



The 10 Principles for the My Book Buddy system:

“Back to basics”

Introduction:

My Book Buddy is a private non-governmental organisation that focuses on school libraries for children in need by placing bookcases, made by local carpenters, in every existing primary school. This case is filled with reading books with the educational level of the children in that particular class, and the books are in the language of that particular country. The number of books is calculated so that a child can read one book every week at home for the duration of a whole school year. The My Book Buddy rucksack, provided to every child, ensures that the books are protected to and from school. Once a week the My Book Buddy flag will fly so that the children know it is time to choose a new book. The teacher will maintain an easy administrative system, which is made available by My Book Buddy. The children record their reading results on their own bookmark. All elements are an integral part of the My Book Buddy system, and the school agrees to the terms and conditions of My Book Buddy by signing the contract.

1. The My Book Buddy bookcase

The local carpenters receive instructions with the correct measurements and know how to build the bookcases. Included is a shopping list, so that the carpenter can buy the right materials, for example the right amount of wood and paint, to build a My Book Buddy bookcase for every classroom. The bookcase, including the wheels and lock, can be assembled in one day. After the bookcase has been painted it will look like a book itself. The colourful logo is an eye catcher in every classroom. The SIE logo can be added on the front, the local Soroptimist club involved will be asked to organise this. The back of the bookcase is coated with chalkboard paint, thus giving the opportunity to visualise relevant information. In schools where the classrooms cannot be locked, the bookcases can easily be moved to a room where the door can be locked, such as the teachers' lounge. Many people take part in the production process, which makes the involvement of children, parents and teachers in the My Book Buddy programme very present in the community.

2. The books

The number of books per class has to be sufficient to provide a choice for every child to read a new book each week for the duration of the school year.

This implies that with a minimum of 50 children per class 60 to 70 titles should be available, with 20 children there should be at least 40 titles.

The selection consists of different categories: fiction and non-fiction, animal stories, poetry collections, fairy tales and folk stories, books on religion, informative and instructive books. For the highest classes a dictionary, an atlas, an encyclopaedia with lots of pictures and a Bible, Koran or book on world religions should be always available for use in class as a source of reference, and not be taken home. Additionally, every teacher will be supplied with a book to read from in class.

The level of the books should match the age and development of the children. The pre-schoolers and kindergarten children will receive books with simple, short texts and lots of pictures for the teacher to read from as well as books for beginners. The increasing difficulty of the books is visible in the use of language: from books with one sentence per line for the 4 to 5 year-olds to novels with sentences of more than 14 words per sentence and more polysyllabic words for the advanced readers.

The books should be selected in the language which is used in school. The proportion of books in the mother tongue, if available, should be a maximum of ten percent. In a number of countries bilingual books are available for children to practice bilingual reading.

The acquisition of books should be done in close coordination with a librarian, a professional bookseller and a teacher or director at the school in question. Guidelines on language, categories, publishers etc. for buyers for My Book Buddy are available.

3. The rucksack

A waterproof rucksack in the colours light blue and dark blue with the logo of My Book Buddy and SIE protects the book during transport to and from school. The rucksacks will be produced in sewing workshops in the country in which they are sold. Using this method we try to support the local economy. At the launch, every child receives one rucksack.

4. The flag

The My Book Buddy flag, made from firm polythene, with the full colour logo, flies once a week on the school playground. The ceremony consists of the children raising the flag, a short introduction by the school principal about the importance of reading, and the announcement that on that day a new book can be chosen. A self-composed My Book Buddy reading song will be heard regularly at the time of the ceremony.

5. The lending system

Since most schools are not outfitted with computers, the teachers will receive a folder with the student registration system in it and a list to write down the books in alphabetical order. Every book will be marked with the My Book Buddy stamp and the Soroptimist International stamp to prevent theft and to mark the books as part of the My Book Buddy collection. A number is written on the supplied labels that will also be noted in the folder behind the title in the book. Once a week every child returns the borrowed book and chooses a new one that will also be recorded in the lending system.

Library passes with personal data are therefore unnecessary and irrelevant because in some countries the huts and the houses where the children live are not built in streets and do not have

numbers. The teachers who are responsible for the My Book Buddy library at their schools will gradually qualify as teacher-librarians.

6. The bookmark

On the reverse side of the My Book Buddy bookmark the children record the number of books they have read. After primary school they will have amassed their own reading history, which often amounts up to 240 books. For children who had previously had no book resources, this arrangement provides a huge boost to their individual development.

7. The contract

At the official opening of the My Book Buddy library, usually accompanied by speeches, singing and dancing, the parties sign the contract. In this contract they promise, for instance, that they will actually lend the books out at least once a week. A huge cultural shift will thus take place, because in the past people thought books were too expensive to be lent, especially to children who could not be trusted to bring them back. The contract is signed by the head of the school, individual teachers, representatives of parents and representatives of the students, both boys and girls, so that the responsibilities of all concerned are assured.

8. Suggestions for library classes

Uncomplicated and fun reading-related activities are described for teachers who have never had any children's books at their disposal or had never paid attention to children's literature during their teacher training. They are often not familiar with reading as a leisure activity or reading just for fun. Suggestions from My Book Buddy range from dialogic reading, reading contests, making a written summary, delivering a classroom lecture etc. Children are usually able to master the various genres surprisingly quickly. The scheduling of a weekly library lesson as part of the curriculum is normally achieved after one year.

9. Activities for community involvement and parent participation

A reading culture at school and at home requires a number of cross-curricular activities which are innovative for existing schools with disadvantaged children and their teams. It will take time to bring about that change, because the frame of reference is completely missing. Reading aloud to family members and siblings at home and looking at pictures together add a new dimension to the oral culture that is widespread in many regions.

10. Annual evaluation

The evaluation form, which must be completed by the school management each year, gives My Book Buddy an insight into the quality of the processes, the progress, the needs and problems, so that the system can be constantly improved.