

## BRIDGING LITERACY GAPS THROUGH PEER MENTORING IN SCHOOLS

*by:*

**Jonas R. Arellano**

*Teacher I, Tucop Integrated School*

Reading is one of the most essential skills a student must develop in their early academic years. However, many lower-grade students still struggle with fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. One emerging practice in schools is the use of higher-grade peers as reading buddies or mentors. This approach encourages collaboration and fosters both academic growth and social-emotional development.

Higher-grade students can serve as reading buddies or tutors who help younger learners practice decoding words, improve fluency, and build comprehension through shared reading activities. This strategy creates a positive and safe space for learning, as the presence of peers often reduces anxiety and encourages participation. According to Atamosa & Dioso (2024) the implementation of peer tutoring has proven to significantly improve academic performance and foster a more engaging and collaborative learning environment.

In schools where reading buddy programs are implemented, both tutors and tutees benefit. Younger students improve their oral reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, while older students develop leadership, responsibility, and empathy. Some studies reported significant improvement in reading performance among lower-grade students who participated in a peer reading program. Older students also became more confident and engaged in their roles as mentors.

To implement this approach effectively, schools must provide training and guidance to peer mentors. Teachers should model how to give feedback, assist with pronunciation, ask comprehension questions, and encourage positive behavior. Scheduling regular sessions and matching pairs thoughtfully are key to success. Though challenges such as inconsistent attendance or mismatched pairs may occur, these can be addressed through teacher supervision and proper planning.

Using higher-grade students to support the reading development of younger learners is a practical and impactful approach. It not only improves reading skills but also strengthens relationships, encourages collaboration, and builds a supportive learning environment. With structured planning and teacher guidance, peer-assisted reading can become a sustainable component of a school's literacy program, fostering both academic growth and character development among students.

#### References:

Atamoso, M. S., & Dioso, E. D. (2024). "Peer Tutoring Approach and Academic

Performance of Pupils: An Experimental Study." *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology* 9, no. 7 (2024): p. 2089. Retrieved from: <https://www.ijisrt.com/assets/upload/files/IJISRT24JUL1085.pdf>