Reading Outreach: One Tutoring Session at a Time

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Background

The Reading Outreach program was built around a community ask by Deep Creek Primary School (DCPS) to partner with The Island School to support young readers.

Based on successful reading programs in other locations, the Reading Outreach program buddied up with 8 students identified as struggling readers by DCPS. The selected readers worked with one Island School student weekly at the Open Learning Center (OLC) and Library Hour.

Throughout the semester, the Island School students tracked and analyzed their buddies' progress so the central question — "Is our help helpful?" — could be answered.

This project aims to improve the methods that joint Island School–DCPS reading programs use in the future, as well as to contribute to the limited body of knowledge on successful reading program implementation in the Bahamas.

The short-term goals of this project were to help the teachers at DCPS foster positive feelings toward reading and increase reading skills by reading in a more approachable peer setting.

Purpose

Figure 1.
An Island School student and a Research advisor reading with a student from the Open Learning Center, an after-school program.

The objective of this study was primarily to help the participants improve their reading skills through one-on-one tutoring sessions. Specific areas targeted were their reading levels, accuracy rates, error rates, and self-correction rates. By tracking these skills, the Reading Outreach team was able to gauge whether this model of reading support was effective.

Schedule

Figure 2.
An Island School student working with a student from the Open Learning Center, an after-school program.

On Mondays, Island School students worked with their DCPS buddies at the Open Learning Center (OLC), an hour-long after-school program at Deep Creek Middle School. The first 30 minutes were dedicated to homework while the last 30 minutes were dedicated to reading and skill-based games.

As part of the typical school day, DCPS has Library Hour every Wednesday. This program runs for two 30-minute sessions, which are split by age group. The work Island School students did with their buddies in each session included time for reading and playing skill-based games.

Figure 3.
An Island School student working with a student at Library Hour.

Forming Relationships

Figure 4.
Island School student hugging student from Deep Creek Primary School.

Part of what made this research unique was its focus on people. Tutors spent 22 total hours with the students, an average of 3.5 hours with each student. Island School students built strong relationships with their buddies, and these relationships were integral to motivating student reading and growth.

Methodology

Objective Data:
For an objective measure of how each student's reading skills were impacted from the tutoring sessions, each student took a pre- and post-test in the form of a running record. These running records measured accuracy rates (check mark), error rates (circled), self-correction rates (SC), teacher-assisted words (T), and reading levels.

Figure 5.
An example of the pre- and post-tests.

Subjective Data:
Subjective data was collected in observation-based field notes. Before and after each tutoring session, the Island School student took note of their buddy's focus, motivation, energy, attitude, confidence and independence. They rated these traits on a 5-point scale and recorded anecdotal evidence to support their ratings.


March 18th   **Motivation**

1   2   3   4   5

No desire to read, actively refuses

Excited to read, little to no prompting needed before or during reading

"At the beginning, it was difficult to find a book the child wanted to read, but after we found one, they were much more excited and only needed a little motivation from the tutor."

Figure 6.
An example of what the observation-based field notes contain.

Results
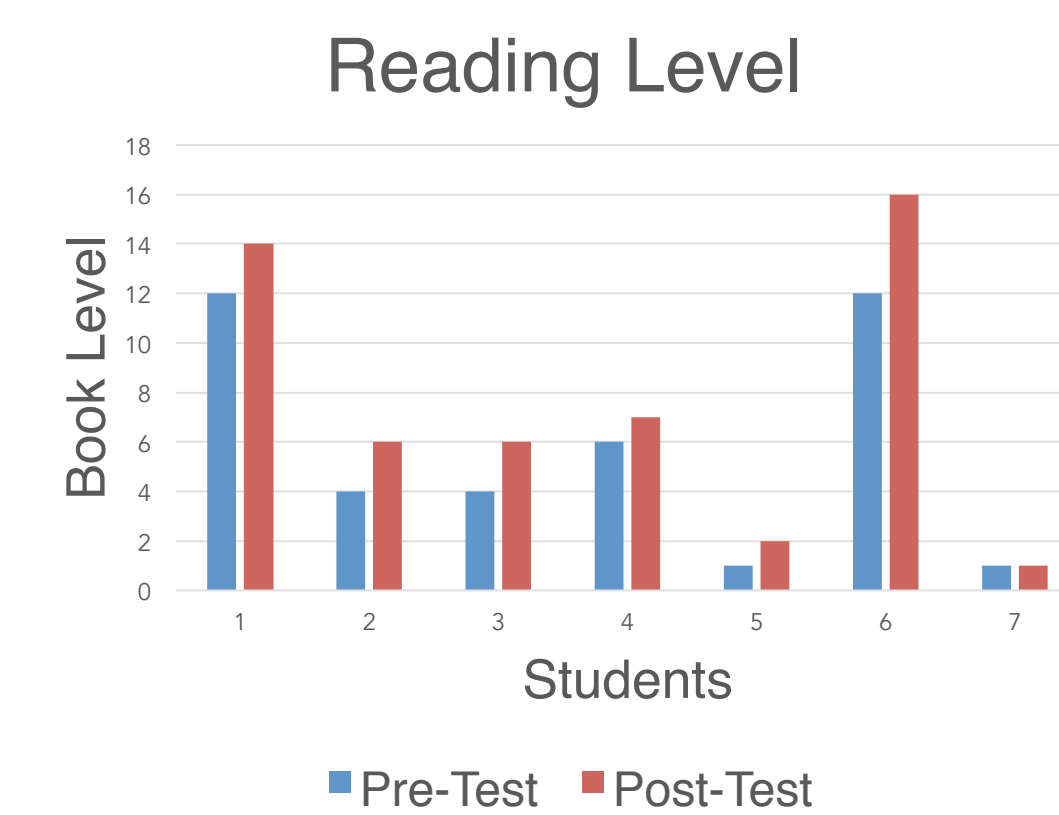
Reading Level

The students' reading levels increased an average of 1.7 levels from the pre-test to the post-test. Most notably, in 3 months, Student 6 increased 4 reading levels, which is the equivalent of 1.5 grades.

The error rates of each student decreased an average of 1.8% from their pre-test to their post-test, meaning that all of the students made fewer reading mistakes on their post-tests.

Error Rates
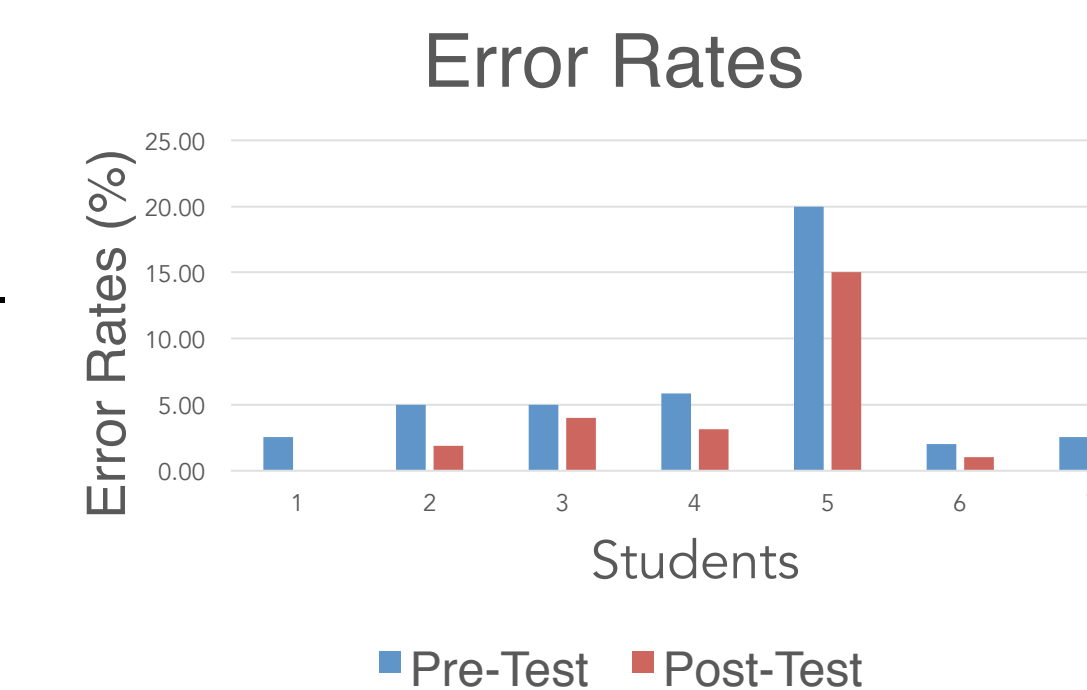

Accuracy Rates
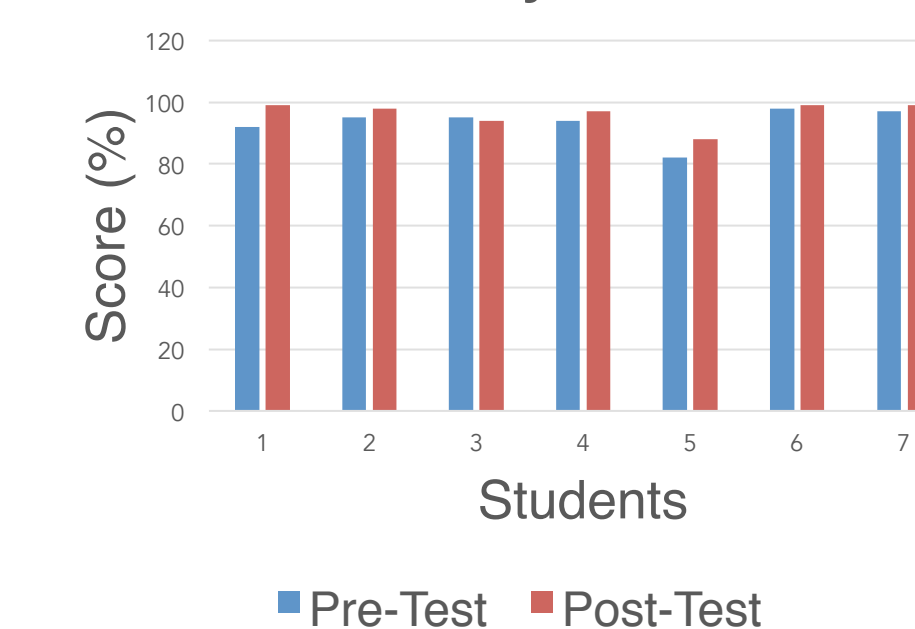
On average, students' accuracy increased by 3%. Almost every student started with a pre-test score above 90% and scored even higher on their post-test.

The independence of each student raised an average of 16% from their first tutoring session to the last one. This means that they student needed less tutor assistance when reading. The error bars are a result of the small data pool.

Student Independence
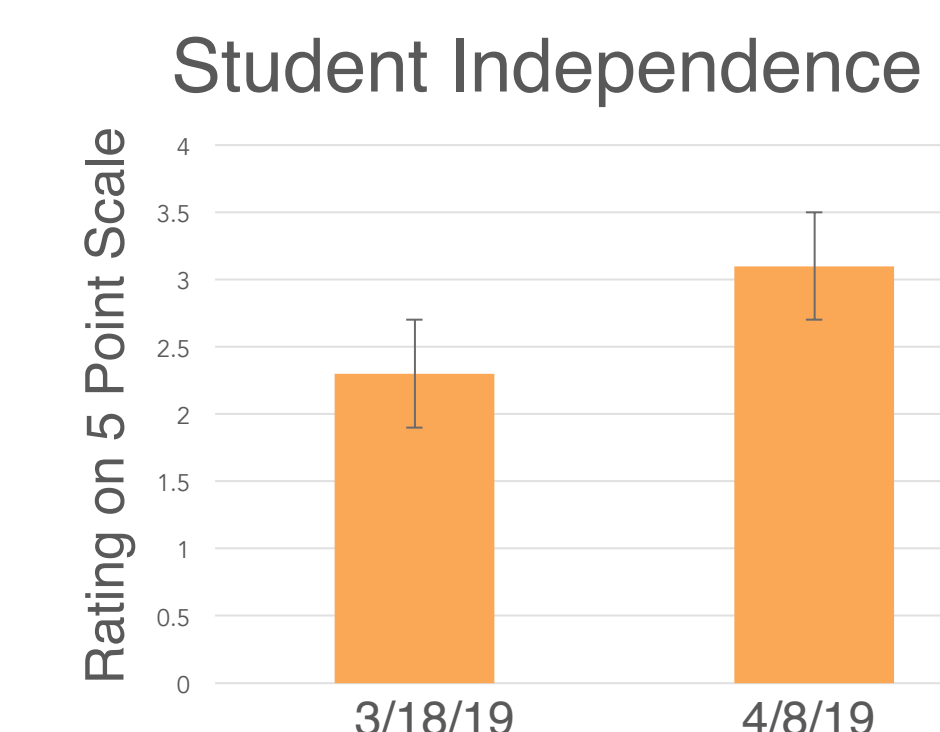
Student Motivation
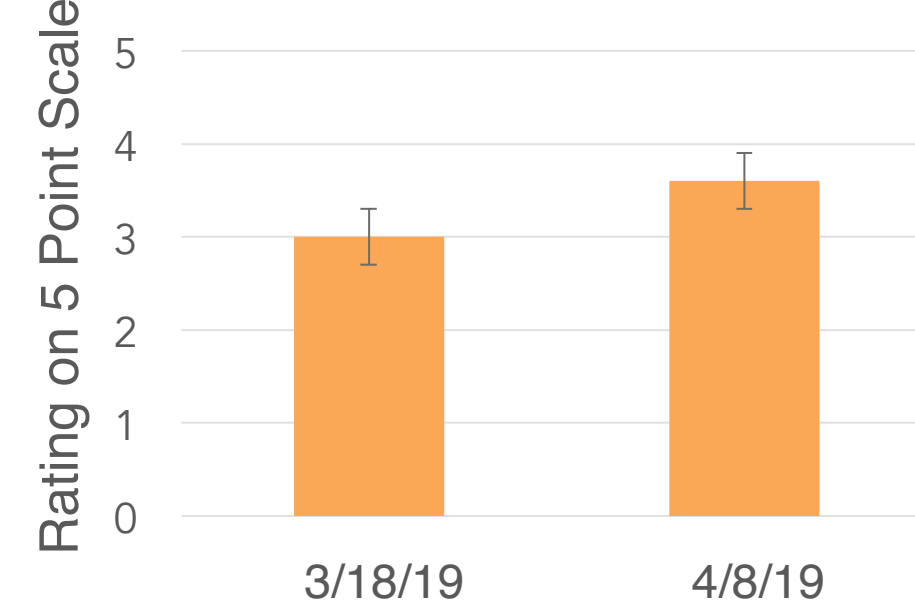
Student motivation increased by an average of 12%. Students were more eager to read in later tutoring sessions than they were in the beginning.

On average, there was a 10% increase in student focus. After three months, students were more likely to persevere through reading even when they were exposed to external distractions.
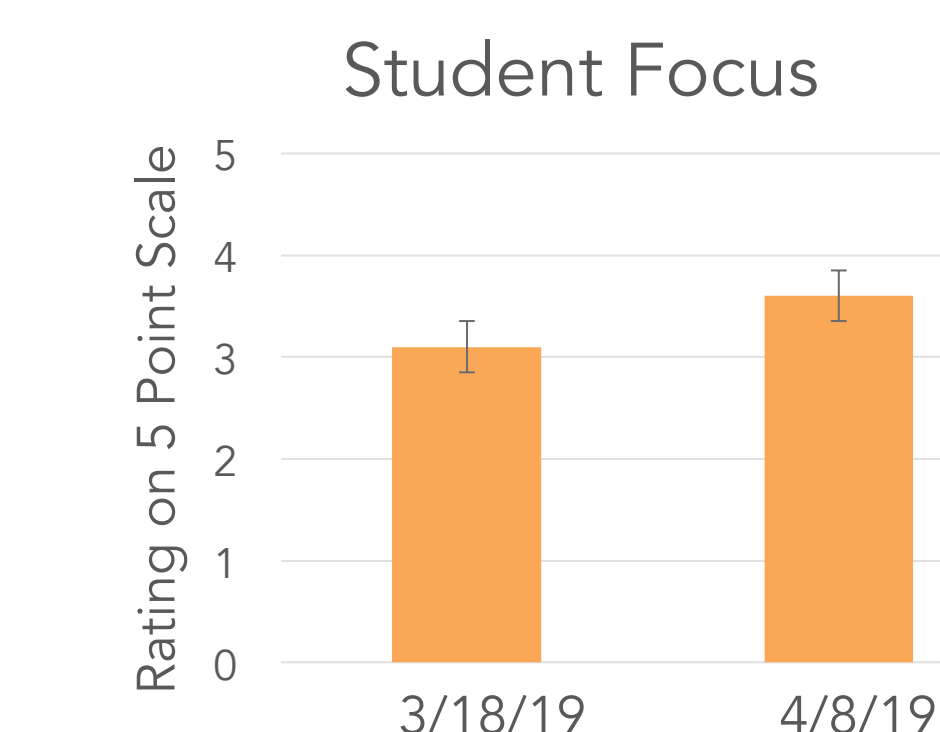
Student Focus

Discussion

Human Element:
Ample room for scientific error existed in this project due to humanistic and external variables. A student's mood could easily impact the subjective data collected. Focus, for example, might decrease based on distracting surroundings during a reading session.

Further Implications:
The Island School Reading Outreach team hopes to further inform future Island School service efforts with these results. The success of this individualized tutoring program will affect the format of reading programs in semesters to come.

Figure 7.
An Island School student reading with students during Library Hour.

Acknowledgements

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Background figures (left icons)

Community Ask for Reading Help

8 Struggling Readers Selected

Weekly Literacy Tutoring Sessions

Track Progress

Question: Was Our Help Helpful?

Improve our Methods