

Florida Center for Reading Research

Help One Student to Succeed
(HOSTS)

What is HOSTSLink Language Arts?

HOSTSLink Language Arts, (Help One Student to Succeed) is a structured mentoring program designed to supplement a school's core reading curriculum. Trained volunteers from the community provide students with one-on-one tutoring sessions using lesson plans that have been specifically tailored to the individual needs of each student. *HOSTSLink Language Arts* is appropriate for Grades K-8 including the general school population and low achieving or at-risk students, and for older struggling readers, Grades 9-12. The principle goals of *HOSTSLink Language Arts* include improving academic achievement in reading and writing, building problem-solving skills, and improving behavior, attitudes and self-esteem. The three major components of the *HOSTS* mentoring program are professional development, individualized lesson plans, and mentoring. These main components are highly developed to provide a complete tutoring program that is aligned with local, state, and/or national standards.

Paramount to the success of the *HOSTS* program is each school's facilitating teacher (or *HOSTS* teacher) who is a certified teacher, preferably a reading specialist or a teacher with a strong reading background. The teacher/facilitator is given two days of extensive training, which includes reading assessment strategies, instructional strategies for the mentoring program, mentor recruitment and training, and software training. These two days are followed by two more days of on-site implementation and unlimited technical assistance during the school year. The significant role of the teacher/facilitator consists of the initial assessment of the students, organization of the *HOSTS* materials, training of the mentors, coordinating the mentor/student materials, ongoing monitoring and assessment of student performance, and scheduling the mentoring sessions. In order for the mentoring program to be effective, long-term commitment is required of the mentors and the teacher/facilitator must be willing to recruit and train mentors as well as have access to a computer.

An important feature of the *HOSTS* program is its nationwide database for teacher use only. The database *HOSTS Learning* serves many purposes and the facilitating teacher is trained to become facile in its use. Along with an extensive listing of resources that have been cross-referenced and aligned with the school's curriculum and standards, the database offers access to software, teacher resource books, literature, games, kits, manipulatives, videos, and worksheets from a vast quantity of commercial publishers. Basal reading programs with a 2000 copyright are also cross-referenced in the database. Another characteristic of the database is its ability to generate individualized prescriptions or educational plans for each student.

Once a student has been identified for academic intervention, he/she is given a diagnostic assessment to determine strengths in word analysis, vocabulary and comprehension, and an informal reading inventory to determine reading level. Then the *HOSTS* teacher/facilitator feeds this information into the database, which in turn generates a long-range prescription for that student. From this prescription, or long range educational plan, an individualized learning objectives plan is created, which is aligned with the school district's standards and resources, and also indicates which

materials to use for each objective. Then the *HOSTS* teacher develops weekly lesson plans based on the student's instructional needs and reading level.

Each student has a student folder containing his/her specific learning objectives and weekly lesson plans. Students receive thirty minutes of one-on-one instruction four times a week from trained volunteer mentors. When the mentor arrives for tutoring, he/she picks up the student folder, takes that day's lesson plan and gathers the materials necessary for implementation. Materials for mentoring are taken from the resources available in the school as well as materials suggested and provided by *HOSTS*. Each thirty minute lesson consists of three parts: ten minutes of reading, ten minutes of vocabulary instruction, and ten minutes of objective reinforcement, thus providing the student with a structured session that optimizes academic learning time. Throughout the lesson, the mentor guides the student, provides feedback and encouragement, and records the student's progress for the *HOSTS* teacher to evaluate. Mentors are trained to use the *HOSTS* Recipe for Success Cards, Recipe Response Forms and Activity Cards, which are included in each student folder. These various cards include specific reading and writing strategies, graphic organizers, and activities intended to develop and extend a literature selection. They are supplemental instructional strategies that encourage strategic teaching and learning and are written in clear and concise language. Through use of these cards, the mentors are encouraged to use good teaching techniques such as being specific, modeling, giving positive and immediate feedback, breaking a task into smaller steps, and encouraging the student to verbalize what he is doing.

In addition to the *HOSTSLink Language Arts* mentoring program, *HOSTS* Learning also offers the following programs: *HOSTSLink structured* mentoring in *Language Arts Readiness*, *Spanish Language Arts*, *Spanish Language Arts Readiness*, and *Math* as well as a classroom system, *LearnerLink*, and *professional development program*, *ProLink*. *LearnerLink* is specifically designed for classroom use, offers teachers the advantages of the database with state and local standard alignment, online diagnostic reading assessments, prescriptive lesson plans for individual students or groups in the classroom and lesson plans that are linked only to the resources in the classroom. Unlike the mentoring program used for struggling readers, *LearnerLink* is for all students. The *Language Arts Readiness* program is appropriate for K-2 emergent readers and the *Spanish Readiness* program is for grades K-3. *ProLink* is a five-module series of professional development that uses an on-site coaching model for K-3 teachers as well as special education reading teachers.

Is *HOSTSLink Language Arts* aligned with *Reading First*?

In terms of *Reading First*, the *HOSTSLink Language Arts* program addresses the five major components of reading through each student's prescription. If a particular student's diagnostic assessment reveals a weakness in phonemic awareness, then it will be addressed with a specific learning objective on the individual learning plan. The teacher/facilitator will choose from the available materials suggested by the learning objective plan and write this into the weekly lesson plans. The same process will be used to address problems with phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Many of the *Recipe for Success Cards* used by the mentor contain strategies with a research base, such as explicit instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics instruction, repeated reading strategies to develop fluency, and various comprehension strategies such as word part analysis, prediction, sequencing, summarizing and questioning

The one difficulty with this database of instructional materials and strategies is that it has been growing for the past twenty-five years. During this period of time, HOSTS has been adding materials, programs and activities to their database; at least 80,000 programs and 70,000 literature titles. Given the length of time these materials have existed on the database, it is highly probable that many of the older materials and suggestions would not reflect the current research on the need for explicit instruction in basic skills. Thus, it is probable that teachers occasionally might receive intervention suggestions or materials recommendations that would not be consistent with other parts of the reading curriculum, assuming that the other parts are consistent with the instructional guidelines contained in Reading First documents.

Research support for HOSTSLink Language Arts

HOSTS was developed in 1971 and expanded to become an independent organization in 1977. Various levels of research have been conducted to document the effectiveness of the *HOSTS* mentoring program. This research is reported on the *HOSTS* website and ranges from a multi-site study using a comparison group to qualitative case studies.

During the 1995-96 academic year, students in grades 2-6 were administered the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) in both the fall and spring in a Delaware school district. Outcomes were measured and reported as the percentage of gain reflected in pre to post CTBS Reading scaled scores. Students who received *HOSTS* alone (155) made an 8% gain; students who received *HOSTS* and Title I services (24) made a 6% gain; students who received only Title I (93) services made a 3% gain; and students who received neither *HOSTS* nor Title I (147) made a 3% gain. Although this research indicated that only those students who received *HOSTS* (either *HOSTS* alone or *HOSTS* plus Title I) showed performance that exceeded that of the no intervention group (those students who did not receive *HOSTS* or Title I), it is important to note that matched samples and random assignment were not part of this research design.

During the 1990 and 1991 academic years, seventy-four third and fourth grade students from an elementary school in California participated in a research study conducted by *HOSTS*. The Stanford Achievement Test (SAT-7) was administered with these students using a pre and post-test design. Gains, in terms of NCE units were compared to statistics of statewide gains. *HOSTS* reports that the gains the *HOSTS* students made represent from two to four times the gains seen in third and fourth grade California students statewide.

Bowling Green State University conducted a study that included 358 students receiving Title I or Special Education services in 16 Ohio schools during the 2000-2001 school year. These students were pre-tested at the beginning of the year and post-tested at the end of the year with STAR Reading Assessment. The scores used were reported in NCE standard scores and statistical analysis indicated that student gains on all subtests measuring a broad range of reading and language skills were statistically significant (.05 level). The fact that these gains were achieved in all tested areas with a student population that all too often experiences educational failure is encouraging. It is important to note, however, that these gains cannot be attributed solely to the *HOSTS* intervention because students also received comprehensive educational services in addition to *HOSTS*.



When *HOSTS* is implemented as intended it addresses the components research has found to be essential to the success of tutoring programs for reading

(Wasik, 1998): a certified reading specialist (teacher) needs to supervise tutors; tutors need ongoing training and feedback; tutoring sessions need to be structured and contain basic elements; tutoring needs to be intensive and consistent; quality materials are needed to facilitate the tutoring model; assessment of students needs to be ongoing; schools need to find ways to ensure that tutors will attend regularly; and tutoring needs to be coordinated with classroom instruction.

The content of *HOSTSLink Language Arts* is consistent with reading research in that it includes instruction in the five essential components of reading. It provides schools with a structured plan that integrates appropriate, individualized lessons taught by volunteers to support instruction that occurs in the classroom. We conclude that there is a beginning level of research to support the use of *HOSTSLink Language Arts* as an effective mentoring program. Currently, the Michigan Center for Assessment and Educational Data at Central Michigan University is conducting a statewide scientific study to track the impact of *HOSTS* on achievement among students who start with below-grade level skills. This scientific study will employ the use of a control group of students not involved in *HOSTS* and be implemented over a two-year period. Results from this study will offer additional insight into the effectiveness of the *HOSTS* mentoring program.

Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths of *HOSTSLink Language Arts*:

- Structured mentoring sessions optimize academic learning time.
- A facilitating teacher monitors mentoring sessions, ensuring that the individual learning plans of students are addressed.
- One-on-one mentoring provides encouragement and support to students who are most in need of such reinforcement.
- The database is multipurpose, providing access to resources, student prescriptions, alignment with state and local standards, and progress monitoring management.
- Students' progress is continually monitored and assessed by the *HOSTS* facilitating teacher.
- Schools that employ the *HOSTSLink Language Arts* program report that, as a result of the one-on-one attention provided by the mentors, students' self-esteem and school attendance improve.

Weaknesses of *HOSTSLink Language Arts*:

- The database might offer suggestions that are not consistent with the current research. Therefore, it is important that schools clearly identify their adopted research based reading curriculum as the *HOSTSLink* system is personalized for their school.

Which Florida counties have schools that implement HOSTS?

Brevard	321-631-1911	Leon	850-487-7147
Dade	305-995-1428	Marion	352-671-7702
Desoto	863-494-4222	Orange	407-317-3202
Duval	904-390-2115	Osceola	407-870-4008
Escambia	850-469-6130	Palm Beach	561-434-8200
Gadsden	850-627-9651	Pinellas	727-588-6011
Indian River	772-564-3150	St. Johns	904-826-2100
Lake	352-253-6510	St. Lucie	772-468-5021
Lee	941-337-8301	Volusia	386-734-7190

For More Information

<http://www.hosts.com/>

References

Advantage Learning Systems (1997). *STAR Reading*. Wisconsin Rapids, WI: Renaissance Learning.

Stanford Achievement Test (SAT 7). San Antonio, TX: Harcourt, Inc.



Wasik, B.A. (1998). Using volunteers as reading tutors: Guidelines for successful practices. *Reading Teacher*, 51 (7) 562-70.

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