



# Overview

1. Implementing *Reading Together*<sup>®</sup> at secondary level
  - Helping at Home
  - Helping at School - adult and/or senior student volunteers
2. Feedback from secondary teachers
3. Critical success factors at secondary level

# 1. Implementing *Reading Together*<sup>®</sup> at secondary level

## Using *Reading Together* for the first time in a secondary school - a case study

- Margaret, the 'reading teacher' in a secondary school, asked for help to implement *Reading Together*. She was an ex-primary teacher, employed for 12.5 hours per week in a school with approx 1500 students.
- Approximately 45% of Year 9 intake were reading between 7 and 12 year levels (a consistent pattern across 9 other secondary schools in Canterbury)
- First two years of *Reading Together* implementation - Helping at Home:
  - 91 students (+ siblings), 130 parents, 5 subject teachers, 1 counsellor, 2 Workshop Leaders (Margaret and Jeanne)
- Significant improvements in students' reading of meaningful texts (i.e. accuracy, self-correction and understanding)
- Very low cost for school, no cost for families, workshops held in evenings

# 1. Implementing *Reading Together*® at secondary level

## Using *Reading Together* for the first time in a secondary school - a case study

- Students reported that they were pleased to have their parents' help
- Parents appreciated the opportunity to find out how to help their children

*It was helpful to know to wait to give him time to work it out and to praise him. He is now enjoying reading. A parent*

*I enjoyed it and learnt more. I just wish it was going years earlier. A parent*

*It was very worthwhile and has helped with all reading with our 3 children. A parent*

- Borrowing from reading resource room (stocked with over 4000 resources) exceeded borrowing from school library

# 1. Implementing *Reading Together*® at secondary level

## Using *Reading Together* for the first time in a secondary school - a case study

- Implementing *Reading Together* with adult volunteers
  - approximately 11 volunteers each year (many on a continuing basis e.g. 7+ years)
  - approximately 30 students supported each year
  - each student supported during two 30 minute sessions a week
  - students showed obvious benefits, and some made rapid gains

*I enjoy working with students on a one-to-one basis and I feel satisfaction when they improve even slightly. I see a great need to help students improve their reading ability.*  
An adult volunteer

*It was good. It helped us read and understand. I would have liked to continue.* A student

*There is an obvious gain in general attitude and self-esteem. Students are more interested in reading and learning.* A subject teacher

# 1. Implementing *Reading Together*® at secondary level

## Using *Reading Together* for the first time in a secondary school - a case study

- Implementing *Reading Together* with senior student volunteers

*I have greatly enjoyed helping the students' understanding in reading as well as watching them develop their vocabulary skills.*

*It has been an immense pleasure teaching and talking to other age groups and I am pleased with the progress that two students in my care have developed.*

*I believe this is an opportunity to help others, especially for those interested in teaching.*

*I find it very informative to tutor someone who doesn't find reading easy.*

*It has taught me patience. I had to find new ways to rephrase what I was saying.*

*It went beyond just reading. It was helping with other problems that Year 9 students encounter.*

*It was satisfying to establish a good relationship with the student.*

# 1. Implementing *Reading Together*<sup>®</sup> at secondary level

## Using *Reading Together* for the first time in a secondary school - a case study

- Implementing *Reading Together* with a focus on reference reading
  - supporting 'competent' readers, many of whom struggle with reference materials
  - students and parents appreciated the reference reading workshops

## Special note re the research of Ruth Davidson-Toumu'a (Victoria University)

- Pacific students (almost all NZ born and educated) enrolled in first-year university courses:
  - were reading at slower than 'average' speeds
  - had more limited vocabularies (both general and academic vocabularies)
  - preferred strategies that indicate a passive, 'surface' approach to text and that were not as 'deep', effective or efficient as they needed to be
  - had negative feelings toward reading and about themselves as readers

# 1. Implementing *Reading Together*® at secondary level

## Using *Reading Together* in other secondary schools

- *Reading Together* has been implemented in other secondary schools in some parts of New Zealand since the early 1980s
  - workshops are almost always led or supported by an ex-primary teacher
  
- Presentations to various groups have included:
  - Secondary Reading Teachers' Association in Canterbury
  - NZRA national conferences in various cities
  - 'Jumbo Day' for secondary teachers in Canterbury
  - PPTA national conference in Wellington

## 2. Feedback from secondary teachers

*The workshops were the most satisfying part of my teaching career and over those 10 or 12 years I wish I had kept a record of how many parents, volunteer tutors (both adults and senior students) benefited from the workshops.*

*For some of the women tutors the confidence they gained helped them get back into the workforce, and the senior students would have taken those skills of working alongside children into their many and varied careers. Many went on to become really good primary teachers.*

*To my mind it is an extremely cost effective way of helping families relate well together with so few sessions.*

*Once the programme is established in a school, it grows from there.*

*Margaret, a teacher who implemented *Reading Together* in a large secondary school*



## 2. Feedback from secondary teachers

*Why would you involve parents [in Reading Together] at secondary? Because parents are thrilled to be able to learn a way of helping, they end up helping more than their own kids, some would join the tutor programme, and then go and get a job somewhere.*

*The adult doing the helping often improves their own reading, spelling etc.*

*Some had no cars and had to walk but it was surprising how they all turned up. These kids were mostly from low income families.*

Margaret, a teacher who implemented *Reading Together* in a large secondary school

## 2. Feedback from secondary teachers

*Some parents help other children in their extended families/communities e.g. younger siblings are usually reading competently when they arrive at secondary school 'No, I don't need help - mum helps us now.'*

*Some adult volunteers improve their own literacy levels, learn how to use libraries and access information, gain more confidence and then find employment.*



*Volunteer tutors receive letters of commendation for their CVs.*

*Some of the student volunteers working with the younger ones go on to be really good primary teachers.*

Margaret, a teacher who implemented *Reading Together* in a large secondary school

## 2. Feedback from secondary teachers

*The parents were very grateful.....some touchingly. Some told me appalling stories of teachers who had told them it would all come right, do not worry and other fob off comments. I even had tears of gratitude that I was honest.*

*The parents found the demonstration with a boy very helpful. The principal was so keen to get the programme under way and gave me such support. It was a great programme because we could work so closely with the boys.*

Joan, a teacher who implemented *Reading Together* in a large city school

## 2. Feedback from secondary teachers

*The results in terms of parent teacher child communication were excellent, as parents valued the opportunity to learn skills that would enhance their children's learning, and experienced working alongside the teacher for their child's benefit.*

*The outcomes of this process are more than reading enhancement. They foster a sense of partnership between parents, students and teachers. The process is affirmative guidance.*

*It was obvious that when a reading pattern is fostered in the home, by parents informed with helping strategies, the student benefits.*

Leona, a teacher who implemented *Reading Together* for 16 years in two different secondary schools.

# 3. Critical success factors at secondary level

Critical success factors for implementing *Reading Together*<sup>®</sup> at secondary level include:

- Keen, competent teacher(s) to lead workshops
- Clear focus i.e.
  - supporting teenagers who are struggling with reading, or
  - supporting teenagers who are struggling with (difficult) texts
- Special processes for engaging and supporting:
  - teenagers
  - parents/extended family (Helping at Home)
  - adult volunteers (Helping at School)
  - senior student volunteers (Helping at School)

# 3. Critical success factors at secondary level

Critical success factors for implementing *Reading Together*<sup>®</sup> at secondary level include:

- Ready access to lots of resources:
  - relevant, meaningful and well-written texts (factual and fiction)
  - high-interest for teenagers
  - easy/manageable texts ranging in difficulty from approx '6 years' upwards
- Informed support of principal/senior staff, librarians (school and community), teachers and counsellors
- Co-ordination of, and support/mentoring for, the ongoing work of volunteers (adults and senior students)
- 'Peaceful' spaces in which teenagers and parents/volunteers can read and talk together