



Colorado Youth for a Change
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New Impact Evaluation of Colorado Reading Corps Finds Outsized Gains in Student Reading Skills

DENVER, Colo. — Amidst national reckoning of the effectiveness of pandemic-era tutoring, a new evaluation of Reading Corps in the context and settings of Colorado has revealed an average student **growth equivalent to several months of additional instruction. Student growth was even more significant among English-language learners.**

Reading Corps launched in 2003 and uses AmeriCorps members as tutors. The program has been replicated in 13 states and is backed by a large body of research, including rigorous third-party randomized control trials. The program consists of daily 20-minute one-on-one literacy interventions with students in kindergarten through third grade identified as needing extra support in reading. [Colorado Youth for a Change](#) implements the program in Colorado and served 2,682 students with the program last year.

Completed by the National Science and Service Collaborative and funded by AmeriCorps, [this study](#) was designed to investigate program impact in the context of Colorado and was guided by two research questions:

1. What is the impact of Reading Corps on the literacy skills of participating students as compared to those who did not participate?
2. Specifically among English Language Learners, what is the impact of Reading Corps on the literacy skills of participating students as compared to those who did not participate?

Participants and Methodology

The study focused on specific Colorado school districts that implemented the Reading Corps program during the 2022-23 school year. Researchers collected data from students in kindergarten to third grade, including both those who received Reading Corps tutoring and those who did not. In total, 1,039 students participated in the study. Reading Corps evaluates student literacy performance in the fall, winter, and spring. The assessments vary by grade and encompass letter sounds, nonsense words, and oral reading fluency. All measures evaluate fluency, providing scores as "correct per minute."

Key Findings for All Grades



Students served by Reading Corps in Colorado showed significantly greater improvement over their comparison group peers. These effects translate to accelerated growth up to 3 additional months of literacy learning for all students and up to 5 additional months for ELL students compared to their peers not receiving Reading Corps support. The study revealed that outcomes for Reading Corps participants were higher than non-participants for all grades, except for one of two measures in first-grade students. Here are the key results:

- Kindergarten students who participated in Reading Corps showed the highest improvement of 17.08 more points in letter-sound performance than their non-participating peers.
- First-grade students benefited from the program by reading 2.34 more nonsense words correctly per minute. There was no statistically significant improvement in oral reading fluency among first graders.
- Second-grade students demonstrated the second-most significant improvement, reading 15.06 more words correctly per minute.
- Third-grade students also made notable progress, reading 5.95 more words correctly per minute.

The research data is displayed visually in [the accompanying infographic](#).

Results for English Language Learners (ELL)

Grounded in the knowledge that 36% of the students in the Colorado Reading Corps program are English Language Learners, the study also dug specifically into program impact on this subgroup. The program's impact on ELL students' scores was even more pronounced than the overall results. For instance:

- First-grade ELL students improved by 6.09 more nonsense words per minute than their non-participating peers and 12.44 words per minute in oral reading fluency, with standardized effects more than double those of the full sample.
- Second and third-grade ELL students also experienced significant progress in oral reading fluency.

Significance and Implications

In practical terms, the study's findings translate into several additional months of literacy growth for students. For example, in the case of first-grade nonsense word reading skills, this improvement would equate to nearly 16 extra weeks for ELL students.

Importantly, Reading Corps not only yields positive educational outcomes but is also cost-effective. **Cost-benefit analyses show that the program provides a strong return on investment, exceeding \$5 for every \$1 invested.** This is primarily due to improved educational results and higher high school graduation rates.



This research adds to the existing body of evidence supporting the effectiveness of the Reading Corps program in improving literacy outcomes. Overall, the program's consistent positive effects and cost-feasibility make it an accessible and impactful option for schools and their communities.

About Colorado Youth for a Change: *Founded in 2005, Colorado Youth for a Change addresses barriers to learning by providing individualized supports throughout pivotal stages of students' education journeys. Our prevention programs support students to catch up with peers and stay engaged in school, while our Reengagement program identifies and assists young people who have left school without a diploma to reenroll. These programs support over 6,000 Colorado students ages 3-21 every year to maximize their own learning and growth. To learn more about our work, please visit [our website](#).*

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