



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

First-Ever READ USA Literacy Tutoring Randomized Controlled Trial Demonstrates Improved Literacy Skills Among Elementary Students

-- Third-party evaluation validates past findings: READ USA Literacy Tutoring improves reading skills --

-- Study shows statistically significant improvement in literacy comprehension, accuracy, and other measures --

JACKSONVILLE, FLA. – April 22, 2024 – READ USA, a Jacksonville-based nonprofit dedicated to eradicating illiteracy, announces today the results of its first-ever randomized controlled trial. The study, conducted and analyzed by leading researchers at The Ohio State University, validates past evaluations about the impact of READ USA’s Literacy Tutoring program: elementary students who participate in Literacy Tutoring demonstrably improve their reading skills.

“The impressive results revealed by this experimental study provide third party-validated evidence of what we have understood for several years: READ USA Literacy Tutoring works,” said Robert Kelly, Ph.D., chief executive officer of READ USA. “These results show the community, funders, and school districts that the investment in READ USA Literacy Tutoring creates a tangible, positive impact on students’ reading abilities and is moving the needle on solving illiteracy.”

A randomized controlled trial, or RCT, is a scientific study used to measure the effectiveness of an intervention or treatment. In the READ USA study, one group of students received the Literacy Tutoring intervention in the autumn of 2023 while another group of students waited until the spring 2024 semester. Both groups were evaluated pre- and post-study using the same methods, and the results were compared to measure effectiveness of the Literacy Tutoring intervention among the first group. Another analysis of results will occur after the spring semester.

On average, the students who received tutoring started one to two grade levels behind in literacy performance. Using the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) to measure the effectiveness of Literacy Tutoring, the RCT results showed that students who participated in Literacy Tutoring were 68% more likely to increase a performance level in reading skills compared to the students in the control group. It also showed that Literacy Tutoring was found to work equally effectively across all student demographics.

The results showed similar performance on the Gray Oral Reading Test (GORT) measurement, particularly with improvement in reading comprehension. In about three months of school, one would expect students to make three months of academic growth, and that is evident with students in the control group. That indicates that the core literacy instruction provided by Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) is working. However, students needing tutoring are typically one to two years below grade level in reading, meaning they need accelerated growth to catch up to grade level expectations. These study results show that READ USA Literacy Tutoring did just that. “We complement the district’s literacy instruction by providing accelerated literacy intervention and high-quality teacher professional development, both critical ingredients to solving illiteracy,” Kelly said.

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“Comprehension is the ultimate measure, while rate and accuracy might be considered penultimate measures. This finding is significant because studies of other literacy interventions typically find smaller effects on comprehension compared to word reading and fluency,” stated The Ohio State University researchers in the full report, which is available [here](#). “It is demonstrably more difficult to positively impact comprehension, thus READ USA’s positive impact on comprehension is even more notable.”

The GORT results showed that, on average, students in all grades who participated in READ USA Literacy Tutoring statistically outperformed the comparison group in reading comprehension, accuracy, fluency, and the sum of all measurements. Reading comprehension specifically showed statistically significant improvement. Reading rate was the only measurement that did not demonstrate statistically significant improvement; however, accelerated growth due to READ USA Literacy Tutoring was evident because the students started tutoring further behind the comparison group in all measurements according to pre-study evaluations. This accelerated growth was also evident in the other areas of measurement (comprehension, accuracy, fluency, and the sum).

“School districts across the nation have for years been working to elevate grade-level reading rates, and while there are a number of nonprofit organizations providing literacy support, few use stringent research methods to validate their instructional models,” added Kelly. “This is precisely the approach we’ve taken to intentionally demonstrate impact, and we are grateful for our partners who have invested time and resources into helping Literacy Tutoring deliver its many benefits.”

The READ USA Literacy Tutoring program, active in 15 DCPS elementary schools during the 2023-2024 school year, launched in 2019. Using an evidence-based instructional model created by READ USA, the organization recruits, trains, and pays teenagers and young adults to implement the robust Literacy Tutoring intervention to elementary students. Tutoring lessons occur at elementary schools three days a week, with READ USA-trained teachers and content specialists providing in-the-moment coaching and support to tutors.

The RCT was conducted at seven DCPS elementary schools that participated in Literacy Tutoring. In the autumn semester, 159 students participated in Literacy Tutoring, and another 154 students are receiving tutoring during the spring semester. All students, who are in second through fifth grades, were eligible for the intervention based on their reading achievement levels.

ABOUT READ USA, INC.

READ USA is laser focused on closing the literacy gap by opening pathways for children in under-resourced communities to help them become lifelong readers and learners. Founded in 2016 by an educator and community volunteer in Jacksonville, Fla., READ USA provides a research-based, multi-layered approach to solving the literacy crisis in our country. The pillars of READ USA’s model include Book Choice and Ownership, Literacy Tutoring, Workforce Development, Family Engagement, Multicultural Literacy, and Literacy Professional Development for Educators. Combined, these programs are moving the needle to achieve grade-level reading proficiency in all students, starting in Duval County. For more information or to donate, visit www.readusainc.com.