



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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Students who struggled with reading in early elementary may face challenges in late elementary as they are expected to read for longer periods, 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 one to five by reducing learning gaps and improving students' reading skills starting from an early age. To accomplish this goal:

- The Dallas ISD MTSS Department supported a total of 34 interventionists in 2022-23.
- 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 2022-23 school year, the annual outcome goals were:¹

- 1) By the end of June 2023, 60 percent of students in grades three to five served by an MTSS interventionist will meet or exceed their growth projection for *Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Growth Reading*.
- 2) By the end of June 2023, 70 percent of students in grade two served by interventionists will meet or exceed their expectation level in sentence fluency performance on *MAP Reading Fluency*.

In 2022-23, the MTSS Reading Interventionists – REO program was funded with \$1,539,020.68 in General

Operating funds and \$1,245,670.88 from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) grant.²

To help mitigate learning loss and further support students after the COVID-19 pandemic, the district continued to offer three different school calendars in 2022-23 and other supports.³ 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, (c) student assessment outcomes, and (d) student, teacher, principal, and interventionist perceptions of the program. The evaluator also analyzed program goals set by REO and MTSS central staff members. The evaluator used program implementation data, interviews, student characteristics, assessment data, and surveys to evaluate the program.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

How was the program implemented in 2022-23?

A total of 768 students⁴ across 19 elementary schools⁵ were served by reading interventionists. All selected schools were high-priority campuses⁶ with a relatively large population of African American students.⁷

On average, each interventionist served approximately 23 students per campus⁸ (range: 16 to 31). Table 1 presents the number of students served by each campus.

- Eighteen interventionists served students in grades three to five and 15 interventionists served students in grades one and two.
- Four interventionists served as lead interventionists and worked with the MTSS department to support other interventionists by traveling to multiple campuses.

¹ Goal 1 was funded by the REO and goal 2 was funded by ESSER.

² Funding data provided by Racial Equity Office on 07/17/23.

³ Additional information can be found at <https://www.dallasisd.org/timetolearn> and <https://www.dallasisd.org/esser>.

⁴ Students who were actively enrolled and had attendance data at the end of the school year are included in the analysis. The total number of students varied throughout the school year due to withdrawals and transfers. Data provided by MTSS department on 06/28/23.

⁵ Same campuses from 2021-22 were served; Bushman and Pease are combined in 2022-23.

⁶ The full list of high priority campuses can be found at <https://tei.dallasisd.org/download/9088/>.

⁷ On average, 64 percent of all students at the 19 campuses served by interventionists were African American and 32 percent were Hispanic.

⁸ Fourteen campuses had two interventionists; five campuses had one interventionist.

Table 1: 2022-23 List of Schools Served by MTSS Reading Interventionists

School Name	Students N	School Name	Students N
Alexander	51	Marsalis	21
Carpenter	18	McNair	48
Carr	38	Oliver	48
Cedar Crest	40	Pease	46
Douglass	54	Rice	29
Dunbar	50	Starks	16
Ervin	48	Thompson	52
Fridia	34	Turner	50
King	31	Young	56
Lee, U	38		

Source: MTSS department, 06/28/23. District demographic data file dated 05/12/23.

Note: N = 768.

- Each interventionist provided 45-minute interventions to a group of six students or fewer, four times a week, using diagnostic prescriptive reading intervention programs, such as the LLI kits and the Florida Center for Reading Research.
- Interventionists received regular training⁹ on research-based reading intervention materials as well as MTSS. They also provided MTSS support at their campuses.
- Principals at each campus supervised reading interventionists by conducting observations and evaluating interventions.

What were student, teacher, principal, and interventionist perceptions of the program?

Student Perceptions

Students who received interventions were invited to take a reading perception survey created by the MTSS department at the beginning of year (BOY) and end of the year (EOY). Survey questions asked students to rate how they feel when (a) they read to themselves, (b) they read to friends, and (c) others read to them, and to answer whether they believe reading skills will help them in other subjects.

A total of 205 students participated in the survey each at BOY and EOY. Overall, students' responses showed a more positive trend at the end of the year.

- Students' reported feelings of happiness or confidence while reading or when others read to them increased by 5 to 14 percentage points across questions from BOY to EOY.
- Reading skills were deemed beneficial in other subjects by 99 percent of students, reflecting a six-percentage point increase from BOY to EOY.

Teacher and Principal Perceptions¹⁰

Surveys were conducted to gather feedback from teachers whose students received interventions and principals who had reading interventionists at their school.

- Most teachers indicated that they observed moderate to significant improvements in students' engagement in reading (90%), students' motivation to read (92%), and students' reading behaviors (85%).
- All principals who responded to the survey indicated that the overall quality of interventions was either "good" or "excellent."

Interventionist Perceptions¹¹

A feedback survey was administered to reading interventionists asking for their feedback on various aspects of the reading intervention program.

- The majority of reading interventionists reported that they observed moderate to significant improvements in students' engagement (90%), motivation (87%), and reading behaviors (91%).
- While most respondents indicated that the program was moderately or highly effective (94%) and they were satisfied with support and resources received (87%), slightly fewer respondents reported that the overall organization and management of the program was either "good" or "excellent" (74%).
- Some challenges highlighted by the respondents included teacher resistance, lack of administrative support, lack of adequate workspace, and the need for clear expectations and training.

Which Dallas ISD students were served by the program in 2022-23?

Students were prioritized to receive reading interventionist support if they scored in the 25th percentile or lower on the MAP Growth assessment for reading at beginning-of-year (BOY) and if they were not receiving other special education services.

Most students identified for interventions were African American and economically disadvantaged (Table 2). The proportion of students classified as at-risk¹² generally increased as grade level increased.

⁹ Training topics include MAP, PowerSchool, and the Fountas & Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI).

¹⁰ Full survey results with response frequencies are available at https://dallasisd.az1.qualtrics.com/reporting-dashboard/#/dashboard/64c295d52609ec00095049d9?pagelD=Page_16da1f55-d2d7-43cf-ae66-e8ebec2a063e

¹¹ Full survey results with response frequencies are available at https://dallasisd.az1.qualtrics.com/reporting-dashboard/#/dashboard/64c295d52609ec00095049d9?pagelD=Page_16da1f55-d2d7-43cf-ae66-e8ebec2a063e

¹² At-risk students are identified as at risk of dropping out of school or failing the current grade based on various criteria.

Table 2: 2022-23 Characteristics of Students Served by MTSS Reading Interventionists

	Total		Gr 1	Gr 2	Gr 3	Gr 4	Gr 5
	n	%	%	%	%	%	%
Sex							
Female	391	50.9	51.6	47.2	56.1	50.0	53.2
Male	377	49.1	48.4	52.8	43.9	50.0	46.8
Race/Ethnicity							
Af Am	643	83.7	75.8	83.5	80.9	87.9	87.2
Hispanic	97	12.6	21.0	12.3	12.7	9.7	12.1
Other	28	3.6	3.2	4.2	6.4	2.4	0.7
Special Student Populations							
At Risk	297	38.7	9.7	12.3	19.7	80.6	88.7
Econ Dis	740	96.4	93.5	96.8	96.2	96.8	96.5

Source: District demographic data file dated 05/12/23.

Note: Gr = Grade. Af Am = African American. Econ Dis = Economically Disadvantaged. Ns for grades = 62 (Gr 1), 284 (Gr 2), 157 (Gr 3), 124 (Gr 4), 141 (Gr 5).

What were student assessment outcomes in 2022-23?

2022-23 goals for the program were evaluated using data from the *MAP Growth* reading and *MAP Reading Fluency* reading assessments.

MAP Growth Reading

Rasch Unit (RIT) Score¹³

- The average RIT score of students who received reading interventions was lower (175 at BOY and 190 at EOY) than other students at their campus who did not receive reading interventions¹⁴ (189 at BOY and 197 at EOY) and all students in the district in grades three to five (192 at BOY and 200 at EOY).
- However, students who received reading intervention experienced a greater percentage increase (9% increase) from BOY to EOY than other students at their campus who did not receive the reading intervention (4% increase) or all students in the district in grades three to five (4% increase).

Projected Growth¹⁵

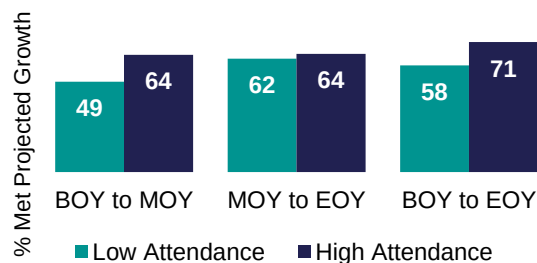
A student's projected growth is how much a student's score is expected to grow between two assessment administration windows based on his or her result on the first administration (e.g., BOY to MOY, MOY to EOY, BOY to EOY).

- Sixty four percent of students met projected growth at EOY, achieving the MTSS REO program's goal for 60

percent of intervention students to meet or exceed their *MAP Growth* reading targets.

- Overall, students with higher attendance rates met their projected growth target at a higher rate than students with lower attendance rates (Figure 1).

Figure 1: 2022-23 Percentage of Students Served by MTSS Reading Interventionists Who Met Projected Growth on MAP Growth Reading by Attendance



Source: District MAP data file dated 02/08/23 (MOY) and 06/25/23 (EOY).

Note: Ns for each assessment window = 380 (BOY to MOY), 381 (MOY to EOY), 371 (BOY to EOY). Rate of each attendance category: Low Attendance = 60% or below; High Attendance = 61% or above.

MAP Reading Fluency

Students in grades one and two took *MAP Reading Fluency* assessments at BOY, MOY, and EOY. Results were used by teachers and interventionists to gather interim performance indicators about foundational reading skills.

- Sixty nine percent of students in grade two who participated in reading intervention program achieved their expected level in sentence fluency performance. Therefore, the MTSS REO program did not meet its goal for 70 percent of grade two students to meet or exceed the expected level by a slight margin.
- There was a notable increase in the rate of students in grades one and two who met expectation at EOY (Figure 2).

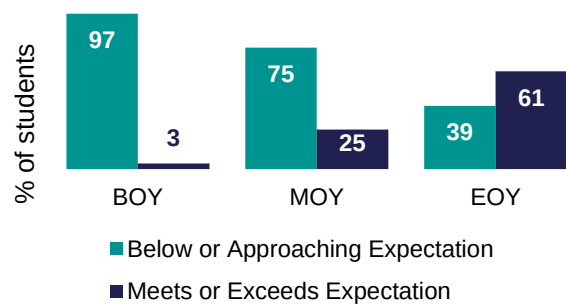
¹³ The RIT is a standardized, equal-interval score that represents the level at which a student is ready to learn at the time of assessment. It can be compared to other RIT scores regardless of student age or grade.

¹⁴ Includes all students in grades three to five on REO campuses who have not undergone reading interventions.

¹⁵ 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.

Figure 2: 2022-23 Percentage of Students Served by MTSS Reading Interventionists Who Met or Exceeded Expectation on Reading Fluency



Source: District MAP Reading Fluency data files dated 10/10/22 (BOY), 02/10/23 (MOY), 06/25/23 (EOY).
Note: N = 319 (BOY); N = 333 (MOY); N = 328 (EOY).

Comparison with Other Students

MAP Growth reading and MAP Reading Fluency data for students served by reading interventionists were compared with respective data for students from comparable campuses at the same grade level who were not served by the interventionists.¹⁶

Comparison students were selected based on their MAP Growth reading scores (i.e., below 25th test percentile) for students in grades three to five and MAP Reading Fluency achievement level (i.e., below or approaching expectation) for students in grades one and two at BOY.

For both groups of students, the evaluator compared (a) the rate of students meeting projected growth on MAP Growth reading (grades 3 to 5) and (b) the rate of students meeting or exceeding in sentence fluency performance on MAP Reading Fluency (grades 1 and 2).

- From BOY to EOY, students in grades three to five who received reading interventions have met their projected growth on MAP Growth reading assessment at a higher rate (64%) than their comparison peers (49%).¹⁷
- At EOY, students in grades one and two who received reading interventions have met

expectation at a higher rate (61%) than their comparison peers (22%).¹⁸

RECOMMENDATIONS

Support collaboration between interventionists and campus staff members. Encourage collaboration between interventionists and teachers to foster a shared understanding and promote support for the program. Scheduling and space constraints will need to be regularly evaluated to ensure flexibility and accommodate interventionists’ needs. MTSS department and interventionists are encouraged to engage in proactive communication with school administrators, emphasizing the importance and positive impact of reading interventions, to promote school administrators’ active involvement and support.

Reinforce regular attendance for reading interventions. Students who received reading interventions on a more regular basis demonstrated better academic outcomes compared to their peers with less attendance. Identify students with irregular attendance patterns and provide targeted support to address barriers that may discourage their consistent participation. Assess the scheduling and timing of reading interventions to ensure they are adequate for optimal attendance. Make necessary adjustments to intervention schedule to accommodate student needs and enhance overall attendance rates.

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>

¹⁶ Same comparison campuses as last year were used (Kim, 2022). 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.

¹⁷ Ns for students = 371 (reading intervention), 1,064 (comparison).

¹⁸ Ns for students = 328 (reading intervention), 775 (comparison).