

The Ongoing Evaluation of a Volunteer Tutoring Program for Struggling Readers

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Reading Partners Tutoring Model

- Pull-out program for struggling readers
 - K-5th grade
 - Half a year to two years below grade level
- Regular one-on-one tutoring two times a week for 45 minutes
 - Provided by trained community volunteers
 - In a designated school reading center
 - Using structured and individualized curriculum

Evaluation of Reading Partners Traditional Model

- In 2012–2013 Reading Partners received funds:
 - To expand the program
 - To conduct rigorous evaluation (MDRC and University of Michigan)
- 1,166 students in 19 schools across the country were randomly assigned within school:
 - Half received Reading Partners tutoring
 - Half received typical school reading support

Finding 1: Students Received Regular Tutoring

Average Student's Experience in Reading Partners

Program Characteristic	Program Group	School-Level Averages	
		Minimum	Maximum
Number of sessions per week	1.55	1.11	1.76
Length of participation in program (weeks)	28.13	24.24	32.01
Student attendance rate ^a (%)	78.76	55.75	88.98
Number of tutors assigned	2.52	1.67	3.60
Duration of each tutoring relationship (weeks)	19.81	11.20	26.01
Scheduled sessions per week with primary tutor ^a			
Scheduled once per week (%)	76.38	39.58	91.24
Scheduled twice per week (%)	23.62	8.76	60.42
Sample size	594		

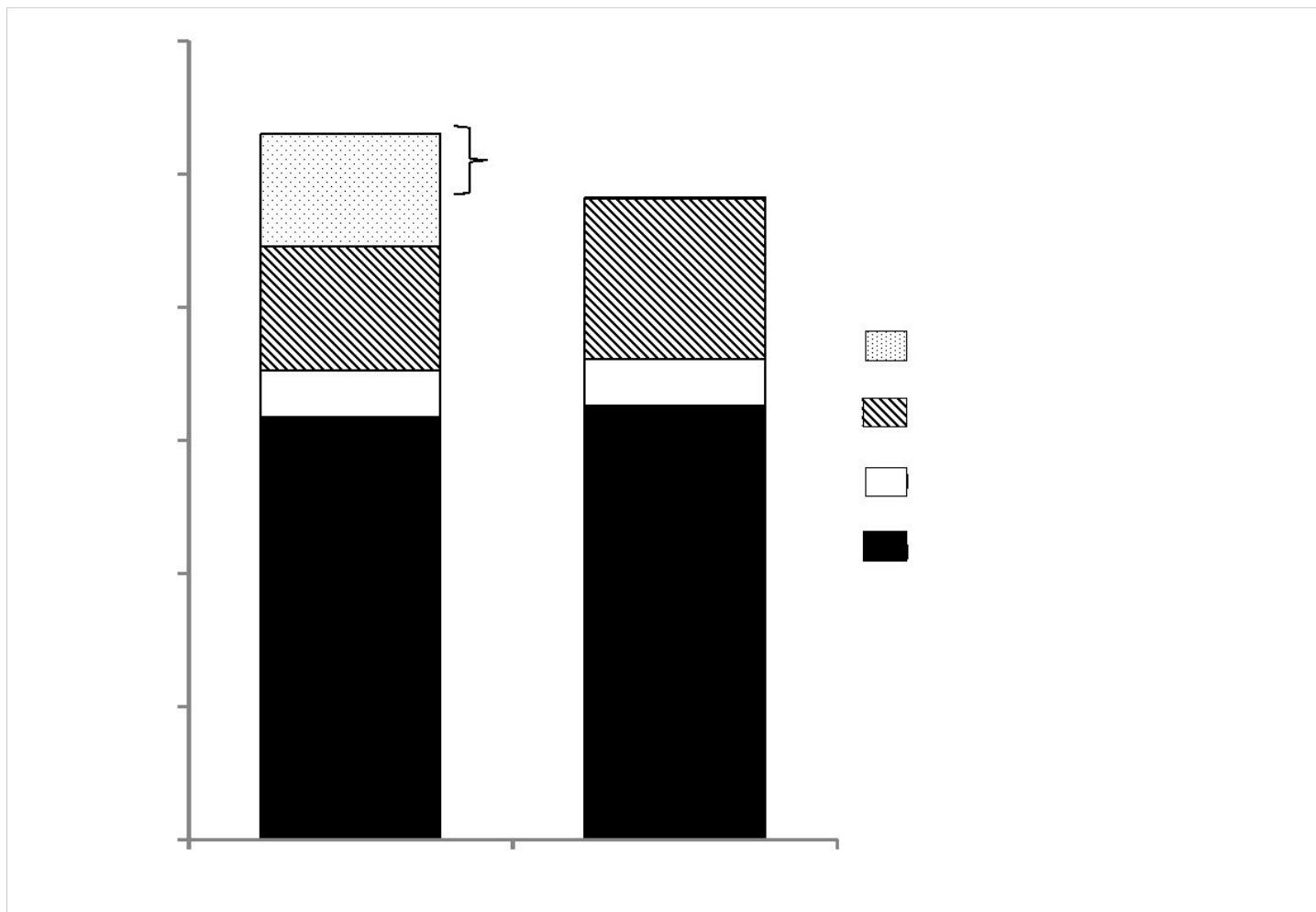
Finding 2: Most Sites Implemented with Fidelity

High Fidelity (maximum score = 5) Study Fidelity (maximum score = 5) Fidelity Scores of Study Schools (maximum score = 7)



Finding 3: Positive Impact on Receipt of Services

Reading Partners
Daily Reading Instruction and Supplemental Services



Findings 4: Reading Partners had a Positive Impact on Literacy Skills

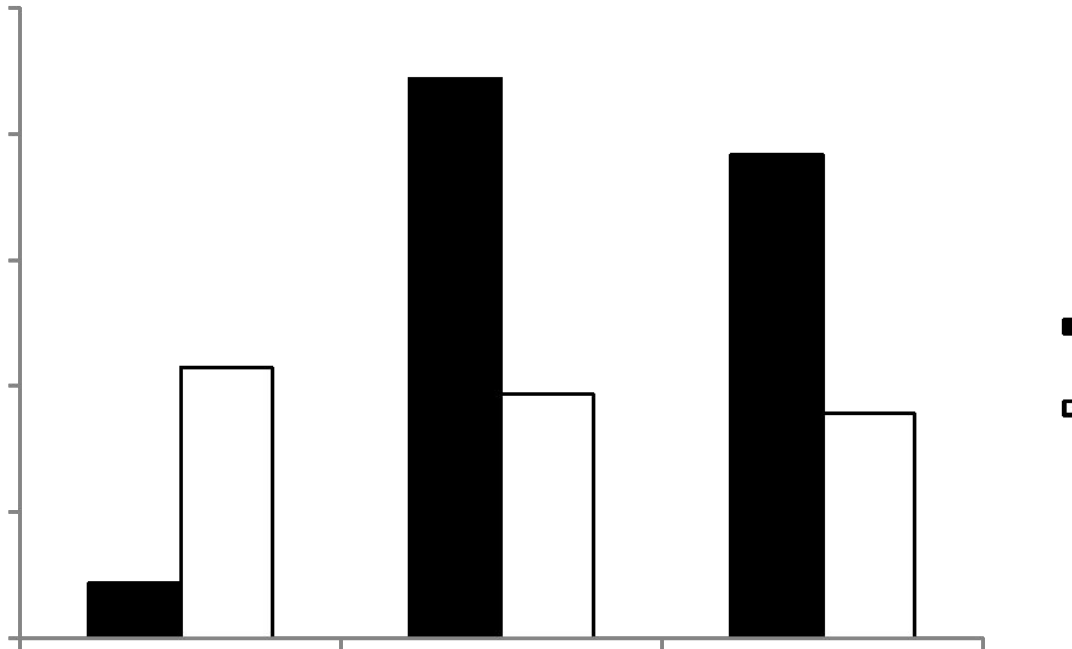
- Positive impacts on three different measures of reading proficiency
 - Sight word reading
 - Fluency
 - Reading comprehension
- 1.5 to 2 months of additional growth compared to the control group

The Program may be Most Effective for those with the Lowest Skills

Highly
significant

Effect Size

Reading Partners Improves Reading Skills for the Lowest-Achieving Students



Biggest Challenge: Recruiting & Maintaining Volunteers

- Transportation & location posed barriers.
- Tutors often only made short-term time commitments or could only tutor once a week.
- Lack of consistency in tutor attendance

Why Did this Model Work?

- Full time “site-coordinators” managed day-to-day operations (AmeriCorps member).
 - Filled in when tutors were absent
- Tutors were provided with structured curricular materials.
 - Easy to use and start right away
- Tutors recorded progress in student folders which facilitated communication.
 - Enabled students to work with multiple tutors

Conclusions

- If the right design and administrative structures are put into place, volunteer tutoring programs can be effective when implemented at scale
- Managed to be effective even in the absence of oft-cited key components to successful tutoring, including, extensive tutor training and tutor consistency.

New Study EIR Study to Evaluate Reading Partners Connects

- Like traditional model:
 - Structured lessons
 - Twice weekly 45-minute sessions with a tutor
- Reading Partners Connects adds:
 - Video conferencing in an established school reading center
 - E-books for tutors and students

Proposed Design

- Three-way randomized trial
 - Reading Partners (traditional)
 - Reading Partners Connects
 - Business-as-usual Control Group
- Assess using the same outcomes as original study
- Follow-up with all three groups after one year, and then one or two years later a year later

Acknowledgements

- Reading Partners: Dean Elson and many others...
- MDRC co-collaborators: Catherine Armstrong Asher, Jaclyn Altuna Willard and many others...
- Funders: Edna McConnel Clark Foundation (EMCF), US Department of Education

For More Information

- [Reading Partners Website](#)
- Full [MDRC Report](#)
- Peer reviewed publication:
 - Jacob, R., Armstrong, C., Bowden, B. & Pan, Y. (2016). Capitalizing on Volunteer Tutors: An Experimental Evaluation of a Tutor Based Program for Struggling Readers in Elementary School, [Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness](#), 9(S1), pp. 67-92.
- EIR [Grant Announcement](#)

THANK YOU

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We are always looking for new opportunities to increase measurable impact. For more information, or to discuss a new project idea, contact us: www.youthpolicylab.umich.edu

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