



READING POWER

Annual Report
2010-2011

Mission Statement

Reading Power is a not-for-profit, literacy tutoring program serving low-achieving children attending elementary schools in North Chicago, Illinois.

Our mission is to accelerate children's literacy learning and to develop in them a love of reading and writing.

We accomplish this goal through an independent tutoring program working in partnership with the schools. We believe that all children deserve to reach their academic potential.

Individual tutoring...
Changing Children's Lives

Highlights

- ❖ New executive director hired – Rebecca Mullen, MEd, began with Reading Power in July, 2010 and will return for the 2011-12 school year, continuing her tenure as the executive director and certified reading specialist leading our program. Rebecca worked alongside our dedicated volunteers, staff members, and board of directors to strengthen the Reading Power program and expand the literacy opportunities for the children of North Chicago.
- ❖ Opened an afternoon program at Forrestal Elementary School – a program focusing on second grade students was implemented on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday afternoons. The 2011-12 school year, will be the second with a full morning and afternoon tutoring program at FES.
- ❖ Hired a kindergarten program coordinator – our kindergarten coordinator is the leader of the Reading Power kindergarten program at Yeager and Green Bay Elementary Schools. She worked closely with the classroom teachers and volunteer tutors to strengthen our earliest intervention program. As our organization continues to grow, our leadership naturally increases. Each year, we add more qualified, dynamic educators to our professional staff.
- ❖ South Elementary School expansion – After successfully building a four day program under the direction of volunteer site/tutor coordinators, Reading Power will be expanding the tutoring program at South Elementary School this fall. The program will include tutoring five mornings a week in a larger classroom – increasing the total number of students tutored on a daily basis. We have hired a site-coordinator to tutor children, lead our volunteers, and collaborate with teachers and administrators.
- ❖ Library Night – Reading Power continued its partnership with the North Chicago Public Library to inform parents/guardians about our program, provide information about quality home literacy activities, and encourage patronage at the public library. After two successful years, our library night will become an annual event where children are read to, complete crafts, and receive books for their home libraries.
- ❖ Expanded our book give-away program – many books generously provided by private donations, civic and religious groups, and our partnership with Bernie's Book Bank have allowed Reading Power to greatly expand its ability to provide books to our students and build their personal, home libraries.
- ❖ Website expansion and social networking – we launched an on-line donation program on our website (www.readingpowerinc.org) and created a [Facebook](#) page to link to our website. By increasing our online exposure, we hope to share Reading Power's mission with potential donors, tutors, and other constituents.
- ❖ New members to the board of directors – two new directors, Jim Chomko and Graham Cook, have joined our board of directors – bringing the total board membership to twelve.

Program

Reading Power was formed at one school (AJ Katzenmaier) in 2003, and now operates in five elementary schools in the North Chicago School District #187. This district serves 4,000 students in 6 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, and a single high school. The breakdown of the district's diverse student body is shown below:

Black	44%
Hispanic	44%
Caucasian	7%
Mixed	5%

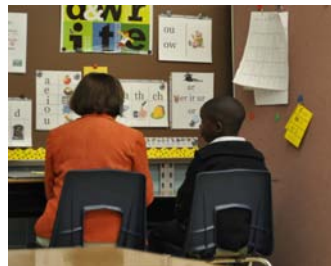
Due in part to the Great Lakes Naval Training Base, this school district has a very high mobility rate of 30%, compared to the state mobility rate of 13%.

The school district has currently entered an agreement with the Illinois State Board of Education to help them recover from financial and administrative issues, and a failure to meet annual yearly progress (AYP) on the state issued standardized tests. All elementary schools have been placed on the academic watch list for not meeting these goals, and "the agreement, which runs through 2014, provides for a state-appointed liaison to help oversee the decisions and operation of the district."¹

Standardized testing shows that less than half (48%), of third grade students in the district meet state reading standards. Furthermore, only 10% of 11th grade students meet the state reading standards.

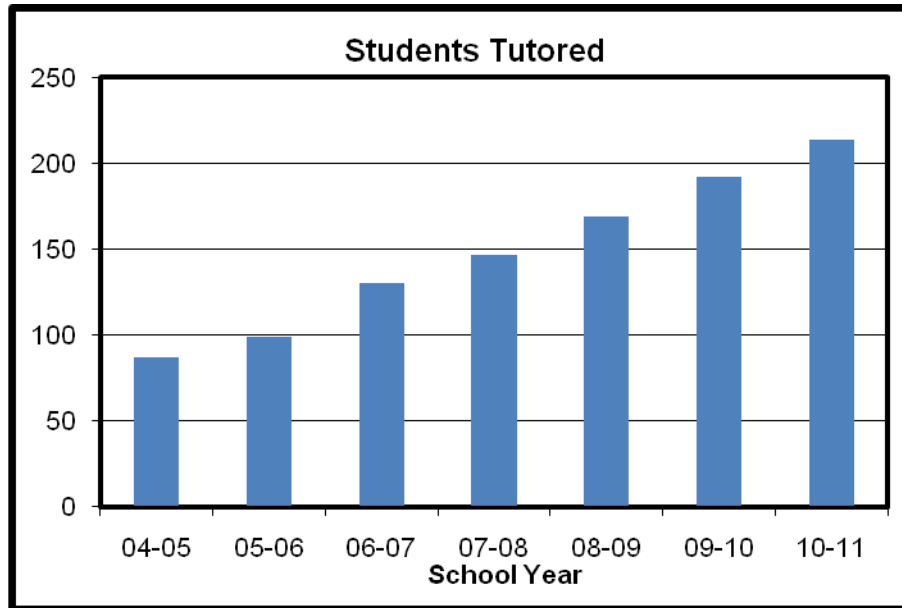
Clearly, there is a great need for the literacy program Reading Power provides. From the beginning, the program's cornerstone has been early intervention – helping to accelerate children's literacy learning before they have a chance to fail. More than 300 dedicated tutors have helped over one thousand children during the past eight years. Our tutored children make at least twice the reading fluency gains when compared to their non-tutored peers.

Reading Power owes much of its success to quality organization, dedicated volunteer tutors, and rigorous, high-quality, ongoing training for our volunteers and employees. We believe this is reflected in our 75% tutor retention rate and our students' continued progress. For many of our tutors, Reading Power is not only a time to teach but also a time to learn.



¹ As reported in the Chicago Sun-Times (April 2, 2011): <http://newssun.suntimes.com/news/3309314-418/district-state-board-chicago-north.html>

Students



Each year Reading Power has brought more one-to-one tutoring to students than in the prior year. For the academic year 2010-11, the total students tutored increased by 16% to 214.

Students Tutored, by grade				
Grade	2010-2011		2009-10	
	Students	%	Students	%
K	57	26%	53	29%
1	100	47%	70	38%
2&3	57	26%	61	33%
	214	100%	184	100%

The breakdown by grade of students tutored over the past two years shows a major shift toward implementing more first grade interventions. “Longitudinal studies tell us that low first grade readers will likely be the lowest readers in grade four.”² Reading research and our experiences have proved that the earlier we are able to intervene with a low-performing reader the more lasting progress is made through the one-to-one tutoring.

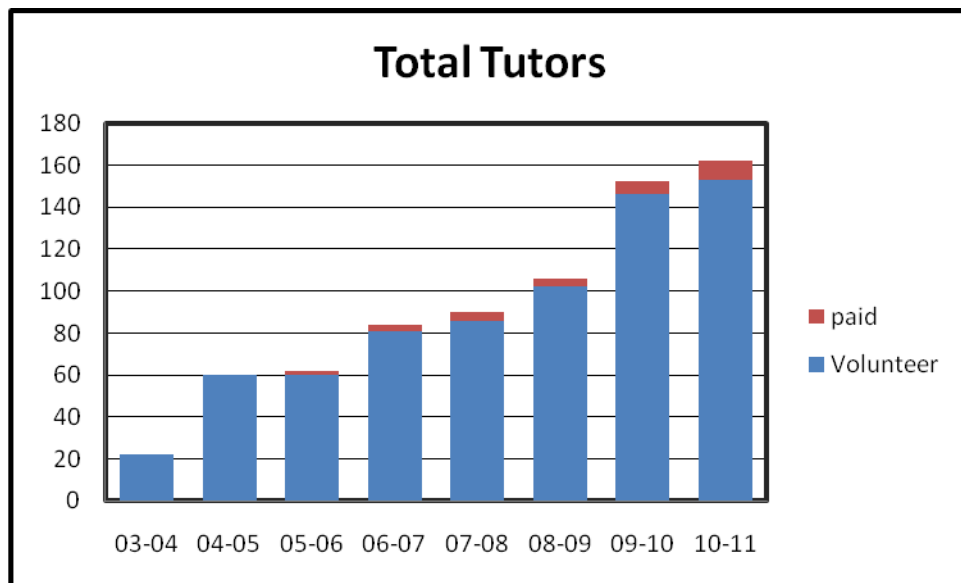
Since first grade students are tutored five days each week, versus two - three days for kindergarten and second grade, the total tutored hours provided by Reading Power increased at a greater rate than the 16% increase in students.



² Santa, C. (1999). Early Steps. Kalispell, Montana: Scott.

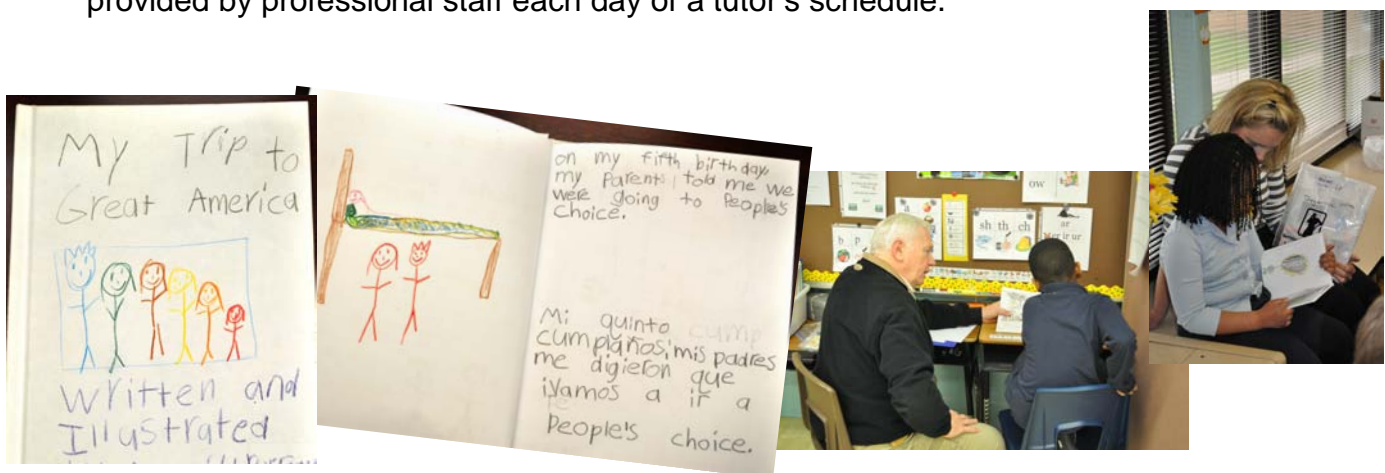
Tutors

The success experienced by the students in the Reading Power program is due to the time, dedication and effort by our volunteer tutors who set aside at least one half day per week throughout the academic school year.



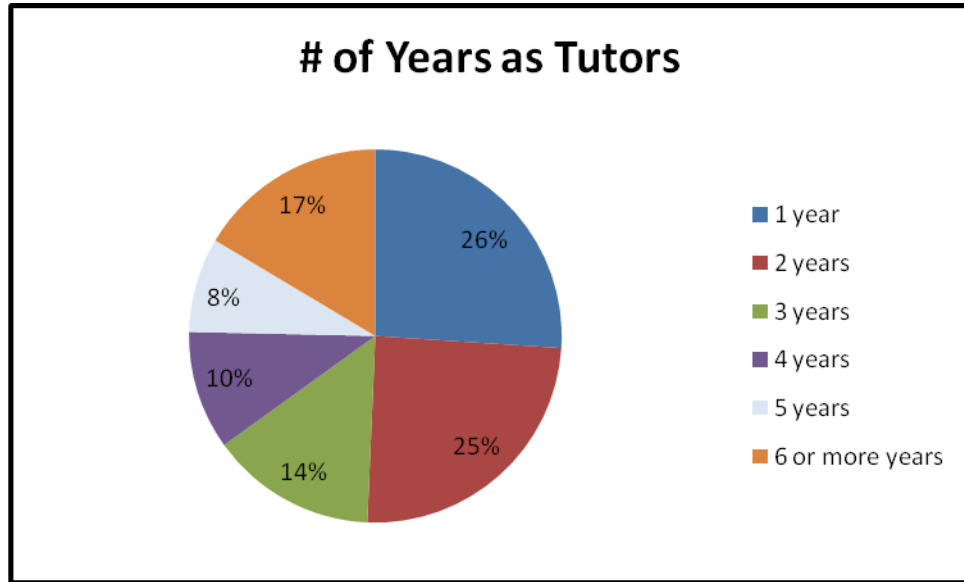
Since its inception, Reading Power has increased the number of volunteer tutors each year. One of the biggest gains was in 2009-10 to support the new program at Forrestal Elementary School and expansion at existing schools. For the school year 2010-11, the increase was due to the new afternoon program at Forrestal Elementary School.

Research has shown that an effective tutoring program must provide training for its volunteer tutors, “supervision and daily mentoring to demonstrate how to transfer the responsiveness and decision making of an experienced teacher to the tutors.”³ Reading Power ensures the effectiveness of its volunteer tutors through use of a structured curriculum that guides them on a daily basis. Continued training and mentoring is provided by professional staff each day of a tutor’s schedule.



³ *Older Volunteer Tutors for Young Readers: An Evaluation of a Tutoring Program*, Melissa Sinnett, Illinois Reading Council Journal, Vol. 39, No. 2, Spring 2011.

The quality of our tutor corps has improved each year because a large percentage of them return from the previous year(s).



Over the past school year, about three-fourths of our tutors had at least one prior year of experience; nearly half had two years, and a fourth had over five years experience.

This is an exceptional rate of returning volunteers, especially with the intensive commitment Reading Power requires of their volunteer tutors.



Progress Measurement

Every year, our Reading Power students selected for tutoring have made much greater progress when compared to their non-tutored classmates. This past school year was no exception.

Kindergarten

At the beginning of the school year, all kindergarten students are assessed for early literacy development using the ISEL (Illinois Snapshot of Early Literacy)⁴. This assessment is repeated in May. Average ISEL scores for tutored students are compared with those of the non-tutored students in the table below.

	Fall	May	% gain
tutored	39.1	99.2	155%
non tutored	54.0	98.2	82%

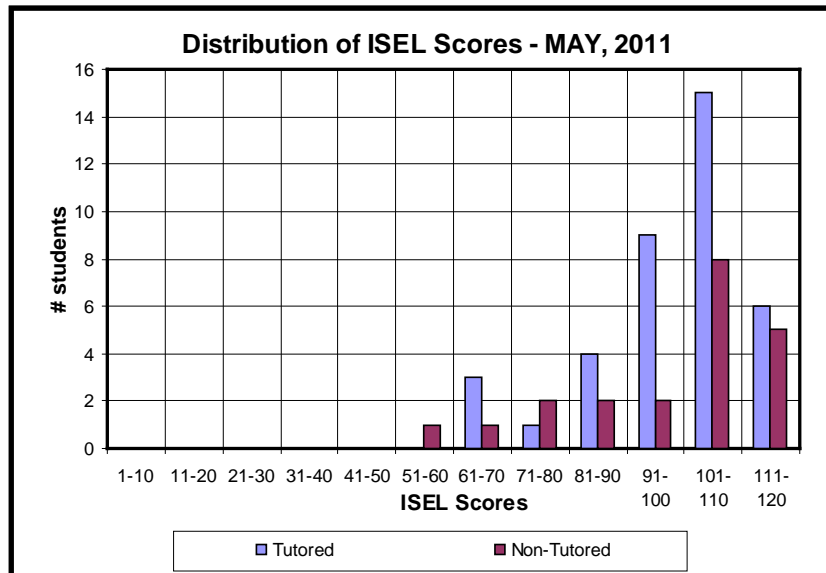
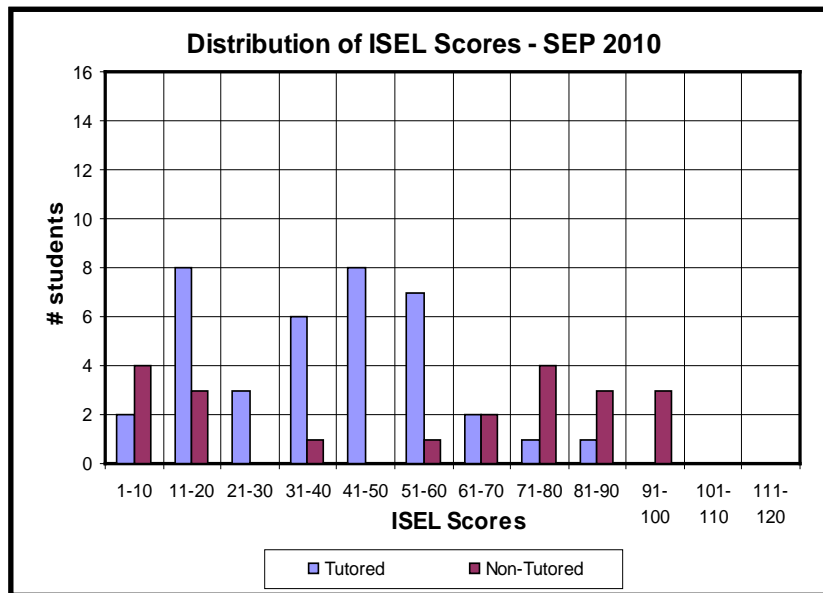
In September, the 38 students chosen for Reading Power showed an average ISEL score of 39, which was well below the average of 54 for the 21 non-tutored students. By the end of the school year, all students had made significant improvement, and importantly, the tutored students had more than closed the gap between their scores and those of their non-tutored classmates.



Reading Power crew!! I would just like to say THANK YOU ALL! for all you have done and all you do. You are all amazing. Since being in the reading power program Asta went from not reading well to... it seemed like overnight reading 10x better. You all are doing a great job and I am so thankful 😊 have a great day!!

⁴ "The Illinois Snapshots of Early Literacy (ISEL) are sets of standardized, individually administered measures of early literacy development for grades K, 1, and 2. They consist of brief measures of performance which can be used to regularly monitor the development of early literacy skills." (Illinois State Board of Education, <http://www.isbe.state.il.us/curriculum/reading/html/isel.htm>)

Fifty-nine Kindergarten students, both tutored and non-tutored, were assessed both in September and May. The distribution of their individual scores is given in the charts below.



In September, the students selected for Reading Power (shown by the blue bars) were drawn predominantly from the lower end of the class average. By May, the entire class had formed a more classic “normal” distribution. The average score for the 38 tutored students reached 99.5, slightly greater than the 98.2 average of the 21 non-tutored students.



CBM Assessment, 2010-11

Summary

Reading Power administers the Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) in September, January and May to all students in the first and second grades. The CBM measures student reading fluency (the ability to read grade level text accurately and quickly). The results for tutored students are compared with those of non-tutored students in the table below.

Note: Results from students that were not assessed in both September and May were excluded from this comparison to ensure statistical comparability. There is considerable mobility, 30%, in the North Chicago School District (as high as 55% in one elementary school).

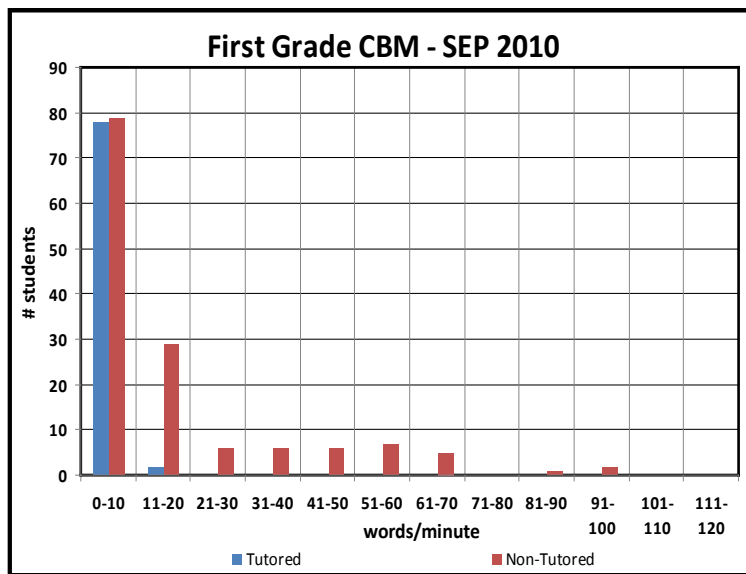
Curriculum Based Measurement - 2010-11				
Words Read Correctly per Minute				
	First Grade		Second Grade	
	(tutored)	(non tutored)	(tutored)	(non tutored)
# students	80	141	42	135
SEP score	4.2	17.1	20.2	53.0
MAY score	42.5	54.0	55.0	86.8
% Gain	921%	218%	172%	64%

The data show that improvements were made in **all** grades for **both** tutored and non-tutored students. As expected, the gains are much greater in the earlier grade. The students selected for Reading Power are taken from the lower end of their classes, yet they do not qualify to receive special education services from the school district. Their percentage gains, therefore, are naturally greater than those of non-tutored students. Statistical analysis, however, shows that the tutored students had statistically significant gains over what would be expected were they not tutored.

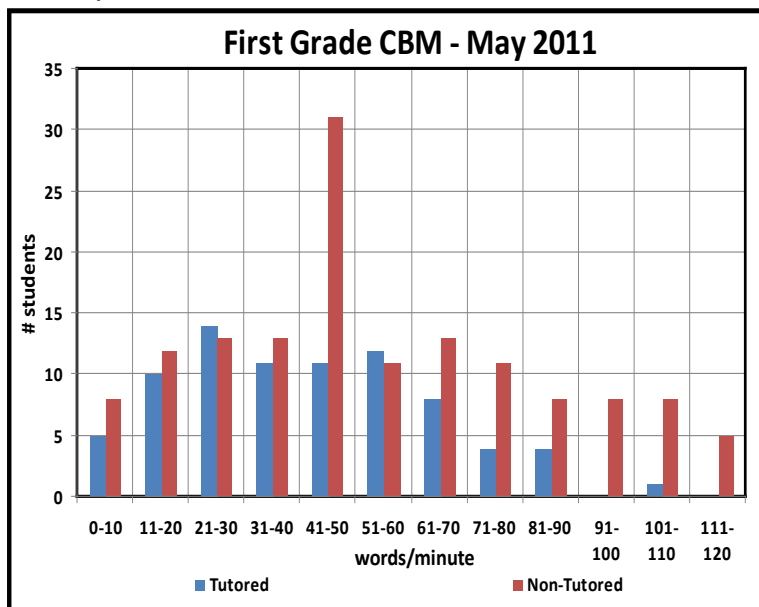


First Grade

In both September and May, 221 students were administered the CBM. The distribution of individual scores is shown on the charts below.



In September, most of the students (147 of 221) were reading below 10 words per minute (wpm). Students chosen for Reading Power, shown by the blue bars, were mainly taken from the lowest group. Starting the school year, their average score was 4.2 wpm versus 17.1 wpm for the non-tutored students.

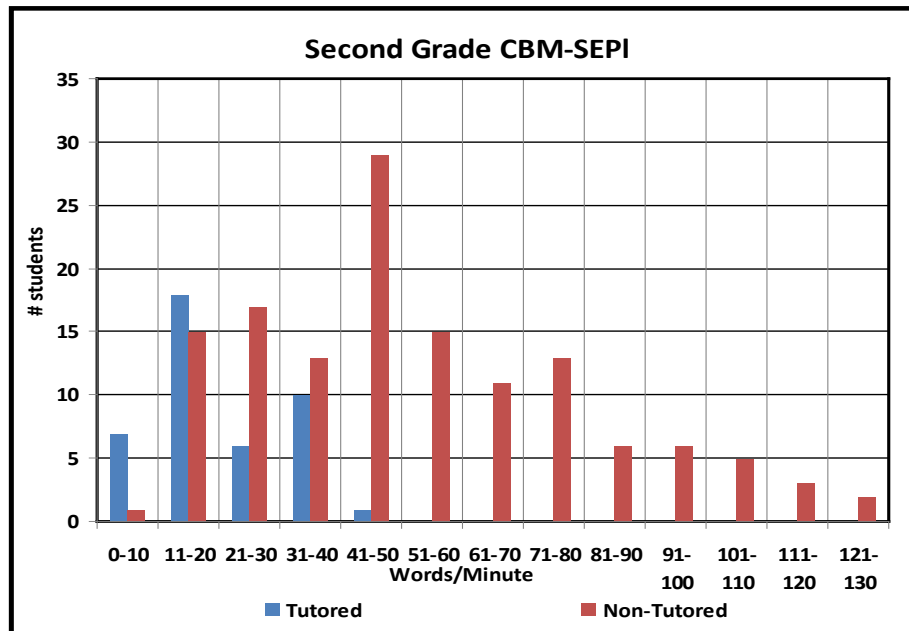


By May, nearly all students had made good progress. The class average had increased from 12 wpm to 50 wpm. For comparison, the average range for CBM scores nationally for first grade students is 30-70 wpm⁵. Although all of the 80 Reading Power students' CBM scores were below the class average in September, 31 students exceeded the class average in May. Moreover, 64 Reading Power students were within one standard deviation of the mean.

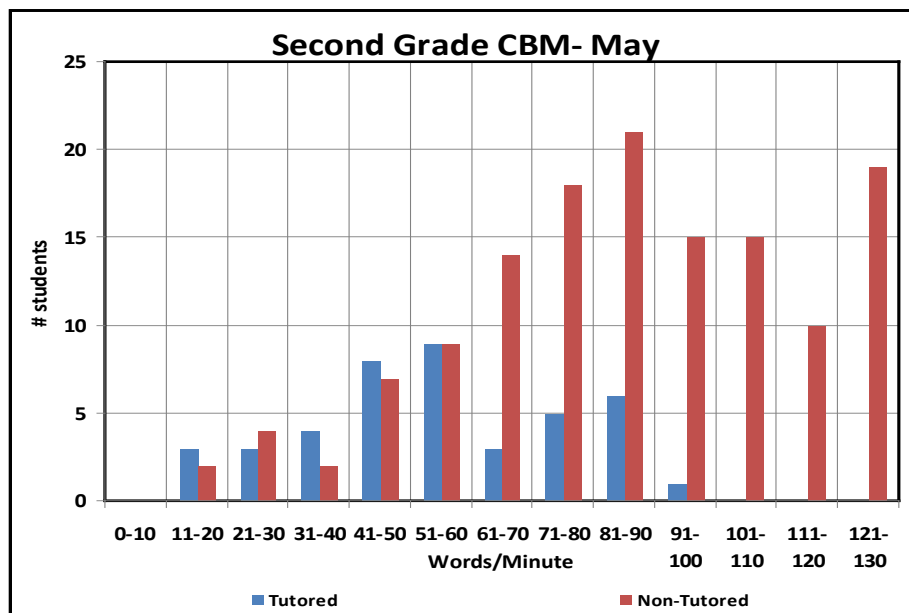
⁵ Barr, Blachowicz, Katz, and Kaufman (2002) *Reading diagnosis for teachers: An instructional approach*; Pearson, Allyn, Bacon; New York, New York

Second Grade

The CBM was administered to 178 second grade students in both September and May. Of those, 42 were selected for Reading Power, as shown in the chart below.



The class average in September was 45 wpm; 20 wpm for Reading Power students versus 53 wpm for the non-tutored students.



By year-end, the class average had increased to 79 wpm, a 75% gain. The tutored students improved from a lower level by 172% versus a 64% gain for the non-tutored students. All of the Reading Power students started below class average at the start of the year. By May, 7 of the 42 students were above class average and 25 were within one standard deviation of the average. Typical end of the year fluency rates for second grade students, according to *Reading Diagnosis for Teachers* (Barr, 2002), is 50-100 words per minutes.

Qualitative data

The data from the ISEL and CBM assessments show that Reading Power students make statistical gains throughout the school year. Not surprisingly, our tutors and staff witnessed their students' growth each week in the classroom and our biggest accomplishments all involve the children we tutor. The school year began with a Reading Power student exclaiming during a tutoring session, "This is the first book I ever read!" and students at every school asking, "Can I come to Reading Power, too?" As the school year progressed, our students began to read and write more and more. We constantly monitored each student's progress throughout the year, and some of our students were reading at grade level after a few months in the Reading Power program. When a student reaches grade level, we are able to graduate her/him from the program and begin tutoring another student.

Reading Power students read and write during every tutoring session. The acts of reading and writing are reciprocal, and "the writing knowledge serves as a resource of information that can help the reader."⁶ Early in the school year, students complete their writing in a journal. By the end of the year, some students even "published" a variety of writing pieces. Students wrote personal narratives ("My Family Vacation to Six Flags"), instructional pieces ("How to Make Cupcakes"), fictional stories ("A Samurai Adventure"), nonfiction pieces ("All About Polar Bears") and many other creative stories. They read their books aloud, full of pride, at our end-of-year "author days" and left with a feeling of empowerment created by their authorship.

Reading Power's qualitative and quantitative data combined demonstrate the effectiveness of our early intervention literacy program. Each year, we are able to tutor more students and change their literate lives *forever*. Our dedicated volunteers and staff strengthen our partnership with the school district more and more every year, and we are committed to focusing our efforts on the students enrolled in the North Chicago School District #187.



⁶ Clay, M., (1993) Reading Recovery: a guidebook for teachers in training, Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH

Expenses

Reading Power's total expenses in 2009-2010 were \$223.2 K. The budget for 2010-11 was \$223.7, only a slight increase from the prior year. Professional fees were expected to increase, but were largely offset by reductions in salaries & benefits as well as our operating expenses.

Comparative Expenses, \$000				
Actual/Budget/Prior Year				
	Actual 2009-10	Budget 2010-11	Actual 2010-11	Change vs. Budget
Salaries & Benefits *	178.7	176.9	178.2	-1.3
Professional Fees *	22.8	27.5	21.8	5.7
Operating Expenses	21.7	19.3	16.2	3.1
	223.2	223.7	216.2	(7.5)
* Admin. Mgr. status changed from independent contractor to employee in 2010-11. 2009-10 numbers restated to be comparable.				

Actual expenses for 2010-11 came in 3.3% below budget. The biggest change was lower than expected professional fees. Both audit and legal fees were lower and we did not incur a budgeted consultant fee to aid the new executive director. Lower operating expenses resulted from below budget costs for books, training materials, computers and background checks, partially offset by higher than budget insurance costs.

Contributions during 2010-11 totaled \$241.2 K, exceeding expenditures by \$25.0 K.

