1997

Reading Together: California Campuses and Communities Connect through America Reads

America Reads

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Reading Together provides an in-depth look at how America Reads is working in California. It describes how America Reads operates in schools and communities and offers insight into what makes for strikingly successful programs.

As the data and case studies show, America Reads programs are doing great things throughout this state. Since the spring of 1998, more than 9,300 California college students have worked as America Reads tutors in more than 900 schools. Because of America Reads, almost 25,000 California elementary school children have so far received the extra help they need to learn to read and their numbers will grow in the years ahead.

As I read this report, I am profoundly impressed by the ambitious, imaginative, complex and powerful programs developed by California's higher education institutions—public and private, large and small. I know that these successes are being replicated in every state across the country. What we can do now, for each other and for our nation's children, is continue the kind of communication this report represents. Let us find ways to talk with each other, share our best ideas, and encourage the expansion of a program that truly is transforming young lives and futures.

Robert A. Corrigan
Chair, Steering Committee of College and University Presidents
The America Reads/Counts Challenge
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In a crisis of such proportions, we need a response of equal magnitude. And we may well have found it in America Reads.

Robert A. Corrigan, President
San Francisco State University
February 3, 1997
Summary and Recommendations

During the summer of 1999, the James Irvine Foundation funded a research project to describe the range, scope, and quality of America Reads programs of California higher education institutions. The project was designed to describe these programs using two methods: a questionnaire that would gather descriptive data and an in-depth analysis of five highly respected programs in California.
The Questionnaire
In order to get as complete a picture as possible, we decided to canvass the America Reads programs in California. Using the list from the America Reads sign-ups and institutions' FISAP reports, we created a roster of programs and institutions to contact. The response rate for the questionnaire was outstanding at 81 percent. Of the 99 colleges who received the survey, 68 (85% of those who responded) currently have an America Reads program in place. Twelve (15%) responded by saying that they are not operating an America Reads program.

This study clearly demonstrates trends and suggests possibilities for improving America Reads in California. The 68 America Reads programs we studied are unique and represent their institutions and communities. The information that we gathered depicts a vibrant and complex whole.

First, the programs are significant. In spring 1999, 3537 students in 64 California institutions tutored 11,251 children for approximately 624,000 hours. Beginning with the spring semester of 1998, colleges report that 9,323 tutors provided 1,644,577 hours of reading help to 24,933 California children. Since the launch of the America Reads Challenge, the number of college programs in California has grown, and each semester, starting with 1998, more tutors have provided tutoring to more children. As funding for Federal Work-Study aid to institutions grows, we can expect an even broader reach of America Reads. With the addition of America Counts on many of the campuses, the impact of tutoring programs will increase.

UCLA and CSU Sacramento lead in the number of reading tutors with 340 and 300 tutors respectively, but even programs less notable for size are thoughtfully designed and strikingly effective. While program administration may be located in many places on campus, financial aid offices play a significant role in recruiting and supporting students in the program. In fact, student financial aid offices, followed, predictably, by schools or departments of education, administer thirty-five percent of the America Reads programs.

The institutions take training very seriously. Tutors are trained an average of 13.5 hours before being assigned to young children, and they are trained an average of 20.8 hours during their service. College faculty or school personnel lead a majority of tutor training. Generally, tutoring materials are created by the colleges or adapted from other sources.

In California, America Reads tutors are paid an average of $7.79 an hour, and they work an average 12.6 hours a week. They travel to more than 900 nearby (and some not-so-nearby) schools and centers to tutor children in on-on-one or small group sessions. Second grade is the target class for many of the tutors, who receive an average of three hours of tutoring a week. Tutors are most often assigned to three children, who receive reading help during school time or in after-school programs.

Programs have worked hard to create or adapt assessment tools to determine the progress of the children being tutored, but they also rely heavily on teachers' judgment of children's advancement in reading. 'Tutors' training and work with children are carefully assessed, and college and school personnel closely supervise tutors. Most striking of the impacts of America Reads is the growth in the desire of tutors to become teachers.

While programs report difficulties with certain areas, the most prominent has been dealing with the state-imposed fingerprinting process. Nevertheless, most of the respondents felt that their programs are operating above their expectations.

As for needs, America Reads contacts report that funds for program improvement (instruction and training and tutoring materials, training workshops, assessment tools, and examples of good practice) and administration are highest on the list. They also would like to serve more children, and thus also request additional Federal Work-Study support.

The Case Studies

Choice of Institutions
In choosing the five America Reads programs to study in depth, we considered the following factors regarding the institution: reputation for quality, type of institution, focus of program, and membership in Campus Compact. In selecting the programs, we consulted with others, including the director of California Campus Compact and the director of California State University's Office of Community Service Learning. After narrowing the list, we conducted a telephone interview with directors of each of the programs, and, based on the interviews, we made the final selection of programs to study.
Over the summer of 1999, we conducted in-depth reviews of the America Reads programs at Glendale Community College, San Francisco State University, University of California—Berkeley, University of San Diego, and University of Southern California. The reviews included gathering materials that help illustrate the organization and operation of the programs and interviewing America Reads staff, college and school personnel, and tutors over two-or-three-day visits to the campuses. The case studies reveal in greater detail the complex nature of the America Reads programs in California, and illustrate the deep commitment of the institutions and the program leaders to creating high quality programs that serve their students and improve the reading levels—and thus the life chances—of California's next generation.

Each institution uses its campus resources in innovative ways to reach its own set of goals. For example, Glendale Community College seeks to serve a group of non-traditional students whose educational and employment needs are great, while reaching out to needy preschool children. UC Berkeley's goals are to employ the superior research capabilities of its faculty to create programs to improve the educational attainment of children who traditionally are unprepared to attend the university.

All five institutions have developed a commitment to community service—either through tradition or design. Over the past several years, they all have sought to introduce their students to community service opportunities and to engage the institutions more deeply in the life of their community. The University of San Diego and the University of Southern California have consciously delineated nearby neighborhoods as areas where they will concentrate their efforts. In constructing its program, San Francisco State University has sought to combine its responsibility for teacher preparation with its commitment to community service.

While the details of these programs may vary, some general themes are reflected in the five case studies. First is the significant institutional commitment to community involvement—all the way to the top of the institution. Second is the active involvement of financial aid offices in developing new ways to use an old federal program like Federal Work-Study to serve the goals of their institution and the needs of their students. Another critical factor in creating extraordinary America Reads programs is the quality of program leadership. In each of the institutions there is one or more individuals who are the source of inspiration, creativity and determination that make the programs work. The “people skills” of all these leaders are extraordinary.

Another determinant of success among these five institutions is the administrative structure that each program has developed. Supervision, coordination, reporting structures, and supporting mechanisms are key to high quality delivery of tutoring help to children. Cooperative working relationships with leaders and teachers at the tutoring sites are extremely important.

Well-conceived and ongoing tutor training is essential. Development of useful teaching tools and clearly defined plans for tutoring sessions improve the effectiveness of the assistance tutors are giving young students, and increase the satisfaction level and personal growth of the tutors. All five institutions care equally for the children being tutored and the students delivering the tutoring.

Another important characteristic among these five institutions is the desire to evaluate and improve their programs. All five programs reported the continual rethinking and reworking of administrative arrangements, training approaches and evaluation mechanisms. This year, Glendale is offering course credit for the weekly reflection and training sessions as a way to encourage students to participate. San Francisco State has created an incentive to America Reads tutors to become teachers by “pipelining” them into the graduate credential program. USC has developed a leadership-step process for tutors to site coordinators and above.

America Reads as Change Agent

Colleges' incorporation of America Reads has allowed the participating campuses to initiate change. First, it has fostered campus partnerships that may not have existed before. For example, financial aid offices have moved more to the foreground and have forged partnerships with campus departments and offices they may not have previously related to. It also has helped colleges reorder their priorities for off-campus work opportunities. America Reads is offering students meaningful, satisfying work and direct observation of teachers and schools.
America Reads programs have opened new pathways for outreach to schools. UC Berkeley’s America Reads projects are offering high quality research-based tutoring programs to schools. Because America Reads programs supplies tutors paid with Federal Work-Study funds, and not “soft” money, the schools can count on the university’s commitment for many years. This sets up an opportunity to forge deep partnerships between the university and schools based on commitment and trust.

For neighborhoods like Linda Vista in San Diego and University Park in Los Angeles, America Reads helps cement a strong educational bond between the universities and the residents of their adjoining area to complement economic and safety initiatives. The neighborhoods gain from having tutors and mentors working with children of area families. And the universities benefit as the neighborhoods’ loyalty and respect for the university increase.
America Reads Program in California

In 1996, President William Clinton launched a new initiative and asked America's colleges and universities to step up and tackle the appalling proportion of children living in poverty in the United States. The President's Initiative for Educational Opportunity, or America Reads, was to help children learn to read at an age when they could learn most effectively. It has been successful in helping to improve educational opportunities for children nationwide. The program has been instrumental in increasing the number of children who are reading at grade level.
After appointing his domestic policy advisor to direct the Challenge, President Clinton turned to higher education leaders to help devise a program that would engage their institutions in changing the literacy rate of young children. The President appointed a steering committee of colleges and university presidents to guide the effort, and White House and committee leaders met to concentrate on the details. A plan emerged quickly: the White House challenged colleges to use at least half of a significant increase in funding for the Federal Work-Study (FWS) program—federal financial aid for college jobs—to engage college students in tutoring elementary children. An incentive for colleges to participate was a waiver of the requirement for a non-federal match (25%) of FWS funds. Participation by colleges was made voluntary, and higher education associations pledged actively to support Clinton’s plan. The White House agreed to introduce legislation to provide broad financial support to the Challenge and was successful in including funding for the impending program in the FY 1998 budget.

Recruitment of college participation began in early 1997, and by the beginning of the 1997–98 academic year, a number of institutions were implementing full-fledged programs. By the summer of 1999, eighty-three institutions in California had signed on to the America Reads Challenge. With few rules, and some guidance from the U.S. Department of Education and the Corporation for National Service, California colleges created a set of complex, ambitious, and imaginative America Reads programs.

The Report

Colleges are required to report annually on how of their FWS allocation is directed towards America Reads, the only official reporting mechanism. America Reads programs voluntarily have proffered brief descriptions of their programs to be placed on the U.S. Department of Education’s Web site and other publications, and America Reads directors have attended workshops and roundtables in which a number have offered more detailed descriptions of their projects. Yet there have been few systematic studies or reports reflecting organization, recruitment and training of tutors, relations with schools and other partners, makeup of the tutoring sessions, assessments of effectiveness, and continuing needs of America Reads programs.

This report describes the results of a study of current America Reads programs in California. The study is in two parts: 1) a report of findings of a canvass of America Reads programs in California and 2) case studies of five exemplary America Reads programs.

Canvass of Higher Education Institutions in California

To signify their acceptance of President Clinton’s challenge, colleges submit sign-on forms to the America Reads office at San Francisco State University, U.S. Department of Education or Corporation for National Service. Information from these forms is entered into a database and the names of the institutions are added to a list published by the U.S. Department of Education. In addition, college submissions to the Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE) at the U.S. Department of Education contain information regarding FWS funds allocated to America Reads programs.

All California institutions that submitted sign-on forms and those who reported America Reads expenditures under the America Reads waiver in the 1997–98 academic year were asked to participate in a survey of their programs. One hundred institutions were contacted. Eighty-four institutions responded, and 68 acknowledged that they were operating projects and submitted detailed information about their programs.

Case studies

Five America Reads programs in California higher education institutions are spotlighted in this part. They are as follows: the University of Southern California, the University of San Diego, the University of California-Berkeley, San Francisco State University, and Glendale Community College. These institutions represent four of the various segments of higher education in the state: private institutions, the University of California, the California State University, and the California Community Colleges. All are members of California Campus Compact. The institutions were chosen as case studies because of their reputations for having high quality projects and as a result of a preliminary interview with directors to appraise the factors and approaches that contribute to the programs’ effectiveness.

Results

Program Administration and Support

Administration of America Reads at California higher education institutions reflects the complexity and oversight built into the design of the programs. Where America Reads is located on campuses varies considerably. At 35 percent, the most frequently listed campus office or department was the financial aid office. Other locations include learning or tutoring centers, service learning centers (11%), the institution’s department of education (15%), the AmeriCorps office (6%), the volunteer center, student service office (each 10%), and the career center (8%).
Seemingly disparate, the financial aid office and the education department were the two most cited locations for administering the America Reads program. Perhaps the most significant difference in the programs run out of these two offices was their reasons for selecting tutors. While eligibility for work-study topped both lists, the education department emphasized the students' desire to become a teacher and prioritized bilingual abilities, whereas the financial aid office was much less inclined to consider these qualities important in selecting tutors.

Funding for America Reads flows to students through the institutions' financial aid offices. Federal rules allow these offices to underwrite some administrative and job placement costs from the institution's FWS allocation. In many colleges, this funding may be the most administrative money available. While financial aid offices do not generally operate community-based programs, they are equipped to communicate with college students, negotiate job placements, draw up work contracts, and handle time sheets and payroll.

As evidenced in the case studies, many financial aid departments work overtime to make sure that students are able to take advantage of America Reads. Some of the motivation may be that institutions are required to allocate 5 percent (now 7%) of their FWS to community service positions, including America Reads, but it also may be that financial aid staff understand the positive impact of America Reads programs on the students and the institution. For America Reads projects operating from other campus offices, the active involvement of the financial aid office remains critical to the success of the program.

Almost all of the California America Reads programs surveyed have been in existence for a year or more. Nearly forty percent have been operating since 1997; more than half are one to two years old. Still another 7.5 percent started an America Reads program within the last six to twelve months. They report receiving financial support from a number of sources, including the federal government, schools or school districts, the California Department of Education, and local businesses, in addition to their own institutions' contributions. Federal support most likely is from grants or programs such as AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps*VISTA. State funds may come from SB 316 grants or from California Work-Study, which recently was increased to provide funds for tutors.

America Reads programs have formed partnerships with parent organizations and community-based literacy groups, child-serving organizations, libraries, the Red Cross and others. As reported by 45 percent of respondents, the most frequent partnerships are with the school district.

While programs range widely in complexity, most programs have developed processes and systems to administer recruitment and training of tutors, establish relations and maintain connections with school and other tutoring sites, supervise tutors at the sites, and create, adapt, or choose tutoring materials and assessment tools.

The Tutors

Numbers and impact

In the spring semester 1998, 59 California colleges surveyed for this study reported that 1790 Federal Work-Study students worked as reading tutors for elementary school children. They were joined by 224 volunteers, another 140 students who were receiving course credit for tutoring, and 322 AmeriCorps members whose assignments were to tutor children in reading. Those figures rose to 2250 FWS, 283 volunteers, 218 receiving course credit and 559 AmeriCorps in the fall 1998 semester as 65 institutions reported participation figures. By spring 1999, 64 colleges reported that 2485 FWS, 427 volunteers, 272 receiving course credit and 353 AmeriCorps members were tutoring young

From Spring 1998 to Spring 1999,
9,323 college students
from 68 California institutions
gave over 1.6 million hours of reading help to children
Students from these institutions are working from 4.5 to 20 hours a week, for an average of 12.6 hours of tutoring. Assuming a 14-week semester for spring 1999, students in 68 California institutions in the tutored 623,927 hours. Over the last three semesters, 9,323 tutors conducted 1,644,577 hours of reading help for children in California. Over the three-semester period the number of tutors, the number of children tutored, and the number of hours devoted to tutoring have grown dramatically. This increase is due to several factors: in each semester, more colleges have instituted America Reads programs; at the same time, institutions have expanded their programs to include more tutors who work more total hours and serve more children. Additionally, some experienced tutors may be taking on more children to tutor.

Tutors are recruited primarily through the institutions' financial aid offices. Posters, flyers and advertisements by the student employment office, the office of community service learning, or the career center may supplement this recruitment. Presentations in students' classes and booths or tables at campus job or volunteer fairs, and advertisements in campus newspapers help attract students to work as tutors.

Preferred characteristics of America Reads tutors are, most importantly, eligibility for Federal Work-Study, followed by students' interest or desire to become a teacher, ability to speak other languages, and having an early childhood major. Upper-division status was the least important choice of characteristics.

**Training**

Eighty-eight percent of programs reported that tutors receive training before being assigned to a child. The length of preservice and inservice training varies widely, but the average preservice training time is 13.6 hours; training that occurs during the tutoring period averages 20.5 hours. Anumber of institutions require at least one semester of coursework to supplement the tutors' service, yet many colleges feel comfortable with a one-day orientation session and periodic meetings for further training or to explore special topics such as multiculturalism.

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**Tutor training is most often conducted by college faculty**

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Training consists generally of an orientation, instruction on tutoring techniques, presentations or hands-on practice with reading activities, and training in reading theory and practice. Other topics include reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and word attack, along with practical sessions on behavior management, dealing with special needs, communicating with children with limited English skills, and diversity training. A few programs offer training in English as a second language.

A majority of tutor training (60%) is led by college faculty or the school personnel. America Reads program staff (17%) also prepare students to tutor, and sometimes rely on former tutors or local literacy organizations to help with training.

Most of the California America Reads programs adapt their training materials from other sources (35.5%) or develop their own training and tutoring materials (25.4%). A slightly smaller number use material provided by the school district (22%), and still others use ready-made tutoring manuals and activities (17%). A number of programs use a combination of their own materials and ones they get from other

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The top three America Reads needs are money for tutor training, administration, and tutor materials.

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![Total number of tutors per semester by type](chart)
The number one reason for choosing a school site is that it is in the community served by the institution.

Sources, such as manuals prepared by Bank Street College of Education and Miami-Dade Community College.

A majority of America Reads programs (59.6%) evaluate their tutor training by asking tutors' opinions and views on its effectiveness. Some get their answers in pre-post tests of tutors (10.6%) and 19.1 percent have personnel from the school site evaluate the tutor training. Program leaders constantly strive to make training more effective. After increasing the number of tutors, improving training was the second most selected improvement that programs cited for the upcoming year.

Schools/Sites

America Reads programs provide tutoring for children in 817 schools and 100 other sites. Location near the institution is an important factor in choosing sites to be served by tutors, as well as whether the school applied to be a tutoring site. More important is whether the school or site has an ongoing relationship with the institution and even more important is whether the site is in the community served by the institution. Of less importance in choosing locations for commitment of college-age tutors is whether a school official recommended the school.

Children served by tutors

As the number of tutors has grown over the three-semester span of the questionnaire, so has the number of children tutored. Indeed, the number of children tutored increased 127 percent in three semesters. In spring 1998, 36 colleges reported that America Reads tutors tutored 4,953 children. In fall 1998, 8,729 children received tutoring help from tutors in 41 institutions, and in spring 1999, 44 colleges reported that college students in America Reads programs tutored 11,251 children. In all, colleges reported that in the three semesters, 24,933 children were in the tutoring program. (Not all colleges reported totals. There are a variety of reasons for the non-reporting, but the primary cause was that the data were gathered in the summer and the programs were not able to get data from the schools.)

Over the three-semester period, the numbers of children tutored at each grade level rose significantly. Second-graders received the most tutoring in the schools reporting data by grade, and third-graders received the second-most attention, followed by K-1 and preschool, then fourth and fifth grade, with grades six or above receiving the least help.

Teachers and principals generally refer children for reading assistance. Scores on standardized tests also are used to designate children who could benefit from extra tutoring, and parents and children also request reading help. In a few programs, America Reads staff chooses children to receive tutoring aid.

Tutoring Sessions

Reading experts agree that the most effective tutoring is achieved one-on-one or in small groups. An overwhelming number of America Reads programs in California provide one-on-one, small group or a combination of tutoring approaches.

The majority of tutoring (57.5%) occurs during the school day, despite having to synchronize college students' free time with the early hours of elementary schedules. Most (66.2%) of the in-school tutoring sessions are conducted in the children's class during the regular instruction period. After-school programs are somewhat less popular times (34%) for tutoring. A few programs offer tutoring before school and on the weekends.
Among the California programs, the average number of tutoring sessions a week for each child is somewhat over 3; children receive an average of 3 hours a week of tutoring.

According to the survey, children stay in the tutoring program approximately one academic year (8 months).

Assessing progress
Case study institutions reported struggling to find useful and reliable measures of young students' progress in reading. Most report employing tutor-administered Running Records or conducting pre- and post-tests to measure gains. Programs also rely on teacher assessments of progress and improvements on reading scores on statewide tests.

Relations with families
Most of the America Reads programs rely on teachers to communicate with the families of children being tutored. Direct communications with families are usually made through progress reports, newsletter and family events. Few (13.2%) of America Reads programs in California include family literacy.

Evaluating tutors' work quality and personal growth
The quality of tutors' work is most often evaluated by teachers' and site supervisors' reports; observations also are included as a way to assess tutor effectiveness. Some programs also use reports, portfolios and pre- and post-tests to gauge work quality and improvement. Tutors' personal growth and satisfaction with their work experiences are most often probed in ongoing reflection sessions. Reports, portfolios, pre- and post-service questionnaires and exit interviews also are used to judge tutors' increased awareness, understanding and work satisfaction.

Over the last two years there has been anecdotal evidence that America Reads may be a very effective means of recruiting future teachers, since the program gives students first-hand experience relating to young children and affords them a realistic picture of the work—and life—of a teacher. America Reads contacts were asked about the impact of the America Reads experience on students' interest in becoming teachers. Nearly two-thirds who responded said the students' interest in teaching has increased a great deal. Another 28.4 percent reported that students' interest in teaching had increased at least somewhat. Only 7.5 percent saw no change or a decrease in interest.

Assets and Needs
The U.S. Department of Education and the Corporation for National Service have developed a number of information sources for America Reads programs. America Reads contacts in California were asked which of these information sources they use.

The Department of Education's monthly newsletter, "Federal Work-Study Update," has the largest audience among this group (24.7%) followed by the Department's America Reads web site (23.3%). Approximately 21 percent of respondents in California rely on the America Reads listerv. Other publications and media efforts, including "The Tutor" newsletter, published by the LEARNS partners for the Corporation for National Service, America Reads teleconferences, the Corporation for National Service America Reads Web site, and the California Reads web site sponsored by the Regional Office of the U.S. Department of Education, are much farther down the list. These data might suggest some rethinking of publication and distribution means.

America Reads contacts were asked to indicate whether their programs had experienced any of a list of problems, such as lack of resources to pay for training and materials. That problem, which tied for third place with coordination of the student tutors at 11 percent, fell below the aggravations and complications presented by state and local requirements for fingerprinting and background checks and the difficulty in getting transportation to the tutoring sites (18.7% and 15% respectively). The contacts responded to other suggested problems, such as poor attendance by children, lack of cooperation within the university, school or school district and attitude and environment problems.

On a scale from one to three, with three being the most important, respondents were asked to rate a list of 20 services, publications, or resources that their programs need. Naturally, program directors see a need for funding and support to help them improve their projects. Directors say their greatest need is for money to improve tutor training, followed, in order, by administrative funding, then grants for tutor training, grants for developing tutor materials, local and regional training, and more Federal Work-Study money—all of which were rated equally. Next followed a guide to good practice and off-the-shelf training and assessment tools (especially helpful for new programs).

Despite the problems and needs expressed by the America Reads contacts, half the respondents said they felt their projects are operating above their original expectations. Only 12.7 percent said they felt their programs were not meeting their expectations.

Although only 16.4 percent of programs have conducted a formal evaluation, many have planned positive changes in this academic year's programs, including increasing the number of tutors, changing or adding sites, improving training, improving evaluation and assessment, adding volunteers and creating new materials.

In addition, 73 percent of institutions report that they are planning to include mathematics tutoring (America Counts) in the near future.
University of Southern California

The America Reads program at the University of Southern California (USC) is known as USC Readers Plus. It began as USC Readers in May 1997 and has trained and placed approximately 100 Federal Work Study students in five area schools each semester and summer. Each reader works between 8 and 20 hours per week tutoring one-on-one. Children are chosen to participate by their teachers, who are guided by the program to designate for help those who are performing in the third quartile. In May 1999, the program was renamed USC Readers Plus, with the addition of 19 math mentors (America Counts) working with the literacy tutors.
The University Context

President Steven B. Sample, responding to the riots and looting near the campus after the Rodney King verdict, determined that USC would become an engine for change in the neighborhoods surrounding the university. Refocusing outreach programs to serve the area bounded by the 110 and 10 freeways, Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, and Western Avenue, the university has created programs and partnerships that have helped to define and achieve community goals.

Specifically, the University helped initiate the USC Family of Five Schools, which includes Vermont Elementary, Norwood Street Elementary, Lenicia B. Weemes Elementary, James A. Foshay Learning Center and 32nd Street/USC Magnet Center. USC Readers Plus and other USC programs operate in these five schools.

To support the educational efforts in these schools, USC has partnered with local police and community groups to organize Kid Watch, which mobilizes 600 volunteers to provide safe corridors and havens for children walking and playing in the neighborhood. Through its Neighborhood Academic Initiative, USC helps neighborhood children qualify for admission to USC and other higher education institutions. NAI offers a full complement of educational and social service programs to low-income, at-risk, minority scholars and their families. Counselors, teachers and tutors work with the youngsters and their parents before and after school and on Saturdays. The rigorous program, which begins in 7th grade, graduated its first class two years ago, and promises four-and-a-half-year full tuition scholarships to USC for those that qualify.

The Joint Educational Project (JEP), an “academic program with a service as an educational tool,” has coordinated USC’s service-learning program since 1972, and provides volunteer experiences for more than 800 students enrolled in more than 50 courses each semester. JEP partners with the Family of Five and 8 other schools, as well as 10 community-based organizations. JEP also coordinates a growing program for staff, faculty, and alumni volunteers. USC Readers Plus operates from the JEP.

The University’s commitment to the neighborhood is exemplified by its decision to focus United Way funds donated by employees and faculty on the University Park neighborhood. Since 1994, the USC Good Neighborhood Campaign has more than doubled the usual staff contributions, precisely because the funds serve the surrounding neighborhood. Additional fees that students assess themselves also are funneled into campus-based programs that serve the surrounding neighborhood.

The Neighborhood Schools Context

The Family of Five schools represent low-income Hispanics/Latinos and blacks, with a small minority of Asians and whites. The older neighborhood of single family houses and apartment buildings has seen waves of immigrants and ethnic groups; the current transition is from predominantly black to more Hispanic residents. The schools are all old. Although temporary (now permanent) bungalows have been placed on the grounds, all of the schools are badly overcrowded. To accommodate the numbers of children, all schools but 32nd Street operate year-round and utilize three or four tracks that move at different schedules, creating havoc for families and discontinuity for programs serving the students. Despite complex scheduling, the elementary schools, whose lower-grade classes have been reduced to 20 pupils or less, are using every inch of space.

Foshay began as a middle school, and recently has added an elementary program and a highly selective high school. The elementary school is not year-round, but the middle and high school programs are. Students have painted the interior walls with wildly imaginative designs, and the classrooms are bright and stimulating. Equipment and furniture are old. Foshay is led by a principal (recently named California Principal of the Year) who is an energetic and persuasive advocate for his school. He proudly recites the achievements of the school’s programs and graduates, yet despair that the average 6th grader reads at the third-grade level.

The reading program at Foshay is supplemented by a fairly large volunteer component, HOSTS, that utilizes USC undergraduates, graduate students, alumni and staff, and other business volunteers.

Norwood Street Elementary’s pupils are 98 percent Hispanic and all receive free or reduced-price lunches. Seventy-eight percent of the students are limited in their English proficiency. Norwood’s principal has made literacy her central goal, and has worked hard to renovate the library and get donations of computers and books. The new shelves are far from filled, but the bright surroundings are now a draw for the school’s students.

Vermont Avenue Elementary School’s students are 90 percent Hispanic and 8.5 percent black. Sixty percent of the students are limited in their English proficiency, and only one child in the school is not eligible for free breakfast, lunch and snack. Parent involvement at Vermont Avenue is poor, but a Parent Institute has just been offered, and 300 parents attended the first session of the eight-week seminar. Vermont Avenue also has renovated its library.

The principal of Lenicia B. Weemes School, moving toward the end of a 40-year career in public education, is frustrated by the system that has passed over her school for special programs. Her school’s most recent “honor” is being named one of the 100 worst schools, but she points out that Weemes students achievement on recent tests are higher than other schools that do not have additional resources from the school district.
or other grants. The 1750 students are crammed into old buildings and "bungalows" and represent a mix of Hispanics (55%) and African-Americans (45%).

**USC Readers Plus**

**Organization**

USC Readers Plus’s director is supported by a general coordinator, a student who was a coordinator at Foshay, and before that, a Reader. A critical component of the project’s organization—recognized by USC and the schools—are the coordinators who are placed at each of the school sites. The coordinators, USC students with experience as Readers, direct the tutor activities at the sites, including scheduling, relations with staff and teachers, and also act as mentors for the readers. In schools with rooms or areas set aside for Readers, they supply materials and keep files and correspondence up-to-date. The coordinators, who are on site 15 to 20 hours a week, work closely with the school’s principal and advocate for the program with teachers and staff. In the summer, coordinators are able to work as much as 40 hours a week and are paid with matching funds or out of nonfederal sources.

An AmeriCorps*VISTA assigned to USC Readers at Norwood Avenue has been working with parents to support their children who are in the tutoring program.

**The USC Readers**

The USC Readers, chosen from the pool of students who receive financial aid, are recruited through letters, job and volunteer fairs, newspapers, advertisements, and banners on campus. Students apply to USC Readers, and they are accepted on the strength of their resumes and recommendations. To be eligible, Readers must have a work-study award of $2500 or more. They are paid $7 an hour.

Readers are trained, assigned to young students, and begin tutoring 8-10 hours a week. Readers attend weekly staff meetings led by the site coordinator, and report their hours on forms that are forwarded to the main office. Each week they communicate their pupils’ progress to their teachers. The USC Readers receive in-service training at least three times during the year. In the first session, Readers use several tools to help judge their pupils’ interest and skill levels: the "Garfield" Attitude Survey, Running Records, which helps judge the reading level, and the Alphabet Assessment Survey. These assessments are repeated in eight or twelve weeks, depending on the tracking schedule.

Readers usually are able to use school library materials and books, and several USC Readers sites have books and activities assigned for their use. Over the two-year period, coordinators have negotiated donations of paper and other supplies.

While a number of USC Readers have dropped out of the program (and a few were dropped), the Readers have held up their year-long contractual obligations, and many are serving for a second or third year. Surprisingly, the summer program includes nearly the same number of USC students as the regular academic terms.

**Training**

There is an eight-hour training session for new Readers that includes the following elements: cueing systems, creating activities, choosing literature and oral reading, writing and language development, assessment and evaluation, and an orientation to the community.

In-service trainings respond to Readers’ needs and present additional material and tools. Weekly staff meetings also allow for responses to Readers’ questions about tutoring sessions. The site coordinators also help USC Readers during tutoring sessions.

**The tutoring sessions**

Except in a few instances, the USC Readers program is conducted outside the classroom. Readers go to the classrooms and take the children to a USC Readers room, the school library, or other quiet place for the tutoring session. The program is book-centered, and Readers use a variety of materials in tutoring their children in reading and activities related to the books. Readers also work with children on phonics and reading-related games and activities. Readers are encouraged to develop activities for their tutees that can be reproduced and used by other tutors. Sessions last 30 to 45 minutes, and the children are then returned to the classroom. USC Readers meet with their tutees two or three times a week. Because of the chaotic tracking schedules in most schools, the number of tutees that the USC Readers help during the year varies, but generally they work with 2 or 3 pupils.

**Mathematics component**

In May 1999, USC Work-Study students were recruited and trained to tutor K-8th grade children in the Family of Five schools. They began their work in the summer term. A significant recruitment effort was instituted for the fall term, and the program now includes about 40 trained tutors. Rather than keep the two programs separate, USC has chosen to give additional training to Readers who are interested in tutoring mathematics as well as reading. In schools like Foshay and 32nd Street, with K-12 programs, these tutors can serve a wider age group without moving between school sites.

The first training in mathematics tutoring was presented in five half-day segments during one week, and included instruction, site orientations and observations. Students were introduced to formative assessment, tutoring methods, review of mathematics concepts and practice, orientation to web-based and other mathematics resources, and use of manipulatives. The math tutors also receive regular in-service trainings and meet weekly with site coordinators for problem-solving and coaching on their assignments.
Tracking tutor activity

USC has developed several communications forms for the tutors. On the USC Readers Plus Weekly Log, tutors indicate their tutees' name, grade, gender and ethnicity, the numbers of contact hours, and the type of tutoring they provided during the week (one-on-one or small group: reading or math). They also report any additional hours. Each week, the form presents tutors with an exercise—for example, to describe two of their tutees, and list the goals for their tutoring sessions. Tutors also use another form to communicate with and receive feedback and insights from their tutees' teacher. The work reports and teacher communication forms are reviewed by the site coordinators and forwarded to the directors for her review and assessment. Coordinators meet regularly with the director and her chief coordinator to plan additional training and survey the project's activities. Every few weeks, the Readers receive a newsletter from the USC Readers Plus office, relating information, sharing resources, and relating reflections from Readers and their learners.

Tracking young students' progress

USC has attempted to develop assessment tools that tutors can use to gauge their learners' reading levels and to determine the young students' progress during the tutoring sessions. Assessment has been difficult, since tutees' schedules vary considerably from track to track. A recent report on progress on the Garfield Attitude Survey, the Alphabet Assessment Survey and Running Records was based on a sample of students on one track in each of the five schools. Results from pre- and post-tests of the three measures were as follows:

Attitudes—A total of 41 students were tested. Of those, 83 percent of the students with whom USC Readers worked improved their attitudes about reading.

Letter/Sound Recognition—The Alphabet Assessment was administered to 16 students in the test sample. Sixty-nine percent of the students working with a USC Reader improved in letter recognition and 75 percent improved their knowledge of letter sounds.

Reading Accuracy—Using results from Running Records, 28 students were gauged in improvement on reading accuracy, either by improving their accuracy in reading at the same pre-and post-test reading level, or by improving so that they are reading at a higher reading level from the pre-test to the post-test. Sixty-one percent of the students who worked with a USC Reader improved their reading accuracy. Nearly half of those student improved by at least one grade level.

USC Readers will begin assessing comprehension measures in the 1999–2000 academic year.

Program leaders are not satisfied with the current assessment process and hope to build in more consistency and improve data gathering. They are hoping to work with the schools to integrate reading test scores and other measures to increase the accuracy of their assessment, and they are seeking researchers in USC's Department of Education to help in developing long-term studies of young students in the Readers and Readers Plus programs.

Elements of Success

When asked why he feels the USC Readers Plus has been so successful, the JEP director related that JEP and the university made good decisions early: 1) to work with the neighborhood boundaries and to focus resources on the Family of Five schools, 2) to commit to developing a long-term relationship with the schools and with their children, and 3) to place a program coordinator in the schools.

Along the way, other decisions were made that honed the program: 1) to focus reading efforts on children in the third quartile of reading achievement, 2) to move toward having a separate space in each school for the USC Readers Plus tutoring activities (which also creates a "headquarters" and a place where tutors interact with the coordinator and each other), 3) to intensify inservice training, 4) to keep the tutoring sessions book-focused, but add activities created by the tutors themselves, 5) to create communications and reporting forms that inform the teachers and JEP staff of problems and progress. These processes have led to the addition of a parental support element, begun at Norwood with the addition of a VISTA this year, and expanding to another school in the upcoming term.

The organizational arrangements and scheduling presented a number of unexpected advantages: 1) placing USC Readers Plus in JEP has allowed students in service-learning courses, other student, staff, and community volunteers to be added to the projects in the schools with greater ease, 2) the year-round school schedule allows USC Readers to work a heavier schedule in the summer, and gives the tutors and children more time together; the summer schedule allowed USC to begin its reading and its mathematics tutoring earlier than other colleges.

In the case of USC, success does not come automatically or cheaply. Recruiting, training, coordinating, administering, assessing and expanding a program as complicated and comprehensive as USC Readers Plus requires critical elements: 1) a university administration deeply committed to the program, 2) a financial aid staff that is willing to commit enormous effort and creativity to work on behalf of the students and support the off-campus program, 3) a visionary leader at JEP who sees the possibilities and the opportunities for the university, its students and the community, and translates the vision to other decision-makers, 3) dedicated staff and coordinators who manage the paperwork, communication, and respond to changing realities (new principals, teacher turnover, student schedules, transportation, to name a few), and open-minded and willing school personnel who welcome and provide for the program in the schools.
The America Reads Program at Glendale Community College is known as Ready to Read. It began in 1997 with support of an AmeriCorps grant administered by the Chancellor’s office for institutions in the California Community College system. The purpose of the system grant, which is reflected in Glendale’s program, is to provide welfare (Temporary Aid for Needy Families-TANF) recipients with education and work opportunities. Thus, Glendale’s tutors are part-time (900 hours a year) AmeriCorps participants who serve while participating full-time in college. The tutors who are TANF recipients receive welfare benefits, including childcare, and Federal Work-Study awards, supplemented, if necessary, with college funds. Ready to Read also includes students who are receiving only Federal Work-Study awards. Sixty members work 20 hours a week during the school year and full-time in the summer tutoring preschool children in Head Start and other child development centers. Currently, pay is set at the federal minimum wage of $5.15 an hour.
The College Context

Glendale Community College has been an established fixture in the Los Angeles area for more than 60 years. The College prides itself on the large percentage of students who complete the two-year curriculum and transfer to four-year institutions, despite the large number of students (60%) whose first language is not English and the relatively low economic status of students (one-third Pell Grant recipients, one-half receive tuition remission). The college serves 15,000 students from Glendale and the broader Los Angeles area. The student body is a mix of cultures—Hispanic, Asian, Filipino, and African American. In addition, a large enclave of Soviet Armenian refugees in the Glendale area supplies the largest cultural group on the Glendale campus. The College sees itself as strongly committed to its students and has developed a significant array of academic and support services, including a large full-time faculty and peer tutoring services by students who receive Federal Work-Study.

The current president, Dr. John Davitt, an ardent community volunteer himself, embraced very early the importance of offering volunteer and service-learning activities for Glendale students. It is said that President Davitt’s activity and “presence dominates the culture of the college,” and are exemplified in the well-established Volunteer and Service-Learning Office on campus and active membership in Campus Compact at the state and national levels. Co-curricular activities are considered an integral part of a student’s education, and the College supports and encourages a strong and active student government and promotes student leadership through mentoring and coursework.

The Volunteer and Service-Learning Office, started with an AmeriCorps grant, is now funded from general fund monies, and places 1000 students a semester in agencies across Los Angeles County. In 1998-1999 forty-five faculty offered service-learning in fifty courses enrolling 500-700 students per semester. Glendale recently reorganized its service and outreach efforts and placed them under the Dean of Student Services, who reports directly to a Glendale Vice President. The new arrangement allows for better coordination and collaboration among service programs, and affords more formal links through the Vice President to academic programs. At the conclusion of major renovations this year, these programs, including America Reads, will be brought together at the student center in the heart of campus.

Early Childhood Education and Tutor Placements

Ready to Read activities are developed in cooperation with the Early Childhood Education program at Glendale. The Ready to Read tutors are now required to take a three-credit course co-presented by Ready to Read staff and instructors from the early childhood education program, for which they receive 3 credits. TANF tutors also are enrolled in at least two other courses a semester (and one in the summer) in the early childhood program, including laboratory school observation and practice. The tutors’ program is designed to qualify them to move them into paid staff positions in early childhood programs at the end of their year’s service.

Ready to Read tutors are placed in seven Head Start centers in Glendale and Pasadena, four early childhood centers operated by the Glendale Unified School District, the Highland Park Children’s Center, Hathaway Children’s Service (which serves abused and neglected children referred by the court system), the Westminster Children’s Center, and Infant and Toddler House. In the summer other sites, including the YMCA Domestic Violence Project, are added to allow tutors to acquire more tutoring hours. All of the centers serve low income children.

Ready to Read

Organization

Glendale College’s Ready to Read operates as an AmeriCorps program. The director is assisted by program and clerical staff. An AmeriCorps*VISTA member is responsible for recruitment, orientation, and general coordination, including tracking AmeriCorps and FWS hours and background checks. She also provides liaison with the tutors, offering insight into their training and support needs. Directors or family service advisors at the various Head Start and early childhood centers provide supervision and mentoring at the sites.

Ready to Read Tutors

Glendale’s Ready to Read program was established as a way to serve welfare recipients through the state’s CalWorks program along with other students eligible for Federal Work-Study. The TANF recipients, mostly mothers of small children, are recruited from the community in an aggressive program. Beginning in the spring, Ready to Read staff recruits participants at GAIN clubs (job hunting sessions required by CalWorks), Head Start parent meetings, through advertisements in local and neighborhood newspapers, and flyers distributed in the schools and the
community. Other FWS students are placed in Ready to Read by the Job Placement Office at Glendale. Potential community and FWS participants are invited to attend one of a series of eleven 2-hour orientation sessions to learn about benefits of the program and how to join. While the formal program does not begin until August, TANF recruits are encouraged to begin taking courses at the college during the summer. The TANF tutors are guided through the bureaucratic maze of CalWorks, college eligibility and matriculation, application for Federal Work Study, fingerprinting and other requirements. At the beginning of the semester, tutors receive two-and-a-half days of preservice orientation and training. Beginning this year, they are required to enroll in a one-semester course for which they receive credit.

Tutors are interviewed and placed at appropriate sites for their experience and scheduling needs. At least two tutors are assigned to each site. Teachers meet with the tutors each week to plan activities and respond to concerns. The tutors are in constant contact with Ready to Read staff through the required course, which is offered in two sections. Tutors evaluate the site after they have served two to three weeks and make suggestions to improve their experience. Several times a semester, site mentors evaluate the tutors. The written reports are reviewed by the tutor and mentor together, and signed by the tutor. The Ready to Read director makes site visits often during the year.

Training
Training for Ready to Read tutors has evolved over the life of the project. This year, the weekly seminar will rely on (or adapt) a new literacy/tutoring handbook and tape developed by the California Community College system. The course also will rely on preservice training approaches instituted for AmeriCorps America Reads and AmeriCorps "VISTA. Course instructors also will use material developed and adapted by Glendale's program over the past two years, and tutors will hear from guest speakers from the campus and the community. Throughout the semester, tutors will make journal entries on topics highlighted in the weekly session or in the readings. Journals are collected and surveyed by the instructors, who respond in the class session to questions, themes, or concerns reflected in the prior week's journals. The individual classes consist of academic instruction on reading theory and practice, problem-solving, role playing, and reflection. For the TANF students, class participation and writing are critical to their growth as students and as individuals, as they gain greater skill in expressing their ideas and emotions in the context of their tutoring.

Tutoring Sessions
Ready to Read Tutors are half-time AmeriCorps members, and they are required to provide 900 hours of service per year, roughly equivalent of 20 hours a week. Thus, Ready to Read tutors interact with more children than other programs. In addition, their classroom activity may include several approaches appropriate to the age and maturation of preschool children. Generally, the sessions are teacher-directed, but tutors also develop lessons and activities for the children, with assistance from the teacher. These may involve singing, reading, puppetry, crafts, storytelling, or identifying colors, numbers, and letters. Tutors may be engaged with one child, or with children in a small group. Literacy is integrated into all tutors' activities with the children.

Supporting tutors' progress
While the Glendale College program concentrates on helping young children prepare to succeed in school, it also has an equally important mission in helping TANF recipients prepare to join the workforce. Thus, Glendale has created systems to support the needs of these special students. The college insures that financial supports are available through Federal Work Study and other aid. The financial aid office's job placement staff is very flexible and creative in helping these students, including solving eligibility problems (for example, a number of students have lost eligibility for federal financial aid because they have not paid back earlier educational loans). The Volunteer and Service-Learning staff have recruited faculty and other staff who mentor the new students. The Ready to Read director and her colleagues are in constant communication with county officials and other agencies to assure that welfare, childcare and other social services continue to be provided. The Early Childhood Education program has created a "gateway" course for the tutors, a lower level introductory academic and laboratory course that suits their needs, and has held places for the tutors' children in the laboratory school and evening childcare. As a result, the retention rate of Glendale's AmeriCorps America Reads program is 72 percent.

In addition, the program has provided a way for many of the tutors to make significant changes in their personal lives. In a moving and emotional meeting with five tutors who were nearing the end of their year-long commitment, I heard these women relate how the program had opened new opportunities for them and given them independence and confidence. One spoke about how she had become more assertive with her husband, and was now able to go to church and be involved in other activities in the community. Another said that the program had intro-
duced her to a lifestyle outside the home that she could not have easily engaged as an immigrant from the former Soviet Armenia. The women told of volunteering to read to children in a hospital, and setting up a children's room with a library at the YMCA domestic violence center. All agreed that they understand and are better able to respond to their own children's needs and they feel that their training has helped them be better mothers. All were articulate and eager to contribute to the conversation. (In contrast, I sat in a class of new tutors, whose anxiety, reticence and "issues" filled the room. Their discomfort with writing and their unwillingness to engage in a listening activity was clear. Yet, the Ready to Read director observed, the women I interviewed had been equally anxious and withdrawn in the beginning of the program.)

**Tracking children's progress**

Tracking preschoolers' progress in literacy is more difficult than tracking progress of grade schoolers. Currently, tutors use an inventory of emergent literacy and preschool age skills developed by Long Beach City College. The tutors use the checklist to record the children's skills after three weeks of tutoring, midyear, and at the end of the year. In earlier years, Ready to Read tried to collect and assess portfolios of children's work and attempted to track progress by using a log, but both were very complicated and did not yield useful information. Glendale is continuing to look for other instruments that can be administered to preschoolers.

**Advisory Board**

As a requirement of the AmeriCorps grant, Glendale's Ready to Read program formed an advisory committee that meets twice a year. The members represent agencies and organizations that have a stake in the program, including representatives from the county welfare office, the City of Glendale, the office of the local state senator, the public library, the college volunteer and service-learning office, and the Head Start and child development sites.

**Events and Gatherings**

In late September ceremony attended by the Member of Congress and state legislators from the Glendale area, Glendale's Ready to Read tutors are sworn in as AmeriCorps members. Usually, one or more of the political guests speaks, and there is a reception. At the end of the service year, there is a graduation ceremony for the students that include college personnel and family members. At other times, there are picnics and potluck meals that bring the tutors together as a group.

**Tell Me A Story**

While I was at Glendale, I was introduced to the director of another AmeriCorps project at the college. Tell Me A Story is a full-time AmeriCorps project that engages mostly young high school graduates in one-on-one tutoring of first, second, and third graders during the day, and an after-school program that involves acting out stories that the children read. The program operates in school districts in "forgotten neighborhood" in Highland Park, South Glendale, South Pasadena, and Eagle Rock. No one at Glendale had considered Tell Me a Story an America Reads program, since it is an AmeriCorps project. Yet the program also employs eight Glendale students who receive pay for part-time (900 hours) work through Federal Work-Study. An added bonus at Glendale!

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San Francisco State University

San Francisco State University is celebrating its centennial in 1999, and proudly calls itself "the City's University." SFSU's commitment to the city of San Francisco is exemplified through the myriad programs of the San Francisco Urban Institute, the Marian Wright Edelman Institute for the Study of Children, Youth and Families, which administers Head Start for the city, and other services such as Community Science Centers, and academic programs that engage the city as a laboratory and its residents in its teaching. During the last fifty years, SFSU's student body has been known for its activism. Many of San Francisco's political leaders, including Mayor Willie Brown and California Senate President Pro Temp John Burton, honed their skills during their college years at SFSU. Through the Community Involvement Center, thousands of other students have served as volunteers in the City's neighborhoods and agencies.
In the 1990s, SFSU’s President Robert Corrigan has helped encourage and refine the campus’s natural activism through creation of the Office of Community Service Learning and advanced development of service-learning courses throughout the curriculum. Currently, students can take advantage of an array of more than 85 courses that offer community service as a learning experience. President Corrigan chairs the California Campus Compact, whose office is located at SFSU, and has brought Thomas Ehrlich, the founder of Campus Compact, to the campus as Distinguished CSU Professor. Thus, in December 1996, when President Clinton announced the creation of the America Reads Challenge, he turned to Corrigan to chair the Steering Committee of College and University Presidents.

President Clinton asked colleges to pledge at least 50 percent of an increase in their Federal Work-Study funds to America Reads; Corrigan pledged 100 percent. He then turned to his School of Education and the Office of Financial Aid to determine how SFSU would respond to President Clinton’s call, and the Dean of Education chose a professor in the College of Education to design a program.

This America Reads project received a Learn and Serve Grant from the Corporation for National Service in early 1997, and with the $220,000 in Federal Work-Study funds in hand, the program began.

SFSU America Reads

To become a licensed teacher in California, students must complete their undergraduate coursework in a major before continuing additional work toward their credential. Over the years, the liberal studies major in CSU institutions has attracted students who are interested in teaching as a career because it allows them to attain all the prerequisites of the credential course in their undergraduate years. SFSU’s America Reads program was designed primarily to serve students who intend to become teachers.

In the first year (1997-98), students were recruited exclusively out of the pool of Federal Work-Study eligible liberal studies major. While this requirement has softened in subsequent years, the thrust of instruction and training has remained focused on enhancing the undergraduate experience for potential teachers.

The School of Education has developed such confidence in America Reads as worthy experience that SFSU students who complete a year of tutoring are given special entry into the teacher credential program. Last year, 12 graduates of America Reads enrolled in the credential program.

Recruitment

The Office of Financial Aid spearheaded the recruitment effort in the spring of 1997 by including in students’ financial aid award letters information about the opportunity to work as a tutor in America Reads. (This continues to be the most important recruitment tool.) Tutors are paid $9.05 an hour. Flyers, advertisements, informational sessions, and word of mouth also help in spreading the word. Students apply for positions in the spring for the following semester and are interviewed before being chosen for tutoring positions. Fall recruitment seeks to replace students who have had to leave the program before finishing out the year.

Training

Students receive 10 hours of preservice training before the fall semester begins, and they are required to enroll in a three-hour course in the first semester. The preservice session is designed to give the students an introduction to America Reads and the SFSU program, an overview of literacy tutoring, basic information about the children and the schools, an outline of requirements and expectations, details of record-keeping, and other logistics.

The semester-long course, taught by SFSU professors, meets in two sections every two weeks and concentrates on various aspects of literacy tutoring: read-aloud, shared reading, guided reading, word play and phonics. The course uses two textbooks, Phonics from A to Z and Help America Read. Tutors are given resource books that include outline notes from the course, written descriptions of activities and strategies for tutors, games, and suggestions of “things that work” from other tutors. The resource materials are kept in ring binders that can be added to during the year. The pass/fail course considers the tutor’s demeanor, responsibility, spirit and flexibility in assessing the grade, and requires participation in class activities, positive recommendation of teachers and site coordinators, and other written work, including “quick writes” on themes (such as “one unresolved problem…”). There is also a mid-term and a final exam. The examinations may include exercises such as the tutor’s assessment of the progress of his or her tutees, or development of the tutor’s plan for using a passage of text or a story in a tutoring session.

During the second semester, tutors receive one academic credit for attending periodic training sessions that generally center on strategies and problem-solving. In the spring 2000 term, the subject matter will be expanded to include more focus on community involvement, with speakers who represent various constituencies. Beginning this fall, returning tutors are enrolled in a one-unit course that concentrates on leadership skills and includes training in diagnostic testing of children.
Organization

A professor in the College of Education directs the SFSU America Reads program. Two additional professors conduct the course, and another faculty member provides liaison with the sites. At each of the 12 schools, a mentor teacher has been selected to work with the America Reads tutors. The teachers are paid a stipend from the Learn and Serve grant for their extra service. The America Reads director conducts an orientation meeting for teacher mentors at the beginning of the school year; during the year, SFSU liaison meets with site mentors regularly. The director also meets with new principals and third grade teachers at the beginning of the year.

The mentor teachers meet regularly with the tutors, and ideally, see them every day, if only to greet them. America Reads team leaders, who are second-year tutors, help with scheduling, oversee hours and other paperwork for the tutors, and take care of other administrative chores. In addition to their own tutoring, team leaders also provide peer counseling for the tutors and help develop games and other activities. Team leaders have replaced AmeriCorps*VISTA coordinators who served in the first year, and have been invaluable to the mentor teachers and the tutors alike. Another San Francisco State professor conducts a formal evaluation each year.

Each of the sites is supplied with a large bin of books, materials and supplies (paper, scissors, markers, tape, crayons) for the tutors' use in the tutoring sessions.

The tutoring session

In most San Francisco schools, there are no separate space for tutors to gather or to take their children to tutoring. (The Daly City school provides space in hallways for tutoring.) Therefore, most tutoring session are conducted in the classrooms at a table slightly separated from the other students. The one-on-one tutoring session usually lasts about 45 minutes and includes 15 minutes of reading aloud, 15 minutes of shared or guided reading, and 15 minutes of games and activities concentrating on phonics or other word-based exercises. The session may also include written conversations between the tutor and the child. Tutors make a lesson plan for each student's session that can vary with the student's interest and need. Tutors meet with their tutees three times a week and usually are assigned to work with three children. Tutors also keep a log of each session, noting the session's activities and the pupil's success in completing the lesson. The lessons are not based on the reading that the child is doing in the classroom, but rather respond to the child's interests, needs, and ability. As much as possible, pupils who are learning English are paired with bilingual tutors.

The schools

San Francisco Unified School District reflects the diversity and the needs of the families of this great city. The schools are woefully under-funded in areas such as music and art and many lack staff and resources. Elementary school libraries are often depleted, and few have librarians. Class-size reduction has cut down on overcrowding in individual classrooms, but it has pushed schools beyond their ability to create new classrooms to house the children. There is a teacher shortage, coupled with principal and teacher turnover that make stability and coordination difficult. In addition, the 12 America Reads schools reflect the incredible cultural and ethnic diversity of the city. In some schools, more than half of the students are English language learners. Their native tongues are an array of Asian, Southeast Asian, Spanish, eastern European, African and Indian languages and dialects, which complicate teaching and learning. Notwithstanding these factors, and despite turnover of three of the twelve principals this year, America Reads has been able to continue in the same elementary schools since 1997.

The SFSU America Reads program focuses on tutoring third graders. Children are referred to America Reads by their teachers based on reading test scores and teachers' perception that tutoring will help the children improve their literacy. The teachers are instructed to choose only pupils whose reading scores fall in the third percentile (the level felt to best benefit from additional tutoring) and most comply.

Evaluation

Each year, SFSU America Reads conducts a formal evaluation of the project. In the 1998 and 1999 evaluations, undergraduate tutors were questioned about the two semesters of coursework and other aspects of the overall project. In addition, classroom teachers, site mentor teachers, and principals also were asked to evaluate tutors and to judge their impact of the program on their pupils' reading progress. Based on the 1998 evaluation, the America Reads director incorporated changes that responded to concerns expressed in the surveys. These improvements raised the overall assessment of the second year's America Reads program.

In 1999, tutors rated the coursework very favorably, especially noting the quality of the instructors and the worth of sharing experiences with their peers and the instructor. Tutors felt very positive about the America Reads program overall and believe they helped their tutees progress in their reading ability and their attitude toward reading. Overwhelmingly, they also see their experience as a valuable learning experience in preparation for a teaching career.
Teachers, site mentors and principals were very positive in their ratings of the quality of tutoring and the commitment, flexibility and relationship of the tutors with the children. All of the teachers reported that their pupils progressed in their reading skills. The site mentors and principals mirrored these positive responses.

The evaluation also reviewed the tutees' scores on the San Diego Quick Assessment (word recognition) and the Bader Reading Comprehension Inventory. On the first assessment, only 45 percent of third graders who took the test before they were coached by America Reads tutors were able to identify at least half the words on the third grade list. By the end of the tutoring period, 70 percent of the children had mastered half the list's words (a 58% gain). On the Bader inventory, children moved from 73 percent at the third grade level to 97 percent at that level in the post-test. (Comparisons on the STAR-9 reading test for 2nd and 3rd grade are forthcoming.)

End-of-the-year celebration

At the end of the first year of the America Reads program, the university hosted a celebration, inviting children, families, tutors, teachers and school administrators for lunch and presentations. For the second year's celebration, the America Reads director engaged faculty and students from a course entitled "Urban Physical Education" to design, organize and produce a day of outdoor activities for the children, families, tutors and teachers. The class set up games and competitions that appealed to all ages attending the celebration. There were presentations and food, and children were given gifts and prizes. The day was so successful that the program's director is planning to extend the university involvement to art and drama faculty and students for the 1999-2000 celebration.

Other tutoring programs using Federal Work-Study

In 1998-99, the Partners program, funded under the provisions of state legislation (SB 316), employed another 49 SFSU students who receive Federal Work-Study funds. These students were trained in a semester-long class similar to the America Reads course but led by a SFUSD reading specialist, and worked in six middle and six elementary schools tutoring children in reading using an intervention strategy known as "Phono-Graphix."

In the 1998-1999 academic year, SFSU's commitment of FWS funds to the three programs totals $469,000 of the SFSU allocation $1.6 million.

Elements of Success

A key to success of SFSU's America Reads program is the intense commitment of SFSU's president. His leadership emboldened the student financial aid office to think and act creatively in establishing new recruitment methods, moving out into the classroom to work with students to complete their forms and deal with other requirements. In addition, the financial aid office aggressively has sought other sources of FWS funds—reallocated and special use—to use for participants in America Reads.

The Learn and Serve grant has supported the program's administration and allowed it to engage faculty experts to train and supervise the tutors and evaluate the program's effectiveness.

The formal evaluation has enabled the America Reads director, trainers, and school personnel to analyze the strengths and correct the weaknesses pointed out by interpretation of the questionnaires. In the coming year, for example, training will include instruction in English as a Second Language (ESL) and include a section of multicultural understanding—both requested by the tutors in their evaluation.

Through the concentration on liberal studies majors as reading tutors, America Reads has created an excellent way for undergraduates to participate in, observe, and consider teaching as a profession, and to gain useful experience to prepare them well for the teacher credential program. In addition, by giving successful America Reads tutors an advantage in entering the credential program, SFSU has created a pipeline for undergraduates to the teaching profession.
In July 1995, Regents of the University of California (UC) voted to end affirmative action in admissions, halting a practice that attempted to balance the student body to reflect the general ethnic, and regional composition of recent high school graduates in California. For UC Berkeley, the most selective university in the UC system, affirmative action in admissions had helped diversify undergraduate and graduate programs across the board. After the Regents’ ruling, Berkeley Chancellor Tien moved to create other acceptable approaches to attract underrepresented students to the university. The Berkeley Pledge was born out of the University’s determination that the university itself would have to be engaged in developing a larger pool of minority students on whom Berkeley could draw to fill its classes. After many discussions with Bay Area schools and school district leaders, the university decided to commit its resources to students in the Berkeley, Oakland, San Francisco, and West Contra Costa school districts. Chancellor Tien committed an initial $1 million to the Berkeley Pledge and promised to raise additional funds to support the outreach efforts.
By early 1997, the Berkeley Pledge had surveyed its outreach programs and discovered wide service gaps, particularly with elementary schools. Operating through the Graduate School of Education, the Pledge issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) to members of the university community to provide literacy services to children in the four school districts. Participation in America Reads seemed natural, and five strong proposals emerged to deliver assistance to young children in reading. These five projects make up the America Reads program at UC Berkeley.

Organization

As in other exemplary America Reads programs, leadership by key personnel is critical to success. The Berkeley Pledge director is part of the Chancellor’s office, and her vision pervades the America Reads projects. The Director of the Excellence in Outreach and Collaboration in the Graduate School of Education coordinates the five projects.

Berkeley’s financial aid staff were critical partners in establishing America Reads on the campus. Student employment staff had experience managing other community-based projects and were eager to commit FWS resources to expanding off-campus work opportunities in literacy tutoring projects.

Students are recruited for the five America Reads projects by the financial aid office and by other means—flyers and advertisements, for example—and interested students are referred to the coordinator, who presents the students with the array of tutoring opportunities and refers them to projects that interest them. Each project chooses its tutors, and the coordinator oversees the administrative details of hiring the students. The business office of the Graduate School of Education manages the payroll, but the project supervisor and the coordinator review students’ time sheets. Currently, 69 students are receiving Federal Work-Study awards and are paid $8.71 an hour for work in America Reads programs at Berkeley.

The Projects

The three America Reads projects directed by faculty are heavily research-based, with extensive training, supervision and evaluation. Below is a description of each of these projects.

UC Links

UC Links was originally conceived as a program using computer software to teach mathematics and reading. When UC Links became part of the Berkeley Pledge as an America Reads program, the computer reading component was supplemented by an enlarged print-related curriculum. Undergraduate students participating in the program are enrolled in a formal one-semester service-learning course, "Practicum in Early Development in Education," which covers topics such as early literacy and math, phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency, and word recognition. The course also includes readings and discussions on cross-cultural and cross-national early childhood education.

Thirty to thirty-five Berkeley students, including Federal Work-Study recipients, are placed as tutors in an extended day program at Columbus School in Berkeley. Harding Elementary School in El Cerrito uses UC Links tutors in regular class time. At Harding, tutors work with 8-10 students chosen by teachers in the first, second, and third grades (25 total). In the sessions, tutors lead group activities such as language games and reading.

At Columbus, tutors work with all the children in the after-school program. Generally, the tutors spend 20-30 minutes twice a week in one-on-one reading activities with pupils and devote additional time to mathematics instruction on the computer. (UC Berkeley has donated a number of computers to this project.) Tutors conduct pre- and post evaluations of the children, and these data are compared to a control group in the schools. Longitudinal data also have been collected on the children participating in the program. Although the rise in scores seems to decline as children get older, achievement scores of the participants have been significantly higher than expected.

Project FIRST (Foundations in Reading Through Science and Technology)

Project FIRST is a program of the Space Sciences Laboratory’s Center for Science Education and the Graduate School of Education. In Project FIRST, Federal Work-Study students work one-on-one with first graders at Hoover Elementary School, a low-performing school in Oakland whose student body is about 90 percent African-American. In this project, every child in the first grade classroom has a tutor and each tutor is assigned to two or three children. Tutors work with their children twice a week in 25-35 minute sessions. The project, developed by an astronomer at SSL, seeks to integrate technology as a way to develop literacy in young children. The science curriculum covers astronomy (the planets and stars) and weather, and includes hands-on experiments, observations, computer activities, reading and writing that have been adapted for 6-year-old understanding. In the beginning of the year, tutors work with children to develop literacy skills in activities tied to (but one week behind) the teacher’s curriculum. By December, children are introduced to the computer and the Internet. In January, tutors incorporate World Wide Web activities into their sessions.
Tutors receive six hours of preservice training and make two classroom observations. Before beginning work with the children, the tutor meets with the site coordinator to review training elements and reflect on the observations. Tutors are introduced to their tutee on the computer in short biographical sketches, illustrated with a scanned photo of themselves at age six. Tutors keep a portfolio of children's work and give simple pre-and post tests of reading and interest in science; other assessments of progress are administered by the program director and graduate student site coordinators.

The group of tutors meets with the classroom teacher once a week on the Berkeley campus for training and problem-solving, and on alternate weeks, with the Project First program director and site coordinator to review individual children’s needs.

Cal Reads

Cal Reads is a joint project of Berkeley’s Graduate School of Education (GSE) and the Berkeley Unified School District. The GSE provides expertise in the area of literacy assessment and instruction, oversees the program, and provides professional development training to tutors and teachers in the project. The school district provides space on site for administration of the project, allows release of the teacher’s time to help with coordination and supervision at each site, and contributes instructional materials. Seventeen teachers in the two schools cooperated with the project in 1998-99.

The program operates in the sixth grade at Martin Luther King and Willard Middle Schools. The program will expand this year to fourth and fifth grades at Malcolm X Middle School—all in Berkeley. These schools are described as having a “bimodal” student population. Because of voluntary desegregation in Berkeley, the schools serve the neighborhoods, but they are balanced racially across the system. To attract a mix of students each middle school has a specialty.

Cal Reads sites are supervised by graduate students who are credentialed teachers completing work to become licensed in reading (and are being trained in reading assessment and intervention practice). Students are given a battery of diagnostic tests to determine their reading levels. Reading assessments are adapted from commercially available sources and administered by graduate students who develop the lesson plans for the children. Children are selected for tutoring if they fall in the middle-to-low range of literacy for compensatory education, and the intervention is tailored to the children’s individual needs.

Tutors, who are a mix of Federal Work-Study, volunteers, and AmeriCorps participants, receive a day-and-a-half of training before being assigned to tutees, and they receive ongoing group and individual training through modeling and observation at the site.

Berkeley students work with each child three hours a week, following the lesson plan for each pupil. Middle schools present special challenges: students rotate through their classes, and even though the students at MLK and Willard have a reading period in their “modified block” schedule, the schools do not have a reading curriculum. Another factor is that middle school children are more selective in their reading, and they tend to make a distinction between “school reading” and “their” reading. As a result, site coordinators choose books and materials at their reading levels and suited to their interests. Surprisingly, the reading choices tend more toward content and less toward stories. Another element to consider is that compensatory education pupils often are dealing with issues that go far beyond their literacy needs.

Tutors work closely with their site coordinators, and conduct a written dialogue with the coordinator about each lesson—how the child reacted, what subjects interested the tutee, and what additional help the child needs.

Cal Reads conducts a constant assessment of students’ progress and has developed a complex yearly evaluation of the program. There are plans to expand the program to reach more children.

Cal Corps’ “Empowering Generation NeXt” and Stiles Hall’s Role Model/Tutor Mentor programs are somewhat different models.

Cal Corps

Founded in 1967, Cal Corps is designed to enhance Berkeley students’ educational experiences by providing community service opportunities. Empowering Generation NeXt is a project of Cal Corps, an AmeriCorps service-learning program that includes a formal service-learning curriculum for which students receive credit, that integrates the tutoring experiences with academic instruction. Twenty undergraduate Berkeley students serve as part-time AmeriCorps members (completing 900 hours a year, including part-time service during the school year and full-time service in the summer). Cal Corps members receive a stipend of $7 an hour and an educational award at the end of their service. Another ten Federal Work-Study students participate, serving along with 90-110 other Berkeley students who are enrolled in the course and volunteer to tutor reading. The course meets once a week for one hour. The program is operating at Martin Luther King, Jr. and Willard Middle Schools, and at the James Kenney Recreation Center.
AmeriCorps members serve as tutor coordinators, and receive leadership, communication, and conflict resolution training. Federal Work-Study and volunteer tutors receive preservice training that introduces them to the program, and provides information on reading tools, lesson planning, and tutoring techniques. The program uses the assessment and tutoring methods developed by Cal Reads, and relies on Cal Reads school site supervisors and teachers for ongoing training and advice. Team leaders also are involved at the sites, and they receive additional training in school policies and educational issues. They also co-teach at the site and assist in developing lesson plans.

At the schools, the tutors work with children out of the classroom in 45-minute session, divided into three 15-minute segments. Each child’s lesson is individualized. The first part concentrates on activities such as word games. The second period moves to silent reading and reading out loud, and the third includes phonics, word games or writing. The tutor reports on the session in writing to the site supervisor, who responds to the feedback in developing the next lesson for the child.

Some tutors work with children in an after-school homework and reading program at the recreation center. Less structured than the in-school program, this placement reflects more of a mentoring than an instructing model, although tutors keep journals and work on specific assignments with the children.

Tutors, teachers and administrators are surveyed in December and in May to assess their feelings of satisfaction and effectiveness. The survey also gathers information and feedback on various aspects of the program.

Stiles Hall

Founded in 1884, Stiles Hall is a private, nonprofit agency dedicated to enriching the lives of UC Berkeley students through community service. Currently, Stiles Hall provides 275 Berkeley and Oakland youth with trained volunteer mentors. The America Reads project employs 22 Federal Work-Study students to provide one-on-one tutoring to improve the reading levels of sixth grade students in West Oakland middle schools. The program is a cooperative project with the I Have a Dream Foundation in Oakland, which provides mentors and tutors for 50 children for a ten-year period with the goal of college acceptance and attendance for the young participants.

The program particularly recruits Berkeley students from inner-city backgrounds who can be models of academic success for this group of Oakland children. In 1999-2000 the children who started began in Prescott Elementary School are in sixth grade in one charter, two public schools and one Catholic school. Tutors design their own lesson plans or work with texts, with the guidance of a coordinator, three tutor leaders and the director of the I Have a Dream project. Tutors work with children on reading for three to four hours a week in a supervised environment, either in school or in after-school settings, and additional four to six hours a week with the child on campus or other settings. The tutors often spend additional volunteer time participating in activities that expand the children’s cultural horizons and future expectations.

Tutors are surveyed for feedback on the program’s operation. The survey also seeks information about their observations of the students’ progress and their own satisfaction and personal growth during the year. This cohort of children is constantly monitored by I Have a Dream, and their achievement is tracked by performance on the Qualitative Reading Inventory and yearly statewide tests.

Elements of Success

When I talked with the Berkeley Provost and current Chancellor, I asked them why they feel the America Reads program is successful overall. Both responded that the leadership of the Graduate School of Education, which began a concentration on literacy 4 or 5 years ago, is critical, since it provides the research and experiential base for developing high quality programs. Both also believe that meeting the literacy needs of children in Oakland, Berkeley, and West Contra Costa schools is satisfying work for Berkeley students and helps build the pipeline of young students to Berkeley.

Moreover, centering the America Reads program in the Berkeley Pledge helps guarantee long-term financial support and visibility for recruiting and collaboration purposes. The Pledge’s demand for assessment and evaluation also assures proper supervision and high quality in delivery of services to young children.

Berkeley’s long-term commitment to volunteer community service and embrace of service learning also strengthens the America Reads program, since opportunities are available and courses are offered to enrich the tutors’ experience.
The America Reads program at the University of San Diego (USD) began in fall 1997 and has trained and placed 40 to 45 Federal Work-Study students in five area schools each semester. Starting in September, USD has added a mathematics tutoring program—America Counts. Children are chosen to participate by their teachers in four schools, and by test scores in one school, and generally include the lowest performing students. The program operates in three public elementary schools—Kit Carson, Linda Vista, and Chesterton—and one Catholic school, Holy Family. Until now, a middle school, Montgomery Academy, has hosted only a few tutors, but the program will be expanded in the current year.
The University Context

The University of San Diego, a 50-year-old independent Catholic university, began its organized outreach to the Linda Vista neighborhood in 1986, with the founding of a Volunteer Resources Office. A grant from the Irvine Foundation in 1991 helped USD institutionalize cultural diversity, and break through the imaginary walls surrounding the university enclave on the mesa above Linda Vista. The deepening involvement in the neighborhood was spurred by development of USD’s service learning curriculum and enhanced by a Learn and Serve Grant from the Corporation for National Service. USD’s President at the time, Author Hughes, used his influence to gain financial support from San Diego civic and corporate leaders. The university also received other grants targeted for cooperative revitalization of the Linda Vista neighborhood, including a Community Outreach Partnership Grant from HUD and a Campus Compact infrastructure grant. Through these projects, the University has incorporated faculty and students in improving the economic well-being of the neighborhood, and the health and education of its citizens and children.

Guided by the Experiential Education Committee, the faculty are engaged extensively in service learning through more than 100 course offerings each year. In addition to course-based service, USD students are offered a wide array of co-curricular service opportunities through the Associated Students, fraternities and sororities, and university-wide offerings. The Office of Community Service-Learning coordinates all of these activities, with support from the Office of Student Life.

University-wide experiences, such as the Human Relations weekend and diversity trainings, are offered to staff, faculty and students, and are coordinated and sponsored by the Social Issues Committee.

The Neighborhood Schools Context

The Linda Vista community is a polyglot of cultures and ethnic groups, with a notable significant minority of Southeast Asian refugees and Asians who were settled in the neighborhood in the 1970s and 1980s. The three-square-mile Linda Vista area is isolated and densely populated for San Diego, and the houses, commercial buildings and schools are deteriorating. Renters occupy more than half of the residential properties, and many family members are crowded into very small quarters. Unemployment is higher than most areas of San Diego, and family incomes are marginal. More than 70 percent of school children are eligible for free and reduced-price breakfast and lunch. Literacy among adults is low, and education levels, especially among immigrants, are also low.

Sixty-two percent of students speak English as a second language. The schools are not especially overcrowded; students can be bussed out of the neighborhood, but none is bussed in. There are very few safe parks and insufficient after-school activities for young people. Juvenile crime is on the rise, with Linda Vista youth accounting for 23 percent of probation referrals in San Diego. There are Latino and Asian gangs in the area.

Cheserton Elementary School students, while generally reflecting the cultural and ethnic mix of the Linda Vista neighborhood, overall have fewer challenges to succeed in reading. The percentage of students classified as limited English proficient (21%) is notably lower that the other public elementary schools. As a result, second through fifth grade reading and mathematics scores are significantly higher than those in other schools (averaging the 66th percentile in reading and 69th percentile in mathematics for the four grades). Sixty percent of Cheserton’s pupils are eligible for free and reduced price lunch.

Kit Carson Elementary School children are struggling. Their reading scores for this year averaged below the 40th percentile in grades two to five. Math scores ranged from the 39th to the 52nd percentile in the four grades. Reportedly, until last year, Carson’s teachers and staff had become fractious and dispirited under the leadership of a principal who retired in 1998. Carson’s new principal worked very hard in the 1998–99 school year to rally the staff and create a more supportive atmosphere in the school. As a result, while test scores were still low, third and fifth grade reading and mathematics scores rose significantly in one year (19 points in reading and 24 points in mathematics for third grade, and 11 points in reading and 13 points in mathematics for fifth grade).

Ninety-five percent of Linda Vista Elementary School students are eligible for free lunch. Eighty-three percent are classified as limited English proficient. More than 50 percent of the students are Latino, and 26 percent are Vietnamese, Hmong, or Laotian. Except in 2nd grade reading, and third grade reading and math, Linda Vista student scores fall into the 20 to 39th percentiles. Even the higher scores in second and third grade average below the 50th percentile, and some scores went down from last year to this.

The Holy Family parish school, which includes children in K-8, is much smaller than the public schools, and represents the neighborhood mix to some degree. The individual classes are larger, but there is just one classroom for each elementary grade. Holy Family’s principal is newly assigned to the school, but she is supportive of the USD tutoring program. Teacher reaction to America Reads is more positive at
Holy Family than the public schools, probably owing to a general lack of aides and other paid helpers in the classrooms. Volunteer parental help is available, but generally only for filing or classroom cleanup. Tuition at Holy Family is $2300 a year, with some relief for needy families who belong to the parish. Most parents of children at Holy Family speak English, and reading levels are generally good. Test scores for children at Holy Family are not available.

Montgomery Academy is a middle school that serves the Linda Vista area. Eighty-six percent of Montgomery Academy's students are eligible for free lunch, and 54 percent are limited English proficient. Average reading scores for 6th, 7th and 8th grade fall from 22nd to the 33rd percentile. Math scores are comparable. Montgomery Academy will have a new principal this year. The former principal is characterized as "obstructing everything." Thus only a small number of USD tutors have been assigned to Montgomery Academy over the last two years; more students will be assigned to tutor math this year.

Change at SDUSD

In 1998 San Diego Unified School District appointed a new superintendent, a former U.S. Attorney with no prior experience in administering public education systems. He has shaken up the district by imposing new accountability standards and expecting high performance from the schools, as measured by test scores and other measures. He has reorganized the district hierarchy by eliminating deputy superintendents who are administrators and replaced them with instructional leaders who have curriculum and instructional duties. These new sets of leaders were assigned to "coach" and evaluate principals, and at the end of the first year of the new regime, the superintendent relieved 19 principals of their positions. Needless to say, the principals and the teachers have felt they were under a microscope, which created additional tension in schools across the district. Principals at Chesterton and Carson weathered the scrutiny and relate that they are in agreement with the superintendent's goals. They have participated in additional trainings offered by the district and will receive other enhancements. The Carson principal related that it was in this climate that she managed to turn around a dysfunctional school. She feels confident, at the beginning of a new school year, that the teachers and staff are with her as they seek to change the school culture and achievement.

The new system is data driven, and the emphasis is on student performance. District-wide accountability standards are now in place, with specific targets for 2000, 2004, and 2008. Accompanying the new standards are training and counseling opportunities directed by professional staff developers. Literacy is key to the elementary school standard, and all schools have adopted a new schedule that includes an expanded period during the day for reading and writing.

USD America Reads

Organization

America Reads at the University of San Diego is a project of the Office for Community Service-Learning, whose director facilitates the work of the office in supporting student-directed service, the Faculty Experiential Education Committee and the Social Issues Committee. The director of the America Reads program in the Linda Vista community is a member of the Office for Community Service-Learning. Schools were chosen for participation based on the principal and staff's interest following presentations. The 70 America Reads tutors assigned to five schools in Linda Vista are supervised at the sites by coordinators, who are paid by Federal Work-Study funds matched by the university. In the second year of the program, the coordinators were drawn from experienced tutors. Coordinators work approximately 10 hours a week, and occasionally tutor, as well. They meet weekly with the America Reads director and have primary oversight of tutor activity, in addition to communicating with teachers, record-keeping, and scheduling. The advisor to the Associated Students Community Service Program, coordinates the van transportation for USD America Reads students to schools in Linda Vista. Federal Work-Study students, with matching funds provided by the University, drive the vans. While Linda Vista schools are on a year-round schedule (with breaks in April and August), the program operates only during the USD academic year. During the April break, USD students tutor at Fletcher Elementary School, which has a traditional schedule.

The America Reads Tutors

The Director of Financial Aid at USD identified the America Reads program very early as an opportunity to expand off-campus community service for USD students as a way to "return Federal Work-Study to what was originally intended." Most undergraduates at USD are traditional, dependent students. Sixty-eight percent of all USD undergraduates receive some form of financial aid, and 13-to-14 percent of all USD students have jobs under Federal Work-Study. At least 10 percent of USD's Federal Work-Study allocation goes to students in community service placements, including $80,000 for America Reads and America Counts. The Financial Aid Office uses its Administrative Cost Allowance to supplement the additional cost of America Reads. The Office for Community
Service-Learning was chosen to administer the program, since it had experience in managing other off-campus placements.

America Reads recruits students through informational materials included in financial aid award announcement letters and during a student orientation job fair. Applicants are screened and placed in their assignments by the Office for Community Service-Learning. Students are paid $7 an hour (site coordinators are paid $7.50 an hour) and tutor approximately 10 hours a week.

Tutors are trained and assigned to a school. Teachers in individual classrooms direct their work. Tutors keep logs of their activities, and they are reviewed twice a semester. At Chesterton, tutors report pupils' progress daily on forms provided by the school. In other schools, tutors' activities with individual pupils reflect the ongoing reading and writing lessons in the classroom. The school or the classroom teacher usually supplies materials and assignments, but tutors are encouraged to supplement their sessions with books from the well-stocked children's collection in the USD library and to create reading and writing exercises on their own. In past years, tutors received inservice training three or four times a year. This year, tutors will be offered shorter, more frequent, workshops on specific topics, such as diversity and teaching English as a second language.

USD has made the off-campus experience as easy as possible for students, and, as a result, most tutors have stayed with the program. A fairly large number of USD students study abroad for at least one semester, but most resume their tutoring assignments when they return. Many of the USD tutors return for a second, and now, a third year of service.

Training
Tutors receive a day-long orientation and training directed by a member of the School of Education faculty. This year, experienced tutors will be added as trainers for orientation and ongoing workshops. Training consists of an orientation to the Linda Vista community, information on tutoring responsibilities and expectations, communication with site coordinators and teachers, team-building exercises, and an introduction to reading theory and practice. Site coordinators continue training and reflection during the academic terms.

Tutoring Sessions
Tutoring sessions take place either in classrooms, the school library, or other available spaces. Mostly one-on-one, tutors work with the pupils in 30 minutes sessions two-to-three times a week. Most tutors work with three or four young students. Students are assigned to their tutees by their teachers. Tutors at Chesterton use graded reading texts and progress through the series during the sessions. At other sites, tutors develop their own activities, but more often, engage in instruction that supports the teacher's reading curriculum. In the first grade classroom at Holy Family, tutors also lead small group computer-based reading and writing activities.

Transportation—a case study in problem-solving
Many colleges and universities have struggled with difficulties getting students from the campus to the school sites. USD officials decided that the best solution would be for the university to provide van service to schools in Linda Vista. The program commandeered two university vans and hired Federal Work-Study students to drive them. First the route had to be established, then a schedule needed to be set. Scheduling was difficult, because tutors were expected at schools throughout the day, but some periods of the day were more popular than others, leading to crowded vans that passed waiting students by at certain times, and empty vans burning gasoline at others. In addition, demand varied from day to day, as students' class schedules changed. School holidays and other deviations had to be accommodated. Van scheduling became almost a full-time job. Student evaluations at the end of the first year of the program rated transportation most negatively. USD continued to make adjustments in scheduling, adding van trips in heaviest periods, but students still complained that they were being left behind, disappointing teachers and tutees who were expecting them, and missing classes or tests on campus. Finally, a solution emerged—establish a route and a schedule, but give the van drivers a pager, so students could signal their readiness to be picked up. This gave needed flexibility and helped USD students keep to their schedules at the schools and meet their campus deadlines.

USD has been creative in other ways. The advisor to the Associated Students Community Service Program who took on the job of scheduling, drove the van in the early morning for several weeks and noticed that the van rides back and forth presented an interesting opportunity. USD tutors would talk about their experiences with their fellow passengers, and tutors offered support and suggestions to each other. Because the scheduler and other van drivers overheard the conversations, several began to chime into the discussions, relating observations and solutions to similar situations that they had heard on other trips. The scheduler suggested, then, that van drivers were an unexpected resource, and should be made part of the America Reads team. Subsequently, the drivers were included in training, reflection and other group events.
Evaluation and assessment

In addition to reviewing individual logs kept by the tutors and regular reflection sessions with the site coordinators, tutors were queried at the end of each semester about logistics, training, site arrangements, program, school, and USD support. Overall, the students were pleased with all aspects of their tutoring experience. The lowest ratings related to transportation. At the end of the 1998 fall term, many tutors wrote movingly about their experiences, relating especially their personal growth in empathy and understanding they had derived from participation in the program.

Overall, teachers' evaluations of the USD students' work, attitude, and impact have been outstanding, improved from the first year to the second. In the second year, teachers noted marked gains in tutors' attendance and their openness to suggestions. The questionnaires elicited teachers' strong belief that the program is helpful to their pupils' reading performance, and overwhelmingly affirmed that teachers want America Reads to continue.

Elements of Success

Success of the University of San Diego's America Reads programs rests on several important circumstances and critical elements. USD has developed myriad volunteer programs in the Linda Vista neighborhood that are coordinated through the Office For Community Service-Learning. America Reads adds a significant element to the university's service offerings and engages students who may not have the opportunity to participate in community activities (their need to work likely would have precluded extensive additional volunteer service). While the tutoring activities are teacher and school-driven, the university has placed a site coordinator at each school, enhancing communication between school personnel, USD and the tutors, and giving support and assistance to tutors as they work with the young students. Additionally, the university has allocated funds for vans to alleviate a potentially difficult transportation situation.

The university itself is committed to creating a tolerant and culturally competent community and has pledged its resources to working with the residents of the surrounding neighborhood to create a new atmosphere for the at-large campus area. Setting America Reads within this framework infuses the project with added meaning and significance for the university and its students.

Additional elements

To meet the needs of the large number of Linda Vista students whose first language is not English, the America Reads program is working with USD faculty to develop an ESL training module and a series of lessons using ESL approaches and techniques for use by the tutors. In another area, the America Reads staff are very cognizant of the importance of clear communication with teachers. Accordingly, the program staff have developed orientation materials that clearly outline program goals and expectations and works closely with teachers to obtain feedback and suggestions for improving the program.

USD has discovered that its organized community outreach is good for the community and also good for the university. Recently, individual donors from San Diego have begun to respond to the university's mission by making significant gifts to USD to expand and build on these efforts. America Reads is becoming a critical element of USD's outreach to Linda Vista, and university officials are hopeful that private funds may be forthcoming to support improvements and expansion.
Case Study Interviews: List of Contacts

University of Southern California
Richard Cone, Director of the Joint Educational Project
Tina Kienzl, America Reads Coordinator
Howard Lappin, Principal,
    James A. Foshay Learning Center
Cynthia Barry, Director of HOSTS program at Foshay
Rita Flynn, Principal, Norwood Street Elementary School
Nympha Finkelstein, teacher, Norwood Street
    Elementary School (former USC Reader)
Maria Barrientos, Title I Coordinator,
    Norwood Street Elementary School
Rose Washington, Development Office
Michelle Blanchette, Director of Volunteer Center
Kathy Thomas, Vice President for Financial Aid
Major DuBarry, Principal,
    Vermont Avenue Elementary School
Annette Kessler, Principal, Lenecia B. Weemes
    Elementary School

Glendale Community College
Andra Verstrate, Director, America Reads
Nikisha Evans, AmeriCorps*VISTA, America Reads
Nancy Knight, Vice President, College Services
Paul Schlossman, Associate Dean, Student Activities
Miera Lorenza, Director, Job Placement
Sue Borquez, Program Coordinator, Volunteer Center
Hoover Zariani, Program Director, Volunteer Center
Courtney Spikes, Director, Tell Me a Story
Linda Manzano Larson, Director,
    Child Development Center
San Francisco State University
Rosemary Hurtado, Director, America Reads
Pat Gallagher, Trainer, America Reads
Gloria Norton, Trainer, America Reads
Kathleen Halstead, Mentor teacher, Sheridan
    Elementary School
Cleo Cummings, Principal, Sheridan Elementary School
Barbara Hubler, Director, Student Financial Aid
Connie Malone, Associate Director,
    Student Financial Aid

University of California Berkeley
Chancellor Robert M. Berdahl
Richard McCallum, Academic Coordinator, Cal Reads
Carol Christ, Vice Chancellor and Provost
Lisa Kale, Director, Excellence in Outreach and
    Collaboration, Graduate School of Education
Richard Black, Director of Financial Aid
Mary Ann Faris, Associate Director of Financial Aid
Anita Madrid, Berkeley Pledge Coordinator
David Stark, Director of Stiles Hall
Prentiss Starkey, Co-Director, UC Links
Alice Klein, Co-Director, UC Links
Ruth Paglierani, Project First Coordinator

University of San Diego
Judy Rauner, Director of the Office for Community
    Service Learning
Mary Mann, First Grade Teacher, Holy Family School
Peter Minton, Teacher, Holy Family School
Barbara Perry, Principal, Holy Family School
Viviana Alexandrowicz, Professor, School of Education
Judy Lewis-Logue, Director of Financial Aid
Lisa Bach, Student Employment Coordinator
Caralyn Henry, Literacy Trainer, School of Education
Dr. Donald McGraw, Associate Provost
Elaine Elliot, Assistant Director for Academic Affairs,
    Office for Community Service Learning
Chris Nayve, Assistant Director for Student Affairs,
    Office for Community Service Learning
Margaret Lucchese, FWS tutor
Jerilee Fischer-Garza,
    Kit Carson Elementary School Principal
Tim Asfazadour, Chesterton Elementary School Principal

San Francisco State University
Rosemary Hurtado, Director, America Reads
Pat Gallagher, Trainer, America Reads
Gloria Norton, Trainer, America Reads
Kathleen Halstead, Mentor teacher,
    Sheridan Elementary School
Cleo Cummings, Principal, Sheridan Elementary School
Barbara Hubler, Director, Student Financial Aid
Connie Malone, Associate Director,
    Student Financial Aid
Reading Together: California Campuses and Communities Connect through America Reads

Institutions Responding to Questionnaire for America Reads Programs

American Career College
Antelope Valley College
Barstow College
Biola University
California College of Podiatric Medicine
California Polytechnic State University—Pomona
California Polytechnic State University—San Luis Obispo
California State University—Bakersfield
California State University—Chico
California State University—Dominguez Hills
California State University—Fresno
California State University—Fullerton
California State University—Hayward
California State University—Long Beach
California State University—Los Angeles
California State University—Monterey Bay
California State University—Northridge
California State University—Sacramento
California State University—San Bernadino
California State University—San Marcos
California State University—Stanislaus
Cerritos College
Claremont Graduate University
Claremont McKenna College
Cleveland Chiropractic College
College of Alameda
College of Notre Dame
College of the Sequoias
College of the Siskiyous
Contra Costa College
Cypress College
Fresno Pacific University
Fuller Theological Seminary
Gavilan College
Glendale Community College
Grossmont College
Hartnell College
Holy Names College
Hope International University
Irvine Valley College
Laney College
Lassen Community College
Life Chiropractic College West
Mendocino College
Merced College
Mira Costa College
Modesto Junior College
Occidental College
Pasadena City College
Pepperdine University
Point Loma Nazarene University
Pomona College
Riverside Community College
Sacramento City College
Saint Mary’s College of California
San Diego Mesa College
San Diego Miramar College
San Diego State University
San Francisco State University
San Joaquin Delta College
San Jose State University
School of Communication Electronics
Shasta College
Sierra College
Simpson College
Sonoma State University
Stanford University
United States International University
University of California—Berkeley
University of California—Davis
University of California—Irvine
University of California—Los Angeles
University of California—San Diego
University of California—Santa Barbara
University of Redlands
University of San Diego
University of Southern California
West Hills Community College
Westmont College