutoring positions were allocated in a similar fashion, with the older students volunteering to be tested for qualification. The opportunity was offered to all seventh and eighth graders, and interested students completed the necessary program testing for consideration. Tutors were selected based on their academic performance, test scores, and other exemplary factors. READ Foundation personnel trained the qualifying students, who were then able to tutor the younger students after completion of the training.

"I like the feeling I get when my reading buddy is able to read a hard sentence or words that used to give him trouble," commented an eighth grade tutor about his experience with tutoring in the R.E.A.D. program. "It makes me feel proud of him and of myself."

The tutors were partnered with younger students in need of help with their reading, meeting with them twice a week after school to practice and develop their literacy skills.

"We have found this program to be very excellent," Sicari said. "The improvements to the students' reading are noticeable well into their third and fourth year of schooling."

Struggling students who have participated in the program in previous years have demonstrated significant improvement in their reading and comprehension skills, with parents and teachers alike testifying to the positive impact of the R.E.A.D. program at Santa Maria. "It is truly wonderful to see this program at work," said Trouillot.

Eighth-grader Misha McKay tutors Shayla Colon, 6, on reading and comprehension as part of the successful R.E.A.D program at Santa Maria School. – PHOTO BY ANNA FOSTER/JM

<http://www.bxtimes.com/>