

**WASHINGTON READING CORPS
HIGHLIGHTS**

1999-2000 SCHOOL YEAR

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The Washington Reading Corps (WRC) represents the collaborative efforts of schools, community volunteers, and the Washington Service Corps to provide reading tutoring assistance to struggling young readers. Initiated by Governor Locke as a priority for improving public education and funded by the Washington Legislature beginning in 1998, WRC has encouraged effective tutoring programs in 210 elementary schools throughout Washington state.

During the 1999-2000 school year, tutoring programs impacted over 26,000 students who were tutored at any one time by over 6,000 tutors, including AmeriCorps members, VISTA members, community volunteers, and para-educators. These WRC schools focus on serving students in grades kindergarten through six who are struggling to learn to read. WRC offers these students the concentrated attention from volunteer tutors who give the students encouragement and assistance as they work on developing fundamental reading skills.

The Washington Reading Corps is a product of the combined efforts of many people to encourage and support struggling readers. The WRC program blends public, private, and community resources, which are directed toward schools performing poorest on the state reading assessment. The WRC receives funding from the state Legislature (\$8 million) that is allocated as grants to schools by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Federal funding of \$4.8 million from the Corporation for National Service provides nearly 400 national service positions for the WRC, including \$3.1 million for AmeriCorps member positions and \$1.7 million for VISTA member positions. Within the state these funds are allocated by the Washington Commission for National and Community Service and the Washington State Corporation for National Service Office. The Washington Service Corps, a program of the Employment Security Department, administers the WRC for the AmeriCorps and VISTA members (collectively called “national service members”) who serve in most of the WRC schools. In addition to the public resources, businesses and organizations contribute more than \$500,000 to assist schools with the purchase of books and other resources. The organizational structure for schools with national service members can be found at the end of this document (Figure 8).

Each of Washington's nine Educational Service Districts (ESDs) have an assigned contact person who is responsible for the initial training of WRC site supervisors and/or principals at each WRC school. They are also responsible for providing ongoing support and assistance to schools. All schools have a designated site supervisor (certificated staff member responsible for administering the WRC in the school). Often this

individual trains tutors, plans tutoring sessions, or tutors students, as well. Typically, AmeriCorps members serve as tutors in schools, providing sustained support to young emerging readers and modeling effective tutoring practices among the other community tutors. VISTA members typically work to recruit tutors and build community support for the WRC. Almost 80 percent of WRC schools received the support of national service members in 1999-2000.

A major component of WRC is the contribution of thousands of hours of community volunteer tutoring. Around the state, community volunteers devote time each week to supporting the development of reading skills in young students. Cross-age and peer tutors donate their time to the program as well. Community organizations and businesses also support WRC through contributions of employee time, as well as resources for the reading program.

All of these reading volunteers in the WRC schools are expected to be trained in effective tutoring strategies and be supervised by certified teachers or qualified school staff. Tutoring services are typically scheduled before and after school, during school, and/or in summer school. Each WRC school develops its own plan to integrate tutoring services with its overall school reading program.

To assess the impact of WRC on student reading and to provide information about effective practices and implementation designs, the evaluation, conducted by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL), relied on multiple information sources and strategies. During the year, site supervisors were surveyed twice, midyear and in the spring. Teachers with students in WRC were surveyed once at midyear. Student reading achievement was measured three times, in October, January, and May. Kindergartners were administered the *Alphabet Letter Recognition and Sounds Test*, and students in grades one through six took both the *Slosson Oral Reading Test—Revised (Slosson)* and the *Curriculum Based Measure (CBM)*. Finally, an indepth case study of 20 randomly selected schools was conducted to gain a better understanding of WRC school programs. Evaluators visited each of the 20 case study schools twice, in January or February, and again in March. During the visits, they observed tutoring sessions and interviewed site supervisors, national service members, community volunteers, and teachers. These visits were followed up again with phone interviews in May and at the end of summer school.

This report summarizes the impressive gains made by students participating in the WRC program. In addition, it reviews the implementation of WRC in Washington schools and describes both its strengths and the challenges it faced during the year. Despite some problems with the WRC school programs, overall outstanding results were achieved and a strong foundation for effective tutoring programs was established.

Student Participation in WRC

1999-2000 school year. During the 1999-2000 academic year, over 26,000 students in grades kindergarten through six participated in programs at 210 WRC schools. Not all students participated in WRC for the entire year. Some students began in the late fall or winter, when programs had increased the number of community volunteer tutors. Other students began at the start of the school year but then moved away before the year was over. A few schools reduced the number of students tutored midway through the year. For these various reasons, about 16,000 of the original 26,000 students (62%) were involved for the entire academic year. Students in all grades (i.e., K-5 or K-6) were served in 38 percent of WRC schools while 18 percent of the WRC schools only targeted students in the primary grades.

Over half of the students were enrolled in grades one through three. Sixth-grade students made up the smallest percentage of WRC students. Table 1 displays the distribution of WRC students by grade level.

Table 1
Percentage Distribution of WRC Students by Grade Level

| Grade Level | Percentage (n) | |
|--------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | Students Who Ever Participated | Students Who Participated Yearlong |
| Kindergarten | 13% (3356) | 14% (2267) |
| First Grade | 20% (5109) | 18% (2900) |
| Second Grade | 19% (4906) | 19% (3072) |
| Third Grade | 17% (4347) | 17% (2623) |
| Fourth Grade | 14% (3691) | 14% (2293) |
| Fifth Grade | 12% (3096) | 12% (1904) |
| Sixth Grade | 5% (1345) | 5% (839) |
| TOTAL | 25,850 | 15,898 |

Boys made up the majority of the participating students (14,176 or 54%) and gender distribution was similar at each grade level. Almost half of WRC students (46%) were Caucasian, a quarter of the students (27%) were Hispanic, and about 11 percent were African American. Table 2 on the following page presents the ethnic breakdown of WRC students.

Table 2
Race/Ethnicity of Students Participating in WRC
1999-2000 School Year

| Race/Ethnicity of Student | Number of Participants | Percent of All Participants |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 1,577 | 6% |
| American Indian | 1,457 | 6% |
| Black/African American | 2,851 | 11% |
| Hispanic | 6,970 | 27% |
| White/Caucasian | 11,964 | 46% |
| Other | 247 | 1% |
| Unknown | 980 | 4% |
| TOTAL | 26,046 | 100% |

The average school population per WRC school was 434 students. An average of 31 percent of the student body was enrolled in WRC, and an average of 20 percent of the student body participated for the entire year. Because of *Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL)* testing, the extent of participation by fourth-grade students is of interest. A total of 165 WRC schools (79%) offered tutoring to its fourth-grade students, but only 68 percent of the schools served fourth-grade students for the entire year. The average number of fourth-grade students ever in WRC was 18, and an average of 11 fourth-grade students per school were served all year. This information is presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3
Overall Student Participation

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Overall School Population Statistics | |
| Average total enrollment in WRC elementary schools | 434 |
| Total number of schools in WRC | 210 |
| How many WRC students did schools test at any time during the year (an indicator of at least minimal participation)? | |
| Total number of students ever in WRC | 25,850 |
| Average number of students per school, reported on coversheet | 121 |
| Average number of WRC students per school ever in WRC | 122 |
| How many WRC students took both the pre - and the posttest (an indicator of being in the program all year)? | |
| Total number of yearlong WRC students | 15,898 |
| Average number of yearlong WRC students per school | 77 |
| Percentage of all WRC students who remained in the program all year | 62% |
| What percentage of the school population participated in WRC? | |
| Average percentage of students ever in WRC | 31% |
| Average percentage of students who participated yearlong | 20% |
| To what degree has WRC served fourth-grade students? | |
| 4 th -Grade Students Ever Participating in WRC | |
| • Total number of 4 th -graders WRC students tested at any time during the year | 3,655 |
| • Average number of 4 th -graders per school ever in WRC | 18 |
| 4 th -Grade Students Participating for the Entire Year | |
| • Total number of 4 th -grade yearlong WRC students | 2,242 |
| • Average number of 4 th -grade yearlong WRC students per school | 11 |
| Percentage (number) of schools serving 4 th -grade students | 79% (165) |
| Percentage (number) of schools serving 4 th -grade students for the entire year | 68% (143) |

Definitions: "Ever in WRC" = tested at least once any time during the year.
"Yearlong participation in WRC" = pre- and posttested

Over the school year, students received more than 703,000 hours of tutoring (incomplete records from a few schools mean this total is most likely even higher). Of the students who stayed in WRC all year, 67 percent received over 30 hours of tutoring, or about one hour per week. Twenty-six percent received twice that much.

Students were also involved in tutoring other students. In the spring of 2000, schools reported that 5,839 cross-age and 2,444 peer tutors were putting in time to help other students improve their reading. Sixty-nine percent of WRC schools reported using student tutors in their programs (cross-age tutoring was more common than peer tutoring).

Community Volunteer Tutor Participation

In the spring of 2000, schools reported on cover sheets attached to their score report forms that there were 5,100 community volunteers statewide, in addition to 393 AmeriCorps and VISTA members and 546 para-educators who gave their time to tutor students. (Please note that this represents a snapshot of volunteer participation at that specific time and does not represent a cumulative number of tutors.) About 90 percent of the WRC school programs had community volunteers, over three-quarters had at least one AmeriCorps member, and about half of the schools had a VISTA member.

In addition, many schools (61%) received materials and/or incentives from local businesses or community partners for their WRC program.

Program Administration

Almost all WRC schools offered tutoring during the school day. Sixty percent of the schools incorporated after-school tutoring to assist students and one-third offered before-school programs. In 25 percent of the schools, both before and after school tutoring was conducted.

Responsible for administering WRC, the majority of site supervisors held other positions within the school. Two-thirds of the site supervisors were either reading specialists or teachers. Eighteen percent were school principals. Site supervisors were supported in their role in a variety of ways, including stipends, release-time, access to substitute teachers and/or additional planning time. However, a third of them pointed out that the administration of WRC was an extra responsibility for which they were not compensated.

In addition to the administration of WRC, site supervisors were the primary individuals responsible for recruiting, training and supervising tutors, conducting student assessments, and coordinating reading events. This profile changed somewhat in schools with AmeriCorps or VISTA members. In those schools, national service members became more responsible for tutor recruitment and training community volunteers and

student tutors. Site supervisors and national service members shared responsibility for administering student assessments, and coordinating/organizing reading events.

Tutor recruitment was a major focus of WRC school programs. In the case study, schools were almost evenly split between those that effectively recruited tutors and those that struggled in this area. Generally, the key to successful recruitment was the presence of a committed person responsible for recruitment who had a thorough knowledge of community resources. In a few cases, a strong history of volunteerism at the school was the factor most responsible for effective tutor recruitment.

Based on case study findings, WRC school programs were somewhat successful in providing adequate training to all tutors. Overall, WRC school programs provided only informal training in conjunction with a brief orientation for new tutors. Tutor training appeared inconsistent within schools, providing different kinds of information to different tutors. In general, schools that used commercial tutoring programs offered more adequate tutor training because commercial programs provided the materials and structure to support that. In schools with national service members, tutor training was a shared responsibility between site supervisors and national service members; in schools without national service members, this responsibility fell to site supervisors and/or teachers.

In the midyear site supervisor survey, site supervisors indicated that teachers' primary responsibility was the identification of WRC students, but they shared the responsibility of training peer and cross-age tutors with site supervisors and national service members, when appropriate. Also, teachers and site supervisors shared responsibility for tutoring materials, tutoring lessons, and coordinating tutoring with classroom instruction. Tutor supervision occurred informally by site supervisors.

The indepth case studies provided a picture of less coordination and communication than suggested by the site supervisor surveys. Coordination with regular classroom instruction was informal and inconsistent across teachers. Communications between teachers and tutors, a cornerstone in promoting coordination between tutoring and classroom instruction, appeared quite casual, occurring on an irregular basis. Additionally, only a small percentage of programs (30%) demonstrated very adequate levels of tutor supervision.

WRC students were primarily identified based on teachers' recommendations and classroom assessments. To monitor student progress, about half of the WRC school programs gave informal student assessments and about 40 percent used other, more formal, assessments such as the *Standardized Test for Assessing Reading (S.T.A.R.)*, *Helping One Student to Succeed (HOSTS)* assessments, *Open Court* assessments, and *Success for All* testing. Across case study schools, the majority of programs (60%) had set up some system to monitor student progress. Those WRC schools with commercial reading programs could more readily implement structured systems for monitoring student progress than other programs.

Family literacy was another component in many WRC school programs. By midyear, site supervisors reported that events to promote family literacy, such as Family Literacy Nights, had been conducted in 87 percent of the WRC schools. Conducting a family literacy event in itself, however, does not necessarily represent a successful and/or strong family literacy component. Slightly fewer than half of the programs had developed materials for use at home to promote student reading. An indepth look at program practices through the case study revealed a very distinct division among programs— programs either strongly promoted family literacy or not. About 35 percent of case study schools included strong family literacy components. In some cases, this was supported by an intense schoolwide emphasis on literacy, and WRC collaborated in ongoing activities. Even in the absence of such intense school focus on reading, WRC staff sometimes developed their own activities and/or collaborated with schoolwide literacy events.

Tutoring Sessions

Typically, students were tutored about three times a week by the same tutors in one-on-one sessions. Small group tutoring was also conducted. About half of the teachers indicated that their WRC students were tutored during reading/language arts and about half were tutored at other times besides reading/language arts. In the case study, WRC school programs generally succeeded in creating supplemental reading tutoring programs that did not supplant direct reading instructions.

Direct observation of 102 tutoring sessions at the case study schools revealed that the majority of tutoring sessions were conducted in positive and supportive environments. Students appeared generally enthusiastic about, and involved in, reading. While the predominate tutoring practice was students reading aloud to tutors, tutors also discussed the story with students and used open-ended questions to develop students' comprehension skills in 44 percent of the observed sessions. Tutors encouraged interactive discussions by questioning students about stories, sharing personal experiences, and using pictures to discuss stories. In many sessions (43%), tutors celebrated student successes or used positive feedback. Similar results were reflected in results of the midyear site supervisor survey.

Interviews and survey results stressed the importance and impact of the tutors' relationships with tutees on improved self-esteem and confidence. The close relationships developed with adults and the one-on-one extra attention made students feel special and important, connecting them to a caring adult who might otherwise be missing in their lives. Many times it was echoed that WRC students loved to go to tutoring. They felt proud to read to their tutors. In many cases, these relationships formed a much needed foundation or experience from which students' confidence, self-esteem, and enthusiasm for reading were able to grow, promoting increased reading abilities.

Assessment Results

Overview of WRC assessments. WRC students were assessed three times in the 1999-2000 school year—October, January, and May. Kindergartners were given the *Alphabet Letter Recognition and Sounds* test; students in grades one through six were administered the *Slosson* and the *CBM*. In the analysis of assessment results, only the scores of students who participated in WRC for the entire year and had both pre- and posttest scores were used. Descriptions of the three assessments are provided below.

- The *Alphabet Letter Recognition and Sounds* test. The progress of kindergartners was assessed using a test of letter and sound recognition. Three times per year, kindergarten students were asked to read a list of 26 lower-case letters (out of order) and to identify the sounds that each letter made. There was a 2.5-minute time limit to this test.
- The *Slosson*. Students in grades one through six were assessed using the *Slosson*. The *Slosson* test uses 200 words organized into ten 20-word lists, to gauge student ability to read increasingly challenging words aloud. Students read the words on the list and received credit if they pronounced the word correctly. They continue up to the list on which they cannot read any of the words. Their raw score is the number of total words read correctly up to that point (maximum score is 200).

Students' *Slosson* raw scores were compared to grade-equivalent scores based on national samples. A grade-equivalent score of 2.1, for example, would represent a reading level of approximately the first month of second grade; 5.4 would represent a level corresponding to the fourth month of fifth grade.

Because students first took the *Slosson* in October and were posttested in May, there were seven academic months between the time of the pretest in October and the posttest in May. It is important to note that under normal conditions, students could be expected to make a gain of about 0.7 grade-equivalent score points during that time. Grade-equivalent gains of more than seven months are indicative of accelerated reading achievement.

- The *CBM*. This test consists of a 400-word selection all on one topic. The first sentence is complete. After the first sentence, about every seventh word is placed in parentheses, along with two alternate word choices, so that the student must circle the correct word in order for the passage to make sense (*cloze* procedure). The reported scores are the number of correct responses in 2.5 minutes. The students read different texts, at the same reading level, for the midyear and posttests.

There were several problems that made the *CBM* results difficult to interpret:

1. Primary students (first-, second-, and third-graders) all took the test using texts written at a third-grade level (*CBM-A*). Testing first- and second-graders who were already reading well below grade level at such a high level led to predictably low scores that probably understated the true level of growth over the year. Also, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-graders were tested using a fourth-grade-level text (*CBM-B*), which was too easy for some of the older students.
2. The absence of established group norms for the *CBM* test meant there was no way to compare WRC student results to norms or to determine whether growth over the year was higher or lower than typically expected.

Results of the kindergarten assessment. There were 3,356 kindergarten students tested as part of the WRC program in 1999-2000; 53 percent (1,782) of these were boys and 47 percent (1,574) were girls. Of those students, valid pre- and posttest scores were obtained for 2,319 students on the letter recognition portion of the test and 2,304 on the sounds portion. Mean performance scores are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4
Mean Scores on the Kindergarten Letter Recognition and Sounds Test*

| | PRE Raw Score Average | MIDYEAR Raw Score Average | PRE/MID Raw Score Gain | POST Raw Score Average | PRE/POST** Raw Score Gain |
|------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Letters (N=2319) | 6.0 | 13.6 | 7.8 | 21.0 | 15.0 |
| Sounds (N=2304) | 2.0 | 8.8 | 6.9 | 17.8 | 15.8 |

* The maximum score possible on both letter recognition and sounds was 26.

** Because the number of students with pre- and postscores is not necessarily the same number as those with pre- and midtest scores, the pre/mid gain cannot be calculated by subtracting the pretest score from the midyear score.

Kindergarten students' ability to recognize letters, and especially to identify the sounds they make, rose over the seven months of tutoring. The gains for boys and girls were nearly identical. Among the different ethnic groups, Hispanic students started with the lowest scores, registered gains comparable to those of other groups and, on average, finished the year slightly behind students from other ethnic groups. Similarly, students who spoke Spanish at home scored somewhat lower than did students who spoke English or other languages at home.

Results of the *Slosson* assessment. On average, students began the school year reading nearly a year below grade level as measured by the *Slosson*. By the end of the school year, the mean *Slosson* scores of second- through fifth-grade students were within 0.1 grade-equivalents—about one academic month—of grade level. First- and sixth-grade students lagged only slightly behind, about three academic months below grade level. This rate of gain is depicted on the following graphs, both in Table 5 and in the individual graphs by grade level (Figures 1 through 6).

Table 5
Summary of Slosson Scores by Grade Level

| | PRETEST | | MIDYEAR TEST | | | POSTTEST | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | Raw Score Average (SD) | Grade-equivalent * | Raw Score Average (SD) | Grade-equivalent | Pre-Mid Grade-equivalent Gain (N) | Raw Score Average (SD) | Grade-equivalent | Pre-Post ** Grade-equivalent Gain (N) |
| 1 st Grade | 4.9 (11.7) | 0.2 | 16.3 (19.6) | 0.5 | 0.3 (3274) | 40.9 (29.3) | 1.5 | 1.3 (2866) |
| 2 nd Grade | 34.4 (25.0) | 1.3 | 52.8 (30.7) | 2.0 | 0.7 (3405) | 73.1 (31.6) | 2.7 | 1.4 (3021) |
| 3 rd Grade | 63.8 (30.3) | 2.4 | 80.8 (35.8) | 3.0 | 0.6 (2960) | 99.0 (34.9) | 3.7 | 1.3 (2555) |
| 4 th Grade | 86.4 (32.2) | 3.3 | 101.6 (38.9) | 3.8 | 0.5 (2463) | 119.4 (34.8) | 4.7 | 1.4 (2242) |
| 5 th Grade | 104.3 (36.3) | 3.9 | 118.0 (42.0) | 4.6 | 0.7 (2092) | 137.1 (35.0) | 5.7 | 1.8 (1846) |
| 6 th Grade | 118.0 (40.6) | 4.6 | 125.3 (50.2) | 4.9 | 0.5 (867) | 149.1 (34.9) | 6.6 | 2.0 (780) |

* Maximum raw score on the *Slosson* (Grades 1-6) is 200.

** Because the number of students with pre- and postscores is not necessarily the same number as those with pre- and midtest scores, the pre/mid gain cannot necessarily be calculated by subtracting the pretest average from the midyear test average.

In the seven months between pre- and posttesting, students could be expected to make a gain of approximately 0.7 grade-equivalent score points. Sixty-seven percent of first-grade students, and over 80 percent of older students, showed gains of greater than 0.7 grade-equivalent score points (Table 6). Furthermore, between 43 percent and 56 percent of students made gains of 1.4 grade-equivalent score points or greater, more than *double* the improvement typically expected in that amount of time. The average gain for fifth- and sixth-grade students was especially large: 1.8 and 2.0 grade-equivalent score points, respectively.

Table 6
Percentage of Students Improving More than 0.7 and 1.4 Grade-equivalent Score Points in Seven Months of WRC

| Grade Level | Over 0.7 Grade-equivalent Score Points | Over 1.4 Grade-equivalent Score Points |
|--------------|--|--|
| First Grade | 67% | 43% |
| Second Grade | 85% | 49% |
| Third Grade | 82% | 44% |
| Fourth Grade | 82% | 48% |
| Fifth Grade | 82% | 56% |
| Sixth Grade | 80% | 51% |

While many students began the school year reading significantly below grade level, they achieved at or near grade level performance by the end of the school year. Figure 7 (below) compares student reading levels at the pre- and posttest. At the pretest, only 20 percent of students read at or above grade level, as measured by the *Slosson*. By posttest, 47 percent, or more than twice as many students, reached grade level. At the same time, the percent of students who were one year or more behind grade level dropped from 54 percent to 29 percent. Table 7 on the following page presents these results by grade level.

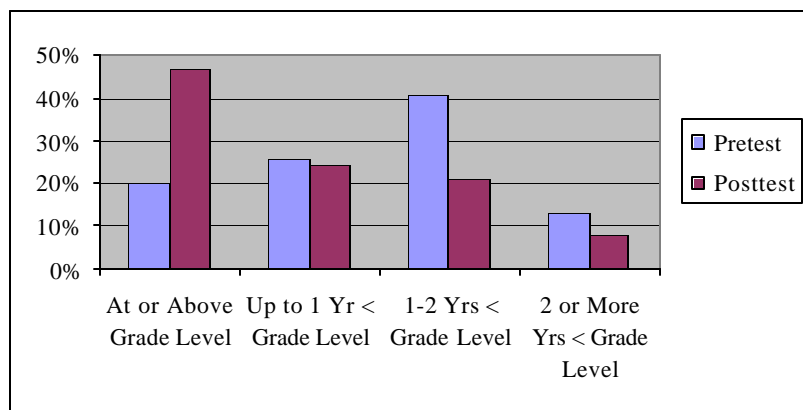


Figure 7: Percent of All Students At or Below Grade Level on the Slosson (N=13,297)

Table 7
Percentage of Students At or Below Grade Level on the Slosson by Grade

| | PRETEST | | | | POSTTEST | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | At Grade Level or Above | Up to 1 Year Below Grade Level | 1-2 Years Below Grade Level | 2 or More Years Below Grade Level | At Grade Level or Above | Up to 1 Year Below Grade Level | 1-2 Years Below Grade Level | 2 or More Years Below Grade Level |
| First Grade (N=2,866) | 4% | 20% | 77% | -- | 38% | 28% | 34% | -- |
| Second Grade (N=3,021) | 19% | 31% | 41% | 9% | 47% | 30% | 16% | 6% |
| Third Grade (N=2,555) | 25% | 33% | 29% | 13% | 48% | 26% | 20% | 6% |
| Fourth Grade (N=2,228) | 26% | 27% | 31% | 17% | 49% | 18% | 22% | 11% |
| Fifth Grade (N=1,847) | 26% | 20% | 27% | 27% | 53% | 15% | 16% | 17% |
| Sixth Grade (N=780) | 33% | 10% | 18% | 39% | 55% | 13% | 10% | 22% |
| All Grades (N=13,297) | 20% | 26% | 41% | 13% | 47% | 24% | 21% | 8% |

While the same general trends of rapid gains hold for most students, there were some variations that deserve attention:

- *Gains of fifth- and sixth-graders.* There were fewer fifth- and sixth-graders participating in WRC than there were younger students, and a greater proportion of these students performed at two or more years below grade level on the pretest, compared to younger students. This was not surprising since students with difficulties in reading often fall further and further behind as they move up the grades. In WRC, however, fifth- and sixth-graders made the largest average gains on the *Slosson*. Over half of fifth- and sixth-graders made gains of over 1.4 grade-equivalents, or twice what might be typically expected in seven months (Table 5).
- *Variations by starting point.* For every grade except sixth, students who were closer to grade level at the time of the pretest made somewhat greater gains than did those students who were further behind at the start. This raises concern for the very lowest readers. Among sixth-graders, this trend was reversed, and the very lowest performing students made the highest gains.
- *Variations by race or ethnicity.* Gains were fairly similar across students from different ethnic groups. However, some students began at lower reading levels than did others, and even notable gains over the year did not close the gap between them and other students. Among the students who continued to lag the furthest behind (scoring two or more years below grade level on the *Slosson* posttest), a disproportionate number were Hispanic.
- *Variations by gender.* At every grade level, there were more boys than girls participating in WRC. In general, gains over the year were very similar for both girls and boys. Boys tended to score lower on the pretest and, for the most part, continued to be somewhat over-represented among the students who were still two or more years below grade level at the posttest.

Results of the *CBM* assessment. Students at all grade levels made gains on the *CBM-A* and *CBM-B* tests. These gains, expressed in the percentage of test items students were able to complete correctly, are presented on the following page in Table 8. Comparisons of pre- and posttest scores show increased average performance across all grades. The gains made by fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students were impressive. The results paralleled the gains found with the WRC students' performance on the *Slosson*.

Table 8
Summary of Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) Test Scores by Grade Level

| | PRETEST | | MIDYEAR TEST | | | POSTTEST | | |
|----------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| | Average Number Correct (SD) | Average Percentage Correct | Average Number Correct (SD) | Average Percentage Correct | Average Percentage Pre-Midtest Gain (N) | Average Number Correct (SD) | Average Percentage Correct | Average Percentage Pre-Posttest Gain (N) |
| <i>CBM-A*</i> | | | | | | | | |
| First Grade | 1.1 (3.3) | 2% | 2.2 (3.5) | 4% | 2% (3377) | 4.2 (4.3) | 8% | 6% (2968) |
| Second Grade | 2.1 (3.0) | 4% | 6.2 (4.9) | 12% | 8% (3538) | 8.7 (5.4) | 17% | 13% (3049) |
| Third Grade | 5.5 (5.1) | 10% | 11.5 (6.5) | 23% | 13% (3102) | 13.2 (6.1) | 26% | 16% (2726) |
| <i>CBM-B**</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Fourth Grade | 9.0 (5.4) | 16% | 10.9 (6.7) | 18% | 2% (2555) | 18.4 (7.0) | 40% | 24% (2222) |
| Fifth Grade | 12.5 (6.8) | 22% | 14.5 (8.5) | 25% | 3% (2175) | 22.2 (8.0) | 48% | 26% (1955) |
| Sixth Grade | 15.8 (7.6) | 28% | 17.0 (8.9) | 29% | 1% (955) | 25.1 (8.9) | 55% | 28% (872) |

* Maximum number correct on the *CBM-A* (Grades 1-3) Pre=57; Mid=51; and Post =50.

** Maximum number correct on the *CBM-B* (Grades 4-6) Pre=56; Mid=59; and Post = 46.

Other Student Changes

While WRC assessment results are indicators of students' reading abilities, they should be coupled with other data sources to fully realize the impact of the WRC school programs on students in Washington schools. Collective information from questionnaires and interviews with site supervisors, teachers, and tutors substantiated other student changes.

1. At midyear, teachers were quite positive about the impact of WRC on students receiving tutoring services. Students' attitudes towards reading and reading skills were reported by about 80 percent of the teachers as "greatly" or "somewhat improved." Seventy percent of the teachers indicated that students' comprehension and critical reading skills had at least "somewhat improved." Through comments, teachers identified other positive student changes such as:
 - "Their reluctance to read has changed to eagerness. That's progress!"
 - "Some of the students are reading better and finishing lessons better."
 - "Building of self-esteem, more positive attitude toward reading, and overall excitement about learning."
 - "The extra help has given them so much confidence. They have become active learners versus passive learners."
 - "Students use the skills and reading tips in my class. They really enjoy the one-on-one attention."
 - "The change I've noticed in my students is that they enjoy seeing the volunteers come everyday."
2. In the spring, site supervisors reported that the majority of their WRC students (70% or more) improved in:
 - Reading attitudes—an average of 77 percent of students
 - Reading skills—an average of 73 percent of students
 - Reading comprehension—an average of 71 percent of students

Over half of WRC students also improved in:

- Social skills—an average of 58 percent of students
- Critical reading skills—an average of 52 percent of students

An overwhelming majority of site supervisors commented on other notable student changes, namely:

- Improved self-esteem and increased self-confidence
- Greater enthusiasm, enjoyment, and/or excitement for reading

The positive impact of adult WRC tutors was highlighted and stressed the importance of these relationships on, and their connection to, improved self-esteem and confidence, and students' enthusiasm for reading that ultimately facilitated improved reading.

Typical comments by site supervisors on student changes included:

- "Increased interest in reading for pleasure."
- "Pride in their accomplishments in reading, as well as their other work."
- "The students and families are focused on reading. More books are being checked out of the library."
- "The students in the WRC program have a much more positive outlook at school. Their self-esteem and enthusiasm towards reading has blossomed. This is due, in part, to their realization that they can be successful readers. Tutees have the opportunity to succeed twice a week with someone who is very interested in their academic, social, and emotional success More importantly, students now more fully understand that learning is the purpose of reading."
- "The students were able to bond with an adult who showed care and concern for them. They greatly enjoyed that individual attention they so needed."
- "Developed a 'love' of reading. Found reasons to read. No longer view reading as a chore."
- "Kids are asking to read during free time; books at recess, discussion of authors, etc."
- "They love their tutors and want to do a good job"
- "Many of our struggling readers see themselves as readers and are so much more confident Parents comment about them trying to read everything!"
- "We do have records indicating the number of books they checked out pre and during WRC tutoring. The increase is nearly 300 percent."

3. In the case study, interviews with site supervisors, national service members, tutors, and teachers during site visits and phone interviews revealed a range of changes attributed to WRC school programs. Some examples of comments (both verbatim and paraphrased) included:

- A 16 percent increase in state reading scores could be attributed to the WRC—WRC helped everyone to stay focused on one goal and see results.
- “Before Christmas, one little kid was only on tub one [beginning reading activities], but after Christmas, he was already on tub four. He read all through Christmas. He had really advanced.”
- Student attitudes toward reading improved.
- Students improved, evidenced through vocabulary, comprehension, and prescriptive diagnostic tests.
- Students returned to the classroom with more confidence and willingness to try reading.
- Individual attention had real benefits in terms of building confidence, self-esteem, and attitude.
- The tutors were more than tutors—they were mentors who enriched the experience for the students, and the students interact with people in a different way as a result.
- “I think we have a focus [schoolwide]. This is our second year and we’re all on the same page and working toward the same common goal.”
- “We’ve put together an early intervention program for K-2, and we believe that by the time the grant is over with, these kids will be up to grade level.”

WRC Summer School

Overview. A total of 128 schools (60%) offered WRC tutoring during the summer months. In spite of various problems, about two-thirds of the WRC summer schools submitted their summer school information and assessment results by the September 15, 2000 deadline for analyzing summer school data. Using these results, over 2,600 WRC students continued to receive tutoring during summer school. The demographics of the students who attended summer school differed from students participating in WRC over the academic year. There were far more Hispanic students in summer school and a much higher percentage of students who spoke Spanish in the home.

In the case study, 60 percent of the schools offered summer school to their WRC students. The average length of summer school was 4.5 weeks, and an average of 72 students participated at each site. Three programs offered multiple sessions, such as seven one-week sessions. At ten of the twelve sites, AmeriCorps members tutored WRC students, while VISTA members and community tutors worked at four sites. Finally, two sites had peer and/or cross-age tutors.

Many of the case study summer schools targeted specific student populations, such as bilingual students, students at risk of detention, students recommended by teachers, students with low test scores, and previous WRC students. While few schools based their summer programs on themes, almost all focused on reading and/or language arts, either solely or in conjunction with another academic area.

Implementation designs for case study summer schools varied. Most implemented WRC as part of their overall summer program. About a quarter of the sites continued their year-long format in their summer programs, another quarter implemented a WRC program followed by a regular summer school program, and a few combined their WRC and Title I summer school program.

National service members were used in much the same way during summer school at case study schools as they were during the school year. AmeriCorps members tutored students one-on-one or in small groups, both in the classroom and “pulled-out.” It was clear that some schools gave their AmeriCorps members more responsibility in terms of working with students, while others used them as classroom aides or assistants. VISTA members not only recruited and organized volunteers but also provided direct services to students.

Definite themes emerged when case study summer site supervisors were asked about the “best” aspects of their summer program, including:

- It provided individualized attention.
- It was “fun,” as teachers went out of their way to ensure fun learning experiences.
- It helped to improve student achievement as evidenced on tests and “running records.”
- Teachers and students liked having a reading/language arts focus.
- It provided a structure to students’ summers and an opportunity to be engaged.

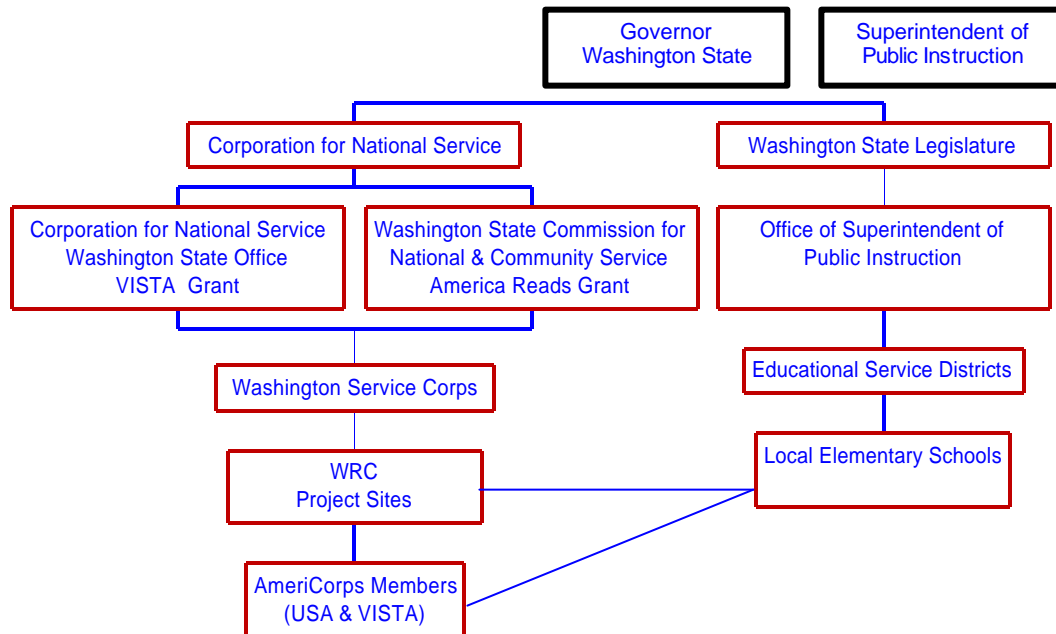
Lessons learned included:

- Plan early for summer school and communicate clearly and early with parents so enrollment can be determined. Knowing summer school enrollment is vital to providing adequate levels of staffing.
- It is important to have consistent staff familiar with the schools' WRC school programs to fully meet its potential.
- Problems with equipment and obtaining materials can be lessened through early and good planning.

Summer school assessment results. The results from two-thirds of the summer schools that submitted their results by the deadline were used to determine students' improvement in reading. Compared to WRC students overall, summer school students were among those who scored lowest on the *Slosson* reading test in May. After their summer school experience, however, which lasted on average four and one-half weeks, summer school students had, for the most part, either matched or surpassed the performance of other WRC students.

Scores of students in grades one through four increased about the equivalent of three or four academic months on the *Slosson*. Fifth- and sixth-grade students demonstrated even higher gains of approximately the equivalent of six to seven academic months. Overall, at the end of a month of intensive tutoring, summer school students made average gains of between three to seven academic months on the *Slosson*.

Figure 8
Organizational Structure for Schools with National Service Members *



* National service members serve in approximately 80% of WRC schools.