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Reading Leaders
Evaluation Report 2008-2009

Prepared by Mary Murray and Margaret Hennings
MEMconsultants
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Reading Leaders Program Evaluation 2008-2009
Executive Summary

Program and Evaluation Background

Team Read is a nonprofit whose mission is to deliver a proven, replicable K-12 model to ensure reading success for struggling readers through the use of peer tutors. Since 1998, Team Read has served over 13,000 students, primarily by matching high school tutors with 2nd and 3rd graders. This year, Team Read piloted **Reading Leaders**, a program that pairs 4th and 5th grade reading tutors with 1st graders. Seventy-seven tutors and 73 tutees participated in the program in six elementary schools.

Since this was a pilot year of the program, the evaluation focuses on documenting program qualities and impact, with an emphasis on identifying ways to strengthen the program in future years. Sources of data include evaluator and staff observation; participant interviews and surveys; classroom teacher, Site Coordinator and parent surveys; and reading assessment scores.

Impact on Tutee Reading

Reading Leaders offered a structured, reading-rich afterschool experience for students with reading challenges. At every site, a culture of reading prevailed day-in and day-out. Tutors, classroom teachers, parents and Site Coordinators report improvements in reading enjoyment, confidence and skill as a result of Reading Leaders.

**Site Coordinators, Parents, Classroom Teachers and Tutors
Report Reading Leaders Improves Tutee Reading**
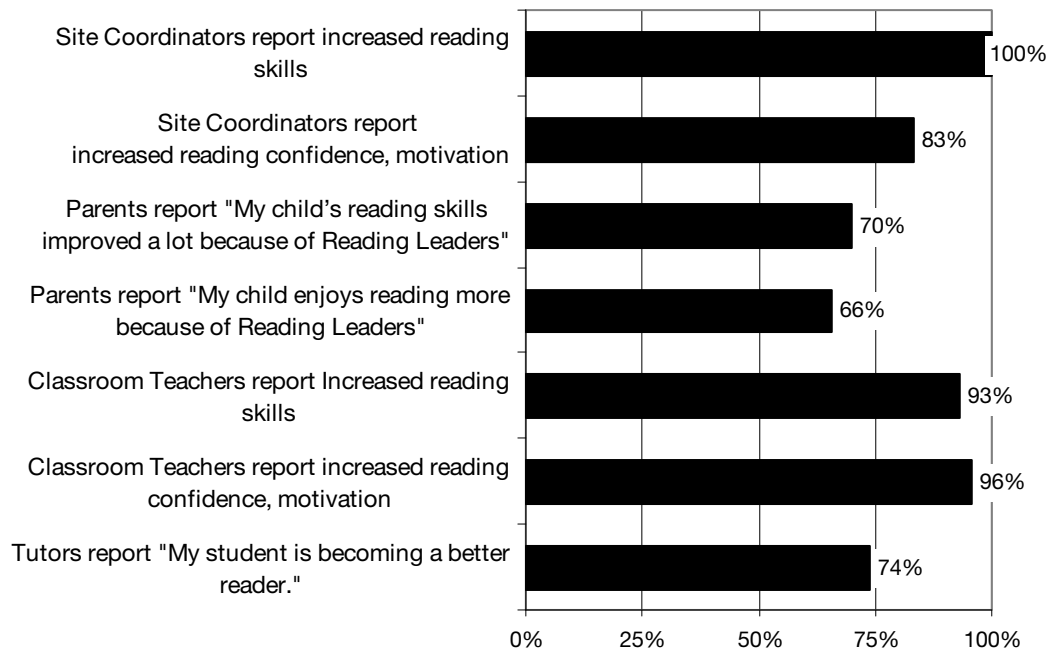
Reading scores suggest that the program impact varied by site. Overall, program participants had higher post-program reading scores when compared to a matched comparison group; however, three of the five sites in the analysis accounted for all of this positive difference, while at two sites the scores were not better than the matched comparison. Sites with the strongest reading improvements each had some of the tutee's classroom teacher as a Site Coordinator. Subsequent evaluations should determine if this year's site by site differences are reliable over time, and if so, explore what site features or qualities (such as Site Coordinator skills or previous relationship with participants, tutor and tutee selection and pairing, curriculum modifications or setting culture) contributed to these site by site differences.

Impact on Leadership Skills

Reading Leaders is designed to foster leadership development among the tutors that participate. All Site Coordinators surveyed agreed that the program does so. Tutor comments suggest that Reading Leaders provided practice in three kinds of leadership skills: helping, teaching, and being a role model for young people. Program planners can consider how to intentionally foster these kinds of leadership, or others, by creating or strengthening program features that develop and reinforcing age-appropriate leadership skills such as these.

Selected Tutor Comments
▪ *I get to help someone become a better reader*
▪ *Reading Leaders is good because I get a chance to experience what it is like to teach 1st graders*
▪ *It's best to help 1st graders and to be role models in lifetimes*

Opportunities for Program Improvement

Group Size and Adult/Student Ratio: Reading Leaders participants are all elementary school students, so the program requires more adult support than do other Team Read programs. Site size should be limited to approximately 10 pairs, with consideration of the number of adults and the size of the room. In larger groups, tutees are more likely to bring learning or behavior challenges that are beyond the skills of a $4^{th}/5^{th}$ grader. The noise levels also become too distracting in large groups. And, the Site Coordinator becomes consumed by classroom management and unable to provide support to tutors; given the relative immaturity of the $4^{th}/5^{th}$ grade tutors, direct observation and feedback while they are tutoring is necessary to develop their skills. As the program is currently structured with one Site Coordinator, not very much coaching of tutors occurs. Program planners should also consider increasing the adult to youth ratio by utilizing two adult Coordinators or hiring experienced high school tutors to work as junior Coordinators or mentors, allowing one person to focus solely on coaching tutors while another focuses on classroom management.

Curriculum: The structured curriculum is a program strength that can be built upon to further foster student engagement, meet program participants at their developmental level, and address uneven pairing situations. A structured and developmentally appropriate curriculum is critical for program success since the

relatively young, inexperienced tutors depend upon it almost completely. More learning activities that allow for movement and seem less like school should be woven into daily schedule to harness the energy that these youngsters bring to the afterschool setting. Phasing in new activities as the weeks progress might minimize boredom. Absences that resulted in excess tutors or tutees were very challenging on certain days, so an alternative daily schedule with activities designed for one tutor, multiple tutees would be useful.

Training: Compared to Team Read programs with older tutors, program planners must provide increased attention to tutor skill development to ensure positive tutor-tutee relationships. The training provided this year was a solid start. Adding a few tutor-only training days throughout the program could increase tutor skill development and address tutor struggles.

Tutee Recruitment and Selection: Tutee recruitment and selection should avoid including 1st graders with unusual behavioral or learning challenges. This year, recruitment led to program participants with an average reading score that was lower than the minimum threshold intended by program planners; thus, most tutors were working with 1st graders with extremely limited reading ability. At two sites, a high percentage of tutees were also English language learners with unique learning needs that exceed the abilities of many tutors. A strict minimal reading score threshold and other screening steps are necessary to set up 4th/5th grade tutors for success.

Conclusions

Reading Leaders shows great promise as a program designed to increase reading skills and provide young people a meaningful opportunity to develop leadership skills through service. There are multiple sources of evidence that tutees reading skills, confidence and motivation increased at many sites. All sites consistently provided a reading-rich afterschool environment likely to improve academic outcomes among participants.

Reading Leaders, however, does contrast with Team Read's Reading Coaches program in a number of ways. The relative youth of tutors means that the program requires more management by adults. The relative youth of tutees means that most are just barely readers, and require a different array of learning activities than a young person ready to practice site words, fluency and comprehension. Initial evaluation suggests the program requires a smaller adult-youth ratio than is the case at successful Reading Coaches sites.

Future evaluations should focus on understanding what features or qualities are most important for creating an optimally successful program. What skills and knowledge does the ideal Site Coordinator bring? What is the best sized group, and the best adult-youth ratio? What is the ideal physical setting (room layout, workspace, presence of distracting noises, etc.)? What training and curriculum works best? Given all the "ideal" qualities and features, which are necessary for success and which are preferable? If the pattern continues, why do certain sites produce better outcomes in reading scores than others?

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Team Read is a nonprofit whose mission is to deliver a proven replicable K-12 model to ensure reading success for struggling readers through the use of peer tutors. Since 1998, Team Read has served over 13,000 elementary and high school students, primarily through Reading Coaches, its core peer tutoring program; this program matches 2nd and 3rd graders with high school student tutors.

This year, Team Read piloted a new program, **Reading Leaders**. This program pairs 4th and 5th grade reading tutors with 1st graders. It was tested on a small scale last year, and this year it was piloted in six elementary schools. Seventy-seven tutors and 73 tutees participated for at least some of the program.

Logic Model

RESOURCES	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	GOALS
PARTICIPANTS ■ 1st graders reading below grade level (*ideally* reading at least at a Level 4 on the Developmental Reading Assessment) ■ 4th/5th graders reading at/below grade level with a strong interest in tutoring younger students (some of whom have participated for one or more year as a Team Read Tutee) RECRUITMENT ■ 1st grade teachers refer 1st graders ■ 4th/5th grade teachers refer "tutors" SETTING/LOCATION ■ Afterschool program at Seattle elementary schools, typically in a classroom STAFF ■ Teacher/School Employee Supervisor for each site (Reading Leaders Coordinator) ■ Team Read program staff PROGRAM ■ Curriculums developed with Seattle School District	TRAINING ■ 4th/5th graders using curriculum developed by district literacy coaches TUTORING ■ 4th/5th graders tutor 1st graders afterschool	TRAINING ■ ~70 4th/5th reading tutors (10-15 tutors/school at 6 elementary schools) ■ 3 sessions ■ 4-5 hours TUTORING ■ 6 elementary schools ■ ~70 4th/5th grade reading tutors ■ ~70 first grade tutees ■ 2 hours of tutoring provided weekly (1 hour twice a week) {note: 3 hours/week was the plan, but 2 hours is what actually occurred}	■ Increased reading tutors' and tutees' reading skills ■ Increased reading tutors' and tutees' reading confidence and motivation ■ Enhanced Reading Leaders leadership development (i.e., sense of responsibility, patience, community services) ■ Supported development of positive relationships between 1st graders with older students	Provide a continuum of literacy support for all students K-12

Evaluation Overview

Initial Research Questions

- What impact does Reading Leaders have on reading scores, reading confidence and reading motivation of tutees and tutors?
- What is the program impact related to leadership development of the tutors?
- What is the program impact related to positive relationships between younger and older students?
- Does tutor past program participation impact reading outcomes of them or the tutee?
- What does this data suggest regarding program improvement?

Methods

To assess how well Reading Leaders met program goals, students, parents, Site Coordinators, classroom teachers, Team Read staff, evaluator observations and reading scores all served as sources of data. The following tools were used to collect data.[1]

1) *Evaluator Observation*. Each site was observed two times for a full session by an evaluator. A structured observation tool was used to record notes regarding: reading skills, confidence and motivation; tutor-tutee relationships; program logistics and features; and program strengths and challenges.

2) *Interviews of Readers and Leaders*. A sample of students at each site were interviewed by the evaluators. A structured interview protocol was designed to address evaluation questions, but due to the age of the interviewees the evaluators sometimes followed the conversational flow rather than the protocol.

3) *Site Coordinator Surveys and Comments*. Site Coordinators completed two online surveys. The first focused on the tutor training. The second was completed at the end of the program and addressed their overall experience, Reading Leader development and effectiveness, tutor-tutee relationships, and curriculum, materials and support. Finally, Site Coordinator comments during an end of program meeting were used to better understand survey responses.

4) *Classroom Teacher Surveys*. Classroom teachers of tutors and tutees were invited to complete an end of program online survey. Survey questions focused on changes in reading skills, confidence and motivation and satisfaction with the program.

5) *Tutor Surveys*. Reading Leaders completed an end of program survey with multiple choice and open ended questions to assess their program enjoyment and their perceptions about its impact.

6) *Parent Surveys*. Program participants brought home a survey for their parents to complete. (The survey was made available in multiple languages.) Survey questions

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[1] Detailed information about sample sizes and response rates can be found in the Appendices.

focused on changes in reading skills, confidence and motivation and satisfaction with the program.

7) *Team Read Staff Observations*. Team Read staff completed a structured questionnaire about each site. Questions focused on reading skills, confidence and motivation; tutor-tutee relationships; program logistics and features; and site strengths and challenges.

8) *Developmental Reading Assessment Scores*. The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) is a reading assessment conducted by the Seattle Public Schools. Spring 2008 scores were used as "pre" scores, and Spring 2009 scores were used as "post" scores to assess changes in reading skills of the tutees. DRA scores for students not in Reading Leaders, but at the same elementary schools, were used as a source of comparison data.

2008-2009 Reading Leader Participants

Seventy-seven tutors and 73 tutees participated for at least some of the program. The following demographic and other information was provided by Seattle Public Schools.

	RL Tutees n = 68	Other 1st Graders n = 577	RL Tutors n = 74	Other 4th & 5th Graders n = 1105
Male	51%	53%	36%	51%
Female	49%	47%	64%	49%
Bilingual	32%	27%	11%	15%
Special Education	3%	9%	13%	13%
Homeless	1%	4%	5%	6%
Asian	12%	20%	12%	16%
Black	62%	42%	70%	53%
Hispanic	15%	26%	11%	20%
American Indian	0%	1%	3%	3%
White	12%	11%	4%	8%

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OUTCOMES

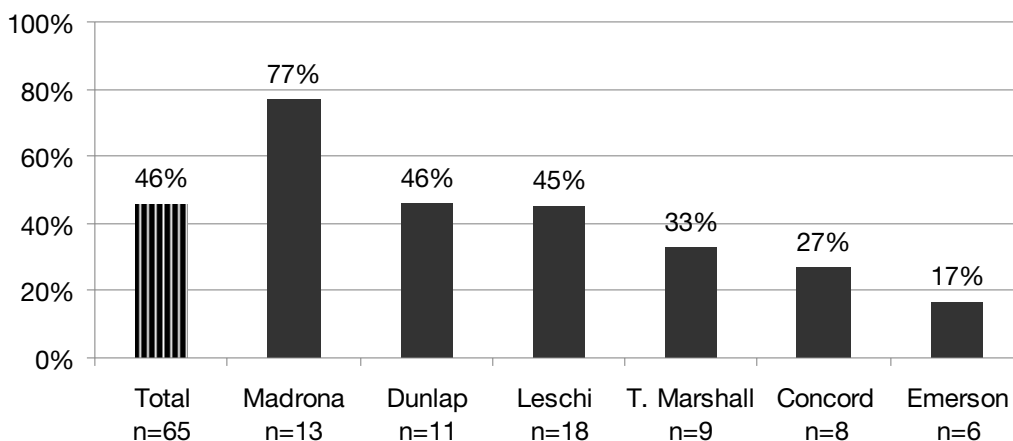## Reading Skills, Motivation and Confidence

DRA Scores

The Developmental Reading Assessment is an individual, performance-based assessment designed for use in primary grades. In individual assessment conferences, as students read the text aloud or silently, teachers analyze and assess student reading and comprehension. The teacher determines a student's DRA level by calculating the number of errors, the time each student took to complete the assessment, and the student's phrasing and retelling.
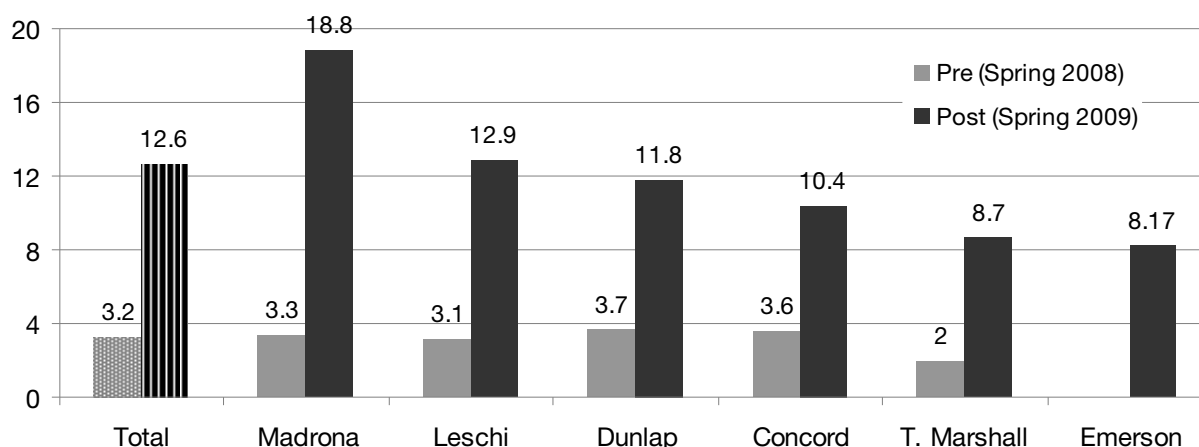
Spring 2008 scores were used as "pre" scores, and Spring 2009 scores were used as "post" scores to assess changes in reading skills. Pre-scores were available for 50 tutees, post scores were available for 65 tutees.

% Who Met Standard After Reading Leaders

Spring 2009 DRA Scores

Category	Percent
Total n=65	46%
Madrona n=13	77%
Dunlap n=11	46%
Leschi n=18	45%
T. Marshall n=9	33%
Concord n=8	27%
Emerson n=6	17%

Mean DRA Scores Among Reading Leader Tutees

Category	Pre (Spring 2008)	Post (Spring 2009)
Total	3.2	12.6
Madrona	3.3	18.8
Leschi	3.1	12.9
Dunlap	3.7	11.8
Concord	3.6	10.4
T. Marshall	2	8.7
Emerson		8.17

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Matched Comparison

A matched comparison group was dervied from DRA scores of students not in Reading Leaders. For every Reading Leaders student, there was an attempt made to find another student at the same school with the same pre-score who also had the same special education or bilingual education status. When possible, gender was matched. When there was more than one comparison student that matched a Reading Leaders student, one was chosen at random. When there was no matched comparison, the Reading Leader student was left out of comparison analysis. The result is 38 matched comparison pairs (out of a possible 47, which is the number of Reading Leader students with both a pre and post score).

	38 Matched Pairs	
	Reading Leaders	**Comparison Group**
Male	23	22
Female	15	16
Bilingual	11	13
SPED	2	2
Homeless	0	1
Asian	4	4
Black	23	25
Hispanic	7	7
American Indian	0	1
White	4	1

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Mean DRA Scores Spring '09
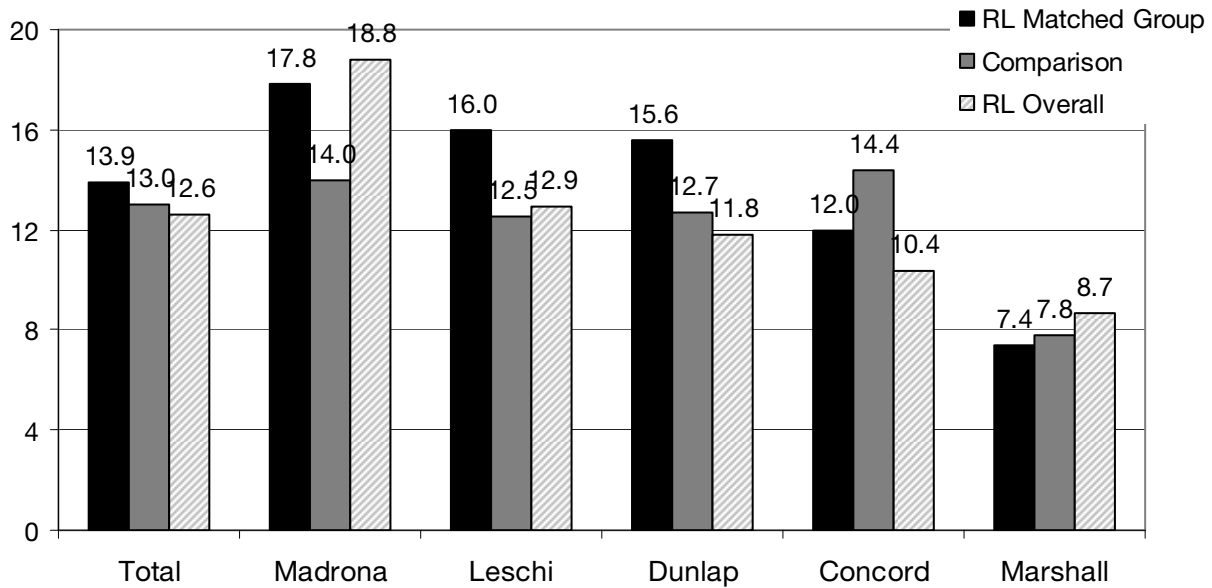
Overall, Reading Leaders participants had slightly higher Spring '09 DRA scores when compared to the matched group (13.9 vs. 13.0). This difference is not statistically significant.

At three sites (Madrona, Leschi and Dunlap), Reading Leaders had significantly better DRA scores than the control group, while at two sites the scores were the same (Marshall) or significantly worse (Concord). The sample size for each school is too small to meaningfully use statistical significance as a measure of success at the three successful schools. However, it is noteworthy that at these three schools, Reading Leaders average DRA scores was at or close to the 1st grade standard of 16.
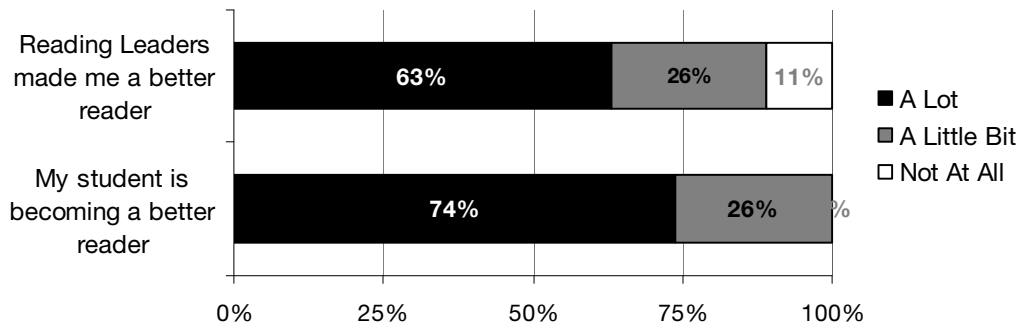
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[2] Emerson is excluded from school-by-school paired analysis since it has only 1 student in the data. This data is included in overall (total) analysis.

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Percentage of Students at Standard in Spring '09
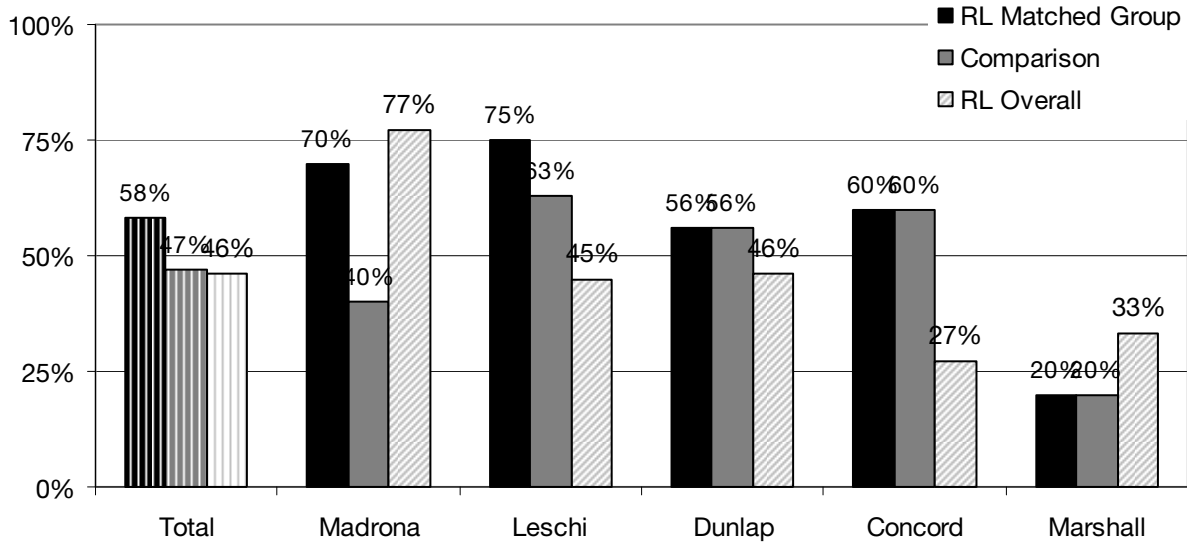
Overall, Reading Leaders participants were 11% more likely to meet the district reading standard (16) in Spring '09 than the matched comparison. These positive Reading Leaders findings are all attributed to positive changes at two sites: Madrona and Leschi (two sites where the Site Coordinator is also the classroom teacher for many of the tutees). At all other sites, the comparison group was equally likely to meet the standard.

**Reading Leaders Report
Increased Reading Skills**

	A Lot	A Little Bit	Not At All

Reading Leaders made me a better reader: 63% | 26% | 11%

My student is becoming a better reader: 74% | 26% | %

(x-axis: 0% 25% 50% 75% 100%)

Selected Reading Leader survey responses to *"What is best or good about Reading Leaders?"*

- *What's best about being a Reading Leader is I get to show my reader how to read.*
- *That you get to become a better reader.*
- *It helps little kids how to read.*
- *You get to help kids read.*
- *I get to help someone become a better reader.*
- *It lets you get to help young kids improve in their reading.*
- *Being able to help students to become a better reader.*
- *I can help me learn more and it can help them learn more.*

Selected Reading Leader interview quotes regarding changes in student reader (paraphrased).

- *He is sounding out words more.*
- *She's more confident, she's learned to read bigger words.*
- *He sounds out words better. I've seen lots of improvement.*

Selected Reading Leader interview quotes regarding changes in own reading (paraphrased).

- *I've learned new vocabulary, especially adjectives.*
- *I learned about punctuation use while reading aloud.*
- *I don't read as fast now, I read aloud better.*
- *I correct myself now and sound out new words!*
- *I do better on my fluency.*
- *I can read better. I can learn more when I read books faster now.*
- *I am at a different level now. Now I keep up with other kids.*

Student Readers Report Improved Reading

In interviews, tutees consistently reported that Reading Leaders helped them become a better reader. However, because they are very young, they were not particularly verbose in their comments (on this or any subject).

- *Reading Leaders makes me smart.*
- *Always gives you something to do and learn something new.*
- *I couldn't read small words before and now I can!*
- *Reading makes you smarter.*

Parents Report
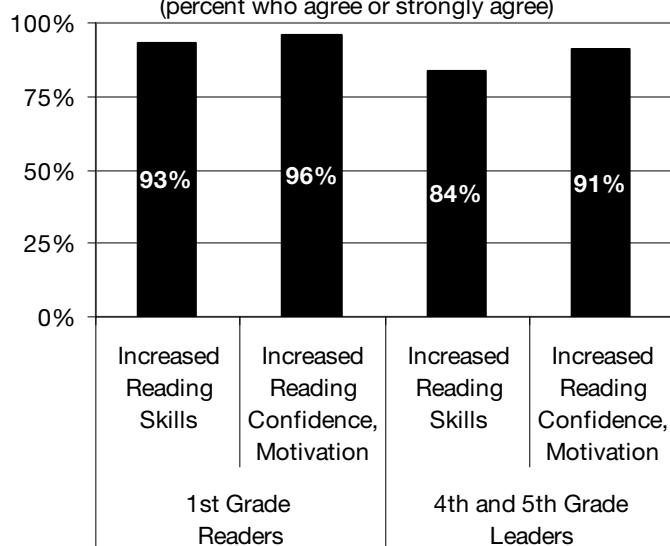## Reading Leaders Improves Reading Skills and Motivation
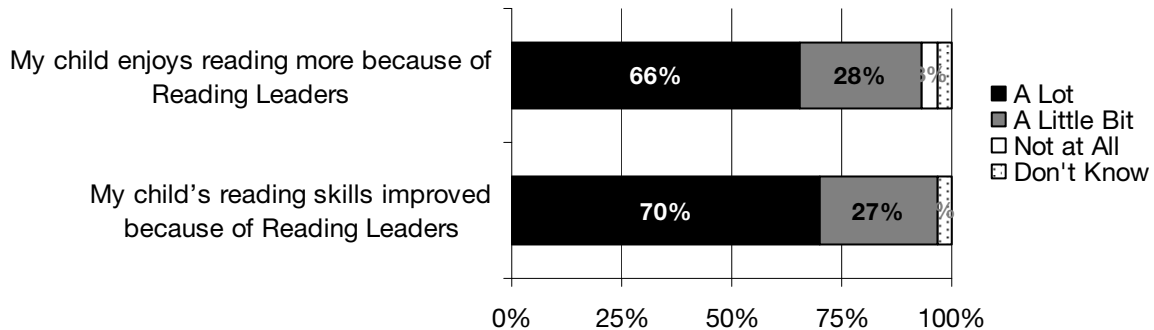
Selected Parent Comments

- *Even though my son loves reading, he really started to read aloud a lot more while he was in Team Read. Thanks for a great program!*
- *This is a great service because my child improved his reading skill. I would like to get my child more help such as writing.*
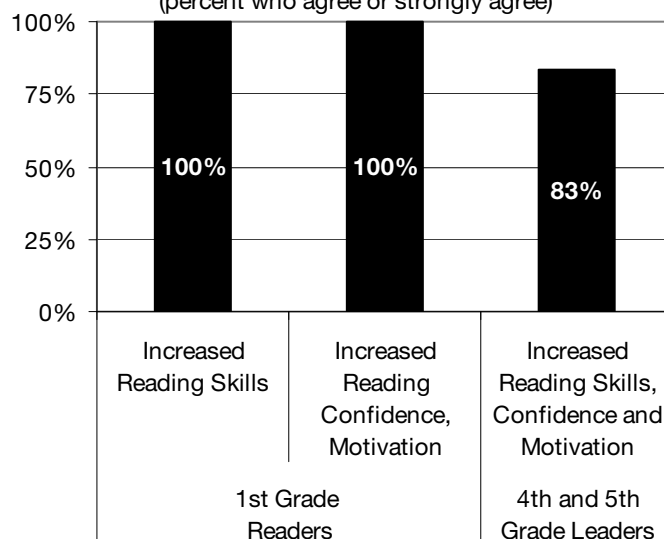
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Classroom Teachers Report Reading Leaders Supports Academic Gains

(percent who agree or strongly agree)

	1st Grade Readers		4th and 5th Grade Leaders	
	Increased Reading Skills	Increased Reading Confidence, Motivation	Increased Reading Skills	Increased Reading Confidence, Motivation
	93%	96%	84%	91%

Site Coordinators Report Reading Leaders Supports Academic Gains

(percent who agree or strongly agree)

	1st Grade Readers		4th and 5th Grade Leaders
	Increased Reading Skills	Increased Reading Confidence, Motivation	Increased Reading Skills, Confidence and Motivation
	100%	100%	83%

Classroom teacher and Site Coordinators report that participation in the Reading Leaders program increases reading skills, confidence and motivation. Ratings and comments by teachers of 1st grade Readers are stronger than those of 4th/5th grade Leaders. Site Coordinators were more likely to report increases in reading skills, confidence and motivation among 1st grade Readers than 4th/5th grade Leaders. Thus, this data suggest that the academic impact of the program is greater for the Readers than Leaders. This trend should be further explored through the collection of reading score data for the Leaders.

Selected Comments

- *I think Reading Leaders built the confidence of these students enabling them to read better.* ~ Teacher of 1st Grade Reader

- *Read(ing) orally with someone helped build word recognition and fluency.* ~ Teacher of 1st Grade Reader

- *Monique and Emily have improved fluency and comprehension skills. Monique and Emily attempt to read a lot of things for themselves now rather than wait for me to read them.* ~ Teacher of 1st Grade Reader

- *Errol is enthusiastic when reading out loud in the classroom. He is not nearly as shy as he was at the beginning of the school year.* ~ Teacher of 1st Grade Reader

- *The students were very motivated to go. They started choosing books that they thought they could use to help other kids, and they wanted to read more themselves.* ~ Teacher of 4th or 5th Grade Leader

- *When the 1st graders entered the program that were less than enthusiastic about reading. Our progress has made the students confident and aware that reading is essential to their education.* ~ Site Coordinator

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Leadership Development

Reading Leaders Describe Leadership Practice

Reading Leaders is designed to foster leadership development among the tutors that participate. Tutor comments on the program suggest that Reading Leaders gave these young students practice in three kinds of leadership skills: helping, teaching, and being a role model for young people. The quotes below provide examples in the words of the tutors themselves.

It should be noted that while Team Read staff and other adults involved in the program recognize the role that Reading Leaders plays in the development of leadership, the young people involved do not seem to think about this. Student comments about why they choose to be involved in the program focus more on having fun and simply enjoying reading (when compared to responses from older students involved in Reading Mentors who do explicitly address leadership). Their comments suggest that they enjoy helping or teaching tutees because it is fun to work with younger kids, read and play games.

Selected Tutor Comments

Helping and Service
- *I get to help someone become a better reader.*
- *Get to help people.*
- *Good way to learn/practice helping for later in school. Very fun way to plan for future.*

Teaching
- *Reading Leaders is good because I get a chance to experience what it is like to teach 1st graders.*
- *Makes me happy that we can teach them how to read.*

Being a Role Model for Young Kids
- *Get to read to little kids.*
- *Cool to work with little kids.*
- *It's best to help 1st graders and to be role models in lifetimes.*

> I think it is an excellent program that teaches leadership and responsibility to the older students and teaches our younger students that it is cool to read and that the older students do care about them.
> ~ Classroom Teacher

> I sat in on a few of the Team read sessions after school and was impressed by the work of the 4th and 5th grade reading leaders to coach my first graders. WOW! Teachers in the making.
> ~ Classroom Teacher

**Site Coordinators Agree
Reading Leaders developed
leadership skills** (patience,
responsibility, etc.) **among the tutors**
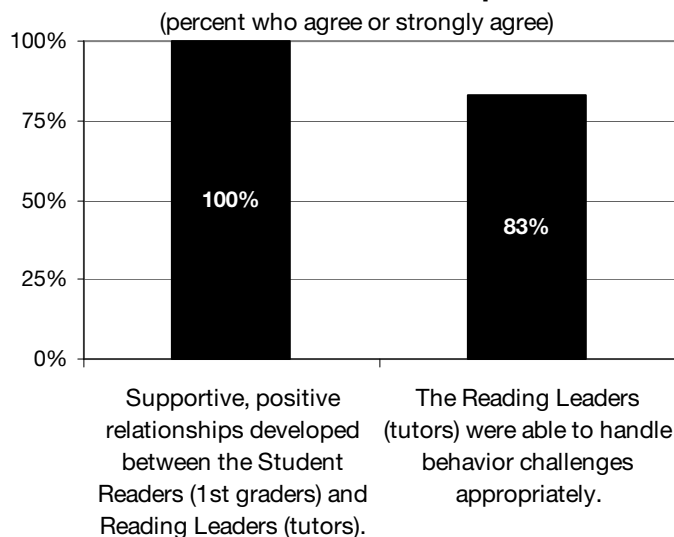

33%

■ agree
■ strongly agree

67%
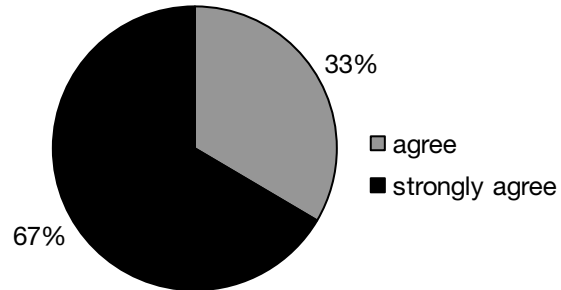
Selected Site Coordinator Comments

▪ *The fourth and fifth graders have done WONDERFUL! The majority of them take their "job" seriously and are dedicated to helping their students.* ~ Site Coordinator

▪ *The ones who stuck with it learned leadership responsibility.* ~ Site Coordinator

▪ One Site Coordinator, during an observation/site visit, pointed out a particular student who was initially "very withdrawn" and had "no confidence." The Coordinator reported that she has "really grown in the leadership role in Reading Leaders and enjoys reading out loud to the group."

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Tutor – Tutee Relationships

Site Coordinators Report Supportive, Positive Relationships

(percent who agree or strongly agree)

Bar chart showing:
- Supportive, positive relationships developed between the Student Readers (1st graders) and Reading Leaders (tutors). **100%**
- The Reading Leaders (tutors) were able to handle behavior challenges appropriately. **83%**

Tutees typically report liking their tutors a great deal. Tutors report that working with their student reader is one of the best things about Reading Leaders. They like to help their young student learn.

Selected Student Reader interview responses to *"Did you like your tutor? Why or why not?"*

- *Yes, because the 4th and 5th graders are nice.*
- *She's nice because she my best RL and favorite leader.*
- *They are good and they sound out words with me. They are nice. Elva helps me read a lot.*

Selected Reading Leader survey responses to *"What is best or good about Reading Leaders?"*

- *The best part about Reading Leaders was helping a kid read.*
- *I can show my reader new words.*
- *I could help my partner understand words and reading.*
- *You get to learn with your student.*
- *Helping a buddy be a better reader.*
- I didn't like Reading Leaders *when my buddy did good and there was no treat for her doing good.*
- I didn't like Reading Leaders when *I couldn't reward my partner.*

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For many tutors, the one thing they did not like about Reading Leaders was the challenging behavior of their tutee.

Selected Reading Leader survey responses to *"What was not good about Reading Leaders?"*

- *When the kids don't pay attention.*
- *What I did not like about Reading Leaders is when my reader doesn't pay attention at me when I read to her.*
- *The thing I don't like about Reading Leaders is when my readers does not listen to me when I am reading.*
- *What I don't like about Reading Leaders is that sometimes my readers doesn't want to read to me and sometimes just relax.*
- *That the students do not listen to you.*
- *What I don't like about Reading Leaders is that student I get sometimes don't want to read with me.*
- *That my student leader did not ingoy [sic] reading with me.*

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PROGRAM QUALITIES

Recruitment, Training, Attendance and Retention

Recruitment

Recruitment that involved classroom teachers seemed to be most effective, according to feedback from Site Coordinators. Site Coordinators stressed the importance of recruiting Leaders who had the necessary reading ability to tutor a younger student. They would have appreciated some further guidance from Team Read on criteria for identifying students to be recruited.

At some sites, Site Coordinators had a difficult time recruiting through teachers and went directly to students. While this brought in students, it is a less efficient manner of recruitment and less likely to bring in the students most appropriate for the program.

It was generally more difficult to recruit tutors than tutees. This was perhaps because teachers had an easier time identifying students who needed extra help with reading that it was to find those with the necessary skills to be a tutor.

Recruitment did not always attract the kinds of students that the program planners intended. The program logic model indicated that all readers should have a "pre" DRA score of 4 or more, which would indicate the beginning of actual reading, rather than simply pre-reading. However, the mean DRA score was 3.5 in Fall 09 scores and 3.2 in the Spring 08 scores (a more complete set of scores than those collected in Fall). Thus, tutors were working with 1st graders with extremely limited reading ability. At Dunlap and Marshall, a high percentage of tutees were also English language learners, which also creates unique learning needs that might exceed the abilities of the tutors.

Training

Overall, Site Coordinators felt that the Reading Leaders had adequate training to be effective tutors, but that improvements could be made to the training.

There was no clear consensus among the Site Coordinators on whether or not the initial training was the appropriate length of time. Few of the Site Coordinators were able to make it through the entire training curriculum in the allotted time, but they noted that the older students were anxious to get to work with their student readers and to make the training longer might not make it any more effective.

The learning objectives assigned to the last day of the training were the ones least likely to be fully addressed due to time constraints. The training curriculum should be adjusted to ensure that the most important information could be presented within the time allotted, and that the most important learning objectives are not slotted for the second half of the last day.

The Site Coordinators expressed a strong interest in being able to do more training with the Leaders throughout the program. Leaders also mentioned a desire for a "tutors only" session when

> I would have loved to be able to meet separately with the Leaders on a regular basis to keep challenging them and to just keep checking in with them... I think it would have helped them to take more ownership of the program as leaders and it would have allowed them time to come up with games or ask questions about tutoring, etc... I know they would have liked to learn different things about being leaders or more ways to be effective tutors throughout the entire program; it would have also been a good way for them to talk about questions or frustrations together to try to work those out for themselves.
>
> ~ Site Coordinator

they could freely discuss challenges and successes with their tutees. Suggested topics for these days include strategies for dealing with unwanted behavior and specific reading skill activities for Leaders to do with their students. The Site Coordinators agreed that this would help the Leaders to put the training in context of their experience and apply what they learn.

There was also agreement that this type of day would be an incentive for Leaders to stay involved in the program. By breaking up the normal routine, this may help keep the interest of the Leaders, especially if it's structured as a type of reward and acknowledgement.

Attendance and Retention

Attendance and retention were a challenge at almost every site. There was no primary cause for poor attendance or drop outs; a mix of reasons included competing afterschool programs, family demands, transportation challenges and student motivation or interest.

Site Coordinators suggested that the repetitive nature of the program may have contributed to a loss of student interest. Students are drawn to Reading Leaders because it is fun, but this does not mean they will be entertained by the same activities over and over again. Separate Leader training days, additional means of reward and recognition and variety in the daily schedule might address some of the attendance and retention issues.

While neither the students nor the Site Coordinators indicated that having an uneven number of tutors and tutors was a great challenge, the evaluator and Team Read staff observations revealed that tutoring quality and the site as a whole suffered when there the numbers were not close to even.

> Toward the end of the program, my leaders started complaining that they were bored during our Reading Leaders sessions—the incentive program and the February Fun Day were two very good additions for us… Perhaps it would create more incentive for the leaders to stay tuned in to the program if they felt like they were experiencing some kind of leadership development once a week or something like that.
> ~ Site Coordinator

Though some students expressed that they liked working with more than one student, observations suggest that the quality of the tutoring session was not maintained in these circumstances. These young tutors typically didn't demonstrate the skills to effectively engage more than one Student Reader at a time; often one sat doing nothing while the other read.

When there were uneven numbers of tutors and tutees, Site Coordinators had to spend much of their time focusing on keeping excess students appropriately engaged. This took them away from observing pairs or providing coaching feedback to tutors. The Site Coordinators agreed this was the case, even though they were comfortable in the role of "extra tutor."

Given that there is no consistent cause for the attendance and retention problems it is difficult to pinpoint a simple solution. However, knowing that this is not an issue that will likely disappear, Team Read should create curriculum activities for the instances when there are not evenly matched pairs of students.

Curriculum, Setting, Coordinator and Tutor Experience

Curriculum

The activities and schedule provided by Team Read for the Reading Leaders program provided a good foundation for the program, with a balance of activities focused on site words, fluency and comprehension. With the exception of Concord, the sites made adjustments to the daily schedule recommended by Team Read.

Students, Site Coordinators and evaluators observed the need for elementary students to have the opportunity to move and expend physical energy during the afterschool program. This younger group has very distinct developmental needs from the students in the Core Program, and simply keeping the tutors and tutees seated requires more structure and adult input. Several of the sites incorporated group site word games such as Heads-Up-7Up or Hangman in to the beginning or end of their sessions to allow for some movement and enhance student enjoyment of the program.

There is also an opportunity to phase in new learning activities as the program progresses to develop and challenge the tutors and meet the increasing skill level of the tutees. This change would prevent boredom and could increase engagement.

Examples of tutors and tutees reporting ways to improve the program:

- *Less hyper. More recess before.*
- *Games, prizes, action (Bingo, prizes, candy, 4 corners) - break from the same schedule every day.*
- *Learning games, where students don't realize they are learning. New games.*

As is noted in the previous section, Team Read should create curriculum activities for the instances when there are not evenly matched pairs of students. Some could be activities that are closely aligned with the traditional model, but better allow for two tutees to be simultaneously engaged with one tutor. Others could be relatively new, group activities, with two tutors and four to six tutees.

Finally, the curriculum should fit within the real schedule constraints of the afterschool setting. After students gather their snack and transition to the Reading Leaders classroom, there was rarely a full 60 minutes for Team Read activities before it was time to pack up and connect with transportation home. Thus, program dosage did not meet the 90 minute session ideal described in the program logic model and caused site coordinators to shave a few minutes off each section of the proposed daily schedule.

Setting

All of the Reading Leaders programs were held in classrooms, but there was variation among the rooms. Some rooms had plenty of space for pairs to spread out and work independently with desks that were clear on top, and an alternative space for group reading. Some rooms were often like this, but occasional classroom art projects took over the space. One room was consistently overcrowded and had cluttered desks.

The young age of the student readers made them easily distracted, and even cups of pencils on top of a desk could take their attention from the reading. The tutors, also young, were not always able to bring back the focus quickly, and they, too, could be distracted. For these reasons, it makes sense to offer this program in a room that discourages distraction.

Some sites allowed students to work in their pairs while seated in spaces other than desks (floor, beanbags, etc) and this appealed to students and probably increased their enjoyment of the program. However, in some cases these students lost focus on the reading task, and this probably only works in settings where classroom management is firmly established.

Coordinator

Serving as a Reading Leaders Site Coordinator is a demanding job. Because of the age of the tutees *and* tutors, few pairs are able to work entirely independently. (The contrast between Reading Leaders and the Core Program in this regard is striking.) Reading Leader pairs would benefit greatly from frequent feedback and coaching from the Site Coordinator. Instead the Site Coordinators often spent their time addressing classroom management, managing absences and uneven pairings, addressing unexpected interruptions and handling logistics issues such as the bus schedule.

The demands on the Site Coordinator could be mitigated by limiting the number of participants. Site Coordinators agreed that 10 pairs or fewer seemed to be a group size that worked well.

Another potential solution is to increase the adult to youth ratio by utilizing two adult coordinators or hiring experienced high school tutors to work as junior coordinators or mentors.

Classroom management ability was a key attribute for successful coordinators. After a full day of school, students need a Site Coordinator who can make the program fun, but keep them focused on reading activities.

Students themselves recognize the need for good classroom management in this program. Tutors said they had more fun when there was less chaos in the room and no behavior issues. They enjoyed the group games and being able to work productively without distracting interruptions from others.

Tutor Experience

Some 4th/5th grade tutors had been in Team Read's core program as 2nd grade tutees and a few spontaneously referenced this experience during interviews. One said that it helped her understand her tutor-job better. Another described the setting differences, and said that being a tutee in an uncluttered cafeteria setting was nicer than tutoring in a crowded classroom. Comments such as these suggest that tutors consciously bring their Team Read experiences to the work they do.

> This program needs better space. In the cafeteria or on the stage. It was better when I was in Reading Coaches. There was more room to spread out. ~ Leschi Leader

However, 4th/5th grade tutors with Team Read experience generally did not say their tutoring skill was a function of their tutee experiences. And observations did not suggest that the most skilled tutors were those with Team Read experience: plenty of very good tutors were new to Team Read.

Logistics, Communication and Program Satisfaction

Site Coordinator Support and Satisfaction

Overall, Site Coordinators were satisfied with the level of support they received from Team Read staff and their school sites.
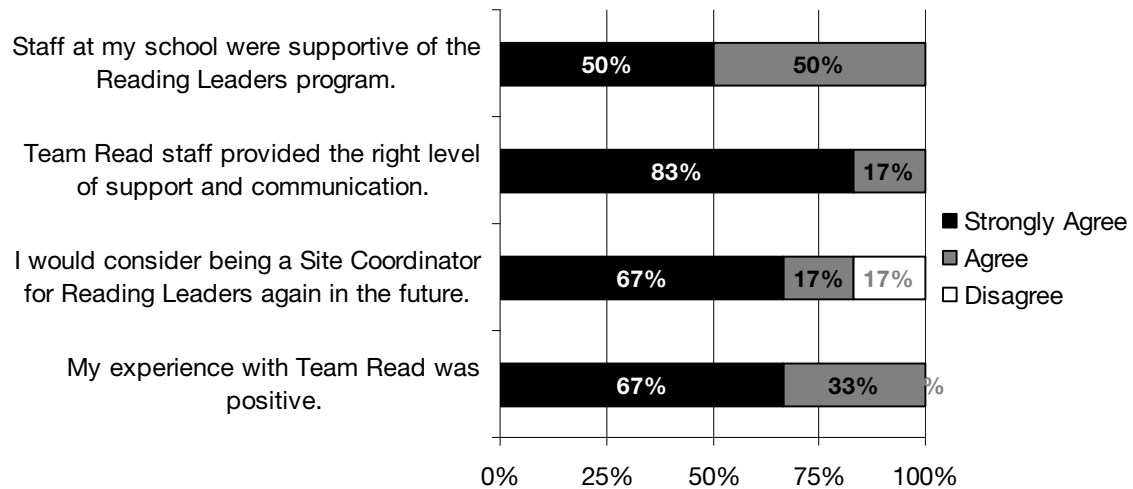

Selected Site Coordinator Comments

- *This experience has been wonderful! I value the relationship I have built with the students as well as their parents. The students love coming to Team Read and the program is very rewarding!*

- *The Team Read staff was very supportive of our program. The staff was efficient in producing all the provided material in order for success.*

- *Our school was overall supportive of the program, but it was difficult to get some 4th and 5th grade teachers to recommend Leaders. I would have made things less stressful for myself if I had started getting those recommendations as soon as possible.*

- *We should have celebrated the Leaders more school wide. Perhaps at a Monday morning assembly or a Friday afternoon read-a-thon.*

- *I am taking on my National Boards next year and won't participate in any extra curricular activities. After that, I will consider being a site coordinator.*

Communication with Classroom Teachers

All classroom teachers of 4th and 5th grade Leaders were satisfied with the level of communication from Team Read. A few classroom teachers of 1st grade tutees rated the communication level as Neutral, and expressed concerned mostly about dates and cancellations.

Classroom Teachers respond to
**How satisfied were you with
the level of communication
from Team Read/Reading Leaders?**

- Very Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral

31%
50%
19%
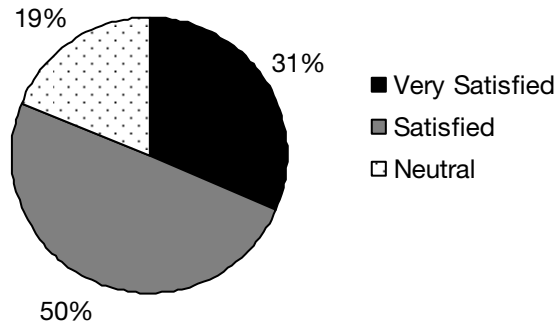
Sample 1st Grade Teacher Comments

- *Team Read/Reading Leaders made it a point to connect with me about any concerns or issues they had with my students.*
- *I was informed of days that it was not in session. Communicating what was the last day would have helped.*
- *I was informed in advance on days the students were not having after school sessions.*
- *I haven't had any contact with anyone from either program.*
- *The only difficulty was the cancellation that happened at the very end of the day on a day that there was just a dusting of snow. It made for a lot of confusion.*
- *I would love to hear updates each trimester from Team Read as to how the program is doing and what you need from us, etc. It would be great to have a short update from you at a staff meeting.*

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Communication with Parents

Parents are very satisfied with the Reading Leaders program. However, as with the classroom teachers, many would appreciate more communication and information about the program.

Parent Satisfaction
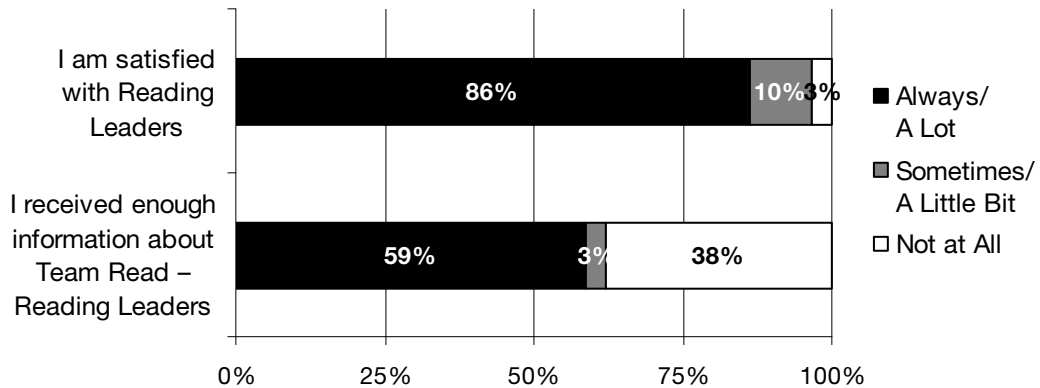
Reading Leader Satisfaction

Overall, Reading Leaders expressed satisfaction with the program.
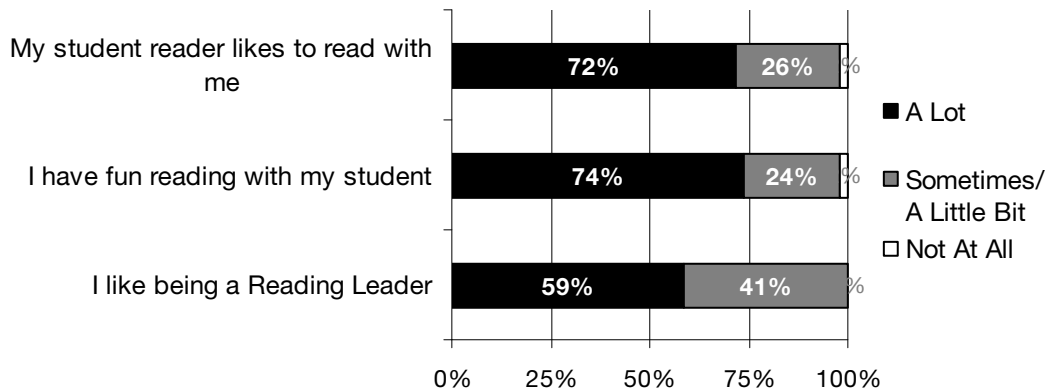
Sample Reading Leader Comments

- (I like it when I) *Get to read to little kids. Makes me happy that we can teach them how to read.*
- *It's fun because you get to teach and you learn.*
- (Reading Leaders is) *Good. Reading is my favorite thing.*

Report prepared by **MEM**consultants

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Academic Development:* Reading Leaders offered a structured, reading-rich afterschool experience for students with reading challenges. At every site, a culture of reading prevailed day-in, and day-out; at some sites, the focus on reading was extremely impressive. Students, classroom teachers, parents and Site Coordinators all report improvements in reading enjoyment, confidence and skill as a result of Reading Leaders. The only "hard" measure of reading skill available, the DRA, was administered to enough tutees at five of the six sites to study program impact overall and site by site. Three sites showed meaningful improvements in reading scores, with two sites in particular with very good results. The data also suggests that not all sites produced results that translated into improved DRA scores. Future evaluation will be needed to learn if this means those sites did not impact reading skills, if the DRA is not a valid measure of the kinds of reading skills that Reading Leaders best fosters, or if there is another explanation for this finding. Further evaluation is also needed to establish a "hard" measure of changes in tutor reading skill as a result of Reading Leadership participation.

- *Tutor-Tutee Relationships:* Reading Leaders generally fostered a positive tutor-tutee relationship. Tutors and tutees alike reported liking their partner, and enjoying their work together. The biggest challenge to positive relationship-building occurred when the tutee brought behavior or learning challenges that were more than the tutor could address successfully. The 4th/5th grade tutors do not bring the maturity, reading skills, or life experience that Core Program tutors do, and are more likely to become frustrated when they are unsuccessful. They are also more likely to express this frustration directly to their tutee. Thus, careful selection of tutees (to avoid including 1st graders with unusually challenging learning needs) and ongoing training and coaching of tutors (to minimize their frustration) is important.

- *Leadership Development:* Adults involved with the program described it as a useful leadership development experience for the tutors, focusing on responsibility development. Tutors described helping, teaching and acting as a role model as meaningful experiences for them. These factors may serve as a basis for further clarification of the catch-all category of leadership skills. Then, more work can be done to tie program features more directly into developing and reinforcing age-appropriate leadership skills.

- *Curriculum and Student Engagement:* The structured curriculum is a program strength. It created a constant focus on reading, maximized "time on task," and provided a variety of skill-building activities that pairs could easily work through. The curriculum could be strengthened with more learning activities that allow for movement and seem less like school (such as site word games). The young readers have excess energy to burn after a full day in school, and for many it is a struggle to keep them sitting still doing quiet reading; some students are simply kinesthetic or tactile learners and would benefit from this type of curriculum delivery. The curriculum also could be strengthened by phasing in new activities as the weeks progress, to minimize burnout or boredom. These new activities may be more challenging, reflecting and fostering the increasing skills of both the reader and tutor.

> As has been found in many studies, the effect size of tutoring is negatively related to duration… This is probably due to "routinization" and/or burnout in longer programs, which could lead to lower enthusiasm on the part of tutors and tutees. Burnout may make the tutors less sensitive to their tutees' responses and more concerned with getting through the routine.
> ~ John Hattie, Studies in Educational Evaluation

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- *Curriculum and Student Readiness:* Since the typical Team Read participant entered at the "pre-reading" level (DRA score of 3 or lower), it is worth questioning if the curriculum is designed for students who cannot read. Interestingly, the two sites with the biggest improvements started with some of the lower average DRA scores (see chart on page 27). These sites were also sites where the Site Coordinator modified the curriculum to teach phonics (Leschi) or selected the books for the students to match their skill (Madrona). Perhaps a more directive curricular approach is most effective with pre-readers.

- *Curriculum and Uneven Pairings:* Occasional, or even regular, absences are to be expected and result excess tutors or tutees on any given days. Alternative daily schedules should be developed for these days, especially for when there are too many tutees. This might be a slightly modified version of the regular curriculum that works well with when one tutor has two tutees, or may be an activity that is altogether a different structure – two tutors and four or five tutees, for instance.

- *Group Size:* Reading Leaders should be limited to approximately 10 pairs, with consideration of the number of adults in the room and the size of the room. Increasing the size has a number of negative impacts: tutees are more likely to bring learning or behavior challenges that are beyond the skills of a $4^{th}/5^{th}$ grader; the Site Coordinator becomes overwhelmed with classroom management and unable to provide coaching to pairs; the noise in the small classrooms contributes to distraction.

- *Past Participation:* This study did not reveal strong evidence about the impact of past Team Read participation on tutoring ability. If this is an important evaluation question, future evaluations should be structured to better understand this by randomly assigning tutees to experienced and inexperienced tutors, and tracking the reading score outcomes.

- *Training:* Reading Leader program planners must provide increased attention to tutor skill development, compared to other Team Read programs, to ensure positive tutor-tutee relationships. The initial training provided a solid start. Adding two additional tutor-only training days one and two thirds through the program could do a great deal to increase tutor skill development and address any building frustration.

> It is not sufficient to merely place a person (with more knowledge) in contact with a student and then expect to see major effects.... Much depends on the training of the tutors, the reasons for selecting the tutors, the quality of the program, and the process is not always successful for all students.
> ~ John Hattie, <u>Studies in Educational Evaluation</u>

- *Coaching:* Direct observation and feedback by a Site Coordinator or Team Read staff to a tutor while they are doing their work is a great way to increase tutor skill. As the program is currently structured with one Site Coordinator, not very much tutor coaching occurs. Program planners should consider restructuring to enable one person to focus solely on coaching tutors (every day or even just one day a week) while another adult focuses on classroom management and addressing issues that arise.

- *Site Coordinator:* The two sites with the strongest improvements in DRA scores each had the tutee's classroom teacher as a Site Coordinator (Madrona and Leschi). The two sites differed in many other ways – Madrona had *two* Site Coordinators and a moderate number of students, while the other had the highest number of students of any site in a crowded room with only one Coordinator. This suggests that the Site Coordinator's existing relationships with the students may be the most important factors for success. Or perhaps these Site Coordinators were
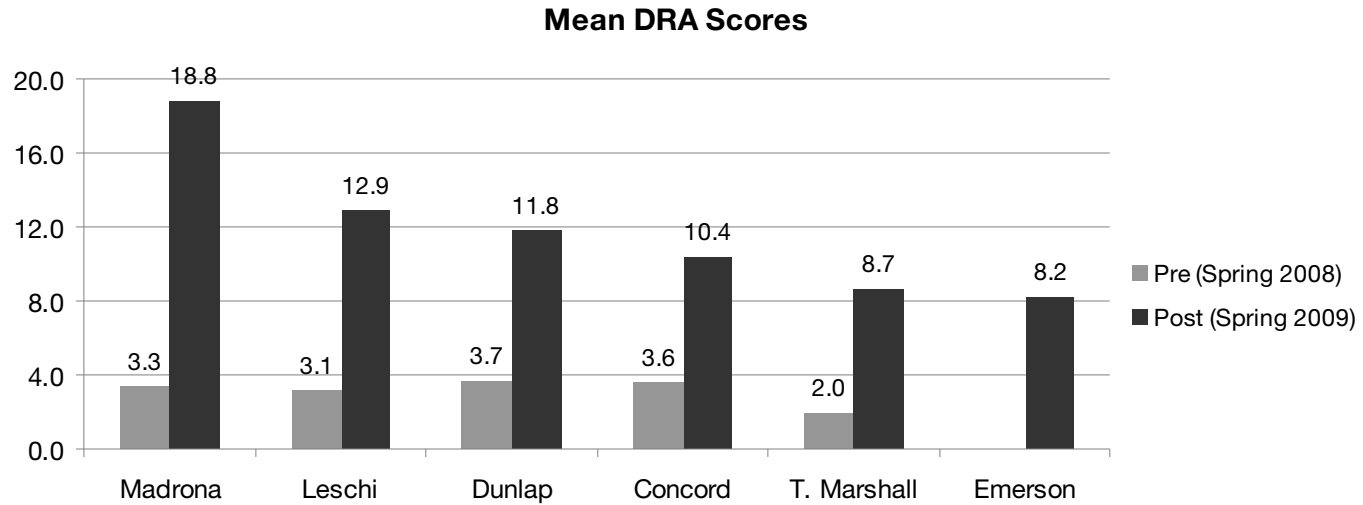
simply highly motivated since it was their own students. Or perhaps those Site Coordinators, given their knowledge of the tutees' skills and learning needs, were able to provide the most specific, useful direction to their tutors and thus fully empowered those tutors to be successful. This is an evaluation question worth exploring more fully.

- *Tutee Recruitment and Selection:* Tutee recruitment and selection should avoid including 1st graders with unusual behavioral or learning challenges. A strict minimal DRA threshold seems wise. Also, school staff familiar with students should be consulted to identify behavior or other learning challenges (such as limited English) that may be more than tutors can handle.

- *Future Evaluation:* Future evaluations should focus on understanding what features or qualities are most important for creating an optimally successful program. What skills and knowledge does the ideal Site Coordinator bring? What is the best sized group, and the optimal adult-youth ratio? What is the ideal physical setting (room layout, workspace, presence of distracting noises, etc.)? Do enhancements to the training and curriculum make a difference? Given all the "ideal" qualities and features, which are necessary for success and which are preferable? If the pattern continues in future years, why do certain sites have better outcomes in reading scores than others?
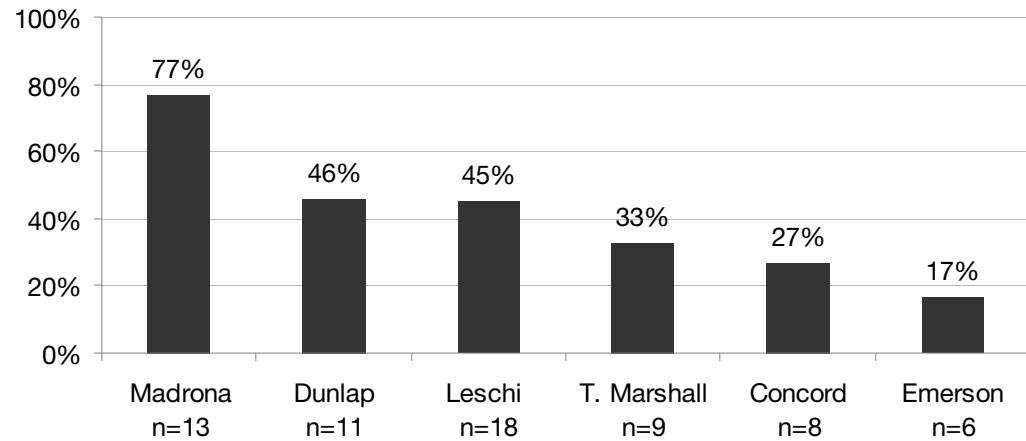
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Site Comparison - Overall

	Concord	Dunlap	Emerson	Leschi	Madrona	T. Marshall
Recruitment and Retention	- Recruitment was a challenge - Retention was good	- Retention was a challenge, especially for Leaders	- Recruitment was a challenge - Retention was a challenge	- Attendance was consistent	- Retention of Leaders was a challenge - Inconsistent pairings	- Initial retention challenges - Consistent attendance
Group Qualities	- Average sized group	- Many ELL students	- Small group	- Large group	- Average sized group	- Average sized group - Bilingual Orientation Center school
Staff	- Teacher with strong classroom management skills	- ELL Teacher	- AmeriCorps member coordinator *plus* AC member support	- Teacher, knows tutees well, strong classroom management and focus on reading	- *Two* teachers, know tutors and tutees well, and manage group well	- Family Partnerships Liaison, good relationship with students
Classroom Space	- Space for students to spread out	- Crowded	- Open, inviting	- Overcrowded and loud at times	- Space for students to spread out; they used it well	- Space for students to spread out
Curriculum/ Time Use	- Generally kept to schedule - Transitions managed well and posted schedule	- Generally unstructured, loosely focused atmosphere - Incorporated group games	- More structured, focused initially - Became less structured over the months	- Added phonics and skill-building activities - Always reading focused	- Tailored to needs of students because teachers running program knew individual needs	- Reading activities most of the time - Always finished with a game
Reading Scores	- No meaningful difference in meeting standard between RL and comparison group	- Better average DRA scores compared to matched group	- Tutee pre scores not available - Lowest post-scores	- Very good site results overall in DRA scores	- Highest post scores - Best site results overall in DRA Scores	- Lowest pre-scores - Almost no difference between RL and comparison group
Tutor Surveys	- High reading improvement ratings	- Low enjoyment and personal improvement ratings	- High agreement with "I like being a Reading Leader"	- Average ratings overall	- No surveys collected	- High enjoyment ratings
Parent Surveys	- Very high/positive ratings in response to every question	- Highest/most positive ratings on *most* questions - Low ratings of "child's reading improved…"	- Mostly average ratings - Low ratings on receipt of RL information	- No surveys collected	- High rating on "child enjoys reading more because of RL" - Low ratings on receipt of RL information	- Average ratings in general - Low rating in response to "child enjoys reading more because of RL"

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Site Comparison – Tutee Reading Scores

Mean DRA Scores

Legend:
- Pre (Spring 2008)
- Post (Spring 2009)

Site	Pre (Spring 2008)	Post (Spring 2009)
Madrona	3.3	18.8
Leschi	3.1	12.9
Dunlap	3.7	11.8
Concord	3.6	10.4
T. Marshall	2.0	8.7
Emerson		8.2

% Who Met Standard After Reading Leaders
Spring 2009 DRA Scores

Site	% Met Standard
Madrona, n=13	77%
Dunlap, n=11	46%
Leschi, n=18	45%
T. Marshall, n=9	33%
Concord, n=8	27%
Emerson, n=6	17%

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Survey Response Rates

	Tutor Surveys	Parent Surveys		Classroom Teacher Surveys			
		1st grade	1st grade	1st grade		4th and 5th grade	
				# teacher respondents	# students represented	# teacher respondents	# students represented
Concord	10	4	4	1	3	1	9
Dunlap	9	4	4	3	10	0	0
Emerson	9	4	4	2	6	0	0
Leschi	10	--	--	2	15	2	11
Madrona	--	7	7	2	12	1	11
T. Marshall	8	2*	2*	0	0	2	14
Total	*46*	*21*	*21*	*10*	*46*	*6*	*45*

* two parent surveys didn't indicate child's grade; one was counted as a tutor survey, the other as a tutee survey

DRA Scores

	Pre Spring 0'8	Post Spring '09	Reading Leaders Score Pairs	Matched Comparison Pairs
Concord	8	8	5	5
Dunlap	9	11	9	9
Emerson	1	6	1	1
Leschi	15	18	15	8
Madrona	12	13	12	10
T Marshall	5	9	5	5
Total	*50*	*65*	*47*	*38*

* since only one pre survey was collected at this site, it is excluded from site-by-site analysis, but it is included in the overall "total" analysis pool

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