



Washington Reading Corps

YEAR 1 REPORT

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Executive Summary

Since 1998, the Washington Reading Corps (WRC), in partnership with the Washington Service Corps, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Washington Commission for National and Community Service, has placed AmeriCorps members in schools, early learning centers, and community based sites to provide literacy support. The WRC members provide tutoring, afterschool support, volunteer recruitment, and family engagement in an effort to increase the literacy skills of students. WRC members serve for 10.5-month terms. Members are not certificated teachers and most have minimal previous literacy training.

In 2013-2014, WRC project leaders contracted with The BERC Group, Inc. to provide an evaluation of the WRC program implementation and impact. The evaluation used a mixed-methodologies approach and included data from interviews and focus groups with 43 WRC members, 15 site supervisors and project leaders; visits at 10 sites; phone interviews with 15 comparison schools; analysis of student MSP/HSPE scores from OSPI; analysis of student achievement data from WRC program sites; and a WRC member survey. The BERC Group, Inc. used this data to answer the following research questions:

Evaluation Question #1: To what extent are the WRC programs being implemented?

After 16 years, the WRC program lost Federal grant support. This led to a reduction in both sites and membership. Due to the loss of funding, the WRC program, previously using a team-based model to place members at sites, switched to individual placement. This was a positive change, and 98% of WRC survey respondents agreed they were a good fit for their site. During the 2013-2014 school year there were 54 members at 33 sites. WRC members work primarily with students who are just below grade-level literacy through tutoring, in-class, and after school support. They also work to engage community volunteers and families. In addition, training changed from monthly meetings to a one-week intensive training in October. About half the members prefer the new training, while the other half believed that it is rushed. In addition, members disagree about the relevancy of the training to supporting literacy. Some would prefer more focus on literacy strategies. Many members also described feeling “stretched thin,” especially at sites that reduced from around five WRC members under the team model to one or two members under individual placement. As a result, WRC members are trying to cover the same number of students with a reduced team. Overall, the majority of WRC survey respondents provided favorable feedback regarding all aspects of their service experience and 74% of respondents rated their service as good or excellent

Evaluation Question #2: What barriers/contextual factors are influencing the WRC program implementation?

The evaluation also focused on identifying barriers or contextual factors that influence program implementation. Many of these factors related to the program changes associated the loss of funding. The first barrier that emerged is the lack of a team. As noted above, many of the current members stated they have an overloaded schedule and are not able to reach all the students who need their support. Communication between teachers and WRC members is also a barrier, as teachers often do not know how to use the WRC members or change their class schedules without informing the WRC members. The timing and relevancy of training has also had a negative impact,



according to some members. Although not all agree, some members reported feeling underprepared in the first few months of their service before SERVES training and others felt that the focus of training did not apply to the WRC program. This is especially true for first-year members. Finally, it is clear that communication between WRC program staff and sites could be improved, as members reported the sites did not know how to use them or expected them to complete non-WRC service.

Evaluation Question #3: To what extent do WRC programs impact student literacy scores as measured by standardized tests?

We found that most students who participated in WRC made at least one year of progress in reading achievement. The percentage of students making one year of progress peaked at 67% during the 2010-2011 school year, fell to 53% during 2011-2012, rebounded to 59% during 2012-2013 and remained consistent at 57% in 2013-2014. The data show that most students of the pre-K through 2nd grade students made a year of reading progress. Older elementary school students were less likely to make a year of growth. In general, students enrolled in schools with more years in WRC were more likely to make one year of reading progress. Additionally, there was a significant relationship between group size and improvement. Each additional student in a group was associated with a 2% increase in the odds of making one year of reading growth.

Evaluation Question #4: To what extent do student scores differ between those served by the WRC and those not served by the WRC?

We analyzed Measures of Student Progress (MSP) in the State of Washington, at WRC schools, and at the comparison schools. Average reading achievement increased for schools in Washington during this period. The state average increased slightly from a low of 68% in 2010 to a high of 73% during 2014. Similarly, the rate at WRC schools rose from 63% in 2010 to 66% in 2013 before falling to 64% in 2014. The rate at the comparison schools rose from 64% in 2010 to 66% in 2014. The last analysis compared the reading achievement progress at WRC schools to a set of demographically similar comparison schools. We found that reading achievement increased at both WRC and comparison schools. Reading achievement at treatment and control groups grew at the same rate.

Evaluation Question #5: What promising practices can be identified in WRC program design and implementation?

Many WRC members and site supervisors shared practices they believe made them more effective at improving student literacy. When members were included in teacher collaboration times or were able to attend professional development, they felt more qualified to provide literacy support. Having a teacher mentor or building support was also beneficial, as the teachers could provide ideas and strategies for members to use with students. Members also perceived that working individually with students was more effective than working with small groups. Several members implemented innovative programs, including book bags to take home and reading buddies to listen to students read aloud. In addition, members joined parent-teacher organizations to improve outreach and volunteer recruitment. Finally, non-WRC interviews revealed similar promising practices as

Executive Summary

described above, with the addition of reviewing student assessment data and dedicating time to Response to Intervention, typically using a push-in model.

Evaluation Question #6: To what extent are the changes sustainable?

Site supervisors believe WRC members are more effective than parents or other volunteers because they work reliably at the school every day. They are also better trained. Members create sustainability binders to help their replacements integrate into the building. However, retention is still the main concern of program leaders. It is important for sites to have reasonable expectations and treat members with respect if they want to retain their WRC members.

Recommendations

The WRC program changed this year, as the loss of federal grant funding required program leaders to make major cuts to membership and sites. In addition, the change from team to individual placement required WRC members and sites to adapt. Despite these changes, the WRC is a popular program at the sites, and the majority of WRC members rated their experience positively. Although new sites often struggle with how to best utilize the members initially, veteran sites find the WRC members to be an invaluable resource that cannot be replaced by parent or other volunteers. Program leaders have been responsive to needs, and they have been intentional in planning for effective implementation in future years.

Based on the information gathered, we provided some recommendations to the WRC program to improve effectiveness and sustainability. First, provide frequent opportunities for member collaboration. Second, develop a mentoring model among WRC sites, especially when opening new sites. Finally, review the time schedule for member service so members are trained before they begin to provide tutoring and allow some time for the site and WRC member(s) to acclimate to each other before classes begin. Recommendations from our previous report include ensuring valid and reliable data collection at each site, developing more long-term relationships with sites, collecting cohort data, and studying successful WRC program sites as well as comparison schools.

Washington Reading Corps Impact Evaluation

YEAR 1 REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Since 1998, the Washington Reading Corps (WRC) program has operated in Washington State in partnership with multiple state organizations including, the Washington Service Corps, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Washington Commission for National and Community Service. The goal of the WRC program is to provide AmeriCorps members on site to develop and improve student literacy skills through research based tutoring and capacity building activities, such as volunteer recruitment and family engagement opportunities. One project leader described the goals of the WRC program in further detail:

There are two main goals. [First] the impact on student literacy, particularly in places where we can support the operations of the building, so Tier II children can get caught up. [Second], is building literacy systems in communities and brokering partnerships in the community [to create] a longer sustainability. The deep touch is the tutoring.

Throughout the state, WRC sites serve preschool through sixth graders in schools, early learning centers, and community-based sites. WRC site selections are based on high need student demographics and quality applications. Additional expectations for selected WRC sites include having an established literacy program; assigning WRC members to tutor students in 20-minute blocks twice a week; submitting quarterly progress reports; and providing supervision, training, and coaching to WRC members surrounding the sites literacy curriculum and assessment. Members are not certificated teachers; they are support staff with minimal previous literacy training.

WRC members serve a 10.5-month term with the possibility of extended service terms. WRC members receive a stipend and educational certificate for providing their service. Additionally, WRC members attend annual training provided by the Washington Service Corps.

Project leaders engaged The BERCC Group, Inc. to conduct an independent impact evaluation of the WRC program for the 2013-2014 school year. The BERCC Group also provided a supplementary data report to project leaders for previous years (2009 – 2010 to 2012 - 2013), and assisted in the development of a three year evaluation plan for a future grant. This report is specifically for the 2013-2014 school year. This report for the 2013-2014 school year includes a description of the evaluation design, evaluation findings, and conclusions and recommendations

Evaluation Design

The evaluation utilized a multiple measures, mixed methodology approach. The collection of both quantitative and qualitative data adds scope and breadth to the study, in addition to providing the ability to triangulate findings.¹ Descriptions of the evaluation questions, participants, and data sources are provided below.

¹ Creswell, J.W. (1994). Combined qualitative and quantitative designs. In, *Research design: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (pp 173-192). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.



Evaluation Questions

Evaluation questions followed the existing framework as stated in the original Request for Proposal (RFP). Specifically, evaluation efforts focused on evidence of implementation, evidence of impact, promising practices, and sustainability, using the following questions to guide evaluation efforts:

1. To what extent are the WRC programs being implemented?
2. What barriers/contextual factors are influencing the WRC program implementation?
3. To what extent do WRC programs impact student literacy scores as measured by standardized tests?
4. To what extent do student scores differ between those served by the WRC and those not served by the WRC?
5. What promising practices can be identified in WRC program design and implementation?
6. To what extent are the changes sustainable?

To answer these questions, evaluators gathered a variety of qualitative and quantitative data. The following sections outline data sources and provide a description of data collection procedures.

Data Sources

To address the evaluation questions, evaluators gathered data from multiple sources for Year 1 of the evaluation. The BERG Group, Inc. completed the following evaluation activities:

- Interviews and focus groups with 43 WRC members, 15 site supervisors/key personnel, and both project leaders.
- Site visits at 10 WRC schools, early learning centers, and community centers.
- Phone interviews with administration or literacy specialists at 15 comparison schools representing both high and low student growth spectrums for literacy.
- Analysis of student achievement data for the WRC program and comparison schools, using OSPI data on MSP/HSPE scores.
- Analysis of student achievement data for WRC program sites, using student log data provided by project leaders.
- WRC member survey completed by 45 members.

School Demographics. We downloaded school demographic data for each of the schools from OSPI's Washington state Report Card site (<http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/>). The demographic data included total enrollment, racial and gender composition, and the percentage of transitional bilingual, Special Education, and free/reduced lunch students. The dataset also included measures of school quality, including student-teacher ratio, average teacher experience, and the percentage of teachers who have earned master's degrees. Table 1 shows the mean demographics for all schools for each year of the study.

Table 1.
Mean Demographics for WRC schools, 2009-2013

Demographic Variable	School Year				
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	All Years
Total Enrollment	407.89	404.02	401.72	408.67	405.57
% Asian/Pacific Islander	8.07	7.3	7.41	7.37	7.53
% American Indian	3.7	2.45	2.35	2.85	2.84
% Black	7.34	6.51	6.24	6.23	6.58
% Hispanic	23.02	25.93	26.71	27.7	25.85
% White	53.16	51.87	50.7	49.73	51.36
% Males	51.28	51.34	51.52	51.88	51.51
% Transitional Bilingual	16.15	17.4	16.4	16.31	16.57
% Special Education	14.67	14.97	15.28	14.92	14.96
% Free/Reduced Lunch	63.79	65.22	66.02	66.95	65.5
Student-Teacher Ratio	15.86	15.68	15.72	15.85	15.78
Teacher Experience	12.01	11.91	11.85	11.64	11.85
% Teachers with Master's Degree	63.15	63.59	64.47	66.09	64.33
Intervention	0.14	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13

WRC Program Variables. In student tracking logs, program personnel noted a variety of indicators about the student groups they facilitated, including the grade level of the participants, the number of days of instruction per week, the number of instructional minutes in each session, and the size of the group. Table 2 shows the means for each variable for each year of the study. Over the five-year period under study, 91% of the 23,171 WRC participants were enrolled in grades kindergarten to 5. Five percent of participants were enrolled in grades 6 to 8; 2% were enrolled in pre-kindergarten; and less than 1% were enrolled in grades 9 to 12.

Table 2.
Mean WRC Program Variables, 2009-2013

Variable	Years					
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	All Years
Grade	2.14	2.33	2.49	2.27	1.97	2.27
Days	3.61	3.62	3.59	3.82	3.56	3.68
Instructional Minutes	28.92	30.12	37.13	32.31	25.84	31.28
Group Size	3.17	3.2	5.91	4.53	3.98	4.04



Within-year Reading Growth. During each year of the study, project personnel recorded pre-test and post-test data on a variety of different measures of reading, including several different subscales of the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests, and Reading Benchmark Assessments (RBAs). The number and type of assessments used varied both within and between schools. For example, some elementary schools used composite DIBELS measures whereas others administered specific subscales such as Oral Reading Fluency or Retell Fluency. At the end of each school year, staff members compared pre- and post-test results to determine whether or not each student made at least a year of reading progress. Consequently, we used staff members' ratings as our indicator of within-year reading growth.

Measures of Student Progress. We used Washington State Measures of Student Progress (MSP) scores to assess school-wide reading development during the four intervention years. The test is administered each year in grades 3-8. We also collected MSP scores for a group of demographically similar schools for comparison.

Survey. Washington Reading Corps members took an online survey in May 2014. The survey focused on their experiences as a Washington Reading Corps member. Responses are integrated throughout the report. Appendix B shows the individual responses.

Evaluation Findings

Process Strand: Evidence of Implementation

This section details the implementation of the program for the entire state, as well as site-specific differences. This section also includes barriers and contextual issues influencing implementation.

Evaluation Question #1: To what extent are the WRC programs being implemented?

The 2013-2014 school year, marked a shift for the 16-year old WRC program. Traditionally, WRC has been a robust program with a "minimum of 200 members." However, last year, federal grant funding was not awarded to the WRC program. Project leaders described the non-renewal of their long time federal grant as "quite a blow to the program." Stakeholders had to make a tough decision of "do we let it [WRC] fold and come back or do we charge ahead [sic]. We decided to continue on with it. We redesigned the whole program." Overall, program leaders stated a need to "dig deep with what is actually happening by running a small program and find out about everything, if there is something, we want to improve."

The WRC program redesign included a significant decrease in member size and a change from their traditional team based site model to individual placement. Within the individual placement model, each WRC site individually interviews and selects members to serve at its location. While the change from a team to individual placement model was driven by lack of funding, project leaders and site supervisors like the new model better and will continue to use individual placement in the future. Some returning members identified both positive and negative outcomes of the individual placement model. Members described a decrease in collaboration time with other WRC members

and an overall lower sense of community within the program as negative aspects, while other members positively highlighted an increase in both program transparency and ability to communicate with project leaders. One member commented:

Last year [was] team based, this year, [it is] strictly WRC. [Our] team last year got help and training from a Wenatchee person, a go-between: managed us and reported to WRC. This year, we talk directly with WRC. You get more specific with trainings and advice when you are not part of a team based program. [I] get information specific to elementary school and reading. Last year, it was more about the community.

Another member commented:

When it was more team-based, we had a lot more service projects. [A WRC member] and I were on the service committee. We would plan projects we would attend. We had a Google doc that we would find service projects around the community and post for people that lived in other counties. It was a lot more team based. This year we only had SERVES [training]. That's the only time the WRC got together. There's time people will help out in our community events or we will go to others. We are in a nice position because we know some of the members from last year that are still in [WRC site].

Survey results show that the individual placement model is creating good matches between sites and WRC members. Ninety-five percent of members felt they were welcomed at their site, while 98% agreed they were a good fit for their site.

Professional Development

Currently, the WRC program has 53 members in 33 sites across Washington State. Most WRC program sites are elementary schools, with some early learning sites and one community-based center. The majority of sites have one WRC member with a site supervisor assigned to each location. At many sites, the school principal is also the site supervisor. Previously, WRC member training was provided throughout the year to members as part of the team based model. However, this school year, members went through a single four and a half-day SERVES training last October in Yakima, to prepare for their service as an AmeriCorps member in Washington Reading Corps. The training provided three-days of AmeriCorps member related education and one and a half-days of Washington Reading Corps specific education. SERVES offers workshops that help members in setting goals during their year of service, as well as completing core training requirements. Session topics include how to become an effective communicator, learning to work in culturally diverse communities, becoming a great reading tutor, learning to be a lively group facilitator, and becoming an active volunteer recruiter.²

Members chose to attend different sessions during the training days based on individual need and interests. Evaluators received mixed feedback regarding the WRC members training opportunities. Approximately half of the WRC members stated the four-and-a-half-day training felt rushed and

² The SERVES training description was retrieved from:
<http://www.csd.wa.gov/washingtonservicecorps/partnersandmembers/ql-serves-conference-information.php>
on June 16, 2014.



did not provide adequate time for them to attend all sessions they were interested in and/or needed. Additionally, these members stated the content of the training lacked some relevancy. One member commented:

First-year training was pretty different than second-year training [2013-2014]. This year we did the Yakima training event, called SERVES. That training consisted of seminars and workshops about 'funky' things like cultural differences. Only a few [workshops] were really applicable, [e.g.,] how to use your scholarships and the other was public speaking. The other trainings were ... interesting. Last year, was a lot more collaborative and seemed a lot more relevant. [This is] why there might be some of these literacy issues.

Another member shared their opinion on this year's professional development:

We also went to a thing in Yakima. SERVES. [It was] more of a para-educator training. Very specific to what we do. Training to time fluency tests. It was a mixed bag, about half was really useful, some not so much.

In contrast, approximately half of WRC members stated they like the new model of professional development and found the content useful. Specifically, returning members who liked the change in training structure described the decrease in travel and time away from their site for ongoing professional development and the opportunity to select their individual preferred training content as the best aspects of the new structure. One member commented:

This year we went to SERVES. That was pretty good. We would have a monthly thing the year before. I liked it more as one big week of a lot of training. We had a lot of classes and seminars that you could take. It was what you were interested in. Something you could be engaged in. We kind of got to check things that you wanted to know more about. There was less chance of finding things that you have gone through before. I prefer the crash course as opposed to leave the school. Just have that week [of training] to say, 'I am gone this is what I am doing.' I felt that it was productive.

Another member described the training:

We got useful info, like learning how to balance AmeriCorps with other aspects of our lives. The para-reading tutoring was very helpful. [A classroom] teacher took some strategies that I learned from this training and utilizes them in her class.

Survey results were quite positive: 81% of respondents felt they were prepared for their service (Strongly Agree and Agree combined).

WRC Programs

At WRC sites, members provide individual and small group literacy tutoring for Tier II students who are categorized as approaching standard or otherwise determined they are not reading at grade level. Members keep student-tracking logs sent quarterly to project leaders to measure change in performance, hours of tutoring, number of students being served, etc. Members also spend their

time actively recruiting and training community volunteers and planning/hosting community outreach events. Evaluators conducted ten site visits based on project leader recommendations. The site visits included one preschool learning program, two community based programs, and seven elementary schools. During site visits, evaluators interviewed WRC members and site supervisors. Additionally, evaluators observed typical WRC member service activities including small group and individual literacy sessions and reviewed typical lesson plans and curriculum materials. Evaluators conducted phone interviews with the WRC members at the other sites and some site supervisors.

WRC members support students through a variety of interventions based on school literacy models. Most WRC members provide individual and small group tutoring. For example, one site used a “book club” model to practice reading and comprehension skills with a small group of students. Another site conducted short tutoring sessions where the student worked on a classroom assignment with support from the member. Another WRC member worked in the classroom, providing support to specific students during classwork, but also supporting the rest of the students. Other sites, in addition to tutoring and other classroom support, run before or after school programs where students do homework or read. These are less structured times. In addition, members coordinate family engagement nights with the school to help build connections between parents and the school. Finally, WRC members recruit volunteers. Although interviewees did not provide specific details on volunteer recruitment strategies, one site supervisor said, “Sometimes we get a call from a [college] student that wants to volunteer. I hand it off to [the WRC member]. He knows the schedule and the kids and knows where that person would be of the most benefit, based on the needs of the teacher and the child.”

Interviews with site supervisors and WRC members revealed that WRC program sites have been impacted by the reduction in WRC members serving at sites. WRC members frequently stated their time was stretched, and they had difficulty meeting their service expectations compared to previous years and as first time members. One member commented that, while the WRC site program might not have changed, the reduction in members impacted capacity:

The program is probably exactly the same, [but] since there were three members last year, there were more students being served. [WRC members] developed a homework backpack plan. They are available for teachers. But this year, we have other focuses; some of the programs put into place last year are not available this year because of less WRC members.

Sites that typically hosted three to five WRC members in the past now work with one or two. Members indicated they are busy and are simply limited in the amount of literacy tutoring and volunteer recruiting they can provide due to their smaller numbers. One WRC member described being on a single-member site:

I need at least two people here to make it a huge success. I could have done so much more with another person here helping me. In particular, finding volunteers, and the volunteer time to actively go out and recruit. To recruit and train a volunteer, [there is] not enough time. A lot of the things they want you to do could be obtained if there were more people. In the end, time gets spent on volunteering.



While many sites utilize small group tutoring sessions to provide face time with more students, some sites see a greater benefit in maintaining one on one tutoring. One site supervisor commented on their WRC program implementation:

We can have that safety net for those kids that are just right on the edge. It usually makes a difference of them not having to have any kind of Title 1 service. They can remain in the classroom and have that extra support every day. We have one-on-one. They have 20 minute slots with one student usually, sometimes two. We find that beneficial because it's right what that child needs instead of having them run a group of three.

In contrast, another site supervisor commented on their combination of small group and one-on-one tutoring by WRC members:

[WRC members use a] push-in versus pull-out [strategy]. Depends on the kids. If there are quite a few kids in the classroom where the needs are higher, it utilizes their resource better to have them go in and work with kids in the classroom. Other classrooms where maybe there are three to four, they might do a small group if the needs are similar. Others, it is really beneficial for the kids to work one-to-one. Maybe because they are so distracted in the classroom.

During 2013-2014, project leaders again submitted a grant for federal funding of the WRC program, and were awarded funding for the next three years (2014-2017). With the support of Federal funding, project leaders anticipate bringing the WRC program back to its previous capacity in preparation for 2014-2015, with approximately 60 sites and 150 members.

Evaluation Question #2: What barriers/contextual factors are influencing the WRC program implementation?

WRC members discussed a variety of barriers and contextual factors that hindered their ability to fully reach students and have an impact on literacy. They included issues specific to their site as well as to the WRC program as a whole. In addition, some of the barriers arose from changes that reduced funding caused to the program.

Lack of a Team

Many WRC members stated they felt most effective when they could work with students on an individual basis. However, with the change from team-based to individual placement, this was not possible. Often sites would assign the members to work with small groups of students to ensure they reached the maximum number of students. One member said, "I do feel like our schedules are really slammed compared to other AmeriCorps members. I feel like I would be more effective if I could be doing more one-on-one."

Members who work in classrooms are often covering the same number of classes with fewer members. "This year with the fact [there's] not five of us, last year we were in classes for longer

periods of time. This year [it is] more classrooms for less time.” Another member stated, “This year we came back and now have to get used to two people doing the same workload as five previously.”

Not only has this affected the ability of members to impact student literacy, but it has been detrimental to other aspects of the WRC program. Specifically, the WRC members have less time to plan community events and recruit volunteers. One member explained,

I think the big thing is that we lost the team based program in the schools. I would like to see that come back. We had team based when I started, and we were able to put on more events. There were five of us. We were able to work with more kids. [There was] more involvement from the parents because we had the team.

Survey responses showed many members felt overworked. One member commented, “[It was a] rewarding experience working with the kids, but [the minimum number of hours] required seemed like too much, especially for people on school schedules with breaks and holidays.” Another described feeling “isolated and lacking in support.”

Communication with Teachers

About one-fifth of the WRC members reported issues related to communicating and coordinating with teachers. As their work requires either working alongside students in the classroom or pulling students out of the classroom for tutoring, poor communication can have a strong hindrance on program performance. For example, one WRC member said:

Something I feel could be improved is the amount of communication I have with the teachers. There’s not really any formal time. I catch them when I can, and I leave a lot of sticky notes with observations and things we might need to talk about.

WRC members stated that, when there are changes in the school day or the students they serve, they are not always informed. A WRC member stated, “If our supervisor decides to do something and tells the teacher and not us or tells us and not the teachers and then it puts us in a bind.”

Schedule changes and other issues also prevent members from being able to work with students. One member said, “There are certain kids that you may see that do need extra help and you can’t get to them whether it’s because the teacher doesn’t recommend it or they’re going to other things in their day.”

Other issues arise when teachers do not know how to use the WRC members or are unsure of their role in the school. “Sometimes I feel like we could have more creative control. I feel often that [teachers] forget that we aren’t part of the staff. They’ll have us do staff type stuff [e.g., copies].” Another WRC member said, “Some teachers have no idea what we’re supposed to be doing so we basically have to figure out what to do in those specific classrooms.”

WRC members suggested that being included in staff meetings and teacher collaboration time would allow them to do their job better and improve communication. One suggested, “Have a grade level meeting that includes us. One at the beginning of every trimester just to make sure



what should be done. Make sure everyone knows the ground rules and how to use us.” Another WRC member wanted a stronger voice in student decisions. “If we have an idea or if something is not working our opinion is not noted. I think it is important for people who are working with the kids [to] get a say.”

Survey responses also show how WRC members struggled with communication. One response was, “Loved the kids, but little support from teachers and principal [sic].” Another member said, “I felt that my project supervisor didn't do as well of a job as she could have with her communication.” A third commented, “The teachers didn't necessarily use us to their advantage.” Overall, 81% of WRC members agreed they received regular support from their WRC site. Members were more likely to rate their service as “Excellent” or “Good” if they agreed that they communicated with or were supported by their WRC site on a regular basis.

Timing and Relevancy of Training

Some members spoke positively of their training, while others were concerned about the relevancy to their jobs and the timing of the training after they have begun working in schools. Although it was not a perfect split, often returning members were appreciative of the training, while first time members, especially those without previous experience in literacy, would have preferred more training in reading strategies. One member said, “I would have liked a little more training because I have never taught reading before. I hadn't spent time in literacy before. I got some training but I'm figuring it out as I go.” Another member added:

They could give people more tools to help members to deal with how to teach literacy. Especially for people who came into the program with less literacy and education background, and not having that training was probably a problem. I think more explicit training and literacy techniques couldn't hurt.

Survey results show that only 45% of WRC members joined the program because of previous experience in education. One survey response said, “At the beginning of my term, I had to adjust to the school environment and learn a lot about the school and [the] WRC system. The experience overall has been positive, but slow in the beginning, as I had to acclimate.” Another response was, “SERVES also seems to focus mostly on the community based volunteer efforts, not the Reading Corps aspect.”

During interviews, members stated that training in other areas of education beyond reading strategies would have been helpful. “We could probably have used some more classroom management training at the beginning of the year.” Another member said, “The hardest thing for me is trying to figure out how to deal with certain students, behavior management-wise.”

Another member commented about the relevancy of training to the region. WRC members reported training on member strategies, partnerships, and similar ideas to help improve their service. However, as one member stated, “. . .the focus was more on cities with a greater population. It was a struggle to relate it back to being such a small town.” Another member commented that the necessary resources were not available:

I remember reading in our para training about a few organizations, about the Children's Reading Foundation where they donate books to literacy events. There was nothing like that out here. There aren't a lot of resources; nothing close by. [There is] not enough money.

One issue that came up only at a few sites was language barriers. Some members described problems connecting with English language learners because they do not speak the students' primary languages. One member said, "... we have a huge Hispanic community, so a language barrier is a factor." Another said, "Working with a diverse culture of kids, we need to have someone who can speak another language, to give the kids some connection to their language. It is less effective because I am only speaking English."

Finally, WRC members reported the timing of training impacted their ability to be effective at their sites, especially initially. One member stated, "This year we started in September and didn't go to SERVES until October... [We were] already two months into our term." Several WRC members reported issues with learning what their role at the school was and how to support literacy. They commented that earlier training would have helped them integrate into the school and improve literacy support immediately.

Coordination and Communication between WRC Program Staff and Sites

Similar to communication between WRC members and teachers, a lack of communication and understanding between the WRC program staff and site supervisors has led to struggles for some members. WRC members expressed it is very important sites understand the role of the member. One member stated:

WRC wants one thing and the school wants something slightly different and I'm trying to strike a balance between those two things. The school wasn't fully aware what WRC really wanted, so at the beginning of the year we said that WRC wanted us to meet with groups of six students for 20 minutes, three times a week. [The school has] tried to do that but it's not really important to them, it seems. There really needs to be an alignment of goals and an understanding of the program design.

Other members made similar comments. One said, "I would change, maybe send each school information about WRC and what the members should be doing. There was a lot of confusion about what we were there for." Another said, "When I went to SERVES training in Yakima in October, I got a description about my role. [It has] not been my job at all on a daily basis... The majority of work is not literacy based or not small group."

One survey respondent commented on a "lack of direction, lack of support, lack of communication/information, not upholding of ANY of the commitments made to WRC per policy [sic]." Eighty-four percent of respondents commented their service matched the WRC member service, and 84% also reported that their WRC site had sufficient resources to support their service.



Site supervisors suggested that knowing ahead of time if they are going to get another member would help them plan ahead and coordinate their activities better. One said, “It would be really good to know if we are having it next year as far as planning. You want to get it up and going in the fall. It would be great if we had the same person back. Knowing in the spring [would be good].” In addition, site supervisors would like to know more information about the training the members receive so they can put them in appropriate roles or supplement their training with school based training.

Survey results show that respondents who felt their site had the resources to support them and that their role at the school matched the WRC member service were more likely to rate their service as “Excellent” or “Good.” Therefore, it is important to ensure the sites understand WRC member roles and strive to create positions that match them.

Process Strand: Evidence of Impact

To assess evidence of impact, researchers analyzed state assessment data (MSP). In addition, qualitative data on impact, gathered from focus groups and interviews, is also included.

Evaluation Question #3: To what extent do WRC programs impact student literacy scores as measured by standardized tests?

This research question focused on students’ progress over the course of the school year. Figure 1 shows the percentage of students who made one year of progress at each WRC site from 2010 to 2014. The findings indicate that most students enrolled in the program made progress on their reading achievement during the school year. The proportion of students making one year of progress peaked at 67% during the 2010-2011 school year, fell to 53% during 2011-2012, rebounded to 59% during 2012-2013 and remained consistent at 57% in 2013-2014. Figure 2 shows the percentage of students who met or exceeded one year of reading growth by school level, combining the five years. The vast majority of students served by WRC were enrolled in the elementary school grades (pre K through 5th grade) and most (58%) of those students reached their reading goals. Figure 3 shows the data for each elementary school grade. The data show that most students of the pre-K through 2nd grade students made a year of reading progress. Older elementary school students (3rd through 5th grade) were less likely to make a year of growth. WRC members work primarily with K-2nd grade students and less with intermediate grades. Figure 4 shows the percentage of students who made one year of reading progress, disaggregated by the number of years that the student’s school participated in WRC. In general, students enrolled in schools with more years in WRC were more likely to make one year of reading progress.

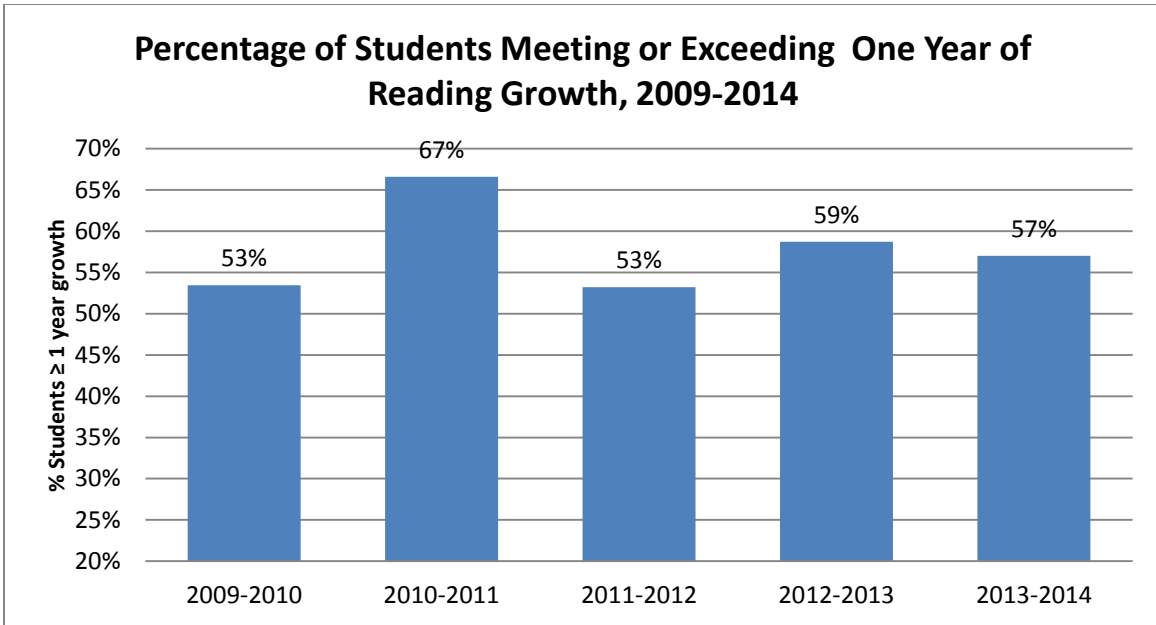


Figure 1. Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding One Year of Reading Growth, 2009-2014

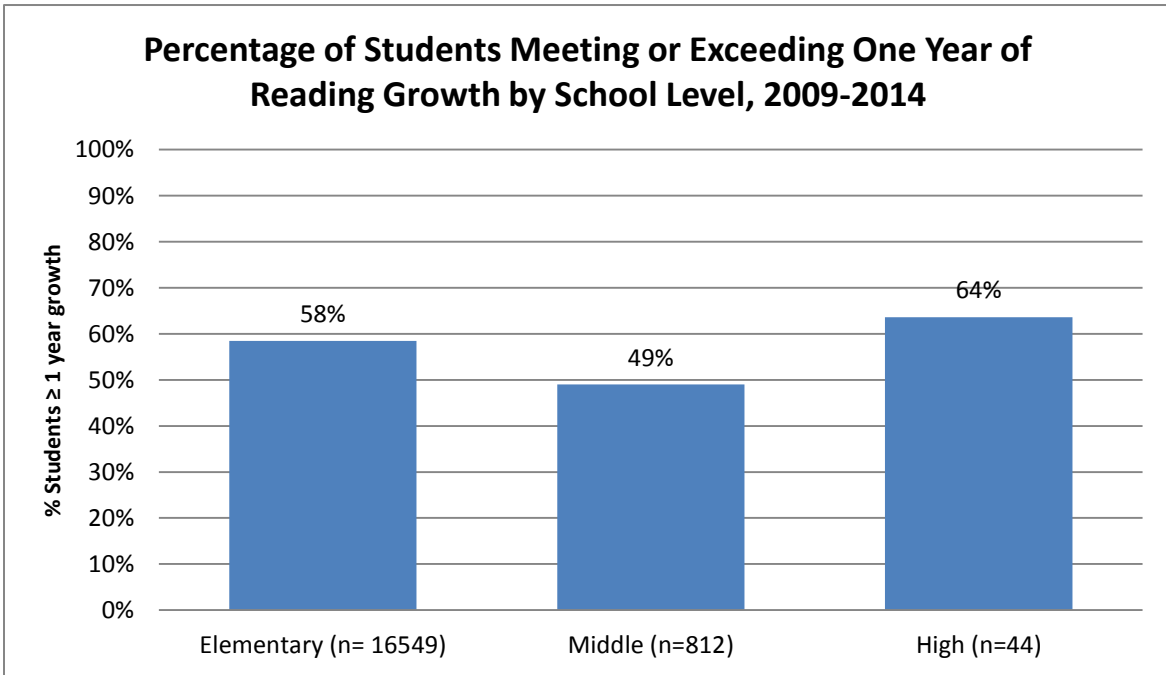


Figure 2. Percentage of students meeting or exceeding one year of reading growth by school level, 2009 - 2014

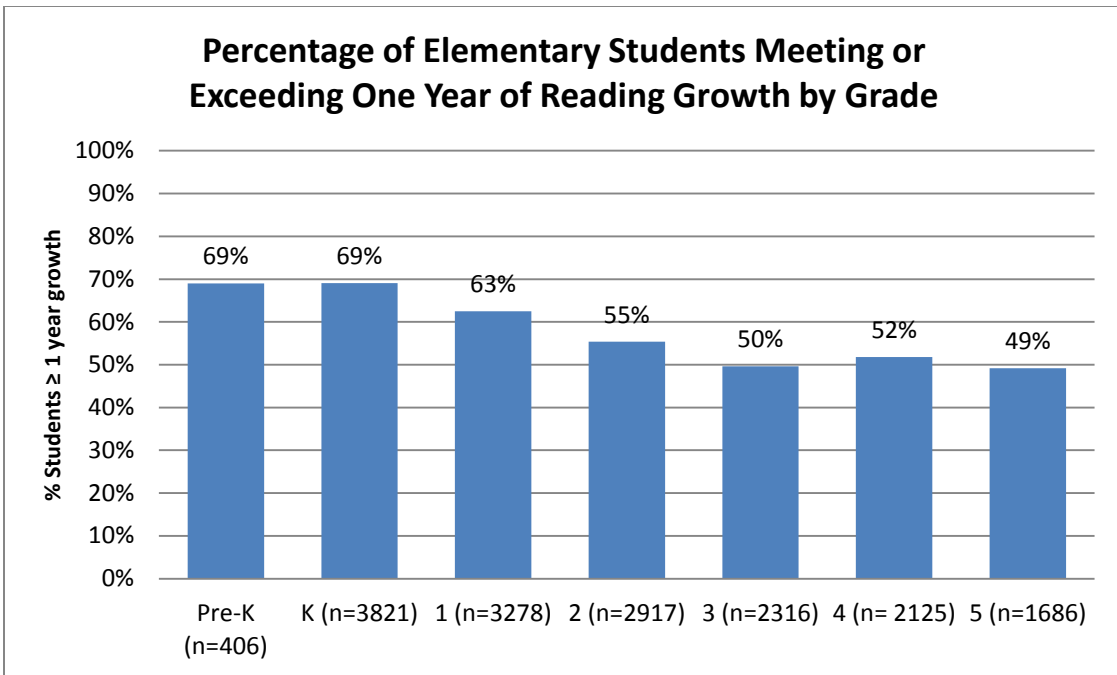


Figure 3. Percentage of elementary students meeting or exceeding one year of reading growth by grade level

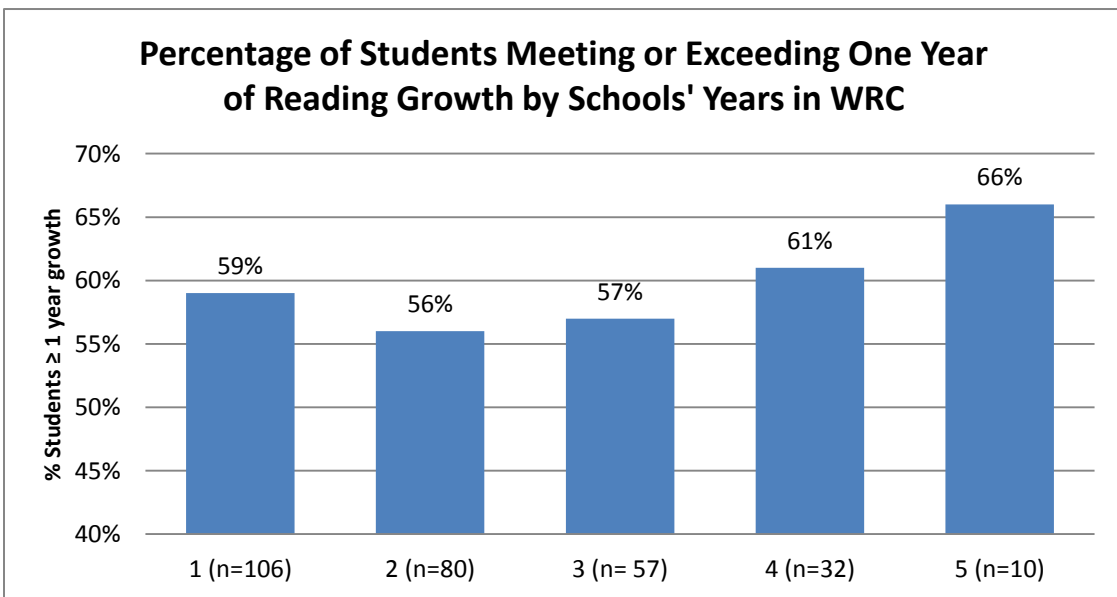


Figure 4. Percentage of students meeting or exceeding one year of reading growth by schools' number of years in WRC.

We used a Generalized Linear Mixed Model (GLMM) to examine changes in the proportion of students who made one year of progress. The model included fixed effects for school-level demographic variables, program variables (i.e., grade, instructional minutes, days, and group size), and trend variables (both linear and quadratic). We centered the trend variables at 2010. The

model also contained a random intercept for schools to control for between-school differences in reading achievement at the baseline of the study.

Table 3 shows the fixed effects estimates for all the predictors in the model. We first focused on the demographic variables. We found several small but statistically significant relationships between school-level demographic variables and reading improvement. We found that school racial composition was related to reading progress. Students enrolled at schools with a higher percentage of non-White students were less likely to make one year of reading progress. Each one-unit increase in the percentage of non-White students was associated with a 3% reduction in the odds of making reading progress. Similarly, the percentage of transitional-bilingual students in the school was also associated with the outcome. Each one-unit increase in the percentage of transitional-bilingual students enrolled at the school was associated with a 3% decrease in students' odds of achieving one year of reading growth. Average teacher experience was also negatively associated with reading progress. Students enrolled at schools with more experienced teachers were slightly less likely to make one year of reading progress. Each one-unit increase in average teacher experience was associated with a 10% decrease in the odds of making one year of reading progress.

We next focused on the program variables. We did not find a relationship between the number of years in the program and students' odds of making one year of reading progress. We found a negative relationship between grade and reading achievement. More specifically, students in lower grades had higher odds of making one year of growth than students in higher grades. Each one-grade increase was associated with a 20% decrease in the odds of making one year of reading growth. We also found a significant relationship between group size and improvement. Each additional student in a group was associated with a 2% increase in the odds of making one year of reading growth.

Lastly, we examined the trend variables. Overall, we found that the percentage of students making reading progress increased over the four years we observed. However, the rate of improvement slowed during the last two years. More specifically, we found a positive and significant linear trend, indicating that the proportion of students making one year of progress increased from the 2009-2010 to the 2013-2014 school years. For each school year, the odds of reading growth increased by 59%. However, the significant quadratic trend shows that the upward trend changed over time. The negative sign of the quadratic trend indicates that the rate of increase slowed during the latter years of the program. In other words, growth slowed in the final during 2012-2013 and 2013-2014. There was an 8% decrease in the odds of making one year of reading progress in each of the last two years of WRC.



Table 3.
Generalized Linear Mixed Model for Gains in Reading Achievement.

Variable	B	SE	Exp (B)	1 /Exp(B)	95% C.I.	z	Pr (> z)
Intercept, π_0	-0.20	1.31	0.82	1.22	-2.76,2.36	-0.15	0.88
Total Enrollment, π_1	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.00,0.00	-0.31	0.76
Percent Non-White, π_2	0.03	0.01	1.03	0.97	0.01,0.04	3.99	<.001
Percent Male, π_3	0.03	0.02	1.03	0.97	-0.01,0.07	1.27	0.20
Percent Transitional Bilingual, π_4	-0.03	0.01	0.97	1.03	-0.04,-0.01	-3.90	<.001
Percent Special Education, π_5	0.02	0.01	1.02	0.98	0.00,0.04	1.65	0.10
Percent FRL, π_6	0.00	0.01	1.00	1.00	-0.01,0.01	-0.46	0.65
Student-Teacher Ratio, π_7	-0.04	0.03	0.96	1.04	-0.09,0.01	-1.53	0.13
Avg. Teacher Experience, π_8	-0.10	0.03	0.90	1.11	-0.17,-0.04	-3.17	0.00
Percent Teachers with M.A., π_9	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	-0.01,0.01	0.27	0.79
Years in WRC, π_{10}	0.16	0.14	1.18	0.85	-0.11,0.44	1.15	0.25
Grade, π_{11}	-0.20	0.01	0.82	1.22	-0.22,-0.18	-17.24	<.001
Instructional Minutes, π_{12}	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	-0.01,0.00	-3.68	<.001
Days, π_{13}	-0.07	0.02	0.94	1.07	-0.11,-0.03	-3.30	<.001
Group Size, π_{14}	0.02	0.00	1.02	0.98	0.01,0.03	5.00	<.001
Year, π_{15}	0.46	0.07	1.59	0.63	0.33,0.60	6.65	<.001
Year ² , π_{16}	-0.08	0.02	0.92	1.08	-0.12,-0.05	-4.55	<.001

Evaluation Question #4: To what extent do student scores differ between those served by the WRC and those not served by the WRC?

Next, we examined the development of reading achievement at the WRC schools in the context of the development for a group of demographically similar schools and the state average. Figure 4 shows the percentage of students passing the MSP reading examination for 2009-2014. We assembled the comparison group using genetic matching (Sekhon, 2011) as implemented in the R module MatchIt (Ho, Imai, King, & Stuart, 2011). The procedure “use[s] a genetic search algorithm to find a set of weights for each covariate such that a version of optimal balance is achieved after matching” (Ho et al., 2011, p. 12). In other words, genetic matching uses all variables to assemble a control group from the larger population.

In the present case, we used OSPI school demographic data to find matches for 143 WRC schools among 1989 comparison schools from throughout Washington. The matching variables included total enrollment, racial composition, percentage of transitional bilingual students, percentage of Special Education students, percentage of students on free/reduced price lunch, and membership on the state’s priority or focus lists. Appendix B contains the balance information for the 143 WRC and the 113 comparison schools, before and after matching. After examining the mean differences

on the matching variables and the propensity scores for both groups of schools, we determined that the covariate balance was sufficient for further analysis.

Figure 5 shows the MSP reading achievement from 2010-2014 in the State of Washington, at WRC schools, and at the comparison schools. Average reading achievement increased for schools in Washington during this period. The state average increased slightly from a low of 68% in 2010 to a high of 73% during 2014. Similarly, the rate at WRC schools rose from 63% in 2010 to 66% in 2013 before falling to 64% in 2014. The rate at the comparison schools rose from 64% in 2010 to 66% in 2014.

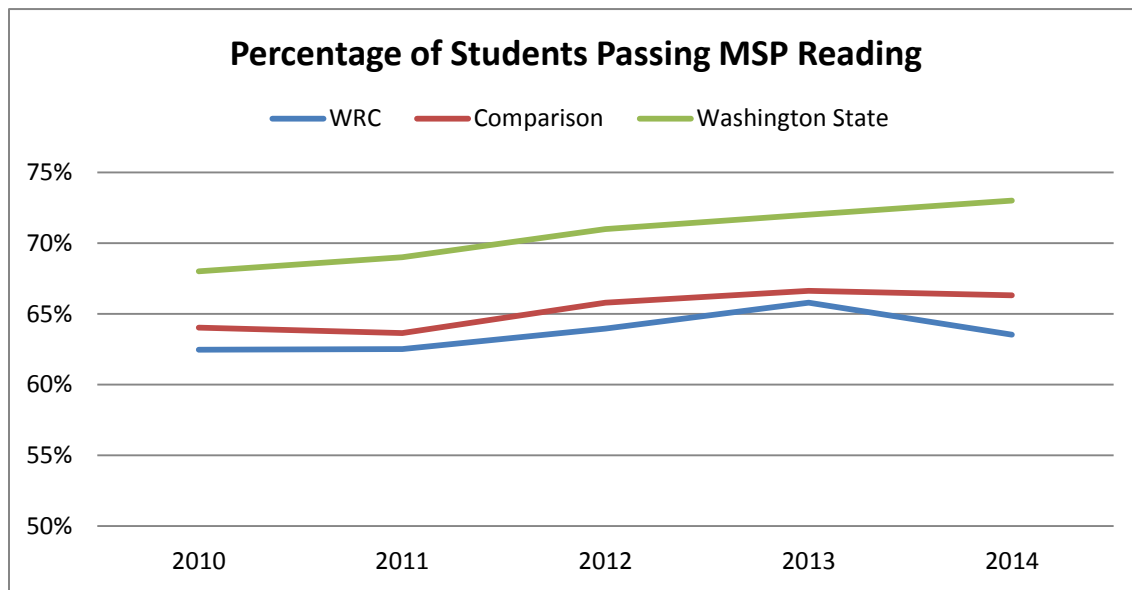


Figure 5. Percentage of Students Passing MSP Reading

We used a Linear Mixed Model to examine the trajectory of reading achievement at WRC and comparison schools. The model included fixed effects for participation in the WRC and a linear trend variable. The model also included a treatment by trend interaction terms to determine whether growth differed between WRC and comparison schools. The linear trend was centered at 2010. The model also contained a random intercept for schools. The results are summarized in Table 5.

The coefficient for treatment was non-significant, indicating that there was no significant difference in reading achievement between the WRC and comparison schools during the 2010 school year. The significant linear trend indicates that reading scores increased at both treatment and control schools over time. The non-significant interaction term indicates that reading scores at treatment and control groups grew at a similar rate in both groups of schools.



Table 5.
Linear Mixed Model for MSP Reading Scores.

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Pr(> t)</i>
(Intercept), π_0	0.66	0.01	303.50	53.01	<.001
Propensity Score, π_1	-0.16	0.03	255.10	-4.90	<.001
Treatment, π_2	0.00	0.02	299.60	-0.30	0.77
Year, π_3	0.01	0.00	947.50	2.29	0.02
Year x Treatment, γ_{31}	0.00	0.00	950.00	1.23	0.22
Year ² , π_4	0.00	0.00	949.10	-0.76	0.45

Promising Practices

Evaluation Question #5: What promising practices can be identified in WRC program design and implementation?

During interviews, WRC members and site supervisors identified a few practices that helped the members carry out their service better and have a greater impact in the sites. Academic data did not reveal any program differences between high and low-performing WRC sites. Rather, these results are based on data related to WRC member satisfaction and their own assessments of their effectiveness.

Attend Teacher and/or Paraeducator Training

As noted above, many WRC members struggled with the relevancy of the SERVES training to their daily work as literacy tutors. According to survey results, people were more likely to rate their service as “Excellent” or “Good” if they also agreed that they were prepared for their service. While some members expressed frustration with the timing and relevancy of the WRC training, many schools supplemented SERVES training by allowing the members to attend teacher and paraeducator training throughout the year. For example, they can work with teachers during staff professional development. As one member described, “At the school during the staff professional development, I work with teachers. They are ready and willing to have me there. I’ve learned the most from that.” Another said, “[We] got to go to professional development. It was very informative. [We] were able to collaborate, have older grades talk to younger.” Other WRC members explained they are included in training for para-educators. One site supervisor explained how they integrated their WRC member into the building:

Having them go to Language Literacy Intervention training was really helpful. It gave them background on how to teach reading. [I am] having them work with the ELL (English Language Learner) teacher because she is highly skilled. [I had] them go into classrooms in the beginning before they started working with kids to see different teaching styles and behavior management... From the get go, they were a part of all staff meetings.

A survey respondent that rated the service as “Excellent” said, “I worked at a great school that taught me how to improve my abilities with students.” Another commented, “Excellent site, collaborative relationship with staff, positive attitude, great leadership on site.”

Teacher Support/Mentorship

Although sites did not specify a staff member to be a mentor to the WRC member, many of the members described staff members who supported them, helped integrate them into the building, and provided coaching on how to do their jobs more effectively. For example, one member said, “The school has helped me by pairing me with...a reading teacher who is more of an expert. I talked with them about how to run a reading group and questions to ask kids.” Other members explained how they compensated for a lack of relevant training by relying on teachers for training. One said, “I wasn’t ever given explicit instructions on the programs and materials here so I work really closely with the instructional coach.” One member specifically attributed their success with students to being able to work with a mentor, saying, “We work very close with the mastery teacher in intervention, which also accounts for the success of our students.”

Other members described a generally supportive atmosphere in the building. Rather than relying on one or two teachers for help, members could ask any teacher. One WRC member said, “I find the Title 1 room and the teacher are very helpful on giving me techniques on how to reach students and make what I’m doing better.” Another member discussed the strong communication at the site as a large boon to the work. The member shared, “The communication is great. If I have a question, I will send an email out and I will get a response in minutes.”

Survey responses show teacher support was a reason many WRC members rated their service highly. One respondent commented, “I had amazingly supportive supervisors at my school site, a co-member who complimented my work style, and lots of trainings held by the school district that I was allowed to attend for professional development.” Another said, “Everyone was helpful and I got a lot done.”

One on One Work with Students

WRC members, although not disparaging of group work, discussed how much more effective working with students individually is. One said, “The more personalized attention really encourages growth.” By working one-on-one with students, members are able to address individual needs and encourage students who are not necessarily comfortable reading in front of their peers. For example, one member described their service, “I do a lot of very individualized learning things for specific students and trying to meet their needs. When I’m working more one-on-one, it’s more differentiated and specifically directed towards their needs.” Another said:

What I like best is the fact that it is helping the kids. I love to be able to be there to help them achieve their goal of reading, whether it is for that week. The long-term goal is to have them go back into the classroom and be confident enough to be with their class.

The WRC members also described the impact this had on students. For example, one member said:



Teachers have seen the growth after one on one tutoring takes place [and are] much more willing to let us take a student aside for 30 minutes. In three weeks, we can get the growth needed and pave way for more solid intervention team.

Although it may be difficult with individual placement, it is clear members believe that one-on-one tutoring model is more effective. However, the data did show that students made more progress when they were in groups. Thus, this differs from members' reports. The reason for this difference should be further explored.

Literacy Programs

Many members discussed specific programs they had put in place that they believed were having a strong effect on student literacy. While there is not specific data on how these programs may improve literacy, anecdotal evidence suggests it improves student confidence and fluency in reading, and helps increase family involvement.

Several members created book bags they can send home with students. They encourage the students to read with their parents, but when that is not available, they have them read to anybody, including family pets and siblings. One member who had implemented this type of program shared:

I've noticed the kids pick up on things faster and seem more interested in things. The kids have been picking up things faster and it also increases parent involvement. The parents actually like it. The kids get excited and the parents are more involved, which is an important aspect of WRC and AmeriCorps, and it's become important to me as well.

Another member joined the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) to use that as a venue for recruiting and planning events. The member has also worked with the PTO on ways to increase parent membership and has had some success. Other WRC members recruit volunteers from the middle school and high school, or a university if one is nearby.

WRC Comparison Group Promising Practices

In addition to comparing achievement scores between WRC sites and non-WRC sites, evaluators conducted interviews with a sample of non-WRC sites to identify whether any differences were apparent among low and high growth sites. Non-WRC interviewees revealed several promising practices for WRC sites to consider, which are similar to the promising practices described above among WRC members. Specifically, non-WRC site interviewees from low-growth schools indicated that an overall increase in support to schools would greatly benefit their literacy efforts. Interviewees stated a need for support to train teachers, provide more personnel in classrooms, identify/purchase literacy materials aligned with the CCSS, and provide collaboration time among staff. One commented, "I would like some time paid for staff to get together to plan together and observe each other's lessons." Finally, another interviewee commented on the support needed within their school:

We need to have teacher buy-in. Training that is systematic and consistent. Books on their level that are engaging, exciting, and get them to want to read. Teacher buy-in and training will lead to positive benefits. Those two things need to be in place though.

Evaluators noted the presence of para-educator/teacher training, multiple personnel in classrooms to provide student support, relevant literacy materials, and frequent and consistent collaboration time among all staff as common practices within the high-growth non-WRC schools. Additionally, high-growth non-WRC interviewees identified the collection and frequent review of student assessments and dedicated Response to Intervention time, typically using a push-in model, as key practices in their literacy programs.

Finally, a push-in versus a pullout model was a common practice among the high growth non-WRC schools. However, according to the survey, only 27.9% of WRC members reported their school uses a push-in model of support. As noted above, members felt that the pullout model takes time away from other academic subjects and is not as effective.

A push-in model has the support staff or paraeducator enter the general education classroom and work with students during their regular lessons. They typically provide individual support for students.. Some criticisms of this model include having extra support staff being intrusive and the lack of time to coordinate lesson plans. The support staff often go in not knowing the specifics of the lesson and have to jump in blindly. The pullout model has the student or groups of students leave their general education classrooms and work with the support staff or paraeducator in a separate setting. This allows the support staff to design a specific lesson plan to meet the needs of the students. However, educators criticize this model for making students miss class time in their general education classrooms.

Sustainability

Evaluation Question #6: To what extent are the changes sustainable?

Sustainability has two components: WRC member retention and program sustainability at the school level. The following section addresses both of these areas.

Program Sustainability

With changes in funding and the reduction in the number of sites and service members, being able to sustain programs is a key issue for all stakeholders. As one program leader stated:

At this point, I don't see that we have any sustainability piece in place, we have done a good job, educating the sites about sustainability by recruiting volunteers, or even just educating the staff about what they are doing, members are supposed to put together sustainability binders.

The WRC program leaders are concerned with the sites being able to sustain elements of the WRC literacy program without having a service member present. One component is volunteer recruitment. Site supervisors described WRC members as being paramount to effective recruitment and utilization of outside volunteers. One said, "They [WRC members] have helped to implement peer tutoring: community and WWU students to come in and help. They help with scheduling and knowing where the spots are and match [volunteers] with students..."



Other site supervisors commented that parent and community volunteers are not an adequate substitute for WRC members. A site supervisor explained, “You can use parent volunteers and others, but they’re not as consistent. Parent can’t come some weeks. This is every day. That continuity is so valuable. They see the same kids four days a week.”

Site supervisors believed that maintaining the WRC members was essential. One even went so far as to say:

I will do bake sales. The teachers will do bake sales, honestly. It’s the number one priority out of our building budget. [Teachers] have given up other things and don’t ask for anything because they know that [keeping the WRC member] is a high priority.

AmeriCorps Member Retention

As one site supervisor said, “Having a consistent person is key to establishing connections with students and having a lasting impact on literacy.” Therefore, it is essential that WRC adopt strategies to retain members for more than one year. Although there are different incentives, member comments made it clear that support, both at the site and from WRC staff, is paramount in retaining members. One member explained why she is not continuing her service, saying:

I can’t give 28 students 20 minutes of one-on-one time, it’s just not possible, but they are telling me to do it anyhow. It is a real struggle. This will be my last year. I would not recommend for anyone to do WRC at this level.

Survey responses show that, of the members who answered “No” to repeating their service, most commented that not being eligible for the education grant beyond a second year was their deciding factor. Those who said they would repeat another year identified the chance to learn, to grow personally, and to work with students as strong factors.

Conclusions

The WRC is a program in flux this year. The loss of federal grant funding has required program leaders to make major cuts to membership and sites. In addition, the change from team to individual placement has required WRC members and sites to adapt. In some cases, members have to choose only the neediest students. Other have adapted by stretching themselves, working with small groups, or finding other means to reach students. WRC members also noted that the changes have made volunteer recruitment and family engagement more difficult.

However, it is also clear that the WRC is a popular program at the sites. Although new sites often struggle with how to best utilize the members initially, veteran sites find the WRC members to be an invaluable resource that cannot be replaced by parent or other volunteers. Program leaders have been responsive to needs, and they have been intentional in planning for effective implementation in future years.

To prepare for the new three-year federal grant WRC program implementation, project leaders have identified many changes that will take place to accommodate program capacity, fidelity of implementation, and target member retention. These changes include:

- Continue individual placement model allowing WRC sites to identify and select members based on best organizational fit
- Hire three WRC case managers (two staff to focus on member case management, one staff to focus on program data management)
- Utilize OSPI regional literacy coordinators located at each ESD
- Conduct periodic WRC site visits by project leaders and WRC staff
- Identify an AmeriCorps leader (to focus on member support, coordinate and facilitate regional member functions)
- Provide three days of WRC focused member training with periodic webinars
- Create awareness of WRC within communities through marketing strategies including member uniforms, signage, and informational documents

In addition, it will be helpful to address some of the barriers. Below are recommendations to help sites support their WRC members and improve retention. The recommendations for both the 2013-2014 evaluation report and 2009-2013 data report are included. It is notable that program leaders have already begun implementation of many of the recommendations at the delivery of this report.

Recommendations

Provide Frequent Opportunities for Member Collaboration

With the transition to the individual placement model, many returning members identified a decrease in sense of community and collaboration among fellow WRC members. Members attribute the decrease in collaboration to fewer members stationed per site and training provided during a one-week session at the beginning of the service term. Members would like the opportunity to collaborate frequently through structured events to develop relationships and reflect on their shared experiences. One member commented, “I would have more meetings with other members at the preschool level. I met them at SERVES, but that was only at the beginning of the year. [Provide a] chance to share ideas.” A site supervisor provided a similar statement regarding the need for collaboration. “It’s important that WRC members from other schools get together and share what is going on in their building. [There] might be something they are doing that is working that can be duplicated in another building.” Project leaders also identified support among members as an area of need and plan to identify an AmeriCorps leader to plan and implement WRC member collaboration opportunities. We recommend WRC leaders provide regular opportunities for members to share ideas and discuss their work. Although the opportunity to meet in person is popular among members, webinars, email listservs, and other online methods are both cost-effective and meet the goals of collaboration.



Develop a Mentoring Model among WRC Sites

In addition to increasing the opportunity for members to collaborate and increase their sense of community, we recommend WRC site supervisors and relevant staff personnel collaborate to share promising practices within WRC sites and trouble shoot their problems. This is particularly important for new WRC site supervisors and relevant staff personnel to have the support and background knowledge gained from established WRC sites. One site supervisor stated, “The newer schools need a lot more support to show what has worked. The program might want to start mentoring relationships with schools that have had it longer. Talk about what has worked with their program.” Additionally, project leaders stated they have developed a best practices research report. We recommend sharing this literature and the promising practices identified within this report among WRC site supervisors and members, while encouraging sites to mentor one another through periodic site supervisor meetings.

Review Time Schedule of Member Service Term

Lack of preparation at the beginning of the service term was a common area of concern among new members. While returning members have the benefit of serving for an entire school year, new members have very little prep time before going into a site and do not receive formal WRC training until school is already in session. Members with minimal prior experience in education were particularly challenged by this program time structure. One site supervisor commented on the difficulty of transitioning members into their site last year due to the time schedule:

The timing of this particular program in September can be a real challenge. The [WRC site] is just starting their program and the school is also starting. All of the sudden there is a Reading Corps member who does not know what they are doing. Having summer being a transition time would be good. It’s always a challenge. It’s January before they know what they are supposed to be doing and feeling comfortable. It is a hard time to start all the different things at the same time.

Another site supervisor commented:

It would be great to have the Reading Corps there prior to school as we are working on things as a staff. So the program is seen as an integral part of the school. The more training we can offer to the Reading Corps person the more benefit we will see.

We recommend project leaders review the WRC member time schedule to identify ways to increase member preparation at WRC sites prior to their service with students. Below are recommendations to prepare WRC members for service:

- Provide formal WRC training before members provide student tutoring.
- Provide time for WRC members to spend with site staff to acclimate to the environment and become familiar with literacy materials before student tutoring begins.

Previous Recommendations

Ensure Valid and Reliable Data Collection at Each Site

During the past school year, program administrators have refined the student tracking log and provided detailed instructions to help personnel through the data collection process. We encourage program administrators to think about more ways to assist personnel to collect valid and reliable data. Administrators should review each data file and communicate about any inconsistency or missing data with site personnel.

Develop More Long-Term Relationships with Sites

Our analysis demonstrated that sites that participated in the program for more years made more progress in reading achievement. We recommend that the program focus its energies on developing deeper relationships with a core group of sites. We believe that fostering these relationships would lead to better coordination between site personnel and local schools. For example, site coordinators would work with the same school teachers and administrators for a period of years and would have increased familiarity with the local curriculum and instructional goals.

Collect Cohort Data

Program administrators should work to secure data agreements for more comprehensive data collection. More specifically, standardized testing data from before and after the intervention would provide a clearer picture of the effectiveness of the program. For example, if a student participated in the program during 4th grade, the dataset would ideally include her MSP reading scores from grades 3 - 5. This data would allow program administrators to demonstrate the gains associated with the program and to assess any potential long term effects of participation.

Study Successful WRC Program Sites as Well as Comparison Schools

The present student tracking log provides only a few pieces of information about each program, including the number of days per week of tutoring, the length of each tutoring session, and the size of the tutoring group. However, the effectiveness of the program at a particular site might hinge on other considerations, including the quality of the training the WRC members receive and the degree to which members and teachers are able to collaborate. We recommend that the program initiate research into successful WRC program sites to develop promising practices recommendations to guide program design. We also recommend that administrators study demographically similar comparison schools to assess the scope of their interventions.

Appendix A – Survey Results

How many months have you served as a WRC member?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 1	0.0%	0
1-3	0.0%	0
4-6	2.3%	1
7-9	41.9%	18
10-12	11.6%	5
12-14	2.3%	1
15+	41.9%	18

Please identify which grade level(s) you worked with (select all that apply).		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Preschool	18.6%	8
Kindergarten	76.7%	33
1	79.1%	34
2	74.4%	32
3	76.7%	33
4	65.1%	28
5	67.4%	29
6	30.2%	13

How many WRC members were at your site?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1	55.8%	24
2	37.2%	16
3	0.0%	0
4	0.0%	0
5	7.0%	3
6+	0.0%	0

Did you relocate from out of state to become a WRC member?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	14.0%	6
No	86.0%	37

Why did you choose to become a WRC member (select all that apply)?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Interest in student education	77.5%	31
Previous experience in education	45.0%	18
Anticipate a future job in education	65.0%	26
Other? (please specify)		6

Please indicate which literacy supports were provided at your WRC site (select all that apply):		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Response to Intervention (RTI) program	37.2%	16
Inclusion Model (Push in)	27.9%	12
English Language Learner (ELL) program	62.8%	27
Student tutoring	81.4%	35
Extended Learning Opportunity programs	18.6%	8
Family/Community Literacy Nights	88.4%	38
Accelerated Reader program	34.9%	15
Title I program	58.1%	25
Learning Assistance Program (LAP)	23.3%	10
Reading/literacy coach	60.5%	26
Staff professional development	44.2%	19
Student Book club/Homework club	39.5%	17
Common Core aligned Reading Curriculum	48.8%	21
Classroom support (i.e., Community volunteers, Paraeducators, Instructional assistants)	83.7%	36
No additional supports	0.0%	0
Other? (please specify)		0

If you had the opportunity to serve another term as a WRC member, would you?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	67.4%	29
No	32.6%	14
Why?(please specify)		37



How would you rate your member experience with the WRC program?							
Answer Options	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent	Rating Average	Response Count
	2	1	8	16	16	4.00	43
Why? (please specify)							34

Please rate the following statements:						
Answer Options	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Rating Average	Response Count
I was welcomed at my WRC site.	1	1	11	30	3.63	43
I was a good fit for my WRC site.	0	1	14	28	3.63	43
I received public recognition at my WRC site.	4	5	21	13	3.00	43
I was involved in decisions that affected my service.	3	4	18	18	3.19	43
I communicated regularly with my WRC site supervisor.	3	6	7	27	3.35	43
I received regular support from my WRC site supervisor or other staff member.	2	6	10	25	3.35	43
I communicated regularly with WRC site classroom instructors.	0	2	11	30	3.65	43
My service matched the WRC member service description.	3	4	16	20	3.23	43
I was prepared for my WRC member role.	1	7	19	15	3.14	42
My WRC site had sufficient resources to support my service.	2	5	14	22	3.30	43
My service made a difference.	0	0	17	25	3.60	42
My service was interesting.	0	0	12	30	3.71	42
My service was challenging.	0	4	13	25	3.50	42

APPENDIX B: COVARIATE BALANCE

Table 5.
Covariate balance for selected variables before matching.

Variable	Means Treated	Means Control	SD Control	Mean Diff	eQQ Med	eQQ Mean	eQQ Max
Distance	0.19	0.06	0.07	0.13	0.15	0.13	0.45
Intervention	0.13	0.07	0.26	0.06	0.00	0.06	1.00
Total Enrollment	400.02	488.79	378.11	-88.76	93.20	163.84	1536.60
Percent American Indian	2.62	2.53	7.94	0.09	0.11	0.76	32.70
Percent Asian/Pacific Islander	7.59	6.43	8.04	1.16	0.32	1.28	12.56
Percent Black	6.43	4.16	6.84	2.27	0.09	2.31	19.02
Percent Hispanic	26.47	17.93	19.22	8.54	7.13	8.80	19.38
Percent White	51.03	61.57	23.23	-10.54	10.68	10.47	21.32
Percent Male	51.79	51.20	7.29	0.59	0.39	2.14	37.65
Percent Transitional Bilingual	17.23	7.76	11.74	9.47	9.53	9.25	19.90
Percent SPED	15.76	14.24	12.55	1.52	2.11	3.42	58.95
Percent FRL	65.76	45.19	23.58	20.57	22.61	20.56	28.24



Table 6.
Covariate Balance for selected variables after matching.

Variable	Means Treated	Means Control	SD Control	Mean Diff	eQQ Med	eQQ Mean	eQQ Max
Distance	0.24	0.23	0.25	0.01	0.00	0.08	0.66
Intervention	0.13	0.13	0.34	0.00	0.00	0.01	1.00
Total Enrollment	404.35	409.38	120.41	-5.03	11.60	13.54	98.20
Percent American Indian	2.49	2.44	6.29	0.04	0.07	0.29	6.94
Percent Asian/Pacific Islander	6.87	7.10	8.96	-0.23	0.29	0.96	6.03
Percent Black	5.81	6.59	9.55	-0.78	0.14	0.58	4.34
Percent Hispanic	25.45	24.38	17.60	1.06	1.13	1.76	8.35
Percent White	53.57	52.65	23.98	0.92	2.22	3.14	11.76
Percent Male	51.95	51.69	2.11	0.26	0.21	0.38	2.25
Percent Transitional Bilingual	16.13	15.37	13.96	0.76	1.64	2.60	17.77
Percent SPED	15.29	15.26	3.93	0.03	0.42	0.51	6.43
Percent FRL	65.03	63.98	17.97	1.04	2.35	2.62	6.14

Table 7.
Percentage balance improvement.

Variable	Mean Diff.	eQQ Med	eQQ Mean	eQQ Max
Distance	96.78	100.00	53.80	0.00
Intervention	100.00	0.00	84.18	0.00
Total Enrollment	95.85	86.14	91.73	93.37
Percent American Indian	-116.65	55.13	55.68	79.89
Percent Asian/Pacific Islander	-11620.50	5.81	-45.77	47.31
Percent Black	48.72	-47.83	64.67	79.53
Percent Hispanic	85.51	83.93	76.84	44.31
Percent White	88.34	71.18	60.10	30.88
Percent Male	72.62	61.45	76.52	94.02
Percent Transitional Bilingual	90.34	77.82	65.95	-0.98
Percent SPED	98.78	81.58	81.18	69.88
Percent FRL	94.57	88.79	86.35	76.70

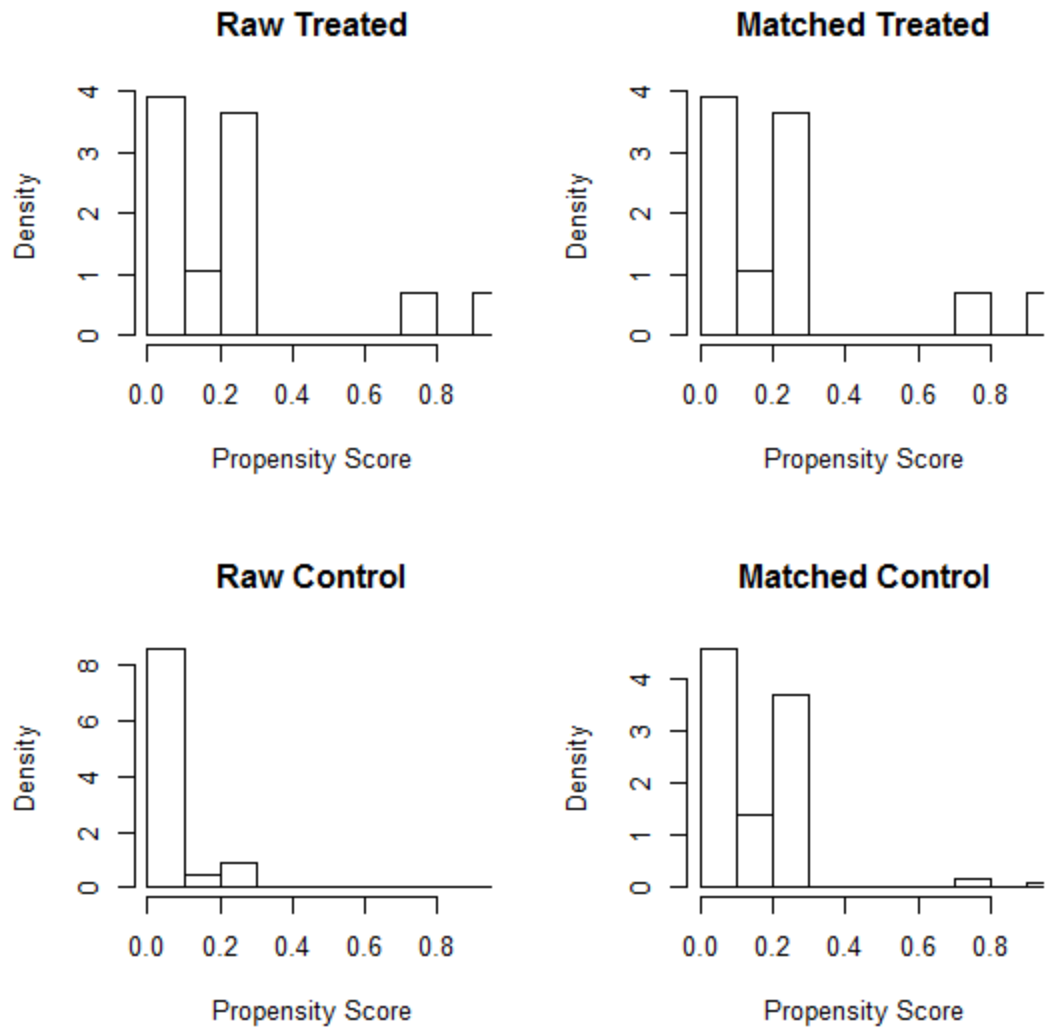


Figure 6. Propensity scores for treatment and control groups before and after matching.

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