

## Literacy Buddy Program FAQs

**How much time do you devote to this program on a monthly basis?** *3 hours/day. This year there are 1600 children and 1600 buddies in the program. This includes working with 107 teachers from 52 facilities. I suggest you start small the first year.*

**Were you hired specifically for this position and how is the position funded?** *A staff member and volunteers started the program but it became apparent within the first year additional staff would be required. The first year my position was funded by a grant. Now it is paid with School Readiness quality dollars, a .37 FTE position.*

**How much of a budget do you keep for the children who are not mailed a book?** *Each year Barnes and Noble sponsors a bookfair/fundraiser for us. We made \$2500 for this one day event and received about 300 paperback books this year for young children which I use if a child does not receive a book.*

**How do you know if the children do not receive their book?** *There are deadlines for the volunteers to send their books and letters. Teachers notify me if a child hasn't received a book. I try to contact (email or phone) the buddy as a reminder. Within a week or two the teacher notifies me if the child still hasn't received a book and I send one from those donated and the \$2500 defrays the postage.*

**Do you contact the Volunteers to remind them that it is time to send the book?** *Just as needed. I set the deadline dates around holidays so they have a date to remember. Next year our schools start earlier so Halloween will be the first deadline, Valentine's Day the second, and April 15 the third. I explain, "Considering fairness to all children, if you would like to send extra books or holiday gifts, please send them to the teacher to share with the entire class." The children/school send a thank you and most buddies send their next book and letter right after receiving that. We try to spread it out over the year so the buddies can watch the children's progress.*

**Who conducts the training for the participants?** *I conduct the training for the teachers. We require the teachers to attend the workshop/training before the beginning of the year. It is essential that they understand the expectations of the program, including the need for good recordkeeping, and the importance of the children writing each time to their buddy. This class gives teachers the opportunity to share their experiences with the Literacy Buddy Program. Teachers learn what works and what doesn't from each other. I provide them with tip sheets for parents in English and Spanish on what they can do to help their child become a successful reader ([www.ColorinColorado.org](http://www.ColorinColorado.org)).*

**How do you recruit volunteers?** *Our first year, we ran articles in local papers and appeared on local morning talk show on TV and radio. This gave us a huge boost to begin. Now, I make many presentations to service organizations, book clubs, church groups, etc. to recruit volunteers. At that time, I show samples of the children's writing and explain that developmentally, they start with pictures and scribbles and give examples of the progression. Many of the volunteers are retired educators and become great mentors. Several volunteer in their buddy's school. As a community service project, businesses ask their employees to become a Literacy Buddy. They may adopt a classroom of 10-15 students. Instead of mailing the books and letters, a contact for the business collects the letters and books from the*

*employees and delivers them. A convenient time is set up with the school first. Several of these organizations and businesses have made monetary donations to the Literacy Buddy Program. High school and college students make good literacy buddies. They can earn community service hours for their participation. Each year we also invite our current buddies to continue. A new application is mailed with a thank you letter each May.*

**How do you get parents involved?** *It is very important to notify parents that their child is participating in the Literacy Buddy Program. One mother actually thought her child had taken a book from his teacher and she tried to return it. The Literacy Buddy Program provides teachers with a genuine purpose to inform parents of the importance of speaking and reading aloud to their child. Some schools have held a Literacy Buddy Night where parents are invited to learn more about how they can become partners in their child's education. The teachers model strategies for reading aloud, the public library distributes information about their free programs, and children perform for their parents.*

**What are some ways to eliminate the cost of postage?** *Literacy Buddy applications can be downloaded from the ELC website, a link to this website can be added to other community organizations' sites such as the public library, United Way, etc. Buddies may choose to deliver their books, but they should be in a mailing envelope. The cost of mailing the thank you notes is the school's responsibility. When a business or organization adopts a whole class or school, the thank you notes can be delivered or mailed to one person for distribution.*

**How do you guarantee the identities of the children are secure?** *We use first names and last initials only. The books are sent to the child at the center in care of the teacher. Photos are not encouraged, nor are visits to the child at the center.*

**The Literacy Buddy Program is a means to connect schools, parents, and community to help children become successful in school. It's a way to showcase and garner support for good school readiness programs.**