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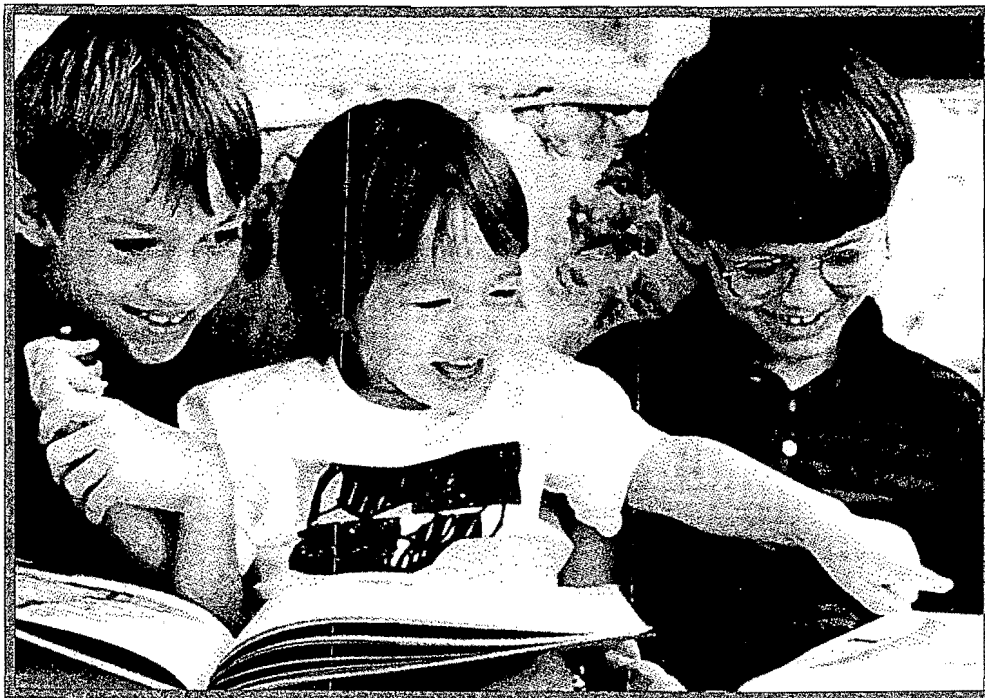
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# Ideas at Work



*How to Help Every Child  
Become a Reader*

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U.S. Department of Education  
America Reads Challenge

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*Perspectives on*  
**Reading  
Instruction**

# **Evaluation of DC Reads Book Partners Program**

## **Year I Final Report**

Submitted to:  
**Corporation for National Service**

Submitted by:  
**Macro International Inc.**

**February 28, 1999**

## Acknowledgments

Macro International Inc. was pleased to have the opportunity to evaluate the DC Reads Book Partners program. The evaluation was sponsored by the Corporation for National Service. Dr. Susan Labin, the evaluation task manager for the study in the Corporation's Office of Evaluation, provided technical oversight. Karen Hallerman, program manager in the Corporation's Office of Program Planning and Integration, was highly supportive of the research effort and encouraged stakeholders' participation in the evaluation.

DC Reads is led by a collaborative of local public and private organizations, higher education institutions, and the District of Columbia Public Schools. Throughout the evaluation, Macro received the cooperation of DC Reads partners, particularly Monica C. Swann, deputy director of Communities in Schools of Washington, D.C.; Mark Enoch Robertson, assistant superintendent of the District of Columbia Public Schools; and Dr. Christopher Koliba, principal investigator with the Collaborative Initiative for Tutoring Youth.

A large number of Book Partners participants—teachers, principals, college-student tutors, RSVP tutors, AmeriCorps\*VISTAs, project site directors, campus coordinators, and parents—shared their views, experiences, and time with Macro in an effort to ensure that high-quality data would be available to inform decisions on improving the Book Partners program. We offer special thanks to the AmeriCorps\*VISTAs. In addition to their program responsibilities, AmeriCorps\*VISTAs facilitated our data collection activities.

We are grateful for the guidance provided by our consultants: Dr. George Farkas, director of the Center for Education and Social Policy at the University of Texas, and Dr. Barbara Wasik, principal research scientist at the Center for Social Organization of Schools at the Johns Hopkins University. They offered insights and direction at numerous key points.

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# **Executive Summary**

## **Program Background**

In March 1996, the Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National Service (the Corporation) approached the Superintendent of the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) to explore ways the Corporation could assist students. The result was the DC Initiative, a comprehensive plan to engage the Corporation in the District's schools. Searching for community partners to help bring the plan to fruition, the Corporation identified Communities in Schools of Washington, D.C. (Communities in Schools/CISDC) as an appropriate partner for "School Success," a key component of the DC Initiative. In September 1996, Communities in Schools enlisted AmeriCorps\*Volunteers in Service to America (AmeriCorps\*VISTAs), Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) members, some Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) members, and other community tutors for a 1-year pilot tutoring program in one District of Columbia elementary school for the 1996-1997 academic year. The tutoring program, "Book Partners," was implemented at 16 elementary schools the following year (1997-1998), with Federal work/study students from local colleges and universities serving as tutors.

## **The Year I (1997-1998) Book Partners Program**

Work study students from institutions of higher education (about 180) and some RSVP seniors (about 20) tutored first-graders in reading twice a week for about 1 hour during the school day. Campus coordinators at the respective colleges and universities recruited, hired, and trained the work study tutors, in addition to providing logistical and other support. The tutors were supervised and supported at the elementary schools by AmeriCorps\*VISTAs. The AmeriCorps\*VISTAs, in turn, were supervised and supported by project site directors from Communities in Schools, the organization managing the Book Partners tutoring program.

Coinciding with the collaborative effort, DCPS had each of the participating schools adopt a "change model," which provided teacher training and materials, as well as daily tutoring, to the neediest first-graders. The Book Partners program targeted first-grade students who did not receive individual tutoring by means of a change model, yet needed assistance in reading.

## **Evaluation**

To determine what the tutoring program can achieve when it is reasonably well implemented, and what factors contribute to its success, the Corporation funded an evaluation of Book Partners by Macro International Inc.. The evaluation was exploratory research, designed to identify the benefits from and challenges of Book Partners. It did not attempt to address the rate of change in tutored students' reading performance, nor did it attempt to identify the relative contributions of

## Aspects Contributing Directly to Program Benefits

The Corporation had previously identified eight essential features of high-quality tutoring programs in its *Principles and Key Components for High-Quality America Reads and National Service Program Initiatives*. These principles were grounded in the literature on reading research. This report enumerates the effective practices and lessons learned from Book Partners for each of the components. The Corporation defines *effective practices* as the activities and methods a program engages in to produce positive results. *Lessons learned* are the solutions implemented in the program or envisioned as improvements for future programs, in response to the challenges the program confronted. Though based on the Book Partners experience, they are framed here in more general terms to enhance their applicability to other tutoring programs.

### **1. Use of research-based elements to produce reading achievement**

Effective Practices. The Book Partners program was developed over a 1-year period at a school chosen as the pilot site. The program was based on both the *Book Buddies* program developed by the University of Virginia and the *Early Success* reading program from Houghton Mifflin. Book Partners was modified to make it both affordable and feasible for nonprofessional tutors using a reduced teacher's curriculum.

Lessons Learned. Although one-to-one adult attention may be desirable for many first-grade students, programs usually can tutor only a limited number of students. The selection of children should be drawn only from those requiring reading support, as indicated by initial student assessments or teacher recommendations, in order to make the best use of a fixed number of spaces.

### **2. Well-structured tutoring sessions in which the content and delivery of instruction are carefully planned**

Effective Practices. The Book Partners model offered a highly structured program that included three components: 1) Rereading Familiar Material, 2) Early Success Reading, and 3) Choice Time Reading. Activities within each lesson, as well as the progression from one to another, were well defined (see Table I-2, Book Partners Components).

Lessons Learned. It is important to provide materials appropriate to the age and skill levels for all tutored students, even for those below the standard curriculum. When the model fails to provide a curriculum that reaches all children at their current reading level, tutors have the added burden of developing their own materials to engage children. For example, tutors working with pre-readers may require material not in the model to help children learn the letters and sounds of the alphabet. Tutors also need a sufficient variety of materials to keep all children interested and challenged.

to participate or were pulled from sessions by their parents. On occasion, tutor transportation problems also affected regularly scheduled sessions.

## **6. *Careful evaluation, assessment, monitoring, and reinforcement of progress***

Effective Practices. Individual reading assessments were administered by experienced and well-trained reading specialists and school psychologists. Reading performance tests were aligned with the curriculum, were appropriate to the target population's age and performance level, and were carried out in a manner that would cause the least disruption to teachers and students.

Throughout the project input was obtained from a variety of stakeholders — principals, teachers, and parents. Focus groups and interviews were also conducted to solicit views of tutors, AmeriCorps\*VISTAs, project site directors, and campus coordinators. Other important information was gathered from tutors' progress logs and AmeriCorps\*VISTAs' quarterly progress reports.

Lessons Learned. The evaluation would have benefitted from revisions in the choices of appropriate reading performance tests and from the use of a reading attitude assessment with fewer response categories. The need for simplifying and standardizing reporting in tutor progress logs was also emphasized.

## **7. *Access to training and technical assistance resources***

Effective Practices. Training and technical assistance resources available to tutors included daily in-school support from about 30 AmeriCorps\*VISTAs (one or two at each elementary school). A campus coordinator at each college and university developed service-learning and leadership activities for tutors and provided training and support. Teachers responded to tutors' requests for technical support as needed.

Lessons Learned. Additional technical assistance from school reading specialists would have helped tutors, particularly those working with children who appeared to have special needs. To ensure availability of school reading specialists for the program, program staff could reach an agreement with principals on the amount of time reading specialists will contribute (for example, 10 percent of their time each week).

## **8. *Engendering positive, caring relationships among students, staff, and tutors***

Effective Practices. Many positive, caring relationships were formed between tutors and students and between AmeriCorps\*VISTAs and students. Teachers, principals, and parents commended tutors and AmeriCorps\*VISTAs for their dedication to helping students learn to read and for their concern for the students more generally.

## Chapter I. Introduction

The story of the DC Reads Book Partners Program is the story of numerous groups—local and federal, private and public—joining together to implement a tutoring program that helps District of Columbia first-graders improve their reading (see Table I-1, Participating Organizations). The program, designed to use a variety of federal and community resources, was directed toward schools targeted as needing high levels of academic and social assistance.

**Table I-1. Participating Organizations**

|                                                           |                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| District of Columbia Public Schools                       |                        |
| Corporation for National Service and four of its programs |                        |
| –AmeriCorps*Volunteers in Service to America              |                        |
| –Foster Grandparent Program                               |                        |
| –Learn and Serve America                                  |                        |
| –Retired and Senior Volunteer Program                     |                        |
| Communities in Schools of Washington, D.C.                |                        |
| Collaborative Initiative for Tutoring Youth               |                        |
| –American University                                      | –Georgetown University |
| –Catholic University                                      | –Howard University     |
| –George Washington University                             | –Trinity College       |

### Forming the D.C. Collaborative

In March 1996, the Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National Service (the Corporation), Harris Wofford, approached Franklin Smith, who was then Superintendent of the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), to explore ways the Corporation could assist students. The result was the DC Initiative, a comprehensive plan to engage the Corporation in the District's schools. Searching for community partners to help bring the plan to fruition, the Corporation identified Communities in Schools of Washington, D.C. (Communities in Schools/CISDC) as an appropriate partner for "School Success," a key component of the DC Initiative. In September 1996, Communities in Schools enlisted AmeriCorps\*Volunteers in Service to America (VISTAs), Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) members, some Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) members, and other community tutors for a 1-year pilot tutoring program in one D.C. elementary school for the 1996–1997 academic year.

At about the same time that the Corporation and DCPS began talks in early 1996, representatives from six D.C. colleges and universities began discussing ways they could collaborate to serve

first-graders in reading twice a week for about 1 hour during the school day. The program was based on both the *Book Buddies* program developed by the University of Virginia and the *Early Success* reading program from Houghton Mifflin. Using input from various stakeholders — including principals, teachers, the participating colleges and universities, and Communities in Schools — Book Partners was modified to make the tutoring program both affordable and feasible for nonprofessional tutors using a reduced teacher's curriculum.

### ***The Modified Model for Book Partners***

According to the modified model, the Book Partners tutoring sessions were designed for tutors and students to meet one-on-one twice a week for about an hour and cover three components (see Table I-2, Components of the Book Partners Programs). First, tutors and first-graders would reread familiar material. Next, using an adapted Early Success reading component, they would engage in reading new material, shared reading, working with words, writing, coached reading, and independent reading. Finally, in Choice Time reading, the child would select a book from the collection the program provided or from other sources, and reading by the tutor, reading by the child, or shared reading could take place.

**Table I-2. Components of the Book Partners Program**

- Rereading Familiar Material
- Early Success Reading
  - Reading new material
  - Shared reading
  - Working with words
  - Writing
  - Coached reading
  - Independent reading
- Choice Time Reading
  - Reading by the tutor
  - Reading by the child
  - Shared reading

### ***The Management of the Program***

Campus coordinators at the respective colleges and universities recruited, hired, and trained the work study tutors and provided logistical and other support. The tutors were supervised and

## ***Program Challenges***

When DC Reads began tutoring early in November 1997 at most of the 16 schools, the program faced several challenges. The first was making a partnership based on such recently established relationships work efficiently. Another challenge was that DCPS was a school system in transition: there had been three DCPS superintendents in 3 years. Because of rapid changes occurring in DCPS, it was difficult to ensure that information was communicated to all relevant parties in the school system.

## **Evaluation**

The Corporation for National Service asked Macro International Inc. to evaluate Book Partners to determine what the program could achieve and what factors contributed to its successes. The evaluation was exploratory research, designed to identify the benefits from and challenges of Book Partners. Without a more rigorous design, though, we could speak only to students' final reading performance; we could not speak to the rate of change or to reading progress during the year.

Furthermore, the evaluation design could not separate effects of the Book Partners tutoring program from the effects of maturation over the academic year or other reading-related interventions such as the schools' "change models." The evaluation, however, did collect data from all groups of program participants and stakeholders. Firsthand observations drawn from the perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders — principals, teachers, tutors, AmeriCorps\* VISTAs, project site directors, campus coordinators, and parents — did address the role of Book Partners in students' progress.

## ***Data Collection Study Sites***

Data collection took place at all 16 schools; four of those schools were chosen for intensive data collection (Figure I-3, Data Collection Activities).

Four Intensive Study Sites. The four schools selected as intensive study sites were considered well implemented for a variety of reasons—for example, a sufficient number of tutors were placed at those sites. The evaluation team conducted a battery of reading performance tests for all tutored students at those schools, as well as to a reading attitude assessment of all first-grade students. Data were extracted from the qualitative comments in the progress logs that tutors maintained for each student and from the quarterly progress reports that AmeriCorps\*VISTAs wrote. The evaluation team interviewed principals and surveyed parents.

Sixteen Schools. Data collection activities at all 16 schools included the following: observations of tutoring; surveys of teachers; data extraction of quantitative variables in tutors' progress logs;

**Table I-3. Reading Performance Assessments**

The following tests were administered by professional test administrators to all 103 tutored students at the four study schools.

**Pre-print Concepts.** The *Concepts of Print* is designed to measure "eminent literacy" in children from prekindergarten through the beginning of first grade. The test assesses the prereading child's understanding of the function of print (that print carries messages) and the conventions of print (what people do when they read).

More than nine of every 10 children properly demonstrated how to hold a book and how to turn pages, identified people engaged in reading activities, differentiated print from pictures and numerals from letters, explained what words tell us, and identified components of written communication (a letter, the beginning of a story, a period).

**Printing First and Last Names.** Testers provided children with wide-lined paper and primary pencils and asked them to write their first and last names.

More than nine of every 10 children wrote their first name with appropriate uppercase and lowercase letters (92 percent). More than eight of every 10 children wrote their last name appropriately (83 percent).

**Identifying Letters.** This subtest of the *Woodcock Reading Mastery Test* measures children's ability to identify uppercase and lowercase letters.

More than half of the children (55 percent) correctly identified all 27 letters in the Capital Letters subtest, and nearly a third (30 percent) had only one error. Nearly half of the children (49 percent) correctly identified at least 90 percent of the items on the Lowercase Letters subtest.

**Identifying Words.** This subtest of the *Woodcock Reading Mastery Test* asks children to read printed words.

Students scored a mean of 96, only slightly (but to a statistically significant degree) below the national norm of 100.

**Sounding Out Words.** In this subtest of the *Woodcock Reading Mastery Test*, children identify sounds of non-words, to simulate how they would attempt to decode unknown words.

Students had a mean score of 97 — equivalent to or not statistically different from the national norm of 100.

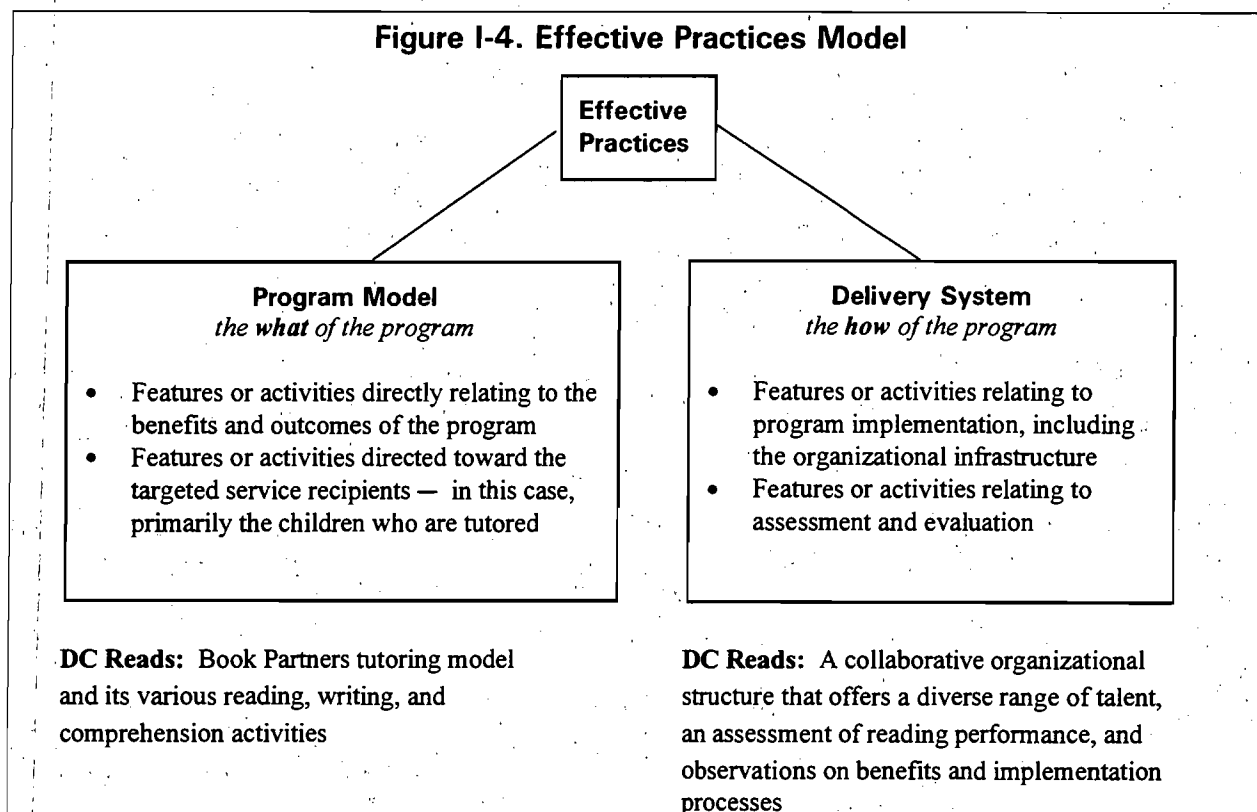
**Oral Reading Comprehension.** The purpose of this subtest of the *Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty* is to provide an estimate of children's instructional reading level. Children use both decoding and context clues to read the passages and answer questions about the content of the material.

One-fourth of the children (25 percent) read above the first-grade level, about one-half (52 percent) read at the first-grade level, and approximately one-fourth (23 percent) read below the first-grade level.

**Listening Comprehension.** This subtest of the *Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty* asks children to listen to the test administrator read a paragraph aloud and then to answer questions about the material read.

More than nine of every 10 children (92 percent) were able to understand material suitable for the first-grade level.

reading at study sites, as well as observational data on both observed benefits and implementation processes gathered from a range of program stakeholders.



A summary of effective practices in the program model and delivery system for the Book Partners program is provided below (see Table I-4, Effective Practices of the Book Partners Program). The practices are shown classified by the eight components in the Corporation's *Principles and Key Components for High-Quality America Reads and National Service Program Initiatives*, which support a conclusion that the practices are effective, on the basis of previous research.

## Summary of the Report

Chapter II, Accomplishments and Benefits, presents documented and observed benefits that accrued to the tutored students as well as to other program participants. In Chapter III, Effective Practices and Lessons Learned, we describe activities considered as having contributed to the program benefits, as well as inferences drawn from the challenges the program confronted. Following the report summary in Chapter IV, Conclusions, we have included appendices to provide additional information on the evaluation methodology and supporting documentation on the Book Partners tutoring program.

## Chapter II. Accomplishments and Benefits

The evaluation allowed the Macro team to describe some documented and observed benefits that accrued to the students as well as to the other participants in the program. The provision of one-on-one tutoring for first-grade students, mostly by trained college and university work study students and some RSVP members using the Book Partners model, was effective across many areas we assessed. This finding is especially noteworthy for a program in its first year of operation. The program was effective in producing a variety of achievements and benefits. (See Table II-1, Summary of Program Accomplishments and Benefits.)

**Table II-1. Summary of Program Accomplishments and Benefits**

### **Student Benefits and Achievements**

- Positive student reading performance at or only slightly below national averages
- Observed reading improvement
- Improved student attitudes, including confidence, and improved behaviors toward reading and overall school participation
- Establishment of strong relationships between tutors and students

### **Tutor and AmeriCorps\*VISTA Benefits**

- Rewarding and educational experiences for tutors
- Personal and professional growth opportunities for AmeriCorps\*VISTAs
- Supervisory support for tutors from campus coordinators at the consortium of local colleges and universities
- Supervisory support for AmeriCorps\*VISTAs from Communities in Schools project site directors

### **Program Achievements**

- Implementation at 16 elementary schools targeted for social and academic assistance
- Tutoring of approximately 450 students in reading skills
- Creation of good will for the program at the elementary schools
- Satisfaction with the program on the part of stakeholders — principals and teachers

**Oral Reading and Listening Comprehension Results.** Students scored mostly at grade level on two subtests of the *Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty*.

On the Oral Reading Comprehension subtest, which asks students to read prose aloud and then answer corresponding comprehension questions, one-fourth of the children read above the first-grade level, about one-half read at the first-grade level, and approximately one-fourth read below the first-grade level (Table II-3, Oral Reading Comprehension Results).

On the Listening Comprehension subtest, which asks children to listen to the test administrator read a paragraph aloud and then to answer questions about the material read, more than nine of every 10 children were able to understand material suitable for the first-grade level.

**Table II-3. Oral Reading Comprehension Results for First-grade Students**

| Reading Level         | N   | Percent |
|-----------------------|-----|---------|
| Above 2nd-grade level | 3   | 2.9     |
| 2nd-grade level       | 23  | 22.3    |
| 1st-grade level       | 53  | 51.5    |
| Below 1st-grade level | 24  | 23.3    |
| TOTAL                 | 103 | 100.0   |

### ***Observed Reading Improvement***

A variety of sources—teachers, parents, and tutors—offered evidence that DC Reads children were reading more and better. More than 80 percent of teachers responding to a survey said that they observed improvement in tutored students' reading ability to a "great extent" or to "some" extent due to Book Partners tutoring (20 out of the 33 teachers who responded).<sup>1</sup> One teacher described a tutored student who moved from the teacher's lowest reading group to the highest reading group. More than 90 percent of parents responding to a written survey said their child was reading better because of participation in Book Partners (23 out of the 25 parents who

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<sup>1</sup> Of the 56 teachers whose students were tutored at all 16 schools by DC Reads, 33 teachers (58 percent) responded to a written survey. Throughout the remainder of the report, this response rate applies to all numerical data reported for the teacher survey.

of children don't get that kind of support [the kind given by tutors] at home," a teacher remarked during a focus group discussion.

## **Tutor and AmeriCorps\*VISTA Benefits**

### ***Rewarding and Educational Experiences for Tutors***

The program allowed tutors to gain valuable experience. Tutors in the focus groups said they were gratified to contribute to the lives of the children, both in terms of the children's reading and in other, more intangible ways. "It makes me feel good that I made a difference in a child's life," a college tutor noted. A participant in the RSVP tutors focus group said, "I felt good knowing that I was helping a child learn to read." During interviews, campus coordinators and project site directors observed a "transformational experience" for tutors working in a community with which they had previously had only limited contact. Tutors in focus groups also commented that they appreciated the opportunity to learn how to teach.

### ***Personal and Professional Growth Opportunities for AmeriCorps\*VISTAs***

The program gave AmeriCorps\*VISTAs a chance to develop competencies in many areas. According to interviews with project site directors, AmeriCorps\*VISTAs made tremendous progress. They gained supervisory experience and other helpful skills to enhance their resumes and future employment prospects. The program had "given them their wings," a project site director said.

### ***Supervisory Support for Tutors and AmeriCorps\*VISTAs***

The program provided effective support for tutors by campus coordinators from the consortium of local colleges and universities. College and university tutors participating in a focus group were highly pleased with the support they received. Campus coordinators were said to be "always available," and they offered tutors useful information (for example, they provided lists of ways to motivate students and to instill confidence, and information on education levels). A tutor said, "I talked to her [the campus coordinator] about one of my students, and she was very helpful."

The program also provided effective support for AmeriCorps\*VISTAs from Communities in Schools project site directors. AmeriCorps\*VISTAs participating in a focus group were highly pleased with the support they received. "She [the project site director] visits the schools. We have her home number, pager, and office number. We can call her anytime, at any point," an AmeriCorps\*VISTA said during a focus group.

that some (though not all) AmeriCorps\*VISTAs responded to requests from principals and teachers to set up other programs (such as GED and ESL classes), help with non-DC Reads children, and participate in a lengthy list of other activities. AmeriCorps\*VISTAs accomplished those activities in addition to tutoring children and supporting and supervising tutors.

### ***Satisfaction With the Program on the Part of Stakeholders — Principals and Teachers***

Principals. All of the principals were interviewed at the four selected schools, and all were pleased to have the Book Partners program and wanted the program continued at their school. During interviews, a principal stated, "It was a delight to hear we would have more help." Another elaborated:

The tutors made a believer of me of the power of volunteers. I hadn't seen [before] a volunteer spend any significant amount of time. This program had more life and energy. It sent a message to the community: more people care about your children; you need to get on the bandwagon.

Teachers. All teachers responding to the written survey indicated they would like to participate in the program next year. These consistently positive results need to be somewhat cautiously interpreted because these responses represent a 58 percent response rate (n=33 out of a possible 56 teachers). Although this is a minimally adequate response rate, teachers who did not return a completed survey may hold different views from those who did respond.

## Chapter III. Effective Practices and Lessons Learned

As we noted in Chapter II, the evaluation design permitted us to describe some observed and documented benefits to the children as well as to the other participants in the program. The evaluation also allowed us to describe the practices that the program engaged in, which are included in this chapter. The design of this evaluation did not permit us to make the causal connections to support that the practices presented in Chapter III actually did cause the benefits or outcomes reviewed in Chapter II, but previous research allowed us to make the reasonable assumption that the practices contributed to the benefits and were therefore thought of as effective practices (see Table I-4, Effective Practices of the Book Partners Program).

Previous research in reading was the basis for the Corporation's identifying eight essential features of high-quality tutoring programs in its *Principles and Key Components for High-Quality America Reads and National Service Program Initiatives* (see Table III-1, Key Program Components). This chapter enumerates the effective practices and lessons learned from Book Partners for each of the components.

The Corporation defines *effective practices* as the activities and methods a program engages in to produce positive results. *Lessons learned* are the solutions implemented in the program or envisioned as improvements to future programs, developed in response to the challenges the program confronted. Though based on the Book Partners experience, they are framed here in more general terms to enhance their applicability to other tutoring programs. Appendix B notes the sources supporting the effective practices and lessons learned described in this chapter.

**Table III-1. Key Program Components**

1. Use of research-based elements to produce reading achievement
2. Well-structured tutoring sessions in which the content and delivery of instruction are carefully planned
3. Close coordination with schools, school administration, and the classroom and/or reading teacher
4. Intensive and ongoing training and supervision for tutors
5. Frequent and regular tutoring sessions
6. Careful evaluation, assessment, monitoring, and reinforcement of progress
7. Access to training and technical assistance resources
8. Engendering positive, caring relationships among students, staff, and tutors

that reaches all children at their current reading level, tutors have the added burden of developing their own materials to engage children. For example, tutors working with pre-readers may require material not in the model to help children learn the letters and sounds of the alphabet. Tutors also need a sufficient variety of materials to keep all children interested and challenged.

### **3. Close coordination with schools, school administration, and the classroom and/or reading teacher**

#### ***Effective Practices***

Communities in Schools, local colleges and universities, and the Corporation formed a partnership with the District of Columbia Public Schools, allowing for close collaboration. DCPS administrators chose appropriate elementary schools to participate in DC Reads. At 9 of the 16 targeted assistance schools, more than 90 percent of the children were eligible for federally funded free and reduced-price lunch; at another five schools, more than 80 percent of the children were eligible (according to the DCPS School-by-School Results for Spring 1997 on the Stanford 9 Achievement Test).

Communities in Schools worked with teachers and principals to select students for tutoring. Principals and teachers within each of the 16 schools cooperated in making children available for one-on-one tutoring. The schools provided office and tutoring space for the program and helped resolve academic and other issues as needed. AmeriCorps\*VISTAs were available at the schools daily to serve as liaisons between tutors and teachers, the program and the schools.

#### ***Lessons Learned***

Encourage support from school principals and teachers by keeping them informed. Communicating information about the program in advance to the teachers and principals fosters support for the program.

*Orientations.* Orientations should be held with all key stakeholders at the schools: teachers, reading specialists, and principals. Information needs to be communicated directly to all parties at the start of the program, rather than relying on the principal or some other key staff member to disseminate the information to teachers and reading specialists. Orientations provide a critical opportunity to gain support for the program. Without teacher support, for example, children may not be consistently released from class to attend tutoring.

## ***Lessons Learned***

The initial orientation/training should prepare tutors for the difficulties they are likely to encounter. The initial orientation/training should refrain from painting an idealistic picture of what tutors can expect. Tutors need guidance to deal with children's limited attention spans, behavioral problems, and reading performance below the lower boundary of the tutoring program's curriculum. An understanding of children's cognitive development, cultural differences, and a variety of techniques to teach them how to read would strengthen the tutors' training curriculum. Alternatives are also needed for tutors who are unable to attend scheduled training. Training is critical if tutors are to be able to implement the model as intended.

In-school training provides hands-on experience for tutors. Tutors would benefit from a chance to tutor a child and receive feedback on their tutoring, rather than role-playing with another tutor or watching a demonstration session with an "exemplary" student. Without appropriate training and appropriate expectations, tutors may become frustrated and withdraw from the program.

AmeriCorps\*VISTAs need training on a wide range of topics. AmeriCorps\*VISTAs should be trained in teaching phonics (so they can better support tutors), children's cognitive development, and several techniques for teaching reading. Training should also cover aspects of AmeriCorps\*VISTAs' supervisory role: lines of communication, supervising tutors, and group dynamics. Lack of such training may negatively impact the college student and retired senior tutors who look to the AmeriCorps\*VISTAs for support.

Provide extensive cultural diversity training. Giving an understanding of urban cultures to people who have had little contact with them will facilitate program operations and partner relationships. Tutors and AmeriCorps\*VISTAs should participate in extensive, perhaps periodic, diversity training. Doing so will not only help tutor and AmeriCorps\*VISTA interactions but will also assist tutors in their relationships with their students. One teacher surmised, for example, that cultural differences were at the root of tutors' reluctance to discipline children who were misbehaving.

## **5. Frequent and regular tutoring sessions**

### ***Effective Practices***

First-grade students were tutored 2 days a week in reading. Each tutoring session lasted approximately 1 hour. The sessions could not have occurred more frequently than that, owing to the schedules of the college work study students and the time required to transport college students to and from the elementary schools.

## ***Lessons Learned***

Follow the student selection plan. The actual selection of children needs to follow the selection plan, be documented appropriately, and be consistent across schools. The selection of children should draw from all children who need assistance — and only from those children. Any changes regarding which children are tutored should be noted, along with an explanation for the change. This information is critical for improving a key program process (student selection) and for ensuring a high quality of data for the evaluation (enabling the examination of the extent of change in reading performance with respect to the amount of tutoring received).

Refine choices of appropriate tests in the reading performance battery. After tests have been selected to meet the broad criteria (measure the skills stressed by the tutoring model; age-appropriate, and so forth), factors should be considered that may affect children's being able to demonstrate their reading skills. For example, assessments should be examined for awkward wording in test items or the use of different fonts that may cause problems for children, problems unrelated to their reading skills. Pilot testing could address such issues.

Simplify response patterns for the reading attitude assessment. First-grade students have difficulty making graded responses. That is, they have trouble distinguishing between varying degrees of happiness (a picture denoting the "happiest" expression versus a picture denoting a "slightly smiling" expression) and between varying degrees of sadness (a picture denoting a "mildly upset" expression versus a picture denoting a "very upset" expression). An attitude assessment that offers only three response categories, easily distinguishable from one another, is most appropriate for young children.

Simplify and standardize reporting in tutor progress logs. Tutors' progress logs can yield a great deal of useful information, but they must be completely and consistently filled out. Logs should contain information on each session, and information should be recorded in each field. One page of the log can contain multiple rows — one for each tutoring session — so as to reduce the number of pages needed and minimize the total amount of information recorded. Tutor training should stress the importance for the evaluation of fully completing progress logs — without complete, consistent data, the evaluation cannot paint an accurate picture of the program. To document why a session did not occur, AmeriCorps\* VISTAs could complete part of the log on days when a tutor fails to come in.

recruited for tutoring. An early start to the recruiting process and realistic estimates are probably critical factors.

The AmeriCorps\*VISTA position requires persons who can handle a great deal of responsibility. In addition to a focus on recruiting from within the community, it is important to ensure that AmeriCorps\*VISTAs are mature enough to handle their supervisory responsibilities, including supervising RSVP tutors. During recruitment, programs should ensure that applicants have a realistic expectation of the responsibilities of their position. Teachers were disconcerted by AmeriCorps\*VISTAs who acted inappropriately, and principals were displeased with high turnover among the AmeriCorps\*VISTAs. Given that a goal of many tutoring programs is the development and maintenance of relationships with schools, AmeriCorps\*VISTAs — as school liaisons — fulfill a key role. Therefore, sufficient time and resources should be accorded to recruiting for this position. It may be better to hire fewer AmeriCorps\*VISTAs (one for each school, as opposed to two), rather than to enlist people who may be ill suited to the demanding position.

Reduce staff turnover by providing realistic job expectations and on-the-job support. Maintaining a large proportion of the staff throughout the year and from one year to the next is important for the continuity and betterment of the program. At all levels, personnel turnover affects the program: high turnover adds to confusion about roles and communication channels. During interviews for staff positions, applicants should be given a realistic portrayal of the job being considered. Support mechanisms should be in place for hired staff.

## Chapter IV. Conclusion

The evaluation allowed us to describe some observed and documented benefits accruing to the students and to the other participants in the Book Partners program. Providing one-to-one tutoring for first-grade students, mostly by trained federal work/study students and by some retired seniors (RSVPs) using the Book Partners model, was effective across many areas we assessed. This result is especially noteworthy for a program in its first year of operation.

### Aspects Contributing to Program Benefits and Accomplishments

The Corporation identified eight essential features of high-quality tutoring programs in its *Principles and Key Components for High-Quality America Reads and National Service Program Initiatives*. The principles were grounded in the literature about reading research. This report enumerates the effective practices and lessons learned from Book Partners for each of the components. The Corporation defines *effective practices* as the activities a program engages in to produce positive results. *Lessons learned* are the solutions implemented in the program or envisioned as improvements to future programs, in response to the challenges the program confronted. The lessons here, though based on the Book Partners experience, are framed in more general terms to enhance their applicability to other tutoring programs.

For each key principle of high-quality tutoring programs, we present below a summary of the effective practices of Book Partners, followed by a summary of the lessons learned.

#### **1. Use of research-based elements to produce reading achievement**

Effective practices. The Book Partners program, modeled on both the *Book Buddies* program developed by the University of Virginia and the *Early Success* reading program from Houghton Mifflin, was developed over a 1-year period at a school chosen as the pilot site.

Lessons learned. Initial student assessments or teacher recommendations should be used to select children for tutoring, in order to assure that those most in need of reading help will receive one of the limited number of spaces.

#### **2. Well-structured tutoring sessions in which the content and delivery of instruction are carefully planned**

Effective practices. The Book Partners model offered a highly structured program that included three components: 1) Re-reading Familiar Material, 2) Early Success Reading, and 3) Choice Time Reading. Activities within each lesson, as well as the progression from one to another, were well defined.

Lessons learned. The evaluation would have benefitted from a consistently followed student selection plan, refined choices of appropriate tests in the reading performance battery, and simplified response patterns for the reading attitude assessment.

#### **7. Access to training and technical assistance resources**

Effective practices. Training and technical assistance resources available to tutors included in-school support from AmeriCorps\*VISTAs, service-learning and leadership activities led by campus coordinators, and some technical support from teachers.

Lessons learned. Additional technical assistance from school reading specialists would have helped tutors, particularly those working with children that appeared to have special needs.

#### **8. Engendering positive, caring relationships among students, staff, and tutors**

Effective practices. Teachers, principals, and parents commended tutors and AmeriCorps\*VISTAs for their dedication to helping students learn to read and for their concern about the students generally.

Lessons learned. Identified improvements to be made to the program included making sure that enough tutors are recruited to meet the number agreed upon with schools, alleviating problems with tutor absences, paying attention to the quality of college and university students recruited for tutoring, and providing realistic job expectations and on-the-job support.

### **Summary of Benefits and Accomplishments**

*First-grade students tutored by DC Reads Book Partners scored near the national averages or at grade level on tests of reading performance at the end of the school year.* A battery of accepted tests was administered by trained testers. On subtests of the *Woodcock Reading Mastery Test*, students read at or only slightly below national averages. Scores from the oral reading comprehension and listening comprehension subtests of the *Durrell Analysis for Reading Difficulty* were mostly at grade level.

*Stakeholders, such as principals and teachers, were confident that the tutoring made a difference in the reading ability of children.* Improved reading ability, increased desired to read, and increased self-confidence were reported effects.

*Benefits accruing to tutors and AmeriCorps\*VISTAs were observed and reported.* Personal, educational, and professional growth was observed and reported for tutors and AmeriCorps\*VISTAs.

# **Evaluation of DC Reads Book Partners Program**

## **Year I Final Report**

## **Appendices**

Submitted to:  
**Corporation for National Service**

Submitted by:  
**Macro International Inc.**

**February 28, 1999**

# **Appendix A. Methodology**

## **Appendix A. Methodology**

### **Evaluation Design**

The evaluation was designed as a "post-only" assessment of students' reading performance. While a "pre/post" design with a comparison group would have been preferable, the timing and logistics of the first-year program did not allow for testing to occur at the start of the program or with all (tutored and nontutored) students.

The original plan for student selection relied on a random sample of students from all first-graders in the DC Reads schools who had not been selected for individual tutoring from the Success for All (SFA) or National Institutes of Health/National Institute of Children's Health and Human Development (NIH/NICHHD) change models. On the basis of initial assessments conducted by SFA and NIH, children who scored in the lowest 30 percent (for SFA) or the lowest 15 percent (for NIH) were slated to receive individual tutoring from the change model. Out of the remaining group of students, DC Reads randomly selected children from those who still needed additional reading assistance. Principals and teachers, however, often reviewed the list of students selected and made changes in order to ensure that the neediest students received tutoring.

In addition to the testing of students, we solicited comments from all stakeholder groups on various aspects of program implementation and administration. We collected data from participant and stakeholder groups at all 16 schools participating in Book Partners, although more intensive data collection activities took place at four selected schools. On the basis of recommendations from DC Reads administration, we chose four schools that seemed to have implemented the Books Partners program well. Two of the schools had adopted the SFA change model, and two had adopted the NIH/NICHHD change model.

Each of the data collection activities is described below (see Figure I-3, Data Collection Activities, for a summary of data collection activities conducted at the four study sites and activities conducted at all 16 sites). Appendix C provides copies of the evaluation instruments used in the data collection activities.

### **Reading Performance Assessment**

Professional educators and psychologists administered a battery of reading tests to 105 tutored children at four DC Reads schools. We selected test components that would assess the variety of reading skills that Book Partners focused on that could be completed in 1 hour — the length of the students' tutoring session. Six testers administered the individual test battery to 103 first-grade students and two second-grade students. Testers rotating among the schools administered the battery in the rooms that tutors had used for their sessions, in the same afternoon time block

following: child reads to tutor, child reads silently, tutor reads to child, tutor mentors child, tutor helps child with specific skills (for example, phonics/decoding sounds, context clues, comprehension, spelling, rhyming), and tutor and child discuss what was read.

In the second section, observers noted what materials the tutor and child used, as well as how much time they spent with each. Book Partner materials consisted of structured reading materials, picture books, journals, letter tiles and trays, a sound box, and sentence strips/envelopes.

The third section on the protocol required the observer to rate the tutor/child interaction on different factors. For each, the researcher noted the extent to which she had observed that aspect of the relationship ("very much," "quite a bit," "somewhat," or "not at all"). Items covered the tutor's confidence, tone in speaking to the child, enthusiasm about and encouragement of the child's efforts, and enjoyment in being with the child. Other items were child centered; they looked at the extent to which the child enjoyed being with the tutor and the extent to which the child was on task most of the time.

The final section allowed the researcher to note observations not otherwise recorded on the protocol. For example, observers commented on the tutoring setting (for example, the suitability of the room used, the number of tutor/child pairs in the room, other distractions), discipline problems, diagnosed learning disabilities (if reported to the observer), language deficiencies, perceived reading levels (for example, pre-alphabet), use of pre-printed lesson plans, and techniques tutors used.

## **Progress Logs**

Tutors maintained page-a-day progress logs on each of their students. The logs revealed detailed information on the day-to-day tutoring experience: the actual number of tutoring sessions received, the number of tutors involved per student, tutor and student attendance, and the consistency and continuity of tutoring, as well as other information. At the completion of the Book Partners program, we attempted to collect a sample of the progress logs. We selected 10 percent of the progress logs from each school (with a minimum of two progress logs selected per school), using random number tables to select particular progress logs. After collecting a total of 38 progress logs from 13 schools (we were unable to obtain progress logs from three schools), we extracted and analyzed data for a number of quantitative variables. In addition, we reviewed 100 percent of the progress logs from the four schools where we assessed reading performance. In the 104 progress logs collected from those schools, we focused on the qualitative comments recorded by tutors.

Although the progress logs yielded a great deal of useful information, they suffered from two sources of incompleteness. First, pages seemed to be missing from the progress logs, which are not bound documents. In many cases, missing pages may reflect a tutoring session that failed to take place; in other cases, pages may have been lost or misplaced. Second, many of the log pages

## **Focus Groups and Interviews**

We conducted two focus groups of tutors (one of college tutors and one of RSVP tutors), two focus groups of teachers, one focus group of AmeriCorps\*VISTAs, and one of campus coordinators. Tutors discussed their motivation to join tutoring program, relevant prior experience, orientation and training, overall responsibilities, communication, support and supervision, successes and challenges, and thoughts on areas in which the program needed improvement. Teachers discussed their perceptions of the program's successes; challenges; relationships with tutors, AmeriCorps\*VISTAs, and others; and thoughts on areas for the program to improve. AmeriCorps\*VISTAs gave input on their relationships with tutors, teachers, students, and project site directors; and benefits and challenges of the program. Topics for the campus coordinator focus group included their responsibilities, selection and training of tutors, relationships with other partners, perceptions of the program's successes, and areas that could be improved. Participants for all focus groups represented all 16 schools.

We interviewed project site directors and principals singly or in pairs. Topics for the project site director interviews included their responsibilities, recruiting and hiring of AmeriCorps\*VISTAs, AmeriCorps\*VISTA assignments to schools, relationships with other partners, the program's successes and challenges, and areas in which the program could improve. Principals discussed their perceptions of the program's successes and challenges, relationships with other partners, and areas needing improvement. Principals were chosen from the four selected schools. All three project site directors were interviewed.

## **Appendix B. Selected Sources**

## **Appendix B. Selected Sources**

Appendix B presents the sources supporting the effective practices and lessons learned that were described in Chapter III.

### **Well-structured tutoring sessions in which the content and delivery of instruction are carefully planned**

#### ***Effective Practices***

Observations of 47 tutor/student pairs in 14 of the 16 schools confirmed that the tutors followed a highly structured plan in the tutoring sessions. Tutors spent about one-third of the session on structured reading materials, and they made use of letter tiles and trays, journals, picture books, sentence strips, and other materials.

#### ***Lessons Learned***

The model did not reach children at the lower (pre-reading) level. In 14 percent of the progress logs that tutors maintained on their students (15 of the 104 progress logs), the tutors wrote that their students had little to no grasp of the alphabet — either the letters themselves or the sounds the letters make. The tutors developed their own materials to engage the children in alphabet-learning activities.

### **Close coordination with schools, the school administration, and the classroom and/or reading teacher**

#### ***Effective Practices***

After students were randomly selected for tutoring, principals and teachers reviewed the lists; some made modifications to ensure that students receiving tutoring were in need of it. Slightly more than half of the teachers responding to a written survey said they helped to select the children to be tutored (17 teachers, or 52 percent of the 33 teachers responding to the survey).

Some principals supplied furniture for a DC Reads office in their school. During an interview, a project site director noted, "We had said we were coming fully equipped, but schools gave us desks and chairs."

views on appropriate teaching techniques may have been formed in the absence of any training — for example, views on the role of memorization as a precursor to learning to read. In-service training did not meet the needs of tutors participating in the focus groups. Tutors wanted the opportunity to tutor a child (rather than role-play with another tutor) and receive feedback on their tutoring.

AmeriCorps\*VISTAs in the focus group, while generally pleased with training, wanted additional training topics included. Suggestions from focus group participants included expanding the information provided on teaching phonics (so that they could support the tutors better) and covering additional techniques for supervising tutors.

## **Frequent and regular tutoring sessions**

### ***Effective Practices***

Tutors and teachers voiced general satisfaction with the scheduled length of the planned tutoring session — 1 hour with each student. Tutors participating in a focus group said the hour-blocks worked well and should be maintained. Teachers participating in a focus group said it was a reasonable amount of time. They noted that if a child were tired or hyperactive on a particular day, the tutor had leeway to stop, discuss other matters with the child, take a walk, or the like. One teacher added, for comparison purposes, that the first-grade classes participated in 2-hour literacy blocks.

### ***Lessons Learned***

Tutoring sessions were intended to last one hour each. On the basis of the 10 percent of tutors' progress logs collected from all schools (38 logs — one per student), sessions lasted from 20 to 66 minutes, with an average of 43 minutes. According to a review of comments in 100 percent of the progress logs from the four selected schools (104 logs), tutoring time was abbreviated in 71 sessions.

## **Access to training and technical assistance resources**

### ***Effective Practices***

Most of the participants in tutor focus groups received additional training at the school where they tutored. The content of that training varied across schools, though all covered the tutoring materials to be used (such as sentence strips and Early Success books). Sometimes a D.C. Public Schools employee (it was unclear to focus group participants whether the employees were teachers or reading specialists) demonstrated tutoring with a child. Then the tutors were shown a video that they had already seen at the orientation/training. Tutors in the focus group also spoke of AmeriCorps\*VISTAs who got supplies for the tutors, gave them outlines of what to do each day, and told them what teachers and children were doing in the classroom.

## **Appendix C.**

### **Other Pertinent Sources**

## **Appendix C. Other Pertinent Sources**

Appendix C lists other sources of information on Book Partners that pertains to the eight components of high-quality tutoring programs.

### **1. Use of research-based elements to produce reading achievement**

#### ***Effective Practices***

- Program documentation

#### ***Lessons Learned***

- Program documentation

### **2. Well-structured tutoring sessions in which the content and delivery of instruction are carefully planned**

#### ***Effective Practices***

- Review of Book Partners materials
- Observation of 47 tutor/student pairs

#### ***Lessons Learned***

- Tutor focus groups
- AmeriCorps\*VISTA focus group
- Project site director interviews
- Qualitative analysis of tutor progress logs

### **3. Close coordination with schools, the school administration, and the classroom and/or reading teacher**

#### ***Effective Practices***

- DCPS school-by-school results for spring 1998 on the Stanford 9 Achievement Test
- Program documentation
- AmeriCorps\*VISTA focus group

**6. Careful evaluation, assessment, monitoring, and reinforcement of progress**

***Effective Practices***

- Evaluation documentation

***Lessons Learned***

- Program documentation
- Evaluation documentation

**7. Access to training and technical assistance resources**

***Effective Practices***

- Tutor focus groups
- Campus coordinator interviews
- AmeriCorps\*VISTA focus group
- Teacher focus groups

***Lessons Learned***

- Tutor focus groups
- Campus coordinator interviews
- AmeriCorps\*VISTA focus group
- Project site director interviews
- Informal discussions with program staff

**8. Engendering positive, caring relationships among students, staff, and tutors**

***Effective Practices***

- Tutor focus groups
- AmeriCorps\*VISTA focus group
- Teacher focus groups
- Principal interviews
- Parent survey
- Project site director interviews

## **Appendix D. Instruments**

## Tutor Focus Group Protocol

### A. Introduction

Purpose (overview of evaluation, importance of tutor feedback)

Confidentiality (no names in report, only aggregate reported)

Note taking (first names only)

Time (definitely end by \_\_\_\_\_)

Introduce selves (where from, which university, what major, which elementary school)

### B. Experience and Training

1. How did you end up becoming a tutor with DC Reads?

*Prompt:* What appealed to you about DC Reads compared to other work study options? (e.g., give back to the community, work with children, develop teaching skills, just a job)

2. What previous experience did you have that was helpful to your work with DC Reads?

- a. Tutoring of other topics/populations
- b. Working with children
- c. Activities specifically focused on literacy

3. What did you think about the orientation/training at GW?

(Motivational speakers, Ages&Stages, Tutoring 101, Book Partners Model)

*Prompt:* Did it give you a realistic idea of what being a DC Reads tutor would be like?

*Prompt:* What else should it cover?

4. Tell me about the initial training you received from the program (Rdg Spec: Bk Prtnrs Mdl).

- a. How much training did you receive? (days/hours?)
- b. What topics did the training cover? (tutoring skills, behavior management, other)
- c. Which topics were the most useful?
- d. How confident did you feel going into the tutoring?
- e. What was missing from the training? (information on learning disabilities, discipline)

5. What additional training did you receive after the initial training?

- a. How much training did you receive? (days/hours?)
- b. What topics did the training cover? (tutoring skills, behavior management, other)
- c. Which topics were the most useful?
- d. What was missing from the training? (information on learning disabilities, discipline)

### **E. Successes and Challenges/Expectations**

13. When you think back on your DC Reads experience, what do you feel best about? What do you think were the benefits:
  - a. For the first-grade students? (friend/mentor, interest in/increase/better reading, increased self-esteem/confidence, general motivation in school, overall academic behavior)  
*Probe: How do you know? (e.g., teacher said, child said, tutor saw, attendance)*
  - b. For yourself? (understanding of children, teachers, schools, environment)
14. What were the most significant problems:
  - a. Your students encountered?
  - b. You encountered?
15. To what extent were your overall expectations for the experience met? (1st-graders, schools, duties/responsibilities, relationship with AmeriCorps\*VISTAs, reading specialists, teachers, principals)
  - a. Which expectations were most fully met?
  - b. Which expectations were largely unmet?

### **F. Suggestions for Improvement**

16. What suggestions do you have for improving the DC Reads program?
  - a. Training
  - b. Tutoring model (e.g., session, activities, progress log)
  - c. Materials used
  - d. Organization, scheduling of tutoring sessions (e.g., more time for other activities structured by the program such as mentoring, doing fun things together)
  - e. Length of tutoring sessions
  - f. Overall operation of DC Reads
  - g. Other (*probe for solutions to challenges mentioned above*)

## AmeriCorps\*VISTA Focus Group Protocol

### A. Introduction

Purpose (overview of evaluation, importance of AmeriCorps\*VISTA feedback)

Confidentiality (no names in report, only aggregate data reported)

Note taking (first names only)

Time (definitely end by \_\_\_\_\_)

Introduce selves (where from, which elementary school, whether have children in schools)

### B. Experience and Training

1. How did you end up becoming an AmeriCorps\*VISTA with Communities in Schools?  
*Prompt:* What did you think you would like about it?  
(E.g., give back to the community/school, work with children, improve teaching skills)

2. What previous experience did you have that was helpful to your work with DC Reads?
  - a. Tutoring of other topics/populations
  - b. Working with children (your own or others)
  - c. Activities specifically focused on literacy
  - d. Management or supervisory experience

3. Tell me about the initial training you received from the program.
  - a. How much training did you receive? (days/hours?)
  - b. What topics did the training cover?
  - c. Which topics were the most useful?
  - d. How confident did you feel going into the schools in the beginning?
  - e. What was missing from the training?

4. What additional training did you receive after the initial training?
  - a. How much training did you receive? (days/hours?)
  - b. What topics did the training cover?
  - c. Which topics were the most useful?
  - d. What was missing from the training?

### Roles and Communication

5. Tell me about your responsibilities for DC Reads. *Prompt:* Describe a day at your school.
  - a. How many tutors do you supervise? How often do you meet? For what purposes?
  - b. How would you characterize your relationship with your tutors?  
*Prompt, if other than positive:* Can you explain the challenges in the relationships?
  - c. Do you tutor any students?
  - d. What other administrative responsibilities do you have? (with teachers, rdg. specialists)
6. What do you think the role of the AmeriCorps\*VISTA should be?

## Teacher Focus Group Protocol

### Introduction

- Purpose (overview of evaluation, importance of teacher feedback, chance for more in-depth feedback than on the 1-page survey)
- Confidentiality (no names in report, only aggregate data reported)
- Ask that they also keep private anything said during our discussion (don't reveal anything that would relate to an individual or specific school)
- Note taking (first names only)
- Time (definitely end by \_\_\_\_\_)
- Introduce selves (where from, which elementary school, whether have children in schools)

### Perceptions of Success

1. What particular needs did the DC Reads program fill in your school?
2. In what ways has the DC Reads program been especially successful?  
(e.g., recruiting effective tutors, delivering a high-quality literacy intervention, improving the reading skills of students, increasing self-esteem/self-confidence of students; helping the classroom environment, the teacher, the school; other)

*Prompt:* What aspects of the program made it particularly beneficial?

3. What challenges did the DC Reads program face? In what ways has the program been especially unsuccessful?  
(e.g., recruiting effective tutors, delivering a high-quality literacy intervention, improving the reading skills of students, increasing self-esteem/self-confidence of students, other)

### Relationship with Staff, Tutors

4. What changes would you like to make in your relationship with the AmeriCorps\*VISTAs?
  - a. How often did you meet? (e.g., formal/informal meetings, written/verbal, 1:1/group)
  - b. For what purposes? (plan, problem solve, critique, discuss individual tutors/students)
  - c. What kind of contact was most useful? What would you like to see more of in the future?
5. What changes would you like to make in your relationship with the tutors?
  - a. How often did you meet? (e.g., formal/informal meetings, written/verbal, 1:1/group)
  - b. For what purposes? (plan, problem solve, critique, discuss individual tutors/students)
  - c. What kind of contact was most useful? What would you like to see more of in the future?

## Principal Focus Group/Interview Protocol

### Introduction

- Purpose (overview of evaluation, importance of teacher feedback, chance for more in-depth feedback than on the 1-page survey)
- Note taking/confidentiality (no names in report, only aggregate data reported)
- Ask that they also keep private anything said during our discussion (don't reveal anything that would relate to an individual or specific school)

### Perceptions of Success

1. What particular needs did the DC Reads program fill in your school?

*Prompt:* What aspects of the program made it particularly beneficial?

2. In what ways has the DC Reads program been especially successful?  
(e.g., recruiting effective tutors, delivering a high-quality literacy intervention, improving the reading skills of students, increasing self-esteem/self-confidence of students; helping the classroom environment, the teacher, the school; other)
3. What challenges has the DC Reads program faced? In what ways has the program been especially unsuccessful?  
(e.g., recruiting effective tutors, delivering a high-quality literacy intervention, improving the reading skills of students, increasing self-esteem/self-confidence of students, other)

### Relationship with Staff, Tutors

4. What changes would you like to make in your relationship with Communities in Schools Project Site Directors?
  - a. How often did you meet? (e.g., formal/informal meetings, written/verbal, 1:1/group)
  - b. For what purposes? (plan, problem solve, critique, discuss individual tutors/students)
  - c. What kind of contact was most useful? What would you like to see more of in the future?
5. What changes would you like to make in your relationship with Communities in Schools AmeriCorps\*VISTAs?
  - a. How often did you meet? (e.g., formal/informal meetings, written/verbal, 1:1/group)
  - b. For what purposes? (plan, problem solve, critique, discuss individual tutors/students)
  - c. What kind of contact was most useful? What would you like to see more of in the future?

## **Project Site Director Interview**

### **Introduction**

#### **Purpose**

### **Overall Responsibilities**

1. Tell me about your overall responsibilities. *Prompt: Describe a typical day or week.*
  - a. How many AmeriCorps\*VISTAs do you supervise? (How many schools are you responsible for?)
  - b. How often did you meet? For what purposes?
  - c. How would you characterize your relationship with your AmeriCorps\*VISTAs?
  - d. (*If other than positive:*) Can you explain the challenges in this relationship?
  - e. What other administrative responsibilities do you have? (with teachers, reading specialists.)

### **Recruiting and Hiring AmeriCorps\*VISTAs**

2. How many AmeriCorps\*VISTAs does CIS have?
3. What did you look for in recruiting and hiring AmeriCorps\*VISTAs?  
(e.g., tutoring of other topics/populations, working with children, activities specifically focused on literacy, management or supervisory experience)
4. What did you consider in assigning AmeriCorps\*VISTAs to particular schools? What did you consider in assigning one versus two AmeriCorps\*VISTAs?
5. How would you characterize the AmeriCorps\*VISTAs?
  - a. About what percentage are parents of children in the targeted schools?
  - b. How many are female?
  - c. Other?
6. In terms of AmeriCorps\*VISTAs' strengths, what differences did you note between those AmeriCorps\*VISTAs who were parents of children in the school and those who were not?

### **Relationship with CNS/Campus Coordinators/DC Reads**

7. What kind of contact did you have with staff at the elementary schools?
  - a. How often did you meet? (e.g., formal/informal meetings, written/verbal, 1:1/group)
  - b. For what purposes? (plan, problem solve, critique, discuss individual tutors/students)
  - c. What kind of contact was most useful? What would you like to see more of in the future?
  - d. What support would you have liked to receive but did not?
8. What changes would you like to make in your relationship with Corporation staff?

## **Campus Coordinator Focus Group Protocol**

### **Introduction**

#### **Purpose**

### **Responsibilities**

1. What are your responsibilities related to work study students tutoring with DC Reads?
  - a. How many work study students from your program tutor with DC Reads?
  - b. How often do you meet with the work study students?
  - c. For what purposes do you meet? (planning, problem solving, critiquing, discussing individual students, other)

### **Experience and Training**

2. How were work study students selected for DC Reads? (e.g., their choice, Education majors, those with tutoring experience)
3. How would you characterize the DC Reads tutors? (e.g., percentage of freshmen, sophomore, etc.; of undergraduates and graduates; of women and men)
4. Does your work study program provide an orientation or training for the college students?  
*If yes: Please describe.*

### **Relationship with CNS/CIS/DCPS**

5. What changes would you like to make in your relationship with Corporation staff?
6. What changes would you like to make in your relationship with CIS?
7. What changes would you like to make in your relationship with DCPS?
8. What other literacy programs are your work study students involved in?

**Dear Parent/Guardian:** We need your help. Please tell us what you think about the DC Reads program. Your child was tutored in this reading program twice a week during school hours. (We do not ask for and will not report any children's names to anyone.)

**1. What did your child think about the following:** *(please check 1 box in each line)*

- a. The tutoring program ..... ☐ GREAT ☐ PRETTY GOOD ☐ OKAY ☐ POOR  
 b. His or her tutor ..... ☐ GREAT ☐ PRETTY GOOD ☐ OKAY ☐ POOR  
 c. The materials (books, journal, letter tiles) .. ☐ GREAT ☐ PRETTY GOOD ☐ OKAY ☐ POOR

**2. Please tell us what your child liked best and liked least for each of the following:**

|                           | WHAT MY CHILD LIKED BEST ABOUT... | WHAT MY CHILD LIKED LEAST ABOUT... |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| a.<br>TUTORING<br>PROGRAM |                                   |                                    |
| b.<br>HIS OR HER<br>TUTOR |                                   |                                    |
| c.<br>THE<br>MATERIALS    |                                   |                                    |

**3. Has your child brought home:** *(please check 1 box in each line)*

- a. Any work to show you from the tutoring sessions? ..... ☐ YES ☐ NO  
 b. Any other materials from the tutor? ..... ☐ YES ☐ NO

**4. What changes have you seen in your child that you believe result from your child participating in the DC Reads tutoring program?** *(please check 1 box in each line)*

- a. Is more interested in reading ..... ☐ YES ☐ NO  
 b. Reads better ..... ☐ YES ☐ NO  
 c. Reads faster ..... ☐ YES ☐ NO  
 d. Seems to understand more of what s/he reads ..... ☐ YES ☐ NO  
 e. Reads more for pleasure ..... ☐ YES ☐ NO  
 f. Seems more confident about doing well in school ..... ☐ YES ☐ NO  
 g. Goes to school more often ..... ☐ YES ☐ NO

**5. Would you recommend DC Reads to parents of other 1st-grade students?** ☐ YES ☐ NO

**6. What did YOU like most about the DC Reads program?**

**7. What changes would you like to see made next year in the DC Reads program?**

*Please mail the survey to Macro International Inc. in the postage-paid envelope provided. Macro, a private firm, was hired by the Corporation for National Service to evaluate DC Reads. Thank you very much for helping us improve the DC Reads program.*

**Dear Teacher:** The Corporation for National Service has asked Macro International Inc., a private firm, to evaluate the DC Reads tutoring program. Please tell us what you think about DC Reads. Your opinion matters! (The survey is **confidential**. We will not use any teacher names or school names in any communications with anyone in the schools, DCPS, or any reports. We request names only to see whether students in different classrooms have different experiences.)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

1. How many students from your first-grade classes participated in DC Reads? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Did you help select the children to be tutored through DC Reads? ☐ YES ☐ NO

*If yes: What criteria did you use to select students for tutoring through DC Reads?  
(check all that apply)*

- ☐ a. Observed reading performance ☐ b. Student attitude toward reading  
☐ c. Student behavior during reading activities ☐ d. Student attitude toward school  
☐ e. Standardized tests/assessment tools (specify: \_\_\_\_\_)  
☐ f. Other (specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

3. If more DC Reads tutors had been available, would you have wanted more first-grade students of yours to be tutored? ☐ YES ☐ NO

4. How many of your students participating in DC Reads do you think have special needs?

- |                                                        | <u>Many</u>              | <u>Some</u>              | <u>Few</u>               | <u>None</u>              |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. English for Speakers of other Languages (ESL) ..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) .....              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Learning disabilities .....                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Other (specify) _____ ..                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

5. Did the students tutored through DC Reads receive individual tutoring through any other reading programs this year? (check all that apply)

- ☐ a. Success for All (SFA) Change Model ☐ b. NIH/NICHHD Change Model  
☐ c. ALEM Change Model ☐ d. Other tutoring program (specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

6. If DC Reads could offer any format, would you recommend tutoring first-graders:

- a. When? ..... ☐ Before school ☐ After school ☐ During school  
b. How often? .. ☐ 2 days/week ☐ 3 days/week ☐ 4 days/week ☐ 5 days/week

7. How frequently:

- |                                                                    | <u>Daily</u>             | <u>2-3 times a week</u>  | <u>2-3 times a month</u> | <u>Never</u>             |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Did you communicate with the <u>VISTA(s)</u> at your school? .. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Would you like to communicate with the <u>VISTA(s)</u> ? .....  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

8. How frequently:

- |                                                                  | <u>Daily</u>             | <u>2-3 times a week</u>  | <u>2-3 times a month</u> | <u>Never</u>             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Did you communicate with the <u>tutors</u> at your school? .. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Would you like to communicate with the <u>tutors</u> ? .....  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

9. How satisfied were you with...

- |                                                         | <u>Very satisfied</u>    | <u>Fairly satisfied</u>  | <u>Not at all satisfied</u> |
|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. Your students' DC Reads <u>tutors</u> ? .....        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>    |
| b. The DC Reads tutoring program <u>overall</u> ? ..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>    |

 (please turn to other side)

## OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

(Observe 3-4 tutoring sessions at each site. Allow 30 minutes each.)

### 1. DESCRIPTION

a. School \_\_\_\_\_ b. Student \_\_\_\_\_  
 c. Tutor \_\_\_\_\_ d. College/Community Vol. \_\_\_\_\_  
 e. Day (date) \_\_\_\_\_ f. Start Time \_\_\_\_\_ g. Stop Time \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. ACTIVITIES

| Activity                                       | 1-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 21-25 | 25-30 |
|------------------------------------------------|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| a. Tutor and child talk about pictures         |     |      |       |       |       |       |
| b. Tutor reads aloud to child                  |     |      |       |       |       |       |
| c. Child reads aloud to tutor                  |     |      |       |       |       |       |
| d. Child reads silently                        |     |      |       |       |       |       |
| e. Tutor helps child with specific skills      |     |      |       |       |       |       |
| 1. Phonics/word attack/decoding (sounds)       |     |      |       |       |       |       |
| 2. Context Clues (logic, pictures, etc.)       |     |      |       |       |       |       |
| 3. Comprehension                               |     |      |       |       |       |       |
| 4. Spelling                                    |     |      |       |       |       |       |
| 5. Rhyming                                     |     |      |       |       |       |       |
| 6. Other ( <i>specify</i> )                    |     |      |       |       |       |       |
| f. Tutor, child talk about what child has read |     |      |       |       |       |       |
| g. Child writes about what s/he has read       |     |      |       |       |       |       |
| h. Mentoring (discussing unrelated topics)     |     |      |       |       |       |       |
| i. Other ( <i>specify</i> )                    |     |      |       |       |       |       |

| Activity                                          | 1-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 21-25 | 25-30 |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| j. Tutor provides corrective feedback to child    |     |      |       |       |       |       |
| k. Tutor encourages child to sound out word       |     |      |       |       |       |       |
| l. Child asks tutor for help with meaning of word |     |      |       |       |       |       |
| m. Tutor encourages child to reread for meaning   |     |      |       |       |       |       |
| n. Tutor asks comprehension question              |     |      |       |       |       |       |