Cross-Age Literacy
Primary Content Area: English I

Introduction
The Cross-Age Literacy program enables students to experience success as readers as they reinforce literacy attainment strategies using children’s books with younger children in local feeder schools. Teachers partner with a local elementary school for monthly 9th grade/1st grade literacy sessions. Students read a children’s book (When I Was Young in the Mountains), create their own book based on their Chicago experiences, and plan and implement reading activities for their “little buddies.” Freshmen develop literacy skills and confidence, “little buddies” gain a mentor and friend and build their literacy skills, and elementary schools build stronger relationships with their neighboring high school.

Project Goals

- Students will develop writing and editing skills as they create their own books based on When I Was Young in the Mountains.
- Students will build relationships with local elementary school students.
- Students will gain confidence in their literacy skills.
- Students will learn how to plan and implement a long-term project.
- Students will become meta-cognitive learners by developing and implementing reading activities for their “little buddies.”
- Students will reflect on their experience.

Procedure/Project Sequence
1. Teacher identifies a feeder elementary school partnership. Community organizations can help with this process.
2. Teacher schedules monthly dates with elementary schools for Cross-Age Tutoring program.
3. Students read When I Was Young in the Mountains, by Cynthia Rylant.
4. Students create their own “When I Was Young in Chicago...” book.
5. Students practice reading their text with classmates.
6. Teachers introduce literacy attainment strategies including phonemic awareness, prediction, sight words, autobiographical development, etc.
7. Students plan an ice-breaker and reading activities for “little buddies” focusing each session on one literacy attainment strategy and utilizing a variety of children’s books.
8. Classes travel to elementary schools and implement lesson plan.
9. Students write reflections of and evaluate collectively their experience.
10. Students plan follow-up lesson plan for their “little buddies.”

Community Partner/Resources
Logan Square Neighborhood Association
2840 N. Milwaukee Avenue
Chicago, IL 60618
http://www.lsna.net/index.html
GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs)
http://www.gearupchicago.org

Addendum

Standards
This project addresses the following Social Emotional Learning Standards as well as the following Common Core State Standards:

Goal 2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.
A: Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others
4b. Use conversation skills to understand others’ feelings and perspectives
B: Recognize individual and group similarities and differences
4b. Demonstrate respect for individuals from different social and cultural groups.
C: Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.
4a. Evaluate the effects of requesting support from and providing support to others.

Goal 3: Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.
C. Contribute to the well-being of one’s school and community
4b. Plan, implement, and evaluate one’s participation in a group effort to contribute to one’s local community.

RL.9.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
W.9.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Duration: The suggested duration of this project is 6 months (once a month for six months).

Preparation: Read When I Was Young in the Mountains, write their own When I Was Young in Chicago books, and plan monthly ice-breakers and reading activities for “little buddies”
Action: Implement literacy attainment activities with “little buddies” at feeder elementary school
Reflection: A reflection is written after each trip to the elementary school and a longer reflection is written at the end of the six-month program. Reflection also takes place as students evaluate their performance at schools and seek ways to improve their practice.

Cross-Curricular Connections: Connections with Drama, Art and History.