

READING BUDDIES IN ACTION

Weddy Youn and Joseph Cooke

Transcript

WEDDY: Hi. My name is Weddy Youn, I've been teaching for five years.

JOSEPH: My name is Joseph Cooke, and I have been teaching for eleven years.

WEDDY: The way the MARTHA SPEAKS Reading Buddies Program worked is that Mr. Cooke's fourth-grade students came down to my kindergarten class and worked with my kindergarten students. We had eight sessions of the MARTHA SPEAKS Reading Buddies Program.

Myself and Mr. Cook would introduce the four words that we were going to be listening for throughout the day, that they'd hear in the video clip, or in one of the stories that go along with the video. And once they heard those words, afterwards they'd do a little journal activity or little arts and crafts activities to work with the four vocabulary words.

JOSEPH: It gave the fourth graders the opportunity to be more of a facilitator and more responsible for teaching younger kids.

WEDDY: I saw my kids' confidence start to grow. They would raise their hands and answer questions more and the fourth graders just spoke with them and told them it's okay if you get it wrong.

JOSEPH: One of the unexpected benefits that I got from the fourth grade students was that they enjoyed the collaboration with the kindergartners and they also got a sense of what teachers actually go through when they're teaching students, how to keep students engaged and on task. I had a couple of students that also said that they might grow up to become a teacher because of doing this program.

WEDDY: I feel as though my kindergarten students looked at the fourth graders as role models. They would say, I talked to a fourth grader today, or they helped me learn a new word, and that always made me smile. It still does now.

JOSEPH: And it also helped my students who had behavioral problems to behave better in class. It also gave them more confidence in their own reading abilities.

WEDDY: My students they still come to me and say, the first word we learned was stupendous, I'm stupendous. So they keep on saying stupendous and they use it correctly too so I am proud of that, that they're not just saying stupendous for anything.

And my students also use fantasy and reality. I remember that episode where Martha was a superhero dog. So they knew that fantasy meant make-believe and reality meant something real.

JOSEPH: The students really did use the vocabulary words when they were writing or when they were speaking.

Both the fourth graders and the kindergarten students were both assessed, given a reading assessment, prior to starting the program. I had fourth-grade students that were above the fourth-grade level that were matched with students that were way below in the kindergarten level. And then we took fourth-grade students that were not very strong readers and put them with a high reader that was in kindergarten so it could sort of, they could balance and feed of each other.

I saw my students learn to use context clues better. It helped them to recognize unknown words in the story or whatever they were reading and then go back and read the sentence to help them figure the word out. And that was one of the problems that they were having prior to doing the program. So the repetition of the vocabulary really helped to reinforce those new vocabulary words.

Not only are they watching a TV clip but they're also reading and they're active with the students in the classroom.

WEDDY: And it's also active learning. Like Joe said, it's not just the teacher in front of the classroom. The way they use the vocabulary words, the way the sessions were broken down for you, I just really, really enjoyed it. It was straightforward. It kind of just flowed within our lessons. The parents were also happy that it removed the kids from the regular cartoon shows they would usually watch.

JOSEPH: I highly recommend the program because it really did give both the fourth graders and the kindergartners a greater sense of confidence in their reading abilities.

