



**SPREAD  
THE WORD  
NEVADA**

**BOOKS & BUDDIES  
VOLUNTEER  
MENTOR  
GUIDEBOOK**

5373 Arville Street  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89118  
P: 702.564.7809  
E: [info@spreadthewordnevada.org](mailto:info@spreadthewordnevada.org)  
[SpreadtheWordNevada.org](http://SpreadtheWordNevada.org)

# WELCOME

Dear Volunteer Mentor,

We are delighted to welcome you to the Books & Buddies program! Your commitment to sharing the joy of reading with children is truly inspiring, and we are excited to have you join our community of mentors.

This Volunteer Mentor Guidebook has been prepared to support you in your role. While much of the information was introduced during orientation, we encourage you to read through the entire booklet to gain a full understanding of your responsibilities and the impact you will make. Inside, you will find details about our program as well as helpful recommendations for reading with children. By dedicating just one hour each week, you are opening doors to imagination, confidence, and lifelong learning. The difference you make in a child's life through reading is remarkable, and we are grateful for your willingness to give your time and energy to this mission.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please reach out to us or your site facilitator at any time. We are here to support you every step of the way. Thank you again for your dedication to making a difference—one book at a time.

With appreciation,  
The Books & Buddies Team

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# ABOUT BOOKS & BUDDIES



Books and Buddies is a multi-generational reading and mentoring program in which volunteer mentors work one-on-one with elementary students to help support literacy skills and build confidence. Mentors play a crucial role in providing the much-needed individualized attention that is not always consistently available to students.

## **Our goals are to:**

1. Provide equity to children in underserved communities
2. Support children's fundamental literacy skills
3. Increase children's self-esteem with individualized attention from their mentors on a weekly basis
4. Provide a well-rounded, quality volunteer experience for community volunteers
5. Bring support and resources to elementary schools
6. Generate a love of reading and books

# PROGRAM IMPACT



## Through Books & Buddies, students:

- 📖 Learn that reading is fun and become excited about books
- 📖 Are given the opportunity to learn about the world beyond their local experiences
- 📖 Expand their thinking and imagination
- 📖 Improve their reading fluency, listening and vocabulary skills
- 📖 Are encouraged to think "outside the box"
- 📖 Develop self-confidence because of the time and attention they receive from their mentor

## Through Books & Buddies, volunteer mentors:

- 📖 Form meaningful and rewarding relationships with students, fellow mentors and STWN staff
- 📖 Make a difference in the community through a well-supported and robust program
- 📖 Create a connection between schools and the community
- 📖 Learn more about the community they live in and the varying needs of the other people in the community



# BOOKS & BUDDIES CENTERS








Books & Buddies Mentor Centers are in 6 partnered Clark County schools.

There is a dedicated room at each school filled with books, literacy activities, and other materials.

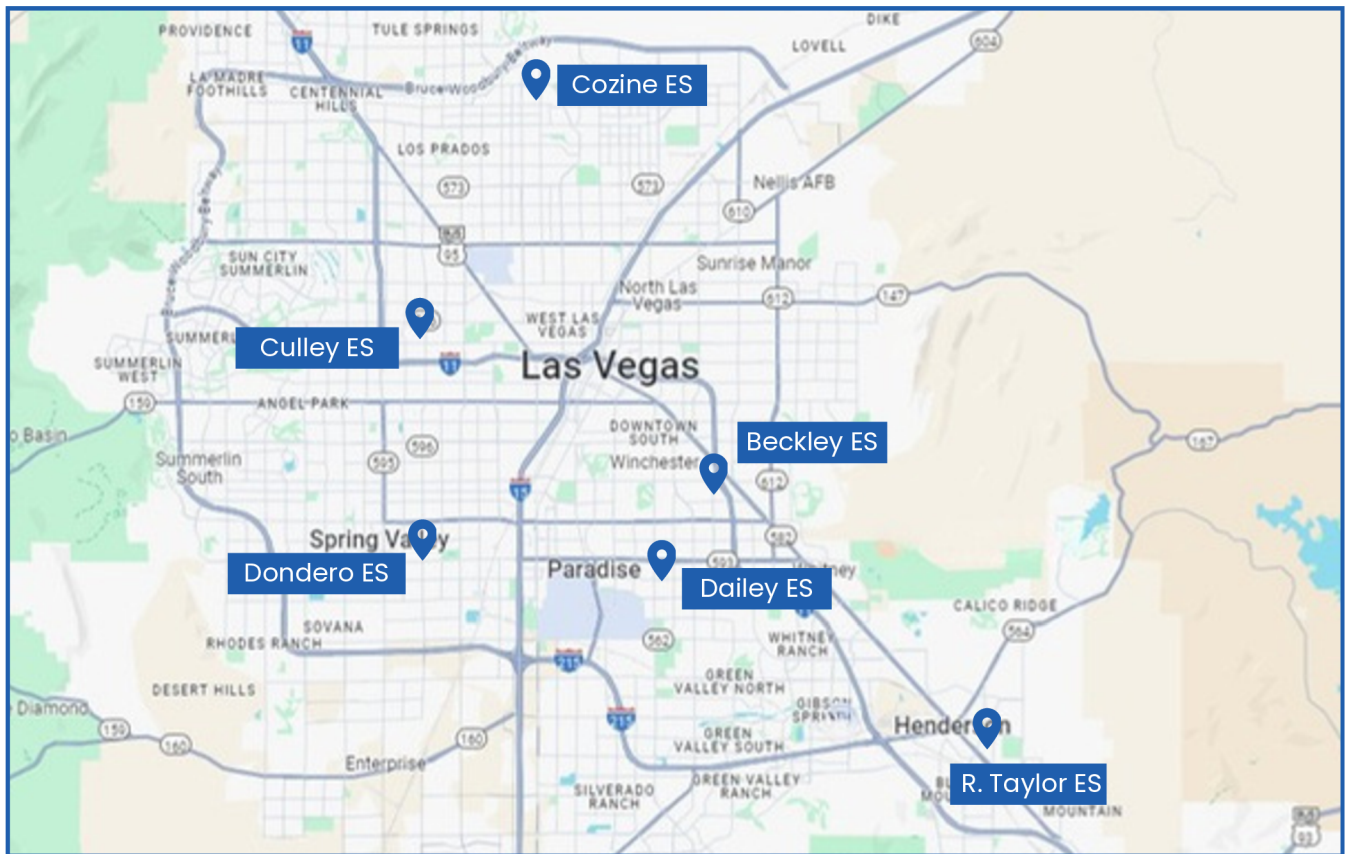
Onsite STWN facilitators oversee the daily operation of the centers at the school and provide support to mentors. Facilitators are also responsible for enforcing program policies and providing mentors and students with a safe and comfortable space. Your on-site facilitator is your direct line of communication. Please notify them as early as possible if you will be absent for any reason.

As a volunteer mentor, please feel free to bring comments, ideas, problems, and suggestions to the attention of your site facilitator. You are also welcome to contact the Program Manager at any time.

## Facilitators:

-  Support volunteer mentors and offer assistance when needed
-  Track session attendance for mentors and students
-  Monitor all mentoring sessions
-  Ensure your comfort and safety as well as that of the children you work with
-  Notify you if your students are absent and provide program updates

# BOOKS & BUDDIES CENTER LOCATIONS



## **Will Beckley ES**

3223 S. Glenhurst Dr.  
Las Vegas, NV 89121  
M-Th 9 am - 1 pm

## **Steve and Linda Cozine ES**

5335 Coleman St.  
N. Las Vegas, NV 89031  
M-Th 10 am - 2 pm

## **Paul Culley ES**

1200 N. Mallard St.  
Las Vegas, NV 89108  
M-Th 9 am - 1 pm

## **Jack Dailey ES**

2001 E. Reno Ave.  
Las Vegas, NV 89119  
M-Th 11 am - 3 pm

## **Harvey Dondero ES**

4450 Ridgeville St.  
Las Vegas, NV 89103  
M-TH 10 am - 2 pm





## **Robert Taylor ES**

144 Westminster Way  
Henderson, NV 89015  
M-Th 10 am - 2 pm

# A VOLUNTEER MENTOR'S ROLE & IMPACT

As a volunteer mentor, you will meet one-on-one with a minimum of two students for 30 minute blocks of time on a weekly basis. You will talk and listen to your students, read aloud with them, and encourage them to share an enthusiasm for books.

Your role as a volunteer mentor is to:

-  Build relationships by talking about shared interests, reading together, and to positively take an active role in your students' well being
-  Commit to volunteer on a weekly basis
-  Receive support and guidance from Spread the Word Nevada staff, particularly the Site Facilitator
-  Provide structure in the mentoring session by helping to select reading materials, keeping students engaged, and encouraging discussion

Mentoring is a brain  
to pick, an ear to  
listen, and a push in  
the right direction.

John C. Crosby

BrainyQuote

A mentor is defined as a "trusted counselor or guide." Children from underserved communities who have a mentor are more likely to succeed.

Youth who have a positive role model in their lives, feel cared for and valued. This feeling can boost self-esteem and help children deal with life's challenges.

According to a 2014 report from The National Mentoring Partnership, young adults who face an opportunity gap but have a mentor are 55% more likely to be enrolled in college than those who did not have a mentor. Youth with mentors are also 52% less likely to skip school.

# POVERTY & ITS AFFECT ON CHILDHOOD LITERACY

As a volunteer mentor, it is helpful to consider the constraints that poverty often places on children's lives and how those constraints influence learning and academic achievement.

Here are some ways poverty impacts a child's education:

## **Health and Well-being**

Living in daily economic hardship can adversely affect students' physical and mental health. Poverty often places constraints on the family's ability to provide resources for their children.

Many times, these students come from homes where their families aren't able to afford proper nutrition or have enough food at home. According to a 2008 study by the Journal of Educational Psychology, not eating enough can reduce the brain's capacity to learn.

## **Reduced Verbal and Reasoning Skills**

Children who live in poverty often enter school lacking in language development. Students from impoverished households tend to have lower levels of verbal and reasoning skills than their peers because their parents are less likely to read to them. In *Educating the Other America*, Susan Neuman (2008) states that more than 50 years of research indicated that "children who are poor hear a smaller number of words with more limited syntactic complexity and fewer conversation-eliciting questions, making it difficult for them to quickly acquire new words and to discriminate among words."

## **Impaired Development Due to Stress**

Financial insecurity can be a major cause of stress, for both adults and children. Living in poverty can result in increased levels of cortisol being released into a person's bloodstream causing headaches and anxiety in adults. In children, this can actually have the effect of dampening brain development. All is not lost, as the brain can adapt to new positive experiences outside the home. With proper support, a child can overcome these factors of stress.

# POVERTY & ITS AFFECT ON CHILDHOOD LITERACY

## **Brain Development**

Neuroscientists have studied the children from a variety of socio-economical levels and have found that significant findings of children that live in poverty. They have found significant differences in: frontal lobe development, occipital lobe development, and in working memory. Frontal lobe controls a person's self control (paying attention, listening, and learning on-demand). Occipital lobe houses a person's spatial skills. Our working memory is the domain the allows a person to listen and comprehend when talking and reading. Our working memory is where a person is able to recall what is read and translate into written language.

## **Fewer Educational Experiences**

Children from impoverished families are less likely to have access to extracurricular activities and experiences that enhance literacy, such as visits to libraries, museum trips, or after-school programs. These experiences can broaden a child's vocabulary, world knowledge, and interest in reading.

Children in poverty may also lack the socialization opportunities that promote language development. This includes interactions with peers who can help enhance conversational skills and exposure to different language registers.

## **Cycle of Poverty**

Poor literacy skills can perpetuate the cycle of poverty, as individuals with limited literacy often struggle to access quality jobs, further education, and healthcare. This means that children growing up in poverty are more likely to become adults who are also economically disadvantaged, passing on the cycle to the next generation.

# LITERACY & ACCESS



Numerous studies show that there is a direct correlation between home libraries and academic success in children. Research shows that children who have access to books in their household will, on average, complete two more years of school than their peers who don't have books in their homes. Giving a child a book puts choice into their hands and can change their life's trajectory.

Not only does it matter that kids have access to books, but that they have someone to share those books. Students who grow up in a household with a book lover often become one themselves. Being read to, reading to others, and discussing what is read can create an upward spiral. This can lead to, not only academic success, but personal contentment as well. Each child coming to a B&B center leaves with a book every week. This allows our children to continue building up their home libraries and sharing their literary adventures with their loved ones.

# BECOMING A VOLUNTEER MENTOR

To become a mentor, you must:

## **Attend a mandatory orientation session**

Mentor orientation sessions are conducted monthly. The orientation outlines the purpose of Books & Buddies, the role of mentors, and the tools needed to become a successful mentor.

## **Pass a background check**

You are required to pass a background check. Background checks are conducted through the Clark County School District. This process will be reviewed during the mentor orientation.

## **Obtain a badge from CCSD**

After passing your background check, you will need to apply for a Clark County School District volunteer badge. CCSD will provide you with the necessary information.



# READING TIPS

Choosing the "right" book and the "best" way to use the materials provided depends on your buddy. No two individuals read at the same level or pace, so patience and persistence is key.

Here are some tips for working with students:

## **Choose books they want to read**

Children are more motivated to read if they are interested in the material. When kids choose their own book, research has shown that they are 91% more likely to engage with it and continue reading. There are, however, instances where you may need to guide your students to select books that are appropriate for their reading levels. We recommend the [Five Finger Rule for Reading](#).

Have your buddy read the first page aloud. For every word they struggle with, they put up a finger:

- 0-1 fingers - too easy
- 2-3 fingers - just right
- 4-5 fingers - too hard

## **One word at a time**

Too much text can sometimes be overwhelming for struggling readers. When reading with students, it helps to start having them sound out individual words before progressing to phrases and sentences. Once a complete sentence has been read, you can reread it to ensure understanding. Remember children reading word by word lose the meaning because they are so focused on sounding out individual words.

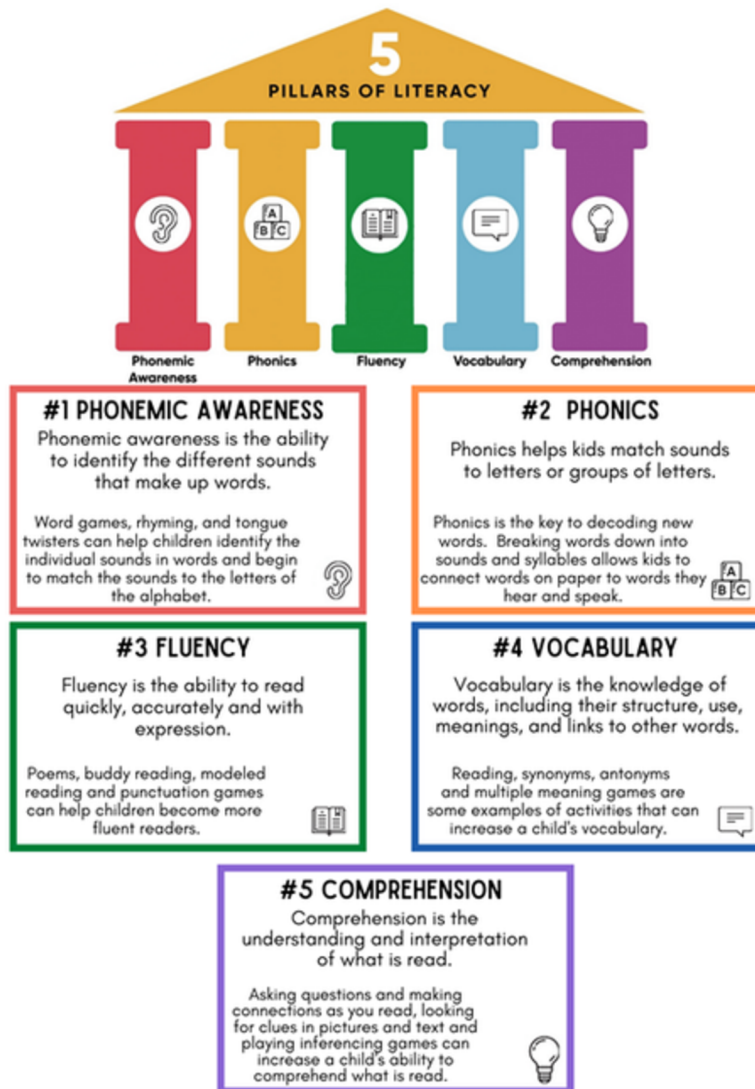
## **Have students read the same thing several times**

When trying to improve fluency, it helps to see the same text multiple times. Each reading becomes easier, and motivation goes up as students experience success, due to repeated exposure to words and phrases. Repetition is the key to comprehension. Talk about pictures, words, and ask lots of questions about both.

## **Encourage Active Reading**

Mentors should encourage active reading by asking students about what they have read. Asking questions about what is happening in the story, a character's feelings, or what will happen next will help students gain a deeper understanding of the text.

# THE FIVE PILLARS OF LITERACY



The Five Pillars of Literacy is a tool in determining your child's literacy needs. The first pillar is phonemic awareness, which pertains to a child's ability to determine different sounds and to be able to differentiate between them. Start here with a beginning reader. Pillar 5, Comprehension, is the ultimate goal.

This chart is prominently placed in every Books & Buddies mentor center. Your on-site facilitator will help you determine the appropriate kind of book to select for your student based on what their literacy needs are at the time.

# LITERACY ACTIVITIES & TOOLS



In the B&B mentor centers, you'll find a variety of literacy games and activities that can help engage your students in different ways. We typically recommend that mentors allot 15-20 minutes of the 30-minute scheduled time reading together. For the remaining time, feel free to play a literacy-based game with your buddy. Students who have attended previously Books & Buddies will be familiar with the activities found in the center and may gravitate toward their favorites.

Games will be color coded with stickers that match the skills based on the Five Pillars of Literacy. For example, when working on phonics with a student, look for activities that have yellow stickers. This system makes it easy to quickly determine an appropriate game.

Each center is supplied with basic materials such as paper, whiteboards and writing materials. Please feel free to come to the center early to select activities to use with your buddies that day. Each student is assigned a folder to make it easy to take notes after each session so that you can plan for future sessions. Facilitators are familiar with all materials so do not hesitate to ask questions.

# ARE YOU READY TO BE A VOLUNTEER MENTOR?

- ✓ Make a positive impact on a child's life
- ✓ Help them build self confidence
- ✓ Introduce your buddy to new ideas, places and things through books
- ✓ Help them along the path of becoming a lifelong reader

You have just taken the first step toward changing a child's life. The impact you and your gift of time will have on them is immeasurable. Spread the Word Nevada thanks you. Now let's get to work!

## Next steps...

1. Follow up email containing links to: Mentor interest form, CCSD volunteer application, and CCSD mandatory videos.
2. Follow through with volunteer application requirements (fingerprinting included)
3. Obtain CCSD Volunteer badge.
4. Notify Program Manager when CCSD volunteer badge is obtained.
5. Program Manager will connect you with site facilitator.
6. Start mentoring!

Welcome to our  
Books & Buddies Team!