

Read To Learn, Learn to Do  
Mississippi State University  
2019 Program Evaluation Summative Report  
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### **List of Acronyms**

ELL - English language learner

RTL - Read to Learn

STAR - Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading

## **Executive Summary**

The RTL program is designed as an after-school elementary enrichment program to promote literacy in emerging readers and students at-risk for reading difficulties. It provides students with additional instruction and support in reading four days each week and integrates the instruction into engaging activities that are enjoyable for students. This report serves as a summative evaluation of the second year of implementation for the RTL program at Church Hill Elementary School and South Side Elementary School. This report was intended for stakeholders with an interest in the program's primary outcomes (i.e., program personnel, parents of students, school administrators and staff members, Mississippi Department of Education personnel). The report addresses the program's impact on three outcomes (i.e., student academic achievement, youth development, and family engagement) and asks the question "What was the impact of the RTL program?" on each of these outcomes. These questions are answered using descriptive analysis of program data collected during the 2018 – 2019 academic year. Overall, the RTL program appears to have a positive effect on students' reading ability, improving their scores on standardized assessments of reading achievement. Similarly, the RTL program appears to have a positive effect on youth development, with improvements in student behavior, homework completion, and classroom participation evidenced in the data. The RTL program did not appear to have a positive impact on parental engagement, with few parents attending family literacy events put on by the program. In sum, the RTL program meets its primary goal of improving students' reading ability and a secondary goal of impacting youth development; however, modifications may be necessary for the program to influence parental engagement in their children's education.

### **Evaluation Purpose and Evaluation Questions**

The purpose of this evaluation is to determine the extent to which the RTL program met each of its objectives and outcomes during the second year of its implementation. The findings of this evaluation are intended to be used for two purposes: 1) To evaluate the effectiveness of the RTL program in improving participant outcomes (e.g., academic achievement, youth outcomes) aligned with all of the goals and measurable objectives and 2) to identify areas that may be in need of modification or improvement. The following evaluation questions were developed to achieve these purposes:

- 1) What was the impact of the RTL program on student academic achievement? (Goal 1; Measurable Objectives 1.1 and 1.2)
- 2) What was the impact of the RTL program on youth development? (Goal 2; Measurable Objectives 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3)
- 3) What was the impact of the RTL program on family engagement? (Goal 3; Measurable Objectives 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3)

### **Program Background**

The RTL program is designed as an after-school enrichment program to promote literacy in emerging readers and students at-risk for reading difficulties. It is implemented at Church Hill Elementary School and South Side Elementary School, both located within the West Point Consolidated School District, serving grades 1-2 and 3-4 respectively. The 2018 - 2019 school year marked the second year of implementation of the RTL program, which is funded by a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) grant through the Mississippi Department of Education . Participating students are grouped by grade and rotate throughout a regular set of program activities each day.

Activities include independent and group reading, enrichment activities designed that incorporate reading as a critical component (e.g., cooking, filming a scripted video), and other enrichment activities such as martial arts. RTL was scheduled to run four days each week during the 2018 - 2019 school year (Monday through Thursday) and was implemented for four weeks during the fall semester (11/26 - 12/20) and 17 weeks during the spring semester (1/8 - 5/9). RTL was also implemented over a third shorter summer rotation (5/25 – 6/26) following the end of the 2018 - 2019 school year.

### **Attendance**

A total of 172 students were recruited to participate in the *Read to Learn, Learn to Do* program across the 2019 Fall, 2019 Spring, and 2019 Summer sessions. Of the 172 participants, 80 (46.5%) were male and 92 (53.5%) were female. Regarding participant ethnicity, a large majority were Black or African American (133; 77.3%) with the remainder identifying as White (29; 16.8%), Asian (5; 2.9%), Hispanic or Latino (4; 2.3%), and Middle Eastern (1; 0.7%). Participants were recruited nearly equally across first grade (32; 18.6%), second grade (31; 18%), and third grade (36; 20.9%); however, fourth grade students were overrepresented (73; 42.4%) relative to other grades, accounting for nearly half of all participants. These enrollment numbers exceeded the projected grade level recruitment targets (i.e., 25 per grade level), increasing the total participant pool to 137.6% of the projected target of 125 students and also represents a 10.9% increase over the previous year (2018-2019) enrollment. All participants (172; 100%) were eligible for free and reduced lunch. Very few participants were receiving special education services (20; 11.6%) and even fewer were identified as possessing limited

English proficiency (4; 2.3%); however, ELL students comprise less than 1% of the total enrollment across both schools, indicating that their representation in the RTL program was higher than expected.

Participants varied in the number of days they attended the program. The average number of attendance days during the 2018 Spring semester was 39 (range = 4 – 72; SD = 21.2), a slight decrease from the previous year average of 41. The average student attended 54.8% of total program days. Overall, a total of 104 students attended the program regularly, which is defined by the Mississippi Department of Education as attendance of 30 days or more. Thus, for the remainder of this evaluation, only the data from these 104 regularly attending students will be used when considering alignment with the measurable objectives.

### **Progress Toward Goals and Objectives**

The following section will address the RTL program's progress toward each of its three broad goals. Progress toward goals will be determined by examining the extent to which the RTL program achieved each of its eight measurable objectives

**Goal 1:** Increase academic achievement in literacy (reading and writing)

***Measurable Objective 1.1:*** 80% of regularly participating students, including ELL students, will show significant growth in reading proficiency as measured by both school-level measures and at least one state-approved standardized test.

Data from the Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading (STAR) were collected and analyzed for the 104 students that regularly participated in the RTL program. Data from the Fall, Winter and Spring administrations were compared to determine the effect the program had on STAR score performance. Table 1 presents aggregate STAR data for all regularly

participating students. Overall, 85.6% of regularly participating students demonstrated improvement on their STAR test between the Fall and Spring administrations.

STAR Metric	Fall	Winter	Spring
Scale Score	234	300 (+66)	329 (+29)
Percentile Rank	30.3	41 (+10.7)	39 (-2.0)
Grade Equivalent	2.29	2.85 (+.56)	3.09 (+.24)

**Measurable Objective 1.2:** 75% of regularly participating students, including ELL students, will demonstrate a sharper learning trajectory (higher change score) in either reading or writing than was recorded in the previous semester.

As can be seen in the data in the table above, participating students exhibited the largest reading gains between the Fall and Winter assessment periods. Specifically, the average scale score increase from Fall to Winter was 66, whereas a gain of 29 was evidenced from Winter to Spring. This translates into a percentile score increase of 10.7 from Fall to Winter compared to a 2 percentile decrease from Winter to Spring. Comparing these data to the previous year, the participants in the RTL program demonstrated a slightly higher learning trajectory in the current year. Specifically, in the 2018 – 2019 school year, a scale score increase in the Fall to Winter assessment period of 59 was exhibited, translating to a 9.6 percentile increase.

**Goal 2:** Improve student health outcomes and reduce sickness-related absences; Build student leadership skills to increase positive decision-making

**Measurable Objective 2.1:** 90% of regularly participating students will meet or exceed the district-wide attendance goal of 95% of daily attendance.

Of the 104 regularly attending students, 99 (95.2%) met the district-wide attendance goal of 95% daily attendance during implementation of the RTL program.

***Measurable Objective 2.2:*** 80% of regularly participating students will demonstrate increased performance across all of the six physical education competencies defined by MDE.

These data were not collected in the second year of the program; thus, the degree to which this objective was achieved is unknown. In Year 1, these data were also not collected or reported because the physical education teacher who was hired to conduct the requisite assessments quit unexpectedly. A new physical education teacher was not hired for Year 2 of the program as these data were not identified as critical to the program in the needs analysis.

***Measurable Objective 2.3:*** 75% of students who participate regularly in the Minecraft Leader in Me Club will be identified by their classroom teachers and school administrators as positive peer role models.

Teachers were asked to indicate which students demonstrated improvement in classroom participation, behavior, and homework completion after participating in the RTL program. These variables could be considered indicators of peer leadership as students exhibiting increased engagement and positive behavior are setting good examples for their peers. 37 students regularly participated in the Minecraft Leader in Me Club. Of these students, 31 (83.7%) were identified as improving in classroom participation. Similar rates of improvement were identified for homework completion (89.2%; and classroom behavior (89.2%).

**Goal 3:** Increase family participation in school-sponsored activities; Increase students and family engagement in reading and writing as part of daily life

**Measurable Objective 3.1:** 85% of regularly participating students' families will attend parent-teacher conferences.

Overall parent-teacher conference attendance for regular program participants was 85%. Attendance levels by grade were slightly different with 90% of first grade parents, 87% of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade parents, 85% of third grade parents, and 77% of 4<sup>th</sup> grade parents attending parent-teacher conferences. It should be noted that these attendance levels are higher than for students that did not participate in the RTL program. Overall, 83.5% of non-participant students had parents attend parent teacher conferences.

**Measurable Objective 3.2:** 70% of the families who meet Objective 3.1 will report an increased sense of “belonging” in relation to the school.

A survey was administered to parents of participants to determine the extent to which they felt involved in their child's education. A total of 90 families responded to the survey using a 5-point Likert-type scale. The table below contains data for the survey questions most relevant to parents' sense of school engagement, the average ratings by parents, and the response anchor that most closely matches the average score.

Item	Average Score
Our school provides sufficient opportunities for parent involvement.	4.21; Agree
Teachers regularly communicate with parents of their students.	4.17; Agree
The concerns of parents are reflected in decisions affecting our school.	3.82; Agree
It is easy to get an appointment with the teachers, counselors, or administrators of our school.	4.26; Agree
Reports concerning my child's progress are adequate.	4.18; Agree

Parents are informed of our school's policies.	4.36; Agree
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**Measurable Objective 3.3:** 90% of regularly participating students' families will attend at least one family literacy event each semester.

Over the course of the RTL program, several family literacy events were held. Of the 104 students that regularly attended the *RTL* program, 35 (33.6%) had family members attend at least one family literacy event across the Fall, Spring, and Summer sessions.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Overall, the RTL program appears to have a positive effect on students' reading ability, improving their scores on standardized assessments of reading achievement. Similarly, the RTL program appears to have a positive effect on youth development, with improvements in student behavior, homework completion, and classroom participation evidenced in the data. The RTL program appeared to have moderate impacts on parental engagement. Although few parents attended family literacy events put on by the program, parent-teacher conference attendance of program participants was higher than average for non-participants and parents reported agreeing to a number of positive statements about their level of school engagement. In sum, the RTL program meets its primary goal of improving students' reading ability and the secondary goals of impacting youth development and parental engagement.

The following recommendations are made to improve implementation of the RTL in future years:

1. Identify another way to collect data on the physical education competencies that were proposed as part of the project. Although these data are not critical to the RTL

- program they would provide insight into the additional benefits RTL may offer to participants
2. Collect and analyze parent-teacher conference attendance data to use this as a metric of parent engagement at school. Currently, only the family literacy events are contributing to this objective, potentially limiting the scope of what is considered family engagement. Adding additional sources of data would improve the ability to assess this outcome.
  3. Promote parent attendance at family literacy events by providing incentive for students who encourage their parents to attend. That is, students who bring a parent or caregiver to a certain number of family literacy events could be made eligible to receive an end-of-program reward. This would promote the program's goal of increasing family engagement at school and would increase the likelihood that family literacy events were well attended.

**Appendix A: List of Individuals Interviewed**

Kristen Javorsky (Project Coordinator) – Assistant Professor of Early Literacy Education,  
Mississippi State University,

Leslie Scott – 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> grade project manager

Tasha Stanfield – 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> grade project manager

### **Appendix B: Brief Evaluator Biography**

Dr. Evan H. Dart, Ph.D., BCBA-D is an associate professor in the School of Psychology at the University of Southern Mississippi. He currently serves as the training director of the school psychology doctoral program. Dr. Dart completed his graduate training at Louisiana State University in school psychology with an emphasis in applied behavior analysis. He is a licensed psychologist and a board certified behavior analyst.