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Book Buddies build strong bonds through reading

Year 11 students from Holland Park State High School are preparing to share their love of reading with Prep students from Marshall Road Primary School over the course of a five month Book Buddy program.

Aiming to help Prep students develop a love of reading at an early age, the program also assists the Prep students in developing strong prediction and questioning skills when reading.

Holland Park State High School head of English Fran Ilott said the Book Buddy program will see 15 volunteer year 11 students take on the role of Book Buddy and join 43 Prep students one morning a week.

“While the aim of the program is to help the Prep students foster a love for reading, the program also focuses on the importance of relationship building,” Ms Ilott said.

“The Prep students will stay with the same Book Buddy for the duration of the program, enabling the two students to develop a bond that transcends reading and allows the Prep students to see their Book Buddy as a role model and friend.”

Marshall Road State School early phase head of curriculum Tania Colvin said the program provided the Prep students with invaluable experiences.

“The Prep students learn to love reading both fiction and nonfiction as well as learn how to use the library and find books they are interested in,” Ms Colvin said.

“The program also helps them build their self-confidence, as they learn to work with unfamiliar people besides those in their class and in turn, they develop a strong relationship and connection to their Book Buddy.

“The favourite part of the program for the Prep students is the relationship they foster with their Book Buddy, we find that they end up feeling special and cared for by someone in the community. The most important part of the program academically is their exposure to all aspects of literature, as this is such an important part of their overall development and especially from this young age.”

Ms Ilott said Holland Park State High School began the Book Buddy program in conjunction with Marshall Road Primary School last year.

“The Book Buddies who volunteer enjoy spending their time with the Prep students,” Ms Ilott said.

“The Book Buddies know there are significant benefits to be gained from developing a love for reading from a young age and they also understand the importance of being able to read well.

“The Prep students take great joy in learning from their Book Buddy and they also enjoy having the opportunity to choose what book is read each week, though the Book Buddies will step in and try to persuade their Prep student to make a different choice if they feel it would be better.”
Ms Ilott said prior to meeting their Prep students the Book Buddies undergo a training morning where primary school teachers model how to read the books, provide guidance on effective verbal and non-verbal cues and show students how to develop questions to prompt the Prep’s to think about the text.

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For more information please contact Cassie Dellit 0411 351 160