

HOBART  
AND  
WILLIAM SMITH  
COLLEGES

**Results of the 2008-2009 America Reads Evaluation Project**

***Why did we conduct this study?***

This project was completed by a junior psychology major (Stephanie Wells) and a faculty member in the psychology department (Dr. Julie Kingery) at Hobart and William Smith Colleges during the 2008-2009 school year. The purpose of this project was to examine changes in students' reading abilities and self-esteem across the school year. The project included 17 second and third grade students (9 females, 8 males) who were enrolled in the America Reads Program at North and West Street Elementary Schools. The students who participated represented 55% of the total number of students in America Reads at these two elementary schools.

Children who had permission from a parent or guardian to participate in this project completed a questionnaire regarding their self-esteem and feelings about their academic abilities. Parents provided information about the home literacy environment (e.g., how often they read with their child). Parents, teachers, and tutors completed a survey about their perceptions of children's reading abilities and self-esteem. Information was collected at the beginning and end of the school year.

***What were the main findings of this study?***

- Based on tutor and teacher evaluations, a significant improvement was seen in children's America Reads reading levels across the school year. According to tutor reports, the children improved an average of 6.7 levels. Based on the teacher reports, the children improved an average of 4.4 levels.
- At the end of the school year, 67% of tutors and 50% of parents said their student/child had improved either "somewhat" or "a lot" in their ability to sound out words. At the end of the school year, 22% of the tutors indicated that their student's attention span during reading activities had improved.
- At the end of the school year, the teachers of 65% of the students and 47% of the tutors rated students as being either "somewhat" or "a lot" more interested in reading.
- At the end of the school year, parents rated their children as being "better" or "much better" at reading since they began participating in the America Reads Program.

- At the beginning of the year, 65% of parents reported reading to their child either several times a week or daily. At the end of the year, 53% of parents reported reading to their child either several times a week or daily. However, fewer parent surveys were returned at the end of the year school year, which could have influenced the accuracy of these results.
- Based on a self-report questionnaire, students' self-esteem did not change significantly from the beginning to the end of the school year. However, at the end of the school year, 53% of the tutors and 47% of the parents reported feeling that their student's/child's self-esteem had improved.
- At the beginning and at the end of the school year, students' global self-esteem (i.e., overall how happy they are with themselves as a person) was significantly higher than their academic self-esteem (e.g., feelings about how long it takes them to finish their schoolwork, how well they do in school compared to other kids their age).
- Overall, parents reported a high level of satisfaction with the America Reads Program.

### ***What do these results mean?***

These results show that participation in the America Reads Program has a positive effect on children's reading ability, attention span, and general interest in reading. Although the students' global and academic self-esteem did not improve from the beginning to the end of the school year as we had expected, their self-esteem remained stable.

This study also found that over half of the parents reported reading to their children either several times a week or daily. It is encouraging that the skills children are learning in America Reads are being practiced with parents and other caregivers at home. Future research with a larger number of children involved in America Reads will help us to continue to understand the impact of this program on children's reading skills and well-being.

Overall, these findings help to show that one-on-one tutoring programs such as America Reads can be effective in helping elementary school children with reading difficulties.

We greatly appreciate the cooperation of the children, parents, teachers, and tutors who participated in this project. We are also grateful for the support of Katie Flowers (HWS Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning Office), Arlene McDermott (West Street Principal), and Nina McCarthy (North Street Principal). If you have questions about this project, please contact Dr. Julie Kingery via phone (315-781-3641) or e-mail ([kingery@hws.edu](mailto:kingery@hws.edu)).