



Building Your Buddy's Confidence as a Reader

You can probably think of times in your life where being less-skilled at something that others seemed to be able to do quite well made you feel inadequate or less-than. Many students experience similar feelings when they recognize they are not reading at the same level as some of their peers. This lack of reading confidence can be an obstacle to developing a positive self-image as smart and capable, and can impede their growth in reading when it causes anxiety or affects motivation. While there is no one quick fix to boost your Buddy's confidence, here are some things you can do to foster their confidence as readers over time.

Give Specific Praise

General praise such as "good job," or "nice work" helps to validate your students' efforts. However, when possible offer descriptive praise that is specific to what they did: "wow, you broke the word into parts and were able to sound it out" or "you used context clues to help you figure out what that word means." This type of praise lets students know exactly what they are doing right. It also helps to show that effort and use of strategies contributes to their success, not just innate ability.

Emphasize Progress

As wonderful as verbal praise is, it is even more powerful for students to see how they've improved. If your student has moved up levels since the beginning of the school year, point that out to them, "when we started you were reading Level E books and now we are working on Level G books." If they haven't made much growth in their levels show them other improvements like reading more smoothly the second time you read a book, or getting right some of the sight words they missed the previous week. Find tangible ways to show your student what they can do to respond to their claims, "I can't read" or "I'm stupid" rather than simply countering them with "yes, you can." As we discussed in your initial Reading Buddy Training, it's important to validate how students are currently feeling as you try to move them to a more positive outlook on their ability. Make a big deal of milestones, like moving to a new level or reading the first chapter of a new book, give your students a certificate from the trunk.

Share Your Own Experiences with Failure

Whether it was struggling with reading or math in school, failing your driving test multiple times, or not making it onto the varsity team, share with your students times when you had your own confidence shaken. Talk about ways you were able to meet and overcome such challenges. Sometimes knowing they have someone who can empathize with the way they are feeling can go a long way.

