



Evaluation of the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Reading Interventionists – Racial Equity Office Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between 33 percent and 50 percent of fourth-grade students in the United States do not demonstrate mastery of prerequisite skills that are fundamental to read proficiently (Burns et al., 2020). Students who struggled with reading in early elementary may face challenges in late elementary as they are expected to read for longer periods of time, read more difficult words, and comprehend expository text (Donegan & Wanzek, 2021). However, previous research has found evidence that implementing targeted reading interventions in a small group setting is very effective for elementary students with low reading skills (Burns et al., 2020; Hall & Burns, 2018).

To provide additional assistance for students in the Dallas Independent School District (ISD) with low reading skills, the Racial Equity Office (REO) and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Department recruited MTSS reading interventionists.

The goal of the MTSS Reading Interventionists – REO program was to support underperforming students in grades three to five by reducing the learning gap and improving student's reading skills before they reach middle school. To accomplish this goal:

- The Dallas ISD MTSS Department recruited 10 interventionists in spring 2021 and 10 additional interventionists in 2021-22.
- Students were identified as “in need” if they (a) consistently demonstrated reading skills below their grade level and (b) did not receive any other services outside of the classroom.

For the 2021-22 school year, the annual outcome goals were:

- 1) Eighty percent of students who receive intervention from an MTSS reading interventionist will increase at least five *Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment Systems (BAS)* reading levels by end of year (EOY).
- 2) Eighty percent of students who receive intervention from an MTSS reading interventionist will exceed their growth target on the *Measures of Academic Progress Growth (MAP)* reading assessment.

In 2021-22, the MTSS Reading Interventionists – REO program was funded using \$959,765 in General Operating funds.¹

During the 2019-20 school year, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Dallas ISD transitioned students to at-home learning on March 23 until the end of the school year. In 2020-21, Dallas ISD delayed the start of the school year until September 8, 2020 and implemented at-home learning for the first four weeks. In 2021-22, the district returned to in-person instruction for all students, with minimal exceptions. The district offered virtual learning to a small subset of students who met eligibility requirements. To help mitigate learning loss and further support students, the district offered three different school calendars in 2021-22 and other supports.² Because of these variations in instructional time and support activities, results should be viewed with caution.

PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this evaluation was to provide an overview of (a) the context and implementation of the program, (b) characteristics of students served, and (c) student assessment outcomes. Program goals were set by REO and MTSS central staff members, and the evaluator used program implementation data, interviews, student characteristics, and assessment data to evaluate the program.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

What was the context of the program?

A total of 553 students across 20 elementary school campuses were selected to be served by reading interventionists. Most selected schools were high priority campuses³ with a relatively large population of African American students.⁴

On average, each interventionist served approximately 28 students at each campus (range: 22 to 35 students; Table 1).

¹ Funding data provided by Racial Equity Office on 04/29/22.

² Additional information can be found at <https://www.dallasisd.org/timetolearn> and <https://www.dallasisd.org/esser>.

³ All but one school was high priority campuses. The full list of high priority campuses can be found at <https://tei.dallasisd.org/download/9088/>.

⁴ Board Briefing presentation on 12/02/2021. On average, 65 percent of all students at the 20 campuses served by interventionists were African American and 30 percent were Hispanic.

Table 1: 2021-22 List of Schools Served by MTSS Reading Interventionists

Students		Students	
School Name	N	School Name	N
Alexander	30	Marsalis	28
Bushman	23	McNair	35
Carpenter	22	Oliver	23
Carr	28	Pease	26
Cedar Crest	24	Rice	27
Douglass	34	Starks	27
Dunbar	31	Thompson	30
Ervin	28	Thornton	27
King	29	Turner	32
Lee, U	23	Young	26

Source: MTSS department, 12/16/21. District PEIMS snapshot demographic data file dated 11/1/21.

Note: Total N = 553.

- Of the 20 reading interventionists, 17 were former Dyslexia interventionists. Three interventionists were master reading teachers with doctorate or master's degrees in reading.
- In addition to providing services to students, interventionists reached parents through phone calls, conferences, and home visits to explain the support students received at school and the importance of regular school attendance.
- The interventionists received regular training⁵ on research-based reading intervention materials as well as MTSS. They also provided support for MTSS at their campuses.

Which Dallas ISD students were served by the program in 2021-22?

Students were prioritized to receive reading interventionist support if they scored in the 10th percentile or lower on the MAP assessment for reading at beginning-of-year (BOY) and if they were not receiving other special education services.

Interventions were offered primarily to grade five students to ensure they were ready for middle school. Students in grades four and three also received interventions if interventionist was available.

Most students identified for interventions were African American and economically disadvantaged (Table 2). The proportion of students classified as at-risk⁶ increased as grade level increased.

⁵ Training topics include MAP, PowerSchool, and the Fountas & Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI).

⁶ Student deemed "at risk" have a higher probability of dropping out of school or failing the current grade based on certain socioeconomic challenges and performance criteria.

Table 2: 2021-22 Characteristics of Students Served by MTSS Reading Interventionists

	Total (N = 553)	Grade 3 (N = 113)		Grade 4 (N = 218)		Grade 5 (N = 222)	
	N	n	%	n	%	n	%
Sex							
Female	271	61	54.4	99	45.0	111	50.0
Male	282	52	45.6	119	55.0	111	50.0
Race/Ethnicity							
Af Am	470	103	91.2	191	87.6	176	79.3
Hispanic	65	5	4.4	23	10.6	37	16.7
Other	18	5	4.4	4	1.8	9	4.1
Special Student Populations							
At Risk	346	13	11.5	155	71.1	178	80.2
Econ Dis	539	113	100.0	209	95.9	217	97.7

Source: District PEIMS snapshot demographic data file dated 11/01/21.

Note: Af Am = African American. Econ Dis = Economically Disadvantaged.

How was the program implemented in 2021-22?

The interventionists conducted root cause analysis by reviewing multiple factors such as students' assessment and attendance data and evaluated students at BOY using BAS.

The major areas of focus of reading interventions were (a) foundational skills⁷ and (b) reading fluency.⁸ Reading interventionists used research-based resources to promote improvements in students' reading skills and reading comprehension. Each interventionist provided 45-minute interventions in a group of six students or less, four times a week, using diagnostic prescriptive reading intervention programs, such as the LLI kits and the Florida Center for Reading Research. Intervention plans and progress monitoring were documented in PowerSchool and the information on each student's growth were available for teachers and administrators to view.

- In 2021-22, students most often received interventions on improving their skills in decoding and phonics (40%), followed by phonemic awareness (30%), and reading fluency (21%).

Did the program meet its annual goals?

The program's 2021-22 goals were evaluated using students' academic outcomes on the BAS and MAP reading assessments.

BAS

The BAS assessment was conducted at BOY and EOY to evaluate the growth of each student's reading level. The

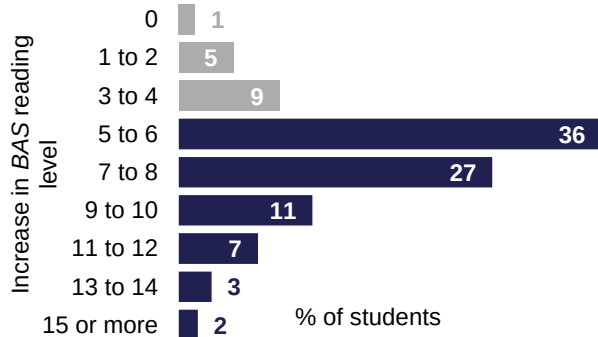
⁷ Foundational skills include phonological awareness, phonics, word recognition, and language comprehension.

⁸ Reading fluency include automaticity, accuracy, and comprehension.

assessment helped to determine each student's guided reading level by letter (from A to Z).

- The department met the goal that 80 percent of served students would grow five levels or more by EOY (85%).
- Ninety-nine percent of students increased at least one reading level from BOY to EOY (Figure 1).

Figure 1: 2021-22 Percentage of Students Served by MTSS Reading Interventionists BAS Reading Level Increase from BOY to EOY



Source: MTSS department, 07/20/22.

Note: N = 430. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

MAP Reading

Rasch Unit (RIT) Score⁹

- The average RIT score of students who received reading interventions was lower (175 at BOY and 189 at EOY) than other students at their campus who did not receive reading interventions (189 at BOY and 198 at EOY) and all students in the district in grades three to five (191 at BOY and 200 at EOY).
- However, students who received reading intervention experienced a greater percentage increase (8% increase) from BOY to EOY than other students at their campus who did not receive reading intervention (5% increase) or all students in the district in grades three to five (5% increase).

Projected Growth¹⁰

A student's projected growth is how much a student's score is expected to grow between two assessment administration windows based on his or her result on the first administration. Student growth can be projected for various timeframes within a given school year (e.g., BOY to MOY, MOY to EOY, BOY to EOY).

⁹ The RIT is a standardized, equal-interval score that represents the level at which a student is ready to learn at the time of assessment. It can be compared to other RIT scores regardless of student age or grade.

¹⁰ Each student's growth projection is based on the student's grade, starting RIT score, and the subject in which that student is tested. It represents the median level of growth observed for similar students in the national norming sample.

- Overall, the MTSS REO program did not meet its goal for 80 percent of students receiving intervention to exceed their growth target on MAP (51% to 55%; Table 3).
- While the overall percentage of students who received intervention that met their growth target increased from BOY to EOY, results were mixed across grades and assessment windows.
- A slightly higher percentage of grade three students met their projected growth from MOY to EOY and from BOY to EOY compared to students in other grade levels.

Table 3. 2021-22 Students Served by MTSS Reading Interventionists Who Met Projected Growth on MAP Reading

Grade	BOY to MOY		MOY to EOY		BOY to EOY	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
3	46	46.9	59	62.1	56	57.7
4	89	46.1	102	57.0	97	54.2
5	102	58.0	78	44.8	86	53.4
All	237	50.7	239	53.3	239	54.7

Source: District MAP data file dated 01/24/22 (MOY) and 06/22/22 (EOY).

Note: N = 467 (BOY to MOY); N = 448 (MOY to EOY); N = 437 (BOY to EOY).

How did students who received the interventions differ from students who did not on MAP?

MAP reading data for students served by the reading interventionists were compared with MAP reading data for students at the same grade level who were not served by the interventionists.

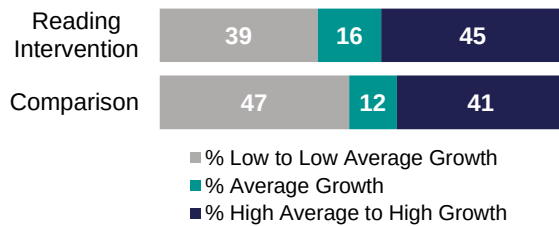
To identify comparison students, a comparison campus was identified for each campus that received a reading intervention. The comparison campus was matched to a reading intervention campus based on (a) the schools' STAAR component raw score and (b) the following student demographics: % Economically Disadvantaged, % Special Education, % Emergent Bilingual, and % African American.

Then, comparison students were selected based on their grade level (i.e., grades 3-5) and MAP Growth reading scores at BOY (i.e., below 25th test percentile).

For students who did or did not receive reading interventions, the evaluator compared (a) BOY to EOY growth quintile, and (b) the rate of students meeting projected growth.

- Overall, students who received reading intervention experienced greater average and high growth on MAP reading assessment compared to their counterparts.
- Sixty-one percent of students who received reading intervention throughout the year showed at least average growth at EOY, whereas 53 percent of students in the comparison group demonstrated similar growth by EOY (Figure 2).

Figure 2: 2021-22 Percentage of Students Served by MTSS Reading Interventionists Attaining MAP Reading Threshold Rates from BOY to EOY

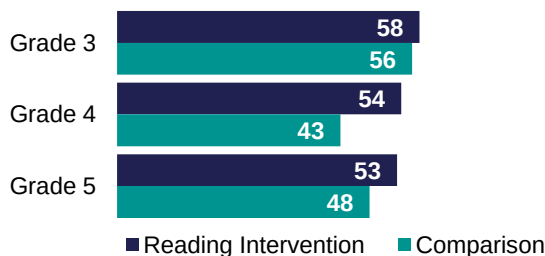


Source: District MAP file, 06/23/21 (EOY).

Note: $N = 435$ students received reading intervention. $N = 1,176$ comparison students.

- At EOY, students who received reading intervention met their projected growth on MAP reading assessment at a higher rate than their comparison peers (Figure 3).
- Between 53 and 58 percent of students across grade levels who received reading intervention met their projected growth (55% overall) at EOY, whereas between 43 to 56 percent of students in the comparison group met their projected growth (49% overall) at EOY.

Figure 3: 2021-22 Percentage of Students Served by MTSS Reading Interventionists Who Met Projected Growth on MAP Reading at EOY



Source: District MAP file, 06/23/21 (EOY).

Note: $N = 437$ students received reading intervention. $N = 1,176$ comparison students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue to provide consistent and quality supports.

In 2021-22, most students who consistently received reading interventions improved by five or more reading levels on the BAS assessment and improved on the MAP reading assessment at a higher rate than similar students who did not receive interventionist support. This indicates that consistent interventions for students with low reading skills can improve their reading ability. Thus, MTSS reading interventionists should continue providing research-based interventions for students reading below grade level to improve their reading skills before reaching middle school.

Provide reading interventions to a larger population.

Because students who received a reading intervention outperformed similar students who did not receive reading interventions, program staff members may want to consider expanding the program to additional campuses. Providing reading interventions on more campuses may improve systematic disparities and equity by reducing the learning gap for students with lower reading skills in early elementary.

REFERENCES

- Burns, M. K., Maki, K. E., Brann, K. L., McComas, J. J., & Helman, L. A. (2020). Comparison of reading growth among students with severe reading deficits who received intervention to typically achieving students and students receiving special education. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 53 (6), 444-453. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022219420918840>
- Donegan, R. E., & Wanzek, J. (2021). Effects of reading interventions implemented for upper elementary struggling readers: A look at recent research. *Reading and Writing*, 34, 1943-1977. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-021-10123-y>
- Hall, M. S., Burns, M. K. (2018). Meta-analysis of targeted small-group reading interventions. *Journal of School Psychology*, 66, 54-66. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2017.11.002>

EA22-639-4

Joohee G. Kim, M.A., Evaluation Analyst II

©2022 Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD)

Mail a written request for permission to use or reproduce any part of this document to:

Dallas ISD Department of Evaluation and Assessment; H. B. Bell School Support Center; 2909 Buckner Blvd.; Box10; Dallas, TX 75228

An electronic version of this report can be found at www.dallasisd.org/Page/888.

For more information, please contact Program Evaluation at evaluation@dallasisd.org.