

RISING TO THE CHALLENGE FOR STRIVING READERS

2024-25 Impact Report



Reading Assist

READINGASSIST.ORG



A Letter From Our CEO

Dear Friends and Supporters,

I'm excited to share our 2024-25 Impact Report with you. This year marked Reading Assist's **35th anniversary**—a milestone that brought both challenges and growth. In our largest year ever, we served more than 2,300 students, a 28% increase from last year and the most in our history. As the nation continues to confront how to close the literacy gap, Reading Assist is better positioned than ever to help lead the way.

This year, we continued to lead with our core strength: high-impact tutoring. Across DC, Delaware, and Pennsylvania, **Reading Assist delivered strong results for our school partners**. Students made steady gains, **with 90% reaching foundational reading benchmarks** and more kindergartners meeting targets than in any previous year.

As we completed the first year of our **Tutors to Teachers partnership with Wilmington University**, we were proud to see 97% of these tutors' students reach key reading benchmarks. As our first-year candidates transition into their teacher residencies, we look forward to continuing to build the teacher pipeline with our new 2025-26 cohort.

We also launched our new **Literacy Leaders** model, which empowers schools to build internal capacity.

With a Reading Assist expert on-site or remote, schools can grow educator talent while we help track student progress and monitor intervention data.

At the end of April, we faced an unexpected challenge when AmeriCorps funding was cut, sidelining 17 Delaware-based tutors with just weeks left in the school year. But through collective advocacy and perseverance, we secured the support needed to finish the semester strong. This experience reinforced the unpredictability of federal funding and strengthened our resolve to diversify partnerships and adapt our services so we can continue reaching students, no matter what.

Thank you for standing with us. Together, we're building a future where every child has the skills and confidence to read, learn, and thrive.

With gratitude,



Caroline O'Neal
Chief Executive Officer



Our board

Pamela Scott,
President

Madeleine Bayard,
Vice President

Israel Mercado, *Treasurer*

James Boyd, *Secretary*

Kae Keister, Ed. D.

Gary Camp

Pete Leida

Darren Mahoney

LaRetha C. P. Odumosu, Ph.D.

Virginia Biasotto (*Founder*)



Wilmington Mayor John Carney announced a summer partnership with the Reading Assist team in June 2025.

Our Staff

Caroline O'Neal
CEO

Jeannine Bedford
Program Director

Lindsay Bedford
Development and Marketing
Manager

Amanda Carreiro
Program Manager

Jen Clinton
Program Director

Deb DeGrosky
Director of Instruction

Leigh Fairley
Managing Director of Programs

Judith Graham Kane
Managing Director of Partnerships,
Development & Marketing

Emily Hershman
Senior Director of Partnerships
and External Relations

Amy Iobst-Zunino
Program Manager

Christopher Kettering
Program Manager

Dara Nigreville
Managing Director of Operations

Kelly Preston
Program Manager

Robert Raup
Finance Director

Phyllis Russo
Program Manager

Emma Warnick
Program Manager

Eric Williamson
Director of Data,
Evaluation & Grants

“

Just as you've dedicated
yourselves to mastering
reading, and to helping
each other, I'm determined
to keep fighting for
Reading Assist, for
volunteerism and service,
and for literacy for all.

U.S. Senator Chris Coons,
Delaware



What Drives Us

MISSION: Reading Assist provides intensive services for young, at-risk children with the most significant reading challenges so they achieve measurable reading progress and long-term proficiency.

AMBITION: Reading Assist will become the leading regional expert and trusted provider of reading instruction and intervention.

GOAL: Serve 10,000 students with 90% reaching benchmarks in foundational skills within one year.

Core Values



EXCELLENCE

We are committed to delivering high-quality, data-driven work achieved through careful planning, thoughtful review, curiosity, and seeking improvement.



DEDICATION

We pledge to consistently show up for our students and advance educational opportunity through success for struggling readers.



PARTNERSHIP

We believe in the power of partnership and that the best outcomes are achieved when diverse perspectives, skills, and strengths are brought together.



ENTHUSIASM

We foster a vibrant workplace where enthusiasm sets our pace, fuels our mission, honors every achievement, and builds a joyful, positive culture.

Why Reading Assist Works

HIGH-IMPACT, EVIDENCE-BASED INSTRUCTION

Reading Assist delivers high-impact, evidence-based instruction through multiple pathways, including direct student support, school-based coaching, and educator training. Our trained instructors use the accredited Reading Assist program, a structured literacy curriculum grounded in the Orton-Gillingham approach.

HIGH-QUALITY TRAINING AND COACHING SUPPORT

All Reading Assist tutors receive intensive training in our structured literacy curriculum and ongoing coaching from our experienced program team. This layered support ensures consistent, high-quality implementation and empowers schools to build internal capacity over time.

DATA-DRIVEN

Reading Assist gauges student success using Acadience Reading K-6, which measures progress in six foundational reading skills through benchmark assessments and weekly progress monitoring. Program staff review this data weekly to make targeted adjustments to each student's tutoring and reading goals.

Multiple third-party evaluations conducted this year further validate our program's effectiveness, including **CitySchools Collaborative and EmpowerK12**, **Verite Educational Services**, and the **Delaware Department of Education through Accelerate**.

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A student told me,
“You make me feel so
smart.” I feel like I’m
really making a difference
in the children’s lives...

Judy, 2024–25 Fellow



“

Reading Assist has been a wonderful resource in our school. Students who meet with Reading Assist fellows have become more confident readers and have grown academically as readers.

– Literacy Coach,
Carrie Downie Elementary School



This year, we served

55
schools and
2,333
students across
the region

84%
of kindergartners tested
on grade level

90%
of students
reached
benchmarks
in foundational
reading skills

Up to
17
months
of learning gained
during the 9 1/2-month
school year

Students outpaced
expected learning
by up to

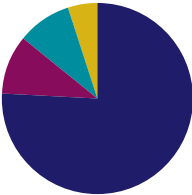
15x

Students showed
431%
average growth in
Oral Reading Fluency—
a key foundational
reading skill measure

Who We Serve: Student Demographics

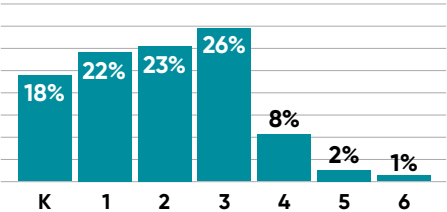
Student Gender: **50%** Girls **50%** Boys

Student Race:



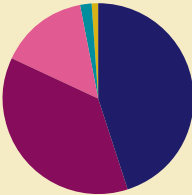
76% Black/African American
10% White/Caucasian
9% Hispanic/Latino
5% Multiracial/Other

Student Grade:



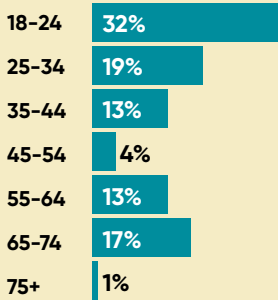
Our Tutors

6% Veteran Status



Fellow Race:
45% Black/African American
37% White/Caucasian
15% Multiracial/Other/Undisclosed
2% Asian/Asian American
1% American Indian/Indigenous

Fellow Age:



DEVELOPING FUTURE EDUCATORS

This year's Reading Assist tutor cohort included 8 aspiring educators—including Tutors to Teachers Delaware candidates and Teacher Academy high school students from Wilmington's Howard High School—reflecting Reading Assist's ongoing commitment to building the teacher pipeline and nurturing careers in education.



2024-25 Highlights

A RECORD-BREAKING YEAR

In our largest year yet, Reading Assist served over 2,300 students—a 28% increase from the previous year and the most in our 35-year history. This success fuels our mission and sets a powerful new standard for our ongoing work to close the literacy gap.



CITYWIDE LITERACY PARTNERSHIP

Through a summer initiative led by the Wilmington Mayor's Office and powered by Mrs. Wordsmith, Reading Assist helped bring game-based reading tools to community hubs, expanding access to literacy for youth across the region.



LITERACY COACHING MODEL LAUNCH

Reading Assist launched its new Literacy Leaders coaching model to help build school capacity to support readers, resulting in 92% of participating students benchmarking on grade level during the pilot year.



BUILDING THE TEACHER PIPELINE

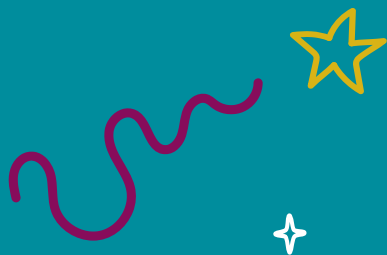
This past year, Reading Assist completed the first full year of our two educator pathways programs: our Tutors to Teachers partnership with Wilmington University, where candidates earn an M.Ed. in Special Education, and our Teacher Academy collaboration with Howard High School, which prepares the next generation of educators through hands-on experience and real-world preparation.



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The Reading Assist folks create great relationships with the students, know what they are doing, and are a valuable resource for our classrooms and our school.

Assistant Principal,
Sussex Montessori



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Delaware

AMERICORPS ADVOCACY & LEADERSHIP

During a national push to protect AmeriCorps funding, Reading Assist emerged as a leading voice, with CEO Caroline O'Neal joining U.S. Senator Chris Coons and Delaware Governor Matt Meyer at press events and on Capitol Hill to advocate for the future of service-based literacy support.



ENGAGING DELAWARE'S TOP LEADERS

From classroom visits with State Senator Sturgeon and State Representative Chukwuocha to community events with U.S. Senator Coons, Governor Meyer, and Wilmington Mayor Carney, Reading Assist showed up at major statewide gatherings, including CharterCon, the Delaware Teacher Pathways Showcase, and Governor Meyer's MLK Day of Service, building momentum for early literacy through high-level partnerships and public presence.



Pennsylvania

CELEBRATING LITERACY UNDER THE STARS

In partnership with Bookish Notions, Reading Assist hosted a family-friendly kickoff to Delco Gives Day in downtown Media, bringing stories, games, and free literacy resources to the community through an evening of joyful, public celebration.



PENNSYLVANIA RALLY FOR LITERACY

Reading Assist staff joined educators, families, and lawmakers on the steps of the Pennsylvania Commonwealth Capitol to advocate for evidence-based literacy policy and funding, raising collective voices to confront the state's literacy crisis.



PA LITERACY COALITION SUMMIT

Reading Assist joined educators, advocates, and policy leaders, including Laura Boyce of Teach Plus and Dr. Kymyona Burk of ExcelinEd, in Harrisburg to address Pennsylvania's literacy crisis and strengthen statewide collaboration around evidence-based reading instruction.

Washington, DC

WHITE HOUSE RECOGNITION & DC EXPANSION

As Reading Assist began expanding across Washington, D.C., our team attended the National Partnership for Student Success (NPSS) Higher Education Summit and the NPSS Principal Survey presentation at the White House, where our work was recognized as part of the Biden-Harris Administration's national effort to grow high-impact student support ahead of its 2025 goal.



Washington, DC

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION (OSSE) LEADERSHIP VISIT

We were honored to welcome Dr. Antoinette Mitchell, DC's State Superintendent of Education, to DC Scholars PCS for a firsthand look at how Reading Assist's structured, evidence-based literacy support is helping students build foundational skills every day.

DC-DE EARLY LITERACY LEARNING TOUR

Leaders from Delaware and DC including Delaware Lt. Governor Kyle Evans Gay and DC Council Member Christina Henderson toured Harmony DC PCS to see Reading Assist's high-impact tutoring in action and explore regional approaches to early literacy success.



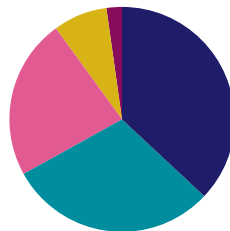
ELEVATING THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION ON HIGH-IMPACT TUTORING

At the 2025 DC High-Impact Tutoring Summit, CEO Caroline O'Neal joined the panel "Designing for Your Context: Insights from Multiple Models for HIT," sharing how Reading Assist tailors its evidence-based approach while sharing the stage with valued DC partners and fellow education leaders.



Our Support

Thank you to the entire Reading Assist community for powering this work. From our dedicated tutors to the donors, funders, board members, and partners who make this work possible, we're grateful for your belief in our mission. As our funding model continues to evolve, this shared investment ensures we can reach more students, in more places, with the high-quality literacy support they deserve.



FUNDING BREAKDOWN (2024-25)

37% AmeriCorps

30% Program Fees

23% Government Sources

8% Corporate and Foundation

2% Individual Giving

Help Us Reach More Readers

Every gift helps us bring high-impact literacy support to more students, schools, and communities. As demand grows and our programs expand, your support ensures we can continue reaching the children who need us most.

SCAN THE QR CODE or visit
READINGASSIST.ORG/DONATE
to join our community of supporters.





100 West 10th Street, Suite 910
Wilmington, DE 19801

See the Reading Assist Difference

SCAN THE QR CODE to watch a short video celebrating 35 years of impact and how Reading Assist continues to unlock the world of reading for students who need it most.

