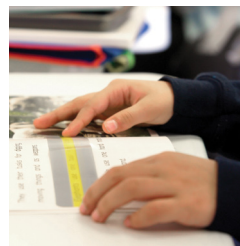




CELEBRATING **20** YEARS
of **Literacy
Success**



2022-2023 Highlights

Powered by
275
Volunteer
Tutors

16,880
one-to-one
tutoring
sessions

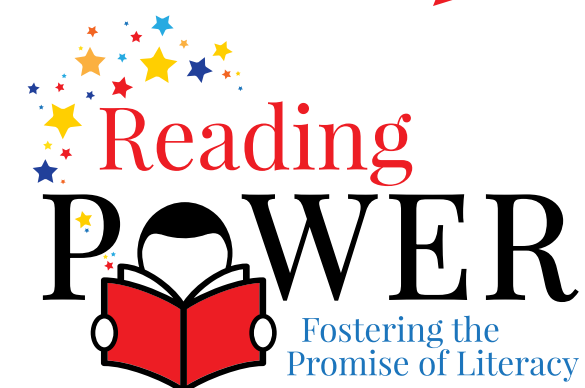
70%
of students
met grade level
expectations

436
tutored
students

Fostering the Promise of Literacy

Our mission is to accelerate children's literacy learning and develop their love for reading and writing

- One-to-one tutoring individualized daily
- Research-based cutting-edge curricula
- Led by reading professionals and powered by trained tutors



Letter from the CEO

DEAR READING POWER FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS,

Reading Power is at an important and exciting moment in our 20-year history. The organization is responding to the critical literacy needs of schools and young students, assessing and planning for significantly scaled impact across additional communities in need, and ensuring our sustainability for the future.

This annual report serves as a testament to the incredible strides that we have made over the last year in fulfilling our mission to foster the promise of literacy for children in Lake County, IL, and beyond. It highlights the programs, initiatives, and milestones we have reached, introduces our strategic roadmap for our future growth, and provides a transparent view of our financials, ensuring accountability and trust in managing the generous resources entrusted to us.

As we move forward, we remain committed to our vision of a world where every child has a strong literacy foundation to support lifelong learning. Barbara Bush said, “Improving literacy is the key to solving everything.” Literacy gives a person the ability to navigate the world with dignity. The ability to read, write, and comprehend is critical to taking control of our lives and advocating for ourselves, our

families, and our communities. When people aren’t equipped with those skills, they are left with limited options in life. The students and families we work with deserve a quality of life, and that depends on their ability to read, write, and comprehend. Low literacy is a national health crisis. It is up to each of us to help solve it.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to each and every one of you for being an integral part of our journey. Your unwavering support has transformed lives, and we look forward to continuing our partnership as we strive toward a brighter, more literate future for all.

Thank you for your dedication, passion, and belief in the power of literacy.

Lisa Bulzoni

Lisa Bulzoni, MEd
Chief Executive Officer

*“As we move forward,
we remain committed
to our vision of a world
where every child
has a strong literacy
foundation to support
lifelong learning.”*

LISA BULZONI, MEd
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Strategic Plan Overview

In the fall of 2022, Reading Power embarked on a year-long process to develop a cohesive and comprehensive three-year strategic plan.

This framework boldly envisions our next three years and serves as a road-map toward greater capacity, impact, and sustainability.

Our Mission

Our mission is to accelerate children’s literacy learning and to develop their love for reading and writing

Our Vision

We envision a world where all children have a strong literacy foundation to support lifelong learning

Our Values

At Reading Power, we believe in...

- Tutoring where the need is greatest
- Individualized, one-to-one learning
- Tutoring during the school day, in person
- High-quality tutoring programs informed by research, led by reading professionals, powered by trained volunteers
- The strong relationship between students and tutors being essential for academic and social-emotional growth
- Trained volunteer tutors being crucial to program success

Our Model of Delivery

Reading Power provides individualized, high-dosage, one-to-one tutoring in person during the school day for children in preschool through second grade. We do this by partnering with schools needing supplemental literacy support, where needs exceed resources.

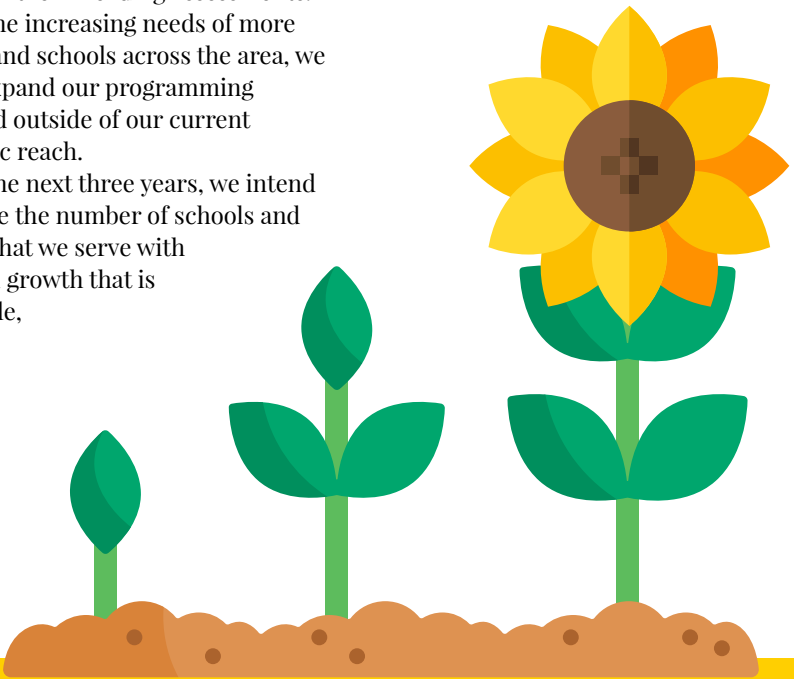


Purpose-led growth strategy for the next three years

Since 2003, Reading Power has provided one-to-one literacy tutoring to Lake County, IL students who score below the 25th percentile in reading assessments. To meet the increasing needs of more students and schools across the area, we need to expand our programming within and outside of our current geographic reach.

Over the next three years, we intend to increase the number of schools and students that we serve with calculated growth that is responsible,

feasible, and sustainable. Within Reading Power, we aim to further strengthen our programming, infrastructure, and leadership that solidify our foundation and enhance our impact.

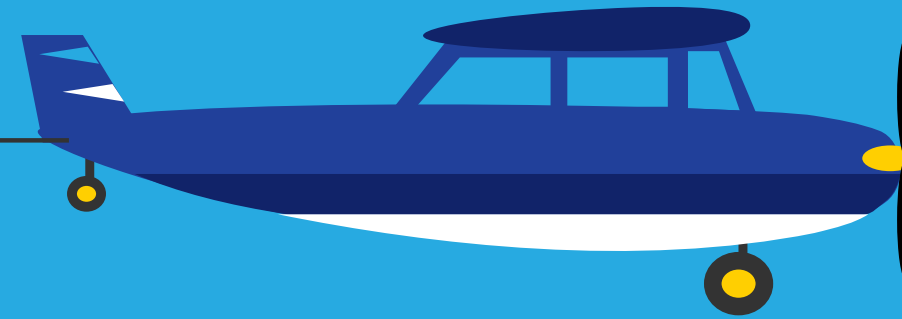


On average, almost 70% of 4th graders read below grade level, which is a major contributing factor to the 8,000 students dropping out of high school every day.
(READING IS FUNDAMENTAL, BASED ON NAEP SCORES)



2022-2023 Year in Review

Reading Power has achieved remarkable milestones in our 20th year, including expanding our reach to new communities, growing our tutor network, and enhancing our capabilities to ensure sustainable growth. With support from our partners and communities, Reading Power is charting a brighter future for all our students.



Cultivated meaningful relationships with like-minded organizations



2022-2023

Reading Power Accomplishments

Added Programs

- Bilingual preschool (North Chicago)
- New kindergarten program (Waukegan)
- Two new first and second grade programs (Waukegan)

Tutor Recruitment

- Doubled the number of volunteer tutors
- Created a Tutor Ambassador program
- Hosted over 20 tutor recruitment community events

Invested In Ourselves

- Relocated our headquarters, doubling in size and capacity
- Approved a three-year Strategic Plan in May 2023
- Created vital staff positions and enhanced the organization's infrastructure to support steady and sustainable growth
- Partnered with KPMG to assess the efficacy of our program

FAMILY LITERACY
FESTIVAL



OFFICE
VOLUNTEERS



VOLUNTEER
APPRECIATION NIGHT



TUTOR
RECRUITMENT



LAKE FOREST
POP-UP SHOP



PLAY FOR
LITERACY 2022



More than one in three children who started school in the pandemic need intensive reading help. (AMPLIFY, 2021)



Our Programs

The Reading Power Advantage

Reading Power’s highly trained volunteer tutors provide one-to-one literacy instruction during the school day under the guidance of educational professionals. Lesson plans structure each tutoring session and are individualized daily for each student. Each kindergarten through second grade session encompasses reading, writing, and speaking to foster the promise of literacy. The target population for the kindergarten through second grade programs is students scoring below the 25th percentile on universal assessments, thus reading below grade level. This past school year many students started below the 10th percentile.

Preschool
Our preschool program is Reading Power’s first opportunity to nurture children’s curiosity and wonder, helping them learn to love books and discover the power of reading. The focus of our preschool program is oral language development through high-quality literature. This program fosters the growth of children’s oral language, gives them opportunities for rich conversations, and helps to develop

Reading Power students receive an average of 150 minutes of one-to-one, individualized literacy tutoring instruction every week.



their listening comprehension and love of books through our one-to-one sessions. Our volunteers work with students two times per week during free choice time in the classrooms.

Kindergarten
The kindergarten program is Reading Power’s first opportunity to make a positive impact on children’s reading skills. Students in the kindergarten program develop story listening skills, increase alphabet letter and sound skills, and boost phonemic awareness and phonics skills while fostering their early love of literacy. These early literacy skills are the main predictors of first grade reading success. Kindergarten students receive 25-minute one-to-one literacy tutoring sessions four times per week. During these sessions, a picture book is read to the child and discussed, which fosters a sense of story, prediction making, vocabulary development, and a love of books. Students also write in a journal or play a literacy game targeting foundational reading skills.

First and Second Grade
The first and second grade program is the heart of Reading Power. The goal is to accelerate student’s literacy learning. First and second grade students are tutored for 40 minutes, up to five days per week in a dedicated Reading Power space. In each tutoring session, the student reads up to four books, writes in a journal, engages in word work to develop phonics skills, and learns high frequency sight words. A well-practiced book and a student-selected library book are sent home each night for reinforcement. A standardized lesson plan is used for each session and is individualized daily for each student. During each session, the student’s performance is assessed, and a new lesson plan is prepared, allowing for a seamless transition for the next day’s tutor.

The Positive Impact of Reading Power

Early literacy has a profound and lasting positive impact on a child’s development. When children are exposed to reading, writing, and language skills from an early age, they can communicate effectively and cultivate a love of learning. Early literacy fosters cognitive development, enhancing critical thinking and problem-solving. It lays the foundation for future academic success.
At Reading Power we believe in our students. We show them we care, and we make learning fun by encouraging a growth mindset that motivates children to want to learn to read. Our goal is to catch struggling students before they have a chance to fail.

The Impact of Reading Books By Kindergarten

1,483,300

Number of Words Learned

Children who are read 5+ books a day

4,662

Children who are NOT read books

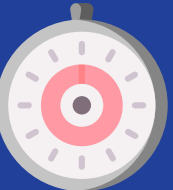
Program Impact-By the Numbers



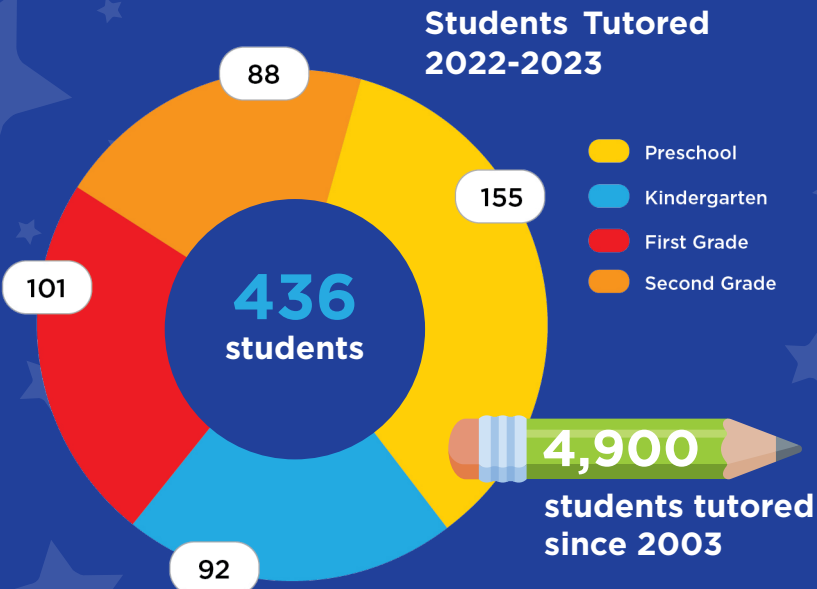
1,112 gift books distributed



52,651 books read, discussed, and shared



557,040 minutes tutored



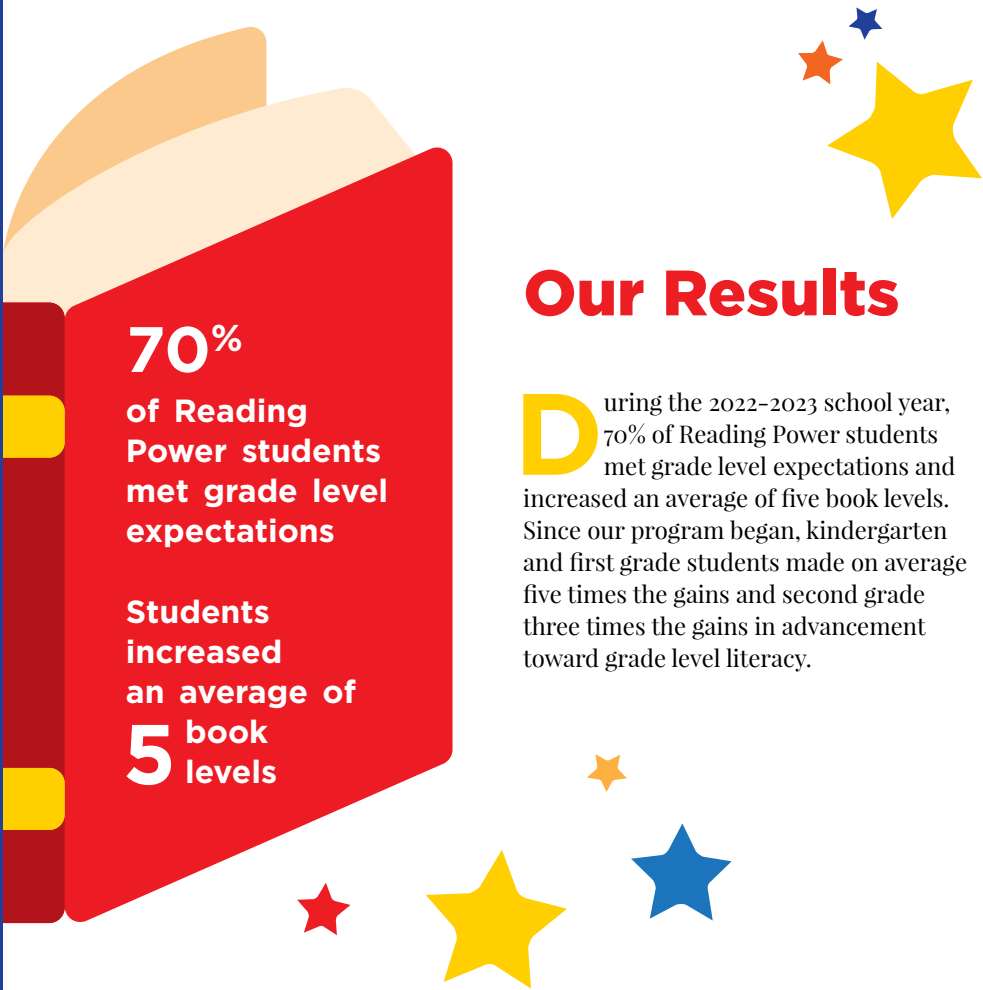
How We Measure

Reading Power measures overall growth to assess students' literacy knowledge using universal assessments in the fall and spring. In addition, students are assessed daily to inform instruction. This individualized intervention is the key to Reading Power's success, as it supports the development of fundamental skills and independent reading practices.

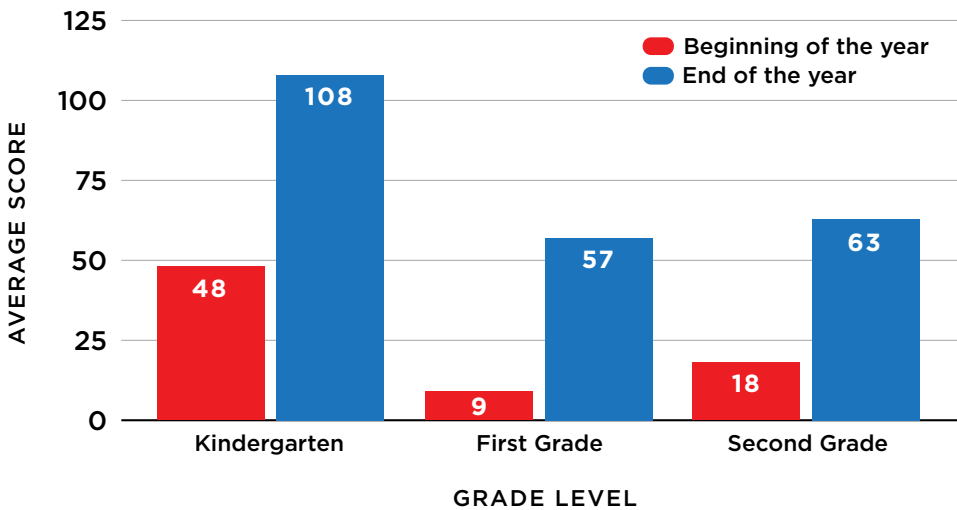
Student performance is formally evaluated three times a year. The Illinois Snapshots of Early Literacy (ISEL) is used for kindergarten and an Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) measure is used for first and second grade literacy. Results inform program eligibility, advise instruction, and evaluate program effectiveness at year-end.



Data gathered since our program began in 2003 has shown that Reading Power students consistently advance to grade level expectations.

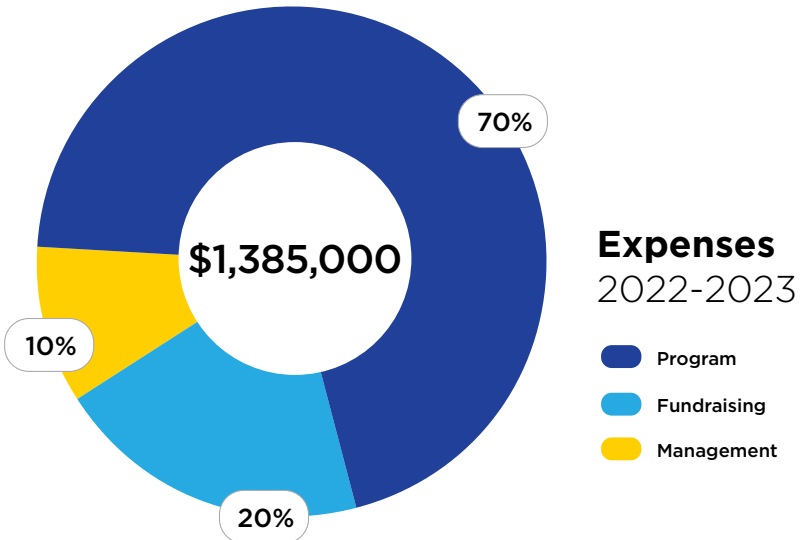
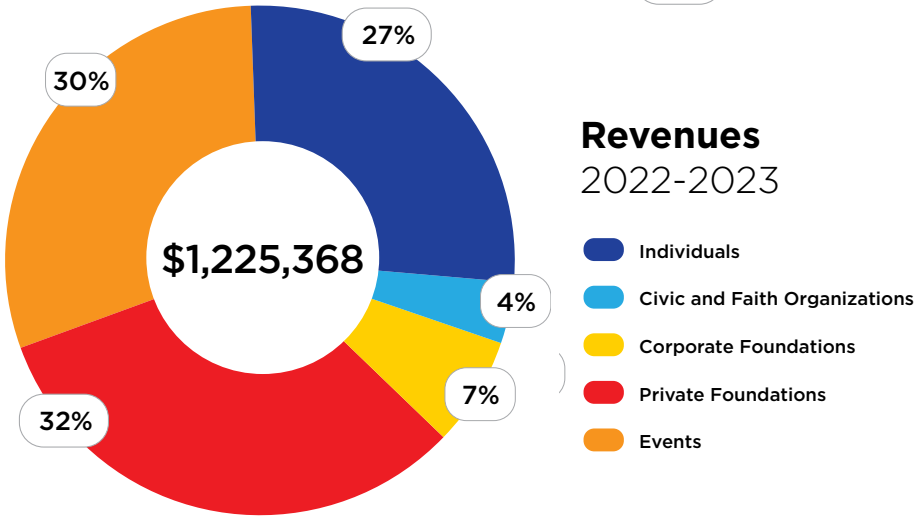


Average Score on Assessments Over the Year



Financial Summary

Reading Power provides a transparent view of our financials, ensuring accountability and trust in managing the generous resources entrusted to us.



Financial Operations Report

\$250 trains a tutor

\$500 builds a classroom library

\$3,000 tutors a Reading Power student for one year

Students who own books are six times more likely to read above grade level. (NATIONAL LITERACY TRUST 2019)

Population Served

In 2022–2023, Reading Power tutored children in North Chicago, Waukegan, and Zion, Illinois. These communities reflect Reading Power’s mission to offer programs in districts where the need is greater than resources and less than 50 percent of third grade students meet reading grade level benchmarks.

Our work is fueled by a fundamental belief that literacy changes lives and we focus our work on schools which lack the resources many of their students need to succeed. Children from underserved populations face several obstacles to their education before even entering the school doors:

- The students Reading Power serves are **81% low-income and 88% minority** (2022 IL School Report Card).
- The students live in a book desert: up to **61% of low-income families do not have any books** for their children at home.
- Black and Hispanic households are three to four percentage points less likely than white households to have reliable access to devices, and **three to six percentage points less likely to have reliable access to the internet.**

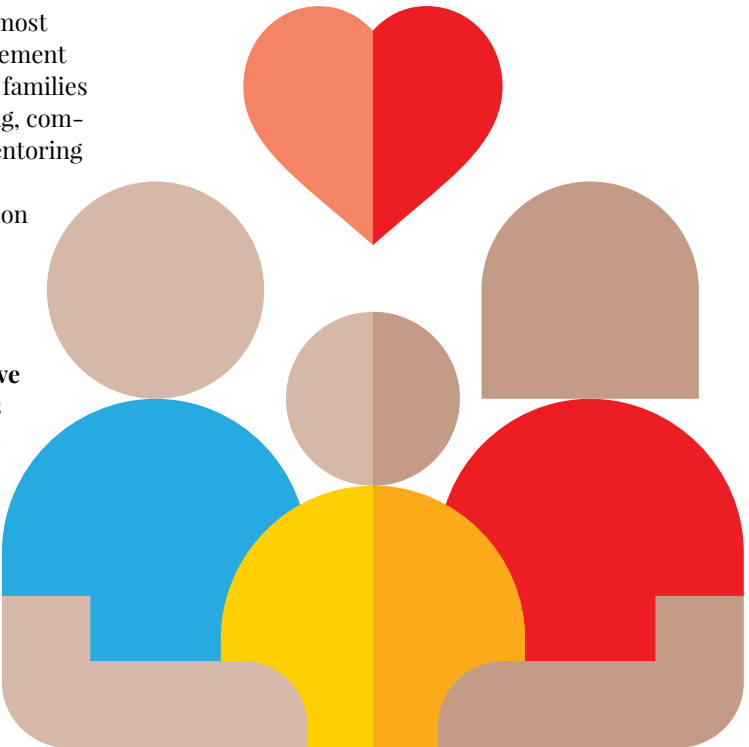
The Covid-19 pandemic only widened these gaps. Low-income, minority families were hardest hit economically and socially by the pandemic and will continue to feel its effects for years to come.

- **No grade level has yet matched its pre-pandemic performance levels.** While more students overall seem ready for grade-level reading, the data also suggest about a third of students continue to read “far behind” where they should be (Amplify, 2023).

- Based on 2022–2023 school year data, most students would now need, on average, an additional 4.5 months of mathematics instruction and **4.1 months of reading instruction to recover** in these two subjects and that is on top of regular classroom time (NWEA, 2023).
- Students in low-income and predominantly minority communities lost double the decline of their peers in more affluent, whiter districts, **widening the racial learning gap** (NWEA, 2023). Minority students now have more ground to make up.

Students need added support to get back on track. High-dose tutoring, defined as three or more individualized sessions per week, is one of the most effective ways to increase achievement for students from lower-income families compared to cooperative learning, computer-based instruction, and mentoring (Poverty Action Lab, 2021).

A U.S. Department of Education survey conducted in December 2022 found that most public schools offered some form of tutoring, but **only 37 percent provided students more intensive “high dosage” tutoring**, which is typically done in smaller groups, takes place for at least 30 minutes and includes at least three sessions a week. Out of all public schools, just 10 percent of students participated in that type of tutoring.



275
TUTORS

Tutor One Child. Change Two Lives.

The need for literacy intervention is greater than ever. Reading Power needs more tutors to continue expanding and reaching more students in need.

Will you join us?

Scan to become a
volunteer tutor today!



Volunteer Tutors

Reading Power is led by reading professionals and powered by over 275 trained volunteers.

So much of the success that students experience in Reading Power is due to the strong relationships that young children form with our dedicated tutors who play an instrumental role in their literacy growth.

Tutor Ambassadors

This passionate group of tutors volunteer at community events to help spread the word about our organization and volunteer opportunities. Since founding the program in 2021, the team has helped recruit over 142 new tutors.

Tutor Ambassadors donated 175 volunteer hours at recruitment events

2023 Presidential Volunteer Service Awards

In 2023, Reading Power became a certified organization with the President’s Council on Service and Civic Participation. Led by the AmeriCorps and managed in partnership with Points of Light, this program allows Certifying Organizations to recognize their most exceptional volunteers and the impact they make. This year, 28 Reading Power tutors were honored with a service award for volunteering over 100 hours during the 2022–2023 academic year.



Literacy has the power to transform lives.

Don't take our word for it. Hear from our Reading Power friends and family...

Mary Jane Hender, Reading Power Co-Founder and Board Member



"In 2003 in the tiniest classroom you can imagine, we had five cubbies separated by cardboard partitions. One tutor and one first grade child graced each cubby. After a half hour of intense and joyful reading and writing, the tutors each walked their student back to class and picked up another. By the end of the morning, each tutor had helped five children to each read four books, learn one word from memory, write a sentence, share their ideas, and meet with success.

Whew! The next day we did it again as five different tutors filled those desks with the same children. Would this work? To my knowledge, it had never been done before. Now, twenty years later, I can proudly announce that, indeed, it does work. Reading Power has successfully tutored 4,900 struggling readers and writers, brought them to grade level, given them the confidence and knowledge to make their own way in school and, hopefully, in life."

Matthew Rizzie, Director GLCU Foundation for Financial Empowerment



"GLCU Foundation for Financial Empowerment is proud to partner with Reading Power who shares in our commitment to impact our local communities. Our mission of enabling financial empowerment for all, regardless of socioeconomic status, starts with literacy and education. Reading Power's one-to-one literacy tutoring provides that foundation and develops a love for learning in children from a young age."

Marla Guziec, Reading Power Site Coordinator Since 2003

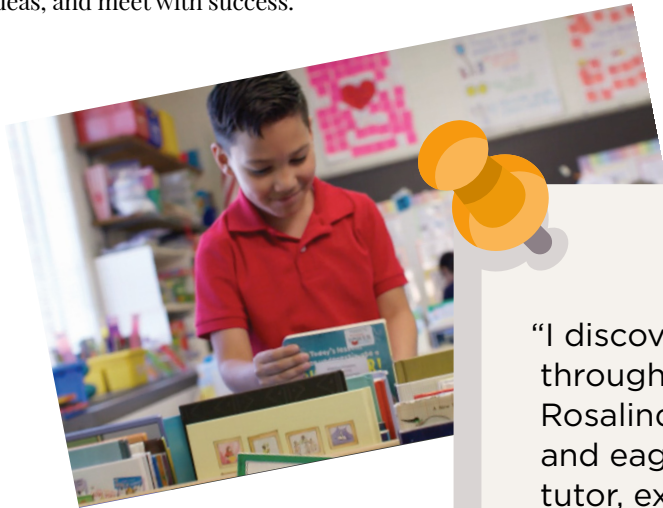


"Reading Power's goal is to propel children forward in their literacy journey. Whether in preschool, kindergarten, first or second grade, we meet students where they are and help them succeed."

"Reading has helped me expand my horizons; it has opened doors that otherwise would have been locked. Reading Power lays the groundwork for a more successful future for so many young people just like me."



Justin Hartley, Former Reading Power student and Tulane University Graduate



"I discovered Reading Power through a classmate at Rosalind Franklin University and eagerly joined as a Spanish-speaking tutor, excited to extend their wonderful service to Spanish-speaking classrooms. I love reading to preschoolers; it provides a delightful escape from schoolwork."

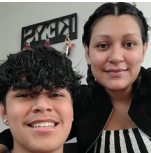


Erica Acevedo de Arias, Reading Power tutor and nursing student at Rosalind Franklin University

Third-grade low-income, minority students who are not proficient in reading are eight times more likely to drop out or fail to graduate from high school.

(ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION)

Eliana Escobar, Mother of former Beulah Elementary Reading Power student

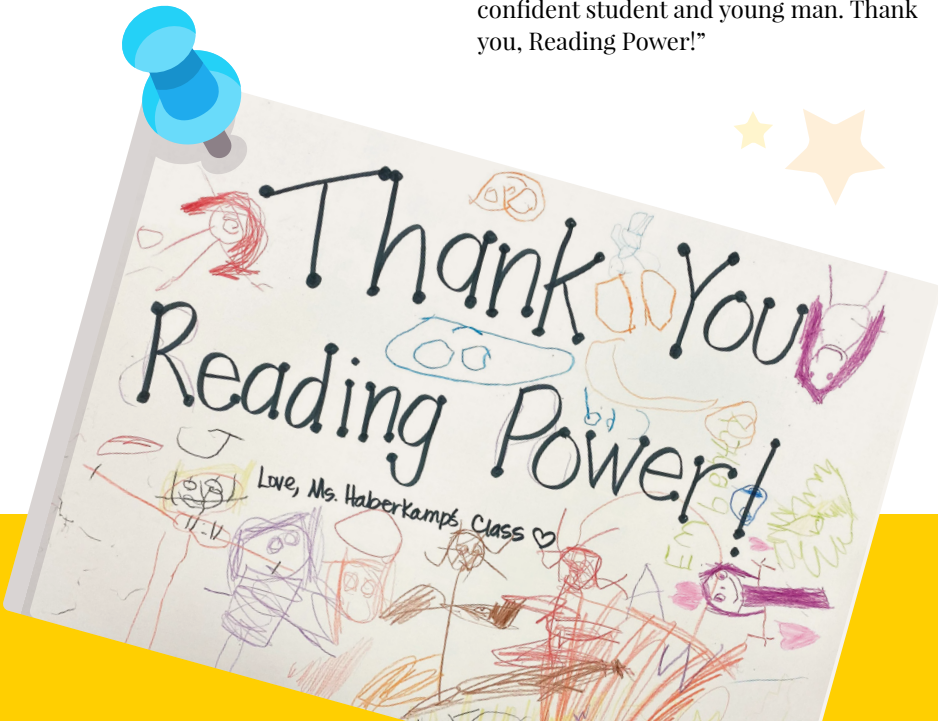


"As a mother, I'm so grateful for the incredible support Marco received from Reading Power during his first and second grades. Seeing him grow from a struggling reader to a successful Zion Benton Township High School honors student makes me and my husband very proud. The great work of the Reading Power tutors during those early years helped Marco throughout his schooling to become a capable and confident student and young man. Thank you, Reading Power!"

Jennifer Sanders, Green Bay Early Childhood Center Principal



"Reading Power is an integral part of Green Bay Early Childhood Center. Children flock to Reading Power volunteers during free choice time to see the latest books and receive one-to-one attention from the dedicated Reading Power volunteers actively engaging in the text with children. Reading Power volunteers have become attuned with the needs, wants, and interests of the children and select texts accordingly. The recent addition of bilingual Spanish speaking volunteers has expanded Reading Power to the dual language classrooms at Green Bay. Reading Power is evolving to meet the needs of each and every child at Green Bay, supporting the advancement towards kindergarten readiness."



Children learn an average of 4,000 to 12,000 new words each year because of book reading. (SCHOLASTIC: CLASSROOM LIBRARIES WORK)

We're Us, Because of You.
In Grateful Recognition of our Annual Donors

Children in classrooms without literature collections read 50% less than children in classrooms with such collections. (INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION)

Summa Cum Laude
\$50,000 and Above

Reichert Foundation
Steans Family Foundation
Diane Quinn

Magna Cum Laude
\$15,000-\$49,999

Joanie and Steve Alley
Anonymous
Maureen and Chris Bennett
William Blair & Co. Foundation
First Presbyterian Church of Lake Forest
Gorter Family Foundation
Grainger Foundation
Great Lakes Credit Union
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Sacks Family Foundation
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Vivo Foundation

Cum Laude
\$5,000-\$14,999

Anonymous
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Jelly Belly Candy Company
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Mindy and Dave Mooney
Susan and Tim Morris
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Northern Trust
Sue and Tom Paulson
Beverly and Joseph Raudabaugh
RBC Wealth Management
Reynolds Consumer Products
Gerrie and Thomas Ryan

Louise and Robert Sanborn
SBB Research Group
Uline
ZF North America, Inc
Dean's List
\$1,000-\$4,999
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Bennett Family Charitable Fund
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Capital Dynamics
Christ Church Lake Forest
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Consumers Cooperative Association
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Gale and Robert Wayne

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Carla Westcott
Wintrust Financial Corporation
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YourCause Abbvie

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\$200-\$999

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Susan and David Barkhausen
Robert Barnett
Ronald Barth
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Prue and Frank Beidler
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LoriLee and Art Bielski
Stacy and Theodor Bilharz
Luann and David Blowers
Ilene and Abram Bluestein
Laura and Brett Boehm
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Cindy and Bob Broten
Sara and Robert Buckley
Lisa and Steve Bulzoni
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Allison and Mike Cekay
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Prasanthi Chennareddy
Chicago Bears Foundation
Gayla Clawson
Marilyn Cleeff
Katie Colopy and David Whitney
Caron and Barry Comin
Caitlin Considine
Connie and David Coolidge
Kelly Cortez
Valerie Crotty and Peter Rogers
Zach Crowley
Mrs. N C Culley
Randee and Gerry Curciarello
Robert Hal Dann
Davey Tree & Lawn



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Laurie and Dan Doherty
Amy and Ira Dolnick
Deborah and Mark Dorris
Madeleine Dugan
Julie and Michael Eckert
Kris and Mitch Engel
Jamie Epstein
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Karen and Jeff Fine
Kristin and Kevin Fine
Sharon and Mark Fine
Erin and Justin Foley
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Frida and Jim Graziano
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Sally Hendron
Highland Park Women's Club
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Mark and Cathy Jensen
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Dr. Claudia Anne Katz
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Judy and Bert Krueger
Kenneth and Susan Kunin
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Debra Learner
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Laura and Tyler Passmore
Penelope Peapod
Amy Pessis
Mary and Frank Phillips
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Rotary Club of Illinois Beach Sunrise
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Janet and Alan Sear
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Camille and Jim Blachowicz
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Raelene Bowman
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Randie and Lew Bricker
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Carrie and Neil Codell
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Legacies Live On

Remembering Marra Lochiatto

In June 2023, Reading Power lost one of our own, Board Member Marra Lochiatto. As a cherished member of our Reading Power family, Marra’s profound impact as a Board member, donor, tutor, and dedicated supporter will forever be etched in our memories.

Marra’s immense contributions to Reading Power were exceptional, a testament to her unwavering commitment to early literacy education. She began her journey with us as a tutor in 2011 and later joined the Board of Directors in 2018, ultimately serving as Vice Chairman. Under her leadership, the Play for Literacy Golf & Games event flourished, becoming a vital source of support for our organization. Since its inception in 2021, Marra’s tireless efforts have helped raise over \$500,000.

Marra’s light will forever shine in our hearts, and her legacy will continue to inspire us to make a lasting impact on the lives of others, just as she did.

Our Mission



Our mission is to accelerate children's literacy learning and to develop their love for reading and writing

Our Vision



We envision a world where all children have a strong literacy foundation to support lifelong learning

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