

## TUTORING CASE STUDY

# New York City Public Schools

New York City Public Schools (NYCPS), in partnership with the City University of New York (CUNY), launched an early literacy tutoring initiative, the CUNY Reading Corps, in the fall of 2020. We spoke with **Andrew Fletcher**, the Director of Strategic Partnerships within the Divisions of Curriculum and Instruction/Teaching and Learning at the NYCPS, about this initiative's place within NYC's broader tutoring plans; as well as **Dr. Katie Pace Miles**, Associate Professor in Early Childhood Education at Brooklyn College, CUNY about its genesis and specifics. Below we summarize their experience with the program, which has grown from a pandemic emergency measure delivered into students' homes to an established offering in 70 historically underserved NYC elementary schools.\*

## NYCPS by the numbers

### TOTAL POPULATION



**1,058,888**  
students



**1,859**  
schools

### RACIAL & ETHNIC MAKEUP



- 41% Hispanic
- 24% Black
- 17% Asian
- 15% White
- 3% Other

### % OF STUDENTS WHO ARE ENGLISH LEARNERS



**14%**

### FUNDING PER STUDENT



**\$24,040**

### % OF STUDENTS WITH FREE AND REDUCED MEALS



**72%**

\*Note that NYC, the largest district in the country, has other district-level tutoring initiatives currently getting off the ground, as well as a number of school-based tutoring initiatives happening at any given time. But we focus here exclusively on the CUNY Reading Corps, which highlights the distinctive promise of a district-university partnership.

All district data is from NCES, as available in September 2022, and has been aggregated by CEMD. In some cases, districts themselves corrected or adjusted a number for us.

# Tutoring Program Overview

## The Vitals

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### Model

**High-dosage.** (3+ sessions per week, at least 30 minutes per session)



### Program Type

This is a **district-university partnership**, with CUNY providing and training tutors (drawing from pre-service teachers); the district central office connecting CUNY with schools; and schools identifying students and coordinating logistics.



### Student Group(s) Prioritized

The program targets **“striving readers”** – those struggling to read on grade level, as identified by school-based assessments. In most cases, progress/performance is measured by the Acadience reading screener and students have been selected via a combination of school-reported reading level systems (such as F&P).



### Grades Served & Subjects Covered

They focus on **literacy** for **grades 1 and 2**.



### Session Timing

When the program rolled out during the pandemic, timing was **flexible and arranged with families**. Now, it's **administered and scheduled via communication between the schools and the CUNY Reading Corps team**, who may situate sessions either **during or after school**.



### Delivery Method

The program began with a **one-to-one, virtual model** but is now also delivered in-person. It has remained one-to-one, but small-group tutoring is a new frontier they plan/hope to tackle soon.

# Program Journey

## From Decision-Making to Outcomes-Monitoring



### Deciding on Tutoring

**The CUNY Reading Corps began during the pandemic shutdown, both to offer early literacy support to NYC students in acute need, and to help CUNY pre-service teachers gain field experience.** Dr. Miles, who requires her graduate and undergrad students to tutor as part of their early literacy courses, remarked that, “It has always been a two-pronged mission: improving pre-service teaching and supporting striving readers in under-resourced communities.” The program launched speedily in the fall of 2020 and prioritized reaching students by whatever means possible: the CUNY tutors Zoomed into about 65 students’ homes that semester, at their families’ convenience throughout the week. By the spring, this was 85 students; and by the next year, fall of 2021, they moved to a school-based delivery model with the goal of reaching about 2,300 students and training 800 preservice teachers this academic year.



### Setting Requirements

**The program is laser-focused on helping struggling students learn to read and sticking to a high-dosage tutoring model with fidelity.** Tutors use two curricula: Reading Rescue, an evidence-based intervention program for early literacy, primarily focused on phonics, fluency, and comprehension; and Reading Ready, a research-based precursor program to Reading Rescue, developed by Dr. Miles for students still working on emergent word reading skills of phonemic awareness, phonics, and decodable sentence reading. The two programs are not overtly connected to classroom curriculum, but as Fletcher noted, “we think that’s fine, because this is strictly about making sure children learn to read. Nothing is going to negate the other.”



## Implementing

**During the initial implementation phase, coordination and support from parents was key; now, it's the coordination and support of schools.** Both Fletcher and Dr. Miles emphasized the logistics lift provided by the CUNY Reading Corps team and NYCPS involved in delivering high-dosage tutoring to very young children (more on this in “top tips” below). Everything from scheduling the sessions, to ensuring protected time and space for students to engage in tutoring, to monitoring smooth access to technology, requires heavy adult supervision and care. Dr. Miles also underlined and lauded the crucial role of the CUNY tutors – many of whom are “non-traditional” university students with complex lives of their own – who were well-trained in early literacy best practices via their coursework in her classes, and highly committed to the tutoring initiative.



## Monitoring Outcomes

**Program leaders monitor movement of students' reading levels and growth in pre-to -post data from automated literacy assessments.** More systematic outcomes-monitoring has gelled as the program evolved into a school- rather than home-based offering. CUNY Reading Corps monitors students' reading levels, as this is of great interest to the schools; they've found over time that participating students improve, on average, one full intervention reading level for every 10 tutoring sessions (during the first year of implementation, students had an average of 20 total sessions; the goal is 40 per student). They also monitor student growth on school-based automated assessments of foundational reading skills, using Acadience and trends in student performance have been very positive in this regard as well.

Beyond the efforts of the CUNY Reading Corps, the big picture in NYCPS includes a major, district-wide expansion of student access to literacy tutoring. As the district emerges from the pandemic, school schedules normalize, and an injection of federal funds helps get new programs off the ground, the district is poised to implement two major tutoring initiatives: Soaring with S.O.R. (Science of Reading), and a three-year tutoring partnership with Expanded Schools and TNTP. “The idea,” Fletcher told us, “is that after two-plus years [of piloting these programs], we're learning how to do this well, and tutoring is becoming a system-wide acceleration strategy.” Dr. Miles, for her part, hopes that the CUNY partnership will also continue to bear fruit for the district and reach more students – possibly by embedding tutoring as a requirement in more university courses over time.

# “What would you do differently?”

## Top Tips from NYCPS



### **APPRECIATE THE LABOR INTENSIVENESS AND EXPENSE OF TUTORING GOING IN.**

As Fletcher remarked, “There’s such a need for that hands-on case management. You need a good number of staff to deal with all the particulars – not to mention tutors who are well-trained, whose training continues, and folks to observe, coach, and make sure the fidelity is there so we get the outcomes.”

### **EXTERNAL PARTNERS/PROVIDERS OF TUTORING CANNOT UNDERESTIMATE THE LOGISTICS LIFT FOR SCHOOLS.**

Echoing many of the same themes as Fletcher, Dr. Miles discussed how much the CUNY Reading Corps relied on school-based coordination and staff support. “It takes a lot of effort on behalf of the schools to pull this off. There has to be someone ensuring, for example, that all the students show up for all their sessions – and that’s no small feat!”