

## President Bush honors North Carolina tutor

Reading Together™ tutor Michelle Gilmore was presented with the President's Volunteer Service Award during President George W. Bush's visit to Guilford County, NC. For the past four years, Gilmore has mentored second-grade tutees at Fairview Elementary in High Point.

In making the presentation, President Bush called mentoring the best way to make a difference for a child: "It's amazing when an adult can take the time to say, 'I care about you and I want to help.'"

GrandPals, Guilford County's Reading Together™ initiative, uses adult tutors, many of them retirees. GrandPals is supported by the United Way of Greater High Point and Communities in Schools of High Point, which nominated Gilmore for the honor.

"She really has the passion to make a difference with a child," said CIS Director of Volunteers Leigh Ayers (also a Reading Together™ tutor!).

Gilmore works for Bank of America, which pays employees for their volunteer time as part of Team Bank of America. Gilmore also logs many hours with Meals on Wheels and other charities.

"Any time you volunteer, you touch lives. You change the world one life at a time," she said. "When you touch one life, they touch one life and it keeps going."

*About 500 Presidential Service Awards have been presented since March 2002. Cross-age tutors also may qualify for recognition. For information about nominating a volunteer in your district, go to [www.presidentialserviceawards.gov](http://www.presidentialserviceawards.gov).*

## Cleveland takes two steps forward

Cleveland Municipal School District has designed an innovative implementation of Learning Together to meet its goal of moving the district into Continuous Improvement. Each tutee has been assigned two tutors, one for reading and one for math, to offer support as they prepare for the Ohio Achievement Test.



About 6,000 students in grades six–eight are tutoring 3,000 below-proficient third graders. The tutors are also below-proficient, and are improving their reading, math and interpersonal skills as they prepare for and lead the lessons. While it will be several months before test results are tallied, coordinators are pleased with the way the program is helping tutors fit into their new K-8 school communities.

"Some of our tutors are very new to our school and haven't made friends. Several do not have good friends because they have poor reputations due to academics or behavior," said Mary Burns, coordinator at Louisa May Alcott Elementary. "Yet when they gathered for lunch, we were so pleased—they all chose to sit together, shoulder to shoulder,

around the end of the same table. They were mixed by gender, grade level and cliques. At one point about eight kids stood in the middle of the group and 'clinked' their pop cans together in a cheer. Unbelievable! Awesome!"

The Learning Together Extended Day Initiative operates after school four days a week in 80 schools, using Reading Together™ Grade Three and Math Together™. Each school was assigned two to four "pods" consisting of a coordinator and 15 tutor/tutee pairs.

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*It is so inspiring to see the older students working so beautifully with the younger students. Our tutors are learning a lot about patience and leadership, and our tutees are really building their math skills.*

Cleveland Math Together™ coordinator

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Tutors were trained as either math or reading tutors during two Saturday sessions. They were rewarded with a \$50 incentive before winter break and will receive another \$50 at the end of the program if they maintain adequate attendance.

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### Perfect for summer school

*Our structured tutoring makes a simple, fun and effective solution for summer programming. Ask about our discount rates through March 30!*

## Word of Mouth

*I wasn't sure I could be a good tutor, but I am! I was surprised to be a good teacher.*

Sixth-grade reading tutor

### Congratulations to Cherry Creek, CO!

With a pilot year behind them, coordinators in Cherry Creek really took off last year, posting some of the best results of all schools reporting data to Learning Together for 2005-06. Tutors averaged more than three years growth in reading accuracy and comprehension on the QRI and every tutor scored within the proficient or advanced areas (as determined by the Colorado Student Assessment Program).

Tutees averaged more than two years growth in reading accuracy and comprehension.

- Second-grade tutees gained 2.6 grade levels in accuracy and 2.2 in comprehension
- Third-grade tutees gained 2 grade levels in accuracy and 1.5 in comprehension
- Fourth-grade tutors gained 2.5 grade levels in both measures
- Fifth-grade tutors gained 4 grade levels in accuracy and 3 in comprehension

In addition to outstanding academic outcomes, the district views Reading Together™ as a tool in its initiative to foster motivation, responsibility, self-esteem and other developmental assets. Cherry Creek has 23 Reading Together™ schools, each with its own unique implementation model, and is using a Cherry Creek Schools Foundation grant to serve all 38 elementary schools next fall.

We invite you to send us your school data when evaluations are completed this spring (in fact, we're happy to help you collate results if you contact Customer Service). We love getting PowerPoints and videos that celebrate your success, and will be updating our website this year to be able to feature some of them.

### Cleveland

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Tutees meet with their reading tutors one day and their math tutors the next day; tutors are either presenting a lesson, or preparing for the upcoming lesson. For example: on Monday, reading tutors work with tutees under the supervision of the reading coordinator, while math tutors receive instruction from the math coordinator; on Tuesday, math tutors work with tutees under the supervision of the math coordinator, while reading tutors receive instruction from their reading coordinator.

Scranton Elementary Reading Coordinator Linda Opaluch tells of an eighth-grade male tutor who took the initiative to make up for a preparation session he had missed. "He spent 20-25 minutes reviewing the lesson and reading the trade book, asking questions when necessary, in order to prepare for his tutee that afternoon," she said. "For a student to take such initiative, and voluntarily take the time (his LUNCH time, no less) to make sure that he was ready gave me goose bumps!

"As I have monitored and observed relationships grow, comprehension and understanding deepen in both tutors and tutees, I have become a real cheerleader for Reading Together™. But I think it was (the tutor's) actions that provided substantial proof that it brings out the traits of responsibility, leadership and caring that probably lay dormant in many of our students! I am proud and glad to be a part of Learning Together!"

*Students at Timberline Elementary in Cherry Creek, CO made a paper "tutoring quilt" to celebrate new friendships.*



## Coordinators' Corner: Focus on eye contact

It is a bonus if we can increase our students' life skills as well as their academic performance. Let's try to encourage *eye contact* as a special challenge for the remaining lessons. There are several ways to promote this skill. We can suggest that our tutors try this during their lessons and we also can promote (and model) it during our debriefing sessions. If students are interested, it will be an added benefit throughout life; if a student is not interested, the seeds of this behavior will have been planted.

During tutor prep, brainstorm with your students about why eye contact is important. Does it help hold a tutee's attention? Does it show someone you care about their response?



If tutors decide to engage their tutees with eye contact, have them start out during the warm-up chat. If that is successful, they can periodically make eye contact during reading, while making a positive comment at the end of the session. During the preparation session, it might be helpful for the tutors to mark a symbol—a line drawing of an eye—at the end of several of their "say" bubbles to remind them to stop and look their tutees in the eyes.

If students decide to practice this life skill during debriefing, have them choose an "eye buddy." When they speak during debriefing, they can practice making eye contact with their buddy.

## Download simplified Intermediate Activities

Several Reading Together™ Intermediate coordinators have pointed out that the post-reading activities for Phase I Lessons 2, 9 and 15 require materials not normally found in the classroom. The periscope in Lesson 15, for example, calls for mirrors and milk cartons.

**alternate activity 15**

Passage 15: Rain Forest Periscope

Select one of the animals pictured in the rainforest book and describe it by completing the chart below. This chart is called a feature analysis. If the book does not answer all the questions listed in the chart, use your imagination to complete your feature analysis.

Name	
Description	
Shelter	
Food	
Offspring	
Mode of Travel	

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Reading Together Intermediate  
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Our curriculum developers emphasize that procedural activities are important for upper elementary and middle school students, who are expected to follow complex directions. That said, we also recognize the limitations under which many schools operate. If providing extra materials is an issue, consider two alternatives:

- 1) Break your students into groups and have them work together, building just one or two items, instead of one for each tutor/tutee pair.
- 2) Replace the activities in Lessons 2, 9 and 15 with alternatives found on the L2 website. These require just pencil and paper, and can be accessed free at [www.learningtogether.com](http://www.learningtogether.com). Click on Resource Downloads and the alternative lessons are listed under Training Materials.

## Spring Writing Contest

**What is your advice to a student who wants to become a Learning Together tutor?**

Give your tutors time to reflect on their experiences and offer suggestions to students who might be interested in tutoring next year. Did they enjoy tutoring? What did they learn about themselves? Did they improve on their "Five Qualities of a Good Tutor?" Can they write a recipe for success and list the important ingredients?

Essays should be at least one paragraph long, but may be as long as the tutor likes. Submissions are due May 1; they should be in the tutors' own handwriting, and may be mailed as hard copies or scanned to send electronically. Be sure to keep and post copies of the essays—it's a great way to get a head start on recruiting for next fall! In fact, consider having tutors read their entries at a school assembly or program celebration.

Every tutor who enters will win a prize, and has a chance for the grand prize of a \$50 Barnes & Noble gift certificate. Contact us at [info@learningtogether.com](mailto:info@learningtogether.com) with questions.

*All entries become property of Learning Together and may be used (without identifying student names) in future newsletters or on the L2 website.*

### Curious about the Monkey?

If you haven't already, you will soon receive an on-line feedback form (called Survey Monkey) asking about Learning Together. It's a fast, fun way to let us hear about your progress, improve our service and troubleshoot any problems. Please remember to keep us updated with a current email address!