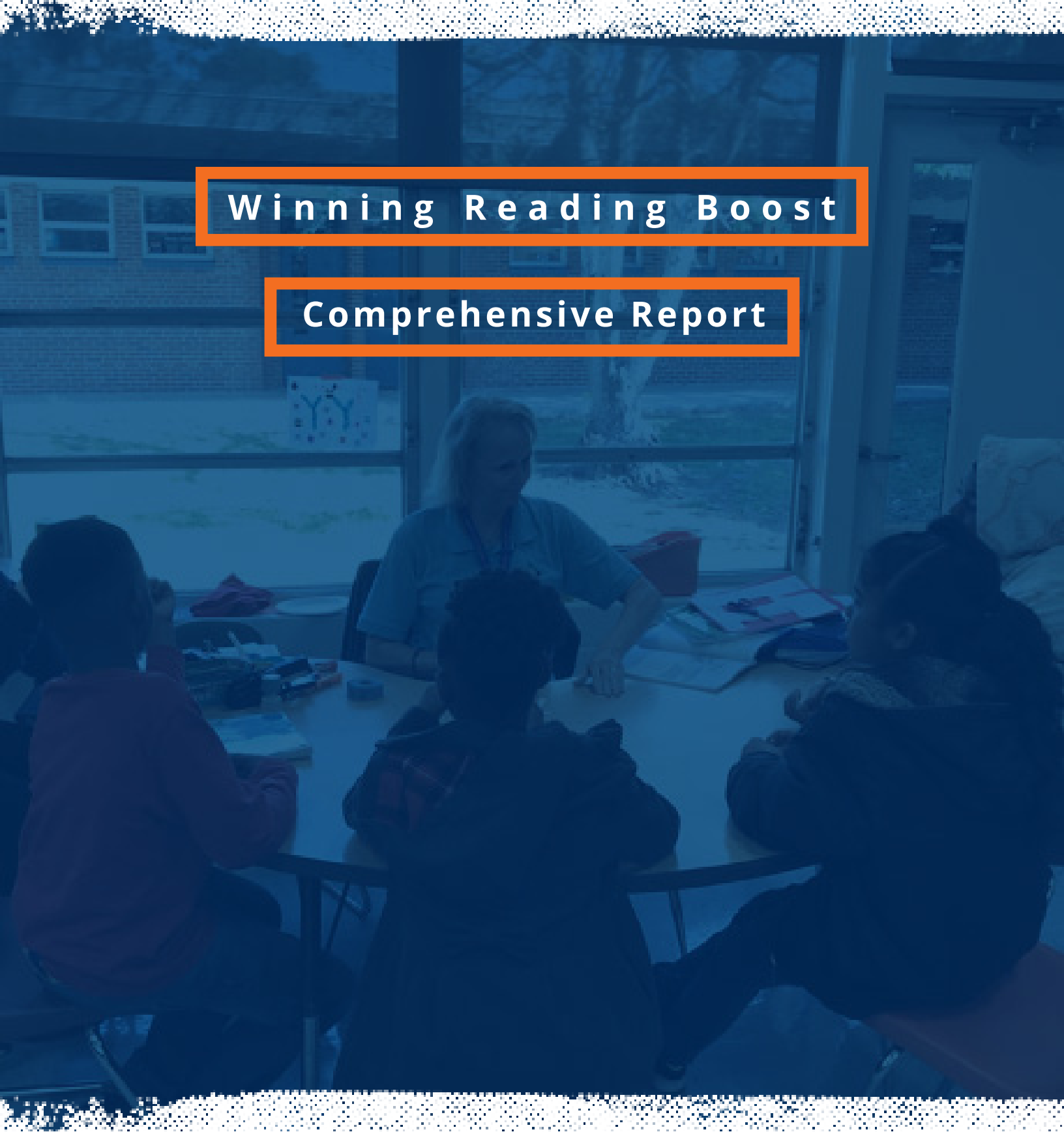


Winning Reading Boost

Comprehensive Report

UF College of Education
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

WINNING READING
BOOST

Overview

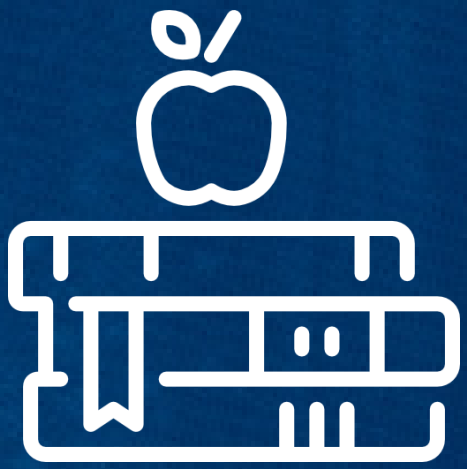
The room is filled with the voices of a group of third graders singing the "Phonics A to Z Rap." Some students bounce to the beat. Today, Darrell sways side to side as he sings along, "Learn the sounds from A-Z. Follow along and sing with me. Before too long, you'll be picking up speed and the next think you know you'll be able to read! /a/ /a/ apple, /b/ /b/ ball, /c/ /c/ cat, /d/ /d/ doll…"

Darrell and his peers are struggling readers. Year after year these students have faced academic failure. They were selected for this reason to participate in Winning Reading Boost, and they are well on their way to becoming fluent readers.

Abstract

Winning Reading Boost (WRB) is an individualized, 36-step program that teaches children how to read. Students are placed with a team of trained instructors and dedicated volunteers that provide intensive, small-group and one-on-one support with guidance each step of the way. Winning Reading Boost helps students become fluent readers through engaging strategies such as phonics songs and echo routines that focus on the skill of decoding - breaking words apart and putting them back together. The ability to successfully decode leads to reading fluency, which is a critical prerequisite skill for reading comprehension.

This report presents aggregated quantitative findings from ten cohorts of students across select Pinellas and Alachua County Schools who participated in the Winning Reading Boost program. Additionally, this report shares preliminary qualitative data featuring interview data and unsolicited remarks from school administrators, classroom teachers, volunteers, instructors, parents, and students. The primary research question that guided this study was, did WRB improve student outcomes in reading? A secondary question was, did students in the lowest quartile make significant gains in reading? Overall, findings indicate that students who participated in Winning Reading Boost experienced significant gains in reading. Further, students who struggled the most made the greatest gains across all three measures of reading.



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Winning Reading Boost

Much more than a curricula or program, Winning Reading Boost provides a powerful way for passionate educators, caring community volunteers, and parents to work together to ensure that the lowest performing children are provided with additional instruction to learn to read. This program was originally developed through a partnership between the University of Florida College of Education's Lastinger Center for Learning and Sue Dickson, a much heralded, award-winning author and publisher. The University of Florida Lastinger Center is a national leader in researching, developing, implementing, and scaling innovative solutions that transform teacher practice and student learning. The Lastinger Center's vision is to create, support, and sustain equitable educational systems where every child and educator, regardless of circumstances, experiences high-quality learning every day. Since its founding in 2002, the Center has leveraged more than $130M in private and public funding to develop high-impact programs, including Winning Reading Boost, Early Learning Florida, and Algebra Nation, that have served over 1 million students and teachers of children birth through 12th grade.

At the core of the Winning Reading Boost initiative is an intervention for struggling 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade readers that builds fluency and reading independence through a unique 36-step learning-to-read curriculum built on carefully sequenced, systematic, and explicit phonics instruction.

The program incorporates phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and oral language development through instructional lessons. Table 1 highlights research-based principles embedded in WRB. Each session is one hour long and includes a team building activity, songs, games, targeted instruction for students provided by trained instructors and volunteers, quizzes, and celebrations of students' accomplishments. One trained instructor is assigned to a group of 4-6 students. In addition, the use of trained volunteers allows for an even smaller student-adult ratio. Many students receive one-on-one instruction based on their needs. Students improve skills essential for future success in career and life including: critical thinking, problem solving,

collaboration, and leadership (Wagner, 2014). Students participated in various WRB models including after school, during the regular school day, and during extended hour.

Beyond teaching the most vulnerable children how to read, the Winning Reading Boost program offers so much more: community volunteers ("boosters") who work side-by-side with the students and instructors to support the learning process, engaged parents who are provided with opportunities to support their children's learning, the partnership of the University of Florida, the state's flagship university, support of local businesses, and engagement with local school districts and school based administrators.

Instruction In Winning Reading Boost

Research-based Principle	Components	Practice
Direct and Systematic Instruction of Phonemic Awareness and Phonics	• Songs • Charts • Games	• Sequenced instruction-simple to complex. • Uses graphemes to introduce sounds. • Body-coda blending.
Oral-Language Play and Decoding Strategies	• Games • Charts • Songs • Stories	• Sound identification and matching. • Add, delete, or manipulate phonemes to generate words.
Variety of Oral and Print Awareness	• Stories • Songs	• Learns sounds to form words, read word lists, and read connected texts.
Hearing, Segmenting, and Blending Sounds	• Games • Charts • Songs • Stories	• Opportunities to segment and blend sounds. • Develops auditory discrimination, listening, and rhyming skills.
Letter/Letter combinations and Name/Sound Knowledge	• Games • Charts • Songs • Stories	• Promotes phonemic awareness through repetition. • Active engagement with letters and letter combinations.
Fluency	• Stories • Charts	• Independent, assisted, and repeated reading of stories. • High-frequency word practice.
Comprehension Strategies	• Stories	• Build background knowledge. • Retelling. • Monitor comprehension and check for understanding.

Supporting Research

Early intervention and effective response to intervention are critical to meeting the instructional needs of struggling readers.

The significance of teaching all students to read is widely accepted; learning to read or not learning to read has many implications for students. Teaching beginning reading effectively has received increased attention because if children fail to develop basic reading skills during the first few years of school this can lead not only to academic, but also economic and social-emotional difficulties (Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, & Hampston, 1998). Too many children in Florida and across the country are failing to learn to read through no fault of their own. Nationally, only 37% of fourth-grade students perform at or above proficient in the NAEP reading assessment, and only 18% of African American and 21% of Hispanic students reach the proficiency level (NAEP, 2017). Children facing challenges often experience low performance in school, which severely limits their potential for future success. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) reauthorization of 2004 includes Response to Intervention (RTI)—a multi-tiered system of support including three tiers—to monitor student progress and identify children with learning disabilities (Pericola, Speece, Silverman, Ritcher, & Schatschneider, 2010). Winning Reading Boost provides support for students in tier 2 who would benefit from systematic and explicit phonics instruction. Effective reading instruction and intervention are imperative for young readers so that they are proficient readers (Foorman & Moats, 2004; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Torgesen, 2002).

Decoding as a critical skill.

Linnea Ehri has made significant contributions to what is known about the development of word recognition from non-reader to proficient reader (Ehri, 1999). Decoding skills develop between partial- and full-alphabetic word recognition and can be problematic for struggling readers (Chall, 1983). In order to make the transition, it is essential for young children to develop skills in phonemic awareness as well as an in-depth understanding of the alphabetic principle (Ehri et al., 2001). The importance of phonemic awareness skills as a predictor of later reading development has been demonstrated by numerous researchers (Blachman, 1984, 1994; Hulme et al., 2002; Mann, 1993; McCardle,

Scarborough, & Catts, 2001; Nation & Hulme, 1997). The National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000) completed an extensive review and meta-analyses of research studies to evaluate the effectiveness of phonemic awareness and phonics instruction. Findings support phonemic awareness instruction for at-risk and struggling readers. Additionally, findings indicate that phonics instruction has a positive effect on reading and benefits decoding and word reading as well as text comprehension and spelling in many readers including young at-risk students and older students with reading disabilities. These findings reiterate how critical it is that students learn to decode. Winning Reading Boost provides sequenced, systematic, and explicit instruction in phonics, so students can decode texts. The ability to successfully decode leads to reading fluency, which is a critical skill in mastering reading comprehension.

Music and Learning.

One highly effective teaching strategy is the use of music to support and reinforce learning. Researchers support the link between music and language development (i.e. Dowling, 1993; Scripp, 2002; Weinberger, 1995). Music stimulates the brain and improves retention. Adams (1990) suggests that the phonological processor is greatly attuned to patterns of rhyme, rhythm, and pitch, making songs easier to learn than lists. Furthermore, music improves the correspondence between graphemes and phonemes (Weinberger, 1998). Dual coding is the idea that retention and recall increases when text is combined with music (Desmond, 1987). Winning Reading Boost incorporates a multimodal approach with phonics songs, look-listen-point sing-alongs, charts, and echo routines.

Community and family engagement positively impact struggling readers.

Teachers have the daunting task of meeting the needs of all students. Small group instruction of 2-5 children and one-on-one attention is necessary for children with low reading abilities. An often-untapped resource is community members who can serve as tutors. Existing literature has highlighted the potential of nonprofessional

community tutors to supplement literacy instruction for students at risk (Vadasy, Jenkins, Antil, Wayne, & O'Connor, 1997). Vadasy and colleagues (1997) explored the impact of a one-to-one tutoring program delivered by nonprofessional tutors compared to a control group who received only the regular reading instruction in their classrooms. Findings indicate the treatment group performed better on every reading, decoding, spelling and segmenting, and writing measure. Community members can in fact be taught how to provide specific literacy activities to students with positive outcomes (Crain-Thoreson & Dale, 1999; Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998). These studies suggest that families and community members can be purposefully incorporated in literacy projects that will positively impact student outcomes. Winning Reading Boost utilizes trained community volunteers to work alongside experienced instructors to provide individualized attention to the most struggling readers.

Sing, Spell, Read, and Write.

Sing, Spell, Read, and Write (SSRW) was also authored by Sue Dickson and is the sister program to Winning Reading. Sing, Spell, Read, and Write was designed for teaching reading, writing, spelling, and speaking in pre-kindergarten through Grade 2. Throughout the program there is a strong phonics orientation. Several validation studies have been conducted attesting to its effectiveness. In a large-group study conducted by Memphis State University (currently the University of Memphis) Center for Research in Educational Policy, 10,000 low stratum kindergarten children were included. The SSRW group outperformed the control group on a measure of work-attack skills. In San Francisco Public Schools, a summer school pilot was conducted with 10 elementary schools. Children varied in English-language proficiency: English proficient, limited English, fluent English, and non-English proficient. After six-weeks of instruction, pre- and post-test data demonstrated that regardless of level of English-language proficiency, children made significant gains in early reading skills including blending, vocabulary-word recognition, and sentence comprehension skills.

Methodology

A mixed methods approach was used to ascertain a comprehensive picture of the impact of WRB on students' literacy learning. Mixed methods research provides "multiple ways of seeing and hearing, multiple ways of making sense of the social world, and multiple standpoints on what is important and to be valued and cherished" (Greene, 2007). In addition, mixed methods research allowed for triangulation of data so quantitative student data could be considered alongside qualitative data (Creswell & Plano, 2017).

Quantitative Measures

To assess the effects of the Winning Reading Boost program, students' skills in the areas of decoding, accuracy, and fluency were assessed before and after participation in the intervention by trained assessors. Both pre-and post-assessments were conducted individually, and each took approximately 20 minutes.

Assessments used included:

- CORE Phonics Survey
- Test of Word Reading Fluency (TOWRE-2)
- Oral Reading Fluency

CORE Phonics Survey. The *Consortium on Reading Excellence (CORE) Phonics Survey* is a measure of phonics and phonics related skills that have a high rate of application for reading. The CORE Phonics Survey has moderate to very strong validity and reliability coefficients (Brandt, 2010) and is a strong predictor of students' fluency and decoding abilities (Park, Benedict, & Brownell, 2014). This assessment begins by asking students letter names and letter sounds and progresses to reading and decoding short consonant-vowel-consonant words to multisyllabic words.

Test of Word Reading Efficiency. The *Test of Word Reading Efficiency* (TOWRE-2) assesses students' skills at reading real words (Sight Word Efficiency subtest) and pseudowords (Phonemic Decoding Efficiency subtest). On this test, items get progressively more difficult. Pseudoword reading is thought to be a particularly useful measure of decoding skills because students cannot rely on their previous experience with or knowledge of the words. Research supports assessing pseudoword decoding as the best predictor of word identification. The TOWRE is used to identify children in the early elementary years who require more intensive and explicit instruction in word reading skills in order to make adequate progress in learning to read (Torgesen, Rashotte, & Wagner, 1999).

Oral Reading Fluency. Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) is the combination of reading rate and accuracy and is a good predictor of future reading performance (Honig, Diamond, & Gutlohn, 2008). Unlike the previous word reading measures, the oral reading fluency measure assessed students' ability to read a passage of connected text. Students were timed for one minute for each of the three grade level passages. The number of correct words per minute (CWPM) is the oral reading fluency score.

Quantitative Measures

In addition to the pre-and post-assessment measures, interview data and unsolicited remarks from teachers, parents, volunteers, instructors, and students are provided.

Participants

Eight schools with some of the highest concentrations of children of color and poverty in the state of Florida were invited to be a part of the study. One of the eight schools supported by this project was, at the time, the lowest performing elementary school in the state. In this school, 160 students took state exams and 154 failed reading or math- only 6 passed both (Lash, 2015). Table 2 highlights demographic information for each participating school. School administrators were asked to select struggling students who would benefit from intensive phonics instruction. This study includes 189 students in 2nd through 5th grade who completed the Winning Reading Boost intervention across ten cohorts.

Table 2: Context of Participating Schools

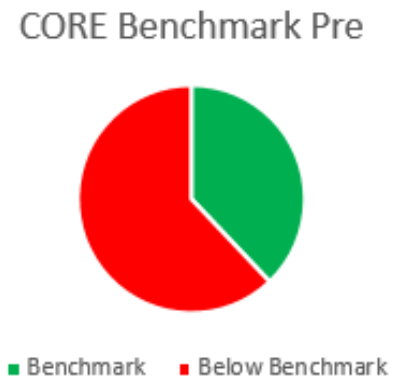
School	Student Enrollment	Students of Color	Economically Disadvantaged
A	579	91.35%	92.6%
B	405	88.9%	90.1%
C	298	100%	88.3%
D	425	96.5%	91.1%
E	284	96.1%	95.8%
F	366	59.6%	71.6%
G	257	94.6%	97.7%
H	774	82.6%	81.9%

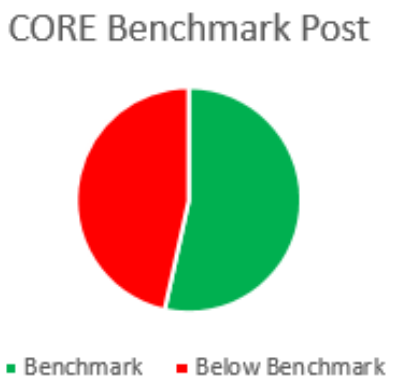
Quantitative Findings

Aggregated results across all ten cohorts (189 students) for each measure are described below.

CORE Phonics Survey

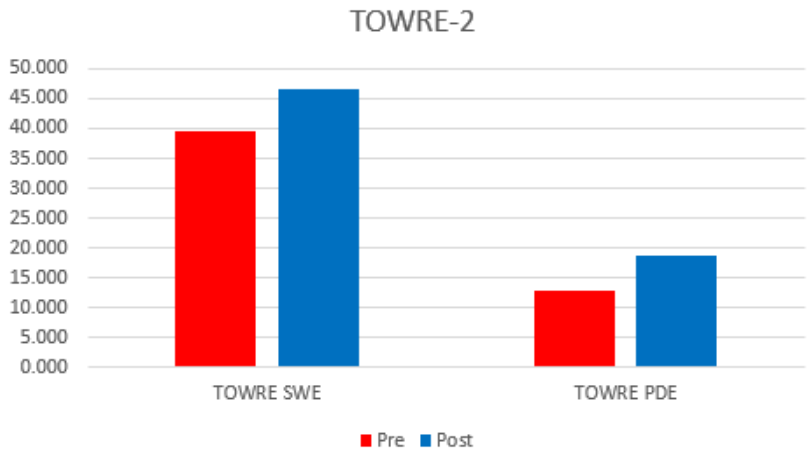
A threshold score for this measure, one that demonstrates the level of decoding skill necessary for reading most text, is 150. At pre-test, only 72 students were at benchmark. At post-test, this number more than doubled to 147 students.





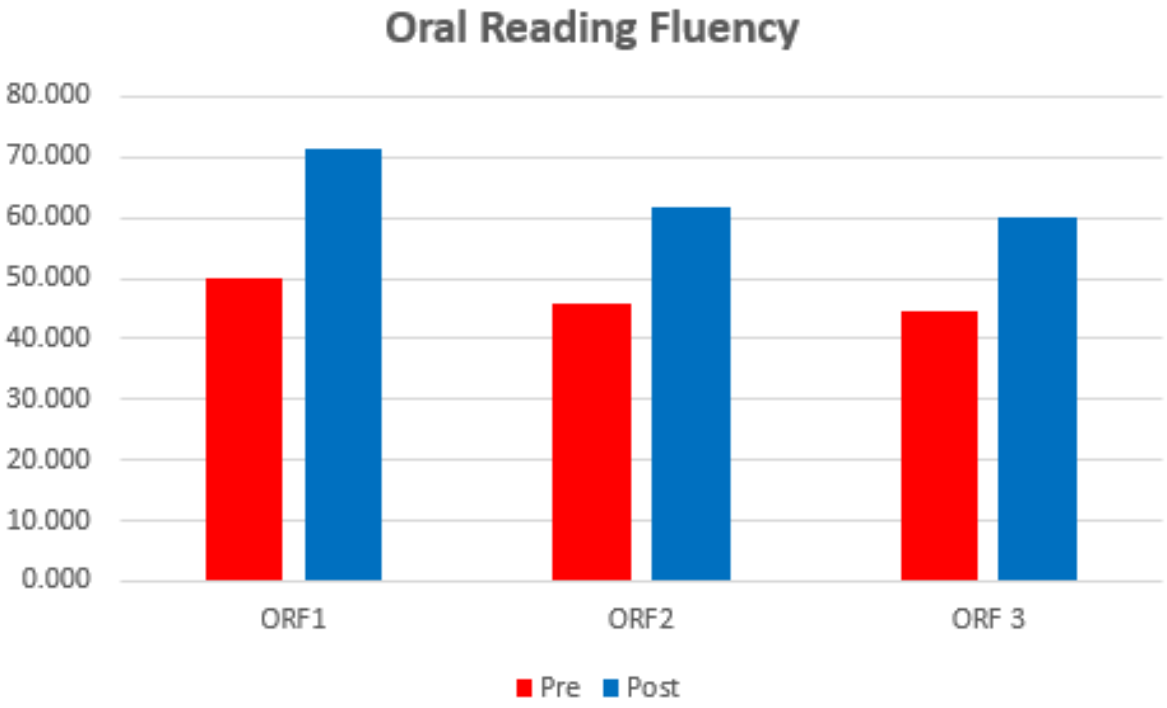
Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE-2)

Before WRB, students on average scored 39.53 on the Sight Word Efficiency subtest and 12.78 on the Phoneme Decoding Effiency subtest. After the WRB intervention students on average scored 46.58 and 18.57 respectively on each subtest. Gains were 7.05 and 5.79.

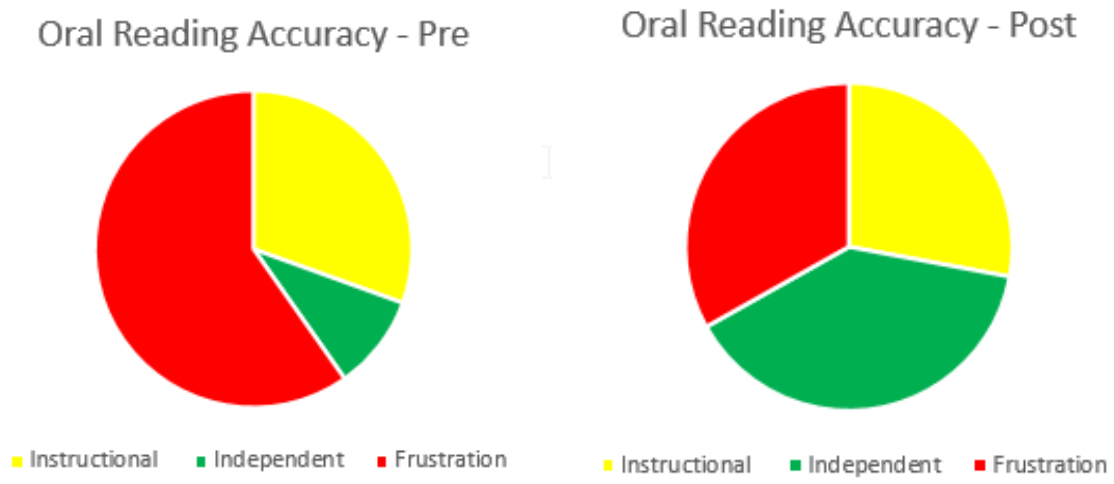


Oral Reading Fluency

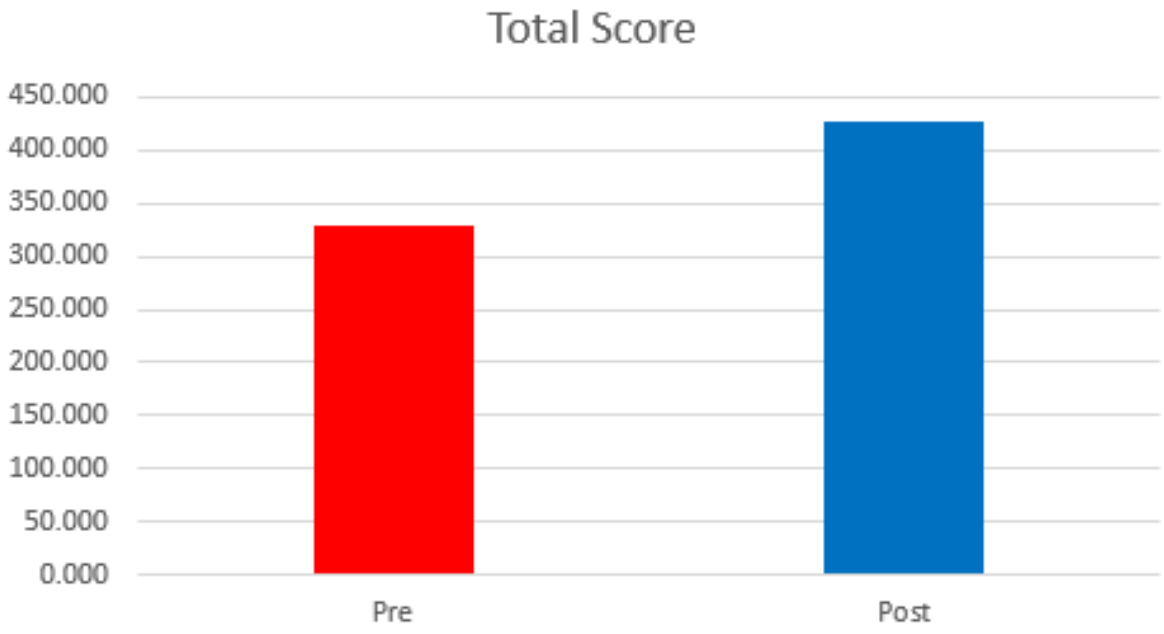
In this assessment, students were timed for one minute for each of the three grade level passages. Students made gains across all three passages. Gains for passage 1: 21.22, gains for passage 2: 15.68, and gains for passage 3: 15.87. Moreover, the number of errors students made decreased from 7.49 to 4.920. That is to say, students read more words correctly.



Students have to be able to accurately decode a word to be able to extract meaning from the text. Errors in accuracy can make reading laborious and comprehension suffers. Struggling readers with less than 90% accuracy on grade level passages are considered to be at frustration level, or the level at which comprehension is likely impaired due to difficulty decoding. Furthermore, students at frustration level are often discouraged from trying because the text is too difficult for them. Before the WRB intervention, 60% of readers experienced this frustration. This percentage decreased by almost half, 33%, after WRB. More students are well on their way to becoming independent readers where they can experience confidence in their abilities as they are able to read more words correctly.



Across all three measures, students overall, had a pre-test score of 330.09 and a post-test score of 428.11 for a gain of 98.020, which was significant, $t(188) = -27.61$, $p < .001$.



The second research question sought to explore how students who struggled the most faired after the intervention. In order to answer this question, students were placed in quartiles based on their total score at pre-test. Students in the 4th quartile scored the lowest at pre-test across all three measures.

Findings indicate that students in the 4th quartile made the greatest gains in all three measures and gains were significant.

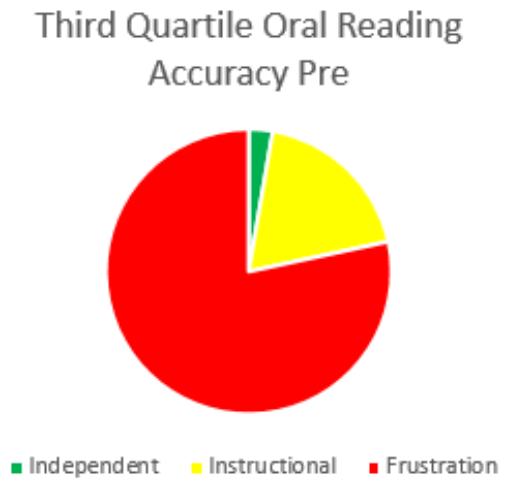
- CORE Phonics Survey: t (46) = -13.80, p < .001.
- TOWRE-2: SWE subtest- t (46) = -8.44, p < .001.
  PDE subtest- t (46) = -5.35, p < .001.
- ORF: t (46) = -6.77, p < .001.

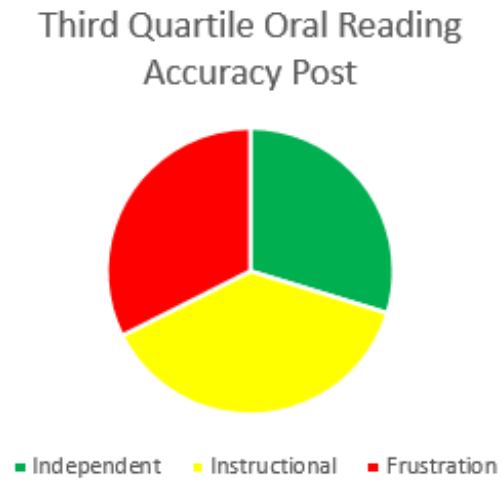
Top (1st) Quartile Gains				Second Quartile Gain Scores			
	Pre	Post	Gains		Pre	Post	Gains
TOWRE SWE	55.23	60.92	5.69	TOWRE SWE	45.81	52.96	7.15
TOWRE PDE	20.10	27.98	7.88	TOWRE PDE	13.87	20.02	6.15
ORF Median	78.900	96.670	17.77	ORF Median	52.17	71.26	19.09
ORF Accuracy	0.918	0.958	0.04	ORF Accuracy	0.90	0.94	0.04
Independent	9	30	21.00	Independent	5	16	11
Instructional	21	6	-15.00	Instructional	19	18	-1
Frustration	8	2	-6.00	Frustration	14	4	-10
CORE-Survey	165	191.77	26.73	CORE-Survey	153.62	183.15	29.53
CORE Benchmark	42	48	6.00	CORE Benchmark	26	47	21
Total Score	476	568.1	92.12	Total Score	370.98	471.40	100.42

Third Quartile Gains				Bottom (4th) Quartile Gains			
	Pre	Post	Gains		Pre	Post	Gains
TOWRE SWE	36.28	42.30	6.02	TOWRE SWE	20.49	29.85	9.36
TOWRE PDE	9.94	14.15	4.21	TOWRE PDE	7.06	11.94	4.88
ORF Median CWPM	36.79	54.81	18.02	ORF Median	19.91	34.06	14.15
ORF Accuracy	0.84	0.91	0.07	ORF Accuracy	0.65	0.81	0.16
Independent	1	11	10.00	Independent	0	3	3.00
Instructional	7	14	7.00	Instructional	0	5	5.00
Frustration	29	12	-17.00	Frustration	41	33	-8.00
CORE-Survey	129.11	165.17	36.06	CORE-Survey	100.79	138.23	37.44
CORE Benchmark	4	36	32.00	CORE Benchmark	0.00	16	16.00
Total Score	284	387.4	103.19	Total Score	186.09	282.53	96.44

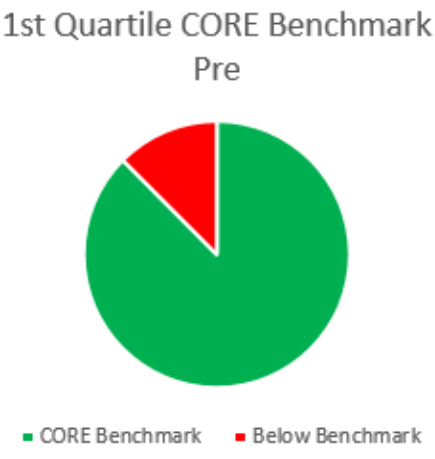
In addition to exploring gains for students in the 4th quartile, results also demonstrated the impact to the other students as well. Interestingly, findings also show that a large number of students in the third quartile moved to benchmark and/or independent. At pre-test, 8 students were at the independent and instructional levels. At post-test, 25 students were at the

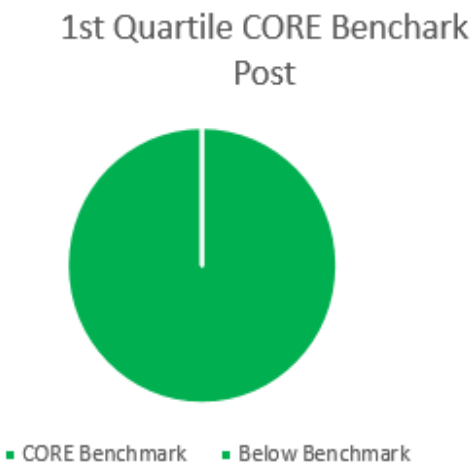
independent and instructional levels. In other words, students in the third quartile went from 78% frustration level to only 32% frustration level.



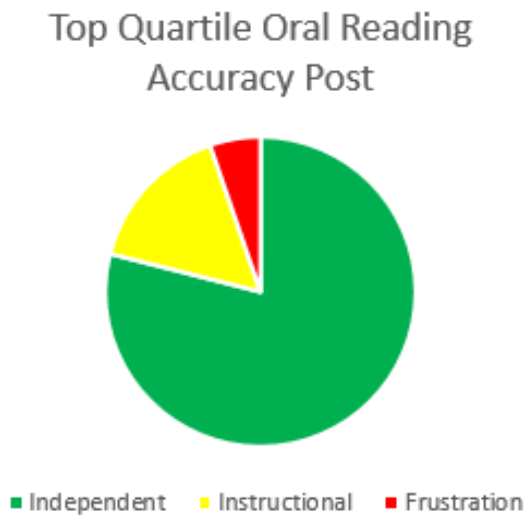


Also, for students in the 1st quartile, the gap on the CORE Phonics Survey closed.





For those same students in the 1st quartile, post WRB all but 5% were at instructional or independent. For example, on pretest only 24% were at an independent reading level, but on post 79% were at an independent level. On instructional, 55% were at instructional at pre and only 16% on post.



Qualitative Findings

In addition to quantitative gains in student literacy outcomes, WRB staff were often stopped by administrators, teachers, parents, and even students themselves were not shy to share the impact of WRB.

Teachers and Administrators

Classroom teachers and school-based administrators were eager to share about the positive impact with WRB instructors. It was common for classroom teachers to try to send additional students to the WRB program who were not identified to participate because they saw the tremendous impact that WRB had on their students who participated. WRB instructors were often stopped by teachers in the hallway who told them numerous stories about students transferring what they learn in the WRB classroom to their own classroom. One teacher told an instructor about a student in their class that was labeled a “non-reader” before beginning WRB. The class attended a field trip to see an orchestra. At the beginning of the performance the conductor displayed a PowerPoint and the same student who was a “non-reader” read every word on the PowerPoint. The teacher was amazed and attributed the student’s confidence and reading growth to WRB.

“Their fluency has at least doubled and they have grown immensely - at least one grade level for most of them.”

Teachers shared anecdotally that WRB students made greater gains on district assessments compared to similar students who did not participate in WRB. Another teacher commented that for students who participated in WRB, “their fluency has at least doubled.” She continued, “and they have grown immensely-- at least one grade level for most of them. And one has grown almost two grade levels. And it’s amazing, because for them, it’s life-changing.” That same teacher ended her interview by sharing, “there are so many programs that come along, and I have seen nothing that has had the impact that this does.” She attributes the success to small adult-student ratios, individualized attention allowing students to move at their own pace, songs that teach, trained instructors, and starting at the basics.

“I think the biggest impact is their enthusiasm for reading...we want to inspire children to love reading, and I think that this program does that.”

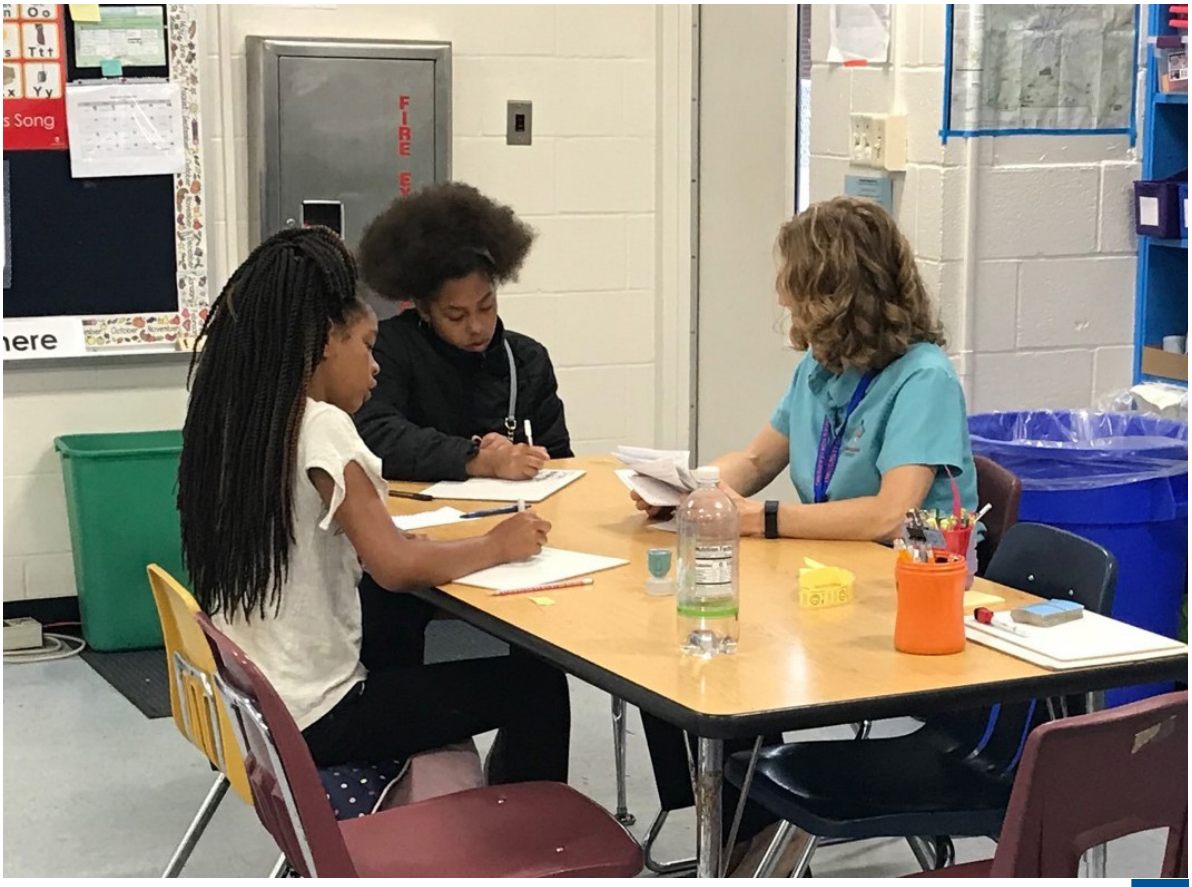
One principal was very forthcoming in sharing her thoughts about WRB. She shared, “I think the biggest impact is their enthusiasm for reading... we want to inspire children to love reading, and I think that this program does that. For them, they’re experiencing success, and so they want to come. They want to read, and that is what is the most rewarding for me to see.” She highlighted the important role that music, movement, and personal relationships played on students’ success. She ended by sharing, “this has been unlike any other program that we have ever had, and being in education for a long time, I have seen programs come and go.” When asked what she would change about the program she commented that she would love for more students to have access to the program, as they would benefit from WRB as well.

Parents

Many parents shared how Winning Reading Boost positively impacted their child academically. This parents' remarks echo this sentiment, "my child really benefited from this program. When she first started she could hardly read or write a full sentence. Her writing and reading is excellent now. I have confidence she will continue during the summer." Several parents mentioned the positive impact that WRB has on making homework time less stressful. One parent shared, "I used to have to make my child do his homework, but now when I come home he is already doing it." Similarly, another parent remarked, "[Before WRB] it used to be through kindergarten, first, and second, it was struggle, struggle, struggle, struggle, struggle. And during all those grades, I would have to do homework with her every night. She couldn't get it done in after school care. I would have to sit with her and help her read and then do her homework. Well, now, she gets it all done in after school care. When we get home, I check it. And it's all right. She's done it all herself." He went on to share that he now enjoys more outdoor leisure time with his children.

In addition to academics, parents noticed other positive changes as well. One parent shared, “Now, it’s just amazing the way she reads. And the way it affects her self-esteem, it’s incredible. She walks with her head up and a smile. And that’s wonderful.” Beyond helping their own child, parents saw how it helped them and could help other children as well. A parent shared, “What you all do, it completely turned, not only [my child’s] life around, but my life around.” Still another shared, “[WRB] improved her a lot- she’s reading words that I don’t even know, so she’s doing good. She helps them [younger siblings] too. When they get on the computer she helps them with the letters and the sounds.” A few parents asked for the program to continue so other students would benefit from the extra reading support. One parent shared very emphatically, “In a matter of months she learned more in this program than she did in kindergarten, first, and second grade combined.” That same parent commented, “When you can get kids excited about learning, you’ve done something magical. That’s it. You’ve done it. Done good.”

“Now, it’s just amazing the way she reads. And the way it affects her self-esteem, it’s incredible.”



Instructors and Volunteers

Trained instructors (referred to as coaches) and volunteers played an instrumental role in the success of the WRB program. Lead instructors are experienced teachers and many assistant instructors come with past teaching experience or involvement with young people. Volunteers across cohorts were from all walks of life including former educators, college students, a musician, a retired fire fighter, local community members, the mayor of the local town, and even the first lady of the University of Florida.

"All of us came because we love these kids and we want them to have a good life - that's what it's all about. "

Instructors and volunteers all expressed a belief in students' innate capability and potential to succeed. One instructor shared, "All of us came because we love these kids and we want them to have a good life- that's what it's all about. To sit and watch them read and discover and to understand- there is so much inside them that has to come out." Another commented, "I've had many experiences in life- and for me there has been growth and learning. I've seen these children with a look in their eyes with amazement and interest that I've not seen before. All of a sudden, they're hungry. These children want to learn, they want to read, you saw the excitement in them wanting to spell." As such they shared positive messages about students' ability and potential. "I let them know if you can do this, you can do anything...if you want to be a doctor, you can be a doctor, but reading provides the opportunity." Another shared, "I tell them you have to endeavor to persevere."

Instructors and volunteers viewed WRB as an opportunity to provide individualized instruction focused on decoding and understanding. One volunteer commented, "It [WRB] was worthwhile. I'm doing something good- you need one-to-one to learn to read or to get better- that's the benefit of this program." Another said, "The interesting part was- and what I really feel needs to happen is meaning- it's one thing to be able to sound a word, but to then understand exactly what it means- for that part they were hungry for, which I think was a rewarding and encouraging experience." A former school psychologist with 30 years of experience and who volunteered with WRB shared, "I never got the chance to just sit down and read with a kid. It's getting to know the kid and the kid getting to know you- get a little bond there. You see the same kid every week and they actually want to see you..."

Students

Students were excited to participate in WRB. At one school in particular where WRB started at the beginning of the school day, students would arrive to the WRB room 15 minutes early with their breakfast (often getting in trouble from hall monitors) just to get an early start! Students across cohorts were asked, "Did you like Winning Reading Boost? What did you like about it?" Many students shared that they enjoyed the songs, games, and reading. Below are a few quotes from students.

- "I like singing songs and learning to read stories."
- "I used to get F's on reading now I get all A's. I used to fail reading tests now I can go to 4thgrade. I'm very happy to be here and do Winning Reading Boost."
- Several students remarked, "I liked everything."
- One student shared that she did another reading program before but still didn't get good grades, but now she does (after being part of WRB).
- "I liked reading words and the party."
- "I liked singing songs and I learned to read. I loved everything about it and wish it would keep going."
- "I learned to believe in myself and push myself to my potential to become a better reader."
- A third grader shared, "I adored it [WRB]. I liked the coaches [instructors] and I got help sounding out words I didn't know. I can read clear now. WRB had done a lot to help me."

Other students shared with WRB instructors that they moved up in three levels in their classroom with reading. Some students reported that they passed their portfolio selections for the first time. During the post-assessment phase, when the assessor walked into the WRB room several children looked around and said, "I miss this place" or "I love Winning Reading Boost."When a 2ndgrader was asked what WRB meant to him, his response was, "Before when the teacher said it was time to read, I didn't know what to do –now I know how to read."

Limitations

Even though the study included reading measures that are reliable and valid, there was a threat to external validity since random sampling was not used in this study. However, the purpose of the program was to provide an intervention to a target population of struggling students who would benefit from intensive phonics instruction. The sample of students identified may not be representative of all struggling students in second through fifth grade. Additionally, there was a threat to internal validity since the design was pre-experimental with no random assignment and no control group. Consequently, findings provided above sheds light on the impact of the Winning Reading Boost program for the students who were selected to participate.

There were a few challenges to implementation even with students' scores increasing significantly. WRB staff were not given access to student IEPs or 504 plans or knowledge of which students needed accommodations. Therefore, students who may have otherwise received support in their classroom did not receive additional support during Winning Reading Boost. This included students with significant behavior and academic concerns. Additionally, attendance was a concern. Factors included scheduling conflicts such as early dismissal at some schools, state testing days, field trips, and chronically sick or tardy students.

Conclusion

This report highlights findings from ten cohort of students between 2015- 2018 who participated in the Winning Reading Boost program. Overall findings indicate that all students made significant gains in reading as measured on the CORE Phonics Survey, TOWRE, and Oral Reading Fluency (ORF). Moreover, students who struggled the most made the greatest gains. Findings also support the use of WRB as an effective intervention, as a large number of students in the third quartile moved to benchmark and/or independent level.

Winning Reading Boost is not intended to replace instruction that is already taking place in the classroom, but instead provides students who have not attained literacy success in school with the boost they need to become fluent readers. This unique 36-step learning-to-read curriculum builds on carefully sequenced, systematic, and explicit instruction that targets the fundamentals of phonological awareness and phonics. It combines the best teaching practices supported by research on language acquisition and reading to ensure individual student success through its use of a multisensory, multimodal approach that requires total participation from learners. Students learn from engaging with songs, games, charts, and appealing stories. Overall, it provides an encouraging learning environment that engages students as they learn the foundations of reading.

Winning Reading Boost afforded access and opportunity to a unique literacy learning experience that supported striving readers to develop positive literate identities. It is evident from the results of the ten cohorts of students that WRB is an effective program in helping the most struggling readers. Students, parents, instructors, volunteers, and classroom teachers have attested to the power of Winning Reading Boost. Of the many reading interventions in existence, this program is unique, not only for its outstanding student outcomes, but also because of its attention to promoting racial equity. Winning Reading Boost was designed with the community, for the community, and focuses on literacy and social and emotional skills so students are not just becoming readers—they are becoming learners in order to improve skills essential for future success in career and life.

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