Tutor Experiences

Final Report

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Photo Credit: Reading Partners

Overview

Reading Partners, a national literacy nonprofit, engaged Child Trends, a national, nonprofit research group, to learn more about how to improve programming and, ultimately, boost learning outcomes for students who struggle with reading. In California reading centers, Child Trends evaluated five key areas of Reading Partners programs:

- **Dosage:** Document the amount of tutoring each student receives.
- **Tutor engagement and quality:** Examine the extent to which Reading Partners is successful in recruiting, engaging, and retaining tutors. Assess the quality of tutors' interactions with students and the effect those encounters have on children.
- **AmeriCorps member experiences:** Identify skills AmeriCorps members bring to Reading Partners and collect feedback about their experiences.
- **Student reading growth:** Determine how student learning is linked to implementation characteristics and dosage.
- **Social-emotional learning:** Examine at how Reading Partners affects students' social-emotional learning (SEL).

The findings in this report on tutor engagement and quality show that volunteer tutors at Reading Partners:

- Bring diverse skills important to tutoring.
- Are primarily motivated to volunteer by their desire to help others.
- Are highly satisfied with their experience at Reading Partners and the various supports provided to them as tutors.
- Demonstrate moderate to high levels of fidelity to the Reading Partners model.
- Engage in positive, supportive relationships with students.

Three companion briefs discuss findings related to the other evaluation focus areas; an accompanying infographic integrates and summarizes findings across the study.

This brief is based on findings from an independent evaluation conducted by Child Trends for Reading Partners.

Introduction

Although reading is a critical academic skill, only 37 percent of U.S. fourth graders read proficiently.[1] Reading Partners, a national literacy nonprofit, seeks to close this literacy gap by partnering with under-resourced schools and engaging community volunteers to provide one-on-one tutoring to elementary school-aged students.

In spring 2016, Reading Partners commissioned Child Trends to conduct an independent evaluation of Reading Partners' California reading centers. This evaluation was designed to build upon the findings of a prior evaluation conducted by MDRC and included an in-depth examination of how key program implementation characteristics (e.g., tutoring dosage, fidelity, student-tutor relationships, and AmeriCorps member characteristics) influence children's learning. The goal was to provide actionable information to improve Reading Partners programs, and enhance the experiences and outcomes of the children, volunteer tutors, and AmeriCorps members who participate in Reading Partners.

This brief highlights key themes and findings from the evaluation regarding tutors' experiences and provides a snapshot of:

- **Tutor skills and characteristics**
- **Tutor fidelity and efficacy**
- **Tutor-student relationship quality**
- **Tutor satisfaction**
- **Tutor motivation and intent to return**

To learn more about the methods used in this evaluation, please refer to the evaluation plan and the related factsheets published in Year 1 of the evaluation.

Evaluation Methods

To answer questions about tutors, researchers used the following data sources:

Administrative Data

We obtained Reading Partners' administrative data on student dosage and early literacy and reading outcomes (as measured by the Star assessment).

AmeriCorps Member Experiences Survey

Each spring we invited all Reading Partners' AmeriCorps members who served in California to complete a survey about their experiences.

Tutor Experiences Survey

In spring 2017, we offered tutors the opportunity to respond to a survey about their experiences as they left the Reading Partners program.

Tutor Fidelity Observations

Using an observation tool developed for this evaluation, Reading Partners staff observed tutors in a selected sub-sample at 11 sites during the 2016–2017 school year.

Tutor Reading Engagement Survey

Reading Partners asked tutors in the sub-sample of 11 sites to report on the quality of their tutor-student relationship and students' level of reading engagement.[5]

[1] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2017). *National Assessment of Educational Progress Reading: Grade 4 National Results*. Retrieved from https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_2017/#/nation/achievement?grade=4

Research Questions and Sub-Questions

Our research into tutor experiences addresses the following evaluation questions:[2]

1. **What characteristics and skills do tutors bring to Reading Partners?**
2. **How well do tutors implement sessions?**
3. **How satisfied are tutors with their Reading Partners experience?**
4. **What factors lead community members to volunteer as tutors?**
    - What factors lead them to continue volunteering with Reading Partners?

To answer these questions, we used Reading Partners' administrative data, a survey of AmeriCorps members serving at Reading Partners, tutor fidelity observations, and multiple tutor surveys. These data sources are described in the Evaluation Methods text box above and in greater detail below.

The evaluation included two samples from the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 school years:

- **Full sample:** This included data from students, AmeriCorps members, and volunteer tutors at all California reading centers. Information collected from the full sample included administrative data, the AmeriCorps Member Experiences Survey, and the Tutor Experiences Survey.[3]
- **Sub-sample:** This included data from the 11 reading centers in the Los Angeles and Sacramento regions that participated in more intensive data-collection efforts. Data collected from the sub-sample included tutor fidelity observations,[4] the Tutor Social-Emotional Learning Survey,[5] and teacher surveys.

[2] Some evaluation questions have been re-phrased from the original evaluation plan.
[3] The Tutor Experiences Survey was only administered during the 2016–2017 school year. In addition, we administered the survey to all tutors volunteering in California reading centers, but data linking tutors to children were only available for children in the sub-sample.
[4] Tutor fidelity observations were conducted in the 2016–2017 school year only.
[5] The Tutor Social-Emotional Learning Survey was revised between the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 school years to focus more on student-tutor relationships and student engagement. Therefore, in 2017–2018 it was renamed the Tutor Reading Engagement Survey.

Tutor Characteristics and Skills

Each year, nearly 4,000 community members volunteer at California reading centers.

In the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 program years, nearly 8,500 tutors volunteered in California reading centers. The majority of these tutors were community volunteers (89 percent), followed by Reading Partners staff (7 percent) and interns/work study students (5 percent).[6] Of the Reading Partners staff who served as tutors (*n*=588), just over half were part of the Reading Partners Program Team (e.g., site coordinators), 24 percent were members of the Reading Partners workforce (non-program team), 20 percent were paid Reading Partners literacy intervention tutors, and 3 percent were AmeriCorps literacy leads.

To better understand the experiences of tutors, following the end of their service in the 2016–2017 program year, tutors were asked to complete the Tutor Experiences Survey, which was designed to better understand the characteristics, skills, and experiences tutors bring to Reading Partners.[7] A total of 1,508 tutors completed this survey, resulting in a 37 percent response rate. Although this response rate is aligned with typical response rates for online surveys (around 30 percent),[8] we realize that the tutors who completed the Tutor Experiences Survey may not be representative of all tutors who volunteer at California reading centers. To better understand how well aligned the Tutor Experiences Survey sample was with the general population of tutors, we used Reading Partners' administrative data on tutor demographics to compare these two groups.

As displayed in **Table 1**, the demographic characteristics of tutors who responded to the Tutor Experiences Survey were aligned with those of the larger population of tutors, with the exception that the survey respondents were more likely to be age 45 or older. Survey respondents were also somewhat more likely to be white/Caucasian and have at least some graduate-level training. Given these differences, the results of the Tutor Experiences Survey should be interpreted with some caution, because they may not fully represent the larger population of tutors serving at all California reading centers.

[6] Data are based on the Reading Partners administrative data on tutor demographic characteristics.
[7] The Tutor Experiences Survey was only administered in the 2016–2017 evaluation year.
[8] Nulty, D. D. (2008). The adequacy of response rates to online and paper surveys: What can be done? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 3*, 301-314.

Table 1: Comparison of demographics between Tutor Experiences Survey respondents and all tutors who volunteered at California reading centers

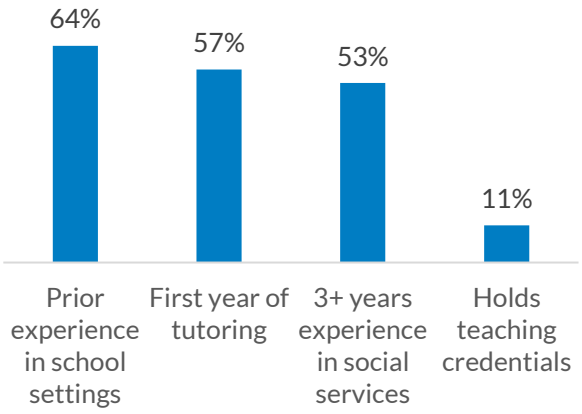
Tutor demographic characteristics		Tutor Experiences Survey respondents (*N*=1,508)	All tutors (*N*=4,109)
Race/Ethnicity	White/Caucasian, non-Hispanic	63%	51%
	Black/African American, non-Hispanic	4%	5%
	Asian, Non-Hispanic	16%	21%
	Hispanic (any race)	15%	19%
	Other, non-Hispanic	3%	4%
Gender	Female	80%	83%
	Male	20%	17%
	Other	0.2%	0.2%
Age	Under 18	9%	21%
	18-21	8%	11%
	22-25	9%	11%
	26-35	16%	15%
	36-45	6%	5%
	45+	51%	15%
Region	Los Angeles	26%	26%
	Sacramento	12%	14%
	San Francisco	37%	36%
	Silicon Valley	30%	24%
Education	High school	14%	11%
	Some college/two-year college degree	16%	11%
	Four-year degree	31%	47%
	Some graduate work/graduate degree	39%	31%

Source: Child Trends Tutor Experiences Survey and Reading Partners administrative data, 2016-2017.

Tutor background characteristics

As noted in **Table 1**, Reading Partners tutors were a fairly educated group, with more than 70 percent having a four-year college degree or higher. In addition, almost two-thirds of tutors had prior experience in school settings, more than half had at least three years' of experience in social services, and one in 10 held teaching credentials **(Figure 1)**. Finally, more than half of tutors were in their first year of tutoring with Reading Partners.

Figure 1: Tutor background characteristics (N=1,508)



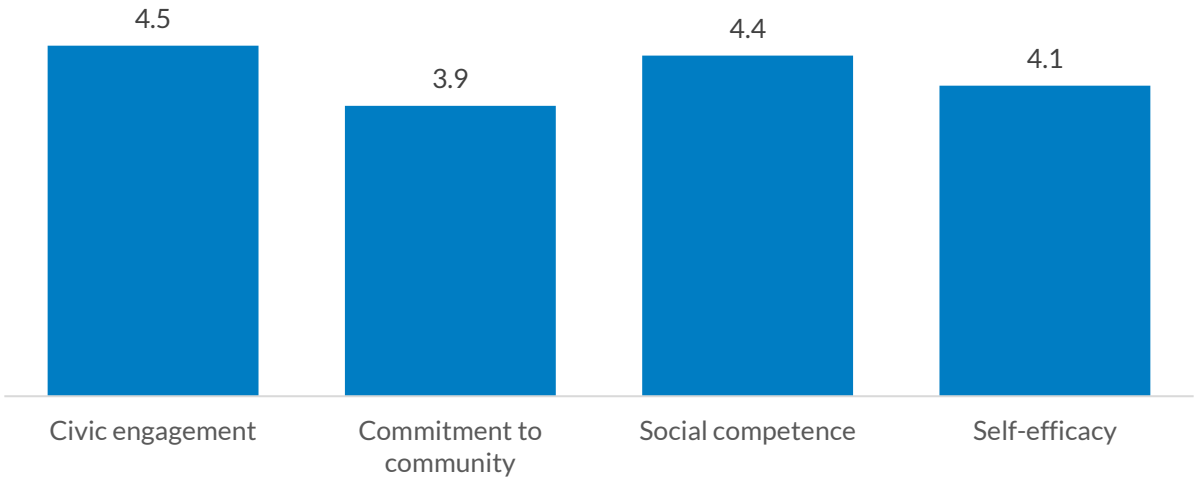
Note: Source: Child Trends Tutor Experiences Survey, 2016-2017.

Tutor skills

In addition to tutors' background characteristics, the Tutor Experiences Survey asked tutors a series of questions regarding their skills and abilities in four key areas:

As reflected in **Figure 2**, on average, tutors reported high levels of civic engagement and social competence and moderately high levels of commitment to community and self-efficacy.

Figure 2: Tutor skills (N=1,508)



Note: Items were based on a 5-point scale (1=*None of the time*, 5=*All of the time*). Source: Child Trends Tutor Experiences Survey, 2016-2017.

Quality of Implementation

We used three sources of data to better understand how well tutors were implementing sessions:

- **Tutor Fidelity Assessments:** In the 2016–2017 school year, Reading Partners staff at the sub-sample of sites in the Los Angeles and Sacramento regions conducted observations of tutors working with students. These assessments examined the extent to which tutors were implementing the sessions with adherence to Reading Partners' model.
- **Tutor Reading Engagement Survey:** In the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 school years, tutors who were working with students in sub-sample sites were invited to complete the Tutor Reading Engagement Survey, which asked them to report on two aspects of their student-tutor relationship quality (conflict and closeness) as well as their interactions with students in sessions.
- **Tutor Experiences Survey:** In the 2016–2017 school year, tutors in all California reading centers were invited to complete a survey of their experiences, which included questions about their perceived ability to tutor students effectively (tutoring efficacy).

Given that two of these three data sources only include tutors from a sub-sample of sites, the results should be interpreted with some caution because they may not fully reflect the implementation quality of tutors at all four California reading centers.

Tutor fidelity

Reading Partners staff at sub-sample sites observed tutors working with students throughout the year to assess fidelity to the Reading Partners model. In all, 384 tutors were observed from October 2016 to May 2017.

384 tutors observed

17% fall sessions
83% spring sessions

5% ER sessions
59% BR sessions
36% CR sessions*

50% site coordinators
50% other observers

* *ER is Emerging Reader; BR is Beginning Reader; CR is Comprehension Reader.*

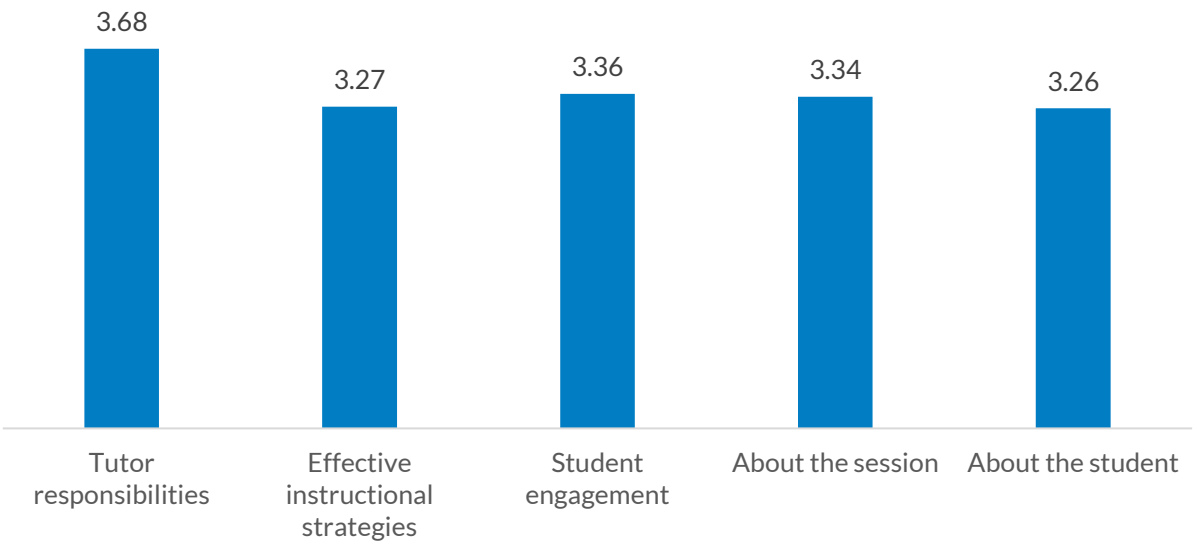
Observers rated tutors on a four-point scale[9] in five key areas of the Reading Partners model:

- **Tutor Responsibilities**
- **Effective Instructional Strategies**
- **Student Engagement**
- **About the Session**
- **About the Student**

Generally, tutors adhere to the five key areas of the Reading Partners model.

Tutors were most successful in fulfilling key tutor responsibilities. Specifically, they were consistently observed following the lesson plan, using strategies on the individualized reading plan, engaging students as they walked between their classrooms and the reading centers, and accepting and applying coaching from the site coordinator (**Figure 3**).

Figure 3: Tutor fidelity in five key areas (N=384)



Note: Items were based on a 4-point scale (1=*Rarely*, 4=*Consistently*) or (1=*Strongly disagree*, 4=*Strongly agree*).
Source: Staff observations of Reading Partners tutors, 2016–2017.

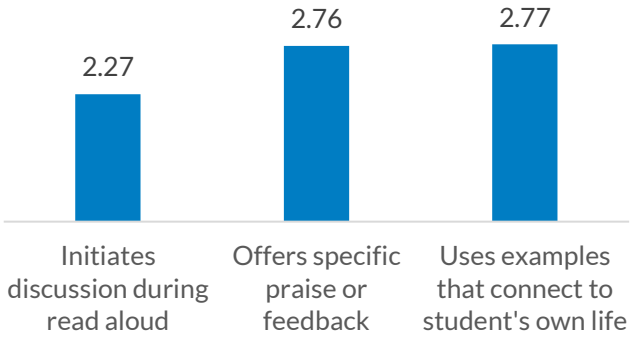
Additionally, tutors were often observed using effective instructional strategies (e.g., providing clear and focused instruction) and engaging students throughout the session. Aspects about the session, such as materials being prepared in advance, tutors accessing all the needed materials, sufficient time being provided, and students demonstrating understanding of the materials were also often observed. Further, ratings of student behavior during the session indicate that students

[9] Scales were either based on a frequency scale (1 = *Rarely*; 4 = *Consistently*); or a Likert Scale (1 = *Strongly disagree;* 4 = *Strongly Agree*)

were often engaged with the materials, actively participated in the discussions, had a chance to ask questions, and freely engaged in friendly and relevant conversations with their tutors. Together, these results suggest that tutors are generally implementing sessions as intended.

There were, however, three items within the fidelity assessment that were rated notably lower across all observations (**Figure 4**). As part of effective instructional strategies, tutors are expected to initiate discussion before, during, and after a read-aloud. Tutors were successful in initiating these discussions before and after the story, but less successful initiating discussions during the read aloud. Further, two aspects of student engagement—offering specific praise or feedback to the student and using examples that connected to a student's life—were also observed less often.

Figure 4: Lowest rated tutor fidelity items (N=384)



Note: Items were based on a 4-point scale (1=*Rarely*, 4=*Consistently*) or (1=*Strongly disagree*, 4=*Strongly agree*). Source: Staff observations of Reading Partners tutors, 2016-2017.

Finally, there were significant differences in observer ratings of tutor fidelity based on the time of year of the observation. Observers rated quality aspects related to "About the Session" (e.g., adequate materials and time to complete the session) slightly higher in the fall (*M*=3.46) than in the spring (*M*=3.31).[10] Ratings in three dimensions (About the Session, Student Engagement, and About the Student) also significantly varied by observer role. Site coordinators tended to rate items higher than observers with other roles (e.g., regional site coordinators and program managers).[11] There were no differences on any of the tutor fidelity dimensions based on the level of the curriculum being worked on during the session.

Tutor-student relationship quality

The Tutor Reading Engagement Survey was used to assess tutors' perceptions of their tutor-student relationship quality. Within this survey, tutors rated two aspects of their relationship

[10] t(382)=-2.51, p=.012

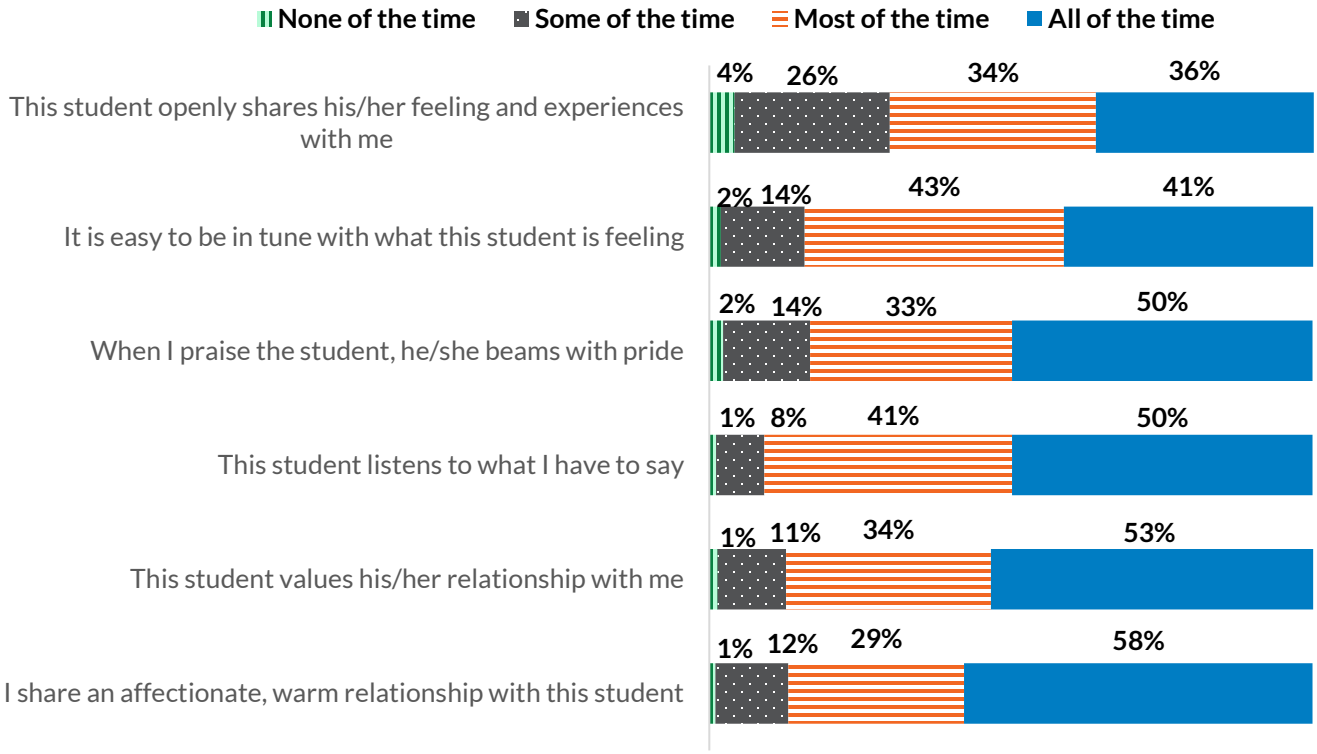
[11] *Student Engagement*: Site Coordinators (M=3.42), Other (M=3.31); t(381)=-2.01, p=.045. *About the Session*: Site Coordinators (M=3.40), Other (M=3.28); t(381)=-2.99, p=.003. *About the Student*: Site Coordinators (M=3.37), Other (M=3.15); t(381)=-4.18, p=.000

quality with students: closeness and conflict.[12]

Tutors characterize their relationships with students as warm and positive, with limited levels of conflict.

On average, tutors reported positive, warm relationships with students (*M*=3.3 out of 4.0) that had limited levels of conflict (*M*=1.3 out of 4.0). As **Figure 5** shows, nearly 90 percent of tutors reported often feeling that they shared an affectionate, warm relationship with their student, their student valued their relationship, and listened to what they had to say.

Figure 5: Tutor report of student-tutor relationship closeness (N=379)



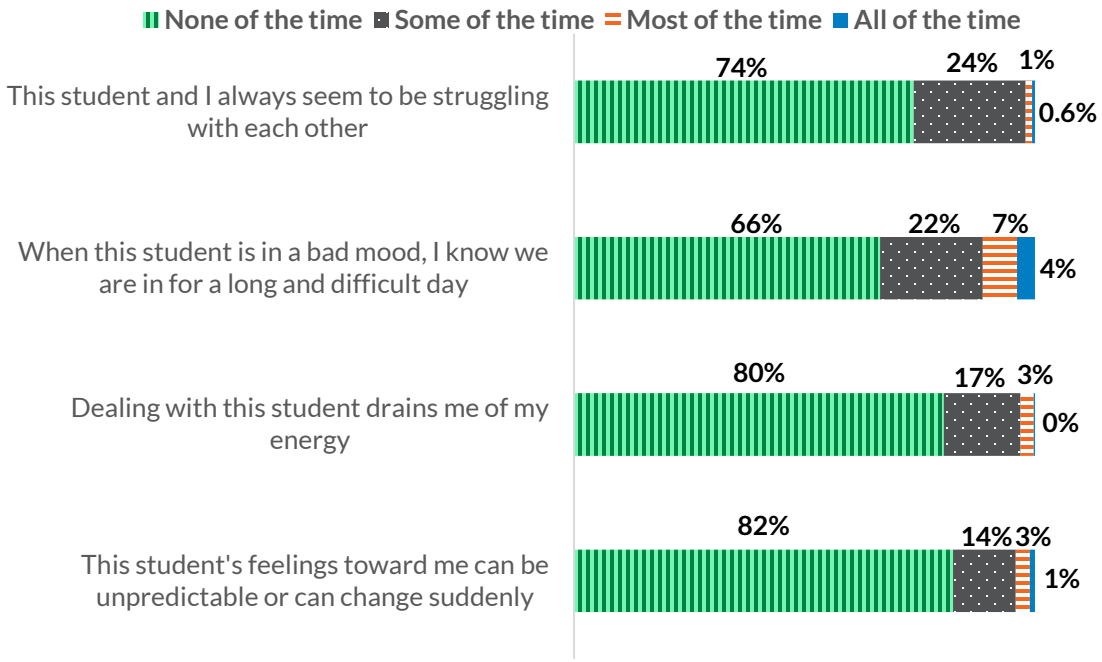
Source: Spring Tutor Reading Engagement Survey, 2016-2018.

Figure 6 displays the items from the Conflict Scale. As illustrated, most tutors reported never experiencing conflict in their relationships with students. There were, however, just over a quarter of tutors who felt like they and their student were struggling with each other, and that they would be in for a "long and difficult day" when their student was in a bad mood, at least some of the time.

[12] These scales were based on a 4-point scale (1=*None of the time*, 4= *All of the time*).

Though just a minority of tutors felt this way, this finding suggests that some tutors may benefit from additional support when working with challenging students.

Figure 6: Tutor report of student-tutor relationship conflict (N=379)

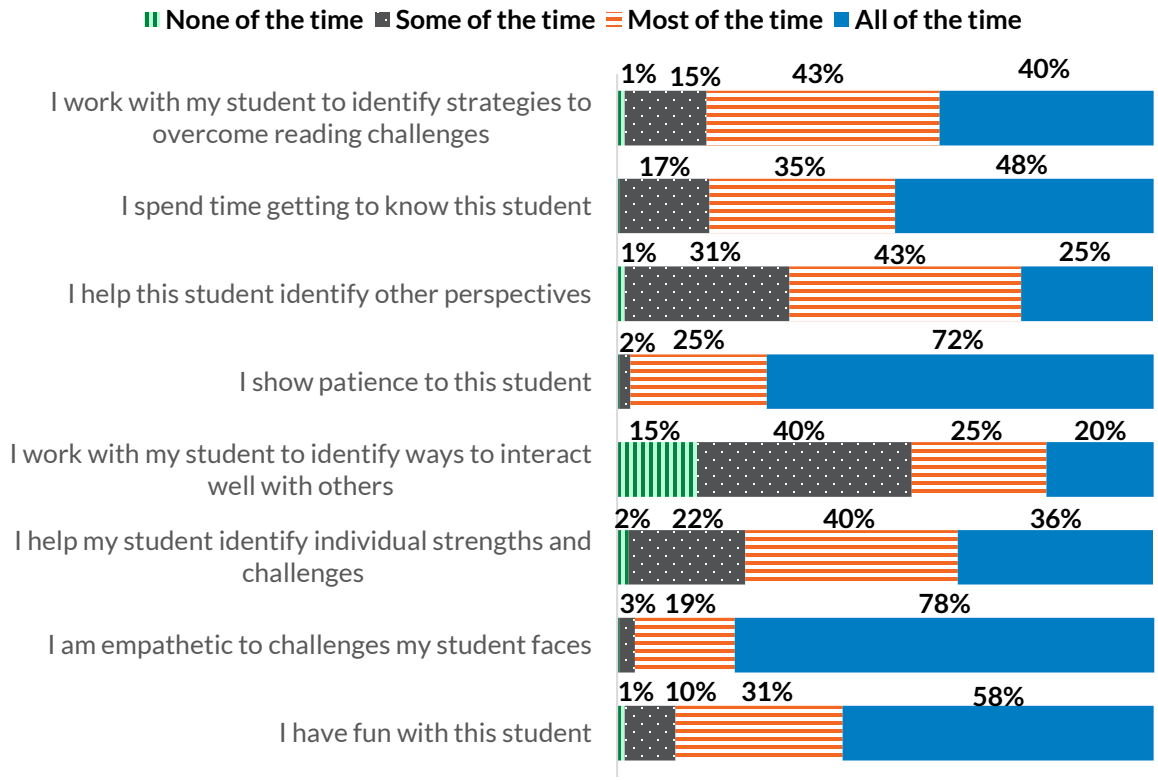


Source: Spring Tutor Reading Engagement Survey, 2016-2018.

Tutor-student interactions

On the 2017–2018 administration of the Tutor Reading Engagement Survey, tutors were asked to report on their interactions with students in sessions. As **Figure 7** reflects, tutors reported being highly empathetic to the challenges their student faces and show patience to their student when working with them. Of note, aspects more closely related to helping students improve their SEL skills (e.g., helping the student identify other perspectives, working with students to identify ways to interact well with others) were some of the lowest-rated items. This finding is not surprising given that SEL skill development is an exploratory outcome of interest for Reading Partners. If, however, the organization wants to have a greater impact in this area of students' development, tutors may benefit from learning effective methods for supporting SEL skill development.

Figure 7: Tutor report of student-tutor interactions (N=280)



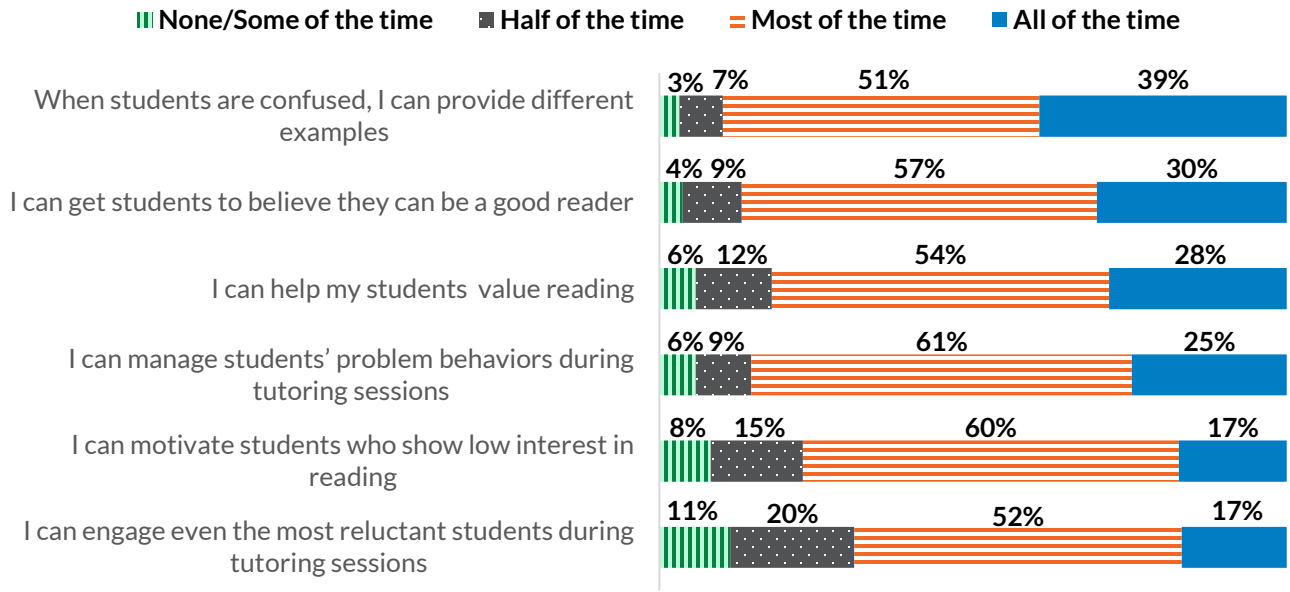
Source: Spring Tutor Reading Engagement Survey, 2017-2018.

Perceived tutoring efficacy

On the Tutor Experiences Survey (administered in spring 2017), tutors in all California reading centers were asked about their perceptions of their own tutoring efficacy (or general confidence in their abilities as a tutor). On average, tutors reported high levels of tutoring efficacy (*M*=4.01 out of 5.00). As shown in **Figure 8**, tutors felt that they could most often provide different examples when students were confused, get students to believe they could be a good reader, and help students value reading. Items related to behavior management and student engagement, particularly the engagement of challenging students, were rated comparatively lower, suggesting that tutors may benefit from additional support in this area.

Most tutors reported they could complete the various aspects of their responsibilities as a tutor "all" or "most of the time."

Figure 8: Perceived tutoring efficacy (N=1,508)



Source: Child Trends Tutor Experiences Survey, 2016-2017.

Factors influencing perceived tutor efficacy

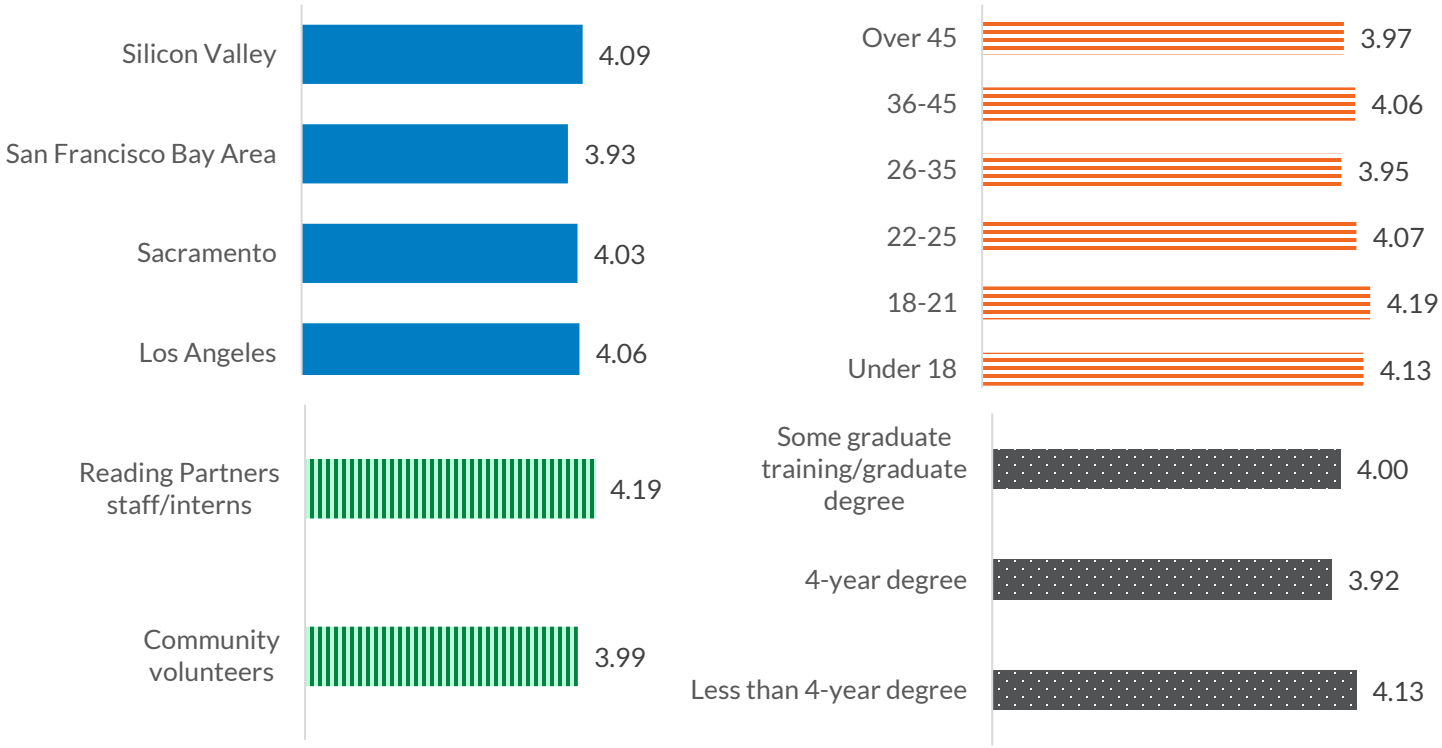
As **Figure 9** shows, because tutors' perceived tutoring efficacy was assessed among the full sample of tutors, we were able to examine the extent to which tutor efficacy varied by region and by tutor characteristics (i.e., age, education, and tutor type). Tutors in Los Angeles and Silicon Valley reported significantly higher levels of efficacy than did tutors in the San Francisco Bay Area.[13] Additionally, though potentially unsurprisingly, tutors who were Reading Partners staff or interns/work study students also reported significantly higher tutoring efficacy than those who were community volunteers.[14]

Tutors ages 18–21 reported the highest levels of tutoring effectiveness, reporting significantly higher tutoring efficacy than tutors ages 26–35 and tutors over age 45.[15] Finally, tutors whose highest education level was less than a 4-year college degree reported significantly greater tutoring efficacy than those with a 4-year college degree or graduate training. [16] Given that our

[13] $F(3, 1499) = 5.98$, $p<.001$. Tutors in the Sacramento region were not significantly different from those in any other region.
[14] $F(3, 1441)=12.92$, $p<.001$
[15] $F(3, 1497) = 4.47$, $p<.001$
[16] $F(2, 1486) = 13.19$, $p<.001$

measure of tutoring efficacy was based on tutor self-reports, it is unclear whether younger tutors' actual sessions with students were of a higher quality.

Figure 9: Tutor efficacy by region, type, age, and education (N=1,442)



Note: Items were based on a 5-point scale (1=*None of the time*, 5=*All of the time*). Source: Child Trends Tutor Experiences Survey, 2016-2017.

Tutor Satisfaction

Almost all tutors reported being satisfied with their experience as a tutor.

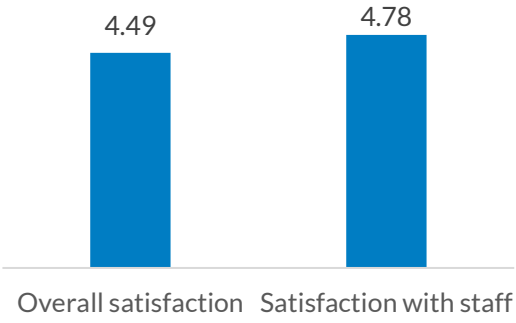
The Tutor Experiences Survey also asked tutors to rate their satisfaction and experiences with Reading Partners. Overall, tutors reported being very satisfied with their experience as a volunteer tutor at Reading Partners: Nearly 80 percent said they were completely satisfied with their experience, while an additional 17 percent reported being somewhat satisfied. Only 3 percent of tutors said they were dissatisfied with their experience.

Tutors also reported their satisfaction with Reading Partners staff as well as their general attitudes toward Reading Partners (Overall Satisfaction). Across both scales, tutors reported high levels of satisfaction (**Figure 10**).

Satisfaction with Reading Partners staff

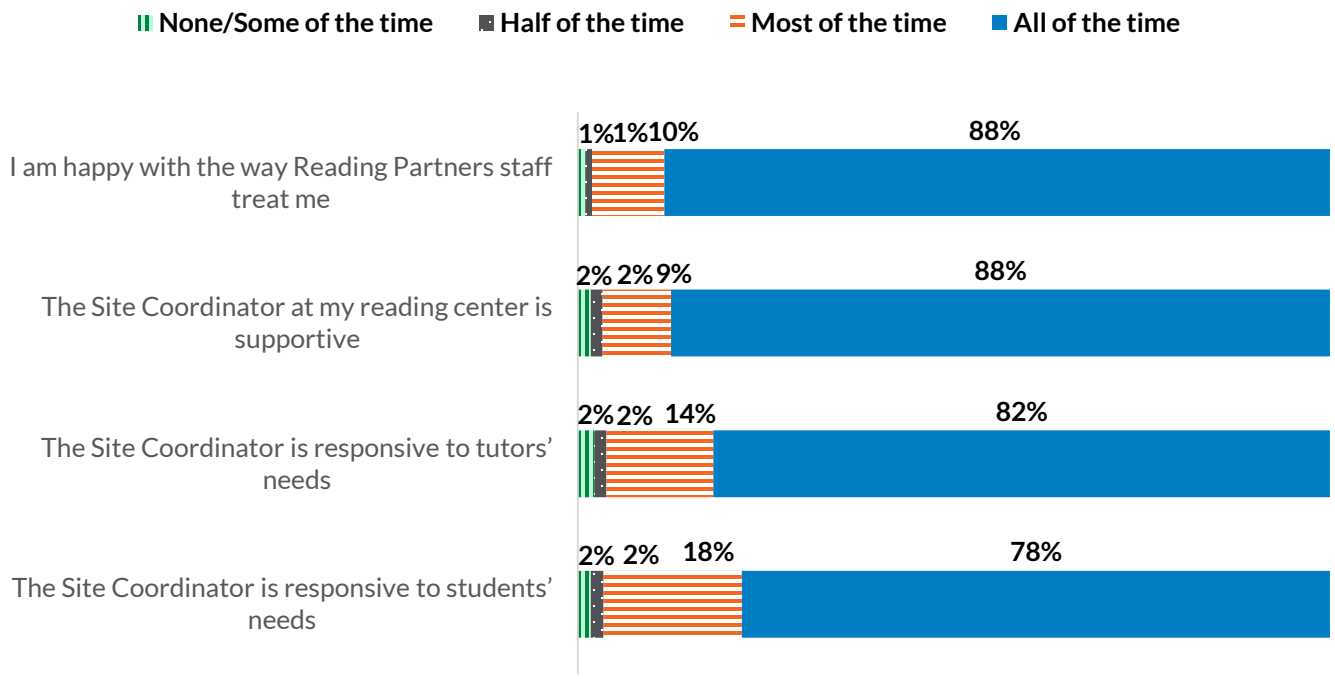
Figure 11 displays tutors' responses to the individual items within the Satisfaction with Staff scale. Almost 90 percent of tutors were happy with the way Reading Partners staff treated them and felt that the site coordinator was supportive "all of the time." But issues related to site coordinators' responsiveness to needs, particularly to those of students, were rated comparatively lower.

Figure 10: Tutor satisfaction (N=1,508)



Note: Items were based on a 5-point scale (1=*None of the time*, 5=*All of the time*). Source: Child Trends Tutor Experiences Survey, 2016-2017.

Figure 11: Tutor satisfaction with staff (N=1,508)

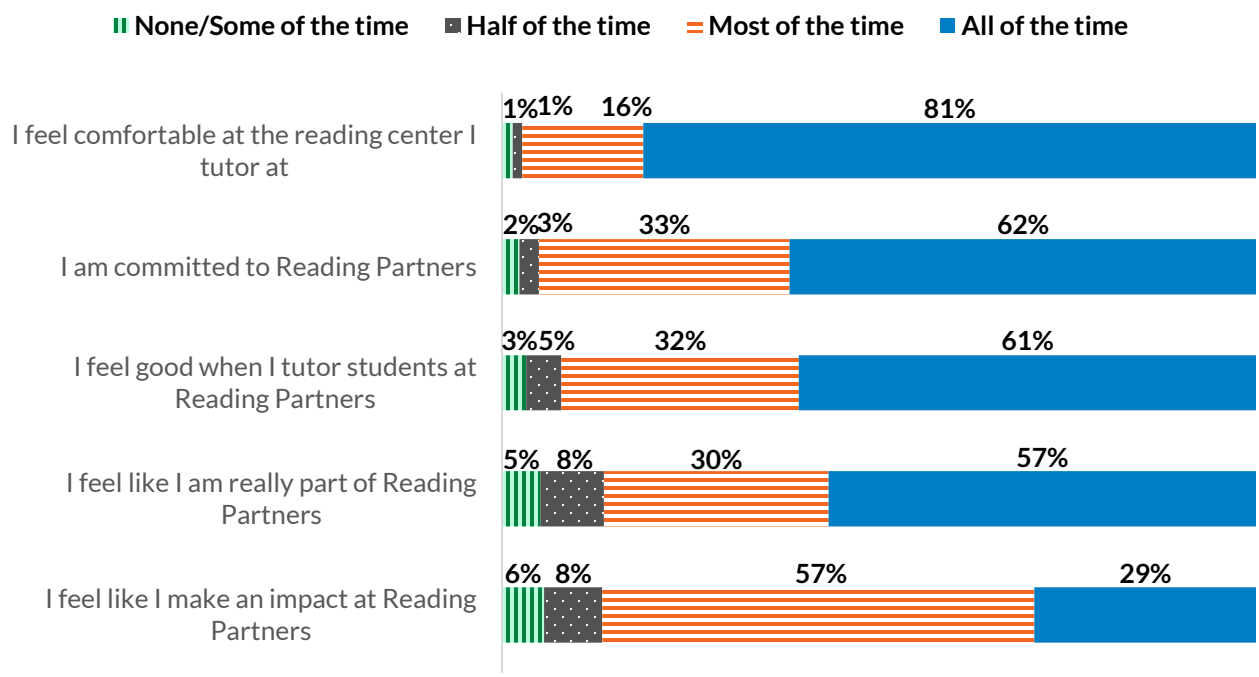


Source: Child Trends Tutor Experiences Survey, 2016-2017.

General satisfaction with Reading Partners

Notably, items related to feeling a part of Reading Partners and feeling a sense of making an impact at Reading Partners were rated the lowest (**Figure 12**). In fact, just under 30 percent of tutors felt like they were making an impact at Reading Partners "all of the time."

Figure 12: Tutor overall satisfaction (N=1,508)



Source: Child Trends Tutor Experiences Survey, 2016-2017.

Factors influencing tutor satisfaction

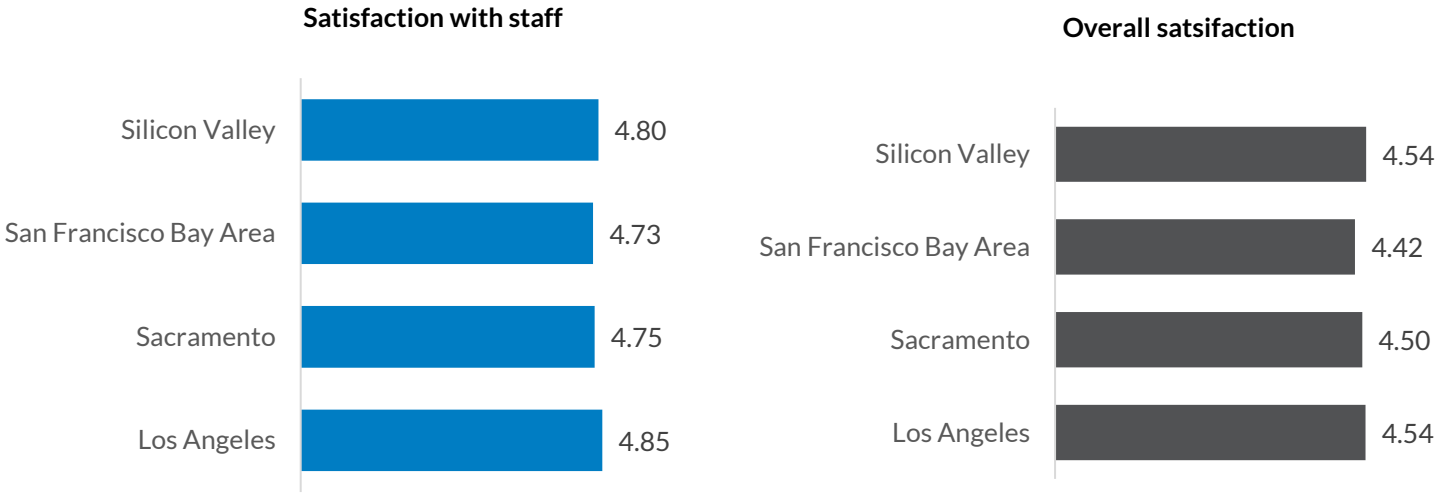
Tutors' overall satisfaction with Reading Partners was significantly correlated with their satisfaction with staff. Tutors who were more satisfied with Reading Partners staff were also more satisfied with Reading Partners overall.[17] In addition, tutors' perceptions of their tutoring efficacy were significantly correlated with both overall satisfaction and satisfaction with staff. Those who felt more confident in their tutoring abilities were more satisfied than those who felt less confident. [18]

We examined differences in our two measures of satisfaction by region, tutor age, tutor education, and tutor type. Small, but significant, differences were found for both aspects of satisfaction. As seen in **Figure 13**, tutors in Los Angeles reported the highest levels of satisfaction with staff (M=4.85), which was significantly different from satisfaction from tutors in the San Francisco Bay Area (M=4.73).[19] Overall levels of satisfaction also differed significantly by region, with tutors in

[17] r=.56, p<.001
[18] Tutoring efficacy and overall satisfaction r=.52, p<.001; tutoring efficacy and satisfaction with staff r=.19, p<.001;
[19] $F(3, 1517)$ =5.80, p<.001

Los Angeles and Silicon Valley respectively reporting higher satisfaction levels (*M*=4.54) than their counterparts in the San Francisco Bay Area (*M*=4.42).[20]

Figure 13: Satisfaction by region (N=1,521)

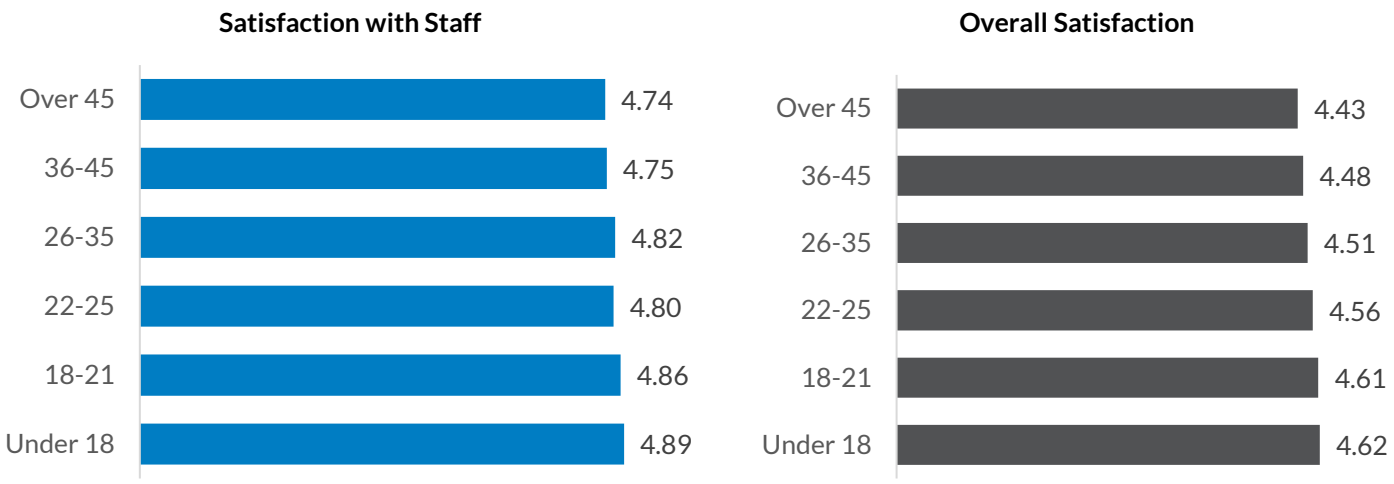


Note: Items were based on a 5-point scale (1=*None of the time*, 5=*All of the time*). Source: Child Trends Tutor Experiences Survey, 2016-2017.

Volunteer tutors who were Reading Partners staff or interns/work study students were significantly more satisfied with Reading Partners (*M*=4.57) than community volunteers (*M*=4.44). There were no differences in these two groups' satisfaction with staff. Tutors under 18 and between 18-21 were significantly more satisfied than tutors over 45 (**Figure 14**).[21] Similarly, tutors with a 4-year college or graduate degree were significantly less satisfied than tutors with less education (**Figure 15**).[22]

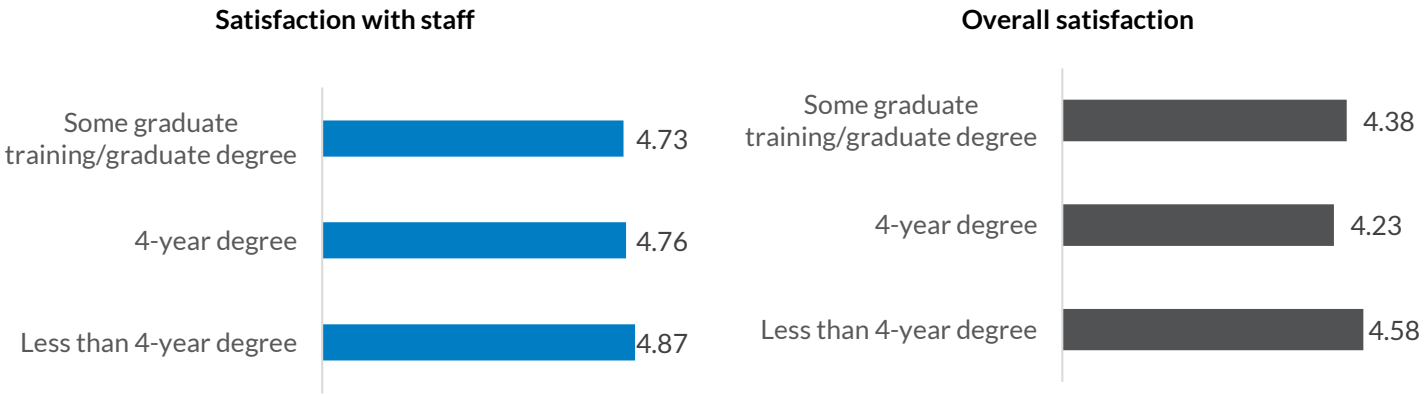
[20] $F(3, 1519) = 4.54$, $p<.01$
[21] $F(5, 1517) = 3.54$, $p<.01$, $F(5, 1515) = 5.51$, $p<.001$
[22] $F(2, 1507) = 15.9$, $p<.001$; $F(2, 1507) = 11.04$, $p<.001$

Figure 14: Satisfaction by tutor age (n=1,521)



Note: Items were based on a 5-point scale (1=*None of the time*, 5=*All of the time*). Source: Child Trends Tutor Experiences Survey, 2016-2017.

Figure 15: Satisfaction by tutor education (n=1,521)



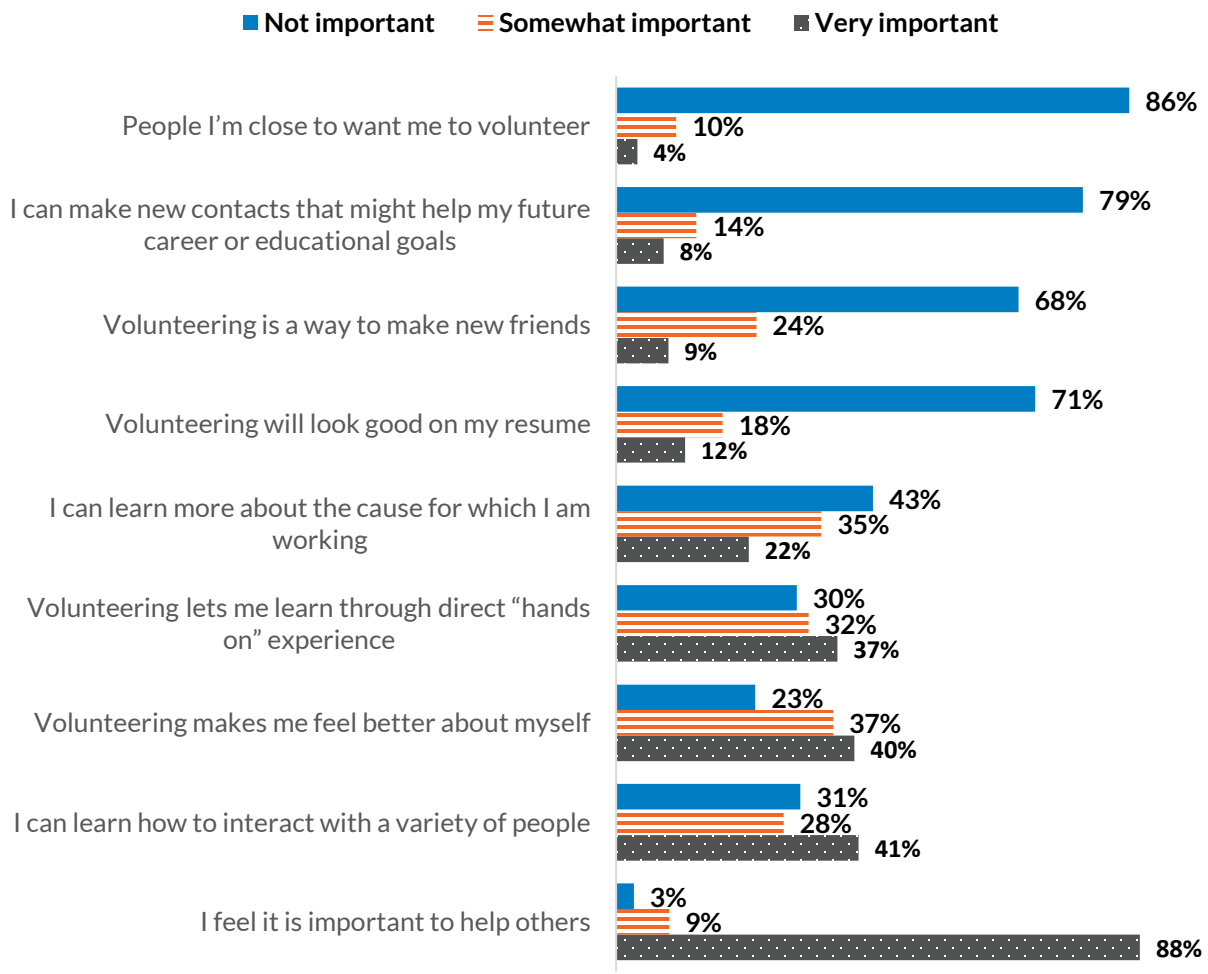
Note: Items were based on a 5-point scale (1=*None of the time*, 5=*All of the time*). Source: Child Trends Tutor Experiences Survey, 2016-2017.

Motivation for Volunteering

Figure 16 highlights factors that tutors described as motivating them to volunteer. The primary factor was that they felt it was very important to help others (88 percent). Other factors that motivated tutors included learning how to interact with a variety of people (41 percent), feeling better about themselves (40 percent), and learning through hands-on experience (37 percent). Notably, only 57 percent of tutors reported that learning more about the cause for which they were working was an important motivator.

Tutors also reported motivating factors that were very unimportant to them. For example, 50 percent said making new contacts to help future career or educational goals was very unimportant. In contrast, 88 percent said they felt it was important to help others.

Figure 16: Motivation to volunteer as tutor

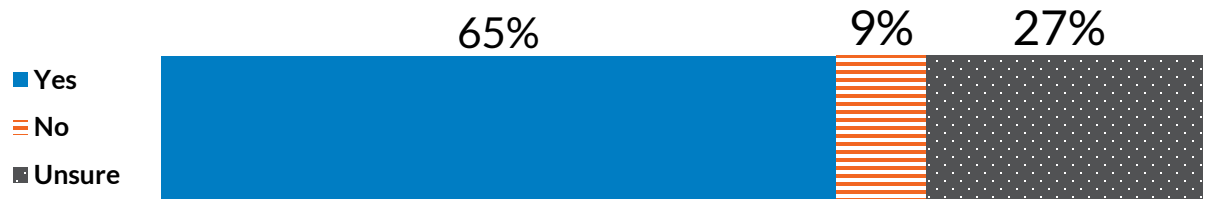


Source: Child Trends Tutor Experiences Survey of Reading Partners tutors, 2016-2017.

Intentions to return

Most tutors (65 percent) intended to return as a volunteer for Reading Partners in California for the next academic year (**Figure 17**). About a quarter said they were unsure about their plans to return, and 9 percent reported they would not return next year.

Figure 17: Intent to return (N=1,499)

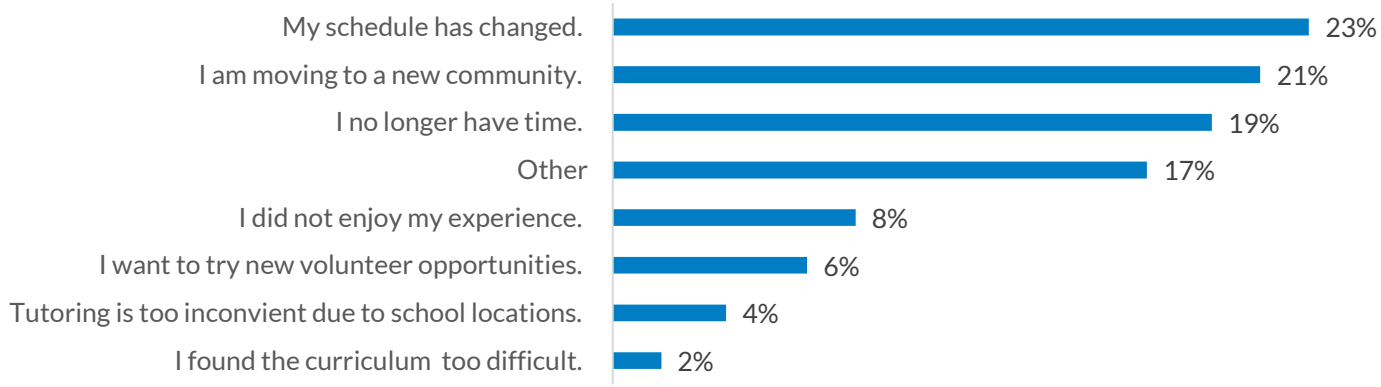


Source: Child Trends Tutor Experiences Survey, 2016-2017.

Reasons for not returning

For tutors who indicated that they would not return to Reading Partners, the survey asked them to explain why. As shown in **Figure 18**, the top reasons offered for not returning pertained to schedule changes, moving to a new community, and no longer having time. Few tutors reported dissatisfaction with Reading Partners as a reason for not returning, though 8 percent said they did not enjoy their experience.

Figure 18: Reasons for not returning (N=130)

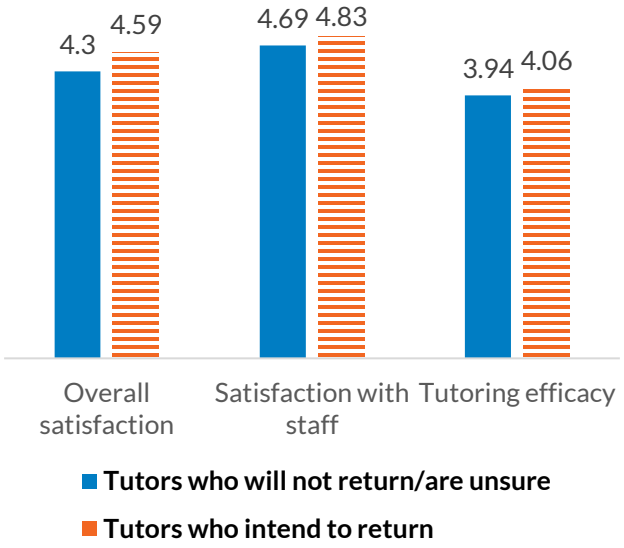


Note: Reasons for not returning are not mutually exclusive. Source: Child Trends Tutor Experiences Survey, 2016-2017.

Given that tutors could report multiple reasons for not intending to return, we recoded the data so that any respondent who indicated they did not enjoy their experience, found the curriculum too difficult, wanted to try new opportunities, or expressed dissatisfaction with Reading Partners in

the "Other" option (such as "program was too disorganized" or "I was not effectively trained") was coded as leaving due to dissatisfaction, while all others were coded as leaving due to logistical challenges. Based on this recoding, we found that only 23 percent of tutors who said they would not return in the next academic year were not leaving the program due to dissatisfaction. Furthermore, within this analysis we found that 3 percent of tutors were not returning because they would be returning as site coordinators the following year.

Figure 19: Satisfaction and tutoring efficacy, by intent to return (N=1,511)



Source: Child Trends Tutor Experiences Survey, 2016-2017.

Predictors of tutors' intention to return

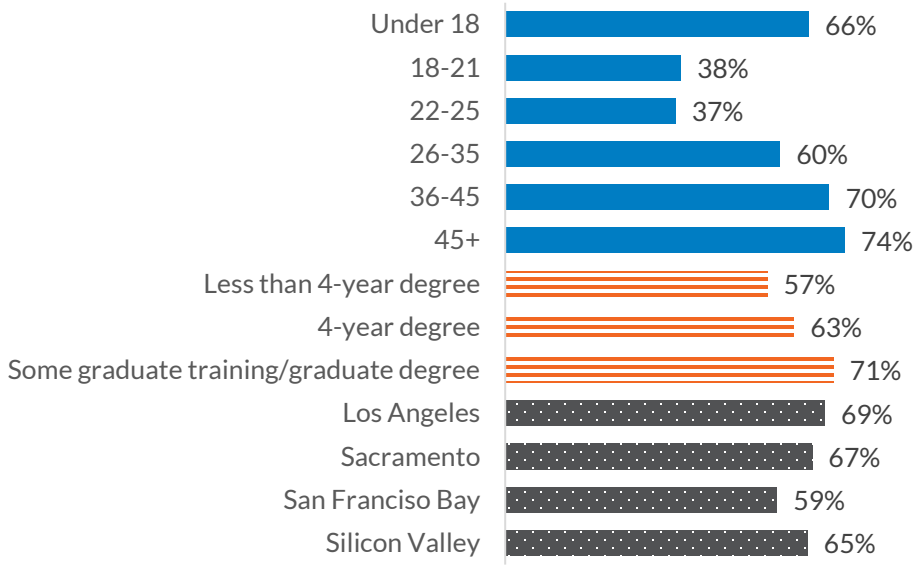
We also examined the extent to which tutors' intent to return as a volunteer tutor at Reading Partners varied by tutor satisfaction, tutoring efficacy, and tutor characteristics. Tutors who intended to return were significantly more satisfied with their experiences at Reading Partners (overall satisfaction[23] and satisfaction with staff[24]) and reported greater levels of perceived tutoring efficacy[25] than those who either reported that they were unsure whether they would return or that they would not return (**Figure 19**).

Significant differences in intention to return were also found among different groups of tutors. Those within the San Francisco Bay Area reported the lowest rates of intention to return (**Figure 20**). In addition, college-aged tutors (18–25) were much less likely to report intending to return the next academic year. Similarly, tutors whose highest education level was below a 4-year college degree were also less likely to intend to return the next year. The findings related to tutor age and education are surprising given that these groups of tutors had reported significantly greater rates of satisfaction and tutoring efficacy.

[23] $F(1, 1511)=102.25, p<.001$
[24] $F(1, 1511)=30.16, p<.001$
[25] $F(1, 1511)=12.81, p<.001$

To explore these findings more deeply, we examined the proportion of tutors who indicated that they would not return to Reading Partners due to being dissatisfied with their experience. As **Figure 21** shows, these groups of tutors were much less likely to report leaving Reading Partners due to dissatisfaction. Thus, although these tutors are less likely to return to Reading Partners, they said they were not returning because of logistical challenges such as changing schedules or moving to new communities, not because they were dissatisfied with the program.

Figure 20: Proportion of tutors who intend to return, by tutor characteristics (N=1,511)



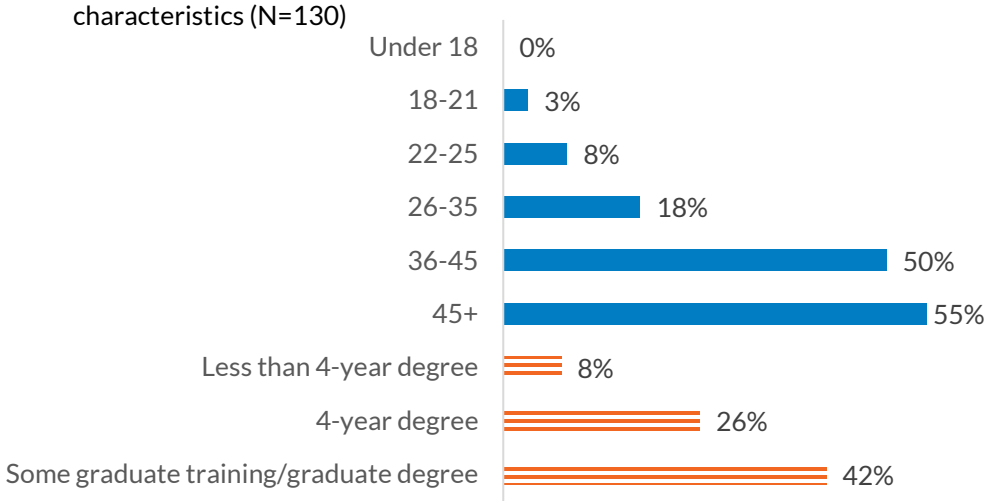
Source: Child Trends Tutor Experiences Survey, 2016-2017.

Conclusions

Tutors who volunteer at Reading Partners are a diverse group of individuals who bring a wealth of experiences and skills to help children in their communities become more proficient readers. Overall, tutors demonstrated a strong grasp of the Reading Partners model and could lead sessions with students as intended. Additionally, tutors reported positive, close relationships with students and limited levels of conflict.

Although tutors' overall implementation of sessions was strong, there are still opportunities to boost their abilities

Figure 21: Proportion of tutors who will not return due to dissatisfaction, by tutor characteristics (N=130)



Source: Child Trends Tutor Experiences Survey, 2016-2017.

related to initiating discussions during read aloud, offering specific praise and feedback, and connecting examples to student's own life. Reading Partners could provide tutors with additional training or examples in these areas such as providing tutors with guidance about how to turn generic feedback into more specific feedback, or asking questions to learn more about students' interests or their lives. Also, if Reading Partners is interested in advancing students' development of social-emotional learning (SEL) skills, the organization might consider providing tutors with additional training to enhance their ability to more intentionally influence outcomes.

In addition, tutoring effectiveness in the areas of engaging students who have low interest or are reluctant students was low relative to other areas of tutor efficacy. Aligned with this finding, just over a quarter of tutors said they felt like they and their students were struggling with each other at times, and that they would be in for a "long and difficult day" when a student was in a bad mood. Together, these findings suggest that tutors may need more training or practice related to engaging challenging students. Site coordinators should also offer more coaching and ongoing support in engaging students who seem to lack interest or are reluctant during the session.

Tutor recruitment, engagement, and retention

Tutors reported that helping others was one of the primary factors motivating them to volunteer as a tutor. Thus, there may be an opportunity to tailor tutor recruitment messages specifically to aspects of being a community helper. Interestingly, despite 88 percent of tutors reporting that they volunteer because they think it is important to help others, only 57 percent volunteered at Reading Partners because they felt it was important to learn more about the cause for which they were working.

This suggests that tutors may be driven to volunteer because they feel that it is important to help others in general, rather than because it is important to help close the fourth-grade reading gap. This may explain why the item "I feel like I make an impact at Reading Partners" was rated the lowest of all the satisfaction items.

Helping tutors understand the importance of helping children become more proficient readers may be a way to both increase tutors' satisfaction with their role as volunteer tutors as well as increase engagement in other aspects of Reading Partners. In addition, Reading Partners may want to help tutors better understand the impact they are having on students both in relation to

the gains they make in early literacy and reading as well as in their SEL skill development.[26]

Marking these accomplishments is challenging when change is incremental during the school year, and because tutors do not always work with the same students throughout that year. Sharing individual or aggregated results about student progress might increase tutor satisfaction in this area. Additionally, Reading Partners staff may need to increase the frequency of reporting student progress to tutors, or create new ways for them to easily understand how they are making a difference.

Finally, nearly two-thirds of tutors reported that they plan to return next year. The small proportion of tutors who said they would not return reflects mostly logistical changes (e.g., schedule, lack of time, moving) as the primary reason for not returning. Very few tutors reported not returning because they did not enjoy the experience. However, a quarter of tutors were unsure about their plans for next year.

There may be an opportunity to have site coordinators engage tutors at the end of the year with messages about the importance of returning volunteers or engage veteran volunteers to talk with first-year tutors about what they could gain by returning. Reading Partners might also consider developing an incentive structure for returning volunteers (e.g., gift cards, scheduling preferences, and leadership opportunities) to motivate reluctant volunteers to return next year.

[26] Murphy, K., Warner-Richter, M. Anderson, S., & Hirilall, A. (2018). *Student Outcomes.* Bethesda, MD: Child Trends