



The Riverton Literacy Corps is an AmeriCorps literacy tutoring program designed to be a tool that communities and states can utilize to ensure that children become proficient readers by third grade.

COMPELLING COMMUNITY NEED

Rationale

From preschool through 3rd grade, children learn to read. From 3rd grade forward, students "read to learn." This time-sensitive window presents either an opportunity to build a foundation for a lifetime of education and economic success or puts a child at risk of the lifelong negative consequences associated with illiteracy. Evidence from a national study indicates that if children are not proficient readers by the end of 3rd grade, they begin to become "in-school drop outs" as early as 4th grade (Paige, 2005). This national study followed 1000 children who were reading at grade level in 3rd grade and a comparison group of 1000 children also in 3rd grade but who were reading below grade level through 4th grade to determine the impact of reading proficiency on academic achievement. By the end of fourth grade, 45% of the children reading below grade level in 3rd grade were now two grade levels behind in reading. 75% received lower grades in three core subjects as compared to those who had been reading at grade level at the end of 3rd grade. Of those who were reading at grade level at the end of third grade, 85% were reading at least at fourth grade level by the end of 4th grade.

As noted by Riverton Literacy Corps's evaluation director, "Once a child starts kindergarten, they have 595 days to learn to read by the end of 3rd grade -- the further behind they are when they start kindergarten, and the longer they stay behind, the greater the odds are that they won't accomplish this goal." RLC findings from an impact evaluation conducted in 2010 showed that 85% of students tutored by the RLC program from K-3rd grade were able to achieve 3rd grade reading proficiency by the end of 3rd grade as compared to a comparison group of children with similar reading proficiency starting Kindergarten but who received no RLC tutoring. At the end of 3rd grade, only 25% of the comparison group was reading at grade level.

Further, literacy researchers Snow, Burns & Griffin (1998, National Academic

Quotes a recent national study (Paige, 2005) that reinforces the program's decision to focus their intervention on age 3 to grade 3. Provides summary of findings from study data.

Quoted their program evaluator about findings from their 2010 impact program evaluation which showed RLC students had higher reading proficiency than at the end of 3rd grade than did similar students who did not receive RLC member tutoring.

Quotes well respected literacy researchers' findings about the importance of reading by grade 3. Even though an older study,

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<p>Press) concluded that, "A person who is not at least a modestly skilled reader by the end of third grade is quite unlikely to graduate from high school." Specific findings from the longitudinal study showed that students who achieved 3rd grade reading proficiency by the end of 3rd grade, were 65% more likely to graduate than their peers who had not received similar assistance.</p> <p>Consequently, reading failure is also linked to a host of negative social outcomes, including teen pregnancy, substance abuse, delinquency and criminal activity. (Talla, 2003).</p> <p>Six years of impressive RLC program results show that 95% of RLC tutored children achieved 3rd grade reading proficiency by the end of 3rd grade, we are confident that reducing the likelihood of these outcomes is achievable.</p>	<p>findings strongly support intervention focus up grade 3.</p> <p>Mentions the negative future impact of reading failure based on another recent study. However, no specific data is provided.</p> <p>Provides a summary of 6 years of RLC program performance results in which 95% of tutored children achieved 3rd grade reading proficiency by the end of 3rd grade.</p>
<p>Needs Assessment</p> <p>The RLC identified those children who would benefit most from working with its members by surveying literacy experts and leaders from Pre-K and elementary schools. A key finding was that while large numbers of children do not meet the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA-II) standards for reading proficiency, their scores are not low enough to make them eligible for mandatory assistance from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Title I tutors or special education/learning disabilities teachers.</p> <p>Policy analysts and practitioners alike described these children as "falling between the cracks" and typically being assisted only through whatever extra support individual teachers manage to rally or directly provide. Unfortunately, research and testing data confirms that children who start out with substandard literacy skills are unlikely to achieve future reading competency without targeted intervention. "Even with excellent instruction in the early grades, some children fail to make satisfactory progress in reading. Getting back on track will require supplementary individual or small-group intensive instruction that is coordinated with classroom teacher instruction." (Snow, et al, 1998). RLC's study of the issue in Minnesota revealed that the provision of any 'extra help' rarely aligns with an individualized assessment of that child's literacy skills and is almost never</p>	<p>Describes that students are selected for participation in the intervention based on need. Describes that there is a cohort of students that while low performing and at risk, did not have scores low enough to receive mandatory assistance thus justifying their focus on this underserved group of students.</p>

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<p>accompanied by ongoing progress monitoring to demonstrate whether the interventions provided are working or should be altered.</p> <p>The RLC has identified its program participants as those children that have the capacity to learn to read at grade level but who experience more prolonged, intense, and often permanent literacy struggles because the educational system is unequipped and almost always under resourced to be able to provide timely and effective data-driven intervention. This is where AC members are a powerfully effective means for meeting the early literacy needs of Minnesota's children. RLC members with intensive training in evidence-based interventions are coached by literacy experts to work one-on-one and/or in small groups to isolate children's specific skill challenges and to tailor their tutoring to effectively build the skills needed by each child to become a successful reader. Members are effective because their tutoring is aligned with Curriculum Based Measurement tools that provide ongoing data that tell teachers and literacy coaches whether or not the member interventions are making a difference. RLC was designed from the ground up to bring into educational settings the tools, resources, training, and experience needed to create a delivery system capable of administering evidence-based literacy interventions to address a statewide systemic gap that too often traps capable children who might otherwise experience success.</p>	<p>Makes the case for why AmeriCorps members can make a unique contribution to addressing the need.</p> <p>Describes the intervention, i.e. how members work with students, and the training they receive to have the needed skills.</p>
<p>Documentation</p> <p>Analysis of the 2009 MCA-II results illustrates the magnitude of need throughout greater Minnesota (the 78 counties that comprise the six geographic regions outside the Twin Cities metro area). 20% - one in five - of the third graders failed to pass the state's reading proficiency exam. Extrapolating this third grade result across the "age 3 to grade 3" range of greater MN students, it is estimated that over 36,000 children within this part of the state are at high risk of failing to become proficient readers by the end of 3rd grade. This proposal aims to target schools and preschools throughout greater MN with the highest percentage of students who are unlikely to acquire proficient reading skills by the 3rd grade without individualized intervention.</p> <p>In addition to using historical reading performance on the state's MCA-II</p>	<p>Data documenting the need</p> <p>Provides recent statewide data documenting how many third graders are not proficient in reading.</p> <p>Makes the case for the numbers of children age 3 – grade 3 in need based on above data.</p> <p>Ties need to program intervention and selection of sites.</p> <p>Will select schools for inclusion as sites using state education</p>

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<p>exam as a criteria for site selection, the RLC will further prioritize those schools and communities with large and/or growing concentrations of children from low income households (as represented by the percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch) and higher numbers of students of color and limited English proficiency. This rationale is grounded in state assessment data that indicates these two variables are the strongest predictors of low performance on the state reading assessment test, and reinforces the RLC's commitment to helping to close the achievement gap.</p>	<p>scores, and the numbers of low-income (free/reduced lunch), students of color and English proficiency.</p>
<p>MEMBER ACTIVITIES</p>	
<p>The RLC program trains and supports AC members to serve as an extension of the literacy instructional team in Pre-K and K-3 classrooms. All Pre-K literacy tutor members perform the following specific activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDI) assessments on all children in their classroom 3x/yr (fall, winter, and spring) to identify their literacy skill needs and measure their progress during the year. • Create literacy-rich environments by integrating additional reading, writing and talking activities into five in-classroom "centers" to make play more meaningful. • Implement "5-Day Read Alouds" using dialogic reading techniques to expand the children's vocabulary, phonological awareness, and letter knowledge by reading the same book for 5 days. • Provide tailored relationship-based interventions to small groups of children needing focused time on specific skills such as phonological awareness, vocabulary, alphabetic principles, conversation, and book/print concepts. • Implement activities to make writing meaningful for young children. <p>*K-3 Members serve within selected elementary schools tutoring K-3 children identified as at risk of not reading proficiently by 3rd grade. Each FT member tutors a total of 25-30, and PT members 15-20, children during the course of the school year. All K-3 literacy tutor members perform the following activities:</p>	<p>The intervention is clearly articulated – both for Pre-K and K-3. In each age group, specifics are provided with how much tutoring at risk students receive (e.g., at least 60 minutes over 5 days/week of individualized literacy tutoring).</p>

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- Provide a minimum of 60 minutes weekly of individualized research-based literacy interventions to each child in their active caseload.
- Collect weekly progress monitoring data on children being tutored. Children "graduate" from the RLC program on a rolling basis when they demonstrate - through the weekly progress monitoring assessments - that they have acquired the literacy skills to "catch-up" with their grade-level peers. Once exited, they are still assessed for 3 consecutive weeks to ensure that they stay on track with grade-level expectations. If they fall below those levels, they are re-enrolled in active tutoring.

MEASURABLE OUTPUTS and OUTCOMES

RLC's outcomes include:

- 90% of the 2,500 Pre-K students served will demonstrate improvement in at least three of the five "building block" literacy skills from fall to spring, as measured by the IGD1 assessments.
- 75% of the 5,500 K-3 students served will demonstrate more than an expected year's worth of growth in their literacy skills, as measured by the grade-specific AIMSweb fluency assessments conducted three times per year.
- 80% of the 700 3rd grade students who participate and graduate from the RLC program will demonstrate reading proficiency on Minnesota's MCA-II reading proficiency exam (3rd grade is the first year that students are tested by the state).

Clear statement of output targets and outcomes (percentage of how many served) expected for various age categories and indicates the various ways outcomes will be measured.