



# Chapter 2

## Peer Reading Visits

In this chapter you will find:

1. The rationale of peer reading visits; an introduction of *My Bear Book*
2. Framework for the peer reading visits
3. Modules for each peer reading visit

### The rationale

The Reading Bear is a unique program that partners adolescents and pre-adolescents with school-age children from different socioeconomic and geographic backgrounds and school locations. As older students (peers) are entrusted with the care and education of younger students (buddies) they learn important interpersonal skills and develop responsibility; simultaneously, the younger buddies receive close attention and encouragement from older peers reading with them. Both students in the peer-buddy relationship learn the value of sharing knowledge and experiences with individuals from other social circles.

The Reading Bear peer-buddy sessions have been developed as a local service-learning program that may be used in all BC schools. They are organized as a step-by-step approach to provide guidance to the educators. *My Bear Book* was created specifically for the peer buddy visits. The content is based on the Ministry of Education Prescribed Learning Outcomes and Assessment (Appendix 2-A), the Ministry of Education Primary Program (Appendix 2-B), and Shared Learnings. Integrating BC Aboriginal Content K-10 (Appendix 2-C).

Themes such as making a new friend (*My Bear, My Buddy and Me*), transfer of reading to the home (*B is for Bear*), cultural diversity (*Bear Celebrates*), sleep hygiene (*Bear Bedtime*), valuing your strengths (*Special Bear*), World Earth Day (*Earth Bear*), World Happiness Day



(Happy Bear), and gratefulness (Thankful Bear) are visited throughout the year. See below table with outline of visits, themes, and schedule.

Visit 1	Chapter One: My Bear, My Buddy and Me	October
Visit 2	Chapter Two: B is for Bear	November
Visit 3	Chapter Three: Bear celebrates	December
Visit 4	Chapter Four: Bear Bedtime	January
Visit 5	Chapter Five: Special Bear	February
Visit 6	Chapter Six: Happy Bear	March
Visit 7	Chapter Seven: Earth Bear	April
Visit 8	Chapter Eight: Thankful Bear	May

The Primary Program is focused on all five domains of development:

1. Aesthetic and artistic
2. Emotional and social
3. Intellectual
4. Physical
5. Well-being

All of these domains, as well as social responsibility, are incorporated within the peer-buddy reading sessions.

*“Kindergarten children learn with their whole bodies, their minds, and their hearts. They learn best when the activities are play based, involving exploration and inquiry, with hands-on activities that engage all their senses and when the activities are developmentally and culturally appropriate”*

*-Full Day Kindergarten Program Guide, p. 8*

The domains outlined above are incorporated by using the Reading Bear Society’s *My Bear Book* activity book. The peer-buddy partners complete reading exercises and activities in each chapter that correspond to that school visit’s theme, (example: May, gratefulness theme, Chapter 8: Grateful Bear in *My Bear Book*). *My Bear Book* stays in the elementary school classrooms until the peers visit the following month, and may be taken home at the end of the school year.

The cornerstone of the RBS program is the relationship between the buddy and the peer, and the playful nature of this relationship. During group play activities with their peers, children are building relationships, combining ideas, compromising, developing oral narratives, and learning to take the perspective of others – key elements of social



competence, creative thinking, imagination, and early literacy (BC Early Learning Framework, p. 12).

Much of children's early learning takes place through play. Play is so important that its significance in children's lives is recognized by the United Nations as a specific right. The positive emotions associated with play are as important as the skills children are building in creating a disposition to enjoy learning and to embrace it with confidence (Full Day Kindergarten Program Guide, p. 13). We know that play is vital to young children's daily lives and promotes their healthy physical and intellectual development in ways that cannot be achieved by focusing on narrow pre-academic skills, such as counting to ten or learning the alphabet (BC Early Learning Framework, p. 12).

## Peer-Buddy Session outline

The peer-buddy sessions are organized by session and theme, with each session containing the following components. The rationale for each session is described.

### The main theme

The main theme helps inform and identify the subject of each session. Each theme is selected from a heart-mind curriculum that promotes the social and emotional well-being of children, as well as the major themes outlined in the guidelines for kindergarten children. An understanding of the health issues surrounding this age group is also a focus for some of the sessions.

### Goal

The goal gives general direction and purpose for each session.

### Objectives

The objectives clearly define the scope of the goal. Objectives are specific and include measurable and observable behaviours for each session.

### Curriculum

Each peer-buddy reading session incorporates the Ministry of Education's kindergarten prescribed learning outcomes (Appendix 2-A), as well as the new curriculum (Appendix 2-B) and the Shared Learnings: Integrating BC Aboriginal Content K-10 is included (Appendix 2-C).

