Review of recent literature pertaining to the service of lay volunteers in school reading programs

Rita Schirtzinger
A REVIEW OF RECENT LITERATURE PERTAINING TO THE SERVICE OF LAY VOLUNTEERS IN SCHOOL READING PROGRAMS

by

Sister Rita Schirtzinger, S.N.D. de N.

A RESEARCH PAPER
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATION (READING SPECIALIST)
AT THE CARDINAL STRITCH COLLEGE

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

1971
This research paper has been approved for the Graduate Committee of the Cardinal Stritch College by

[Signature]

(Date: February 25, 1971)
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Sincere appreciation is expressed to Sister Marie Colette, O.S.F., for directing this research paper.

Grateful acknowledgment is also expressed toward my community for permitting me to pursue my studies, as well as to all my friends, especially the St. Francis de Sales Volunteers in the Reading Program, for their encouragement toward the completion of this work.
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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Parents at St. Francis de Sales School, Lebanon, Ohio, presented a plan for volunteer service to the school principal because they desired to become more actively involved in helping children become better readers. Their proposal was presented to the local parish school board for their approval in designing a mode of action during the following school year. Unanimous approval was given to the study of the proposal. All were agreed that such an action would benefit the double-graded situation of the small elementary school.

The writer of this paper had the responsibility of initiating the program. Recent literature dealing with the use of parents, students, and other para-professional volunteers was abundant. Literature on reading was emphasized in this research because both the parents and the writer were interested in utilizing volunteer services in this field.

It was hoped that the goals set by the parents desiring to volunteer their services would be reached in order that "the esoteric knowledge of the teacher may be used more effectively."\(^1\) It has been the "shortage of teachers, not of materials or know-how" which has sparked the desire of parents and others to aid in the learning process.\(^2\)


Statement of the Problem

This paper presents a review of recent literature pertaining to the service of lay-volunteers in school reading programs.

Objectives

Teachers must be freed of the records, work sheets, and detailed duties which newer teaching innovations have made necessary. How can this be achieved in order to give teachers additional teaching time for individuals, small groups, and classes?

Parents, working as trained volunteers, can be used to bring about these results. Not only would these parents aid the teachers but they would "better understand their own child's progress; help the staff become more competent; provide more individualized help."\(^1\) Volunteer parent aides would also act as liaisons between the school and the community in letting others know and appreciate what the school does for students.

All children in the school should benefit from the volunteer services. This might not be possible if only parent volunteers were selected and trained for service. Research has shown that students can be trained as tutors for other students. Both the tutor and the tutee will benefit from the experience when the situation has been properly initiated and supervised. Tutors become more interested in school, in their own achievement, and in being an aide to another as a result of feeling needed by the tutee. Those under such guidance will benefit from the one-to-one attention necessary for individual learning growth.

Summary

Realizing that these objectives had been obtained in other areas of the country, the writer of this paper was optimistic that those parents who requested permission to give such service would produce like benefits for their school population. The volunteer parents would initiate a spirit of cooperation between the school and the community due to their interest in the school needs and goals.

The individual tutor-tutee system should instill the basic Christian spirit among the student body by replacing competition with cooperation.

Teachers should be more able to meet the needs of the individual and small groups by assigning other tasks to willing adult volunteers.

Betterment of the entire school should be the outcome of such a program.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RECENT LITERATURE

Definition of Terms

Recent literature concerning the use of volunteer aides in the reading program was studied by the writer to find definitions of the terms used by the various authors. The authors did not define the terms; volunteer aide, paraprofessionals, tutor, tutee, or teacher aide in dictionary fashion terms. The writer therefore consulted the unabridged Webster dictionary. Two definitions given there could be applied to the meaning desired in this review of literature.

Aide: any official, confident assistant

Volunteer: a person who performs a service of his own free will; to offer oneself for some service or undertaking

The writer then consulted recent literature to find definitions more particular to the area being studied. Walsh had the following definition. "The teacher aide volunteer program is a group of dedicated people who work regularly as volunteers in the school under the direction of the classroom teachers who have requested their services, or who offer special skills to enrich the school program." ¹

Paraprofessionals or teacher aides were defined in the handbook by Ferver in the following way.

The paraprofessionals, or teacher aides are lay people with a

varied amount of educational and professional training who take an active part in assisting the teachers to discharge their professional duties in a more efficient and economic manner. The amount or degree of instructional or semi-instructional responsibilities will need to be defined. This will depend on each individual aide's capabilities and training.

Teacher aides are not expected to substitute for regular teachers but are assigned to routine duties to free the certified teacher for work with individual pupils or for lesson preparation.

Another definition of the paraprofessional mentioned the duties and services usual to these volunteers. "The paraprofessionals usually take care of moving the children from place to place, set up equipment, and help maintain an attractive and efficient environment. As they gain experience and competence, however, they are able to carry on much significant teaching."\(^2\)

A sub-professional staff was defined under two types of service functions. Staff aides are those who monitor or control pupil activities outside the learning centers, in corridors, cafeteria, assemblies, on field trips. They can also be responsible to provide a pool of adult resources highly useful in many facets of the school program and operation. Clerical aides give clerical help for the teaching personnel and are responsible for keeping records, typing, filing, duplicating, taking inventory in the service centers.\(^3\)

Tutor, another term met in the literature on volunteer school aides,

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was defined as a student in a higher grade who meets the two qualifications of having a learning problem and of being capable of an assignment on a one-to-one basis.¹

Tutee was the title given to the one aided by the tutor.

Some communities have formed volunteer pools of persons who can and are willing to relate the world of work to classroom subject matter such as woodcraft or science. This type of professional demonstration or lecture has assisted pupils in understanding skills needed in the adult working world and has introduced the volunteer into the classroom set-up from the teacher's viewpoint.²

### Nature and Importance of Volunteer Services

Having reviewed the literature on the meaning of terms unique to volunteer services in the reading program, the writer turned attention to the nature and importance of such a project. It was the writer's desire to understand the goals and objectives of the program in order to assist the parents of St. Francis de Sales parish school who requested such a program of active participation.

Research agreed that the nature and importance of volunteer aides to the reading program centered around the vital service such personnel contribute in actualizing educational and human objectives of efficient learning and authentic living.

Walsh has focused attention on these four aims:

**A.** The primary aim is to relieve the professional staff of non-teaching duties: "Free the teacher to teach."

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B. To provide needed services to individual children and to small groups of children: to supplement the work of the classroom teacher.

C. To enrich the learning experience of children beyond what is now available in the school through the use of special skills and knowledge the volunteer can offer.

D. To build better understanding of the school and its problems and needs among parents and parishioners, and to stimulate a more widespread support for the school.

The personal qualities which such aides bring to the school are stated by Wielgat.

By their warmth, interest and enthusiasm in general and on an individual level, teacher-aides enrich the life and experience of each and all pupils they serve. They share in creating wholesome, desirable and increasingly effective intellectual situations. Usually from the local area and familiar with the social background of the pupil, teacher-aides are invaluable in helping to interpret the goals and objectives of the school to the community, and in re-emphasizing the goals and desires of the community for its schools. As part of the educational team that fosters wholesome growth, teacher-aides should be given due consideration on an individual and professional basis.

Other literature endorsed these views and maintained that mothers who aid in such school programs benefit by viewing their own children in relation to others, thus learning how to help their own children more. Volunteer mothers pointed out that they gained a personal satisfaction when they were able to aid children in the learning process.

Reinforcement achieved by direct supervision of study habits, drills to master vocabulary, oral reading practice, sight vocabulary and spelling activities can be accomplished more effectively when a team of teachers and paraprofessionals band together for the youngsters' progress.

1Mrs. John Walsh, Santa Rosa Program p. 7.

Social and psychological benefits were also treated in literature as important because "direct adult recognition provides added incentive for the student to take pride in work and to gain self-confidence." In the same article it was stated that the objective of this program, which had evolved over a four year period, was to benefit all the students of the school whether they be slow, average, or gifted.

Another study placed the goals of the school volunteer program as: "the school volunteer program provides an opportunity to further individualize the instructional program for the child by utilizing the specific interests, aptitudes, and abilities of the volunteers. The program provides community understanding of the challenges of education through involvement of volunteers in the school program."

A research study by Schoeller and Pearson questioned the results which volunteer reading tutors would have in building reading skills and improving the pupil's attitudes toward reading and school and himself. Their study also asked if experienced tutors can help children learn to read. Twelve centers with 115 pupils one or more years below reading level were in the study. The tutors received pre-service and in-service training plus the aid of a part-time reading teacher or specialist. The tutors were trained to establish rapport and improve the pupil's self-concept before beginning formal reading lessons. An evaluation procedure based on the Spache Diagnostic Reading Scale was used for pre- and post-test results. Eight areas were included in the test: level of word recognition, oral

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reading, and six tests of phonic skills. Five related pupil attitude and progress questionnaires were administered to the teachers, parents, pupils, and tutors. The results showed an average gain on all eight parts of the Spache Diagnostic Reading Scale of 3.1 months. The pupil attitude questionnaire return showed a rating of 95% on the area of enjoyment in the volunteer tutor reading program. Work habits, neatness, completion of work, happier school attitude, improved self-concept caused improvement in peer relationship and adult-student relationship. All but three of the 115 students expressed a desire in continuing in the program.

Schoeller and Pearson concluded that volunteer tutors can be effective in achieving attitude change toward reading, school, and self-image.¹

The use of a differentiated staff will allow the teacher to establish close personal contact with pupils. Individualization, small group work, greater social and emotional growth as well as the opportunity for volunteers to exercise leadership and self-discipline will naturally flow from the use of paraprofessionals, volunteer parents and student-tutors.

Student-tutors have been the subject of several research studies. "The school, rather than the community or the parents, creates the environment within which the child conceives himself as unable to succeed and protects his battered self-image by choosing not to try."²


One such study under ESEA Title II funds was conducted in the Los Angeles County Schools in the hopes that reading success could be studied hand in hand with desegregation and integration. The high school tutors, after receiving training in the use of materials, equipment, and methods of teaching and assessing tutee progress were then paired one-to-one with pupils needing reading improvement. Results at the end of the summer session showed that the tutors had gained six months while the tutees increased three months in reading on the reading grade measured by standardized reading achievement tests. Absenteeism decreased by one-half among the tutors and 95% of the potential drop-out group completed high school as a result of this successful performance.

This study pointed out:

1. teaching is an effective method of learning
2. one's sense of worth and power is enhanced by success in a teaching role
3. success motivates behavior suitable for maintenance of a more positive self-image and improves school performance.

Fifth and sixth grade students reading at first and second grade levels were asked to tutor children on those levels in the study by Frager and Stern. Two counseling techniques were used to train the tutors. A traditional instructive procedure in which tutorial process was described, suggestions for working with young children were presented and questions on specific problems were answered. The tutors were given the support to keep them involved. The second counseling technique had five basic steps of defining goals, defining obstacles, specifying alternatives, identifying consequences of specific alternatives, and making selections among alternatives.

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The kindergarten pupils from disadvantaged areas were divided into three treatment groups; children taught by tutors who had received counseling by method one; children taught by tutors who had received counseling by method two; and a third group of children for the control group. Within each of the two experimental treatments half of the pupils were taught by tutors who had high scores and half by those who had achieved low scores on the Stanford Achievement Test.

The findings of the study were in favor of the kindergarten pupils who received tutor training over those who did not. Those tutored were found superior according to the difference between the pre- and post-achievement measurement of the McNeill ABC Learning Activities Test. The effects on the tutors were summarized as; the tutors gained in good morale, school attendance increased, satisfactory adjustment was made to the school setting. The underachievers of the tutor group showed the greatest impact from their experience.

The study demonstrated that achievement level makes little differences in the amount of learning attained by the tutee whereas significant differences in gains were made by the tutors. This study supports the view that low-achieving students make effective tutors of younger disadvantaged children and profit considerably themselves.¹

Thelen reported on studies at the University of Chicago where fifth graders tutored first graders in order to improve the fifth graders from slum area schools. The paper was prompted by the various tutorial schemes which have arisen independently in all parts of our large country, and the fact that educators feel that student tutoring actually works. A salient point of

the study was the helping relationship between students which was created and formally legitimized by the authorities in the school.¹

Hunter College in New York sponsored research involving thirty student teachers tutoring fifth and sixth graders and each fifth and sixth grader then tutoring a third grader on the lesson just taught by the college students. The benefits reported were threefold:

1. the classroom teacher had assistance in dealing with learning problems
2. older pupils gained new self-respect
3. college students created new learning activities

Student tutoring calls for teachers to cooperate across grade levels in an enterprise that is to the advantage of both. It invites recognition of all sorts of individual characteristics of pupils that are usually ignored. It makes creative thinking about lesson plans and activities the norm rather than the exception. It is also likely to interest and involve the parent group.²

The use of student tutors is a promising answer, especially if it were built into the school day on a regularly scheduled basis.

Methods of Recruitment

The studies mentioned previously proved the importance of parents, community volunteers, or student-tutor volunteers in a successful reading program. Research results affirm the benefits such cooperative service grant to all involved or who willingly involve themselves. What does recent literature outline as methods of recruitment? Who makes the decisions as to whom should be trained for such posts? Who are chosen or accepted for this volunteer service?

¹ Herbert A. Thelen, "Tutoring by Students," The School Review LXXVII (September-December, 1969), pp. 229-244.

² Ibid, p. 239.
Some of the suggested methods which appeared in literature were:

A. Send an explanatory letter and registration form to all parents.

B. Contact people personally by phone or attend local meetings, e.g., Guild, September Orientation, etc., and inform them of the program.

C. Explain the proposed plan through a parent meeting and in school bulletin.

Walsh has several suggested methods of recruitment.

Recruitment of volunteer aides is primarily an educational program—that is, educating the parent group to the needs of the school. Most volunteers will be from the parent group.

Personal contact by the Principal, teachers, or School Teacher-Aide Committee is perhaps the most effective method. If any of the staff already know someone whom they feel qualified to act as an aide, their names should be registered with the Teacher-Aide Chairman who will ask someone to call on them, or do it herself.

At registration of students, Parent-Teacher Group sign up sheets are presented with a check list of activities in which parents may wish to participate. Be sure the Teacher-Aide Program is listed as one of these activities.

Any response should immediately be acknowledged by a letter.

The need for aides might be made known by various announcements— from the pulpit, at Parent-Teacher meetings. The first PTG meeting of the school year should include on its agenda an announcement of the program and its aims. A sign-up sheet should be circulated at this meeting.

Another source of volunteers may be retired teachers living in the parish or members of the PTG who no longer have children in the school.

The best volunteer is the one who finds satisfaction and fulfillment in the work she is doing; the best recruiter is the happy volunteer!²

Lansinger made a list of possible volunteer aides from the incoming first grade families. Mothers who were free from pressing obligations such as small children at home were telephoned and asked if they cared to

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help in the school during the current school year. A ditto list of names, dates, and phone numbers of those able and willing to give regular aid as well as a list of mothers who could substitute when necessary was given to each mother so it would not be necessary to bother the school each time a regular mother volunteer needed replacement.\footnote{1}

Perkins takes into consideration the legal aspects of initiating a volunteer program in the school. These are the steps he considers important.

Check the laws of your state regarding the school's use of lay people. Interest a citizen group or groups. In the individual school, such persons will probably be members of the Home-School Association. Interest members who are vitally concerned with the school, persons who are well-thought-of by other members and who accept responsibility and get things done.

Secure the approval of the superintendent of the board of education. The board will have the responsibility of determining

a) legal and insurance coverage of the volunteers

b) medical standards (chest x-rays)

Define the objectives and policies of the program.

Enlist the cooperation of your teachers.

Anticipate space requirements.

Plan an arrangement for assigning volunteers and coordinating volunteer services.

Be guided by school policy regarding duties to which parents of children in the school should be assigned.\footnote{2}

Following on the ideas suggested by Perkins the writer looked for research on the legal aspect the states place on volunteer service. Tanner and Tanner made a national survey of state educational departments with the objective of determining the status and trends concerning the role and function of aides in contrast to the functions generally regarded as being in the domain of teaching. Fifty states responded to a mail questionnaire concerning:

\footnotetext{1}{Sr. Gerard Lansinger, "Mothers as Teaching Aides, Yes Indeed!" \textit{Catholic School Journal}, LXVIII (September, 1968), p. 50.}

a) legal status of teacher aides and regulations governing their duties
b) development of policy statements or guidelines by state educational departments defining and limiting the duties of teacher-aides
c) the role and function of teacher aides as perceived by the state department of education whether or not laws or guidelines are in existence.

The findings of this study were that ten states had laws regarding duties of aides; eleven states had policy statements or guidelines; twenty-nine states had neither laws or statements regarding teacher-aides.

The study closed with the remark, "The confusion regarding teaching and non-teaching approaches is growing and may well lead to conflict." ¹

This research paper was concerned with parents being used as volunteers in reading programs. Some parents, unable to spend time at the school, desire to do volunteer work. These may be called upon to do typing or clerical tasks in the home.

What are the personal qualifications to be looked for in the volunteers? Burgoon set forth a few she felt were important to a successful program.

Conviction and enthusiasm of what the program can and will do for the child, the teacher, and the school.
A belief in the contribution a volunteer can make and the capacity to support the volunteer in making his unique contribution.
Ability to relate positively to the children, to volunteers, to the faculty, and to workers in the community, eliciting and giving confidence.
Capacity to support rather than be supported. ²

Recruitment of students as tutors is less time-consuming because they are present in the school situation and can be encouraged to aid pupils. The self-esteem engendered in slower students in the intermediate or junior


high classes by such a position makes them willing and desirous of such a role. Careful scheduling must be maintained to assure the student-tutor of being able to help others without missing his own level of presentation and work.

Training Programs

Before beginning the training program, the staff of the school must be informed how this is to be done. One program which proved successful was outlined as follows.

The principal was the general administrator. The principal appointed a faculty member as a supervisor. This supervisor administered the program and offered in-service training for the aides. The supervisor was assigned an assistant teacher-aide coordinator acting as a liaison between the aides and the supervisor. The coordinator's main job was to advise the supervisor on the attitudes and abilities of the aides. "Instruction must be made more efficient by identifying levels of teaching responsibility and compensating those levels appropriately."\(^1\)

Walsh discusses the training period from a double viewpoint, namely the cooperation of the professional teaching staff and the orientation of the volunteer staff. As soon as the decision to initiate a Teacher-Aide Program has been made, the Principal should so inform her regular teaching staff.

Either at the last faculty meeting in the spring or the first one the following fall, the staff should become acquainted with the program, its aims, and something of the history and success of other teacher-aide programs in the diocesan and public school systems.

The staff should receive a copy of the Teacher-Aide Program Manual

\(^1\) Carroll L. Lang, Teacher Recruitment p. 53.
as soon as possible, and be given time to study it. At the next staff meeting, the individual teachers should be able to give reports on what types of help they could most use in their own classrooms and be as specific as possible in their requests. With the information assembled regarding the specific needs, the Principal and her Teacher-Aide Committee will have a much easier task in selection and assignment of volunteers to fill those needs.

The staff will attend the initial orientation meeting and workshop along with the volunteer aides.

The orientation of the volunteer staff starts with the initial interview and continues at the orientation and workshop meeting early in the fall term. After an aide has been assigned to her classroom teacher or other duty, her supervising teacher will be responsible for her complete orientation into the program and any in-service training necessary.

At the orientation workshop the beginning aides should be informed regarding:

1. Local school policies, practices and procedures
2. Expected professional ethics as applied to the school
3. Relationship between teacher and teacher-aide
4. Relationship with pupils

After assignment, the supervising teacher will inform her aide regarding:

1. The physical set-up of the classroom and school
2. Scheduling of time
3. Exact duties and their limitations
4. The necessity for keeping records of duties performed so that evaluation by the aide, teacher, and staff of the program will be valid

After the volunteer has been working for a week or two, the Teacher-Aide Committee Chairman of the Principal will conduct an interview with her to resolve any specific problems she may encounter. The Volunteer Staff will meet at least twice a semester to discuss in-service training, evaluation, and operational policies regarding the Teacher-Aide Program.

Wielgat gives a usable form to be followed on the in-service training day.

A. Send notices to the teacher-aides for this workshop in September to enable them to meet the faculty and committee members, and to also acquaint them with their responsibility in the program.

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1 Mrs. John Walsh, Santa-Rosa Program pp. 14, 15.
B. Distribute the Teacher-Aide Information, etc.

C. Introduce the faculty, committee members and teacher-aides.

D. Discuss the importance of professional ethics. (The faculty chairman should consider the principal in presenting this aspect of the workshop or any guest versed in this area.)
   1. Emphasize such points as: working as assigned, using materials and equipment as intended, accepting no gifts, believing in the dignity and worth of each man and measuring success by the progress of each student toward achievement of his maximum potential.
   2. Stress that the progress of the child is CONFIDENTIAL.
   3. Explain that this job is a serious responsibility, that the teacher-aide holds a PROFESSIONAL position, and that there are grounds for dismissal.

E. Discuss the role of the teacher-aide.

F. Explain any form sheets which the aides will be called upon to use.

G. Have one of the faculty members demonstrate a lesson with an individual child and a small group. In her demonstration the teacher should choose from among the materials selected for use in the program.

H. Present a procedure for the children coming to and leaving from the teacher-aide center. During the time of exchange of pupils, the aide may want to prepare for the next child or group.

I. Announce school regulations such as fire drills, parking restrictions, etc.

J. Explain the importance of the bulletin board for teacher-aides which includes:
   1. Progress charts
   2. Attendance sheets
   3. A place for announcements
   4. A list of professional readings

K. Explain the professional teacher-aide section or shelf in the library or teacher-aide center.

L. Explain the necessity of a chest x-ray.

M. Clarify any questions the teacher-aides may have.

N. Assemble the teacher-aides in the room to which they have been assigned. Each aide should be asked to select her own day(s) and time for attendance for the semester. This information is given to the coordinator who posts a general list on the teacher-aide bulletin board.
O. Enjoy each other and refreshments.¹

These have been helpful outlines but it must be remembered that these areas cannot be completed in a short time. Arcement maintains that in-service programs must be gradual.

1. The aide observes vocabulary drill techniques
2. The aide checks pronunciation of new words
3. The aide is assigned a student under the supervision of the coordinator.
4. The aide is given a series of ten lessons on techniques such as vocabulary, phonics, word analysis, tachistoscope, oral reading types and correction of errors, the importance of comprehension skills.²

Paraprofessional programs were initiated with workshops held during the summer to prepare the volunteers in three areas of concern:

1. Orientation to the school philosophy, organization, and classroom routine
2. Educational and learner-related objectives
3. Curricular understanding and exposure

This exposure referred to theories of learning, psychology in individual behavior and group behavior, and an understanding of how children learn to work productively while engaging in cooperative action in the classroom. New teaching trends and relationship to the school curriculum were studied.³

In areas where summer workshops were impossible a pre-service period was held before school opened at which the volunteers:

1. received an orientation to the organization of the school, its operational structure and educational process and programs;
2. examined the various roles and work-relationship with personnel

¹Jeanne Wielgat, *An Effective Program*, pp. 17,18.
3. were instructed on the overview of child growth and development with special attention to the problem of children as they strive for emotional, intellectual and social maturity.¹

The previous reviews were concerned with adult volunteers. Students act as tutors to younger students and must also receive training in order to assure success. Rossi referred to teenagers having received lessons on basic principles of reading and general instructions on what to do. Some teenagers used Botel's *How to Teach Reading* as a guide to their skills and lesson presentation. This in itself was a rewarding outcome because the tutors were proud to have something to contribute. There is no substitute for being needed. Even though the teenagers received training they found the lack of a thorough training plus interference of high school activities and tutee absentism the weakest points in their ability to give service.²

**Services of Volunteers in Reading Programs**

Statements of training programs showed that various methods were used according to the goals, objectives, and needs. Research pointed out that teachers preferred trained aides to those the teacher needed to train.

About two years ago the *Instructor* magazine surveyed the question, "Should Teacher-aides Teach?" Again in 1969 a random sampling of 100 teacher subscribers were asked to respond to: "What should aides be permitted to do?" In this amount of time teacher opinion changed from neutrality or opposition to an appreciation of and a personal desire for an aide. The


² T. P. Rossi, "Help; Students Help Teach Students," *Reading Improvement* VI (Fall, 1969), pp. 47-49.
results of the 1969 opinion poll can be summarized:

- 78% believed the aide should never teach an entire class
- 71% believed the aide should work with small groups
- 79% believed the aide should never meet alone with parents
- 32% believed the aide might sit in on parent conference
- 51% believed the aide should attend teacher meetings.^

Behavioral objectives were noted in the various training programs. Under the heading of behavioral objectives Dickman suggested these services for the aides:

- correct pupil tests
- arrange bulletin boards
- make games and learning devices
- repair torn books
- run errands when needed
- locate materials and supplies
- arrange and chaperone field trips
- operate audio-visual equipment
- read to children
- type for teachers (report cards, etc.)
- help in programmed instruction

Some volunteers can be resource persons to offer information to teachers regarding reading sources and valuable materials pertaining to a specific topic. The volunteer will be rewarded with an increased zest for learning and a feeling of being a link between the community and the school.^

Atwell's job description was divided into two categories, as shown:

- **Instructional paraprofessionals**
  - participate in daily and long range class planning
  - assist the teacher with small groups or individuals

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read stories to small groups or individuals
utilize special talents in music, art, etc.
guide children in work and play activities
give encouragement, affection, comfort
notice individual needs

Non-instructional tasks

keep attendance and health records
prepare instructional materials
arrange displays and bulletin boards
collect monies
check, store, take inventories of supplies
assist groups from place to place
arrange field trips

How can student tutors be of service? Several studies involved students preparing reading tapes of primary story books for the younger children. The tutors benefited by improvement in enunciation, pronunciation and oral reading skills such as interpretation of punctuation marks, word pace and fluency rate. The teacher benefited by the time saved and the interest added for the pupils by the variety of voices on the tapes. These lessons had purpose and relevancy for the teacher, the tutor, and the pupils.  

Walsh compiled a list of services under the title of "Teacher-Aide Activities Check List" and divided it into two areas: In the Classroom, Outside the Classroom.

In the Classroom

conduct spelling drill or test
conduct drill using manipulative devices - games, charts, flash cards
supervise writing drills
prepare flash cards of letters, new words, phonic games
read or tell a story - listen to reading
play the piano or lead singing
collect money, notes, etc., for the office

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set up audio-visual equipment
set up other class materials - distribute books, papers, etc.
put work on the chalkboard
help with room decoration - display students' work
help children with special reports
assist those who have been absent
check some types of homework with keys or answer sheets
act as room librarian
distribute and collect tests
conduct study hall
prepare and distribute materials for artwork
follow along as directions are given by the teacher, being sure the child has the right page, place, necessary equipment
assist children in keeping desks and equipment neat and orderly
remind children of directions given by the teacher, such as things to be taken home, things to bring to school, etc.

Outside the Classroom

type
answer the telephone
other clerical duties
escort students to and from class, bus, field trips
assist in the library
assist the nurse with eye/ear examinations
lunch supervision
correct keyed homework and tests
record grades

The writer felt that the field of possible services of volunteers in reading programs had been well outlined, defined, suggested and itemized. It was the writer's plan to adapt the areas from research which would benefit the volunteer service to be begun at St. Francis de Sales School.

The goals and objectives of such a program may be quoted:

The waste of precious hours in non-professional activities can be cut to a minimum. The combined effort of the teacher and her aide provides more individual attention for each student. The teacher is freed to use her time, training and skills more effectively. The mental and physical relief afforded the teacher improves the "climate of learning" and makes more effective teaching possible.

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1 Mrs. John Walsh, Santa Rosa Program, p. 30.

2 Ibid., p. 11.
CHAPTER III

UTILIZATION OF VOLUNTEER SERVICES IN THE READING PROGRAM

AT ST. FRANCIS DE SALES SCHOOL

After reviewing the recent literature and research on the use of lay volunteers in reading programs, the writer drew up a plan to be used by parents and other volunteers at St. Francis de Sales School in Lebanon, Ohio. The importance of such a program was apparent to all. Due to the small grade enrollment of the school the teachers were absorbed with double grades based on Goodlad's theory that students need to meet age levels above and below their own in order to prepare them for life's situations.

The use of paid nonprofessionals in elementary schools has received a great deal of attention in recent years. Stemming in part from the shortage of teachers and in part from the recognition of the fact that present day teachers necessarily engage in many routine clerical and administrative tasks that might be done by an assistant with less training a number of efforts have been made to include such assistants in the personnel structure. 1

With each teacher responsible to prepare lessons for a double grade, the use of volunteers seemed an answer to teacher needs. The services of the volunteer parents would be under the direction of the requesting teacher after basic steps of training had been accomplished. An ingenious teacher could plan many services which the volunteer would find

interesting and rewarding while pupils' needs would be better met.

Teachers and administrators have found the initiation of such a program to be both time-consuming and gradual. Each step must be measured by the yardstick of effectiveness. A basic objective was to aid each pupil in self-knowledge, self-acceptance, and self-growth. Communication on a one-to-one basis has proved a successful manner of attaining such a goal.

Parent involvement is time consuming. Preparations, explanation, discussion, etc., all make inroads on the little free time school people have. Dividends can be expected if the various programs are handled in a gradual, effective manner.

These dividends may be categorized as: parents support of the program; better understanding of the child's progress; the staff becomes more competent; provides for more individual help for the pupil. All of these add up to a more informed and sympathetic parent population.

The writer of this paper was also interested in the outcome of the volunteers' experience with education. People were not to be accepted into the program unless they had confidence in themselves and were willing to aid pupils on the road to success.

"The assumption is that more confidence in educational programs will result if people become involved and participate in these programs." 2

Recruitment and Training Program Methods

Recent literature and research showed the nature and importance of volunteers in the reading program. What would be the best method to follow


in recruiting more parents to join the already interested group in active participation at St. Francis de Sales? How should the training program be accomplished? Since a year of communication between the home and school had been successfully completed it appeared that the principal could undertake the following steps:

1. Present the idea to the Parish School Board and request a motion that the program be permitted and begun.

2. Present the idea and process to be followed to the Archdiocesan School Superintendent and to the Local Public School Superintendent.

3. Inform the school supervisor of the action already taken and request her aid especially in the in-service workshop area.

4. Contact the faculty and present the plans.

5. Request ideas from the faculty as to their outlook on the program, needs of the pupils, and the desired outcomes to be achieved.

6. Set up a Volunteer-Aide Chairman from the persons who first requested such an active program.

7. Prepare the faculty to direct in-service activities for the volunteers based on the reading materials and audio-visual machines to be used.

Steps one through three were of communication value and received greatest force from the public school which was already using a volunteer aide program.

The faculty of St. Francis de Sales School was anxious to launch such a program due to their knowledge of individual pupil needs and the possibility of achieving more individualized pupil learning by having the volunteer work with individuals or small groups.

The chairmanship was accepted by an interested mother who contacted many she thought would be interested in becoming more involved in education especially in aiding an individual child or small groups in reading.

While this ground work was being established the teachers were draw-
ing up lists of which pupils would be placed under the direction of the volunteer aides, which weaknesses were to be strengthened in each pupil, which methods and materials would best suit each child and each need. The principal studied these lists to see that the requests were in keeping with the goals of such a program.

The Chairman of the Volunteer-Aides was asked to invite all interested persons to meet with the principal in the school learning center for one hour on an afternoon most suitable to the volunteers. At this meeting the principal referred to the school philosophy and pointed out that the reading aid program was to be grounded in the training of the entire child and was to benefit the entire student body by freeing teachers of this small portion of individualization in order that teachers might reach more pupils. It was stressed that any weakness discovered in a pupil was to be kept confidential. The volunteers were urged to speak with the teacher or principal concerning these individual children so as to forward the progress of the individual. Goals of the program were outlined as:

1. To encourage and reinforce the student's academic performance
2. To foster positive feelings in the student regarding his abilities
3. To stimulate the pupil's interest in learning

After this groundwork was completed questions were discussed as to the size of the groups, the tasks to be assigned, the school areas to be used. It was decided that the groups would not exceed three pupils. Tasks would include:

1. oral reading of stories which the teacher had presented and discussed in order to achieve correct phrasing, pronunciation, and increase oral reading rate;

2. correcting of skill book exercises orally in order that the pupil might find and correct his own mistakes;
3. drilling with flash cards to increase sight vocabulary (the Dolch word and phrase flash cards would be used for this);

4. using the Merrill Phonic Skills Tapes in order to clarify consonant, vowel, digraph sounds with pupils weak in such areas;

5. taping oral reading under the volunteer's direction in order to aid upper level children in sight vocabulary and increase oral reading skills;

6. taping upper level pupils' voices reading primary books to be used by younger pupils to appreciate a story, to listen to the story while following the printed word, to read the story along with the taped voice, and finally to read the story alone;

7. using the Controlled Reader in order to increase sight word attack, correct phrasing difficulties, increase comprehension and speed, and improve eye span where necessary.

Finding workable areas was a task worth time and effort. The school corridor could be used very well all day long because it was wide, well-lit, and had many electrical outlets available. The school lunch room offered opportunities for the volunteers to work with individuals or groups. The church foyer could also be used for small group work as it is connected to the school, offers privacy, and has electrical outlets. The basement stairwell would lend itself to small groups especially for oral reading or skillsbook correction. Areas of the learning center could be set up for listening centers or stations when earphones were used.

Before the group dismissed each volunteer informed the Chairman of the day she would be available, the time she desired to dedicate to the work, and the age level she wished to serve or aid. This produced a volunteer list whereby the school would be served two hours each morning and two hours each afternoon. The volunteers also agreed to meet on the third Friday of each month to discuss experiences, talk over problems, and obtain additional in-service training.

The time table of available services was given to the teachers who noted the time and day(s) the volunteer service was desired in keeping in
tact pupils and teachers time schedules.

A week later the group again met at the school to observe teaching techniques, styles, and pupil-teacher relationship in each classroom. The following day they returned to share impressions of the observations, to question areas which needed clarification, and to be introduced to the audio-visual machines they would use in the program. Each volunteer used the machines under supervision.

Fortified with many ideas the volunteers again met with the principal to learn the procedure to be followed at the time of their arrival for service. It was explained that a folder would be on the Health Room desk in which the volunteer would find a time schedule for her period of daily service. A slip of paper stating pupils to be aided, homeroom, teacher assigning the task, assignment to be accomplished, materials needed for the exercise, and the time the volunteer would have with the child or group was in the folder. The volunteers were urged to write comments concerning pupil reaction, type of assignment, amount of material covered, and any other notations she might wish to share. All lists were to be returned to the folder or placed in the teacher's mail case.

Others who wished to give volunteer services but were unable to spend time in the school proper were requested to:

1. type information on reading record cards
2. make flash cards for phonic training or reading lessons
3. repair torn books
4. type word lists for home study
5. make games and learning devices
6. correct vocabulary tests and record the results
7. record pupil progress on charts
The St. Francis de Sales Volunteer Aides in the Reading Program began formal action in October of 1970. It had been a gradual beginning with meetings, training periods, observations and discussions leading into the tutor type of program now in service in the school. At the opening there were five volunteer mothers. Now, four months later, there are twelve aides active in the school, three type either at the school or in their homes, and three correct tests and assignments at home. Others are creating learning devices to improve comprehension and retention. In fact one father asked to join the volunteers and give one morning a week to the junior high level.

Student tutors have also been helpful to the program. Underachieving junior high students have had their self-esteem rebuilt and have regained school interest by helping those younger than themselves. Taping primary stories for the younger readers has aided the student tutor in oral language skills, word attack and correct enunciation. The younger readers have been able to devote themselves to improvement of listening skills, word attack and oral reading skills. The teachers have been able to give more time to teaching, preparation lessons, skills building and comprehension checks.

As the services of the volunteers have become more relaxed and teachers and aides have become adjusted to the schedule, the volunteers have been able to render additional types of aid. Always these services are in accord with school ethics, child development norms, the school philosophy and correct learning processes.

Care has been given that the volunteers experience reward for their efforts. Progress made by the pupils due to the volunteers' efforts has been shared with the aides. Appreciation shown by the teachers to the
aides has always been a high-light of such a program. Any volunteer who has been too helpful to the child and has thus stunted the individual's progress toward independence in reading has been offered suggestions concerning proper teacher helpfulness in the learning process. Self-independence is an aim for every child.

Staff cooperation is extremely important. If the maximum benefit is to be realized from this program of volunteer aide in the reading program, all members of the staff are needed.

Having studied research, literature, and successful programs in use, the writer searched for the text which would express in an easy, fluent manner what the purpose of this program at St. Francis de Sales School in Lebanon, Ohio desired to attain. A document from Vatican II answered the writer's need.

"Moreover, the school sets up a kind of center whose operation and progress deserve to engage the joint participation of families, teachers, various kinds of cultural, civic, and religious groups, civic society, and the entire human community." ¹

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