



Elementary students become reading tutors for younger students

Renton's new Reading Buddies program gives fourth- and fifth-graders the chance to use reading

September 23, 2009— More than 1,000 fourth- and fifth-graders in Renton schools are learning to be tutors and good role models through a new program called Reading Buddies.

The older elementary students will work with second-graders in weekly one-on-one reading sessions, as well as model that reading is important, but it's also fun.

The program, which was conceived and funded by Bob Bridge, president of Bob Bridge Toyota | Scion, Renton, aims to support the great work by Renton teachers who have seen reading scores increase exponentially over the past several years.

The program evolved through conversations between Bridge and Renton Schools Superintendent Dr. Mary Alice Heuschel, and their commitment to early childhood learning. Bridge is committed to public education, and understands that when children learn to read at a young age, they have a greater opportunity for success.

Bridge personally paid \$8,000 for more than 650 books that students will use in school libraries and other areas of schools as part of the Reading Buddies program.

"The work these teachers are doing is phenomenal. This program is just a small way I can assist with their great work to help children learn."

—Bob Bridge, president, Bob Bridge Toyota | Scion, Renton



Program launched with a bang

Fourth- and fifth-graders today attended a special kick-off celebration for the program at the [Family Fun Center](#) in Tukwila, where they learned about their responsibilities to be tutors and ambassadors of education. KING 5 TV news anchor Jean Enersen was the guest speaker. Students were also treated to a free morning of fun, with access to rides, games, putt-putt and more. Family Fun Center owner Scott Huish and general manager Richard Yee donated the Center for the kick-off and the wrap-up celebration. Both groups of students—tutors and tutees—will return to the Fun Center at the end of the school year to celebrate the success of the program.

“It’s kind of exciting to be able to help second-graders read, and to be a role model.”

*—Arionna Killpatrick, 5th-grade tutor,
Renton Park Elementary School*

Bridge has worked with Superintendent Heuschel on other education programs. Last year, Bridge personally funded an online tutoring program to help high school students do better in algebra. In 2007, Bridge visited every school in the district and wrote personal checks for staff to use for teacher-appreciation celebrations.

Results of Renton’s sustained, committed approach to reading programs (Improvements on 2009 Washington Assessment of Student Learning)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary School (Grades 3–5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ English Language Learners (students whose family’s first language is other than English) met proficiency goals in both Reading and Math | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hispanic students improved 3.1% ○ Special Education students improved 1.7% ○ Low income students improved 2% |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle School (Grades 6–8) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All students improved 4% ○ Asian/Pacific Island students improved 4.6% ○ Black students improved 5.3% ○ Hispanic students improved 6.1% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Native American students improved 2.1% ○ White students improved 2.3% ○ ELL students improved 6.6% ○ Special Education improved 3.6% ○ Low income students improved 5.8% |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High School (9-12) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 10th grade students improved 4% ○ Black 10th grade students improved 4.9% ○ Hispanic 10th grade students improved 12.2% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ White 10th grade students improved 3% ○ ELL 10th grade students improved 8.2% ○ Special Education 10th grade students improved 11.2% ○ Low income 10th grade students improved 3.8% |