



READING MENTORS
2018-19
Program Evaluation
Report



Kathleen Hanberg

Reading Mentors Program Manager
The Canby Center
June 2019

Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Evaluation Purposes	6
Key Questions	7
Evaluation Methods	8
Findings:	
RELEVANCE	9
EFFECTIVENESS	11
EFFICIENCY	14
IMPACT	17
Interpretation & Reflections	19
Recommendations	21

Executive Summary

Originally intended as an internal document (for staff and Board Members of *The Canby Center* to reference), this Evaluation Report has been adapted to a much broader audience. Hopefully the information included will illustrate the story of READING MENTORS *and* provide data that will allow you to draw conclusions about the impact on students who participated. READING MENTORS began as a pilot program in 2016 at Knight Elementary (Canby Oregon), serving approximately 50 students. As it expanded into all 6 of the district's elementary schools in 2018-19, the **number of students** who participated, **increased to 145**. This fall as we launched our third year of the program, our top priority was to clarify and better communicate our Vision.

The purposes for this evaluation are to:

1. **inform decisions** about how to improve
2. **provide information** for grant proposals, grant reports, and volunteer recruitment
3. **share results with Canby School District** staff so that they can determine the value of our program for their students and
4. **give necessary feedback** to our volunteer Mentors.

Communicating program results to volunteers is vital to maintaining a strong, dedicated team.

The following pages represent a compilation of Teacher Survey responses, Principal Survey responses and informal observations. Report findings are organized by the **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency** and **impact** of RM 2018-19. From these findings, I conclude that we are on the right track and make recommendations for expanding within our current partner schools. This is a valuable program, with an approach that could include participation of people from our community with a wide variety of backgrounds and a common goal.

Caring volunteers who have a heart for reading with a child and are dedicated to sharing their time **can have a significant impact** on a child's reading engagement. . .
by **modeling their own love of learning**.

I believe that if we faithfully maintain this approach, volunteers will not only help improve reading engagement for children, but will also contribute to greater awareness of the power of simply reading with a child. The READING MENTORS PROGRAM is a work in progress, built on the collective efforts of many unique and dedicated people who support children's literacy. The more who are involved, the more children will benefit.

If you have questions or would like additional information, please check out our webpage at thecanbycenter.org/reading-mentors or contact me at kathleen@thecanbycenter.org.
Thank you for taking the time to learn about Reading Mentors.

Sincerely,

Kathleen

Introduction

What is the READING MENTORS PROGRAM?
How has it developed within the first three years?



Fall 2016 Year One

READING MENTORS is managed through the non-profit, *The Canby Center* whose Mission is, “In God’s love, we renew dignity and inspire learning for youth and families”¹. READING MENTORS began as a pilot program at Knight Elementary as a result of the Canby Reads Initiative begun in 2016 by CSD Superintendent, Trip Goodall. In response to the growing literacy needs of children in our community, volunteer readers met once a week with two children (for ½ hour each) to read with them - to model a love of learning. Volunteers were not trained as tutors, but encouraged to build positive connections while enjoying good books. Once a month each student chose a new, free book to take home. Would these efforts impact the academics of children in the program?

Data provided by Knight Elementary at the end of the first year showed that it did. A comparison of students’ scores in Language Arts assessments in June 2017 showed more growth for students who read with a Mentor each week than those who didn’t.

Fall 2017 Year Two

READING MENTORS began using the phrase “to inspire learning” (part of The Canby Center’s mission statement) as its focus and expanded into 3 more schools. Because students from each school came from various grades and different academic programs (dual-immersion and traditional) the academic data we received that spring came from many different assessments. We learned that it wasn’t possible to accurately draw program-wide conclusions from such a variety of sources. We also learned (from volunteers’ survey responses) that our vision “to inspire learning” needed to be further clarified and better communicated with Mentors.

¹ “Mission, Vision, Values | Social Services | The Canby Center | Canby, Oregon.” *Tccnew*, www.thecanbycenter.org/mission-vision-values.

Fall 2018
Year Three

Students from all six Canby elementary schools now participated in the program by reading each week with a Mentor. We **added our Vision statement** (see notes on prev. pg.) and made it the central focus of all Mentor trainings and monthly communications with volunteers.

Even though READING MENTORS volunteers do not provide an academic intervention, our premise is that when a child has **consistent, one-on-one, fun reading time with a caring adult, their academic performance will be positively impacted.**

Jim Trelease, author of *The Read Aloud Handbook* says,

*What we teach children to love and desire
will always outweigh what we make them learn.* ²

I like to remind the Mentors that we get to share some cool books with the kids, then our job is to send 'em back to class - **ready to learn.** In an article from *Edutopia* ³, the author gives a clear list of the necessity of engaging students,



According to multiple research studies, engaged students:

- *Experience improved academic achievement and satisfaction*
- *Are more likely to persist through academic struggles*
- *Earn higher standardized test scores*
- *Have better social skills*
- *Are less likely to drop out of school.* ⁴

This year, Canby Center staff initiated a conversation with Canby School District administrators to determine if there was a simple way for us to receive general information about the overall academic growth of READING MENTORS students in order to measure the program's impact. We are in process of determining whether there is a time-efficient way to do this, that will not personally identify any student. As we build individual connections with CSD staff (at both the school and district-levels), **our partnership gets stronger and the students benefit.** I am currently drafting an agreement document for 2019-20 that I hope will better define and develop our partnership.

For 2018-19 program evaluation, we relied heavily on teacher and principal surveys. We will update this report with feedback from our volunteers (via Mentor Survey) by mid-July. Their input will help us to measure efficiency and impact as well as identify areas such as Mentor training that need to be improved.

² Trelease, Jim. *The Read-Aloud Handbook*. Penguin Books, 2013.

³ *Edutopia*, www.edutopia.org/about.

⁴ Finley, Todd. "Engage Kids With 7 Times the Effect." *Edutopia*, George Lucas Educational Foundation, 9 Sept. 2015, www.edutopia.org/blog/engage-with-7x-the-effect-todd-finley.

Purposes for Evaluating

- **inform decisions** about how to continually expand and improve READING MENTORS . . .
What's working?
What needs improvement?



- **provide information** when reporting to donors, writing grant proposals and recruiting new volunteers.



- **share results with CSD** staff so that they can determine the value of READING MENTORS participation for their students.



- **give the feedback to volunteer Mentors** that they request. They want to know if they're making a difference. Clearly communicating results of their efforts can promote strong volunteer retention.



Key Questions

RELEVANCE

- Was implementation of READING MENTORS **relevant to the needs of students** targeted?
 - Did the READING MENTORS PROGRAM **align with Canby School District's Vision?**
-



EFFECTIVENESS

- What **effect did participation** in READING MENTORS have on students?
 - What **progress** did we make toward **targeted outcomes?**
-

EFFICIENCY

How well did we **manage our resources** (people, time & books)?

IMPACT

- Did our results **confirm effectiveness** of READING MENTORS Vision?
 - Did participation in READING MENTORS **impact students' reading motivation?**
-



Evaluation Methods



TEACHER SURVEY

Online survey (3 minutes long) sent via principals to all teachers who had RM students or teachers who were involved with them, such as school Reading Specialists.

32 total, 20 responded (62% return rate)

PRINCIPAL SURVEY

Online survey (4 minutes long) sent to all principals
6 total, 100% return rate



MENTOR SURVEY

Online survey *to be* sent to **75 Mentors** after they've seen responses from CSD staff about program impact

INFORMAL OBSERVATIONS such as:

Video interviews with principals, superintendent
Students' responses to ending the year with their Mentor
Number of Mentors planning to return next year
Notes from Mentors written in RM notebook

Evaluation Findings

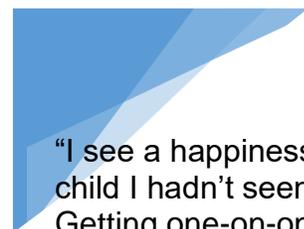
RELEVANCE

Was implementation of Reading Mentors 2018-19 relevant to the needs of students targeted?

Process of Selecting Students

Common questions about our program are, “How are students selected for this program?” and “Are they chosen based upon academic needs?”.

Since principals and other school staff are most familiar with the needs of their individual students, we believe that they are best qualified to identify the students who are likely to benefit from our model of support. School staff select all students for READING MENTORS. They choose some students for the program based on academic need; and they chose others who could thrive from the consistency of meeting weekly with a Mentor.



“I see a happiness in the child I hadn’t seen before. Getting one-on-one time with a kind and gentle adult is very impactful.”

- Teacher,
Canby School District

READING MENTORS
Teacher Survey,
Spring 2019

Students’ Grade Levels

The majority of READING MENTORS students are from 1st and 2nd Grade. This is the starting point for determining which children to target.

Research tells us,

*Through third grade children are learning to read; after third grade students read to learn. But only one-in-three students read proficiently by that point. Without a strong foundation in reading, children are left behind at the beginning of their education.*⁵

However, each READING MENTORS school has unique student demographics. One of the benefits of providing our model of relational support, rather than offering curriculum-dependent tutoring is each principal has **freedom to assign Mentors to fit their students’ needs**. As a result, we mentor students as young as Kindergarten all the way up to 5th grade.

Language

One of our schools, Trost Elementary, is a dual-immersion school. In this model, Trost students 3rd grade and older spend a greater percentage of their day learning in English than K-2 students. Our Trost Mentors read with students who are 2nd - 5th grade. We see a need for more bilingual volunteers (Spanish/English) at all schools, particularly at Trost. This continues to be an important focus for program development.

⁵ “Third Grade Reading Success Matters.” *The Children's Reading Foundation*, www.readingfoundation.org/third-grade-reading-matters.

Evaluation Findings

RELEVANCE

Alignment with Canby School District Vision

WE ASKED PRINCIPALS,

“Does the READING MENTORS Program support CSD staff in pursuing Canby School District’s Vision?”

‘Providing high-quality education to all students, regardless of race, ability or circumstances beyond their control, in order to help students reach their full potential.’?”

“I believe yes – it’s an additional adult connection for all kids in the program.”

“Modeling and practicing reading is always helpful when it comes to young students obtaining and developing those early literacy skills that they will need throughout all of their school years.”

“The Reading Mentors Program definitely works with all students mentioned above. They make connections and add to the students’ high quality education.”

“Yes!
The Reading Mentors give students a chance to practice what they are learning.”

“definitely supports”

“The program does connect well with this goal in that we choose students who need support to meet their full potential.”

- responses from
READING MENTORS
Principal Survey,
Spring 2019

100% of principals surveyed say that **READING MENTORS supports Canby School District’s Vision for their students.**

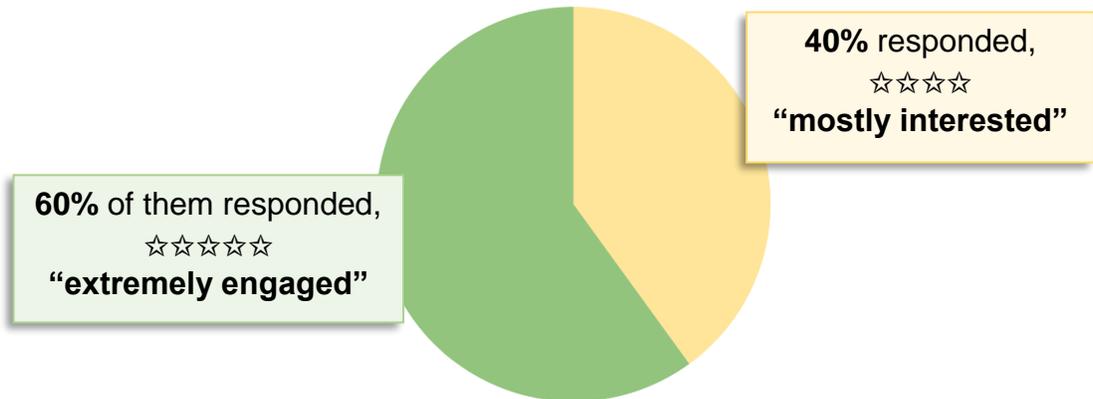
Evaluation Findings

EFFECTIVENESS

What effect did participation in READING MENTORS have on students?

WE ASKED TEACHERS ABOUT STUDENTS' INTEREST IN LISTENING TO A STORY,

“How engaged are your READING MENTORS students when an adult reads to them?”



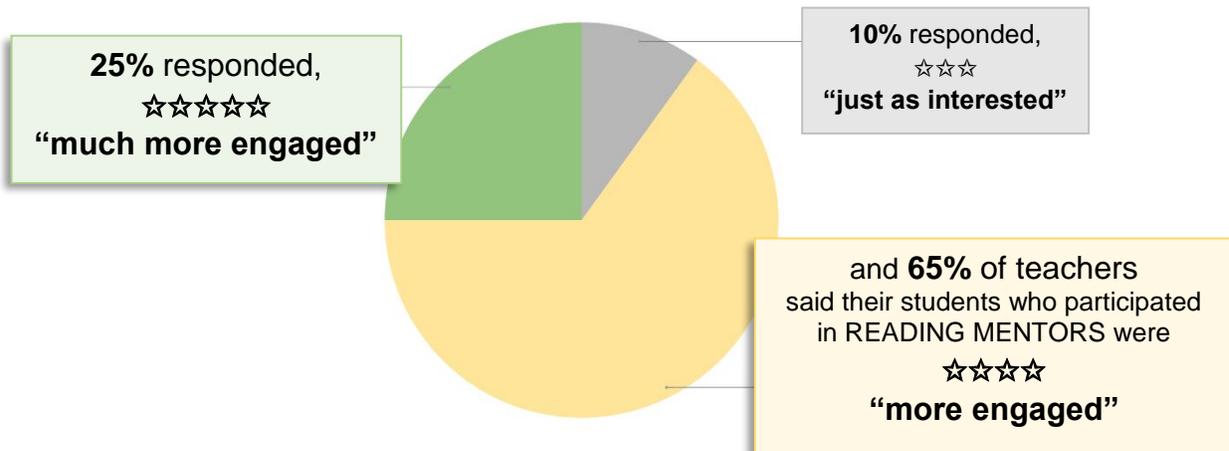
NONE OF THE TEACHERS answered:

☆ “completely uninterested”, ☆☆ “mostly uninterested” or ☆☆☆ “somewhat interested”

WHEN WE ASKED FOR A COMPARISON. . .

TEACHERS SAID,

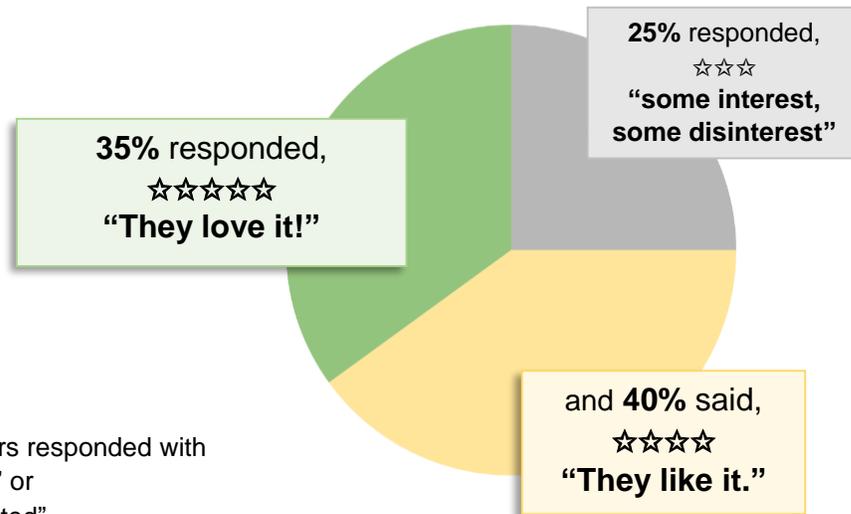
“They are now _____ when an adult reads to them.”



NONE answered: ☆ “much less interested” or ☆☆ “less interested”

NEXT WE WANTED TO KNOW,

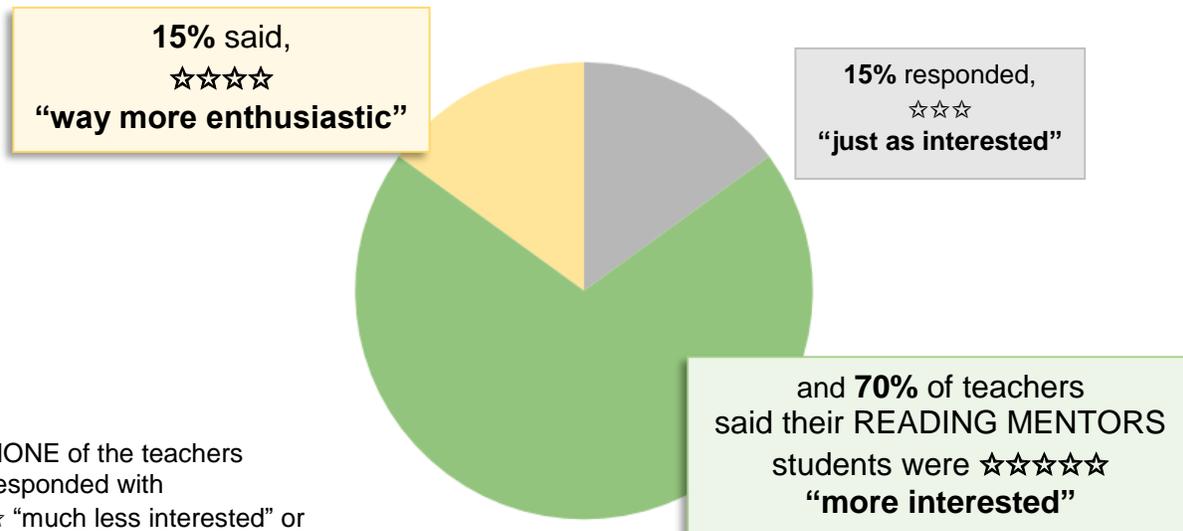
“How much do READING MENTORS students enjoy reading?”



NONE of the teachers responded with
☆ “really don’t like it” or
☆☆ “not very interested”.

THEN WE ASKED IF THAT WAS AN IMPROVEMENT. THE TEACHERS SAID,

“The students are now _____ to read.”



NONE of the teachers responded with
☆ “much less interested” or
☆☆ “less interested”.

Evaluation Findings

EFFECTIVENESS

What progress did READING MENTORS make toward targeted outcomes?



RM Targets

Progress Made (during 2018-19)

<p>Increase number of Weekly Mentors to 100</p>	<p>This year we increased the number of Weekly Mentors* by 20%, from 60 to 73.</p> <p>* 1 Weekly Mentor = 1 one-hour time slot filled by a volunteer</p>
<p>Increase the number of available On-Call Mentors to 30</p>	<p>We doubled the number of On-Call Mentors** from 10 to 20 this school year.</p> <p>** On-Call Mentor = a volunteer who subs for a Weekly Mentor as needed</p>
<p>Serve an increased number of students 200</p>	<p>During 2018-19 we served 145 students, (up from 120 students) an increase of 20% from the previous year</p>
<p>Add two new elementary sites at Carus and Ninety-One Schools, taking the program district-wide in 2018.</p>	<p>The Reading Mentors Program expanded into both Carus and Ninety-One Schools this year, setting up infrastructures that will enable us to continue to expand within each site next year.</p>
<p>Distribute a total of 1400 new books to students in the program.</p>	<p>We sent home 975 new books with Reading Mentors students this year. We significantly improved our book flow system in order to provide greater access to high-quality, high-interest books for students in READING MENTORS.</p>

Evaluation Findings

EFFICIENCY

How well did we manage our people, time and books?

People

Our volunteers are the heart of READING MENTORS. This school year they collectively **contributed over 2,100 hours of their time**. It is a top priority to manage them well by providing any **support they need** and loads of **appreciation**.

Support for Volunteers

We trained each volunteer in our READING MENTORS approach and oriented them to the specifics of the school site.

We also provided a Lead Mentor who was the main contact for their site. Each Lead Mentor lined up subs as needed, provided on-site support, organized and ran the Book Giveaway Days. The Leads were there to **problem-solve** when Mentors had a question or challenge. They set the tone for RM at their school, ensuring a positive experience for children and adults. Each of these super-committed volunteers brought a unique skill-set and **passion** for reaching children. While the program has a different flavor at each site, the focus is consistent. The leadership demonstrated by our Lead Team has strengthened the foundation of our program in ways that we are still identifying.



The Lead Mentor Team met each month to **celebrate** successes at their school, **share** challenges, **plan** and **build** friendships.

On-Call Mentors

As our list of subs grew this year, so did our ability to quickly fill open spots with a qualified volunteer. We established a routine for Weekly Mentors to contact their Lead if they needed to be absent. The Lead

would then line up an On-Call Mentor for the day. This not only contributed to much greater consistency for the students, but also simplified the process for our regular volunteers when they had an unexpected conflict that day or planned a vacation.

Evaluation Findings

EFFICIENCY

How well did we manage our people, time and books?

People

Appreciating Volunteers

We can never say thank you enough to them.

So this year we found a variety of ways to express our gratitude:

- **Monthly Mentor Updates** – positive tone, highlighting their contributions and the impact of the program sent to all volunteers.
- **Mid-year thank yous** – Card and small gift during the holiday season to show that we are so thankful for each of them!
- **Celebration with students** – students and Mentors shared treats, a craft and celebrated their year together during our final reading session.
- **Mentor Appreciation Event** – Our first ever, gathering in June for all volunteers from every school to come together to share refreshments, hear about program results, feel appreciated and meet someone new. This year, we had about 40 people attend the event at Canby Public Library.
- **Mentor Survey** – to gather their feedback about their experience this year.



Time

Lead Mentors organized their reading space at each school library in such a way that volunteers could immediately pick up materials, walk to the child's classroom and jump right into reading. Very little time was lost in transitions.

Each school assigned a contact person for us to connect with so that we could have advance notice of scheduling conflicts like: field trips, assemblies and school closure days. We also connected each Mentor with the school closure alert system in Canby School District so they would have the most immediate information on snow days.

Books

Improved book flow system resulted in better books, immediate access for students and an established method of providing just the right type and level of book for each student in the program. Student choice is important to our approach and now many of them can request specific titles for the next monthly Book Giveaway Day!



READING MENTORS' VISION

TO INSPIRE LEARNING

We meet **consistently** with a child
to enjoy reading together

and **support a student's academic success**
by **modeling a love of learning.**

Evaluation Findings

IMPACT

Did our results
confirm READING MENTORS' Vision?

WHEN WE ASKED TEACHERS,

**“Do you believe that participation in READING MENTORS
impacted students' enthusiasm about having a book read aloud to them?”**

100% of them,
responded
positively

TWO THEMES CONSISTENTLY APPEARED

1. CONNECTING WITH THEIR MENTOR

**“Students love meeting with their Mentors
and look forward to Tuesdays with them.”**

“Students are very excited when their Mentor is here.”

“Yes, they love seeing their Reading Mentor.”

and

2. LISTENING TO A STORY

**“Participation in Reading Mentors
has changed their level of engagement for the better
when a book is read aloud to them.”**

**“Yes, I think they see the value in getting read to
and are more engaged in tracking the story.”**

- responses from
READING MENTORS
Teacher Survey,
Spring 2019

Evaluation Findings

IMPACT

Did participation in READING MENTORS **impact students' reading motivation?**



95% of **TEACHERS**

and

80% of **PRINCIPALS** agreed that . . .

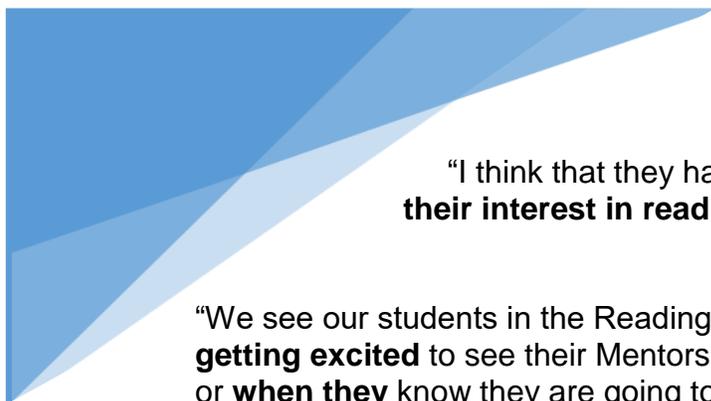
. . . participation
in **READING MENTORS**
positively impacted
students' attitudes
about reading.



Evaluation Findings

IMPACT

Did participation in READING MENTORS **impact students' reading motivation?**



“They are **excited to read** weekly with their Mentors.”

“I think that they have **increased their interest in reading** for pleasure.”

“We see our students in the Reading Mentors Program **getting excited** to see their Mentors or **when they** know they are going to get to **spend some special time reading.**”

- responses from
Reading Mentors'
Principal Survey.



“Having a caring adult give them one-on-one attention while reading **helps build positive feelings towards reading.**”

“They are motivated to show their Mentors what they have learned and **are excited to read.**”

“This **program has highly impacted my students** and their reading abilities. Students strengthen their reading abilities when they have supportive audiences to listen to them read.”



“The **Reading Mentor volunteers are making a huge difference** in our students' lives.”

- responses from
Reading Mentors'
Teacher Survey,
Spring 2019

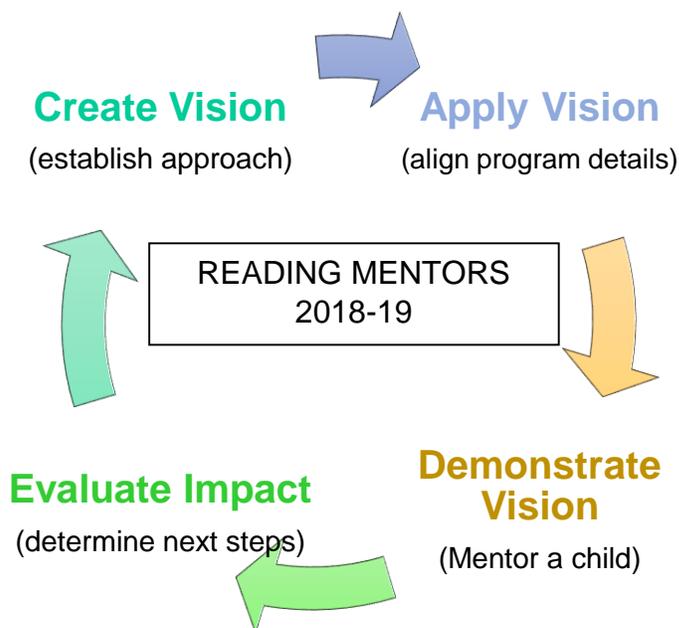
Interpretation and Reflections

1

A VALUABLE PROCESS CREATES A FRAMEWORK

Once we had **created** the READING MENTORS Vision, we consistently **applied** it to all elements of the program.

By **demonstrating** this approach as Reading Mentors, we are now able to **evaluate** the impact of that model on students in the program.



The READING MENTORS Program has **grown in identity** this past year. We carefully sequenced our steps. As a result, we now have a useful framework for reflecting upon last year and looking ahead to the next one.

I think those steps helped us to **build an environment of continual learning** and contributed to a team spirit.

I notice Mentors more comfortable with the fact that we don't expect a standardized way to read with a child. Volunteers don't have curriculum to rely on, a recipe to follow or a lesson plan.

Instead, they learn to discover their own style of engaging a child in a book, (we provide suggestions if they want). This puts the volunteer in the role of an observer - listening to the child, taking time to learn things like what the story looks like from a 1st grader's perspective...

Interpretation & Reflections

2

PARTICIPATION = POSITIVE IMPACT ON STUDENTS' READING MOTIVATION.

The responses from teachers and principals were overwhelmingly supportive of our approach.

We will continue to develop our plans according to the RM Vision.

"We love having the Reading Mentors in our school.
They are positive, enthusiastic and share a love of reading."

-Christine Taylor
Principal, Knight Elementary

"The connections made between Mentors and students are so important.
It truly does take a village to make a difference for our students and **our Reading Mentors are helping to make that difference happen!**"

- Jenne Parker
Intervention Specialist, Lee Elementary

*READING MENTORS is not an academic intervention; however, our belief is that when children have **consistent, one-on-one, fun reading time with a caring adult, their academic performance will be positively impacted.***⁶

In some schools, the principal has shown support for our model by pairing a student with the same Mentor two years in a row. It's a great way to show a child that connecting one-on-one is important. It also gives a volunteer the opportunity to see twice as much growth in a student and supports our relational approach and goal to inspire learning.

⁶ From p. 5 of this report.

Recommendations

Vision First, then Targeted Outputs

Our Vision is our point of reference when making every decision. It defines our response when a challenge arises.

For example, if a volunteer were continually absent and didn't communicate about needing a sub, it's clear our Vision wouldn't be in alignment with program implementation... something would need to change.

Part of our goal as Mentors is to provide **consistent, one-on-one time** enjoying reading. So in that situation, I would ask the volunteer to shift from a Weekly Mentor position to the On-Call list. Typically, another volunteer will step up to fill the gap (as a new Weekly Mentor) in order to keep the two students in the program and provide consistency for them.

If instead, we primarily focused on program outputs, our approach (and likely the results) **would be significantly different.** In that scenario, if targeted numbers came first, we might choose to keep things 'as is' and try to work with a volunteer who is not able to maintain regular attendance. Then when a new volunteer joined the team, if we put output targets above Vision, then we would just add two more students to our roster (increasing our output).

But what would that approach say to the two students already in the program, whose Mentor is reliably unreliable?

When would those students stop looking forward each week to Reading Mentors Day . . . if their Mentor didn't come, but they saw other kids' Mentors who did?

How would that impact their enthusiasm about reading?

Recommendations

Planning for READING MENTORS 2019-20

As we begin to plan for fall of 2019, our leadership team will start with the Vision. We will explore ways in which we can improve the **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency** and **impact** on students in READING MENTORS.

Relevance to Latino students

We want to identify ways to bring more bilingual volunteers into the team so that we are able to achieve a greater degree of relevance for all students. In order to do so, I will seek ways to establish meaningful connections with people and organizations in our community who can help us address this need (such as Building Cultures and local Latino churches). With help and understanding I trust we will be able to identify possible solutions.

Targeted Outputs

For 2019-20 our targeted outputs are:

- Increase the number of **Weekly Mentors** to **90**. This will allow us to
 - Serve an increased number of **READING MENTORS students (180)**
- Increase the number of available **On-Call Mentors** to **30**
- Distribute a total of **1200 books** to participating students

These 2019-20 targets would mean significant growth from 2018-19 outputs. I believe we have the support of our community to meet them.

We are committed to maintaining our focus on the RM Vision, refining and clarifying it as needed. I believe that this will be the most **effective** and **efficient** way for us to be able to positively **impact** an individual child's interest in reading.

