DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 355 473 CS 011 220

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TITLE A Selective History of the Howard Street Tutoring Program (1979-1989).
PUB DATE 93
NOTE 81p.
PUB TYPE Historical Materials (060) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS After School Programs; *Beginning Reading; Elementary School Students; Primary Education; Program Descriptions; Program Effectiveness; Public Schools; *Remedial Reading; *Tutoring; *Urban Education; Volunteer Training
IDENTIFIERS Chicago Public Schools IL; *Howard Street Tutoring Program; Illinois (Chicago)

ABSTRACT

Presenting a year-by-year account, this paper describes the origin and 10-year development of the Howard Street Tutoring Program, an after-school volunteer-staffed tutoring program in a poor Chicago, Illinois, neighborhood. The paper presents a selective history of the program, designed to assist second- and third-grade children who needed help in learning to read, from a supervisor's perspective. The paper concludes with a section that: (1) highlights some factors that contributed to the success of the program; (2) mentions some things that program participants would like to change; and (3) places this tutoring effort in the larger picture of preventing and remediating reading problems in the public schools. (RS)

A SELECTIVE HISTORY OF THE HOWARD STREET TUTORING PROGRAM (1979-1989)

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AUTHOR'S NOTE: This manuscript, heretofore unpublished, describes the origin and 10-year development of an after-school, volunteer-staffed tutoring program in a poor Chicago neighborhood. Detailed descriptions of such small programs are seldom found in the education literature, but they are needed if we are to understand how out-of-school tutoring efforts can make a difference in the education of poor children.

A SELECTIVE HISTORY OF THE HOWARD STREET TUTORING PROGRAM (1979-1989)

Shortly after I had arrived at National College of Education in the Fall of 1979, a colleague, Elaine Weidemann, asked me if I might have any interest in an after-school tutoring program she and a friend were trying to get off the ground in a poor community on the far-North side of Chicago. Anxious to become involved in the city, I responded, yes. I met a few days later with Elaine and her friend, Megan Tschannen-Moran, and thus began my ten-year involvement in helping to develop an inner-city tutoring program for low reading primary grade children.

Seymour Sarason (1972) points out that "doers"--creators of settings--seldom keep adequate records regarding the histories of their various endeavors. It is not surprising that people of action do not find the time to evaluate and record in writing the ongoing development of their projects (e.g., organizing to have a stopsign placed at a dangerous intersection, or planning and fundraising for a small daycare program in a local community center). However, Sarason stresses that without documentation as to how settings (two or more people coming together to pursue a common goal) come into existence, grow, evolve, decline, and eventually die, we will never be in position to learn from our experiences.

As we started our volunteer tutoring program back in 1979, I had every intention of keeping a careful record of its ongoing development. And I did manage to write a narrative describing

the program's first year of operation (Morris, Tschannen-Moran, & Weidemann, 1981). However, as the years went by and the tutoring program matured, I, the well-intentioned recorder, fell victim to Sarason's axiom; that is, I put most of what little time I had into directing the growing and changing volunteer program, rather than into documenting the nature of that growth and change. On the other hand, some records (e.g., test scores, tutor evaluations, minutes of tutor-supervisor meetings, even some systematic journal entries across a few of the years) have survived across ten years' time. Given this information to support my own memory of a decade worth of people and events, I will attempt to recapitulate the history of The Howard Street Tutoring Program. Although the account contains less detail than a community psychologist might desire, I believe that interested readers will benefit from the chronological description that follows.

Year One (1979-1980): Starting a volunteer tutoring program

Megan Tschannen-Moran, a young Northwestern University-trained educator, lived in the poor, Black-Hispanic neighborhood known as Jonquil Terrace. Jonquil Terrace, or "Jonquil Jungle" as police and cab drivers then referred to the four square blocks of apartment buildings and shops, was not unlike scores of other low income Chicago neighborhoods in 1979. High unemployment, low levels of education, welfare dependency, inadequate housing, drugs, and violent crime were common problems faced by the adults and children living within its borders. Megan and her husband, a minister, were part of a small but tenacious community group,

Good News North of Howard, that was trying in various ways to stabilize and improve the quality of life in the neighborhood.

One of the Good News group's projects, and they were not short on ideas or willpower, was to start an alternative school in two dilapidated storefronts that the group had rented on Paulina Street, less than one block North of the busy Howard Street El stop. Megan was in charge of this project. So that the local public school, only two blocks away, would not resent the encroachment of a perceived competitor, and also because Megan was sincerely concerned about the children in that public school, she was determined to offer some type of after-school tutoring for the public school children. Her idea was to end the Good News alternative school's day at 2:30 P.M., the same time that the public school dismissed its students. Then, as the Good News students departed, a group of low-reading public school students could walk over to the alternative school (the storefronts) and receive tutoring in reading from adult volunteers.

I was very interested in Megan's concept of an after-school volunteer tutoring program. Having just completed my doctoral training in reading education, I was convinced that one-to-one tutoring, even only two or three times per week, could make a difference in poor children's literacy development. I also liked the idea that this was a grass-roots, community-based initiative, one that would be free of bureaucratic haggling. Finally, I was curious about the potential effectiveness of adult volunteer tutors. I knew that I could teach children to read in a one-to-

one situation, but could we train volunteers with little or no background in reading to become effective tutors? This was the challenge.

Megan, Elaine, and I, each of us excited about the possibility of a tutoring program, wasted little time. We had two meetings (one hour each) in which the three of us planned strategy and divided up initial tasks. Surprisingly, we were in close agreement regarding some important decisions that would have long-range implications: for example, selection of the children who would be tutored, selection of tutors, and development of a tutoring plan (methods and materials for teaching reading).

Selecting the children. A first step was to determine the age and reading ability levels of the children with whom we would be working. Would we tutor pre-schoolers and struggling first graders, seventh and eighth grade remedial readers, or both of these groups and all ages in between? After some discussion, we decided to concentrate on third grade children who were reading at a first grade level or below. There were several reasons for this choice:

1) By narrowing the reading level at which we would be tutoring (beginning readers only), we believed that the training of volunteer tutors would be greatly simplified. It is one thing to provide volunteers with techniques that can be used with first grade readers; it is quite another to provide them with the variety of techniques and amount of knowledge required to work successfully with children reading anywhere from a first grade to

sixth grade level. Also, we reasoned that the progress made by beginning readers would be more visible and concrete, allowing both the children and neophyte tutors to gain confidence in their respective abilities.

2) By choosing third grade beginning readers as our target group, we anticipated little resistance from the public school about letting children attend the tutoring program. When children have not learned to read in the first two years of school, third grade teachers and their principals are generally receptive to any type of resource help that is available.

3) A final reason for working with third graders was that we believed we might be able to turn some of these children around educationally. If they could learn to read, if they could acquire some competence in this all-important area, they would be in a better position to benefit from their remaining nine years in school.

After we had settled on third grade beginning readers as our target group, Megan visited the principal of the local elementary school to explain our program and ask for his cooperation. The principal quickly referred us to the building reading supervisor, who responded positively to our idea and informed us that there would be no trouble finding third graders who desperately needed help learning to read. The reading supervisor, together with the two third grade teachers, readily agreed to comprise a list of the "lowest-reading" third graders in the school. They assured us that there were a dozen or more children who were struggling in the Preprimer or lowest level books of the school's basal

reader program. In the teachers' opinions, failure to master basic phonic skills was the major stumbling block for these low readers.

Selecting the tutors. Next we had to find tutors. Should we recruit large numbers of volunteers (from the immediate neighborhood, local colleges, suburban churches) and supervise their tutoring efforts? Or should we do the tutoring ourselves? Obviously the significant issue of size of program was involved here. We all agreed that a successful start to the program would be very important to both children and tutors. We reasoned that in the beginning the smaller the number of tutors, the easier it would be to discuss our mutual problems, correct our mistakes, and thereby establish a smooth-running operation. We could always expand the program at a later time. Therefore, we decided to "start small" and assure some degree of quality control by, in the beginning stages, doing the tutoring ourselves. Two friends, both college graduates with no teaching experience, joined Megan, Elaine, and me, and thus our first tutoring group numbered five.

Developing a tutoring plan. Ideally we wanted to work with the children at least three times per week immediately after school. However, it happened that Wednesday and Friday were the only afternoons all five tutors were available. Thus, the tutoring schedule was essentially a product of necessity (3:30-4:30 P.M. on Wednesday and Friday). We did not rejoice at the prospect of tutoring third graders after school on Friday, but we had no choice.

With a schedule in place it was necessary to provide some

pre-service training to the tutors before the children showed up at the door. Of the five tutors, two were totally inexperienced in teaching reading and therefore needed some information about teaching techniques and some direction about how to get started. I provided pre-service training to the group in two one-hour sessions. The following assumptions underlay the training:

a) Children learn to read by reading, just as they learn to ride a bicycle by jumping on and trying to ride it. Therefore, the most valuable tutoring technique is to support beginning readers in their attempts to read interesting stories.

b) Children who are having difficulty learning to read need the semantic and syntactic support offered by good stories written in natural (as opposed to formula) language.

c) Phonics instruction should have a secondary role in a volunteer tutoring program, although such instruction should be provided when needed.

d) Tutoring sessions should be interesting and supportive, but work-filled. Minutes spent reading is an important consideration.

Based on the assumptions listed above, the pre-service training sessions included short explanations of several language-experience teaching techniques:

1) How to take dictation from a child. (Child dictates a personal narrative and the tutor writes it down.)

2) How to guide the reading of a dictated experience story.

3) How to echo-read with a child. (Tutor reads a page or two of a simple book slowly but with expression; child then "echo-reads" the same page(s).

4) How to support read. (Child and tutor alternate reading aloud pages in a book, with the tutor anticipating and quickly providing the child with help on difficult words or phrases.)

5) How to organize a one-hour lesson. For example:
   - re-read old dictation
   - take new dictation
   - review word bank (e.g., play board game with sight words)
   - echo- or support-read a trade book or basal story
   - read a good children's literature selection to the child

Two one-hour training sessions allowed only a brief explanation of these tutoring ideas. Our plan was to elaborate on and refine the use of the language-experience techniques by holding weekly discussions on Friday afternoons once tutoring got underway.

At this point, only one month after our very first meeting to discuss the "possibility" of a tutoring program, we were ready to begin working with "live" children. Looking back, it is clear that we made some good initial planning decisions; however, we also had much to learn. Interestingly, our major concern before the program began was whether third graders who were experiencing considerable academic frustration six hours each day in school would consistently attend an <u>after-school</u> program where the emphasis was on reading.

Fall. Our program officially began on a Wednesday afternoon in mid-October, 1979 when three third graders, two girls and a boy, showed up at the storefront to be tutored. One of the tutors had stopped by the school to meet the children and escort them on the two-block walk to the tutoring center. When the children arrived, three of the tutors paired off with them in corners of the room (the storefront was really two long, narrow rooms separated by a thin wall) and began teaching immediately. The other two inexperienced tutors observed the initial language-experience lessons from a discreet distance. The children were shy, but they obviously enjoyed the one-to-one attention and readily participated in the lessons.

After observing for only two sessions (one week), the two novice tutors expressed an interest in getting started. Therefore, two more children joined us the second week and we continued on, now with five tutor-child pairs. On Friday afternoons following the tutoring sessions, the five tutors met for 30-45 minutes to discuss teaching strategies and teaching problems, as well as to share information about the children. We decided that some of the children were ready for support-reading in easy books, so we devised a system whereby first grade books could be transported back and forth between the storefront and the National College of Education Reading Center. The Friday afternoon tutor meetings seemed important not only for the sharing of information but also for building a spirit of camaraderie and commitment among the participants. We were off to a flying start.

Approximately six weeks later, we had lost 40% of our program. One child had been forced to withdraw because of family problems, but her place was quickly filled. A second child stopped coming of her own volition. However, when two of our tutors, the two with no prior teaching experience, quit in late November, we obviously had reached a crisis point. The elementary school was now sold on the program. We were working with four of their lowest third grade readers, and they wanted us to accept several more. However, we had no tutors for these youngsters; in fact, we had to face the problem of why we had lost two tutors who had started out with a great deal of enthusiasm.

We eventually reasoned that the inexperienced tutors who had dropped out had not received enough support and instruction, and therefore had felt unsure about what they were doing. Because all five of us had been tutoring simultaneously, there had been no supervision during the tutoring sessions. No one had been available to walk around during the sessions and make suggestions, provide feedback, or model teaching techniques. Each tutor had essentially been alone with his/her child, and for the inexperienced, this had proven to be a frustrating, even threatening situation. We decided that more supervision and support would be needed if and when we could find new tutors.

Winter. In early winter the tutoring program was facing some conflicting pressures. Coming to tutoring had begun to be perceived as a privilege in the third grade classrooms. Children were literally begging to be admitted into the after-school

program, and the third grade teachers provided us with a list of children who needed the reading help badly. No longer was it necessary for us to stop by the school and escor the children to the tutoring sessions. They came over by themselves immediately after school and banged on the doors to be let in.

With the external pressure to take in more children (and every volunteer group instinctively "wants" to serve more children), we were forced to consider expanding the program. At the same time, we were worried about our earlier tutor defections and the causes (still unremedied) underlying them. We did not want to begin "throwing" volunteer tutors at kids and have the tutors quit a few weeks later in frustration. There was some discussion and disagreement among the three of us who were still tutoring about how fast we should move in enlarging the number of children served.

When in December a Catholic nun and four of her high school students volunteered as tutors, our sincere desire to serve more children, coupled with the school's requests for help, tempted us to ignore our inclination to proceed cautiously. We told Sister Judith and her students that they could begin tutoring right away, and went back to the school for three new children. My responsibilities at National College were predictably growing larger, so I decided it would be a good time to discontinue my own tutoring and instead begin to supervise, on a once-per-week basis, the tutoring efforts of the new volunteers. We now had seven children, seven tutors, and one part-time supervisor. But not for long!

Looking back, in the context of the whole year, it is difficult to evaluate the rightness or wrongness of our December decision to start so many new and inexperienced tutors at one time. But the immediate effects of the decision were chaotic. There was little preservice training for the new tutors, just a few days of observation. Once they started tutoring, the high school students experienced confusion about what to do, frustration in managing the children, and after a few weeks began to attend so erratically that we were forced to ask them to reconsider their commitment. As we watched the high school students drop out of the program one by one, we felt somewhat responsible for their negative experience. We resolved that we would not only be more selective in choosing our future tutors, but also that we would provide better preservice training and inservice support. Sister Judith and one of her students did stick it out, and they became important members of the tutoring team as the year progressed.

When we lost the three high school tutors, we were left with three children without tutors who continued to show up at the storefront each Wednesday and Friday afternoon. Fortunately, two graduate students at National College of Education volunteered to be tutors, and we were able to provide them with a few hours of training before they met their children. There was still one child left over and we had to turn him away, telling him that he could come back when we found additional tutors. (We eventually were able to pick him up again, but this made the forced parting in January no less painful.)

At this point, the program began to stabilize. We now had six tutors whose attendance was consistent. Moreover, we recognized the importance of supporting and providing feedback to tutors who were just getting started or who were having problems. This support was provided on Wednesdays after tutoring by the more experienced tutors and on Fridays by me, when I walked around during the tutoring sessions, providing specific feedback, advice, and encouragement. Morale was again high, and the children were learning. An entry in Megan's journal captures the spirit of the program at the mid-point of the first year:

> When I went to the school to ask for a second group of kids for tutoring, the third grade teacher thought for a minute, and then said with a roll of the eye and a chuckle, "I guess you could have Mary." I asked, "What's wrong with Mary?" Her only response was, "Wait until you meet Mary."
>
> Mary no doubt had a reputation for the spunk and candor she brought to almost any situation. Her first set of language experience stories were almost all about ways that she had gotten in trouble, how the boys had chased her, what she had done to them. Despite all her spunk, her self image was really pretty poor...
>
> In the beginning it was hard to get Mary settled down to work. If there were any other children within view, she would become very animated and loud. Eventually we found a quiet corner to ourselves to work and she astonished me with the enthusiasm she brought to the work...
>
> Through the year the consciousness gradually came over Mary that she wasn't a dummy, that she could read and that she could do the work at school. Although Mary was reading no better than beginning second grade level, she began to volunteer to read aloud out of the third grade social studies text at school...
>
> One day Mary came strutting into tutoring and told me proudly that I should be the one reading to her that day because she had been moved up to reading group D. I congratulated her, but then told her she had better get busy on the story I had picked out. She read it beautifully, with almost no help from me. When she finished I told her she had just read a story that was just as hard as the stories in People Need People, a book used in the reading

> group one level higher than the one she had just been moved to, and a respected place to be in the third grade class. It's hard to find words for the expression on her face: astonishment, delight, pride. She jumped up and hugged me with a squeal of "Oh, Megan! It was a moment that would be hard to forget. In a small way it summarizes what I get out of the tutoring program and why, despite all of the headaches and hassles, tutoring is such an exciting and important part of my life.... (from Morris, Tschannen-Moran & Weidemann, 1981).

The attendance of the children during these winter months was nothing less than extraordinary. In fact, our records showed that attendance was nearly perfect. We tutored through the two-week Chicago Public Schools'strike and right through the children's spring vacation. The only two children to miss a day were out of town with their families. It should also be remembered that no one was reminding the children to attend. They were coming voluntarily, after school, and they were working hard at improving their reading.

Spring. The productive work accomplished in January and February, along with the energizing effect of the children's remarkable attendance, gave us the confidence to enlarge the program once again in March. Three new tutors, enthusiastic Northwestern University undergraduates, joined our program and by this time we were able to provide them with a meaningful orientation. We emphasized the importance of their making a firm commitment to the program before they ever began working with a child. (We no longer wanted to see tutors quitting the program--and leaving children--out of frustration.) We gave the Northwestern students an introduction to the language-experience philosophy of teaching reading and encouraged them to observe the

actual tutoring sessions for as many days as they desired before making a decision to tutor. When the college students did begin to tutor, we provided them, during and after each session, with as much feedback and encouragement as they needed. In retrospect it is fair to say that these three students had an exceptionally rewarding tutoring experience, as did the children with whom they worked.

The tutoring program concluded in the second week of June with a trip to the zoo and an ice cream and cake party. We did not lose a child or a tutor from January on. Warm relationships had been formed, and parting was not easy.

Reflections. There are two reasons for my writing at such length about the first year of operation of the Howard Street Tutoring Program. First, anyone interested in starting such a tutoring program needs to know about the "ups and downs," satisfactions and disappointments involved in the initial year of such a volunteer endeavor. Second, and more importantly, as I look back, it is clear to me that the lessons we learned that first year (1979-1980) have been instrumental in guiding the successful development of the program over the last 10 years. For example, here are some recommendations we made at the end of the first year (Morris et al., 1981) that are still relevant to the operation of the tutoring program today:

1) It is very important to start small. Establishing a core group (3 to 4) of productive tutor-child pairs is the first step toward developing a sound program. With a small tutor

group, it is easier to work out the inevitable problems of time and space management, and also to iron out inconsistencies and confusion concerning instructional philosophy and technique. Furthermore, the established tutor-child pairs serve as excellent models for new tutors and new children when the program does enlarge.

2) Language-experience is an appropriate teaching philosophy for volunteer tutors working with beginning readers. LEA assumes the child to be an active learner capable of processing written language holistically. Therefore, the novice tutor can let, in fact, should let the child lead in his/her attempts to read meaningful sentences and stories. One does not need a course in reading theory or a detailed knowledge of phonics to be able to listen to a child read and respond to his/her calls for feedback.

3) One person in the tutoring group (a supervisor) must understand the language-experience approach thoroughly and have considerable experience using the approach with beginning readers. Volunteer tutors will differ greatly, just as parents and probably teachers do, in their ability to provide sensitive, timely support to young children attempting to read text. It is in this area that many novice tutors will require the experience and advice of someone who has helped children learn to read in the past. Such advice can take many common-sense forms: a) read the story with the child a few times before letting him start out on his own; b) work with smaller chunks of the text; or c) pick an easier book. Whatever its form, such advice will most

assuredly be needed.

4) Although a preservice orientation to tutoring is necessary, the key to a successful program is inservice assistance to tutors during and immediately after the tutoring sessions. Just as a child needs feedback in learning to read, a novice tutor needs feedback in learning to teach. And since teaching reading is learned in the doing of it, the most valuable feedback is that which occurs in "the heat of the action" -- when the tutor is attempting to support the child's contextual reading.

5) Steps should be taken to promote a "sense of community" among the tutors. As the year progressed, feelings of commitment and belonging developed among our tutor group that were important to sustaining the existence of the volunteer program. This "sense of community" was augmented by informal weekly meetings (following tutoring sessions) in which not only advice but encouragement was shared. A tutor, having experienced a frustrating, unproductive session with a child, appreciated and needed the support of the group. Another informal, tutor support-system developed when the eight tutors began coming to and leaving the sessions in groups of two and three. In this way, the trips to and from tutoring also offered chances to share ideas and vent frustrations.

Before leaving Year One, a few additional points deserve mention. First, the tutoring program ran completely on volunteer energy. Space was donated by the Good News School; both the tutors and the supervisors volunteered their time; and reading

materials were either borrowed (from the NCE Reading Center) or donated by various publishers. Second, beyond an initial parent permission slip, there was little contact between the tutoring program and the children's parents. There was also minimal contact with the school (This will be discussed further under Year 2). Third, there was no effort made at the end of the first year of tutoring to assess the children's gains in reading achievement. In fact, end-of-year testing was the farthest thing from our minds. We, who were tutoring the children week after week, knew that they had made progress, and that was enough for us. Finally, there was an interesting and, as it turns out, prescient paragraph in the end-of-year narrative written by me, Megan, and Elaine:

> Some who are of a quantitative bent, might question the amount of time and energy we have spent in helping "only" eight kids. To answer, in the same quantitative spirit, our goal this year (1980-81) is to serve twelve kids, working up to this number slowly snd cautiously as the school year progresses. If, in the following year we decided to run two separate tutoring shifts (Monday/Wednesday and Tuesday/Thursday), we would then be working with 24 of the lowest reading second, third, and fourth graders in the elementary school. Such a goal, not an implausible one, should certainly satisfy those who doubt the quantitative potential of volunteer tutoring programs...(p. 23)

It is not difficult to see that, despite the first year troubles we encountered, the idea of becoming "bigger," (of serving more children) was with us from the start. And why not; that <u>is</u> the American Way.

<u>Year Two (1980-1981): The crucial role of the supervisor</u>

We began Year Two of the Howard Street Tutoring Program with a great deal of enthusiasm. Megan, Elaine, and I were all back

and we were determined to make the program bigger and better. One theme that came through clearly in the Year One tutors' end-of-year (May, 1979) evaluations of their tutoring experience was their felt need for more inservice training regarding teaching strategies and materials selection. This only reinforced my bias that good tutor supervision was the key factor in a successful volunteer tutoring program. Megan and I decided to split the supervision duty of tutors during the second year, allowing Elaine to continue tutoring the child she had begun working with the previous year.

Another decision we made prior to recruiting tutors or children for Year Two was to try to work with low-reading second graders, as opposed to third graders. We had noticed the year before that several of our third graders had brought considerable emotional "baggage" with them to the task of learning to read. In a few cases, feelings of past failure and frustration proved to be a definite impediment to the children taking necessary learning risks in the tutoring lessons. We thought, as we began Year Two, that beginning second graders, who had only been in school one year, might bring more hope and less frustration to the learning-to-read process. (Note: We later came to learn that reading-related feelings of frustration or helplessness are child specific, not grade- or age-determined. Nonetheless, one can still argue that by working with second graders (as opposed to third graders), you are identifying and attempting to remediate a serious educational problem one year earlier.)

We started small, but expanded quickly in the Fall of 1980.

Operating on a Tuesday/Thursday schedule, we began a group of five tutor/child pairs in October and added four more pairs before the Christmas break. We had an exceptionally able group of new tutors (only two holdovers), most of whom were Northwestern undergraduates or National College MAT students (college graduates with no teaching experience). Based on our previous year's experience, we decided to shorten the preservice tutor training and put most of our energies into providing the tutors with consistent inservice training throughout the year. In fact, the preservice training evolved into a standard three-day routine:

> (Day 1) Brief discussion of the origin and history of the program, and an introduction to the teaching philosophy (including methods and materials) that guides the tutoring. New tutors were assured that prior teaching experience was not required and that they would be fully supported in their work with the children. (One hour)
>
> (Day 2) The new tutor watched the supervisor conduct a full lesson with his/her prospective student. Afterwards, the supervisor and tutor discussed the lesson, with the supervisor explaining what he/she had been trying to accomplish and why. The supervisor also answered questions the new tutor might have. (One hour)
>
> (Day 3) The new tutor conducted his/her first lesson with the child while the supervisor observed. After the lesson, the supervisor provided feedback on the tutor's performance, answered any questions, and helped the tutor plan the next lesson. (One hour and fifteen minutes)

Such a short preservice training cycle de-emphasized the provision of content knowledge about the teaching of reading, and instead put the new tutor "in the teaching saddle" as quickly as possible.

Inservice training. Once the new tutors had started in, we, the supervisors, had to come up with some ways to provide them with meaningful inservice assistance; that is, to provide the tutors with additional information about the teaching of reading, and also with feedback specific to their individual tutoring efforts. How to provide the tutors with general information about beginning reading and the process of tutoring was not a difficult problem. What I intuited then--and came to understand consciously years later--was that there were recognizable stages in terms of training tutors to work in our program. For example, the easiest and most natural task for the new tutors seemed to be supporting their students in oral reading a story. Here, the child does most of the work and the tutor simply follows along, providing assistance and encouragement when appropriate. The new tutors also found it non-threatening, though somewhat less natural, to engage the children in word sort activities, wherein child and tutor practice sorting a corpus of word cards into predesignated categories or patterns. E.g.,

bat	lake	car
hat	make	jar
rat	take	far
cat	bake	star

Because novice tutors found oral reading and word sorting to be comfortable activities, and because these activities were central in our approach to teaching beginning readers, our first group inservices were devoted to these topics; that is, how to guide and support a child's oral reading of a story, and how to conduct a word sort lesson. On the day of an inservice the tutors would send their children home 30 minutes early, and we would all move

to one classroom for a demonstration/discussion of a particular teaching technique. Such group inservices occurred once per month (October through January), lasted approximately 45 minutes, and were well-received by the volunteer tutors.

While oral reading and word sorting were the inservice topics for October and November, respectively, we held off on the silent comprehension and writing inservices until the tutors had been working with their students for several months. Certainly some of the children in the program were writing stories and reading silently before this time, and their tutors were receiving individual guidance and feedback from the supervisor in these areas. However, in the monthly inservices our goal was first to establish tutor familiarty with basic "meat and potatoes" teaching techniques (guidance of oral reading and word sorting), and then, as the tutors gained experience and confidence, to move to the more abstract tasks of monitoring silent reading comprehension and facilitating the writing process. In a sense, our sequence of monthly inservices (oral reading - word sorting - silent comprehension - writing) met the developmental needs of both the tutor and the child. One could argue, and I would agree, that the inservice sequence was somewhat dictated by the supervisor's philosophy of teaching beginning reading. However, there was something else operating in this case; that is, our perception of what seemed to come naturally to a lay adult working with a beginning reader and what did not come so naturally.

While the monthly group inservices were important, the most critical inservice support was provided to the tutors on an individual basis. Direct modeling of a teaching technique (e.g., word sort), with the tutor watching the supervisor work with his/her student, was the most effective form of inservice. Following the 10-15 minute model lesson, the tutor and supervisor would quickly debrief and then set up a time when the supervisor could observe the tutor using the same word sort technique.

Another vehicle for tutor/supervisor dialogue was the daily lesson plan. We provided each tutor with a 8" by 11" spiral notebook (approx. 60 pages) and asked him or her to record each lesson on a separate page of the notebook. This was not as big a task as it might seem, because there was an agreed upon format for each tutoring lesson:

1) child reads a story with tutor's support (15 min.)
2) child does a word sort (10 min.)
3) child reads a second story (15 min.)
4) writing activity (or word sort reinforcement game) (10-15 min)
5) tutor reads a story to the child (10 min.)

All the tutor had to do was jot down on the left-hand side of the notebook page the plan for that day (books to be read, word patterns to be sorted, idea for writing, etc.). Then, on the right-hand side of the page, he/she could comment on how a given activity had gone, or pose a question to the supervisor regarding an aspect of the the lesson.

PLAN	EVALUATION
1) Read "The Lion and the Mouse" (Ginn PP3)	
2) Sort short A word families (-at, -an, -ag)	
3) Read "Crocodiles Are Dangerous" (Breakthrough - blue level)	
4) Play concentration game with short A words	
5) (if time) Read "Ferdinand" to the child	

As simple as the lesson plan system was in concept, it was not a complete success in practice. About half of the tutors could not seem to find the time to communicate in writing with the supervisor. Moreover, the ones who did not write lesson plans or evaluative comments in their spiral notebooks were oftentimes very talented tutors. What happened, of course, was that these tutors secured what feedback they required in short conversations with the supervisor either before, during, or after the tutoring lessons. In fact, as the year went by these informal, catch-as-catch-can discussions between tutor and supervisor became the major source of inservice training.

The central role of the supervisor is highlighted in the informal feedback system described above. The volunteer tutors were busy people, and because several of them did not feel that they had the time (or requisite knowledge) to choose materials, write out plans, and evaluate each lesson, the supervisor had to

fill this important planning role as best he or she could. To do so, the supervisor--also a volunteer with limited time--had to observe the work of as many tutor-child pairs as possible during a given tutoring hour, make mental notes about the appropriateness of the instruction observed, visualize the next teaching step (e.g., whether to up the difficulty level or not), and then find the time to communicate with the individual tutors before the next lesson two days hence. Needless to say, the supervisor's job was an interesting and energizing one, and Megan and I threw ourselves into it; nonetheless, I knew, even then, that the job's hit-and-miss nature was costing us in the careful instructional planning that is so crucial in the teaching of beginning reading.

Getting better, getting bigger. We moved into the second half of the second year of the tutoring program in full swing. All but one of our original nine tutors were still with us, and they were teaching the kids to read. The following are two excerpts from my February 19 field notes:

> ... real breakthrough with Bongiway today.[Bongiway was a little South African girl who had been a virtual nonreader in September.] She was reading "Sammy's Supper" with aggression. She's risking now, feeling a sense of power (ability) rise up within her.

> ... Quincy bowled me over today. Last year we couldn't get him to look at a book, much less teach him to read. Today, Warren had him reading the "jade necklace" story in People Need People (a Holt-Rinehart second grade reader). Quincy's darn voice intonation is everywhere that it shouldn't be, but he's attacking the page with a vengeance and feeling good about his independence.

It was a beautiful, rewarding sight to walk through the two storefront rooms and see eight or nine tutor-child pairs, each buried in a book, oblivious to what was going on around them. The children were among the lowest primary grade readers in their inner-city school, but there were clear signs that they were progressing; for example, their steady movement through the "difficulty levels" (Preprimer, Primer, 1-2, 2-1) in the alternative basal readers we were using in the program. The children were also, as the excerpts above show, becoming more confident in their own abilities.

Our recognition that the program was really working--we were no longer satisfied with good attendance, we expected learning to take place--led us to consider expansion once more. After all, we reasoned, with two supervisors (Megan twice per week and me once), we could add five more tutors and still maintain a one-to-seven supervisor/student ratio. We did end up adding four tutors, and by mid-February the program had 13 tutor-child pairs. Almost immediately, we could sense that something had changed. With 28 people in the two rooms, we had a "cocktail party" instead of an intimate gathering of friends. No longer did everyone know each other by first name; no longer was each adult in the room a known entity to the children. The actual tutoring may not have been affected (though I have my doubts), but Megan, Elaine, and I knew that the program, itself, had lost something--a spirit of togetherness that seemed to us very important in a volunteer-run program.

Making contact with the public school. In early May, I decided it was time to build a more formal relationship with the neighborhood public school that the tutored children were attending. We had been working with some of the school's lowest-reading primary grade students for almost two years now, yet we had had little contact with the school staff; in fact, no contact at all with the principal, and little more than superficial exchanges of "hellos" with the classroom teachers when we picked up a few of their children for tutoring on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. There were several reasons for this lack of communication between the school and the after-school tutoring program. First, there was almost no time for us to sit down with the teachers and talk about the children. The familiar stereotype of a classroom teacher at the end of a long day--grabbing a cup of coffee, trading war stories in the hall with a colleague, and then heading back to her room to plan for the next day or to conference with a parent--did not hold up in this Chicago public school. Instead, the teachers (following a school board/teachers'union agreement) literally raced the children out the school door at 2:30 P.M. After-school conferences were thus impossible, leaving only the 20 minutes before school started, 8:30 to 8:50 (sacred time for any teacher), available for meeting with the teachers. We seldom intruded on this time.

There was another reason I had not pushed for closer communication between the school and the tutoring program up to this time, and this had to do with the Mastery Learning reading curriculum being used in the primary grade classrooms. Chicago

Mastery Learning, as it was called, was a rigid, pretest-teach-posttest, skills-based reading approach that was the antithesis of what we were doing in our language-experience tutoring program. Though some might argue that we should have attempted to coordinate our tutoring with the objectives of the classroom reading program, I felt that the Mastery Learning concept, when applied to beginning reading, was so bankrupt that it would be counterproductive for us to reinforce such learning in the tutoring lessons. Conversely and sadly, the classroom teachers of our children were under such bureaucratic pressure to implement Mastery Learning in the early 1980's that even if they had been interested in some of the instructional ideas we were using in the tutoring program, it is doubtful that they would have felt sufficiently free to try the ideas in their classroooms.

Despite the impediments to communication cited above, I did meet with the public school principal in May. I knew, after two years, that our program was working for some of the neediest children under his charge, and I thought it important that he and the school understand and support, if only in spirit, what was being accomplished. Here is an excerpt from my notes of May 5, 1981 regarding that meeting with the principal:

> ... Mr. H., who is near retirement, was friendly enough. He was concerned about the tutoring program's religious connection, but I assured him that the Good News group was just providing us with the tutoring space, and that the program was as secular as could be. Mr. H. then proceeded to talk about his own attempts (over the years) to set up volunteer tutoring programs in his school. He said each attempt had failed due to poor attendance by the <u>tutors</u>. I told him that I thought our program had actually worked because a supervisor was always present to support and

encourage the efforts of the volunteer tutors...

> At the end of our conversation, I asked Mr. H. about the possibility of my coming to the school to talk with his teaching staff about the tutoring program. He was cold to the idea--thought I was soliciting extra work from his teachers. I explained that I just wanted to inform the second and third grade teachers about the existence and purpose of our program. Mr. H. finally gave me permission to run down the four teachers individully and talk with them, if they would agree to do so, between 8:30 and 8:50 A.M. in the morning. In other words, I could expect no help on his part....

To a degree, my unsuccessful encounter with the principal could be attributed to a lack of salesmanship or political savvy on my part. Whatever was to blame, I only had to be "bashed in the head" once; the tutoring program had minimal contact with the public school for the next three years.

Years Three, Four, and Five (Fall 1981 to Spring 1984): "Hanging in there"

Year Three.

In the Fall of 1981, we began our third year of the tutoring program, this time without Megan. With a newborn baby, she felt that what little time she would have outside the home should go to the Good News School, still a fledgling operation itself. Although we knew that we would miss Megan, Elaine Weidemann and I decided that we could continue to operate the program in Megan's absence, particularly if we shared equally the supervision of the volunteer tutors.

The previous year Elaine had written a grant proposal seeking money (approx. $10,000) to fund the supervisor's position in the program. She was committed to the tutoring concept, enthusiastic about its potential, and saw the supervisor position

as an alternative career possiblity for herself. (Remember that in the program's first two years, no one had received monetary compensation for their efforts.) Unfortunately, Elaine's attempt to secure funding had not been successful. The reasons given for rejecting her grant proposal included the funding agencies' unfamiliarity with the tutoring program's sponsoring institution (The Good News Alternative School) and their skepticism about the small number of children we were serving (approx. 10 per year).

With or without funding, we forged on in 1981-1982, following the basic program design that had worked for us the previous two years. Recruitment of tutors was not a problem because we had our old contacts at Northwestern (an undergraduate, interfaith organization) and at National College (the MAT population and students in my graduate reading courses). Also, though we had little communication with the public school during the school year, each September they were most willing to identify second and third graders who needed help in reading.

Elaine served as the primary supervisor of the program, leaving her job at the college two hours early on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. She picked the children up at the public school at 2:30 P.M., walked them over to the storefront where they received an after-school snack, and then monitored the tutoring lessons of nine tutor/child pairs. I came down each Thursday afternoon throughout the school year to help with supervision. I also conducted the monthly inservices on various teaching techniques. Year 3 went along smoothly with few surprises.

Although the 1981-1982 school year was a productive one for the tutoring program, in the Spring I saw problems on the horizon. The program's smooth operation "with few surprises" was also a sign that the newness of the endeavor was wearing off. There is a sense of adventure, of "pioneering," that energizes and nurtures any new volunteer effort. However, once the new program is in operation and succeeding, there is a natural letdown (particlarly among its founders) unless ways can be found to expand or improve the on-going program. Elaine's effort the previous year to seek funding for the supervisor position had been, I think, a natural response to this desire to improve on one's creation, to make it bigger and better. Unfortunately, without additional resources, we were somewhat restricted in our efforts to expand the Howard Street Tutoring Program. The logical move to a four days per week program would have allowed for two tutoring groups or shifts, Monday/Wednesday and Tuesday/Thursday, thereby doubling the number of children who could be served. However, the volunteer supervisors in the Tuesday/Thursday program, Elaine and I, were already strapped for time, and there were no funds to attract an additional supervisor for a new Monday/Wednesday tutoring group. Lack of tutoring space, potential supervision problems, and a fear of losing our "sense of community" (see Year Two) also precluded expanding the number of tutor/child pairs past ten on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Barriers to expanding the program represented only one problem (I, for one, believed that providing quality reading instruction to even nine inner city youngsters was nothing to be

ashamed about). Also related to our lack of funding was the issue of a stipend for the supervisor. It had become very clear by Year 3 that the supervisor was the "linchpin," the key to making the tutoring program work. The tutors and children could change over each year, but there would always be the need for a consistent, experienced supervisor. His/her duties included selecting the children for the program, recruiting and training the volunteer tutors, being a liason between the program and the children's parents and school, monitoring the quality of the tutoring, and providing juice, peanut butter crackers, and comfort to nine second and third graders every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon. It was a responsible job and a trying one at times. Remuneration for the supervisor was not an issue the first few years, given the intrinsic rewards that came from making the new program work, along with the fact that Megan, Elaine, and I had actually been sharing the role. However, Megan was now gone; I was up to my neck in college-related responsibilities and, though still deeply invested in the tutoring program, wanted someone else to run it; and Elaine looking for a way to support herself, had not been able to secure funding for her work as a supervisor of tutors. Needless to say, I was concerned about who would direct the tutoring program the following school year.

Year Four (1982-1983)

My concerns about the future of the Howard Street Tutoring Program were borne out the following Fall. Elaine had by now taken a full-time teaching position, and I was over-committed in

my job as a college professor. There was no volunteer supervisor (no linch-pin), and the program did not start up in September, 1982. It was not that I had lost interest in the tutoring program--in fact, I was working on this very book that Fall--but rather that I did not have the time or energy to assume the full supervisory responsibility by myself.

The Howard Street Tutoring Program would not have operated in 1982-1983 had it not been for one Warren Aloysius Clohisy. Warren, a young National College MAT graduate with a sizeable streak of Irish independence, had tutored at Howard Street the first three years of the program. In fact, he had tutored the same little boy two times per week for three years. The child had gone from being a reading-phobic illiterate in third grade (we could not get Q. to look at a book the first four months we worked with him) to being a solid third-grade level reader three years later. Given his positive experience with Q. and his background in reading education, Warren had become very committed to the tutoring program.

In the Fall of 1982, Warren was working two part-time jobs --as a Chicago-based trainer for Literacy Volunteers of America (an adult literacy organization), and also as a community organizer for the Howard Area Community Center (a multi-purpose community service agency located in the same neighborhood as the tutoring program). Sister Patricia Crowley, the director of the Howard Area Community Center, had been aware of our volunteer tutoring program for several years. However, because we had been working with the Good News group and because there was some

natural territorial rivalry between Good News and the Howard Area Community Center (they were literally across the street from each other), the tutoring program had had little contact with HACC. This changed when Warren went to work for Sister Pat.

Warren informed Sister Pat about the benefits of the tutoring program and its need for funding. She, in turn, encouraged him to write a grant proposal, offering her staff's assistance. Warren jumped into the grant writing process with his usual enthusiasm, but there were problems. For example, how big should the grant request be? Who should have input into and eventually benefit from a funded grant: the Good News group, the Howard Area Community Center, the people who would actually be running the tutoring program, or all of the above? Warren at first tried to work with all the parties involved. As discussions progressed, he found that the Good News group wanted to be listed as the primary sponsor of the tutoring program (so that they could claim sponsorship in their other fundraising efforts), and to receive "overhead" compensation for housing the program (e.g., lights, heat, maintenance of the building, etc.). However, Sister Pat, whose agency was actually helping Warren with the grant writing, was not particularly interested in raising money for a program that would be sponsored and administered by another community group. Warren was caught in the middle. He and I talked the situation over, and we came to the conclusion that although both community agencies had rights in the matter, it was Warren who was the key to getting the program started back up. Without a supervisor, the program was

"dead in the water," and if Warren was to be the supervisor that year he needed a small salary to help pay his rent.

A compromise was ultimately reached. Warren's grant would request funding basically for a supervisor's salary ($3000 per year). The Good News group and the Howard Area Community Center would be co-sponsors of the tutoring program, allowing both groups to claim ownership in their separate, agency-wide, fund-raising efforts. Good News would continue to donate, gratis, space for the tutoring program, and HACC, under Sister Pat's direction, would lead the fund raising effort and later administer the program's limited finances (e.g., write monthly checks, make occasional financial reports to the funding agency). It was a good compromise, one that brought two neighborhood organizations together on a joint project, and one that preserved the grass-roots, non-bureaucratic, volunteer spirit of the tutoring program. If the grant was funded, the only person to benefit monetarily would be Warren, and the supervisor position he would be filling justly warranted some compensation.

With Sister Pat's help, Warren's grant was funded, and he, the new supervisor, started up six tutor-child pairs before Christmas. I was only teaching one course in the winter quarter at National, so I volunteered to come down and tutor a child over that three-month period. I could see that Warren preferred tutoring a child, himself, to guiding the work of other tutors, but he did a responsible, workman-like job of supervision, and the program served between six and eight children for the remainder of the school year. The important point, however, is

that through Warren's efforts the program was not discontinued in 1982-1983; it may have skipped a beat (the September to December interval) but it did not stop ticking.

Year Five (1983-1984)

Athletic coaches often refer to the last five minutes of a football or basketball game as "gut check" time. This simply means that the outcome of the contest is in the balance, and that each player must reach down deep within to bring forth his/her best athletic effort. The analogy is not perfect, but it could be argued that the fifth year of the tutoring program was my "gut check" (or commitment check) time. If the tutoring program was to start up again in September 1983 and operate for a fifth consecutive year, the responsibility would be mine and mine alone. My fellow supervisors--Megan, Elaine, and Warren--had moved on to other full-time jobs, and, though certainly interested in the program, would not be able to participate in its operation. I, too, had a full-time job and also two little babies at home who had had come along since the inception of the tutoring program four years earlier. The issue confronting me was whether to try to run the tutoring program by myself in 1983-1984, or to write the year off and maybe look for some supervision help for the following year.

I chose to keep the program going in 1983-1984. Several factors influenced my decision. First, being a college teacher, my work hours were flexible, and I could conceivably be down at the tutoring center two afternoons per week. Second, I was fearful that the program would die if it did not operate for a

full school year. I felt that our late start-up the previous year (Warren began his first tutors in December) had cost us some momentum, and I seriously questioned whether a volunteer program would be able to survive a full year of inactivity. Third, and surely most important, my personal values were tied up in the program. I still remembered Hot Rod, Philip, and Randy and Clarence, and knew that we had been working with their Chicago counterparts in the Howard Street program. I also knew that small as our program was, we were making a real difference in the reading achievement of the children we served. Sure, I could walk away from such a program, but I would be walking away from what I was telling myself I believed in.

Supervising the tutoring program by myself was an important learning experience for me, although I am not sure I would do it again. It was not reading that I learned so much about, but rather the myriad of routine, organizational and management responsibilities that one must assume in such a supervisory position. In previous years I had leaned heavily on the day-to-day planning and also the child management skills of my female co-supervisors, Megan and Elaine. I had been the college professor who brought down, from not too "on high", the professional knowledge. No more. Now, I was the one who a) left work at 2:00 P.M. on Tuesdays and Thursdays to drive or take the EL down to Howard Street; b) picked up eight second and third graders at the public school and walked them--more like, herded them--over to the storefront; c) poured the juice and handed out the cookies; and d) tried, oftentimes unsuccessfully,

to keep the boys from tearing the room apart before their individual tutors arrived at 3:00 P.M. I then supervised the tutoring lessons for an hour before making sure everyone got out the door by 4:10 P.M.

The Fall was not so bad, but by Winter 1984 I often felt like an urban Sisyphus, pushing the tutoring "rock" up the hill every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon. Part of this feeling could be attributed to my being physically and mentally overstretched, and part to the fact that we did have a difficult group of kids to work with that year, seven boys and one girl. Not only were a few of the boys consistent behavior problems during the "juice and cookie" pre-tutoring period, but also several of the children balked at reading during the tutoring lessons (a fairly uncommon occurence in previous years). I was quite proud of the patience and understanding shown by the tutors. They did not take the children's occasional resistance and misbehavior personally; they maintained their academic expectations of the children; and over time they helped them improve their reading ability.

One little guy, in particular, was the source of a great deal of the disruption. John would run away when I went to pick up the group at the school, trailing us over to the storefront five or ten minutes later. He would run and hide (and I mean hide) when his tutor showed up at 3:00, and then, once we finally had him seated at a desk with his tutor, he would oftentimes refuse to cooperate. This individual pattern of behavior was troublesome enough, but John's misbehavior more often than not set off a chain reaction in the group. About once per month I

was forced to send him home, but I kept allowing him to come back because he was quite capable of learning when we were able to settle him down. Looking back, I am not sure that our program was what John needed, and we certainly would have enjoyed a more productive year if I had come to that conclusion earlier.

I will not forget the fifth year of our tutoring program, 1983-1984. It truly was a "hanging in there" year, one in which we kept plugging on in the face of day-to-day problems. I would bet that most small, volunteer-based groups face a year of this kind in their development, where the members individually or collectively ask themselves on occasion, "Is it worth it?" I know I asked myself the above question several times during the winter and spring of 1984, and each time the answer was, "Yes." Moreover, I can put my finger on what kept me going. This time, it was the volunteer tutors. Those undergraduates, Masters students, and Northshore housewives were voluntarily coming down two afternoons a week throughout the year to work with children who were, at times, "bouncing off the walls," resisting the reading tasks we put before them, or doing both. The tutors usually succeeded in calming the children down and engaging them in the act of reading. And, good day or bad day, the tutors were back the next session, with a smile and a let's-get-at-it attitude, thereby establishing a basis for trust between tutor, child, and me. The tutors that fifth year were the ones that helped me answer the question, "Is it worth it?"

Years Six and Seven (Fall, 1984 to Spring, 1986): The Turning Point

Year Six.

The Fall of 1984 was a turning point in the Howard Street Tutoring Program. I like to think of Years 4 and 5 as a long, long Chicago winter with September 1984 ushering in warm, beautiful spring weather. Certainly the tutoring program would not have gotten to its spring (its rejuvenation) if we had not forged on through the trying, yet not unproductive winter.

A harbinger of better times for the tutoring program came in May 1984 (end of Year 5) when Bev Shaw, one of the reading specialists at the National College Reading Center, expressed an interest in working at Howard Street the following school year. For five years I had been directing a staff of talented, part-time reading specialists at National College, mostly middle-aged, middle-class women who were very knowledgeable about reading. In fact, these women were experts at one-to-one tutoring and shared with me a similar philosophy of instruction. I had, of course, discussed our Howard Street project with these professional reading specialists over the years, but this was the first time one of them had expressed an interest in working in the program. I knew from the moment she volunteered that Bev Shaw would make a wonderful supervisor of volunteer tutors.

Soon after Bev volunteered, lightning struck again. Betty Boyd, another staff member at National who had just completed her Masters studies in reading, also volunteered to supervise a group of tutors at Howard Street. We began for the first time to think seriously about a four days per week tutoring program; that is, a

Monday/Wednesday group of tutors to be led by Betty, and a Tuesday/Thursday group to be led by Bev.

We had another nice surprise in September, 1984. For the first time we found that the public school was welcoming our presence. A new principal had been appointed and she saw the tutoring program, rightly I think, as a plus in her efforts to raise reading achievement scores. The principal put out the word that we were to be supported in our after-school tutoring efforts, indeed, treated as adjunct members of the school staff. This was important symbolically. After five years of being ignored, of being made to feel like outsiders in an institution we were trying to help, the new principal's words of encouragement and support meant a lot to us.

There were few impediments to our starting up two separate tutoring groups that Fall. Bev and Betty needed little training as supervisors, having worked with me (and the tutoring stategies) for years at National College. The Good News people had no problem with us using their space four afternoons per week instead of just two. And importantly, Sister Pat, of the Howard Area Community Center, said that she had $6,000 to fund the two supervisors and an additional $500 for books and materials. All in all, I felt that the gods were finally taking pity on Sisyphus, but in reality the tutoring program was just reaping the benefits from having been around for six years. Poor communities and their institutions are used to well meaning outsiders coming in and going out again; however, we had stayed around and, by doing so, were beginning to be treated a little

differently.

Recruitment of volunteer tutors was the major problem we faced in the Fall of 1984. Doubling the size of the program required that we find 16 to 20 volunteer tutors in September instead of our usual 8 to 10. We tapped our usual sources (Northwestern and National College students), put up more recruitment posters in churches and community centers than in previous years, and also tried to get alumni tutors to spread the word. What really helped, however, was Bev's recruitment of a network of her friends and acquaintances who lived in the wealthy Northshore suburb of Kenilworth. These half-dozen women, most of whom had finished raising their families, were looking for meaningful volunteer service. They were not teachers by training, but they were intelligent, literate, and experienced in working with children (after all, they had raised their own). The Kenilworth tutors may never have found the Howard Street Tutoring Program without Bev's intervention, but once there, they became mainstays of the program, forming a tight-knit, effective group of volunteers that returned year after year.

Bev, Betty, and their tutor recruits infused the Howard Street program with new energy, enthusiasm, and skills in 1984-1985. By December, the program was up to 17 tutor-child pairs (8 on Mon/Wed and 9 on Tues/Thur) and humming along smoothly. In a sense, there had been a changing of the guard. Megan, Elaine, and Warren were gone, and even I was no longer involved in the day-to-day operation of the program. I did meet with Bev and Betty about once per week at National College to learn about

happenings in the program and to offer my counsel when requested. However, Betty and Bev, in their new supervisor roles, actually derived more support from each other--they were the ones on the firing line--than they did from me.

Lesson plans and tutor supervision. The new supervisors brought with them their own leadership styles and ways of doing things. One seminal change they made greatly strenghthened the effectiveness of the tutoring program in 1984-85 and for years to come. It involved the supervision of the tutors. In previous years, the supervisor's role had been: a) to explain and model new teaching techniques for the volunteer tutors; b) to observe the tutor-child pairs at work; and c) to offer constructive feedback to the tutors in brief one-to-one interchanges before, during, or after the lessons (e.g. "You could have used a little more contextual reading in your lesson today," or "It's time to move to a more difficult book."). Such a supervisory role required that the supervisor be comfortable constantly moving around the room, observing over the shoulders of tutor/child pairs at work, moving in occasionally to model a teaching technique, and continually having short, on-the-run conversations with the individual tutors regarding what to do next. The job emphasized quick, on-the-spot problem solving rather than careful planning and organization.

Betty Boyd was and is a deliberate thinker and a planful, well-organized teacher. As Betty began to work with her first group of volunteer tutors in the Fall of 1984, she found that she was not comfortable with the "roving" supervisor role described

above. Betty felt, from the start, that she needed more structure in her communication with the tutors, and she turned to the lesson plan notebook as a way of providing that structure. Since the beginning of the tutoring program in 1979, each volunteer tutor had routinely been provided with a spiral notebook for recording the plan and evaluation for each tutoring lesson. However, few of the tutors over the years had put much time into the written plans or evaluative comments (see Year Two). And with good reason. As unpaid volunteers, they were short on time; furthermore, many lacked the confidence and experience requisite for written lesson planning and evaluation and, therefore, looked to the supervisor to perform these quality-control tasks. Before Betty Boyd's arrival in 1984, a volunteer tutor would come to a tutoring session knowing that he/she was responsible for reading two stories with his/her child, conducting a word sort lesson, and facilitating a writing activity. However, the tutor may or may not have talked with the supervisor at the end of the previous lesson regarding how that lesson had gone or about story choices or writing ideas for the present lesson. On some occasions, then, a busy tutor might enter a lesson confused about what had happened last time and prepared "to wing" the present lesson until the supervisor stopped by to offer assistance. This introduced a "hit and miss" element to the daily lesson planning, a weakness to be sure, but one that I had come to accept as part and parcel of a busy, volunteer-run program.

Betty Boyd's unique contribution to the Howard Street Tutoring Program was her determined effort to structure and monitor her tutors' work through the use of the lesson plan notebook. Her modus operandi was not complicated; she simply assumed responsibility for writing the daily lesson plans for each child in her tutoring group. This was not an undemanding job. It required that Betty not only keep up with the changing reading levels and skill needs of each of the eight children in her group, but also that she spend two hours prior to each tutoring session (i.e., two times per week) writing out lesson plans, locating stories, and making word card sets for the individual children. With this accomplished, however, Betty had far more control over the quality of tutoring than had I or any other supervisor in the past.

For example, now a tutor, upon arriving at the storefront on a Wednesday afternoon, picked up his/her lesson plan notebook from Betty, turned to the appropriate page, and immediately saw the specific stories that were to be read that day, the specific word patterns to be sorted, and the specific stimulus idea for writing. In fact, Betty included the needed books and word sort cards right along with the tutor's lesson plan notebook (see next page).

PLAN	COMMENTS
1) Echo-read "Pot of Gold" (Sc. Foresmsn PP3, pp. 21-30)	
2) Sort short a word families (-at, -an, -ag)	
3) Partner-read "The lion and mouse" (Wright Group tradebook)	
4) Discuss with Rene what her class is planning to do for Halloween, or what she remembers about last Halloween. Get her to start writing a Halloween story.	

The tutors responded very favorably to Betty's written-out lesson plans. The burden of preparation was off their backs, and at the same time they felt more secure in that they were now following the specific suggestions of a trained reading specialist. With this approach, the tutors also felt more comfortable filling in the right-hand, evaluation side of the lesson plan sheet. (After all, someone else had planned the activities; they were just telling how things had gone.) This led to a consistent--albeit brief--written dialogue between tutor and supervisor across the lessons. As the school year progressed and the individual tutors became more and more familiar with the reading materials and instructional tasks used in the program, Betty was able to telescope or "short-hand" her written directions to the tutors. And a few tutors (usually prospective teachers) sometimes took over the lesson planning themselves.

This, of course, lessened the planning load on the supervisor during the second half of the year.

Betty's lesson plan approach tightened up the sequencing of the reading instruction from lesson to lesson, significantly improving the quality of the tutoring program. However, there was obviously a price to be paid in terms of additional supervisor planning time, a price that had not been paid before. For example, when I supervised the program the previous year, I did not even consider (much less act on) spending four hours per week planning individual lessons for the volunteer tutors. Thus, it is interesting to examine some of the factors that led to this change in supervisory policy in the tutoring program's sixth year. We have already touched on the personality factor; that is, Betty's need for structure and order in her work. Second, Betty had the time to do a more thorough job of supervision. She was not leaving a full-time job two afternoons per week to rush down to Howard Street and volunteer her services. The tutor supervision was her main work outside the home that year. Third, Betty was being paid to do the supervisory work. A stipend of $3000 dollars per year is not a princely sum, boiling down to about $8 per hour for highly skilled work. However, such a stipend, particularly in a volunteer-manned program, legitimizes the professional role of the supervisor, and in Betty's case led to a good deal of extra effort on her part.

I have discussed in some depth the modification of the supervisor role in Year Six. I do not wish to leave the impression that the supervisor-written lesson plans turned the

tutoring into a type of programmed instruction, thereby obviating the need for human supervision. Far from it. The supervisors still observed the tutoring lessons, modeled appropriate teaching techniques, and provided the tutors with verbal feedback on an ongoing basis. However, on my occasional visits to the tutoring program during the Fall of 1984, I could see that something special had happened. The tutors appeared more self-assured and organized as they worked with the children. The daily tutor/supervisor conversations or check-ins were more focused and thus more productive, and I noticed that if the supervisor and a given tutor could not "touch base" after a lesson, there was no panic. The lesson plans were serving as as alternative and effective vehicle for maintaining tutor/supervisor dialogue.

I was not the only one, indeed not even the first, to see the value of supervisor lesson planning. Betty Boyd and Bev Shaw, the other new supervisor, were in constant contact that Fall, and Bev quickly picked up on Betty's method. No less energetic or committed than her partner, Bev immediately began putting in the extra planning time outside of the tutoring lessons. With this large commitment in time and effort from the two new supervisors, the tutoring program took a qualitative leap forward in its sixth year of operation. Seventeen first and second graders were served, and end-of-year testing indicated that over half of the children made a full year's gain or better in reading achievement.

Year Seven (1985-1986)

The seventh year of the tutoring program was basically a re-run of Year Six. This was because both Bev Shaw and Betty Boyd were back as supervisers, a year wiser and no less enthusiastic. The program again was organized around two tutoring shifts (Mon/Wed and Tue/Thur), with a new group of 18 to 20 children and a new set of tutors (excepting Bev's cadre of suburban friends who returned for a second year).

The previous year Betty Boyd had worked with a small number of first graders from the public school to see how they would respond to the one-to-one tutoring. She found that the low-readiness first graders seemed to lack the prior literacy experiences and, in a few cases, the necessary cognitive/emotional maturity to benefit fully from the level of tutoring instruction we were offering. The first graders, therefore, had not made as much reading progress as had the second graders with whom we worked. Instead of changing the nature of the tutoring, we decided at the beginning of Year Seven that the program would concentrate, hereafter, on serving low-reading second and third graders, and possibly some children who were repeating first grade.

Other than conducting a few group inservices for the tutors, I had little involvement with the tutoring program during Year Seven. I followed the progress of the program via bi-weekly meetings with Bev and Betty at National College, but my on-site presence was not required. In March 1986, I received a good news/bad news message; Bev would be returning to supervise tutors

the next school year, but Betty Boyd would not. Betty had her heart set on teaching first grade and would be looking for a full-time classroom teaching position in the Fall of 1986. My first reaction to this news was to count our blessings. With Bev back the next year, the tutoring program would not only survive, but it would maintain some continuity. On the other hand, after two consecutive years of serving 17 to 20 low-reading children, and seeing the tutoring program work, it was disheartening to envision serving only half as many children in the coming year.

The question on our minds that Spring was: Where can we find another supervisor for next Fall? Although the reading specialists at the National College Reading Center had been more than willing to help out at Howard Street over the years, none of them were interested in taking on the major, time-consuming commitment of supervision. I also could not think of any past graduate students in reading who would be both interested in and available to assume the position. However, if desperation is the mother of wishful thinking, it also can sometimes spawn a good idea. On my visits to Howard Street during that seventh year, I had been impressed by the skill and poise of one of Betty Boyd's volunteer tutors, a young woman named Ellen Knell. Ellen, who possessed some special education training, had found our program through a flyer placed on a college bulletin board. On watching her tutor a very passive second grade boy, I noticed Ellen's qualities of warmth, organization, and determination. Betty also mentioned that Ellen was one of her best tutors, one who was always inquiring about why we were using this technique or that

technique. My brainstorm, or mental leap of faith, was to wonder if this young woman, a first year tutor in the program, could the next year take Betty's place and lead or supervise the program.

I mentioned my idea to Betty and Bev, and then to Ellen. I told Ellen that I thought supervising the tutoring program would be a wonderful learning experience for her (a chance to teach adults and children about reading at the same time). I also told her that if she was interested in supervising the following year, she would need to take the graduate-level beginning reading methods course I was teaching that Spring at National College. I explained that the course would provide her with a theoretical framework for understanding why we were teaching as we were at Howard Street. Finally I assured Ellen that I thought she could do the supervisor's job, and that Bev and I would work closely with her the following Fall to make sure that she got off to a good start.

Years Eight and Nine (Fall 1986 to Spring 1988): Rotating Supervisors

Year Eight.

After maintaining some distance from the tutoring program the previous two years, I again became active in its operation during Year Eight (1986-1987). There were three reasons for this. First, I believed it was time that we do a careful, objective evaluation of the program's effectiveness. Second, Ellen Knell had agreed to supervise the Tuesday/Thursday group of tutors, and I wanted to support her efforts, particularly during the first half of the tutoring year. Finally, I was in the

process of working on a book describing the tutoring program and, therefore, wanted to be as close as possible to the tutoring/supervising action.

A comparison group. We had actually been doing program evaluation--year-end achievement testing of the children tutored--since the third year of the tutoring program, when Elaine Weidemann and Warren Clohisy began to seek foundation support. Once Sister Pat Crowley began to fundraise for us around Year Five, I tightened up the evaluation component (a pretest/posttest design) and provided to the Sister each June a written report documenting the reading gains made by the tutored children during that year. These reports were helpful to Sister Pat in her fundraising efforts, but I knew that they did not constitute a rigorous evaluation of the tutoring program's effectiveness. For example, let us say that after eight months of tutoring, we established through pre- and post-testing that, on average, our children made one year's gain in reading. This looked good, but we had no way of knowing how much of this reading gain to attribute to the tutoring and how much to the children's classroom instruction. That is, without the after-school tutoring, might not the children have made similar progress? Not likely, but how could one be sure? One way to address this question would be to contrast the reading gains made by a tutored group of children with the gains made by a comparable group of children who were not tutored. This is what we set out to do in Year Eight.

In September, we asked the two second grade and two third

grade teachers in the public school to identify the ten lowest readers in their respective classes. Bev, Ellen, and I (along with two reading specialists from National College), then visited the school on three consecutive mornings to screen the teacher-identified children for the after-school tutoring program. Realizing that standardized reading tests are poor measures of beginning reading ability, I constructed an informal test battery containing sight words and reading passages taken directly from the basal reader series used in the public school. We tested the 40+ children with the informal battery (approx. 30 minutes per child) and rank-ordered their reading performances. Then, starting at the bottom of the list, we moved up, pair by pair, randomly assigning one child in the pair to the tutored group and the other child to the non-tutored or comparison group. With five specialists testing simultaneously, this was quite an efficient operation. Within four days (one additional day for testing absentees and scoring the protocols), we had identified 20 children to be tutored and a matched sample of 20 that could be used for comparison purposes in the Spring posttesting. Moreover, with the pretesting having been completed at the school before the actual tutoring program began, the supervisors (Bev and Ellen) would not have to worry about pretesting the children at the storefront and, instead, could concentrate their initial efforts on tutor training.

Breaking in a new supervisor. I had committed to helping Ellen Knell supervise the Tuesday/Thursday group of tutors, thinking that I would be able to allay some of her initial

apprehension and share with her some of my experience. Little did I know that my work with Ellen would turn out to be a powerful learning experience for me. The old saying that "one only learns deeply about something by trying to teach it to another" held true in this case. In previous years at Howard Street, I had responded intuitively regarding issues of supervision. True, I had advised the other supervisors (Warren, Bev, Betty, etc.) now and then, but having shared extensive professional contact with these people before they assumed the supervisor role, neither I nor they seemed to expect or need close communication regarding how to do the job. In Ellen's case, things were different; only one year before, she had been a novice tutor herself and now she was going to be supervising the work of eight to ten new tutors. She deserved some help.

As I worked through supervisory issues with Ellen in the Fall of 1986, constancies and changes in the supervisor's role over the eight year history of the program became clear to me. The most difficult part of the job was still getting the program started in October. The new tutors needed close supervision the first month if they were to master basic teaching techniques and establish "good tutoring habits" (e.g., emphasizing contextual reading, minimizing transition time between tutoring tasks, providing timely encouragement to the child for a job well done, etc.). Supervisor modeling of good teaching was still the most effective training procedure, but how could one model a lesson simultaneously for eight different tutors? Videotapes might be used, I thought, or possibly a group of tutors could stand around

and watch the supervisor model a lesson with one child. The problem here was that the individual children with whom the tutors would eventually be working did not all read at the same level or experience the same difficulties with the reading process.

Convinced that, in the beginning, the tutors needed individual support as much as did the children they were tutoring, I came up with a simple idea. If we started just four tutor-child pairs at a time, I could get a couple of the Reading Center staff to join Ellen and me in modeling the opening lessons. In this way each of the four tutors would have the opportunity to observe one or two lessons being modeled with his/her child. Working off the model, the tutors could then teach the next lesson to their individual children, with Ellen walking around, offering advice and encouragement. After a few weeks, or whenever Ellen felt that the first group of tutors had gained their "sea legs," she could start a second group, again requesting the short term lesson-modeling from a few reading specialist friends. This plan worked. It got the volunteer tutors started, and they had an idea of what they were supposed to be doing.

In the first few years of the tutoring program, the supervisor's role had been that of an on-the-job "trouble-shooter," one who put out fires and provided the volunteer tutors with verbal feedback and encouragement. Though trouble-shooting was still an important part of the job, in the Fall of 1986 the supervisor was also expected to sequence the reading

instruction (via written lesson plans) for eight to ten tutor-child pairs two times per week. This, of course, required extensive planning time away from Howard Street which, fortunately, Ellen was prepared to give (approximately two hours of lesson planning per tutoring day in the Fall and Winter, down to one and one-half hours in the Spring).

The lesson planning also required of Ellen a knowledge base or theory of how to teach beginning reading. In order to sequence a child's reading instruction across time, one must have a personal theory of reading development and also know something about methods and materials that fit the theory. This becomes all the more important when supervising the work of volunteer tutors who most likely lack such knowledge. In the knowledge base area, Ellen had two things going for her: a) she had tutored in the program the previous year, gaining invaluable experience and a feel for the volunteer tutor's situation; and b) she had taken a graduate course in beginning reading theory the previous spring, providing her with a framework for thinking about reading development. Still, Ellen was a bit uncomfortable, at first, with the responsibility of planning individual lessons for eight second and third grade children, ranging in ability from non-reader to late-first grade level reader. It was in this lesson-planning area that I tried to be of assistance to her.

I visited the tutoring program at least once per week that Fall, and spent an hour observing the tutors work with their children. After the tutors and children had departed, Ellen and I would go through the tutor-child pairs, one by one, discussing

what both she and I had observed that week. I would make suggestions, and Ellen would ask questions--lots of "why" questions. Then, she would take the notebooks home with her and, based on our discussion, plan the lessons for the next tutoring session. This was a time-intensive, but quite effective way to train a new supervisor. Ellen was curious and energetic, and she realized how much she was learning by observing, indeed directing the reading development of eight different children. I, in turn, loved nothing better than talking about the beginning reading process, particularly when that "talk" was invested in a person committed to helping children learn to read.

As I watched Ellen supervise the tutoring over the Fall and Winter months, I became acutely aware of the importance of "instructional pacing" in our tutoring program. Pacing refers to the rate at at which children are moved through a graded set of reading materials. Barr (1974) demonstrated clearly that pacing is related to beginning reading achievement. She found that the farther children were taken in a first grade basal reading program (assuming that they were mastering the material as they went along), the stronger their reading ability at the end of the year. I had seen specific evidence of the pacing phenomenon in my own work in suburban classrooms, where the reading achievement of first and second graders was sometimes depressed by their teacher's too-slow pacing through the basal reading curriculum.

Pacing is a particularly sensitive issue in a volunteer tutoring program. For example, it is a significant feat just to get a low-reading seven year-old over to a storefront after

school, matched with a tutor, and seated at a desk attempting to read a book--any book. Once such a child is there, why not make the tutoring experience as non-threatening and comfortable as possible, using "easy" books to build confidence, or reading to the child on days when he/she seems tired or frustrated? There is common sense to such an argument, but the issue is more complicated if the ultimate goal of the tutoring is to help the child make real gains in reading ability. In a very real sense, the tutor and child are in "a race against the clock." In our program, the inner-city second grader receives 55 hours of one-to-one help in reading, probably for the first and last time in his/her life. The year of one-to-one teaching provides a crucial opportunity for a child to learn to read for the first time, or to make up distance on his/her higher achieving peers. But... this will happen only if the pace of the tutorial instruction provides an appropriate reading challenge to the individual child across the school year. The tutor cannot pace too quickly or the child will become frustrated with the difficulty of the reading. Conversely, too slow a pace through a set of graded materials will lead to limited gains in reading ability at year's end.

Pacing decisions in a volunteer tutoring program rest largely with the supervisor. Volunteer tutors, particularly during the first half of the year, lack the experience needed to know how many times a child should reread a given story before moving on, or when a child should be moved to a higher (more difficult) reading level. The supervisor, based on conversations with the tutors and observations of the children reading, must

guide the pacing of the reading instruction. I spent a good deal of time helping Ellen to understand the importance of, and how to manipulate, pacing. We discussed: a) materials--which are easier, which are harder, and why; b) observation strategies--how one can tell when a child may be ready to move up a reading level); and c) "how to test the water"--how to support the child, at first, when moving him/her into more difficult material. Ellen, as usual, was a quick study, and by mid-year she had a good grasp of the issues involved in instructional pacing.

Mine was not the only support available to Ellen in her year of supervising the tutoring program. Bev Shaw, the Monday/Wednesday supervisor, talked with Ellen, by phone, on a regular basis, sharing ideas, materials, and encouragement. In fact, in her third consecutive year of supervising a group of tutors, Bev was becoming the hub around which the tutoring program revolved. A high energy, task-oriented woman, Bev also possessed the warmth, patience and tolerance for unpredictability that is required to run such a volunteer program. She enjoyed getting her suburban friends involved in the program, and the Kenilworth women, about five in number, became a tight-knit, very effective little subgroup within the tutoring program. The fact that Bev was in her third year of supervising (the longest tenure of any one person), and looking forward to coming back, also meant a great deal to me. I knew now that I was not the only one who was "hooked"--in a value sense--on Howard Street; I had a partner who was not about quit in the foreseeable future.

Although Bev would be back for Year Nine, we learned in the Spring of 1987 that Ellen would not return in the Fall. She was pregnant with her second child and did not feel that she would be able to handle the load of two babies and Howard Street. Although ordinarily the loss of a supervisor, especially one as effective as Ellen, would have been a staggering blow to the program, I had had my eye on a potential replacement for several months. Judy Ebright, an advisee of mine in the Masters degree Reading program at National College, had been tutoring at Howard Street that year, under Ellen's supervision. From Judy's performance in my graduate courses, I knew that she was an intelligent and serious student; from watching her tutor at Howard Street a high-strung third grade boy with a serious reading problem, I became aware of her teaching ability and empathy for children who are in trouble. I thought, and Bev agreed, that Judy would be a perfect candidate to replace Ellen as supervisor of the Tues/Thur group the next school year. In April, we both spoke to Judy individually about the supervisor position, told her to take her time thinking it over, and then went away with breath held and fingers crossed.

Posttesting. In the Fall of Year Eight we had pretested 45 low-reading second and third graders at the public school, subsequently tutoring 20 of these children in the Howard Street program. At the end of May we returned to the public school to posttest the same 45 children in order to see how much reading gain the tutored children had made in comparison to the non-tutored group.

One frustration in any field-based study of this kind is the inevitable loss of subjects across an entire year. The danger of subject loss is exacerbated when working in a low income, transient, inner-city area, where families, for a variety of reasons, tend to pick up and move during the school year. Looking back, we were probably fortunate to be able to posttest as many children as we did. We lost a few comparison group children (their families had moved), but we had a slight surplus in this group to start off with. What really hurt was to lose children in the tutored group.

For example, one little second grader who was making rapid progress in tutoring up and left in February without a word. When the supervisor went to pick up the kids on a Monday afternoon, the classroom teacher informed her that Frederick's family had moved to the Southside of Chicago, address and telephone number unknown. Another little boy, Charles, who was actually repeating first grade, had missed over 60 school days during the year. However, Charles would come to tutoring even on the days when he played hooky, and... he was learning how to read during the tutoring sessions. Unfortunately, as the weather warmed up in May, Charles went to school less and less, roaming the city streets, by day, like a little alley cat. We could not even locate him the last two weeks of May to obtain a posttest, a test that would have shown that he had made surprising progress in reading that school year.

We did get lucky in posttesting one child. Brandy had probably made more reading progress than any child in the

program. By year's end, this second grader could read any third grade story we put in front of her. Unfortunately for us, her mom, concerned about safety in the neighborhood, had moved Brandy and her sister to another school one week before our posttesting began. I was determined not to lose that posttest. I finally reached the mom at work, explained how badly we wished to document the gains her daughter had made in reading, and arranged to meet her and Brandy one afternoon at the Howard Street Tutoring Center. I showed up at the appointed time; they did not. I called the mom the next day, made another appointment, went down to Howard Street, and this time was able to administer the posttest to Brandy. She did well, and I explained to her mother the positive test results. Mother and child left happy, as did I.

I have detailed some of our problems in collecting pretest/posttest data, not to discourage others from trying to do so, but to point out that an empirical evaluation of a small program's effectiveness looks more clear-cut on paper than it does in real life. We ended up with pretest/posttest data for 17 children in the tutored group and 17 children in the comparison group. The gain score results clearly favored the children who received the after-school tutoring in reading (see Morris, Shaw, & Perney, 1990).

Year Nine (1987-1988)

There was a divisive and damaging six-week teacher strike in Chicago at the beginning of the 1987-1988 school year, but shortly after school reopened in October, we proceeded to pretest

the public school second and third graders for participation in the tutoring program. The strike did disrupt our recruitment of tutors in the Fall. By the time we were actively seeking tutors in mid-October, the college students we usually depended on were buried in coursework and other Fall commitments. Nonetheless, using Bev's suburban tutor group as a base, we were eventually able to get 15 tutor-child pairs going before the Christmas break.

The good news was that Judy Ebright had decided to supervise the Tuesday/Thursday group of tutors in 1987-1988. Bev and I attempted to support Judy's supervision efforts in much the same way that we had supported Ellen Knell one year before. Judy's knowledge base in beginning reading was strong, having just completed a Masters program in Reading, and of course she had been a tutor at Howard Street the previous year. I helped her start up the new tutors in October, and we were in close contact through the Fall. However, as the year went along, Judy needed less and less of my on-site support; we found that a weekly telephone conversation was sufficient to discuss instructional issues and iron out any procedural problems that arose.

The program did have a scare in January when Judy was offered a half-time reading specialist position in a well-to-do Northshore suburb. We were all happy for her, of course, but were afraid we would lose her at Howard Street. The reading specialist job was much closer to Judy's home and in the opposite direction from the inner-city tutoring program. It also paid three times as much money as the tutor supervisor position. To

my surprise and delight, Judy decided to try and juggle both part-time jobs. She went to the suburban school in the morning, and then on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons drove 45 minutes into the city to supervise the tutoring program. She later told me that the contrast between the inner-city and suburban children (and their school environments) made for a stimulating and rewarding teaching experience.

Year Nine of the tutoring program proceeded very smoothly. We posttested the tutored and comparison group children in May, 1988, and the results were very encouraging. Also, Bev and I were delighted in late-Spring when we learned that Judy would be would be coming back for Year Ten.

Year Ten (Fall, 1988 to Spring, 1989)

I am writing this chapter in January of 1989, the middle of Year 10 of the Howard Street Tutoring Program. With Bev Shaw and Judy Ebright back as supervisors, we are enjoying one of our most productive years. There are 11 tutor-child pairs on Monday/Wednesday and 9 on Tuesday/Thursday. Among the tutors there are neophytes, veterans (Bev's Kenilworth friends), and even a few alumni (Ellen Knell has returned not to supervise, but to tutor a child). Enthusiasm is high, and the quality of tutoring is excellent.

Sadly, one of the second grade classrooms from which we drew children this year was literally "out of control" the first four months of the school year. The class of 30 children, ages 7 and 8, had four different teachers before the Christmas break, and the daily turmoil in the classroom precluded much meaningful

instruction. The principal, who was trying diligently to remedy the situation, finally in January split the second grade class, busing 15 of the youngsters over to a neighboring school. However, even if normalcy returns to the classroom in the second half of the school year, the children have already lost months of instructional time. In fact, for the lower reading children in this class, the two hours of tutoring they received each week during the Fall at Howard Street may have been their only opportunity to improve their reading skill. And, it needs to be pointed out again: this is not a bad Chicago public school.

The complete history of Year 10 of the tutoring program will need to be written at a later date, but at mid-year things certainly look good.

Afterthoughts

I began this chapter intending to write a short, balanced history of the Howard Street Tutoring Program. However, about one-third of the way into the chapter, I realized that my account was hardly a balanced one, but rather a selective history of the tutoring program written from the supervisor's perspective. There are other perspectives from which to view the program: e.g., the volunteer tutor's perspective, the child's, the public school's, the sponsoring groups', etc. If my account is one-sided and myopic in certain ways, it does reflect an honest attempt to capture my personal experience with the tutoring program--to articulate those issues that I have thought about, worried about, and some that I have acted on over a ten year period.

In the remaining pages of this chapter, I would like to: a) highlight some factors that contributed to the success of the program; b) mention some things that we would like to change, and c) place our small tutoring effort in the larger picture of preventing and remediating reading problems in our public schools.

Why the tutoring program works. Two accomplishments of the Howard Street Tutoring Program stand out above the rest: a) The program has been consistent in improving the reading ability of low-achieving primary grade children; and b) The program has operated for ten consecutive years. But why has this volunteer tutoring program succeeded when others have not? I believe that the program's ability to insure quality instruction through careful tutor supervision, and its ability to recruit and retain volunteer tutors are a big part of the answer.

To understand the success of the Howard Street Tutoring Program, one needs to understand the evolution of the supervisor's role. From the start, the founders of the program recognized the need to provide some type of support or supervision to the volunteer tutors, but we in no way envisioned the central role the supervisor would eventually come to play. Our first year we staggered a bit, but we were able to bring together low-reading, inner-city children with well-meaning adult reading tutors. With each passing year the expectations of those of us who were guiding the program increased. We came to realize that the supervisor was the "nerve center" of the program. When a "light bulb" went on in the supervisor's head, with a little

planning that idea could quickly be transferred to the actual work of eight to ten tutor-child pairs. Furthermore, we found that we had originally underestimated what volunteer tutors would be capable of doing. They were not limited to carrying out narrow instructional routines. Instead, the tutors improved with experience (just as their children did) and, given adequate direction from the supervisor, many were able to deliver sophisticated, effective reading instruction to their students. The "proof was in the pudding;" the children were learning to read.

Year Four marked the first time any supervisor was paid for his/her services. I believe that the initiation of this small, yearly stipend ($3000) was an important step, justly acknowledging the professional nature of the supervisor's position. In Year Six, with the availability of two supervisors for the first time, the tutoring program doubled in size (operating on a Monday/Wednesday and Tuesday/Thursday schedule), but maintained the same supervisor/tutor ratio (1 to 10). This same year the two supervisors (Betty Boyd and Bev Shaw) assumed responsibility for daily lesson planning in the tutoring program, thereby raising the quality of instruction provided to the children yet another level. Finally, Years Eight and Nine showed that it was possible to pass the supervisor's mantle on to a new and relatively inexperienced reading specialist--with little loss in program effectiveness. Of course, such a leadership change required that the new supervisor receive close and continuing support during his/her first few months on the job.

Although the supervisor was the hub of the tutoring program, serving as theoretician, tutor trainer, cheerleader, and juice-and-cookie-provider, there would have been no program without the tutors who volunteered their time. Recruitment and retention of tutors, then, were major issues for us. We were lucky to be situated in a large metropolitan area, where we could draw from local colleges, churches, and community organizations. My connection with National College of Education, particularly with the Reading Center, also helped immensely. Over a ten year period, we had to recruit over 140 tutors to work at Howard Street, and in some years we scrambled to fill the tutor slots. However, Bev Shaw's recruitment of a core group of semi-permanent tutors in Year 6 lessened the pressure somewhat, and, as the years went by and the program became well-established, we found that informal, word-of-mouth contacts tended to bring more and more volunteer tutors our way.

We discovered quickly that in our program we needed mature tutors, college age or older (see Year One). It takes a certain level of maturity or commitment to give up two afternoons per week for an entire year to tutor a child. Also, some of the children at times brought frustration and anxiety with them to the after-school tutoring lessons, creating management challenges for even a mature tutor (see Year Five).

The flip-side of occasional misbehavior or recalcitrance was the inevitable bond that formed between the tutor and his/her child. The children in our program were not used to receiving a lot of individual attention in school, where class size ranged

from 30 to 35. Initially, some of them would actually withdraw from the intimacy of the tutorial relationship, seeming to disbelieve or distrust it. For example, Quincy, a street-wise third grader with a strong aversion to the printed word, alternated between shyness and surliness in the Fall of 1979, Year One of the tutoring program. I clearly remember Quincy's words to his tutor, Warren Clohisy, around Christmas of that year, "When you gonna leave, Warn?" At first, Warren did not understand the question, but then he answered, "I'm not leaving Quincy, I'm gonna be here all year long." From that point on, Quincy "opened up," both in his personal relationship with his tutor and in his willingness to take risks in reading and writing. Quincy did learn to read, and Warren tutored him for the next two and one-half years. I maintain that the interpersonal bonding between the middle class tutors and their inner-city students was the major reason that the tutors remained so committed to the volunteer program, as demonstrated by their consistent attendance across a year's time.

The presence of an on-site supervisor also had a lot to do with the volunteer tutors' quality of life, and, hence, our retention of their services over time. Many volunteer literacy programs, whether working with children or adults, have poor track records for retaining tutors. Teaching another person to read is not always an uncomplicated act. Lack of knowledge and experience can breed feelings of frustration and self-doubt in well-intentioned volunteer tutors, causing some to drop out of programs they have entered. We were able to retain tutors at

Howard Street, partly due to the on-site presence of a supervisor, a trained reading specialist. Not only was this person there to offer the tutor encouragement on the bad days and praise on the good days, but also, over time, the supervisor, through lesson-planning and informal feedback, actually taught the volunteer how to teach reading (not a bad skill to pick up).

Some things we would like to change. When 21 people (10 tutors, 10 children, and 1 supervisor) come together for one hour two afternoons per week, this creates a spontaneous but transitory setting. Busy people come, volunteer their time, and then pass back into their own separate worlds of home, family, work, and school. One thing Megan, Elaine, and I started out trying to build at Howard Street in 1979--probably because we, ourselves, needed it at the time--was a "sense of community" among the tutors. That first year, we met on Friday afternoons, as a group, with those tutors who could stay to discuss the children and talk about the program in general. We also walked across the street to a Mexican restaurant every two months or so and had dinner as a tutoring group. The resulting camaraderie and feelings of togetherness that emerged that first year of the tutoring program have been difficult to reproduce over the years. Perhaps it was a first year, "new program" phenomenon; perhaps as the tutoring program became more knowledgeably and efficiently run, there was not as much need for informal contact among the tutors and the supervisor; or perhaps busy volunteers just do not have the time for such off-the-job interaction.

Today, of course, there is a sense of group belonging among the tutors. They tutor in the same room with their peers; they often come and go from the tutoring center in pairs or threes, setting up important opportunities for informal talk; and the supervisor surely serves as a steadying "parental or older sibling" figure for the individual volunteers. Nonetheless, the more inclusive sense of community we were able to establish in the first two years of the program has faded somewhat over the years. I view this as a loss, wish we had it back, and believe strongly that any new volunteer program just starting out should consider ways of nurturing and holding on to a sense of community among its members.

One frustration we have experienced in the tutoring program has been the transience of our student population. The community we serve is neither a confining inner-city housing project, nor a stable working class neighborhood. Rather, it is a restless, teeming four square block area that finds poor families continually moving in and out for a variety of reasons. After working with a child for three or four months, it is not unusual for the tutor or supervisor to show up at school one day and discover that the child's family has abruptly moved to the Southside or Westside of the city (new telephone number unknown). Generally, we are given no advance warning of the move, and just have to accept the severed relationship as best we can (as does the child). At least when we lose a child near the end of the school year, we know that we have had time to accomplish something; whatever reading improvement the child has made over

the course of the year he will take with him to his new school.

Being small, independent, non-bureaucratic, and sparely funded has not prevented the Howard Street Tutoring Program from teaching children to read. However, these program characteristics have precluded the offering of other services. For example, beyond phone calls to check on attendance problems, the tutoring program has been able to maintain little contact with the parents of the children served. The parents freely give their permission for their children to be tutored, but only one in fifteen comes by to see the program in operation. The vast majority of the parents are single mothers who either work full-time or have younger children to care for at home during the tutoring program's hours of operation. Over the years, only in rare cases have volunteer tutors had much contact with parents, and though the supervisor has maintained what telephone contact he/she could, this too has been limited.

Certainly more parental contact is warranted in a program such as ours. Important goals might be to share with the parent information about his/her child's reading progress; to show the parent how to read books to and with her children; and possibly in some cases to help the parent enroll in a literacy program him/herself. But who is to handle this parent education task? The volunteer tutors? The supervisor, who is paid $3000 for a year's work? And when and how are such parent contacts to be made? Not all the parents have telephones and, therefore, any serious outreach effort attempted by the tutoring program would involve hit-and-miss home visits. We do <u>not</u> feel good about

operating in the dark when it comes to parent involvement. Perhaps a grant could be written to fund a liason person between the parents and the tutoring program. Without such a position, I unfortunately do not see foresee changes in this area.

Another area of the tutored children's lives where we have had little input is their reading experience in the public school classroom. In truth, it is not unusual for a reading tutor working outside the school to have little contact with--or influence over--the classroom teacher of his/her student. Finding the time for dialogue between a classroom teacher and a tutor always presents a problem. However, in our case, the bigger barrier to communication has been the mismatch in instructional philosophies between the school and the tutoring program. For example, the first four years of the tutoring program, the public school was using Chicago Mastery Learning to teach reading in the primary grades. Unforunately, the school's skills-based curriculum was the antithesis to the language-experience reading approach we were using at Howard Street, effectively lowering interest on both sides as to how the children were functioning in the different environments. That is, the tutoring program was unconcerned about the children's ability to complete Mastery Learning work sheets in the classroom, and the public school teachers, who were being evaluated on their children's performance in Mastery Learning, were not that interested in the free writing and trade book reading the children were doing at Howard Street.

In 1983, the Chicago Public Schools shelved the Mastery

Learning reading curriculum and returned to more traditional basal reader programs in the elementary grades. This narrowed the gap between the kind of instruction being offered in the public school classrooms and in the tutoring lessons at Howard Street. However, in the mid-1980's, "Effective Schools Research" was in its heyday, and one of its premises was: have high expectations of poor inner-city children. Somehow, "high expectations" was interpreted in many Chicago schools to mean that all children should read in grade level books (Second graders should read books of a second grade difficulty level, third graders should read third grade books, and so on). In this way, the thinking must have gone, Chicago children (and their teachers) would be challenged to meet nationally-held reading standards.

The problem with the "high expectations" notion, as described above, is that not all children (particularly the bottom-third of the class in a low SES school) are ready to read at grade level. If forced to do so, these low readers will, at best, learn very little, and, at worst, become frustrated and withdraw psychologically from the reading process. Each September, pretesting (using the classroom basal) showed that our Howard Street children were reading from 0.5 to 1.5 years below grade level in reading. Therefore, in the tutoring program we taught the children "where they were at;" the second graders started off in first grade books, the third graders in first and second grade books, and each child progressed at as quick a pace as he/she could manage. This seemed like "bedrock" commonsense

to us. The fact that many of the same children were working in grade level basal readers and workbooks at school each day was something that we could neither control nor fully understand.

The larger picture. It makes good sense to identify primary grade children who are falling behind their peers in reading and to provide these children with intensive catch-up help. This has been the goal of the Howard Street Tutoring Program since its inception. However, teaching an "at-risk" child to read in an after-school program is only the first part of the puzzle. There must be an interesting, relevant curriculum (content, subject matter) in the school that provides the same child with opportunity and motivation to use his/her improving reading ability. Why read if there is a lack of interest in what is to be read? Furthermore, there must be some assurance that, in the classroom, the child is placed in books that he/she can read. There is no surer way to undermine a successful year of tutoring than to place the child the next school year in reading material that is still one or more years above him/her in difficulty (e.g., putting a late-first grade reader on a steady diet of third grade level material). Note, however, that classroom curriculum and reading level placement are school-based variables over which a tutoring program like our own has no control.

Along this line, one criticism of the Howard Street Tutoring Program could be that it operates outside of the public school, outside of the societal institution entrusted with the responsibility for teaching children to read. Whether the school

is presently fulfilling its obligation or not is beside the point, the critic might argue. Only by affecting the operation of the institution in positive ways will any significant change come about in children's education.

I have two conflicting reactions to the criticism above. First, I fully agree that improving the inner-city school's ability to deliver effective reading instruction is a critical priority. We must keep searching for ideas (and resources) that will help our schools in this task. Innovative thinking and experimentation is needed regarding both classroom reading instruction and pull-out or remedial instruction in the primary grades. Already, several new school-based intervention programs (e.g., Reading Recovery and Success for All) show promise of making a real difference with low readiness first grade readers.

On the other hand, I am aware that schools, as institutions, are highly resistant to change (Sarason, 1972). In the reading area, most elementary schools, not just those in our inner-cities, have historically found it difficult to meet the needs of children who get off to a slow start in reading. This is a systemic problem of long duration, yet it is exacerbated in the deteriorating socio-economic environment of our modern-day urban centers. Many poor children come to school lacking necessary pre-literacy experiences, and the public schools, for a variety of reasons, seem to be less and less successful in helping the children to overcome their reading-related deficits. Furthermore, if one considers that, in the late-1980's, government (at all levels) seems to be turning away from its

responsibility in this early literacy area, there is reason for pessimism. The schools might not be able to get the job done, at least not alone.

Is there a place, then, for bootstrap, neighborhood tutoring programs like the one described in this chapter?. The answer is a resounding YES if you are:

- a child who is having difficulty learning to read.
- an adult volunteer who is interested in helping a child learn to read.
- a reading specialist or an experienced, knowledgeable teacher who would like to work through volunteer tutors to reach beginning readers in need of help.

However, if you are a community development or education policy maker in the public or private sector, the answer is MAYBE. Certainly the cost of funding such a program is not prohibitive (approximately $300 per child served). What remains to be seen, however, is whether the small, after-school tutorial model described in this chapter can be replicated with similar success in other communities across the country.

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