



OASIS Intergenerational Tutoring An Introduction for Educators

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Intergenerational Tutoring

A dynamic approach to help kids read better

The OASIS Intergenerational Tutoring Program promotes literacy with a proven approach that helps high-need children build the skills they need to read at grade level.

Elementary school teachers help identify children in grades K-4 who need help with reading and language skills. With parental consent, trained OASIS tutors are paired with the children. The volunteers work one-on-one with their students each week throughout the school year as tutors, mentors and friends.

Keys to success

Since 1989, OASIS tutors have helped more than 333,000 children nationwide improve their reading skills, academic performance and attitudes about learning. Several components contribute to the program's success:

- **Building strong relationships:** The year-long, one-on-one relationship is a key component. It sets OASIS Tutoring apart from other mentoring programs, allowing the tutor to tailor sessions that address the interests and needs of each child.
- **A specially designed curriculum:** The OASIS six-step approach to literacy was developed by educators specifically for OASIS Tutoring. It includes reading and language activities that spark a child's interest and create an environment where students set goals they can achieve.
- **In-depth training:** Tutors complete 12 hours of



"If you want to have one of the best days of your life, come help a child learn to read."

Esther Taylor, Intergenerational Tutor

training in the OASIS six-step approach before they begin working with students.

- **Ongoing support:** OASIS and the school districts provide tutors with additional training, mentoring and networking opportunities throughout the school year.

The value of meeting more frequently

Research by Washington University in St. Louis shows that children who work with a reading tutor several times a week have better outcomes on standardized reading tests.

In response to this research, OASIS has enhanced the tutoring program with a multi-session model that provides tutoring support for children two or three times each week.

Linking generations, changing lives

A child who struggles with reading is more likely to struggle in every other subject and to face academic and social challenges in school and life. OASIS Tutoring taps the potential of volunteers who have the



“My student went up six levels in reading. He was excited, but I can’t describe how great I felt!”

time, patience and life experience to make a profound difference in the lives of these children.

Tutors participate in comprehensive training where they learn activities and techniques to help children learn. Activities encompass the whole range of communication skills—listening, talking, reading and writing—all necessary to develop language and build reading skill. Through ongoing educational workshops, tutors receive support, gather new ideas, solve problems and share experiences. Tutors often say that they get more from tutoring than they give, and research confirms the benefits for the volunteers. Studies over the past decade demonstrate that older adults who volunteer show greater improvement in both physical and mental health than their counterparts who do not volunteer.

Response from Educators

OASIS Tutoring helps schools meet student needs at a time when financial pressures are on the rise and many

find it necessary to cut funding for special staff and programs. Responses from teachers and principals are consistently positive, noting the energy, dedication and capabilities the tutors demonstrate when working with students.

In the 2011 annual evaluation, teachers reported strong outcomes for their students who were tutored:

- 95% reported improved confidence and self-esteem
- 93% reported improved attitude toward language arts
- 90% reported improved academic performance

OASIS Intergenerational Tutoring operates in more than 900 schools in 24 cities across the U.S. The program has been honored with numerous national, state and local awards for its success in linking struggling students with trained volunteers who are eager to share their love of reading.

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OASIS is a national non-profit organization that promotes successful aging through lifelong learning, health programs and volunteer engagement. The OASIS vision is to see that adults age 50-plus across the country have opportunities to pursue vibrant, healthy, productive and meaningful lives. Founded in 1982, OASIS serves more than 370,000 adults through partnerships in 40 cities. The OASIS Institute in St. Louis is the national headquarters.



Philosophy and Goals

Philosophy

The purpose of the OASIS Intergenerational Tutoring Program is to strengthen communities by building partnerships with school districts to provide assistance for children who struggle with reading and learning. OASIS tutors work with children in kindergarten through fourth grade to help foster a positive self-image and motivation to read and communicate.

Tutors do not view themselves as teachers but as mentors to the young children. The literacy activities used in this program draw from the tutor's and the child's interests and experiences to develop language skills. The program is not designed for tutors to help with classwork, but rather to be a motivating factor for reading and language improvement.

The instructional training received by each tutor ensures a quality experience for each student. The goal is that children view themselves more positively as a result of the tutoring experience and that the volunteers feel that they have made a significant contribution to the lives of the children they tutor.

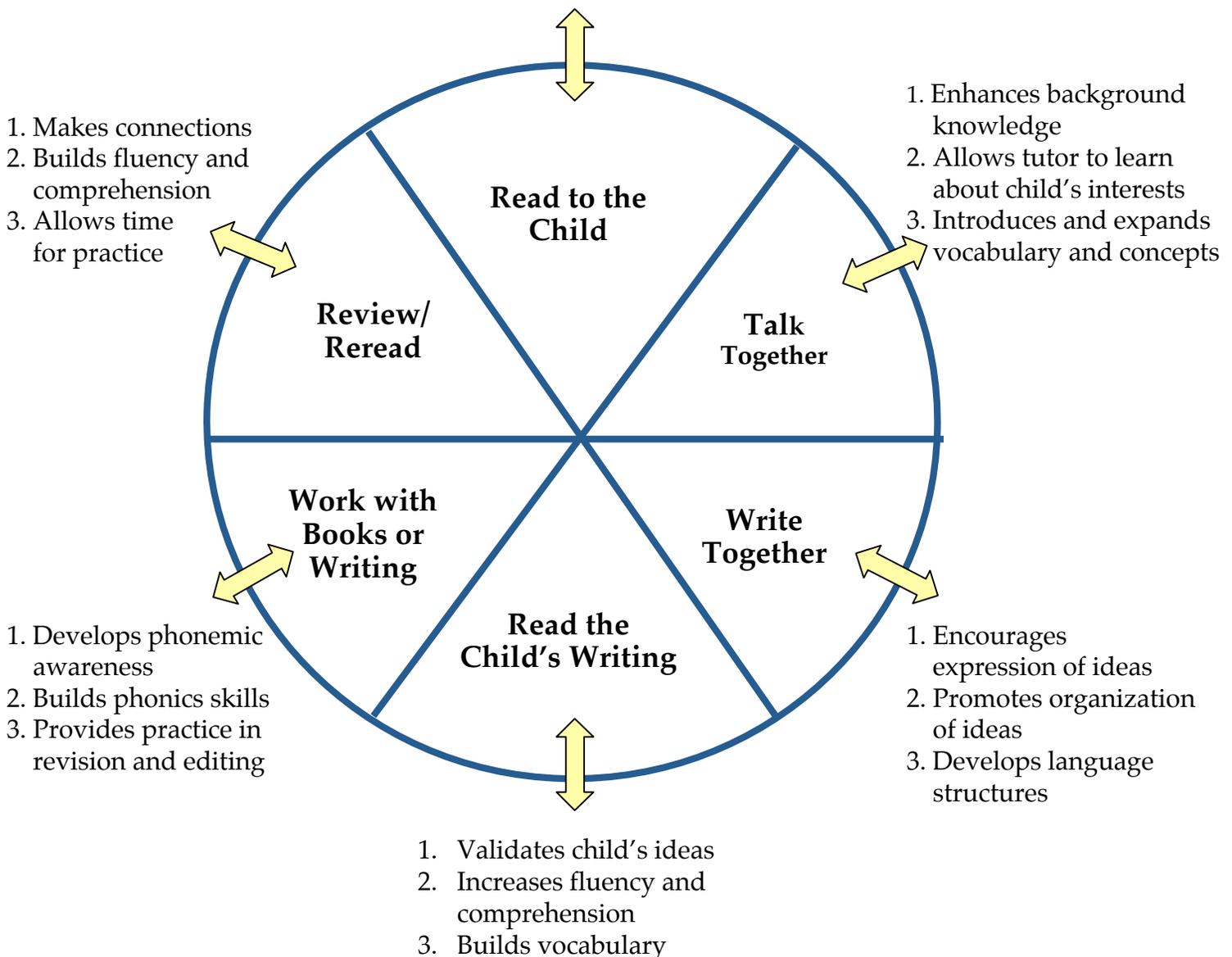
Goals of the Program

- To promote motivation, success and enjoyment of reading, writing and oral communication in kindergarten through fourth grade children
- To help children develop language, build vocabulary and expand background knowledge
- To increase confidence and self-esteem in participating students
- To offer meaningful volunteer opportunities for older adults
- To strengthen ties between generations by providing opportunities for older adults and young children to develop friendships, understanding and trust



How OASIS Tutoring Supports Reading Achievement

1. Builds interest and motivation
2. Models language, oral expression and fluency
3. Encourages response to text



Improvement in Reading Scores of Students Working with OASIS Tutors

**A Study of Students' Reading Achievement
Judith Kamper, Ed.D.
March, 2006**

Summary

Elementary school students who work with OASIS tutors are making progress in their reading achievement, according to a study of students' test scores. The study reviewed pre- and post-test reading scores of 98 students who worked with an OASIS tutor during the 2004-05 school year. Key findings:

- 95 percent of students working with OASIS tutors showed improvement in reading achievement
- 65 percent of the students increased their scores by one year, a rate that is considered accelerated beyond the normal classroom experience
- 27 percent of the students achieved scores that would be considered above the 50th percentile nationally

All of these students were considered to be struggling readers or at-risk students. Often children who experience difficulty in reading are unable to improve their scores by one year, so these improvements can be considered significant.

Background on the OASIS Intergenerational Tutoring Program

The OASIS Intergenerational Tutoring Program pairs volunteers age 50+ with children in grades K-4 who have underdeveloped reading skills. The adults work one-on-one with the students once a week throughout the school year using a curriculum designed to build reading and language skills. OASIS works with school districts to recruit tutors and provides the curriculum and materials for the program.

School district staff train and place the tutors with children who need support. When a teacher identifies a child who is having difficulty reading, OASIS tutoring is often one of the first interventions used by school districts to provide additional support.

Background on OASIS Intergenerational Tutoring, continued

Tutors participate in an in-depth training program where they learn activities, techniques and strategies to help children learn to read. Activities emphasize the range of communication skills – listening, talking, reading and writing – necessary to develop language and build reading skill. Training includes instruction in student motivation and ways to build self-esteem and confidence.

The OASIS tutoring program began in 1989 and operates in 21 cities and more than 100 school districts. Approximately 5,000 tutors participate each year. In 2005 they provided individual help for more than 11,500 students. The program is an important civic engagement opportunity for mature adults who want to contribute their time and experience to help children succeed.

Research Method

The study was conducted in three school districts in St. Louis County, MO, using pre- and post-test scores from 2004 and 2005. Scores for 173 students were included in the study. Of these, 98 of the students worked with OASIS tutors and 75 students were not assigned to OASIS tutors. All of the students whose scores were reviewed were considered to be struggling or at-risk. Approximately 36% of the students in the study were African American, 46% were Caucasian and the remainder were of different ethnicities. Students working with OASIS tutors were identified at the beginning of the school year as individuals who would benefit from spending time working individually with a tutor on language arts related activities.

The progress of the students was measured using the assessments regularly administered in the district. The assessment instruments used were the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, the STAR and the Rigby Benchmark Assessment.

Results

Reading achievement scores of 95 percent of the students working with OASIS tutors showed improvement. Based on Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) scores, 65 percent of the students' increased their scores by one year or more, a rate of progress that is considered accelerated beyond the normal classroom experience. In addition, 27 percent of students had post-test scores above the 50th percentile nationally.

Test results varied by grade level and district. Test results from one district showed second grade students with OASIS tutors making slight gains over those without OASIS tutors. In another district, the average gain of all third grade students with OASIS tutors was greater than the gain of those without OASIS tutors.

Conclusion

OASIS tutors are providing valuable support for struggling students. Test scores demonstrate that 95 percent of students who worked with an OASIS tutor improved their reading skill. Almost two-thirds of the students progressed at a rate that is considered accelerated beyond the normal classroom experience.

Because many other factors can have an impact on students' achievement, OASIS tutoring cannot be considered the causal factor in this progress, but it is certainly a contributory factor. Children who are having trouble with reading often are unable to make a whole year's progress within a school year, so the increases reported in this study can be considered significant.

About the Author

Judith Kamper, Ed.D. is an educator with expertise in educational research, educational administration, early childhood and elementary education, mental retardation, learning disabilities and behavior disorders.

Dr. Kamper holds a Doctor of Education degree in Educational Administration from St. Louis University where she completed her dissertation on "Characteristics of Effective Teacher Mentors." She holds a Master of Arts in Communication Disorders from St. Louis University and a Bachelor of Arts in Christian Education from Elmhurst College.

Her professional experiences include curriculum director and assistant principal for the Kirkwood, MO school district, conducting teaching workshops and coaching elementary grade teachers for the Project Construct National Center in Columbia, MO, area coordinator and special education teacher for the Special School District in St. Louis County and primary grade teacher in the St. Louis Public Schools. She is currently Adjunct Instructor in the School of Education at Maryville University in St. Louis.



Research Behind the OASIS Intergenerational Tutoring Program

Professionally developed over two decades ago, the OASIS Intergenerational Tutoring curriculum was created and grounded in the most progressive theory of its day—the Language Experience Approach (Allen, 1976). The methods, strategies and materials included in the curriculum have evolved over time and reflect many contemporary practices.

Recent reviews of best practices in reading instruction, along with recommended literacy development concepts and strategies that are outlined in consensus documents (Armbruster, Lehr & Osborn, 2001; National Reading Panel, 2000; Snow, Burns & Giffen, 1999), are prevalent in the present-day OASIS tutoring curriculum.

OASIS tutors participate in an in-depth training program where they learn activities, techniques and strategies to help children learn to read. In alignment with the goals of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation, these methods are based on sound research and designed to complement and support most reading programs in use in schools today. The emphasis for these activities is based on the whole range of communication skills—listening, talking, reading and writing—all necessary to develop language, expand background knowledge and build reading skill.

In addition, training includes instruction in student motivation and communication and ways tutors can draw on their own knowledge and experience to enrich the lives of their students. Creating a capsule of success at each meeting, tutors have an opportunity to build the children's self-esteem and confidence, as well as their reading skill. The tutors receive ongoing training from highly qualified presenters and district staff through monthly meetings where they can share experiences, solve problems, gather new ideas, leading-edge strategies and materials and build relationships with each other.

The bibliography listed on the following pages provides many of the resources that have informed us over the years to develop the curriculum and have helped us make pertinent adaptations to keep the curriculum current and relevant to the teaching of reading in today's educational environment.

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National Statistics: 2010 - 2011

Principal Responses

Principals who felt that OASIS tutors added a positive element to their schools:	100%
Schools that plan to participate in the program next year:	100%

Teacher Responses

Teachers who reported improved confidence and self-esteem in their students who were tutored:	95%
Teachers who reported improved attitude toward language arts in their students who were tutored:	93%
Teachers who reported improved academic performance by their students who were tutored:	90%
Teachers who reported improved classroom participation by their students who were tutored:	85%
Teachers who reported improved attendance for their students who were tutored:	62%

Tutor Responses

Tutors who feel volunteering in the program has added a positive element to their lives:	100%
Tutors who plan to continue the program next year:	95%
Tutors who perceived positive changes in their students:	99%

These statistics were compiled from the 3,876 responses we received from participants in the Intergenerational Tutoring Program to our annual Evaluation Survey. The number in each category breaks down as follows:

Principals = 324 Teachers = 861 Tutors = 2,092 Site Coordinators = 67

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Roles and Responsibilities of OASIS and the School District

OASIS will provide curriculum and support for the program, including:

- Training for the School District Coordinator and other staff, provided by the OASIS National Manager.
- Materials to implement the program, including a training DVD, School District Coordinator's training manual, curriculum guides and tutor kits (including tutor handbooks, name badges, bags, age appropriate books and story journals).
- Materials to recruit volunteer tutors from the community.
- Ongoing support and materials from the OASIS National Manager.

The School District will provide local coordination of the program to include the following responsibilities:

- Identify a School District Coordinator.
- Identify a Building Representative for each participating school.
- Contact principals and teachers to introduce the program and provide materials and information to facilitate the student selection process (materials provided by OASIS).
- Recruit volunteers through school district communication channels.
- Conduct an in-depth training for new tutors twice each year.
- Hold monthly tutor meetings to reinforce skills, answer questions and discuss new ideas.
- Assist in conducting the annual evaluation survey and provide statistical summaries twice each year, in the fall and the spring.



Sample Session Plan

Session Plan OASIS Intergenerational Tutoring Program Talk Together -- Write Together -- Read Together

- Talk about an activity you are sharing
- Write together
- Read the student's writing
- Work with the student's writing
- Review journal writings and vocabulary words
- Read a book to your student

1. Read *Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Seuss.
2. Talk about the story. Ask your student to tell you about a time she may have eaten something that she thought she wouldn't like at first.
3. Write about your student's experience.
4. Read her writing together; have her read it to you.
5. Let her draw a picture to illustrate her writing. Label the parts of the picture with post-it notes. Make five word cards from these labels.
6. Review last week's writing, or review the words in her "Words I'm Learning" list.