

Students gain friendship, love of learning from paid tutor program

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Bedford freshman Nolan Johnson helps Torrance Zientek read a book as part of the Students for Other Students (SOS) program at Jackman Road Elementary School in Temperance, Mich., on Feb. 25.

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TEMPERANCE — Reading, writing, and math can be daunting for elementary school students. At Jackman Road Elementary School, sometimes all it takes is a friend to help it all make sense.

Students from Bedford High School have been busy helping their younger counterparts at Jackman Road Elementary School as part of the Students for Other Students program.

McKenna Eaton, a junior, says she likes seeing how the kids change throughout the program.

“I enjoy doing this a lot,” McKenna said. “I like seeing their confidence grow and to see them grow as people too. It is fun watching them take off and fly.”

Liam Lamp, a first grader, said McKenna is nice to work with.

“She is really nice,” Liam said. “She makes reading and writing a little easier. I like it now because it is fun.”

The SOS program is a 501(c)(3) corporation that serves to fund peer tutoring programs across the country. Inventor, businessman, and philanthropist Ford Cauffiel of Toledo founded SOS in 1989. Mr. Cauffiel, founder of the Cauffiel Technology Corp., an engineering and manufacturing company in Toledo, believed that illiteracy is not incurable.

The organization raises money from foundations, corporations, and individuals for the promotion, operation, and funding of peer tutoring programs in school districts to pay students to tutor other students who need extra help.

Jackman Road Elementary reading specialist Anita Brandman said the district has employed 16 Bedford High School students as tutors. The program runs from November through February, and this year concentrated on students in first and second grade. The tutors focused on reading and math.

"The tutors come over after school ends at the high school and stay through the end of the day at the school four days each week," Ms. Brandman said. "The students work for an hour per day and are paid \$12 per hour."

Ms. Brandman said the program has been at Jackman Road Elementary for more than 15 years. The tutors work on mostly reading and writing, but also help with math.

"For many of the students, this is the first job they have ever had," Mrs. Brandman said. "A lot of the students that tutor, about half of them, were students here when they were in elementary school. A few of them were my students at one point."

The high school students can become tutors as freshmen, but seniors and those who worked as tutors before generally get the slots first.

Ms. Brandman said the younger kids like working with the older students.

"The kids work better with the tutor, especially at the end of the day," Ms. Brandman said. "You can see their skills developing."

Janah Byrne, a senior, said she has been working in the SOS program for two years.

"I have volunteered here since I was in junior high before doing this," Janah said. "I really like helping and getting to know the kids. It is a lot of fun."

Nolan Johnson, a freshman, said he liked being able to help the younger students at the end of his school day.

"It gives me something to do after school," Nolan said. "It is actually very fun helping the kids get better at reading."

Sophomore Claire Johnson said she has been working with the kids for two years.

"It is fun seeing them learn and change," Claire said. "I just like helping and I am pretty sure I will do this again next year."

First grader Charlotte Davis said she liked working with Claire.

"She is great because she helps me learn words," Charlotte said. "I know I read better now and it is easier too."

For Maya Ortiz, a junior, being a tutor is helping to prepare her for her future. Maya is hoping to major in education at Taylor University in Upland, Ind., after she graduates.

"I want to be an elementary teacher, so I think this is a good experience for me," Maya said. "I love seeing how excited the kids are to work with us. It is something fun and they give me energy too. A lot of these kids are now moving into doing multiplication, and that is great to watch."

McKenna Howell, a second grader, said she likes getting the extra help in math.

"Maya is kind to me," McKenna said. "I like the work, and I like math now, too."

A survey conducted by the tutors asked the young students what they liked about working with them.

One said "I like the full attention I get when I am struggling." Some said it was fun, while another liked the help with reading.

"One of them said, 'It is easier and more fun to learn when someone is next to you helping,'" Ms. Brandman said while reading the comments. "This comment is so sweet. This student just said, 'It gives me another friend.'"