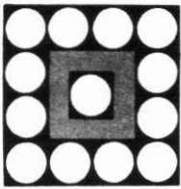


APR 18 1988



The Center for Early Adolescence

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Suite 223 • Carr Mill Mall • Carrboro, North Carolina 27510 • (919) 966-1148

April 14, 1988

Chuck Holland
Montgomery Ward
619 West Chicago Avenue
Chicago, IL 60610

Handwritten:
Dan Bassil
Nice piece
Chuck

Dear Mr. Holland:

Per a previous conversation, I am forwarding you a copy of a press release describing the Center for Early Adolescence study that cited the Montgomery Ward-Cabrini Green literacy program as one of the best in the nation. The findings of this study will be released as a book entitled Adolescent Literacy: What Works and Why by Garland Publishing in June. (See enclosed chapter from the book on the Montgomery Ward program.)

Should you require additional information for your communications efforts on Adolescent Literacy: What Works and Why, please contact me at the number above.

Thank you.

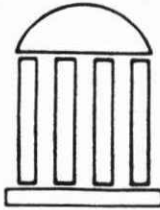
Sincerely,

Handwritten signature: Kitty Marley

Kitty Marley
Marketing and Communications Manager

Encl.

P.S. An article on Adolescent Literacy: What Works and Why and a profile of the Montgomery Ward program will appear in the April 20 issue of Education Week.



NEWS

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4/6/88

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EDITOR'S NOTE: Attached is a list of the names of the programs profiled in the UNC book, contact people and phone numbers to help the media with local angle stories. For more information about the book, call Kitty Marley at the UNC Center for Early Adolescence at (919) 966-1148. For N.C. broadcasters, audio tape will be available on the Carolina Newsline, 1-800-UNC-NEWS.

UNC Center Tracks Nation's Best Literacy Programs REACHING 10- TO 15-YEAR-OLDS BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE KEY TO NATIONAL FIGHT AGAINST ILLITERACY: RESEARCHER

CHAPEL HILL -- Reaching American students who have problems with reading and writing before they leave the middle-school grades is the key to making a dent in the nation's high illiteracy rate, says the co-author of a new national study.

"We don't call a 13-year-old who can't read illiterate, but we will when that same person turns 18," said Judith Davidson, a member of a University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill team that just has completed a search for the nation's best literacy programs for 10- to 15-year-olds.

"When a younger person is in trouble with reading and writing, we assume there will be somebody there to help them," Davidson said. "Unfortunately, our study shows that the middle-school students are a forgotten age group although their need is particularly great. Illiteracy is every bit as serious a problem for adolescents as it is for adults."

Middle school-age students who cannot read may be headed for the ranks of the 72 million American adults who are completely or functionally illiterate. Many of them drop out of school, and illiteracy in this age group also has been linked to high teen-age pregnancy rates, drug and alcohol abuse and juvenile crime.

Six percent of all 9-year-olds in the United States do not have basic reading skills, according to a 1984 study. Forty percent of the 13-year-olds cannot read and understand their textbooks. By age 17, 16 percent of those students who still are in school have not improved.

(More)

Such statistics were part of the reason the UNC Center for Early Adolescence undertook a three-year national search for successful literacy programs for 10- to 15-year-olds. Since 1985 the team has reviewed more than 350 programs recommended by educators, researchers, youth workers, social workers and other experts.

After sifting through questionnaire responses and a round of telephone interviews, the list was trimmed to 32 programs, which were visited by the center team. Profiles of some of the programs visited are part of a book, "Adolescent Literacy: What Works and Why," due out from Garland Publishing in New York this summer.

Programs making the list are everywhere from Fairbanks, Alaska, to New York City. Sponsors include school systems, businesses like Montgomery Ward, social service agencies and churches. Teachers' approaches include focusing on reading comprehension skills, encouraging students to become independent readers and building their vocabularies through field trips.

"These programs have experienced remarkable success in working with older beginning readers and writers," Davidson said. "They have helped students improve their skills and return to the mainstream of school life."

The most important ingredient in the successful programs is that students actually read and write.

"If the students in classes that are supposed to help them learn to read are only filling out worksheets, they may not be able to transfer that learning to reading textbooks or newspapers," Davidson said.

The best programs also meet developmental requirements that the center found applicable to early adolescents. The programs have structure and clear limits, and students interact positively with peers and adults. Teachers also firmly believe that the students can learn to read and write.

"Successful programs engage students who have been alienated from reading and build self-esteem by showing them that they can become successful learners," Davidson said. "As a result, students leave these programs with confidence that they can have more options in the future."

The center looked at three main categories of programs -- those operating during the school day, after school or in the summer.

In Kenosha, Wisc., a federally funded reading program developed by the local school district in 1965 has been so successful it has been used as a model in 28 other states. The program enrolls more than 1,400 students in grades K-12.

(More)

Teachers find topics that will interest students and allow them to build critical thinking skills. For example, a visit to a local tool manufacturer resulted in students writing about the trip using new vocabulary words such as "torque." Other assignments have included reading about careers, filling out a job application in class and visiting a newspaper.

In the East Harlem section of New York City, 2,500 students are enrolled in another federally funded program known as STAR (Structured Teaching in the Areas of Reading and Writing). The program's approach contradicts many conventional myths about remedial readers by using the same approaches normally reserved for accomplished readers. The district has the highest reading scores in city school districts with high minority student populations. In 1985, 63 percent of the students were reading at grade level, up from 25 percent in 1973 before the STAR program was created.

Davidson said when she walked into a STAR program classroom, the first thing she saw were 24 three-foot-high bookshelves stuffed with books about every subject.

"It looked like a library. The message was, 'we're going to be reading here,'" she said. "You knew it immediately. The teacher knew what books she had, and she matched them with the interests of the students. The kids in that class really got a chance to find out that there were books they could enjoy."

Successful after-school programs mentioned in the UNC book included another New York City program called The Friendly Place, a combination bookstore, library and community literacy center. In Chicago, business volunteers tutor children from a public housing project one night a week through the Montgomery Ward-Cabrini Green Tutoring Program.

Davidson said summer programs also are an effective way to fight illiteracy. "Students who are at risk for school failure also are those who fall behind over the summer vacation," she said. "We found several programs that help these young people retain old skills and build new ones over the summer months."

In Fairbanks, Alaska, a six-week summer reading program sponsored by the Alaska Literacy Council trains students ages 14 to 21 with reading problems to tutor 5- to 19-year-olds with reading problems. Tutors must be from low-income families, have a juvenile court record or be under foster care. The tutors, who are assigned to students at least three grade levels below their own reading level, receive training in effective instructional approaches and basic job and living skills.

Davidson said increases in the reading scores of both students and tutors could be attributed to the Fairbanks program. "Just as important, though, is that the program excites both groups about reading," she said. "Young people who say they hate reading now drag their feet when they have to leave their reading tutor."

Davidson said teachers at other middle schools could benefit from the descriptions of successful literacy programs in the UNC book.

"We hope to provide a chance for them to look at what colleagues who have tried new ideas are doing," she said.

have limited reading skills, and some are dropouts. One of Palmer's favorite successes was one of these workers--a hard-boiled, surly young woman who was a beginning reader. The teenager began reading simple picture books to a handicapped child who used the center, over time forming a close relationship with her listener. By the end of her semester of service with The Friendly Place this young woman had read fifty-four books--more than any of the other workers.

The Friendly Place is a living illustration of the American Reading Council's and Julia Palmer's dream--a world where everyone can exercise the right to read, where everyone has books, where preschool and school children are read aloud to every day, and where young people can explore their future and their past through the written word. The Friendly Place has made that dream become real for many young people in East Harlem.

The Montgomery Ward-Cabrini Green Tutoring Program: A Corporate-Community Partnership

The Montgomery Ward corporate headquarters are on Chicago's north side, bordering the Cabrini Green Housing Project. Most of the area's residents have low incomes and struggle daily with the problems of surviving on limited resources. The housing project tends to receive more publicity for its problems than its strengths. Local newspapers periodically report on the gang warfare that plagues it, and it is this image of violence that sticks in the minds of most local citizens. The project is, however, home to many families with hopes and dreams for a brighter future for themselves and their community.

In 1965, concerned with the problems children in this community faced and believing they could make a difference to young lives, a group of Ward's employees decided to stay after work one night a week and share their skills and knowledge with the young people of Cabrini Green. The Montgomery Ward-Cabrini Green Tutoring Program, which achieved its twenty-first year of service in 1986-87, is the result of this unusual partnership between a corporation and a community. Founded, directed, and staffed by volunteers, it is an efficient and effective program.

The program's tutors work with all neighborhood children on a first-come, first-served basis, regardless of reading level. Because of the make-up of the neighborhood, many of the children are at great risk of failing in school unless they receive some outside encouragement. One of the attractions of the program to both parents and students is that it is not considered a remedial

From *Adolescent Literacy: What Works and Why*, by Judy Davidson and David Koppenhaver, Garland Publishing, 136 Madison Avenue, New York, NY, 10016, 212/686-7492.
In press.

program, although many of the participating students need extra help in basic skills.

The program is far larger and more complex today than it was in 1965. One evening a week, some on Tuesdays and others on Wednesdays, two hundred children from the nearby housing project and two hundred tutors from Montgomery Ward, as well as several other corporations, come to the old Ward's catalogue warehouse to learn, share, and grow. In the cavernous hall where shoppers used to place orders for merchandise, the students, ranging in years from 2nd to 6th grade, each spend an hour and a half with a tutor. Almost half of the students are in the 5th and 6th grades.

The purpose of the program is to build children's self-esteem so that they will be able to break out of the cycle of failure that is the future of so many of the residents of Cabrini Green. The tutors want to get the children to believe they can be successful. "If I tell you long enough that you can, you'll believe and do better," says Betty Stanford, a nine-year veteran tutor. The program considers itself one of the many interacting pieces in children's lives that can have an important effect on their success.

The program director, Daniel Bassill, an executive in Ward's advertising division, has been with the program more than fourteen years. His leadership is characterized by thoughtfulness and attention to good management principles. Working with Bassill to direct the program is a cadre of experienced tutors; the majority of the leader/tutors hold management positions at Montgomery Ward or other companies.

Good management is the first thought one has upon entering the tutoring area. "We try to run a tight ship here," says Bassill. The two large tutoring spaces are filled with tables, chairs, and several study carrels that provide special privacy for student-and-tutor pairs. The large library of reading books, skills workbooks, tutors' reference books, and educational games is neatly arranged on bookshelves in an easily accessible area. One bulletin board gives information about the upcoming 6th-grade graduation essay contest; another displays beautifully matted photographs of tutors and students.

As students enter the building, volunteers at the attendance desk check them in and supervise them until their tutors arrive. On Tuesday evenings the site is overseen by Pat Wilkerson, a mechanical engineer in his fifth year with the program. He roves the floor, giving support where needed.

"Attendance is very important," says Wilkerson. Because the program is voluntary, attendance is an important indication of effectiveness, and attendance records are scrupulously maintained. Bassill keeps cumulative attendance records that are figured weekly

on his office IBM-PC, then posted. Weekly attendance of students averages 90 percent, and tutors 75 to 80 percent. The program's computer-tallied statistics have also shown that 90 percent of the students return the next year, as do 60 percent of the tutors. This is an excellent example of the ways computers can be used to track mundane but very important details.

Because tutor attendance is lower than student attendance, the program employs substitute tutors, volunteers who are unable to make a firm commitment for the full school year but can participate frequently. When a student's regular tutor cannot attend, a substitute is assigned. Tutors who are consistent "no-shows" are soon dropped from the program. Hoping to avoid the unpleasantness of asking a volunteer to leave, as well as the effects on a student paired with such a volunteer, recruiters stress the importance of the commitment involved in tutoring when they interview prospective volunteers.

The friendly but clearly defined work environment reflects the spirit of the tutoring sessions. At each table, student-tutor pairs are closely engaged in their work. At one, a tutor reads a story aloud to a child; at another, a pair pores over the *Tutor Tattler* newsletter and makes plans for upcoming events, perhaps an essay contest or a field trip; still another pair plays an educational game from the many on the games shelf.

In another section of the room a tutor helps an older student with his handwriting. She has him write a single letter in the air, using his whole arm, before he writes it on paper. She praises him frequently. The student is focused, concentrating with all his power, trying to do his best on a task that is difficult for him.

Chrissha, an 11-year-old, is working with Annette Skaggs, a substitute tutor. Chrissha knows and likes books. Some of her favorites are *Ramona Quimby*, *The Littles*, and *How to Eat Fried Worms*. She believes the program has helped her improve her reading and writing skills. For the Halloween essay contest, she wrote a story about a lighthouse.

In most cases instructional activities center on sharing a good book, working on specific skills, or finishing homework. The program directors particularly stress developing a positive and consistent relationship between tutor and student, more than a particular method of instruction.

Doris, a round-faced 10-year-old with an infectious smile, is deeply engaged in weaving a potholder on a little metal frame. This is Doris's first year in the program and the first time she has ever tried weaving. As she puts it, she "crashed" one of the program's parties last year and liked it so much she was determined

to get into the program this year. "I like my tutor. I like the people who work here."

Doris's favorite activity is using the computers. The computer area, like all of the tutoring area, is well organized, clean, and neat. It contains workspaces around five PC Commodore 64s. Ken Cartossa and Don Bohling, the volunteers in charge, spent one summer reviewing the software and planning their eight-week class in basic programming. By the end of the course, each student should be able to write a ten-line program. Some have already passed that goal.

Later in the evening Doris plays a computer math game. "I did it! I did it! I did it!" she squeals with delight, smiling widely as she answers another question correctly.

Students attend because they want to. "I like the tutors. They care. It's fun. At first I hated math, but not anymore," says Octavio, a former student and now a "milk kid," one of the junior assistants the program employs to pass out snacks.

The program has a long waiting list. Young people hear about the program from family, friends, or school. On admission, each student's parents must sign a permission slip allowing the program access to their child's school records and giving the tutor the right to confer with teachers at school. A volunteer takes the permission slip to the school and collects it when the school records have been copied. This information goes into the student's cumulative record in the program's files. The student's tutor is allowed to review the material but must sign and return the folder to the program staff.

Because the program's cutoff is at 6th-grade level, the young adolescents who attend are usually 10 or 11 or, occasionally, 12 years old. Sixth-graders receive royal treatment and a special graduation. Parents would like the program to work with their children through junior high and high school, but the program leaders have been reluctant to take on that responsibility. "We would like to extend beyond the 6th grade, but don't feel competent to provide the extra services we think adolescents need," says Bassill.

Though students wait eagerly to join the program, tutors must be recruited. Each fall Vanessa Lowery, who is in charge of recruitment, sets up booths in the three Montgomery Ward buildings, at the Quaker Oats Corporation, and at the Moody Bible Institute. There is no formal screening process. Lowery's team of recruiters, looking for people with sincere interest, try to impress potential tutors with the responsibility of the commitment they are making when they decide to join the program, but they are also

enthusiastic about the benefits of tutoring. Tutoring is a good place to meet new people with similar commitments to improving the quality of young people's lives. One good example is Alan Tyson, a tutor in the program for eighteen years, who works in textiles. He joined the program because he was new to Chicago and wanted to get involved in the community. He has since introduced many friends to tutoring.

The program makes use of tutors' professional skills and special interests whenever possible. When they join the program, tutors are asked to fill out a skills and interests inventory. Program leaders use the information to get special help, such as a pianist for the 6th-grade graduation, or a textile artist to design a banner.

Karen Glazer is in charge of tutor support. She finds that the best training comes from pairing experienced tutors with beginners. She does this through monthly meetings where tutors can get together in a relaxed atmosphere to discuss their concerns. Other support includes a tutor guidebook, a yearly tutoring calendar, and a tutor newsletter. The newsletter is distributed through the work file that the program keeps on each student, which is picked up by the tutor at the beginning of every session.

In 1985-86 the Montgomery Ward-Cabrini Green program teamed with the Fourth Presbyterian Church tutoring program to reinstitute an annual workshop on the teaching of reading and writing. Reading professionals led the workshop, which was aimed specifically at the volunteer tutor and held on a Saturday so volunteers could easily participate. Forty Montgomery Ward-Cabrini Green tutors attended. At the workshop Glazer learned about Jim Trelease's *Read Aloud Handbook*.¹ Now she includes reading aloud in her sessions with her student.

The volunteers' companies provide more than personnel. Montgomery Ward is the major funder of the program, providing the space and utilities free. Also, Ward's United Way Fund pays for two part-time secretaries from Moody Bible College. Quaker Oats makes an annual donation that pays for transportation of its volunteers to and from the program, as well as field-trip transportation for volunteers and students.

One especially valuable feature of the program is the strong parent support group that Stanford has developed. In her position as a project leader, and also as a systems analyst for Montgomery Ward, she is a professional staff trainer. She uses the same techniques to run parent workshops that she uses for her Ward's training sessions. "Our parent workshop was one of the biggest eye-openers we had," she stated. "They worked as well as any business leaders I've known."

At their first meeting she had the parents form groups of five, choose a leader, and discuss and choose three topics to work on. She asked them: What do you expect out of the program? How could you help this program? What would you like to see changed? The parents agreed on four tasks they could perform to help the program:

1. Collect materials to use in tutoring.
2. Collect and distribute clothing for children in need.
3. Assist in calling parents about tutoring.
4. Set up escort teams to bring children to and from tutoring.

They quickly began work on their tasks and implemented their suggestions.

The parents likewise asked Stanford to organize workshops on topics of interest to them. Topics for one recent year were stress management, drug abuse, and parents and teens. The parents are also planning a roller-skating field trip for themselves. Nine parents have been working on a parent newsletter. This has brought them into contact with NYACK, a local political-action group, which supplies the newsletter with information on many upcoming events of interest to Cabrini Green residents.

The Montgomery Ward-Cabrini Green program has found its parenting group to be a remarkably successful source of support. Initially staff members were skeptical about attempting to organize parents, because of reports in the press of failed attempts to engage parents from this kind of neighborhood, as well as discussions with staff of similar programs. Their success may be attributable to the way in which they approached parents: as capable fellow adults.

Youth workers and educators can learn some important lessons from the innovations the Montgomery Ward-Cabrini Green Tutoring Program has adopted from the world of business management. For example, using computers to keep track of program records is efficient. The records are always up-to-date, accurate, and useful in ongoing program evaluation. Stanford's parent group is also a successful application of management principles.

The Montgomery Ward-Cabrini Green Tutoring program stands out from the rank and file of volunteer tutoring programs. For more than twenty years these business volunteers have worked to shape an effective program that does make a difference in the lives of the children who live in Cabrini Green. They have been successful in many cases. For instance, one of Bassill's former

students has graduated from Memphis State University. The success of this one student exemplifies the goal of the program. As Paula Ferguson, the program treasurer, says, "If one person believes you are special, it can break the cycle of failure."

**The Highline Indian Tutoring Program:
A Cross-age Tutoring Program Serving Native Americans**

In the 1950s the federal government established Seattle as an urban relocation center for Native Americans who wished to leave their reservations, thereby attracting members of many different tribes to the Pacific Northwest. By the mid-1980s the Highline School District in Seattle, Washington, was serving nearly seven hundred Native American students from sixty different tribes. In the district the Native American high-school dropout rate is 30 percent, but the total dropout rate may be much higher, because some students drop out before high school.

The Highline Indian Tutoring Program works with students from this group who are at high risk of failure in school. "We try to hold children up in the water while we teach them to swim," explains its director, Cathy Ross. Teenage tutors from local high schools and colleges are trained to work with Native American students in an after-school tutoring program that builds students' self-esteem while helping them to improve their academic skills.

For many Native American children in the Seattle area, the Highline program may well be a critical factor that weights the balance towards future success. The 1986-87 after-school program, for example, included three new 9th-grade tutors who had once been students in the program. The positive experiences they had had in the tutoring program not only helped them to increase their academic achievement but helped them to see themselves as competent enough to lend a helping hand to others in the same position.

Ross believes that many of her students have trouble with classroom instruction, not because they are disadvantaged, but because their cultural backgrounds and learning styles are not compatible with the way they are taught in school. When teachers and students have been brought up in cultures with contrasting values and learning styles, misunderstandings can occur. A study of Navaho children has drawn thoughtful conclusions about this issue:

It is difficult to assess how a growing child conceptualizes his world, but it is likely that in every classroom there are

**PRESS CONTACTS FOR ADOLESCENT LITERACY PROGRAMS PROFILED IN
ADOLESCENT LITERACY: WHAT WORKS AND WHY**

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