Reading Assist

Introducing the Reading Assist Program at Harmony DC Public Charter School

2024

VERITE Educational Services

Contents

I.   Context

A.   Overview of Reading Assist

Reading Assist offers specialized support for vulnerable children facing substantial reading difficulties, aiming to help them improve and demonstrate their reading ability.[1] Collaborating with schools, Reading Assist targets children in grades K-3 who are among the least proficient in reading. They hire, prepare, and deploy tutors, called fellows, to deliver their accredited, high-dosage tutoring program, focusing on students from low-income families, those learning English, and those with dyslexia.

Fellows are at the core of the program. They provide personalized one-on-one reading instruction to students in grades K-3. Fellows help students improve their reading skills, with a particular focus on students who are struggling or at risk of falling behind. Key responsibilities include designing and delivering tailored reading lessons that align with the school's curriculum, assessing student progress, and adapting instructional strategies based on individual learning needs. Fellows build and maintain positive, supportive relationships with students to encourage engagement and motivation. By fostering a trusting and encouraging learning environment, they help students build confidence in their reading abilities. Fellows collaborate with the coach to stay updated on effective teaching practices and strategies, customize instruction appropriately, and solve problems such as severe misbehavior.

Helpful characteristics of candidates include strong experience in tutoring or teaching reading, a background in education or a related field, familiarity with evidence-based reading intervention strategies and differentiated instruction, and the ability to assess student needs and provide targeted support. Reading Assist training helps develop those skills. Candidates must also demonstrate excellent communication and interpersonal skills to work effectively with students. Experience working with diverse student populations, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds or with learning disabilities, is preferred. A commitment to educational equity and improving student outcomes is essential for success in this role.

B.   Implementation at Harmony

For a portion of the 2023-24 school year (March 11 to June 11), Reading Assist hired three fellows to serve 19 students in grades K-3 at Harmony DC Public Charter School.[2] [3] These are students whom the school and Reading Assist collaboratively identified who had shown no improvement with regular interventions prior to the Reading Assist program starting. On average, they scored significantly below their grade level on Acadience, a universal screening and progress monitoring assessment which tracks literacy skills in the elementary grades and comprises indicators of crucial skills for proficient reading.[4]

The tutoring program involves the following key components:[5]

- One-on-one daily reading instruction to struggling readers.

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[1] https://readingassist.org/about/

[2] Reading Assist (2024, April 12). *Harmony ES SY '23-'24 Update* [PowerPoint slides].

[3] Typically, tutoring takes place for the majority of the school year (about 33 weeks).

[4] https://knowledge.acadiencelearning.org/what-is-acadience-reading

[5] https://readingassist.org/services/; https://readingassist.org/services/reading-assist-fellows/; Reading Assist (n.d.). *Reading Assist.* [PowerPoint slides].

- 30-45 minutes depending on the grade.
- Instruction aligned to Science of Reading.
- Practice of foundational skills such as recognizing sounds, spelling, and reading.
- Unique lesson plans for each student daily.
- No additional homework for students.

At Harmony, daily instruction was scheduled to last for 30 minutes, and delivery was virtual.

C. Research Base

Reading Assist tutoring involves key features that research has shown work together to create a powerful and impactful tutoring experience that supports student learning (research is listed in the Appendix). It is grounded in a solid curriculum tailored to meet students' needs. Instruction, which is personalized and informed by student progress monitoring data, is delivered one-on-one during the school day at least three times a week. Each student is matched with a single fellow with whom they develop a trusting, positive, and consistent relationship.

Reading Assist provides fellows with professional learning to bring them to the level of professional tutors, to be more effective than volunteer tutors and almost as effective as teachers who tutor. Typically, before being assigned to a school, Reading Assist fellows participate in several weeks of International Multisensory Structured Language Education Council-accredited training that renders them proficient in instruction aligned to the Science of Reading and equips them to enhance literacy through foundational reading skills.[6] In this case, the program was staffed by experienced fellows who received refresher training that included a virtual delivery component. Fellows were also provided with a scripted curriculum and ongoing support and guidance from a coach.

Reading Assist staff pay close attention to implementation to ensure that the program is delivered as intended and they routinely reflect on implementation, data, and school, fellow, and coach feedback with an eye towards continuous improvement.

Characteristics of Reading Assist tutoring also align with elements of the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education's High-Impact Tutoring Initiative, specifically, at least two sessions per week focused on math or English language Arts during or after the school day for at least ten consecutive weeks, a high-quality curriculum, tutoring grounded in trusting relationships with consistently trained tutors, and data-driven instruction.[7]

D. Report Overview

This report provides information about the implementation of the Reading Assist program at Harmony DC Public Charter School for a portion of the 2023-24 school year. It relies on May and June 2024 interviews with the school's assistant principal, two teachers, two Reading Assist fellows, the Reading Assist coach, the Onsite Support Coordinator and one of her substitutes, as well as an August focus group with Reading Assist staff. The report begins with an overview of overall program successes, followed by information on program launch, program components, content support for fellows, logistical support for tutoring through a coordinator, and communications. The report offers an

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[6] https://www.imslec.org/; https://improvingliteracy.org/brief/science-reading-basics/index.html
[7] https://osse.dc.gov/page/high-impact-tutoring-hit-initiative

overview of the student experience with the program. Recommendations as shared by interviewees are provided throughout.

II.   Program Successes

A.   Overall Successes

School staff and fellows' words and actions speak to the program's success. Examples include:

- School leadership's willingness to act as a reference for other schools.
- School's interest in continuing next year and have more fellows.
- Fellows with a passion for seeing students grow and the patience and flexibility to serve low-performing children with a range of needs and behavior issues and adjust instruction quickly.

"You gotta want to do this for the kids. It's something you do from the heart. It's service from the heart."

- The positive working environment and culture that Reading Assist creates.

"This is the healthiest job I've had in my entire life, they're the most understanding, the most flexible. It's the most enjoyable job I've ever had. It's really helped me expand as a professional."

- One interviewee appreciated that Reading Assist has started acknowledging pronouns and encouraging their use in online meeting names. This is seen as showing respect of everyone's identity.

B.   Student Progress

Reading Assist staff were pleased with the progress students made in the short time that the program was implemented. The goal for the first school year of the grant was for approximately 40 percent of students to reach grade-level benchmarks after receiving the intervention. This goal was exceeded. Indeed, 48 percent of tutored students reached benchmark in one Acadience measure. Students in the program longer were making more progress than their peers. Interviewees shared that Kindergarten students made slightly less progress than hoped, which is attributed to behavior and online delivery.

For some students, progress is very slow and steady. Others had to be moved up faster than expected. One interviewee expressed pride in the students' accomplishments considering online delivery and having to adjust to a new program during the school year. One saw clear progress on the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) assessment.

The program components that are seen as most helpful for student success are:

- One-on-one delivery
    - Students loved it.
    - It was something that teachers were unable to provide in the regular classroom.

- The focus on foundational skills on which it is particularly hard for teachers to spend significant time in addition to providing grade level content.
- Some see the unique daily lesson plans as critical to meet students where they are.
  - One interviewee feels that if the program is implemented with fidelity, there is no need for daily adjustments or even tailoring the lesson plans for each student.

Other features of the program that are appreciated and seen as contributing to student progress are:

- The privileged relationship with an adult.

"Elementary school students missed a chunk of life with COVID, and this generation is most in need of help. With Reading Assist, they have a present adult, a safe space. It can shift their desire to want to read."

- Experienced fellows.
- Fellows listening to students and adjusting the content and pace of instruction as needed.
- The approach to teaching, decoding and breaking down words, which is effective with children with dyslexia.
- Coaching.
- The support of an onsite coordinator who helped keep children seated and engaged.

III.   Program Launch

The program started on a positive note:

- Reading Assist was able to hire fellows with prior experience with the program.
- Reading Assist set clear expectations for fellows.
- Reading Assist provided school leadership with helpful information.
- School leadership was willing and flexible when it came to set up an environment conducive to tutoring.
- Student selection was collaborative and resulted in students in most need of intervention being assigned a tutor.
- Despite a quick turnaround getting started as the coordinator was hired a week before the program launched, school leadership provided the Onsite Support Coordinator with the necessary information to find students. All the supplies were provided and in excellent condition.
- Communications with school staff were highly effective, which helped with collaborative problem solving.
- School staff was welcoming of the coordinator.

"The launch went pretty flawlessly. There were huge supports. Lots of bodies in the building even without tutors there in-person."

Space for tutoring was a mixed experience. The original intent was *"to move with the kids,"* but it became clear within the first week that multiple spaces were not available in the school and that a designated area was needed. Students were tutored in a hallway of the school's main floor with cubicles that serve as desks. The feedback is mixed.

- Pros:
  - This location is advantageous because it is central to the whole school and allows school staff to monitor students if the coordinator steps away.
  - Comings and goings in the hallway are seen as minimal and when they occur, say when a class goes through the hallway, they are quiet and well-behaved. While tutored students are sometimes distracted by their friends walking by, it is not a frequent or long-lasting occurrence.

- Con:
  - The hallway is said to be noisy and the arrangement not conducive to focusing and learning.

  "There are lockers there and upperclassmen coming in throughout the day. There's walking, talking, slamming of doors."

- Interviewees have a recommendation:
  - Identify a dedicated, quiet area of the school – however, Reading Assist staff requested a different space but one was not available. "Kids would work a lot better if it was more of a classroom setting."

Additional opportunities for future improvement were shared during the interviews:

- Finding tutors available and willing at that time of year was a challenge.
  - One did not start resulting in three rather than the planned four fellows.
- Establishing a solid routine was challenging at first, especially starting later in the school year.
  - Students and the coordinator did not know one another, and students were startled at times to be pulled for tutoring.
- Some teachers disagreed with the selection of students leadership chose for tutoring (which was based on scoring in the lowest quartile on the NWEA MAP assessment) and wished that they had been consulted.
- Scheduling was a challenge throughout program implementation.
  - Reading Assist and school staff collaborated at the start of the program to build a solid beginning tutoring schedule, attempting not to pull students from certain blocks and to pull students in the same grade at the same time, so they are in the same area of the school, and it is easier for the coordinator to pick them up.
  - The school schedule was inconsistent, making it hard to plan tutoring around unexpected events. The schedule is such that students may miss specials, lunch time, favorite subjects, or important lessons.
  - Recommendations include:
    - Continue communication with leadership around scheduling.
    - Work closely with school staff to make sure the schedule works and that there are no conflicts.
    - Obtain a calendar of school events to assist in planning the tutoring schedule.
    - Adding a Reading Assist staff member or the coordinator to the teacher mailing list and send them the school's newsletter to allow for better understanding of school events.

IV.   Program Components

The Reading Assist program is appreciated for its strong focus on the Science of Reading, its ability to serve the lowest-performing students and meet them where they are, and one-on-one delivery.

A. Implementation Fidelity

According to interviewees who have the relevant knowledge, this is an accurate description of program implementation with one exception: session length. To save time, the coordinator goes and fetches a student a few minutes before their session is set to begin, which she can do quickly because the school is small, and the student waits while another student finishes their session. Still, sessions are often shorter than 30 minutes (between 20 and 30 minutes) for multiple reasons:

- The schedule requires visits to multiple floors, which created difficulties with starting on time.
- Students may need to go to the bathroom during the allocated time.
- It may take time to set the student up and engage them.
- On Wednesdays, students leave school early so lessons must be condensed to 21 to 24 minutes. The coordinator *"has a lot of students to round up every day, so sometimes sessions get cut a little bit shorter, but it is not an issue unless it's Wednesday, because it's hard to do a lesson in such a short time. She's rushing with kid; the kid is all over the place."*
- Instruction is interrupted, sometimes multiple times, due to students misbehaving, or not wanting to be in tutoring and wanting to be back in the classroom.
- Conversely, sometimes sessions are longer than 30 minutes because the teachers prefer it if the student comes back at a good breaking point in the lesson.

B. Program Adjustments

While the Reading Assist program is prescriptive, there is room for adjustments to tailor instruction to individual student needs. Fellows will make adjustments to promote better understanding, make lessons more enjoyable, address behavior issues, or accommodate student learning styles (e.g., student preferences for working with shapes, colors, or images). Adjustments are discussed with the coach before and after implementing them and the coach sometimes observes as the adjustment is being implemented.

> *"I have a student who has a lot of behavior issues. After the assessment, he knew a lot of letters, but he was missing phoneme segmentation, onset rhyme segmentation and blending, so I tried to address that before moving to 1a lesson delivery, He didn't need to do alphabet knowledge building blocks. I could sense him getting bored with onset rhyme segmentation and blending, so I did lessons 3 and 4 with words and he did a good job blending and reading so moved on to 5, and that was hard to get done. He got frustrated, did little reading, so we went backwards again to onset rhyme, to see if it would help. It had been hard to get him focused on that in the beginning but when we went back, he paid better attention, so hopefully when we move to 5 and 6 reading ability, it will not be so challenging."*

C. Online Instruction

To facilitate online instruction, program staff ensured that there were enough materials, so students had their own workbook. Hiring fellows with experience delivering online instruction and building relationships with students, and giving them flexibility (e.g., having tutors do the work in a workbook and sharing their screen with the student or providing students with direction to do the work themselves in their workbook) helped. Many students are technologically inclined and/or became adept at using computers and Zoom during the pandemic, which also helped. Virtual delivery helped fellows have all materials ready to go and pull them up quickly instead of *"when in-person, constantly flipping a million papers."* Online delivery also requires less space.

There are opportunities to potentially adjust online delivery as shared during the interviews:

- Instruction and engaging students were more difficult especially in a noisy space.
- Some of the multisensory parts of lessons were not implemented.
- Some of the lessons asked students to select icons or images and students instinctually touch the screen despite the laptops not being equipped with touchscreen technology.
- Students are unable to move or draw.
- Manipulatives were challenging to implement.
- Students, especially the younger ones, took their headphones off, turned the volume off, muted themselves, pressed random buttons on the computer, were distracted by staring at their image on screen, or turned off the computer. The coordinator helped but students often reverted to their behavior once she moved on to another student.
- Excellent preparation ahead of time is required to keep students' attention.
- Fellows and teachers were unable to communicate frequently and discuss students and their progress.

V.   Content Support for Fellows

A. Coaching

The role. The role of a Reading Assist Coach involves providing oversight, guidance, and instructional support to fellows to ensure that the program is implemented effectively and results in accelerated student progress. Coaches are responsible for delivering program materials, conducting regular observations of the fellows, monitoring student progress, and suggesting modifications to instruction as needed. They maintain communication with school staff, track data, hold weekly meetings with fellows, and ensure compliance with program procedures. Coaches also play a critical role in facilitating training, offering support with assessments, and coordinating with the instructional team. Qualifications for this role include a deep knowledge of the Science of Reading and experience teaching struggling readers with the Reading Assist Intervention program. Experience working with volunteers or service members is preferred. This expertise enables coaches to provide high-quality mentorship and contribute to the overall success of the intervention program.

The process. Fellows met with their coach weekly or biweekly individually or as a group and they communicate by phone and email. They could reach out with questions and concerns by phone or text anytime.

In addition to informal check-ins and discussing individual students, coaching was observation-based. The coach observed and scored fellows based on a rubric, and they then discussed what took place and recommendations. At first, the coach may have jumped in during lessons, and once fellows were more experienced, she observed, took notes, and discussed the lesson after it was delivered. There was at least one formal observation. Observations could be intimidating but were helpful.

"[The coach] has been absolutely wonderful since the day I met her."

Coach observations and feedback sessions were virtual, the same way it was done during the pandemic. Experienced coaches hold virtual team meetings with fellows, and they served a wide range of schools.

"When you observe virtually something that's taught virtually, you don't miss much."

Student behavior was the area in which fellows needed the most coaching support.

Benefits

- All Reading Assist coaches have tutored in the program and know the program really well.
- Coaching is one-on-one.
- Feedback and having support a text, call, or email away are most useful about coaching.
- The coach is described as approachable, easy-to-reach, knowledgeable, smart, and able to support experienced fellows.

"Every child is different, every learning style is different, and if I get stuck, I go to the coach. And if she gets stuck, we go higher up. And if we're all stuck, we figure it out together."

- Fellows can provide the coach with feedback as well.
- There are also helpful monthly coaches' meeting, which serve as continuing education for coaches.

B. Training

The process. Implementation at Harmony involved experienced fellows who have received the accredited training in the past. Consequently, training in this context involved a review session with the Director of Instruction, updates on program changes, and a discussion of virtual instruction. Training was virtual and tutors received supplies in the mail.

Benefits

- Effective preparation.
- Realistic expectations.

"Reading Assist said, we can only prepare you so much, and when you're in it, it's a different experience, they're clear about that. It's a learning curve at the start."

- Clear messaging that students come from low-income areas and not all speak English.

- Training materials accessible for review.
- Encouragement to practicing online, which was helpful.

> *"I felt like I was in grad school again. It was the most thorough, most supportive environment to learn in. The training was awesome... [One of the trainers] likes to call on you and put you on the spot. I don't like it but it's the perfect opportunity to not be sure and give it a go and do it and get feedback. The amount of information is dense but necessary. We need to know where the Science of Reading comes from, how kids make connections. I like the practice component, the chance to conduct a lesson and for everyone to observe."*

Suggestions from fellows shared during the interviews:

- Offer practice with students.
- Provide a refresher on processes such as local background checks and payroll processes.
- Prepare fellows to work with students from different races, ethnicities, and cultures.
  - This is an opportunity at the onset of the program and during professional learning communities.
- Dedicate a day or half day to teach behavior management including the range of situations a fellow may encounter.
  - One fellow reported being warned that she would encounter *"little tornadoes"* without an explanation of what a tornado was, and she encountered *"a hurricane."*
- Provide guidance on how to adjust teaching to accommodate the different learning styles and ways of viewing the world of students who are on the spectrum.

VI.   Logistical Support: The Onsite Support Coordinator

A. The Role

To support online delivery of the Reading assist program, a new Onsite Support Coordinator position was created. The coordinator ensured the smooth running of operations including setting up devices, making sure the technology is working, and maintaining the space. She picked up students from classrooms, gave them bathroom breaks, took them where they need to be at a specific time, logged them in to a computer, and gave them what they need including short shake or stretch breaks. She supported students and fellows during sessions. She provided markers, fidgets, and other strategies to keep the students engaged. She also conducted student progress monitoring.

She communicated with the fellows about any issues that arose, such as scheduling conflicts and student absences. She emailed if a scheduled, official event like a field trip or testing would prevent students from attending tutoring. She texted if a student was absent. If a student was late, the fellow texted the coordinator who responded with what was happening. If there was a behavior issue the coordinator did not see, the fellow let her know and she handled it.

The coordinator had to build relationships with students early on. It was easier at the beginning because they and the students did not know one another, and students may have been on their best behavior. This changed when some of the students become more comfortable around the coordinator. Some

students were more challenging than others and working with their teacher was helpful in navigating the students' behavior.

The coordinator was in constant communications with the project managers at Verite Educational Services, the partner that had been supporting the project with recruitment and project management services. They met weekly so she could provide updates and raise issues such as the behavior of some students. The project managers were helpful finding answers to questions.

Important characteristics to seek in a coordinator are patience, willingness to learn, flexibility to deal with ever-changing schedules, adaptability, the ability to remain level-headed through both good days and bad days when things go awry and to act quickly to fix problems right away, a knack for building relationships in general and with children in particular, strong experience in behavior management for students, and consistency in showing up to work on time. Having school or daycare experience may help with building relationships with students and handling student behavior.

B. Benefits

"[The coordinator] has been marvelous, I don't know how she does it, she's amazing, flexible, and understanding…The way she handles everything, it's absolutely amazing. And she's easy to reach…She also knows how to put kids in their place. There are two kids who like to fight, and she stands between them, and she makes them turn around, and they stop."

"She really brought this whole sandwich together."

There was much positive feedback about the coordinator.

- The coordinator communicated with *"almost everyone"* (principal, assistant principal, front office staff, and teachers). Maintaining friendly, professional communications helped, especially when navigating schedule changes.

  "Everyone I interacted with in the school…welcomed me with open arms."

- Independent problem-solving allowed the coordinator to ask for support on an as-needed basis only, which may have contributed to increasing school staff confidence in her abilities and the Reading Assist program.
- The coordinator communicated with fellows regularly and responded to them fast.
- The coordinator was communicative with Reading Assist. She reached out (primarily to the Director of Student Success and to a lesser extent the Director of Operations) if she needed support or had questions.
- Reading Assist staff provided great responses and quickly. Text communications were effective.

  "The Reading Assist team is fantastic. Communications are clear, friendly, and responses to questions are always prompt. Reading Assist is easy to work with."

- The coordinator was consistent. She was on time and rarely absent and when she was, a substitute covered for her.

- Having a person on site daily strengthened the relationship between the program and the school beyond what onsite visits by Reading Assist staff could accomplished.
- While Reading Assist staff made the schedule initially, the coordinator's ability to adapt it increased convenience for the school and Reading Assist staff and her ability to keep it consistent has been positive for students.
- The coordinator helped with testing.
- It is helpful to have somebody onsite to remind students to sit in a chair, sit tall, or go to the right page of the workbook, or to hold what students have written up to the camera.

Other recommendations from the interviewees included:

- The most frequent recommendation is to assign two coordinators to round up and manage the students, especially if they are on different floors.

"It can be stressful. It's definitely a workout."

- Set expectations for two-way communications between the coordinator and the coach. More communication and sharing of information may be helpful.
- Identify what additional supports the coordinator may need from Reading Assist staff.

VII.   Communications

A.   Between Reading Assist Staff and Fellows

Fellows appreciate Reading Assist's regular and not-too-frequent email communication, both practical and personal, and feeling no hesitation reaching out with questions or concerns and knowing Reading Assist will have or find the answer.

"They're amazing. Everybody's so amazing. I love everyone."

"They're professional and have a nice attitude. They've created a healthy work environment."

"It has always been a great experience, and seeing how far Reading Assist has come geographically, I hope to be there as much as they want to keep me there, I really enjoy being here."

B.   Between Fellows and School Staff

Due to the virtual program, fellows did not communicate with teachers. Establishing a standard communication channel between fellows and teachers may be beneficial, for example:

- Regular *"in-person quick touch and go."*
- A weekly or monthly email about what each fellow is doing, on what skills they have worked with each student, and a screenshot of the data.

Knowing what fellows have covered with students and the results of progress monitoring may help teachers tailor what they cover with students in the classroom, reinforce what is covered in tutoring, and set targets collaboratively with fellows.

C. Between Reading Assist and School Staff

Successes

> *"The Reading Assist team is extremely flexible in making tutoring work best for students and the school."*

There were regular, prompt communications both ways. Examples of communications were promptly replacing continuously absent students with new ones, supporting a fellow with a student who has an Individualized Education Plan, informing the school about a coordinator's absence and replacement, and organizing a site visit. In addition, school staff not involved in the program were kind and welcoming.

Opportunities for improvement

Interviewees identified two opportunities for improvement:

- Obtain and share information from teachers on students who are resistant to the tutoring and/or misbehave to learn about what works and what does not work with those students in the classroom.
- Facilitate a session with school staff to describe the program and its benefits, answer questions, and promote buy-in.
  - Reading Assist provided that opportunity at school administration's request but only one teacher attended and had no questions.
    - Moving forward, Reading Assist will offer this opportunity early on and collaborate with school administration to understand what communications staff desire (e.g., introductory meeting, monthly reports from Reading Assist through the school or through fellows).

VIII.   Perceptions of Reading Assist Tutoring

Teachers and school staff appreciate the literacy support and additional intervention time for their students. Student perceptions, as reported by interviewed adults, are more mixed:

A. Highlights

> *"They always want to go with Miss Hannah [the Onsite Support Coordinator], she's pretty popular and she's not even the tutor. When they see her, they're like, can I go with you? I don't even know how some of the kids know her 'cuz they're not even part of the program, wanna be a part of whatever group she's pulling. The students really wanna be a part of it. They think it's cool that students get to have their own personal teacher. There's some jealousy there as well. How come I don't get my own teacher?"*

- Some students enjoyed tutoring, the lessons, the learning, the growth in confidence, the fun activities, the fellows, the break form the routine – another adult, a different space.

- Students were generally respectful and engaged in tutoring.
- Some students were not as excited as the other students, but willing to attend the tutoring sessions.

B. Feedback for Consideration

- Some students did not like to leave the classroom and can be upset to miss favorite subjects such as music or physical education.
- Some students did not like virtual delivery.
- Some students were frustrated but it is a behavior issue that is not specific to tutoring.
- Tutoring started towards the end of the school year when students are "getting more rowdy" and less open to a big change.

Fellows mitigate these issues by being patient, using humor, and allowing for a couple of minutes of *"word vomit"* at the beginning of a session to *"get the wiggles out"* and settle the children.

IX.   Conclusion

The implementation of the Reading Assist program at Harmony DC Public Charter School has demonstrated notable successes. One key success was the positive impact on student literacy development, with students who participated in the program making significant progress. This progress was particularly commendable given the students' initial struggles and the challenges posed by the virtual delivery of the program. The dedication of the fellows, supported by a well-structured coaching system, played a crucial role in fostering a supportive and effective learning environment. Additionally, the program's ability to create a positive working culture, as well as the flexibility and patience exhibited by the fellows, were instrumental in its success.

The report also identified a few suggestions to address enhancing the program's effectiveness mainly, scheduling issues, even better communication between fellows and school staff, and the difficulties associated with virtual instruction. Recommendations for future implementation include enhancing communication with teachers to ensure a more seamless integration of tutoring into the school day, improving the scheduling process to minimize disruptions, and providing additional training and support to fellows to better manage student behavior and engagement during virtual sessions.

In conclusion, the Reading Assist program has shown that with the right support, students with significant reading challenges can make meaningful progress. Moving forward, implementing the recommended suggestions will further improve the program's effectiveness and ensure that it continues to provide valuable support to the students who need it most. Reading Assist's staff commitment to continuous improvement, as demonstrated by their desire to elicit feedback to inform program refinements, bodes well for the program's future success.

Appendix: Sources for Research Base

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Reading Assist

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