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PROCESS ASSESSMENT

Minnesota Reading Corps

PreK Program

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Process Assessment of the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK Program

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Authors

This study was conducted by researchers from NORC at the University of Chicago and TIES:

Carol Hafford
Carrie Markovitz
Marc Hernandez
Athena Diaconis
Elc Estrera
Paul Muyskens

This report represents the work and perspectives of the authors and is the product of professional research. It does not represent the position or opinions of CNCS, the federal government, or the reviewers.

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Executive Summary

Minnesota Reading Corps is the largest AmeriCorps State program in the country. Its mission is to help every Minnesota child become a proficient reader by the end of third grade. To meet this goal, the Minnesota Reading Corps and its host organization, ServeMinnesota Action Network, engages a diverse group of AmeriCorps members to provide evidence-based literacy enrichment and tutoring services to preschool (PreK) students and at-risk Kindergarten through third grade (K-3) elementary school students. For the 2013-2014 school year, more than 1,100 AmeriCorps members implemented the Minnesota Reading Corps program in 712 schools or sites[1] and 213 school districts across the state of Minnesota.[2]

This report, commissioned by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), describes the findings from a process assessment of a purposive sample of Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program sites and similar comparison preschool sites during the 2013-2014 school year. The sample of nine program sites and eight comparison sites were drawn from the representative sample of 25 Minnesota Reading Corps programs and 25 matched comparison sites selected for a quasi-experimental design (QED) outcome evaluation of the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program.[3] The goal of the outcome evaluation was to determine the effects of the Minnesota Reading Corps program on PreK students' emergent literacy skills, while the process assessment provides additional context for interpreting these findings.

The PreK process assessment focused on three research questions, with a particular emphasis on understanding the implementation of research-based language and literacy practices in PreK classrooms and the role of AmeriCorps members in fostering emergent literacy skills:

1. How is the program achieving its immediate, intermediate, and long-term outcomes? How does the program's design and administration lead to the achievement of these target outcomes?

    a. What aspects of language and literacy instruction pertain among highly rated Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program sites? In what areas do sites not perform well based on rating of inadequate or deficient? How do the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Tool (ELLCO) Pre-K ratings relate to student outcomes?

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[1] According to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), during the 2013-2014 school year, 1,618 public schools served grades PreK-12. Of those schools, 912 offered PreK services. The total number of preschools in the state of Minnesota (i.e., public schools and non-public schools) was not available. http://w20.education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/Summary.jsp

[2] According to MDE, during the 2013-2014 school year, there were 328 public operating elementary & secondary independent school districts, 3 intermediate school districts, and 150 charter schools (which are considered public school districts in Minnesota).

[3] C., Markovitz, C., Hernandez, M, et al. (October 2014). *Outcome Evaluation of the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK Program.* (Prepared under contract to the Corporation for National and Community Service). Chicago, IL: NORC at the University of Chicago.

b. Does adherence to the Literacy Rich Schedule[4] vary by membership type (i.e., Educator Corps or Community Corps) and role in the classroom (i.e., lead teacher, assistant teacher, volunteer)?

c. Are there observable differences in any dimension of the classroom environment or language and literacy practices that would explain differences in student outcomes?

2. Are there characteristics of AmeriCorps members that are particularly effective with service recipients (i.e., students)?

   a. Should dramatic differences emerge in the ELLCO PreK ratings by member type, what skills and supports are needed for the Community Corps member to be successful (above and beyond those provided to the Educator Corps member)?

3. Which findings and lessons learned from the Minnesota Reading Corps can be applied to other models and/or programs? Are there characteristics that are suitable for similar reading tutoring programs to replicate?

To explore the research questions associated with the process assessment, the evaluation team conducted observations of PreK classroom activity and conducted semi-structured interviews with AmeriCorps members, Internal Coaches, lead teachers, and school principals and directors at each participating site.

About the Minnesota Reading Corps

The Minnesota Reading Corps program was started in 2003 to provide emergent literacy enrichment and tutoring to students in four Head Start programs. In 2005, it expanded to serve elementary school students in Kindergarten through third grade (K-3). Today, the Minnesota Reading Corps is the largest AmeriCorps State program in the country. The core activities of the program, and its host organization, ServeMinnesota Action Network, are to recruit, train, place and monitor AmeriCorps members who implement evidence-based literacy interventions for at-risk K-3 students and preschool children.

AmeriCorps members in the Minnesota Reading Corps program serve in school-based settings to implement Minnesota Reading Corps literacy enrichment strategies and conduct interventions with PreK-3 students using a Response to Intervention (RtI) framework. The key features of the Minnesota Reading Corps RtI framework are:

- Clear literacy targets at each age level from PreK through grade 3
- Benchmark assessment three times a year to identify students eligible for one-on-one or small group interventions
- Scientifically based interventions
- Frequent progress monitoring during intervention delivery
- High-quality training and coaching in program components, and literacy assessment and instruction

[4] "Adherence to the Literacy Rich Schedule" is operationalized through the scores obtained on the ELLCO General Classroom Environment and Language and Literacy subscales

In the RtI framework, data play the key roles of screening students' eligibility for services and then monitoring students' progress towards achieving academic goals (i.e., targets). The Minnesota Reading Corps screens students for program eligibility three times a year (i.e., Fall, Winter, Spring) with two sets of grade-specific, literacy-focused general outcome measures (i.e., IGDI 1.0 for PreK and FAST for K-3) that possess criterion-referenced grade- and content-specific performance benchmarks.

Overview of PreK Program Literacy Focus

The Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program includes both an immersive "push-in" component, where members provide whole-class literacy enrichment for all students (i.e., Tier 1), as well as targeted small group and one-to-one intervention, where members provide more individualized interventions to students struggling with emergent literacy skills (i.e., Tiers 2 and 3). The PreK program focuses on integrating the "Big Five" Essential Early Literacy Predictors outlined by the National Early Literacy Panel (2008) [5] into all aspects of the daily classroom routine. The "Big Five" for preschool students include: 1) conversational skills, 2) vocabulary and background knowledge, 3) book and print rules, 4) phonological awareness (i.e., rhyming and alliteration), and 5) alphabetic knowledge (i.e., letter name recognition and letter sound correspondence). Classroom teachers and AmeriCorps members are tasked with creating a Literacy Rich Classroom using evidence-based practices assessed in the ELLCO (Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation) tool and implementing a Literacy Rich Schedule. In addition, AmeriCorps members serving in the PreK program are responsible for enacting the SEEDS of Emergent Literacy, [6] which provides both members and teachers with specific strategies to enhance literacy instruction for *all children* in the classroom.

The Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program uses the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) tool to gather information about the quality of the language and literacy environment in the classroom by observing instructional activities, teacher-child interactions, and use of materials and classroom space.[7] The ELLCO tool is a validated observational measure designed to assess and monitor the quality of the classroom environment and literacy and language practices in PreK classrooms.[8] It is organized into two primary subscales examining the General Classroom Environment and the Language and Literacy environment. **Table 1** below presents the two subscales, five sections and 19 elements that comprise the ELLCO tool. Each section evaluates a particular characteristic of the classroom (e.g., classroom structure, books, language environment). Sections are comprised of three to five elements that assess specific aspects of the environment (e.g., discourse climate, organization of the book area, curriculum). Each element is rated on a five-point scale, ranging from exemplary to deficient (i.e., 5 is exemplary, 4 is strong, 3 is basic, 2 is inadequate, and 1 is deficient). The tool provides descriptive indicators to guide the assessor's evaluation and provide evidence for the ratings.

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[5] National Early Literacy Panel. (2008). *Developing early literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel.* Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy.

[6] Horst, K., & Passe, A. (2004). *Creating Literacy Rich Classrooms for Preschool Children (Ages 0-5)*. Presented at the 2004 CEED Symposium. Minneapolis, MN.

[7] Per the guidance in the Section 4: Literacy Rich Classroom in the *2013-2014 Reading Corps PreK Manual*.

[8] Smith, M.W., Brady, J.P., & Anastasopoulus, L. (2008). *Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Tool, Pre-K (ELLCO PreK)*. Baltimore, MD: PaSiteul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Table 1. Structure of the ELLCO Tool

General Classroom Environment Subscale	Language and Literacy Subscale
Section I. Classroom Structure a. Organization of the classroom b. Content of the classroom c. Classroom management d. Personnel **Section II. Curriculum** e. Approaches to curriculum f. Opportunities for child choice and initiative g. Recognizing diversity in the classroom	**Section III. The Language Environment** a. Discourse climate b. Opportunities for extended conversation c. Efforts to build vocabulary d. Phonological awareness **Section IV. Books and Book Reading** e. Organization of the book area f. Characteristics of books g. Books for learning h. Approaches to book reading i. Quality of book reading **Section V. Print and Early Writing** j. Early writing environment k. Support for children's writing **l.** Environmental print

AmeriCorps Members and Sources of Support

Within the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program, two types of AmeriCorps members may serve in a classroom: Educator Corps[9] or Community Corps. Both the Educator Corps and Community Corps members' roles are to enhance daily language and literacy opportunities and conduct literacy assessments to help children develop their emergent literacy skills in preparation for kindergarten. The Educator Corps member is the lead teacher or an assistant teacher (a licensed teacher who is the children's primary instructor). Educator Corps members are current employees of the service site who receive additional training and accept new responsibilities to become non-stipend AmeriCorps members. The Educator Corps member fulfills his or her regular teaching responsibilities while incorporating specific Minnesota Reading Corps strategies in his or her instruction, sometimes in collaboration with a Community Corps member. Each Community Corps member is embedded in a PreK classroom to collaborate with teaching staff. At some sites, the Community Corps member is paired with an Educator Corps member. At some sites, the Community Corps member is the only AmeriCorps member in the classroom and works closely with the instructional staff. Community Corps members are typically recruited from the community, such as parents or grandparents, retirees, or recent high school or college graduates.

Minnesota Reading Corps AmeriCorps members are supported by a multi-layered supervisory structure. One or more on-site Internal Coaches mentor members during their year of service, continually monitor fidelity of program implementation, and ensure effective tutoring. Expert-level Master Coaches are also assigned to each Internal Coach to provide consultation on literacy interventions and assessment, as well as ensure fidelity to the Minnesota Reading Corps model. Each summer, the Minnesota Reading Corps hosts a multi-day Summer Institute for training returning and new Master Coaches, Internal Coaches, and AmeriCorps members.[10] This intensive, information-filled institute provides expert training in the evidence-based literacy

[9] In previous years, Educator Corps members were referred to as Professional Corps members.

[10] Members attend all four days of the Summer Institute (one day orientation and three days of training). New Coaches attend three days, and returning Coaches attend one day.

interventions employed by the Minnesota Reading Corps and serves an important role in developing member, coach, and school adherence to the Minnesota Reading Corps model.

Process Assessment Methodology

To explore the process assessment's research questions, the evaluation team intended to conduct qualitative data collection activities with a purposive sample of 18 preschool sites (i.e., 9 Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program sites and 9 non-Minnesota Reading Corps comparison sites)[11] that participated in the PreK outcome evaluation. However, we were unable to visit one of the comparison sites and thus visited a total of 17 sites.[12] Data collection for the PreK Process Assessment was conducted in two phases between August-September 2013 and April-May 2014. The principal data collection methods were: 1) on-site observations using a project-developed Classroom Language and Literacy Observation tool modelled on the ELLCO[13]; and 2) semi-structured interviews with Educator Corps and Community Corps members, Internal Coaches, and Directors/Principals at the program sites, and with lead teachers and Directors/Principals at the comparison sites. The evaluation team also consulted Minnesota Reading Corps PreK training manuals, the ELLCO User's Guide, and other Minnesota Reading Corps program materials.

Findings and Conclusions

Below, we present our findings and conclusions from the process assessment organized by the three research questions.

1. **How is the program achieving its immediate, intermediate, and long-term outcomes? How does the program's design and administration lead to the achievement of these target outcomes?**
    a. What aspects of language and literacy instruction pertain among highly rated Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program sites? In what areas do sites not perform well based on rating of inadequate or deficient? How do the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Tool (ELLCO) Pre-K rating relate to student outcomes?

Based on the ELLCO ratings, Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program sites have implemented "strong" classroom structures and approaches to curricula that support children's learning. With regard to classroom structure, the physical environment of each Minnesota Reading Corps classroom was well-organized for learning and provided a welcoming space for young children to engage in group and independent activities with comfortable, child-size furnishings and thoughtful traffic flows. Classroom materials and activity centers were organized, appealing, accessible, and coordinated with ongoing learning goals. Teachers communicated clear expectations for children's behavior using positive strategies and encouraged their purposeful engagement in language and literacy activities. In addition, staffing was appropriate for the numbers and needs of children, and purposefully organized to engage children in meaningful activities. The program staff across the sites made use of multiple materials,

[11] Hereafter referred to as "program" and "comparison" sites, respectively.

[12] Due to a temporary stop work order, we were unable to complete our visit to this site. Therefore, only 8 of the 9 planned site visits to comparison sites were completed.

[13] Described in detail below, and included in Appendix A.

activities, and interactions in their approaches to instruction—books, transitions, momentary conversations—to infuse language use and literacy into the daily schedule.

The program sites also implemented "strong" approaches to create a language and literacy environment that supports discourse, engagement with books, and early writing. Adults engaged preschool students in conversation, with both teachers and members attempting to maximize a child's interest and understanding of new words or concepts during large or small group activities, or during spontaneous one-on-one conversations. Books were available and used by preschool students independently. Books were read and shared by the teacher, members, and students during circle time or in small groups. Preschool students had multiple opportunities to engage with writing and print in their classrooms.

Higher scores on the two ELLCO subscales that measure the quality of the General Classroom Environment and Language and Literacy instruction appear to be related to one specific type of staffing model[14] and a lower Internal Coach to Community Corps member ratio. These highly-rated classrooms paired an Internal Coach serving as the lead teacher with a Community Corps member. While only evident at two sites and not conclusive or generalizable, it does raise important questions about whether staffing models—here characterized by enthusiastic support for the PreK program and intense supervision and teaming between the teacher and Community Corps member—may facilitate implementation of the Literacy Rich Schedule in preschool classrooms and influence student outcomes.

b. Does adherence to the Literacy Rich Schedule [15]vary by membership type (i.e., Educator Corps or Community Corps) and role in the classroom (i.e., lead teacher, assistant teacher, volunteer)?

Adherence to the Literacy Rich Schedule did vary by member type and role in the classroom. We found greater involvement in language and literacy activities by Community Corps members in classrooms where the member was placed with a lead teacher who served as the Internal Coach or who was a current or former Educator Corps member compared to classrooms where the Community Corps member was placed with a lead teacher only. We also found that, for Educator Corps members serving solo in a classroom, balancing execution of the site- or school-required curriculum *while* implementing all of the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program components on their own is demanding and time-consuming. Although we found that implementation of the Literacy Rich Schedule was adequate in all program classrooms despite member type and role, we concluded that the ideal model for implementing the Minnesota Reading Corps program in PreK settings is to pair Community Corps members with a lead teacher who served as the Internal Coach or who was a current or former Educator Corps member.

c. Are there observable differences in any dimension of the classroom environment or language and literacy practices that would explain differences in student outcomes? [16]

Based on the analysis of the ELLCO scores and the observations using the Classroom Language and Literacy Observation Tool, there were some similarities and some difference in the language and literacy practices between the program and comparison

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[14] The three staffing models observed were: Community Corps member with a lead teacher; Community Corps member with a lead teacher serving or having served as an Educator Corps member; and Community Corps member with a lead teacher who was also the Internal Coach.

[15] "Adherence to the Literacy Rich Schedule" is operationalized through the scores obtained on the ELLCO General Classroom Environment and Language and Literacy subscales

[16] This would include all dimensions of classroom structure, curriculum, the language environment, books and book reading, print and early writing.

sites. With regard to the classroom environment, both the program and comparison sites were well-organized for learning, included appealing materials and furnishings accessible to children, and provided a physical classroom environment organized to support and coordinated with learning goals.

Analyses of the ELLCO data, however, indicate that program sites scored higher than comparison sites on both the General Classroom Environment subscale and the Language and Literacy subscale. The program sites implemented more language and literacy oriented Literacy Rich Schedule components than the comparison sites. These included: implementing "Strive for 5" during meal time; having theme-related props in three or more activity centers for use during Choice Time/Active Learning; providing multiple opportunities to talk, read, and write during Choice Time/Active Learning; and using Big 5 Transitions between activities such as moving from large group activities or lining up to go outside. In addition, differences were found in the approaches to book reading at program and comparison sites, such that program sites were more consistent in implementing high-quality book reading.

Although there were some similarities across sites with respect to the language environment, we observed more *intentional* engagement with literacy and language by students and adults at the program sites. In contrast to the comparison sites, the program sites created environments that fostered preschool students' emergent literacy skills in multiple ways: encouraging meaningful and extended conversations; taking advantage of opportunities to introduce new words and build vocabulary; and encouraging awareness of sounds and letters. Importantly, the program sites took advantage of time in the daily schedule that may otherwise be lost opportunities to engage children in language and literacy activities, such as during arrival, transitions, and meals.

2. **Are there characteristics of AmeriCorps members that are particularly effective with service recipients (i.e., students)?**

    a. Should dramatic differences emerge in the ELLCO PreK ratings by member type, what skills and supports are needed for the Community Corps member to be successful (above and beyond those provided to the Educator Corps member)?

Consistent with the findings of the Phase I process assessment report, AmeriCorps members with diverse backgrounds can successfully implement the Minnesota Reading Corps model in different types of PreK settings. Based on our observations, we concluded that it is not so much the individual member qualifications and skills, but the staffing model and organizational supports provided that are essential to a successful service experience. This is one of the great strengths of the Minnesota Reading Corps program.

The most important source of direct support for the Community Corps member is the Internal Coach. Maintaining the emphasis on coaching that is relationship-based and adapted to members' needs is key to successful program implementation. Furthermore, when the lead teacher is, or was, an Educator Corps member or Internal Coach, the member benefits from daily access to a professional educator that is welcoming and experienced, but also well-schooled in the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK model. Both positions share a common understanding of one another's role in the classroom, work within the same Literacy Rich Schedule, receive training in the SEEDS approach to high quality adult-child interaction, and value and know how to use IGDI assessment data to inform instruction.

In contrast, for those Community Corps members who serve alone, the service experience may differ, as well as their ability to fully implement effective language and literacy practices, depending on the lead teacher's "buy-in" to the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program model. Providing minimal training for lead teachers—such as a one-day orientation and training to the Minnesota Reading Corps program at the Summer Institute, largely similar in content to the training conducted for the Internal Coaches—would be helpful to support the integration of the member into the PreK classroom and for recognizing the member as a trained, dedicated literacy tutor and fellow educator. The Minnesota Reading Corps may consider providing further guidance to PreK sites where Community Corps members are placed with lead teachers who is not Educator Corps members or Internal Coaches, so that their time and training are used effectively and members are able to conduct or lead Literacy Rich Schedule activities that support preschool students' emergent literacy skills.

3. **Which findings and lessons learned from the Minnesota Reading Corps can be applied to other models and/or programs? Are there characteristics that are suitable for similar reading tutoring programs to replicate?**

Consistent with the Phase I process assessment, we find that the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program is highly replicable as long as schools and sites have certain important characteristics to ensure its successful integration. The model is highly adaptable and can operate well in multiple PreK sites, including public schools, Head Start centers, and community-based preschools. To do so, administrators and teachers must subscribe to a similar philosophy as that followed by the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program, as well as enact the principles of SEEDS. In addition, they must support daily implementation of the Literacy Rich Schedule and conduct ongoing assessments. Lead teachers that host a Community Corps member in their classroom should be open to learning, particularly in implementing evidence-based approaches. Lead teachers must fully support Community Corps members' contributions to language and literacy instruction and facilitate their active participation in the classroom. To accomplish this, providing lead teachers with sufficient training on the Minnesota Reading Corps program would create common instructional goals and facilitate Community Corps member program implementation. Internal Coaches serve as mediators between successful PreK program implementation and student outcomes, as they provide expert guidance and support to the Community Corps members to ensure the fidelity of the interventions delivered. All of these components are integral to the purposeful integration of the PreK program into diverse early childhood settings.

I. Introduction

Minnesota Reading Corps is a statewide initiative with a mission to help every Minnesota child become a proficient reader by the end of third grade. The Minnesota Reading Corps program engages a diverse group of AmeriCorps members to provide literacy enrichment and tutoring services to preschool children (PreK) and at-risk Kindergarten through third grade (K-3) elementary school students. For the 2013-2014 school year, more than 1,100 AmeriCorps members implemented the Minnesota Reading Corps program in 712 schools or sites[17] and 213 school districts across the state of Minnesota.[18]

This report, funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), describes the findings from a process assessment of a purposive sample of Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program sites and similar comparison preschool sites during the 2013-2014 school year. The sample of nine program sites and eight comparison sites were drawn from the representative sample of 25 Minnesota Reading Corps programs and 25 matched comparison sites selected for the quasi-experimental design (QED) outcome evaluation of the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program. The purpose of the outcome evaluation is to determine quantitatively the effects of the Minnesota Reading Corps program on preschool students' emergent literacy skills.

This Phase II PreK process assessment informs the findings presented in the PreK outcome evaluation report.[19] It is one of several complementary studies that have addressed the Minnesota Reading Corps program, including: a process assessment of the Minnesota Reading Corps program in 20 PreK and kindergarten through 3rd grade (K-3) sites (completed in Spring 2013);[20] a randomized controlled trial (RCT) impact evaluation of the Minnesota Reading Corps K-3rd program to estimate impacts of the Minnesota Reading Corps program on elementary students' literacy outcomes (Spring 2014);[21] and a survey of AmeriCorps members (Fall 2013).

The PreK process assessment focuses on the following research questions:

1. How is the program achieving its immediate, intermediate, and long-term outcomes? How does the program's design and administration lead to the achievement of these target outcomes?
    a. What aspects of language and literacy instruction pertain among highly rated Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program sites? In what areas do sites not perform well based on rating of inadequate or deficient? How do

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[17] According to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), during the 2013-2014 school year, 1,618 public schools served grades PreK-12. Of those schools, 912 offered PreK services. The total number of preschools in the state of Minnesota (i.e., public schools and non-public schools) was not available. http://w20.education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/Summary.jsp

[18] According to MDE, during the 2013-2014 school year, there were 328 public operating elementary & secondary independent school districts, 3 intermediate school districts, and 150 charter schools (which are considered public school districts in Minnesota).

[19] Markovitz, C., Hernandez, M., Hedberg, E., Silberglitt, B. (forthcoming). *Outcome Evaluation of the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK Program.* (Prepared under contract to the Corporation for National and Community Service). Chicago, IL: NORC at the University of Chicago.

[20] Hafford, C., Markovitz, C., Hernandez, M, et al. (February 2013). *Process Assessment of the Minnesota Reading Corps Program.* (Prepared under contract to the Corporation for National and Community Service). Chicago, IL: NORC at the University of Chicago.

[21] Markovitz, C., Hernandez, M, et al. (March 2014). *Impact Evaluation of the Minnesota Reading Corps K-3 Program.* (Prepared under contract to the Corporation for National and Community Service). Chicago, IL: NORC at the University of Chicago.

the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Tool (ELLCO) Pre-K ratings relate to student outcomes?

b. Does adherence to the literacy-rich schedule[22] vary by membership type (i.e., Educator Corps or Community Corps) and role in the classroom (i.e., lead teacher, assistant teacher, volunteer)?

c. Are there observable differences in any dimension of the classroom environment or language and literacy practices that would explain differences in student outcomes?

2. Are there characteristics of AmeriCorps members that are particularly effective with service recipients (i.e., students)?

   a. Should dramatic differences emerge in the ELLCO PreK ratings by member type, what skills and supports are needed for the Community Corps member to be successful (above and beyond those provided to the Educator Corps member)?

3. Which findings and lessons learned from the Minnesota Reading Corps can be applied to other models and/or programs? Are there characteristics that are suitable for similar reading tutoring programs to replicate?

To address these questions, we begin in Chapter II by presenting a brief overview of the Minnesota Reading Corps program and its role in the recruitment, training, placement and monitoring of AmeriCorps members as they implement the program in public schools, Head Start centers, and community-based preschools. We then describe the PreK component of the Minnesota Reading Corps program, which is the focus of this evaluation, its multi-layered supervisory structure, and the Summer Training Institute. This is followed by a description of the approach the Minnesota Reading Corps uses to assess and monitor the classroom environment and literacy and language practices, using a validated observational measure, the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Tool (ELLCO): Pre-K tool.[23]

Chapter III provides the research questions guiding the process assessment. This is followed by a description of the data collection and analysis methods used, including the site selection process, procedures for conducting observations and scoring using the ELLCO tool, semi-structured interviews with staff from the Minnesota Reading Corps program and comparison sites, analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, and limitations of the study.

This background information sets the context for the presentation of findings from our analyses of qualitative and quantitative data in Chapter IV. Sections in this chapter focus on the characteristics of the Minnesota Reading Corps program and the comparison sites, and then explore similarities and differences in language and literacy practices in the PreK classrooms. Key findings about the role and supervision of AmeriCorps members in the PreK classrooms are presented, as well as challenges in implementing the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program.

In Chapter V we present our conclusions to the research questions. We address if and how the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program is achieving its desired outcomes, with a focus on aspects of language and literacy instruction that are common among

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[22] "Adherence to the Literacy Rich Schedule" is operationalized through the scores obtained on the ELLCO General Classroom Environment and Language and Literacy subscales

[23] Smith, M.W., Brady, J.P., & Anastasopoulos, L. (2008). *Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) Pre-K tool*. Newton, MA: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

highly rated Minnesota Reading Corps program sites, the skills and supports needed for the Community Corps member to be successful, and findings and lessons learned from the Minnesota Reading Corps program, which can be applied to other models and/or programs. Finally, we discuss the implications of the findings for the Minnesota Reading Corps program. The project team developed a Classroom Language and Literacy Observation Tool, an adaptation of the ELLCO tool, and used this tool to observe the preschool classrooms. The Classroom Language and Literacy Observation tool is provided in Appendix A. A glossary of terms to assist the reader is provided in Appendix B. Additional tables that support the findings presented in Chapter IV are provided in Appendix C.

II. About Minnesota Reading Corps

A. Statewide Implementation of Minnesota Reading Corps: 2003-2013

The Minnesota Reading Corps is the largest AmeriCorps State program in the country. The goal of the Minnesota Reading Corps is to ensure that students become successful readers and meet reading proficiency targets by the end of the third grade. The Minnesota Reading Corps program was started in 2003 to provide reading and literacy tutoring to children in four preschool (PreK) Head Start programs. In 2005, Minnesota Reading Corps expanded its program to serve students in Kindergarten through third grade (K-3). The core activities of Minnesota Reading Corps, and its host organization, ServeMinnesota Action Network, are to recruit, train, place and monitor AmeriCorps members to implement research-based literacy interventions for at-risk preschool children and K-3 students.

Minnesota Reading Corps is a strategic initiative of ServeMinnesota. ServeMinnesota is the state commission for all AmeriCorps State programs in Minnesota, including the Minnesota Reading Corps, and helps leverage the federal, state and private dollars to operate Minnesota Reading Corps. As a catalyst for positive social change and community service, ServeMinnesota works with AmeriCorps members and community partners to meet critical needs in Minnesota. As a nonprofit organization, it supports thousands of individuals to improve the lives of Minnesotans by offering service opportunities that focus on education, affordable housing, employment, and the environment.

As a direct service program, Minnesota Reading Corps engages its members in service to work towards the solution of a social issue. AmeriCorps members in the Minnesota Reading Corps program serve in school-based settings to implement Minnesota Reading Corps literacy enrichment strategies and conduct one-on-one and/or small group interventions with PreK-3 students. In exchange for their service of 1,700 hours a year (full-time) or 900 hours a year (part-time), members receive benefits that include a bi-weekly stipend, student loan forbearance, and an education stipend for the first two years of service.

Minnesota Reading Corps AmeriCorps members are supported by a multi-layered supervisory structure. One or more on-site Internal Coaches mentor members during their year of service, continually monitor fidelity of program implementation, and ensure effective tutoring. Internal Coaches are typically specialists, teachers, or curriculum directors employed by the site or school. Expert-level Master Coaches are also assigned to each Internal Coach to provide consultation on literacy interventions and assessment, as well as ensure fidelity to the Minnesota Reading Corps model. The Minnesota Reading Corps Program Coordinators provide administrative support to individual sites (Principals, Internal Coaches, and Master Coaches) and assist members with their AmeriCorps responsibilities.

In the 2013-14 school year, the Minnesota Reading Corps program's more than 1,100 AmeriCorps members served over 30,000 students in 712 elementary schools, Head Start centers, and preschools, making it the largest AmeriCorps programs in the country. Based on the early success of the Minnesota Reading Corps program, replication is underway in Colorado, Massachusetts, Michigan, Santa Cruz County, CA, Washington DC, Virginia, Iowa, and North Dakota.

B. Foundational Framework and Staffing Structure in Minnesota Reading Corps

The Minnesota Reading Corps program utilizes a Response to Intervention (RtI) framework to objectively identify and provide additional instructional support to at-risk students. The RtI model is based on a problem solving approach which was

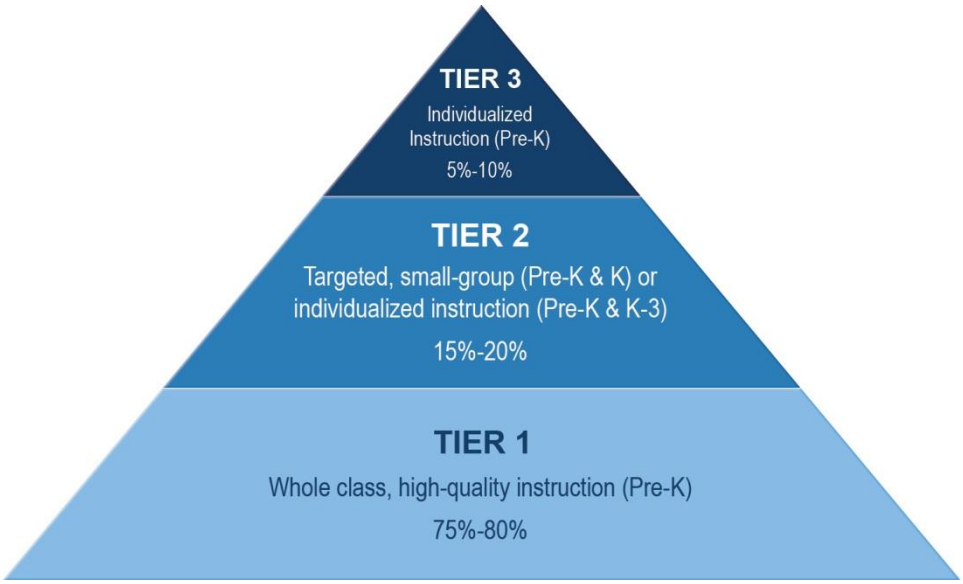
incorporated into the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and has been gaining popularity among educators, policymakers, administrators, teachers, and researchers. The key aspects of the Minnesota Reading Corps RtI framework are:

- Clear literacy targets at each age level from PreK through grade 3
- Benchmark assessment three times a year to identify students eligible for one-on-one and small group interventions
- Scientifically based interventions
- Frequent progress monitoring (formative assessment) during intervention delivery
- High-quality training and coaching in program components, and literacy assessment and instruction

In RtI, assessment data play the key roles of screening students' eligibility for additional services and then monitoring students' progress towards achieving academic goals (i.e., benchmarks). The Minnesota Reading Corps screens students for program eligibility three times a year (i.e., Fall, Winter, Spring) with grade-specific, literacy-focused general outcome measures (i.e., IGDIs for PreK and FAST for K-3) that possess criterion-referenced grade- and content-specific performance benchmarks. Program staff use scores from these general outcome measures to categorize students into one of three possible tiers (i.e., proficiency levels; see **Figure II.1**): Tier 1 students score at or above benchmark and benefit from typical classroom instruction (nationally, 75-80% of students score in this category);[24] Tier 2 students score below benchmark and require specific supplemental interventions until they meet benchmarks (nationally, 15-20% of students fall into this category); and Tier 3 students require intensive one-to-one intervention provided by a special education teacher or literacy specialist and often have individualized educational plans (nationally, 5-10% of students qualify for this category).

[24] The percentage of children testing into Tiers 1-3 are national estimates based on the literature: http://www.rtinetwork.org/essential/tieredinstruction/tiered-instruction-and-intervention-rti-model; http://www.hanoverresearch.com/insights/developing-a-maximum-impact-response-to-intervention-program/?i=k-12-education; Hoover, J.J., & Patton, J.R. (2008). The role of special educator in a multitiered instructional system. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 43(4), 195-202

Figure II.1. Minnesota Reading Corps Response to Intervention Tiers



The Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program includes both an immersive "push-in" component, where members provide whole-class literacy enrichment for all students (i.e., Tier 1), and a targeted small group and one-to-one component, where members provide individualized interventions to students struggling with emergent literacy skills (i.e., Tiers 2 and 3). The Minnesota Reading Corps K-3 program provides one-on-one tutoring where members provide supplemental individualized literacy interventions to primarily Tier 2 students in Kindergarten through third grade. The focus of this process assessment is on the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program.

C. Overview of PreK Program Literacy Focus

The Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program focuses on integrating the "Big Five" Essential Early Literacy Predictors outlined by the National Early Literacy Panel (2008) [25] into all aspects of the daily classroom routine. The "Big Five" for preschool students include: 1) conversational skills, 2) vocabulary and background knowledge, 3) book and print rules, 4) phonological awareness (i.e., rhyming and alliteration), and 5) alphabetic knowledge (i.e., letter name recognition and letter sound correspondence). Classroom teachers and AmeriCorps members are tasked with creating a Literacy Rich Classroom using evidence-based practices assessed in the ELLCO (Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation) tool and implementing a Literacy Rich Schedule. Along with implementing classroom-based strategies, members provide targeted individual or small group literacy tutoring for Tier 2 and Tier 3 students until they meet program-specified targets that predict end-of-year proficiency. Members implement 5 to 10 minute scripted interventions working on students' literacy skills.

[25] National Early Literacy Panel. (2008). *Developing early literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel.* Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy.

The Minnesota Reading Corps Literacy Rich Schedule is designed to provide children with daily routines that embed early literacy predictors into fun and meaningful learning. As such, each classroom's day is structured around a Literacy Rich Schedule that is integrated with the school's curriculum. The schedule includes 12 activities, in order: Arrival, Sign-in, Meal Time, Large Group, Daily Message, Repeated Read Aloud, Tier 1 Small Group, Journal (weekly), Choice Time/Active Learning, Tier 2 or Tier 3 Small Group, Big 5 transitions, and Family (through Talk, Read, and Write with Me!). Within and between each scheduled activity, teachers and members strive to integrate Minnesota Reading Corps expected routines, including "Strive for 5" conversations using an overarching theme, functional vocabulary, and "Big 5 Transitions." The Big 5 Transitions occur as children move from one part of the Literacy Rich Schedule to another. Members and teachers engage the children in an activity focused on one of four emergent literacy skills (oral language, phonological awareness, letter names, and letter sounds), such as rhyming games or letter and sound songs.

In addition, AmeriCorps members serving in the PreK program are responsible for enacting the SEEDS of Emergent Literacy, [26] which provides both members and teachers with specific strategies to enhance literacy instruction for *all children* in the classroom. The SEEDS model is interactive, skills-focused and based on current research in early childhood education, child development, emergent literacy, and effective teaching. SEEDS is a relationship-based instructional approach that maps out for teachers five ways to *intentionally* interact with children in order to promote academic growth and social/emotional well-being. SEEDS high quality interactions include the following five elements:

- ***Sensitivity:*** Look, listen, and ask questions to become aware of each child's needs, thoughts, abilities and feelings;
- ***Encouragement:*** Use intentional affirmations and positive non-verbal communication to create a shared positive learning environment;
- ***Education:*** Embed the "Big 5" literacy skills in daily routines (vocabulary, conversation, phonological awareness, book and print rules, and letter knowledge);
- ***Development of Skills Through Doing:*** Help children explore their world through hands-on learning; and
- ***Self-Image Support:*** Balance the SEEDS quality interactions to support a child's feeling of being respected and capable.

D. AmeriCorps Members' Roles and Sources of Support

Within the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program, two types of AmeriCorps members may be serving in a classroom: Educator Corps[27] or Community Corps. Both the Educator Corps and Community Corps members' roles are to enhance daily language and literacy opportunities and conduct literacy assessments to help children develop their emergent literacy skills in preparation for kindergarten. The Educator Corps member is the lead teacher or an assistant teacher (a licensed teacher who is the children's primary instructor). Educator Corps members are current employees of the service site who receive additional training and accept new responsibilities to become non-stipend AmeriCorps members. The Educator Corps member fulfills his or her regular teaching responsibilities while incorporating specific Minnesota Reading Corps strategies in his or her instruction,

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[26] Horst, K., & Passe, A. (2004). *Creating Literacy Rich Classrooms for Preschool Children (Ages 0-5)*. Presented at the 2004 CEED Symposium. Minneapolis, MN.

[27] In previous years, Educator Corps members were referred to as Professional Corps members.

sometimes in collaboration with a Community Corps member. Each Community Corps member is embedded in a PreK classroom to collaborate with teaching staff. At some sites, the Community Corps member is paired with an Educator Corps member. At other sites, the Community Corps member is the only AmeriCorps member in the classroom and works closely with the instructional staff. Community Corps members are typically recruited from the community, such as parents or grandparents, retirees, or recent high school or college graduates.

Because the lead teacher is responsible for the classroom in which a Community Corps member is placed, the lead teacher is a critical collaborator in the successful implementation of the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program. At the beginning of the school year, the lead teacher enters into an agreement that outlines the roles and expectations for hosting the Community Corps member.

Both Community Corps and Educator Corps members' share the same goal of developing their students' emergent literacy skills in preparation for Kindergarten. Their role in the classroom is to provide children with high quality language and literacy learning opportunities by completing assessments, implementing the Literacy Rich Schedule, engaging in SEEDS quality interactions, and conducting Tier 2 and 3 small-group and one-to-one interventions.

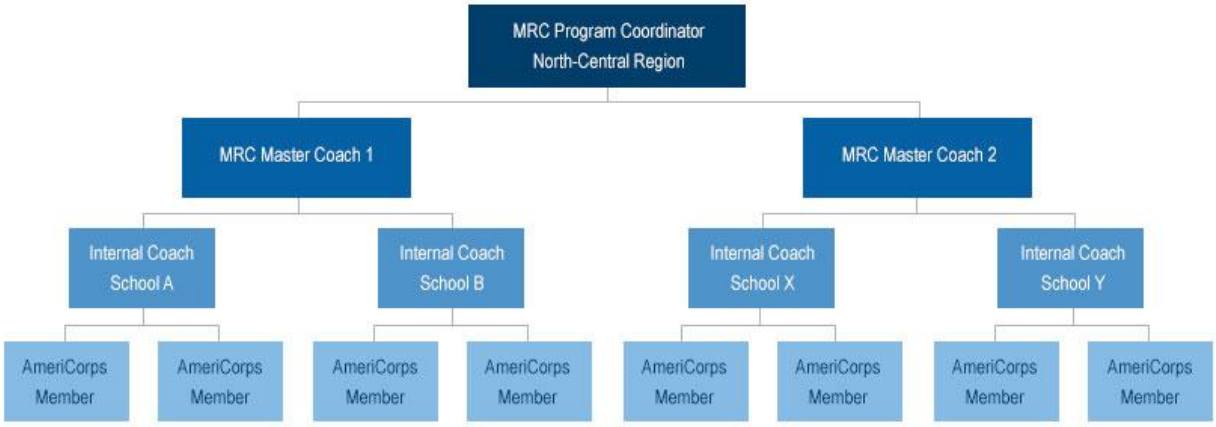
Supervisory Staff

The Internal Coaches and Master Coaches play important roles in Minnesota Reading Corps program implementation (see **Figure II.2** for an illustration of the complete Minnesota Reading Corps supervisory structure). An Internal Coach supports the implementation of the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program at each site and is a key member of the Minnesota Reading Corps team. The Internal Coach is a school employee who is trained to provide on-site literacy support, coaching, and oversight to Community Corps and Educator Corps members. The Internal Coach facilitates the lead teacher's implementation of the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program and integration of the Community Corps member into daily practice. In order to ensure fidelity to the Minnesota Reading Corps model, the Internal Coach conducts integrity observations of members as they assess students (three times per year) and implement interventions with students (once a month). The Internal Coach provides the member with feedback for continual improvement based on these observations. Throughout the school year, the Internal Coach works with assistance from the Master Coach to select appropriate Tier2 or 3 interventions for each eligible student and to determine if a student is ready to exit intervention. The Master and/or Internal Coaches also complete an Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) in the Fall and Spring to provide objective feedback and suggestions to the teaching team to improve the classroom's language and literacy environment. Another key component of the Internal Coach's duties is to ensure the integrity of the Literacy Rich Schedule.

The Internal Coach works closely with Minnesota Reading Corps program staff and school administration to address any concerns about member performance and to conduct disciplinary action if necessary. Minnesota Reading Corps estimates that the time commitment for Internal Coaches is 6-9 hours per member per month. The additional time commitment for required training is 56 hours for new PreK Internal coaches and 24 hours for returning PreK Internal coaches. [28]

[28] http://minnesotareadingcorps.org/sites/default/files/PreK%20Guide%20for%20Sites%2014-15.pdf

Figure II.2. Minnesota Reading Corps Supervisory Structure



The Master Coach is a literacy expert employed by the Minnesota Reading Corps who serves as a literacy consultant to the Internal Coach and member(s). The Master Coach supports the Internal Coach and the member in making decisions about student eligibility for Tier 2 or 3 interventions by reviewing benchmark IGDI data. The Master Coach also helps to ensure fidelity to the Minnesota Reading Corps model. The Master Coach visits schools at different frequencies throughout the year depending on the schools' degree of experience implementing the Minnesota Reading Corps program, ranging from once a month for schools that have recently implemented the program to three times a year for schools where the program is well-established. Visits last approximately one hour per member, during which the Master Coach, Internal Coach and member(s) examine student assessment data, discuss interventions choices, review student progress, and discuss implementation challenges.

For administrative issues, such as questions about training schedules and timesheets, the Internal Coach or member can contact their Minnesota Reading Corps Program Coordinator. The Program Coordinator also helps members answer questions about their community service requirement and requested leaves of absence. Program Coordinators also are to be notified about all member disciplinary issues.

E. Training

Each summer, the Minnesota Reading Corps hosts a multi-day Summer Institute for training returning and new Master Coaches, Internal Coaches, and AmeriCorps members.[29] ServeMinnesota and Minnesota Reading Corps staff orchestrates the organizational and administrative aspects of the Summer Institute, while Minnesota literacy experts conduct training sessions. This intensive, information-filled conference provides expert training in the evidence-based literacy interventions employed by the Minnesota Reading Corps and serves an important role in developing member, coach, and eventually, school adherence to the Minnesota Reading Corps model. At the Summer Institute, the members also meet with their Internal Coach, and sometimes Master Coach, with whom they will be working throughout the upcoming school year.

[29] Members attend all four days of the Summer Institute (one day orientation and three days of training). New Coaches attend three days, and returning Coaches attend one day.

During several intensive sessions at the Summer Institute, members learn the essential skills, knowledge, and tools needed to serve as effective literacy tutors. These sessions introduce members to the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program model, the Literacy Rich Schedule, the SEEDS approach to high quality adult-child interaction, the interventions used in the Tier 2 and 3 small group and one-to-one tutoring sessions, as well as the underlying research and theories supporting the interventions and program model. Importantly, members are provided with detailed *Literacy Handbooks* to serve as a constant resource for supporting program implementation. The *Handbook* provides an introduction to the Minnesota Reading Corps program, information on policies and procedures and service requirements, procedures for the benchmarking and progress monitoring of students, and specific direction and materials for implementing the Literacy Rich Schedule and conducting small group and one-to-one interventions. In addition, members are provided with online resources that mirror the contents of the *Literacy Handbook* and supplement it with other resources such as exemplar photos of a Literacy Rich Classroom, and videos of model interventions and best practices. Both the *Handbook* and website are intended to provide members with just-in-time support, as well as opportunities for continued professional development and skill refinement. At the Summer Institute, members who will be serving in PreK classrooms receive training on the SEEDS of Emergent Literacy approach, which serves as the pedagogical framework within which members and teachers create a literacy rich classroom environment.

The Summer Institute is the primary training venue not only for members, but also for Internal Coaches. At the Summer Institute each Internal Coach receives a comprehensive orientation to Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program, including program and early literacy background, intervention delivery, benchmarking and progress monitoring. During their training sessions, Internal Coaches also learn about their roles and responsibilities, including ensuring fidelity to the Minnesota Reading Corps model, orienting the member to the school, introducing school staff to the member, and coordinating school-based professional development opportunities for their members. Internal Coaches also are oriented to the layers of support provided by Minnesota Reading Corps, including the Master Coach and Program Coordinator.

In addition to the Summer Institute, PreK members participate in multiple smaller trainings throughout the school year. These supplemental trainings include additional training on SEEDS, administering and scoring student assessments, and RtI large and small group interventions. The trainings are generally one-day long and are held in multiple regional locations throughout the state. Each PreK site's Internal Coach is expected to attend the sessions with their PreK member(s).

F. Minnesota Reading Corps PreK Program Implementation

Implementation of tiered literacy instruction in the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program is predicated on clear expectations and responsibilities for the members, Internal Coaches, and Master Coaches. Throughout the year, Educator Corps and Community Corps members implement and support the Literacy Rich Schedule, complete activities that support implementation of the PreK model as measured by the ELLCO tool (e.g., organization of the classroom), engage families in literacy interventions (i.e., Talk, Read, and Write to Me!), participate in required Minnesota Reading Corps trainings (i.e., Summer Institute, SEEDS, Benchmark Assessments) and meetings (i.e., Lead Teacher Orientations, Member Meet Ups), conduct benchmark assessments (IGDI), and enter assessment data at predetermined intervals.

At the beginning of the school year (usually in August and September), the Educator Corps member or lead teacher and the Community Corps member prepare the classroom environment by setting up the classroom and focusing on books. They organize the book area and engage in quality book-reading. Throughout the school year, they phase-in daily implementation of

language and literacy practices to support preschool students' emergent literacy skills: enhancing the discourse climate (October); building vocabulary (November) and phonological awareness (December); establishing an environment for early writing (January); supporting children's writing (February); using environmental print (March); and supporting opportunities for extended conversation (April).[30] Each activity corresponds to an evidence-based element in the ELLCO tool, as discussed in the section below.

On a monthly basis the Internal Coach observes classroom activities and members' implementation of the large group, small group, and individual interventions, coaches the member on intervention integrity, and discusses monthly tasks and goals (e.g., Fall data collection for the Fall benchmark window, ELLCO task completion, SMART goals).[31] The Master Coach facilitates the Lead Teacher Orientation, data review meetings, the Member Meet-Up, and conducts site visits, observations and coaching sessions.

G. Assessment of Language and Literacy Practices in Minnesota Reading Corps PreK Classrooms

The Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program uses the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) tool to gather information about the quality of the language and literacy environment in the classroom by observing instructional activities, teacher-child interactions, and use of materials and classroom space.[32] The ELLCO tool is a validated observational measure designed to assess and monitor the quality of the classroom environment and literacy and language practices in PreK classrooms.[33] It is organized into two primary subscales examining the general classroom environment and the language and literacy environment. **Table II.1** presents the two subscales, five sections and 19 elements that comprise the ELLCO tool. Each section evaluates a particular characteristic of the classroom (e.g., classroom structure, books, language environment). Sections are comprised of three to five elements that assess specific aspects of the environment (e.g., discourse climate, organization of the book area, curriculum). Each element is rated on a five-point scale, ranging from exemplary to deficient (i.e., 5 is exemplary, 4 is strong, 3 is basic, 2 is inadequate, and 1 is deficient). The tool provides descriptive indicators to guide the assessor's evaluation and provide evidence for the ratings.

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[30] As described in the *2013-2014 Reading Corps Calendar* provided to all members and Internal Coaches during the 2013 Summer Institute.

[31] SMART goals are those that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely. Within the context of the Minnesota Reading Corps program, members are required to identify SMART goals, and Internal Coaches are required to discuss them with members on a monthly basis. This process helps to ensure integrity to the program model.

[32] Per the guidance in the Section 4: Literacy Rich Classroom in the *2013-2014 Reading Corps PreK Manual.*

[33] Smith, M.W., Brady, J.P., & Anastasopoulus, L. (2008). *Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Tool, Pre-K (ELLCO PreK)*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Table II.1. Structure of the ELLCO Tool

General Classroom Environment Subscale	Language and Literacy Subscale
Section I. Classroom Structure h. Organization of the classroom i. Content of the classroom j. Classroom management k. Personnel **Section II. Curriculum** l. Approaches to curriculum m. Opportunities for child choice and initiative n. Recognizing diversity in the classroom	**Section III. The Language Environment** m. Discourse climate n. Opportunities for extended conversation o. Efforts to build vocabulary p. Phonological awareness **Section IV. Books and Book Reading** q. Organization of the book area r. Characteristics of books s. Books for learning t. Approaches to book reading u. Quality of book reading **Section V. Print and Early Writing** v. Early writing environment w. Support for children's writing **x.** Environmental print

Source: User's Guide to the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Pre-K Tool (2008). Brookes Publishing Co.

Internal Coaches or Master Coaches complete the ELLCO observation on every classroom in which a Minnesota Reading Corps member serves.[34] Observations occur twice each school year, in the Fall and Spring. All Minnesota Reading Corps classrooms are expected to achieve a basic level (3) of performance, reflecting adequate implementation of Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program expectations. If a classroom achieves "exemplary" ratings (i.e., a perfect score of "5" on all 19 elements), then the Internal and Master Coaches may elect not to conduct a Spring ELLCO (although they are expected to continue to reflect on classroom performance).[35]

[34] ELLCO training was provided to the PreK Coaches during the SEEDS training session at the 2013 Summer Institute.

[35] Per the guidance in the Section 4: Literacy Rich Classroom in the *2013-2014 Reading Corps PreK Manual.*

III. Process Assessment Research Questions and Methods

A. Research Questions

The original goals of the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK-3 process assessment completed in 2012-13 were to identify program factors that contribute to student change, understand AmeriCorps members' transformational process, and identify program features associated with positive student outcomes. While the NORC evaluation team was able to gain a clear understanding of the successful strategies employed by the Minnesota Reading Corps K-3 program model during the original process assessment,[36] we concluded that further study was required to be able to discern the different staffing models (i.e., combinations of Educator Corps and Community Corps members) employed by the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program and whether different student outcomes resulted.

Thus, in 2013-14, we conducted a second phase of the process assessment (Phase II Extension) to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program as it is implemented in classrooms at community-based preschools, Head Start centers, and public schools that are participating in the quasi-experimental PreK program outcome evaluation. An additional goal of the Phase II process assessment was to better understand the role of the Community Corps member in supporting language and literacy instructional practices and development of preschool students' emergent literacy skills.

The key research questions for the Phase II process assessment are noted below.

1. How is the program achieving its immediate, intermediate, and long-term outcomes? How does the program's design and administration lead to the achievement of these target outcomes?
    a. What aspects of language and literacy instruction pertain among highly rated Minnesota Reading Corps program sites? In what areas do sites not perform well based on rating of inadequate or deficient? How do the ELLCO Pre-K rating relate to student outcomes?
    b. Does adherence to the literacy-rich schedule [37]vary by membership type (i.e., Educator Corps, Community Corps) and role in the classroom (i.e., lead teacher, assistant teacher, volunteer)?
    c. Are there observable differences in any dimension of the classroom environment or language and literacy practices that would explain differences in student outcomes? [38]
2. Are there characteristics of AmeriCorps members that are particularly effective with service recipients (i.e., students)?

[36] Hafford, C., Markovitz, C., Hernandez, M, et al. (February 2013). *Process Assessment of the Minnesota Reading Corps Program.* (Prepared under contract to the Corporation for National and Community Service). Chicago, IL: NORC at the University of Chicago.

[37] "Adherence to the Literacy Rich Schedule" is operationalized through the scores obtained on the ELLCO General Classroom Environment and Language and Literacy subscales

[38] Including all dimensions of classroom structure, curriculum, the language environment, books and book reading, print and early writing.

a. Should dramatic differences emerge in the ELLCO PreK ratings by member type, what skills and supports are needed for the Community Corps member to be successful (above and beyond those provided to the Educator Corps member)?"

3. Which findings and lessons learned from the Minnesota Reading Corps can be applied to other models and/or programs? Are there characteristics that are suitable for similar reading tutoring programs to replicate?

The data collection methods used and analysis of program activities and interventions at Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program and comparison sites were designed: 1) to facilitate understanding about whether and how program implementation factors contribute to student outcomes; and 2) to enable identification of promising program features that are suitable for replication by other similar reading tutoring programs.

B. Methods

To explore these research questions, the evaluation team intended to conduct qualitative data collection activities with a purposive sample of 18 preschool sites (i.e., 9 Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program sites and 9 non-Minnesota Reading Corps comparison sites)[39] that participated in the PreK outcome evaluation. However, we were unable to visit one of the comparison sites and thus visited a total of 17 sites.[40] Data collection for the PreK Process Assessment was conducted in two phases between August-September 2013 and April-May 2014. The principal data collection methods were: 1) on-site observations using a project-developed Classroom Language and Literacy Observation tool modelled on the ELLCO [41]; and 2) semi-structured interviews with Educator Corps and Community Corps members, Internal Coaches, Directors/Principals at the program sites, and with lead teachers and Directors/Principals at the comparison sites. The evaluation team also consulted Minnesota Reading Corps PreK training manuals, the ELLCO User's Guide, and other Minnesota Reading Corps program materials.

Site Selection

The purposive sample of program and comparison community-based preschools, Head Start centers, and public schools were selected from a larger sample of sites participating on the PreK outcome evaluation. They were selected to represent a variety of urbanicities (i.e., urban, suburban, rural) and types of sites (i.e., public school, Head Start center, community-based program) within each QED stratum. Sites in the program and comparison groups were matched on these variables, as well as: ages of children served (3-5 year olds or 4-5 year olds); poverty as measured by school's percentage of students eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) or by Census tract and family structure using American Community Survey (ACS) data when this data was not available; percentage of students who were Dual Language Learners (DLL); total student enrollment at the time of recruitment call; total licensed capacity for enrollment; whether teachers were trained in SEEDS; and student-to-teacher ratio. The 18 sampled sites are presented in **Table III.1**.

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[39] Hereafter referred to as "program" and "comparison" sites, respectively.

[40] Due to a temporary stop work order, we were unable to complete our visit to this site. Therefore, only 8 of the 9 planned site visits to comparison sites were completed.

[41] Described in detail below, and included in Appendix A.

Table III.1. Program and Comparison Sites

Program Sites	Comparison Sites
Site 1	Site 10
Site 5	Site 13
Site 2	Site 14
Site 3	Site NV [42]
Site 4	Site 12
Site 6	Site 17
Site 7	Site 16
Site 8	Site 11
Site 9	Site 15

Classroom Observations and ELLCO Analysis

The evaluation team conducted observations of classroom activity at the program and comparison sites using a tool specifically developed to guide our observation of the activities of the Literacy Rich Schedule and their alignment with the corresponding evidence-based elements of the ELLCO tool, as shown in **Table III.2** below. (The project developed observation tool, referred to as the Classroom Language and Literacy Observation Tool, is provided in **Appendix A**). All six members of the evaluation team that conducted the observations were trained on ELLCO administration during the Minnesota Reading Corps Summer Institute in August 2013 and prior to conducting the Fall 2013 visits. In addition, the project team held an internal refresher training prior to conducting the Spring 2014 observations.

To schedule the one-day visits, we spoke with the Internal Coach and Program Liaison at each program and comparison site, respectively. Two-person teams visited 15 sites. One senior member of the evaluation team conducted two visits independently. Each visit began by collecting information about the classroom environment prior to the children's arrival. This was followed by a 2-hour observation of the daily schedule and routines. Using the project-developed Classroom Language and Literacy Observation tool (modelled on the ELLCO), we completed several activities: drew maps of the classroom; described the general classroom environment; documented literacy and language activities in which the preschool students engaged; whether students were engaged in large-, small-group or individual activities; the role of the adults in leading and/or supporting the activity (i.e., Educator Corps and/or lead teachers, Community Corps member at the program sites; lead teachers and other staff at the comparison sites); the materials used (including books); and the duration of the activity.

At the conclusion of the visit, each team met off-site to review their observations and assign numerical ratings to each ELLCO section (as shown in **Table II.1**), conduct inter-rater reliability checks, and agree on a final score. Following ELLCO scoring guidelines provided by the Minnesota Reading Corps, scores were rounded down to the nearest whole number. At the conclusion of both rounds of site visits, the project team met to debrief and compare scores and observations.

[42] Due to a temporary stop work order, we were unable to complete our visit to this site. Therefore, only 8 of the 9 planned site visits to comparison sites were completed. (NV is "not visited").

We entered the ELLCO scores for each of the 19 components for the nine program and eight comparison sites into a database and conducted secondary analyses. We examined the mean scores obtained by the program and comparison sites on the ELLCO's two subscales, General Classroom Environment and Language and Literacy,[43] to compare their performance and then ranked the sites from high to low on these key indicators. Scores for all 19 ELLCO elements (identified in **Table II.1**) were arrayed to examine similarities and differences in their performance. To examine language and literacy practice more deeply, we examined the most frequently occurring scores for certain ELLCO elements from the Language and Literacy Subscale. These analyses pertain to the Language Environment section (elements include discourse climate, opportunities for extended conversation, efforts to build vocabulary, and phonological awareness), as well as Books and Book Reading section (elements include approaches to book reading, quality of book reading). The qualitative data from the observations (which featured language and literacy practices observed in the preschool classrooms) were arrayed to discern similarities and differences in program and comparison sites' adherence to the Literacy Rich Schedule.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Following the observations, we conducted semi-structured, in-person interviews with Educator Corps and Community Corps members, Internal Coaches, and Directors/Principals at the program sites and with lead teachers and Directors/Principals at the comparison sites. For the comparison sites we used the existing OMB-approved instruments that were originally developed for the Minnesota Reading Corps Feasibility Study. Topics addressed were staff background; selection, training, and coaching; program activities (including assessments and interventions); implementation facilitators and challenges; organizational supports; and results and lessons learned.

Analysis of the qualitative data focused on the program sites only. Statements from respondents at these nine sites were coded using pre-determined categories corresponding to the question topics (e.g., role in selection process, frequency of coaching, lessons learned). Responses within a site were compared and contrasted across respondents and triangulated. Across sites, similarities and differences were identified, as applicable. In addition, we categorized the observation and interview data in tables and matrices in order to determine relationships between key characteristics (e.g., site type, staffing model) and the ELLCO ratings, which facilitated the identification of new insights concerning the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program and its implementation.

[43] These are the two scales on the ELLCO. As shown in Table II.1, the General Classroom Environment subscale addresses classroom structure and curriculum; the Language and Literacy subscale addresses language environment, books and book reading, and print and early writing. Within each section there are 3-5 components.

Table II.2. Minnesota Reading Corps PreK Literacy Rich Schedule and ELLCO evidence-based elements

PreK Literacy Rich Daily Schedule		
What & When	**Daily Schedule Routine**	**ELLCO Evidence Based Element**
Arrival	■ Greet Children	1: Organization of the classroom 3: Classroom Management 8: Discourse Climate 9: Opportunities for Extended Conversations 10: Efforts to Build Vocabulary 11: Phonological Awareness
Sign-in	■ Write Name	11: Phonological Awareness 17: Early Writing Environment 18: Support for Children's Writing
Meal Time	■ "Strive for 5" conversation using theme and/or functional vocabulary	8: Discourse Climate 9: Opportunities for Extended Conversations 10: Efforts to Build Vocabulary 11: Phonological Awareness
Large Group [44]		8: Discourse Climate 9: Opportunities for Extended Conversations 10: Efforts to Build Vocabulary 11: Phonological Awareness 15: Approaches to Book Reading 16: Quality of Book Reading
Daily Message	■ Write and share a daily message	17: Early Writing Environment 18: Support for Children's Writing 19. Environmental Print
Repeated Read Aloud	■ Theme related read aloud ■ Target Vocabulary daily	8: Discourse Climate 9: Opportunities for Extended Conversations 10: Efforts to Build Vocabulary 11: Phonological Awareness 15: Approaches to Book Reading 16: Quality of Book Reading
Tier 1 Small Group	■ Read Theme Related Book-week 1 & 2 ■ Read Rhyme/Alliteration Book or Nursery Rhyme-week 3& 4	8: Discourse Climate 9: Opportunities for Extended Conversations 10: Efforts to build vocabulary 11: Phonological Awareness 15: Approaches to Book Reading 16: Quality of Book Reading
Journal Weekly	■ Journal-draw or write ideas	17: Early Writing Environment 18: Support for Children's Writing
Choice Time Active Learning	■ Theme-related vocabulary props in 3 or more centers (dramatic play or writing center) ■ Provide opportunities to Talk, Read & Write	1: Organization of the classroom 2: Contents of the Classroom 3: Classroom Management 5: Approaches to Curriculum 6: Opportunities for Child Choice and Initiative 9: Opportunities for Extended Conversations 10: Efforts to build vocabulary
Tier 2 or Tier 3	■ Interventions done daily	10: Efforts to build vocabulary 11: Phonological Awareness 18: Support for Children's Writing

[44] The six ELLCO evidence based elements noted for the Large Group activity are not included in the Minnesota Reading Corps version of this form. The evaluation team included these elements in our Classroom Language and Literacy Observation Tool in order to structure our observations of language and literacy activities during Large Group (whole class) instruction in both program and comparison classrooms.

PreK Literacy Rich Daily Schedule		
What & When	**Daily Schedule Routine**	**ELLCO Evidence Based Element**
Big 5 Transitions	■ Vocabulary/Oral language ■ Letter names ■ Letter sounds ■ Rhyming ■ Alliteration	10: Efforts to build vocabulary 11: Phonological Awareness
Family	■ Talk, Read, and Write with Me! done weekly	18: Support for Children's Writing

C. Limitations of the Study

The process assessment identified important implementation issues, provided information on how the PreK programs achieved observed results, and draws lessons about service delivery facilitators and challenges that can improve the program and its replication.

Limitations of the evaluation team's observations in the program and comparison classrooms must be noted. The findings in this report are based on a purposive sample of nine program sites and eight comparison sites and provide only a limited perspective of language and literacy practice as they occurred on the day of the observation. Moreover, the on-site observations and interviews occurred in two phases, in Fall 2013 and Spring 2014. The Fall 2013 data collection occurred over a three-week period (between August and September 2013), which coincided with the start of the school year for five of the program sites. Thus, the observations were conducted as the children, staff, and members, were settling into their PreK classrooms and routines. As Fall benchmarking was only scheduled for late September/early October, Tier 2 and Tier 3 children had not yet been identified; therefore, Tier 2 and Tier 3 (i.e., small group and 1-1 interventions) were not observed at the sites visited in the Fall. In contrast, the remaining four program site visits and eight comparison site visits were conducted in Spring 2013 towards the end of the school year. In some cases the visit occurred very late in the school year where classes may have been less likely to focus on literacy instruction. Thus, there may be important implementation differences regarding the performance of program and comparison sites, classroom activity, and preschool students socialization and maturation due to the timing of the observations (i.e., at the start and end of the school year).

All members of the project team were trained to administer the ELLCO at the 2013 Minnesota Reading Corps Summer Institute, participated in a refresher training in 2014 conducted by NORC, and engaged in two rounds of observations. Despite this, we recognize that our observations and scores may be less accurate than those of a seasoned Internal or Master Coach. Our observations were not biased by previous visits or relationships with the staff, but we may have also failed to notice elements that an educator who is in a preschool every day may not.

A further limitation of the study is the self-reported nature of the qualitative interview data that informs this report. Although triangulation across respondents was used wherever possible, our findings and conclusions could not be independently verified by researchers.

Finally, the purposive sample size of nine program sites and eight comparison sites is not necessarily representative of the entire population of similar sites; thus, limiting the generalizability of our findings and conclusions.

IV. Findings

In this chapter we present the key findings from the 17 site visits conducted with the program and comparison sites. First, we present key site characteristics, staffing and classroom practices. This is followed by the findings for the program and comparison sites stemming from the analysis of the ELLCO scores for the General Classroom Environment and the Language and Literacy Environment subscales. This section also presents findings related to similarities and differences in instructional practices, including staffing, curricula, and assessments. Next, we present findings from the observational data related to language and literacy practices in the program and comparison classrooms.

The remainder of the chapter focuses on implementation of the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK model at the program sites. We focus on the role of the Community Corps in the classroom, their qualifications and characteristics, training and supports, and coaching and supervision. Lastly, we present findings on implementation facilitators and barriers.

A. Characteristics of Program and Comparison Sites

The project team visited program and comparison PreK programs operating in public schools, Head Start centers, and community-based preschools. **Table IV.1** (in Appendix C) provides information on the location of the site; year of Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program implementation; the number of Educator Corps and Community Corps members; the percent of the student population qualifying for Free or Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL), as a proxy for poverty status; the PreK student enrollment; percent of Dual Language Learners (DLL) in the classrooms; class size; and ages of students in the classroom.

Key Site Characteristics

Program and comparison sites were compared on key characteristics of the student population, including the percentage eligible for FRLP, the percentage DLL, class size, and ages of children in the classrooms. Among the sites that the evaluation team visited, our findings indicate that the program sites served more low-income students than the comparison sites, based on the percentage FRPL (75.1% and 50.9%, respectively). Program sites also served more DLL students than comparison sites (23.7% and 15.7%, respectively). Hmong and Spanish were the most frequently spoken languages in classrooms in addition to English. The average class size of the program and comparison sites was comparable (16.6 and 15.6 students, respectively). Most of the program and comparison sites visited served 4- and 5-year old students compared to 3-year old students.

Staffing and Classroom Practices

Similarities *and* differences between the program and comparison sites were found with regard to the Pre-K staffing, curricula, and assessments for the classrooms. We provide the findings from our analysis of each of these areas of staffing and classroom practices below.

Staffing

With regard to staffing, we found that that the presence of teacher aides/assistant teachers in program and comparison classrooms was equivalent. The total number of adults who worked with children in the classroom ranged from two to six at the program sites and from two to five at the comparison sites. The adult-to-child ratio appeared slightly more favorable in the program classrooms than in the comparison classrooms (1:5 and 1:6 respectively). As shown in **Table IV.2** (in Appendix B), each

observed program classroom had one Community Corps member serving. The members served in full time positions at seven of the nine sites visited and in part time positions at the remaining two sites. Five sites placed a combination of a Community Corps and an Educator Corps member (current or previous) within the same classroom. Two sites had the Internal Coach for the PreK program serving as the lead teacher in the classroom with the Community Corps member. Seven sites had an Internal Coach serving outside the immediate classroom.

Pre-K Curricula Guiding Instruction

The Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program is a curriculum neutral intervention; therefore, each preschool we visited was implementing its own selected curriculum with its students. The "Creative Curriculum" by Teaching Strategies was the most common curriculum used in both program and comparison classrooms. It was used in about half of the sites visited (i.e., 4 program sites and 5 comparison sites). The "Creative Curriculum" is the most widely used core curriculum in Head Start centers and is one of the most widely used in early childhood education.

The remaining sites employed a variety of curricula in their classrooms. Two of the program sites, located in the same school district, also used a socio-emotional curriculum entitled "Second Step for Early Childhood-Grade 8." One of the comparison sites used "Splash into PreK" as a secondary curriculum. The various types of curricula used by the program and comparison sites are presented in **Table IV-3**. We found that implementation of the literacy-rich schedule is adaptable to any curriculum.

Assessment Practices

In terms of assessments, and in keeping with Minnesota Reading Corps practice, all of the program classrooms used the Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDIs) to assess and monitor student progress. The IGDIs are a set of standardized, individually administered assessments that are used to evaluate children's emergent literacy skills. These formative assessments are used in the RtI framework for data-driven decision making. Fluency within three key areas of emergent literacy are assessed: (1) rhyming (Phonological Awareness); (2) picture naming (Vocabulary); and (3) alliteration (Phonological Awareness). The IGDIs also include assessments of letter sound fluency and letter name fluency for 4- and 5-year olds, or letter name recognition for 3 year olds. None of the comparison sites used the IGDIs to conduct student assessments.

Among the comparison sites, seven of the eight classrooms visited used a variety of assessments (i.e., teacher observation, parent questionnaire, direct child assessment) with varying degrees of reliability and validity to measure children's academic skills and socio-emotional development. Assessments included screeners, formative assessments, and summative assessments. Two schools used more than one assessment tool. One school did not conduct student assessments as part of their instructional program. The assessments used (along with the number of sites using them) were: BRIGANCE Early Childhood Screen (1); CORE Observation Record (1); DROP (1); Minneapolis Preschool Screening (1); Ages and Stages Questionnaire (1); Pearson Work Sampling System (2); a Teacher-created assessment (1); Teaching Strategies GOLD (1); and the University of Chicago Impact Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress (STEP) Literary Assessment (1).

Thus, all of the Minnesota Reading Corps classrooms, most of the comparison classrooms were conducting student assessments. However, the extent to which the classrooms used the data to inform instruction varied. Only the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program sites used the IGDIs to inform instruction.

B. Similarities and Differences between Program and Comparison Sites

In this section we present findings for the program and comparison sites based on the analysis of the ELLCO subscales and elements. We first provide findings on the ELLCO subscale scores and then we provide the ratings by site type (i.e., public school, Head Start center, community-based preschool). Having examined similarities and differences in instructional practices, we present findings related to the Language Environment and Approaches to Book Reading sections of the ELLCO specifically. The actual ratings are provided in **Table IV.4** (in Appendix B).

ELLCO Subscale and Section Ratings[45]

General Classroom Environment and Language and Literacy scores

> The program sites scored higher on the ELLCO subscales measuring the General Classroom Environment and Language and Literacy practices.

Analyses of the ELLCO data indicate that program sites scored higher than comparison sites on both the General Classroom Environment subscale and Language and Literacy subscale. The General Classroom Environment Subscale focuses on two sections: 1) classroom structure; and 2) curriculum. The Language and Literacy Subscale focuses on three sections: 1) language environment; 2) books and book reading; and 3) print and early writing.

The average General Classroom Environment subscale score for the program sites was 4.1 (strong) and the average score for the comparison sites was 3.3 (basic). The average Language and Literacy subscale score for the program sites was 4.0 (strong) and the average score for the comparison sites was 2.8 (inadequate).[46]

Findings indicate that the program sites have implemented "strong" classroom structures and approaches to curricula that support children's language and literacy learning. In contrast, we find that the comparison sites were rated as "inadequate." There was limited evidence that the comparison sites implemented basic classroom structures and approaches to curricula that support children's language and literacy learning.

Differences in ECLLO Subscale Ratings by Site Type

> The program sites implemented "stronger" classroom structures and curriculum approaches than the comparison sites.

Differences were found between the program and comparison sites by site type (i.e., public school, Head Start center, community-based preschool). On average, the program sites achieved higher scores on the General Classroom Environment and Language and Literacy subscales than their comparable comparison site across all site types. Program sites were rated "strong" and "basic" whereas the comparison sites were rated as "basic" or "inadequate."

In general, the five *public* preschool program sites scored higher on the General Classroom Environment (4.37) than the three *Head Start* (3.76) program sites and one *community-based* (3.57) program site.[47] Similarly, the five *public* preschool program

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[45] As noted in Table II.1, the ELLCO is organized into two subscales, the General Classroom Environment Subscale and the Language and Literacy Subscale. Each subscale is organized into sections (i.e., domains).

[46] As explained previously, ELLCO scores are rounded down, thus a score of 2.8 would be rounded down to 2, which is an "inadequate" rating.

[47] The evaluation team visited only one community-based site that was implementing the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program.

sites scored higher on the Language and Literacy (4.23) subscales than the three *Head Start* (3.81) program sites and one *community-based* (3.50) program site.

Differences in ELLCO Ratings for the Language Environment Section

> Program and comparison sites engaged students in activities to foster PreK students' language and literacy skills, but the program sites did so with greater frequency and intensity, using evidence-based methods.

Minnesota Reading Corps has identified a set of practices and behaviors that educators should engage in to create an environment that fosters development of early language and literacy skills. Our analysis focused on the four ELLCO elements related to practices that foster development of these skills: Discourse Climate, Opportunities for Extended Conversation, Efforts to Build Vocabulary, Phonological Awareness. A positive discourse climate is fostered by teachers actively engaging children in conversation, responding to child-initiated interactions, modeling and demonstrating good listening skills, and getting down to a child's level when listening. Similarly, teachers should provide students with opportunities for extended conversation, by using a "Strive for 5" strategy in different group settings, using mealtimes for extended conversations, and asking open-ended questions. Efforts to build vocabulary should be built into all facets of the classroom environment through "word walls" and books, and in one-on-one interactions between teachers and students, through readings and vocabulary cards, etc. Developing an awareness of sound (phonological awareness) is embedded into playful routines, such as syllable clapping and nursery rhymes, and using transition songs to move from activity to activity.

A mode analysis[48] was conducted to determine the most frequently occurring value for key elements of the Literacy Rich Schedule[49] that related to the language environment in Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program and comparison sites. We found that program sites most frequently received a score of 4 (strong) for all four elements constituting the Language Environment section (Discourse Climate, Opportunities for Extended Conversation, Efforts to Build Vocabulary, Phonological Awareness). The lowest score received was a 3 (basic), and the highest a 5 (exemplary). One public school received a rating of 5 for all four elements. However, among the comparison sites, the most frequent score for Discourse Climate, Opportunities for Extended Conversation, and Phonological Awareness was a 3 (basic). Discourse Climate scores ranged between a 3 (basic) and 4 (strong). For Opportunities for Extended Conversations and Phonological Awareness, scores ranged between a 1 (deficient) and 4 (strong). The most frequently occurring score for Efforts to Build Vocabulary was a 2 (inadequate), with scores ranging between a 1 (deficient) and 4 (strong).

Both program and comparison sites engaged preschool students in positive activities to support their use of language. However, in contrast to the comparison sites, the staff in the program sites engaged in more *intentional* language and literacy practices that supported preschool students' emergent skills. Based on our observations, the staff fostered a positive discourse climate that actively engaged children in conversations that facilitated the mutual exchange of ideas, opinions, and feelings. During choice time, for example, teachers and the member at one program site engaged in play at the various stations set up for children. They asked questions relating to the children's play (i.e. "What is your favorite kind of pizza?), asked questions about children's

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[48] Given the small sample size (17 sites), using the mode provided a more informative analysis on site specific similarities and differences between the program and comparison sites. A single score, whether high or low, could affect the mean.

[49] The Literacy Rich Schedule is designed to provide children with daily routines that embed early literacy predictors into fun and meaningful learning. The Literacy Schedule is presented in Table III.2.

families, and elicited definitions of the toys' functions (i.e., "What does your truck do?"). In addition, the staff took advantage of opportunities to engage children in extended conversations (on teacher-selected or child-initiated topics) that were designed to encourage children's oral language development and learning. For example, after a student read aloud the daily message "Bugs, Frogs, and Toads!" the teacher at one site posed the question, "What is the connection between bugs to frogs and toads?" After the students answered, she built on their response, and discussed how the children in the classroom all come from different places, and used a map to show children's heritage across the globe.

Although we observed staff at both the program and comparison sites engaging preschool students in conversation, the staff at the program sites made more purposeful efforts to build vocabulary by introducing new and challenging words, eliciting word meanings from children, and acknowledging their experimentation with new words. For example, during mealtime at one site a student spilled water on his paper towel. As the water began to spread, the lead teacher took the opportunity to discuss the concept of "absorption" with the child, working with the child to define the word and talk about the concept of absorption. At the same table, another student heard the word "frustrating" used, and asked the Community Corps member about the word. The member then discussed the meaning with the student, and helped the student to generate a definition of the word.

Program sites also engaged in more formal and informal opportunities for children to build phonological awareness through listening and use of language sounds abstracted from their meaning or written form. Rhyming and letter sound review (i.e. exaggerating the sounds of certain letters in a word during book reading, or during a review of vocabulary words) were activities frequently incorporated into the repeated read aloud and daily message activities. As well, many sites used songs, such as "Letters have sounds," during transitions to talk about the sound of a letter of the teacher's choosing. For example, during two large group sessions, teachers led a letter name to letter sound matching game, and a song to repeat each student's name and count the syllables in each name. During small group, a Community Corps member led an alliteration game with students.

Differences in ELLCO Ratings for Approaches to Book Reading

> Book reading was observed in all of the program and comparison sites; however, the quality of this activity tended to be higher at program sites.

An additional mode analysis was conducted to determine the most frequently occurring value for key elements regarding books and book reading in the program and comparison classrooms. Our analysis focused on two ELLCO elements related to practices that foster early engagement with books and book reading opportunities: Approaches to Book Reading and Quality of Book Reading. Minnesota Reading Corps emphasizes the active engagement with reading throughout the school day. Such approaches include both teacher-initiated and child-initiated activities. For example, the teacher engages the students with a daily message or selects reading materials focused on a particular theme; students read aloud what they have written during journaling work or when labelling artwork and objects with their names or new vocabulary words. To enrich the quality of book reading, teachers introduce new vocabulary, higher order thinking skills, book and print concepts while reading in large and small groups or in individual interactions. They also select books that relate to a classroom theme, engage students' interests, and vary in difficulty of the text (e.g., wordless, labelled, first reader) and graphics (e.g., illustrations, photos, cartoons).

For Approaches to Book Reading, all nine program sites received a score of 4 (strong), indicating that book reading is an integral part of the preschool classroom experience and occurs in a variety of settings and groupings. Among the comparison sites, the scores for Approaches to Book Reading varied, ranging from 1 (deficient) to 4 (strong). Although the most frequent score

received was a 4, only four of the comparison sites achieved this score. The other four sites received scores of 3 (basic), 2 (inadequate), and 1 (deficient). For the Quality of Book Reading element, the most frequently occurring score among the program sites was a 5 (exemplary, 4 sites) *and* 4 (strong, 4 sites). The program site scores ranged between 3 (basic) and 5 (exemplary). However, for comparison sites, the most frequently received score was 3 (basic) for Quality of Book Reading (3 sites). The lowest score received was a zero (deficient, indicating book reading was not observed at one site) and the highest was a 5 (exemplary, at one site only).

For all of the program sites and some of the comparison sites, we found that the PreK classroom teachers and instructional staff incorporated book reading as an integral part of children's daily classroom experience. At every site visited besides one, at least one book reading took place during large group time. At several sites, large group book reading took place twice during the day, and at two program sites, additional book reading-specific time was included in the daily schedule. We observed striking examples of staff engaging preschool students in "dialogic reading" (i.e., reading that engages children in conversation), which is an effective way to improve oral language.[50] Dialogic reading, also known as "book sharing," engages children in actively participating in book reading though conversation about the content of the book, prediction of story later events and potential subplots, as well as connection of story themes to a child's everyday life.

At one program site, the lead teacher used a variety of strategies during two book readings that were conducted during large group time. After reviewing vocabulary related to the first book, the teacher began to read the story, stopping to acknowledge words that rhyme. First, the teacher modeled a rhyming pair, elicited student response to pairs ("Raise your hand if you think [word] and [word] rhyme, or if you think [word] and [word] rhyme!"), and then asked for children to help define a new word that they come across in the story. During the second reading, a book the students had read on a previous school day, the teacher used the vocabulary cards from the word wall to guide a discussion about the order of events that took place in the story. At another program site, the lead teacher (a former Educator Corps member) led a book reading about "Feelings." Each page featured an image of a child and a word describing the child's expression: grumpy, sad, shy, proud, surprised, scared, thoughtful, sleepy. The teacher invited individual students to describe an occasion when they felt a certain way (e.g., sad – "I miss my Dad"; proud – "I did something cool"), provided positive affirmation, and then encouraged all the children to respond in chorus, balancing both individual attention to the students and their contributions with a group-oriented reading.

The scores on both ELLCO elements of book reading tended to align with each other. Program and comparison sites with "strong" Approaches to Book Reading also had "strong" Quality of Book Reading. Similarly, the three lowest scoring comparison sites had low scores on both reading elements.

[50] http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/interventionreport.aspx?sid=135

Differences in ELLCO Ratings by Minnesota Reading Corps Staffing Model

> Program sites with the highest ELLCO subscale scores had a Community Corps member paired with a lead teacher who was also the Internal Coach. These program sites also had a low Internal Coach to Community Corps member ratio.

As noted above, the project team observed three different staffing models in the nine program classrooms visited: (1) Community Corps member only (2 sites); (2) Community Corps member with a lead teacher currently or previously serving as an Educator Corps member (5 sites); and (3) a Community Corps Member with a lead teacher serving as the site's Internal Coach (2 sites).[51] We examined the staffing models in relationship to the scores obtained on the ELLCO General Classroom Environment and the Language and Literacy subscales. As shown in **Table IV.5** (in Appendix C), among the five program sites that scored a 4 or higher (i.e., strong) on both ELLCO subscales, the staffing model at the top two sites had a Community Corps member paired with the Internal Coach as lead teacher in the classroom. The other three sites had both a Community Corps and an Educator Corps member (past or present) serving in the classroom (i.e., 1 past, 2 present). The lowest scoring site had only a Community Corps member serving in the classroom under the auspices of a lead teacher who had not previously been either a Member or Internal Coach.

Moreover, we found a relationship between the Internal Coach-to-Community Corps member ratio (IC:CCM) and the average scores attained on the subscales. As shown in **Table IV.5**, as the IC:CCM ratio decreases, the higher are these average ELLCO scores. Especially noteworthy is the relationship between the ratio and the scores at two sites where Internal Coaches also served as lead teachers (1:1). At these two sites, the IC:CCM ratios were smaller than the ratios at the seven sites at which Internal Coaches did not serve in an additional role, such as a lead teacher. Moreover, the two sites that had lead teachers as the Internal Coaches in the classroom, ranked first and second on the average subscale scores. In contrast, the IC:CCM ratios at two sites (1:8 and 1:9) were among the highest of all Minnesota Reading Corps PreK sites, and these two sites ranked eighth and ninth on the same ELLCO scores, respectively. We found that the lower the ratio between the Internal Coach and the Community Corps member, the higher the score on the ELLCO subscales. The lowest ratios were found where the Internal Coach was the lead teacher in the same classroom with the Community Corps member.

C. Language and Literacy Practices in Program and Comparison Classrooms

Findings from the qualitative observational data for the program and comparison sites are presented in **Table IV.4** (in Appendix C). Our analysis points to more intentional engagement with literacy and language by students and adults in the program classrooms as the reason for these apparent differences in the ELLCO ratings described in the section above. A clear distinction was observed between the program and comparison sites with regard to embedding language and literacy in all components of the preschool schedule and more intentional efforts to foster a classroom environment that supports opportunities for students' engagement and practice with letters, words, books, sounds, and writing.

As described earlier, the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK Literacy Rich Schedule provides teachers with a structured set of evidence-based oral language and literacy activities and routines that when implemented regularly and intentionally are designed to improve student outcomes. As such, each classroom's day is structured around a Literacy Rich Schedule that is integrated

[51] For the Phase II process assessment we did not observe a classroom in which only an Educator Corps member was present. However, in the Phase I process assessment one of the eight PreK sites visited did have Educator Corps members only serving in the classrooms

with the school's curriculum. The schedule includes 12 fun and meaningful learning activities, in order: Arrival, Sign-in, Meal Time, Large Group, Daily Message, Repeated Read Aloud, Tier 1 Small Group, Journal (weekly), Choice Time/Active Learning, Tier 2 or Tier 3 Small Group, Big 5 transitions, and Family (through Talk, Read, and Write with Me!). Within and between each scheduled activity, teachers and members strive to integrate Minnesota Reading Corps expected routines, including "Strive for 5" conversations using an overarching theme, functional vocabulary, and "Big 5 Transitions."

> Program sites embedded more language and literacy into all daily activities—including meal time, transitions, choice time and small groups—than the comparison sites.

We found that program and comparison classrooms followed similar daily schedules and routines, such as arrival, sign-in, meal time, daily message, large group activity or circle time, and choice time where children pursued independent activities. However, the project team observed more *literacy-oriented* schedule components in program classrooms than in comparison classrooms. Notably, these literacy-oriented schedule components included "Strive for 5" conversations during Meal Time, use of theme-related props in three or more activity centers during Choice Time/Active Learning, as well as opportunities for preschool students to talk, read, and write. During snack time at one site, two of the teachers engaged the students in a discussion and asked students about their home life. In addition, the classroom used snack time to have a "star of the week" student share things about his or herself with the whole class.

In addition, program sites engaged in "Big 5 Transitions" as students moved from one part of the Literacy Rich Schedule to another activity. Members and teachers engaged the children in an activity focused on one of four skills (oral language, phonological awareness, letter names, and letter sounds), such as rhyming games or letter and sound songs. Rhyming and letter sound review (i.e., exaggerating the sounds of certain letters in a word during the book reading, or during a review of vocabulary words) were activities frequently incorporated into the Repeated Read Aloud and Daily Message activities. Many sites used songs, such as "Colors have Names" or "Letters have Sounds" during transitions from one activity to another to talk about the sound of a letter of the teacher's choosing. For example, during the Large Group activity, one teacher led a letter-to-letter sound matching game with preschoolers; another teacher led a song to that repeated each student's name and counted the syllables in each name. During small group activity, a Community Corps member led an alliteration game with students.

D. Role of the Community Corps Member in Minnesota Reading Corps PreK classrooms

> Community Corps members consistently engaged PreK students in conversations and supported their writing activities.

Based on the two hour observations of the Literacy Rich Schedule in the nine program classrooms, we found that at site that scored highest on the ELLCO subscales, the Community Corps member conducted literacy activities during six of the 12 Literacy Rich Schedule activities (i.e., Arrival, Sign-In, Choice Time, Transitions, Small Group, Large Group). This was the only site where the Community Corps member had such a high degree of involvement.

Across all program sites, we found that there were two activities where Community Corps members played a significant role: Sign-in (7 sites) and Choice Time/Active Learning (8 sites). These findings are presented in **Table IV.6** (in Appendix C)**.** The Sign-in activity occurs when students arrive in the PreK classroom, write their name on a card, and then post their name on word wall or in a designated area. Examining the Community Corps members' practices and interactions through the lens of the ELLCO evidence-based elements (see **Table III.2**. Minnesota Reading Corps PreK Literacy Rich Schedule and ELLCO

evidence-based elements), revealed more detail about the way in which Community Corps Members interacted with students during these activities. Within each of the 19 ELLCO elements, the "exemplary" score provides 2-4 evidence-based criteria that provide an empirical basis for the rating assigned.

Using these criteria as a guide, analysis revealed that Community Corps members at six sites conducted the Sign-in with the preschool students using exemplary evidence-based ELLCO elements. These members either led the Sign-in and conducted it on their own, or provided direct support along with other adults in the classroom to help children write, guide their efforts in making latters (using the Zaner-Bloser Auditory Scripts[52] provided by the Minnesota Reading Corps program), and read their names. At five sites, Community Corps members conducted small group or one-on-one literacy activities with children using exemplary elements during Choice Time/Active Learning. We found that at the three top scoring sites on the ELLCO subscales, Community Corps members actively engaged in literacy activities with children during Choice Time/Active Learning time, such as stenciling letters at the writing center, drawing in an alphabet book, talking to students about their families, and helping them write and sound out new words. Among the other Literacy Rich Schedule activities, Community Corps members conducted Arrival (n=3), Meal Time (n=3), Journal Weekly (n=1), Transitions (n=1), and an "Other" activity during the day (n=1) using exemplary evidence-based ELLCO elements.

The most common evidence-based ELLCO elements that Community Corps members demonstrated through their language and literacy interventions were Support for Children's Writing (n=7), and Opportunities for Extended Conversation (n=7). Within the exemplary-level criterion related to Opportunities for Extended Conversation, members were most frequently observed to have "created varied opportunities for interaction; engaged children in individual, small or large group talk" and engaged in "teacher/child 'talk' to inform learning (to extend content knowledge or oral language skills)". With regard to Support for Children's Writing, members engaged in exemplary behaviors and "provided opportunities that motivate children to write; engaged children to generate interest; served as models; and supported children's writing." In addition, the Community Corps members engaged in exemplary practices demonstrating that "children are observed writing as part of several teacher organized routines and play." Examples from the Literacy Rich Schedule include:

- **Sign-In:** The Community Corps member worked 1:1 with each child and asked him/her to write certain letters and describe the letters in relation to other letters the student has learned: "This is called L, this one is almost like [another letter] but it's shorter." The Community Corps member guided the child's hand as s/he wrote the letter. (Support for Children's Writing)
- **Meal Time:** Instructors engaged students in conversation, asking questions about using utensils, and encouraged students to converse with one another. (Opportunities for Extended Conversation)

Community Corps members also engaged in practices that supported Phonological Awareness and Efforts to Build Vocabulary (both, n=4). Within these two domains, Community Corps members engaged in language and literacy practices wherein "teachers are observed using terms that describe instructional goals (rhyming, syllable, initial sound) as they engage children in

[52] The Zaner-Bloser© method uses auditory scripts to support developmentally appropriate handwriting instruction. For example, when a student is composing the letter "A" the teacher would provide coaching with the following script: "Slant left, slant right, slide right." http://www.zaner-bloser.com/products

activities" (Phonological Awareness), and "teachers show excitement for words through playful interactions" (Efforts to Build Vocabulary). Examples include:

- **Meal Time:** In a classroom with a high percentage of Dual Language Learners, the Community Corps member led the students in a "What is it?" song to identify and name a spoon, and then asked them to describe what it was used for and what it was is not used for. She asked the students to identify the kind of food they were eating with the spoon and its source (i.e., applesauce, apples). (Efforts to Build Vocabulary)
- **Transitions:** The Community Corps member led students through the song "Letters, Letters, Letters have Sounds." (Phonological Awareness)

E. AmeriCorps Members

Qualifications and Characteristics of AmeriCorps Members

Analysis of the interviews provided further insight into the characteristics and qualities as well as the qualifications of Educator Corps and Community Corps Members.

For Educator Corps Members, the primary qualification was years of experience as a teacher, although variation existed in the number of years across the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program sites. Three Internal Coaches stated that they tended to recruit members "internally" or encouraged teachers within their schools to apply. However, the Internal Coach who oversaw two sites indicated that she prefers to engage Educator Corps Members that are recent college graduates.

For Community Corps Members, the primary qualification for serving in a PreK classroom was experience working with children. At three sites, being a parent counted as such experience. Some of the Internal Coaches and Directors/Principals also identified common desired characteristics and qualities of the Community Corps members. Possessing organizational skills was a commonly desired characteristic. At three of these four program sites, additional qualities were noted, including a "willing[ness] to learn and try things out" and interest in working in a field that provides intrinsic benefits. These characteristics and qualities are similar to those found in Phase I of the process assessment.

Matching Community Corps members to Minnesota Reading Corps PreK classrooms

The Internal Coaches indicated that they matched the Community Corps members to classrooms purposefully, using criteria such as student needs, member and teacher qualities, or logistics to make assignments. Five of the program sites had multiple Community Corps members serving in the preschool classrooms. The Internal Coaches had varying degrees of control over the placement. One Coach's description of the matching criteria displayed considerable thought: the student makeup of the classroom; prior relationships between families and teachers; coherence among the personalities of the students, Corps member, and the teacher; and where the students live relative to the site as well as their access to dependable and reliable transportation (Laura MacArthur Head Start, Stowe Head Start). Two Coaches referred to the use of students' needs as the criterion in matching Corps members to classrooms. One Coach referred to risk factors experienced by "families that have very high need" and who "struggle with mental illness and domestic violence in their homes," suggesting that the placement of Corps members into preschool classrooms is key. Another Coach described the site's four-year-old classroom as her "highest priority because they're entering Kindergarten next year," also suggesting that these students would be best placed in a classroom with a Corps member. Finally, one Internal Coach had the flexibility to place three new Corps members together at one site.

Training and Organizational Supports

Training

The majority of Internal Coaches agreed that the training provided by the Minnesota Reading Corps adequately prepares AmeriCorps members to provide literacy interventions. A need for more training and support for members who have limited experience working with young children, was also expressed. Their observations regarding the adequacy of AmeriCorps member preparation are consistent with the Phase I process assessment findings.

Organizational Supports

Educator and Community Corps members are an integral part of their schools and receive strong organizational support. At all sites visited by the project team, Corps members agreed that there is sufficient organizational support for the implementation of the Minnesota Reading Corps program and thus their work.

Three patterns in the interviews with internal coaches suggest that Corps Members receive strong organizational support. First, Community Corps members typically had access to the same site resources provided to lead teachers. Three Internal Coaches specifically mentioned the provision of two resources to Community Corps members: time and physical space. Moreover, describing Community Corps members as individuals that "the school almost treats as another teacher in the building," one Internal Coach listed three other resources received by Corps members: school district e-mail accounts; phone numbers; and work computers. With these resources, the member has the opportunity to lesson plan during the day in some part of the school designated for her own use, using equipment and communication tools assigned to her.

Second, the majority of Internal Coaches stated that Community Corps members participate in at least one of the following activities: parent-teacher conferences, staff meetings, and teacher professional development sessions (**Table IV.7**). At six sites, the members participated in either parent-teacher conferences or staff meetings. At four sites, they participated in teacher professional development sessions. Finally, at one of the three Minnesota Reading Corps Head Start classrooms, Community Corps Members accompanied lead teachers on home visits. Community Corps members were treated professionally by the PreK sites and recognized as having a level of responsibility in the classroom similar to lead teachers. Notably, the Community Corps members in the preschool classrooms with the lead teacher as the Internal Coach received additional forms of training, including continual individual support—not as part of a coaching session—and specific instructional techniques, such as Reading Recovery.

> Program sites provided school resources to support Community Corps members and let members participate in professional activities.
>
> Lead teachers served as role models and mentors to Community Corps members.

Educator and Community Corps members at three sites also remarked on the importance of role modelling and mentoring provided by the lead teacher. A classroom teacher may mentor a teacher serving as an Educator Corps Member or model "what [the teacher] wants the Community Corps member to do". A second-year Community Corps reflected on this dynamic: "I think we were successful last year. I attribute a lot of that to having an Educator Corps and Community Corps member in the same room. We had come through the same track, we understood what was expected. This year we understand much better and will have a bigger impact. A great deal of our success is due to that. Those who don't have a lead teacher aren't as lucky . . . The lead

teacher would give me advice; sometimes she would suggest other things. Having a lead teacher as an Educator Corps member is invaluable. There is a mentorship component [to this arrangement]."

Despite this degree of integration into the preschool setting and the Internal Coach's support for the Community Corps members reported across the program sites, it is important to note that one member reported difficulties in performing the role of a literacy tutor as fully as intended and contributing more to the Literacy Rich Schedule. The member attributed this to the lead teacher's lack of buy-in to the PreK program and to the potential contribution of the Community Corps member to the preschool language and literacy environment. It points to the importance of training the lead teacher to better understand the PreK model, as well as the instructional capacity of the Community Corps member as a trained and effective literacy tutor who can support implementation of the Literacy Rich Schedule. Finally, at no Minnesota Reading Corps site visited by the project team was a Corps Member removed or reassigned.

F. Coaching and Supervision of AmeriCorps Members

Tenure and Location of the Internal Coach

Findings related to the teaching tenure of the Internal Coaches and their supervision of the Educator Corps and Community Corps members are presented in **Table IV.8**.

Among the Internal Coaches who serve only as Coaches (not as both Coaches and lead teachers), the number of years for which the Coach was a full-time staff member at the school ranged from one year to 28 years; the average was 15 years. The average tenure of these Internal Coaches with the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program was four years. All Internal Coaches who served only as Coaches (not as lead teachers also) supervised between 2-8 Corps members, or nearly five members, on average.

As noted earlier, an unanticipated finding of the process assessment was learning that two lead teachers also served as Internal Coaches. Given the uniqueness of this staffing model we looked more closely at their experience in the classroom and their supervision of the Community Corps members. One Coach had been a full-time staff member at the school for five years; the other Coach had been at the same school for 20 years. It is worth noting, however, that the Internal Coach-lead teacher who had been at her school for five years had served in the same school district for 15 years. The average tenure of these two Coaches in their districts was 17.5 years. Their tenure as Internal Coaches with the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program was four years, on average. The Coaches supervised one or two Corps members and their responsibilities included: 1) the general oversight and training of Corps Members; 2) observing, giving feedback to, and encouraging Corps members; 3) checking for benchmark integrity; 4) interpreting assessment data (e.g., IGDI results); 5) collaborating with Corps members, including building their skills in implementing Minnesota Reading Corps literacy strategies; and 6) communicating with families.

Differences were found with respect to whether the Internal Coach was based on-site or off-site. Four Internal Coaches oversaw Corps members at their respective sites only, whereas two Coaches oversaw Corps members at more than one site.

Internal Coaches varied in the number of Corps members they supervised, which included as few as one Community Corps member and as many as eight Community Corps members. Internal Coaches also supervised different combinations of Community Corps and Educator Corps members (e.g., 1 Community and 2 Educator, 3 Community and 2 Educator).

Coaching Sessions

These two types of Internal Coaches differ in three key ways. First, on average, the two Internal Coaches who also served as lead teachers had a shorter tenure at their schools than the other seven Coaches. However, they had a longer tenure as Internal Coaches. Second, Internal Coaches who served only as Coaches oversaw more Corps members than Coaches who served as lead teachers. Moreover, no Coach-lead teacher oversaw Corps members at more than one site; two Coaches who served only as Coaches oversaw Corps members at more than one site. Finally, Internal Coaches who served as lead teachers met more frequently with their Corps members.

Internal Coaches (7 sites)

Four aspects of coaching sessions were noted: the frequency of sessions; the topics addressed during sessions; additional training, if any; and how to handle Corps members that need additional training.

First, the Internal Coaches who served only as Coaches reported that they conducted coaching sessions with Corps members as frequently as every day or as infrequently as twice per month.

Second, these Coaches used the coaching sessions for multiple purposes: 1) to discuss the management of student behavior and building relationships with students; 2) to strengthen the Corps members' adherence to the components of the Literacy Rich Schedule ; 3) to check-in with the Corps members; and 4) to review the integrity checklist.

Third, variation was observed in the additional training provided to Corps members, which included: inviting Corps members to all staff trainings; targeting specific skill deficits; addressing challenging student behaviors; and discussing cultural awareness and sensitivity.

Finally, these Internal Coaches varied in how they handled Educator or Community Corps members that need additional training. The strategies included: reviewing the SEEDS training, if student behavior issues were challenging; reaching out to the Master Coach or program coordinator; reaching out to Minnesota Reading Corps Program Coordinators directly; and doing one-on-one or group work with Corps Members.

Lead Teacher as Internal Coach (2 sites)

The same four aspects of coaching sessions noted for Internal Coaches who serve only as Coaches were also noted for Coaches who served as lead teachers. First, the two Internal Coaches who served as lead teachers met with Corps members daily or almost every day. Second, topics addressed during coaching sessions included: students' progress, according to IGDI results; how to execute lessons or interventions; and whether and how to adjust instructional strategies for particular students (e.g., interventions, groupings), given their abilities and progress or ELL status. Third, these Coaches mentioned that they invite Corps members to professional learning community events and in-service workshops or instruct Corps members on reading strategies. Finally, these Coaches stated that they work with Corps members to build on their strengths and get them "used to [the fact that] this is a lot of work". The fact that these coaches worked directly with the Community Corps members in their classroom on a daily basis to advance their students' language and literacy skills allowed for constant opportunities for on-the-job learning and informal coaching.

G. Implementation Facilitators and Barriers

The most frequently cited barrier to implementation of the Literacy Rich Schedule was time. Lead teachers, members and Internal Coaches all acknowledged the difficulty of "getting it all done" or "fitting it into the day." It was challenging to fit all 12 components into the daily instructional schedule, and particularly difficult when the preschool session was only a half-day or a 2-3 days per week. The highly-intentional implementation of the PreK model—with its focus on scripted instruction, interaction, and a degree of spontaneity—requires skill, coordination, teamwork, and stamina. Key facilitators to implementing the model were mutual support between the lead teacher and the member, and accessibility to coaching.

V. Conclusions

The findings from the process assessment provide important evidence for addressing the studies' key research questions. Below, the project team offers our conclusions based on these findings and organizes them by the four major research questions. Following our assessment of the questions is a discussion on the implications of our findings on plans for replication of the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK model.

1. **How is the program achieving its immediate, intermediate, and long-term outcomes? How does the program's design and administration lead to the achievement of these target outcomes?**

    a. What aspects of language and literacy instruction pertain among highly rated Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program sites? In what areas do sites not perform well based on rating of inadequate or deficient? How do the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Tool (ELLCO) Pre-K rating relate to student outcomes?

Based on the ELLCO ratings, Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program sites have implemented "strong" classroom structures and approaches to curricula that support children's learning. With regard to classroom structure, the physical environment of each Minnesota Reading Corps classroom was well-organized for learning and provided a welcoming space for young children to engage in group and independent activities with comfortable, child-size furnishings and thoughtful traffic flows. Classroom materials and activity centers were organized, appealing, accessible, and coordinated with ongoing learning goals. Teachers communicated clear expectations for children's behavior using positive strategies and encouraged their purposeful engagement in language and literacy activities. In addition, staffing was appropriate for the numbers and needs of children, and purposefully organized to engage children in meaningful activities. The program staff across the sites made use of multiple materials, activities, and interactions in their approaches to instruction—books, transitions, momentary conversations—to infuse language use and literacy into the daily schedule.

The program sites also implemented "strong" approaches to create a language and literacy environment that supports discourse, engagement with books, and early writing. Adults engaged preschool students in conversation, with both teachers and members attempting to maximize a child's interest and understanding of new words or concepts during large or small group activities, or during spontaneous one-on-one conversations. Books were available and used by preschool students independently. Books were read and shared by the teacher, members, and students during circle time or in small groups. Preschool students had multiple opportunities to engage with writing and print in their classrooms: through the daily ritual of the "Sign-in;" by labelling artwork; by spelling new words with letters in a sandbox or writing them on the white board.

Higher scores on the two ELLCO subscales—which measured the quality of the classroom environment and language and literacy instruction—across the nine Minnesota Reading Corps program sites appear to be related to the type of staffing model[53] and the ratio of the Internal Coach to the Community Corps member. While only evident at two highly-rated sites and not conclusive or generalizable, it does raise important questions about whether staffing models—here characterized by enthusiastic

[53] The three staffing models observed were: Community Corps member with a lead teacher; Community Corps member with a lead teacher serving or having served as an Educator Corps member; and Community Corps member with a lead teacher who was also the Internal Coach.

support for the PreK program and intense supervision and teaming between the teacher and Community Corps member (although merging the typical supervisory structure)—may facilitate implementation of the Literacy Rich Schedule in preschool classrooms and influence student outcomes. This hypothesis is supported by analyses of the rich observational data collected in the classrooms that revealed greater participation of the Community Corps member in implementing the Literacy Rich Schedule at sites where the member was paired with a lead teacher who served as the Internal Coach for the program or with a current or former Educator Corps member.

Importantly, across the nine program sites, there were no areas of deficiency identified across the 19 ELLCO elements. However, in assigning a rating of "inadequate" to three sites with regard to recognizing diversity in the classroom, the evaluation team struggled with how best to define and operationalize this construct, as well as questioned the sensitivity of the ELLCO instrument. This is perhaps an area that needs further exploration by the Minnesota Reading Corps program, particularly with respect to sites that are demographically homogenous.

b. Does adherence to the literacy-rich schedule [54]vary by membership type (i.e., Educator Corps or Community Corps) and role in the classroom (i.e., lead teacher, assistant teacher, volunteer)?

Adherence to the Literacy Rich Schedule did vary by member type and role in the classroom. At a minimum, we found that all Community Corps members at the nine program sites visited were involved with the Sign-in and Choice Time/Active Learning, which are two of the 12 activities of the Literacy Rich Schedule. However, we found greater involvement in language and literacy activities by the Community Corps members in classrooms where the member was placed with a lead teacher who serves as the Internal Coach or who is a current or former Educator Corps member. We found lesser involvement on the part of the Community Corps member in language and literacy activities in classrooms where the member was placed with a lead teacher only. Although we found that implementation of the Literacy Rich Schedule was adequate in classrooms with a member and a lead teacher, this finding points to a need for training for lead teachers regarding the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK model (especially the Literacy Rich Schedule and the SEEDS approach to high quality interaction), as well as additional guidance in how to collaborate with and manage Community Corps members in the PreK classroom.

The combination of the Community Corps member working in tandem with a lead teacher who serves as the Internal Coach facilitates greater member involvement with the Literacy Rich Schedule, as evidenced by the classroom observations and the ratings on the ELLCO subscales. Pairing the Community Corps member with a current or former Educator Corps member also facilitates adherence to the Literacy Rich Schedule. Both staffing models enable the member and lead teacher to work closely as a team, as they share common understanding of program expectations and perform their roles in a complimentary manner. In addition, these staffing configurations enable the lead teacher to serve as a mentor and to model high-quality language and literacy behaviors for the member to emulate.

Further, both staffing combinations facilitated fidelity to the Minnesota Reading Corps model and implementation of the Literacy Rich Schedule. Both their daily interactions and immersion in the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program model allow for greater coordination between the member and lead teacher (both as Internal Coach and Educator Corps member) regarding

[54] "Adherence to the Literacy Rich Schedule" is operationalized through the scores obtained on the ELLCO General Classroom Environment and Language and Literacy subscales

decisions about teaching strategies and intervention selection based on the needs of each individual child and or groups of children.

For the Educator Corps members, implementing the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program on one's own in the classroom can be challenging. Balancing execution of the site- or school-required curriculum *while* implementing all of the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program components on their own is demanding and time-consuming. It can also be a lonely process if the Educator Corps member is working in a classroom with a co-teacher who is not part of the Minnesota Reading Corps.

c. Are there observable differences in any dimension of the classroom environment or language and literacy practices that would explain differences in student outcomes? [55]

There are some similarities and some difference in the language and literacy practices between the program and comparison sites, based on the analysis of the ELLCO scores and the observations using the Classroom Language and Literacy Observation Tool. With regard to the classroom environment, both the program and comparison sites were well-organized for learning, with appealing materials and furnishings that were accessible to children, and with the physical classroom environment organized to support and coordinate with learning goals.

Analyses of the ELLCO data indicate that program sites scored higher than comparison sites on both the General Classroom Environment subscale and Language and Literacy subscale. The program sites implemented more language and literacy oriented schedule components than the comparison sites. These included: implementing "Strive for 5" during meal time; having theme-related props in three or more activity centers for use during Choice Time/Active Learning; providing multiple opportunities to talk, read, and write during Choice Time/Active Learning; and using Big 5 Transitions between activities such as moving from large group activities or lining up to go outside. In addition, there were differences found in the approaches to book reading between the program and comparison sites.

Although there were some similarities between program and comparison sites with respect to the language environment, in keeping with Minnesota Reading Corps program expectations, we observed more *intentional* engagement with literacy and language by students and adults at the program sites. In contrast to the comparison sites, the program sites created environments that fostered preschool students' emergent literacy skills in multiple ways: encouraging meaningful and extended conversations; taking advantage of opportunities to introduce new words and build vocabulary; and encouraging awareness of sounds and letters. Importantly, the program sites took advantage of time in the daily schedule that may otherwise be lost opportunities to engage children in language and literacy activities during arrival, transitions, and meals.

[55] This would include all dimensions of classroom structure, curriculum, the language environment, books and book reading, print and early writing.

2. **Are there characteristics of AmeriCorps members that are particularly effective with service recipients (i.e., students)?**

    a. Should dramatic differences emerge in the ELLCO PreK ratings by member type, what skills and supports are needed for the Community Corps member to be successful (above and beyond those provided to the Educator Corps member)?

AmeriCorps members with diverse backgrounds can successfully implement the Minnesota Reading Corps model in different types of PreK settings: public schools, Head Start centers and community-based programs. This is consistent with the findings of the Phase I process assessment report. In learning more about the variations in placements and PreK settings, it is not so much the individual member qualifications and skills that make a difference for the Community Corps member, but the staffing model and organizational supports provided to them that are essential to a successful service experience. This is one of the great strengths of the Minnesota Reading Corps program.

Community Corps members are integrated into the preschool service setting and receive support in a variety of ways: through their participation in teacher development activities; staff meetings; and parent-teacher conferences. However, the most important source of direct support for the Community Corps member is the Internal Coach. Although there are differences in the frequency of supervision (ranging from daily to weekly to monthly) and the topics addressed by each Coach (depending on the site and the needs of the preschool students), all have one thing in common: coaching keeps the member inspired, motivated, and on-track. To this end, the Internal Coaches facilitate the members' adherence to the RtI framework and implementation of the PreK model in diverse classroom settings. Internal Coaches are an important mediator between AmeriCorps members' implementation of the PreK model and preschool student outcomes. Maintaining the emphasis on coaching that is relationship-based and adapted to members' needs is key to successful implementation.

There is another important source of support: lead teachers. Community Corps members spend their days supporting student learning in someone else's classroom. When the lead teacher is, or was, an Educator Corps member or the Internal Coach, the member enjoys daily access to a professional educator that is welcoming and experienced, but also well-schooled in the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK model. Both positions share a common understanding of one another's role in the classroom, work within the same Literacy Rich Schedule, have been trained in the SEEDS approach to high quality adult-child interaction, and value and know how to use IGDI assessment data to inform instruction. However, this is not always the case. For those Community Corps members who serve "alone,"' the service experience may differ, as well as their ability to fully implement effective language and literacy practices, depending on the lead teacher's "buy-in" of Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program model. Providing training for lead teachers—such as a one-day orientation and training to the Minnesota Reading Corps at the Summer Institutes, largely similar in content to the training conducted for the Internal Coaches—would be helpful to support the integration of the member into the PreK classroom and for recognizing the member as a trained, dedicated literacy tutor and fellow educator. The Minnesota Reading Corps may consider providing further guidance to PreK sites where the Community Corps member is placed with a lead teacher (i.e., one who is not an Educator Corps member or an Internal Coach) so that his or her time and training are used effectively and the member is able to conduct or lead Literacy Rich Schedule activities that support preschool students' emergent literacy.

3. **Which findings and lessons learned from the Minnesota Reading Corps can be applied to other models and/or programs? Are there characteristics that are suitable for similar reading tutoring programs to replicate?**

The Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program is conducive to implementation across site types: public schools, Head Start centers, community-based preschools. While some differences were found by type of site, they were quite small. The PreK program is highly-structured but appears to be adaptable to any curriculum (i.e., curriculum neutral). The prescribed schedule of literacy-rich activities and Tier 2 and 3 interventions can be adapted to the current PreK programming in place. In terms of program adoption and implementation, staff buy-in and administrative support within the preschool setting are essential. Fidelity checks conducted by the Internal Coach, along with the embedded and hierarchical nature of the Minnesota Reading Corps' staffing structure are important to program integrity. Approaches to early childhood learning also matter. Preschools that adopt the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK model demonstrate openness to using new evidence-based instructional practices, flexibility in organizing their staffing and schedules, and adaptability in using data to consistently inform instruction.

As the Minnesota Reading Corps increases in scale statewide, and expands into other states, it is important to maximize the likelihood of success, given the great investment of time, resources, and personnel that implementation fidelity to the PreK model requires. For sites that are interested in implementing the PreK program, it would to helpful for the Minnesota Reading Corps to introduce the concept of "readiness," and perhaps develop a "self-assessment readiness tool" for sites to increase their likelihood of successful installment and implementation. Important markers of readiness would be willingness to restructuring the daily schedule to better maximize instructional time, as well as conducting skill-focused assessments to target preschool students' language and literacy needs.

Implications for Program Replication

Through the process assessment we found that the sites implementing the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program differed in important ways from the comparison sites, with important ramifications for program readiness and replication. At the program sites, we found that the PreK program and the service of the AmeriCorps member enrich the language and literacy instruction at participating schools. We witnessed intentional teaching with a focus on oral language development, particularly increasing children's vocabulary, which was supported through multiple opportunities for extended discourse and high quality interactions with books. Extended conversations provide children with vocabulary and meaning. They help a child to build background knowledge, provide a model and chance to practice speaking and listening, and provide opportunities for using new words and oral language, along with comprehension. Extended conversations also help build relationships between children and adults as they listen and learn from each other.

Another importance distinction between the program and the comparison sites was the effective use of time during the day. For the comparison sites, there were moments where an instructional opportunity was lost, whereas at the program sites transitions between activities and interactions with preschool children were "teachable" moments. Finally, we saw with the program sites that the intentional nature of teaching resulted in highly integrated instruction. Daily messages and weekly themes integrated instruction in multiple emergent literacy skills throughout the day. This integrated form of instruction is likely to produce significant gains in emergent literacy skills.

Consistent with the Phase I process assessment, we find that the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program is highly replicable as long as schools and sites have certain important characteristics to ensure its successful integration. The Minnesota Reading Corps model is highly adaptable and can operate well in multiple PreK sites, including public schools, Head Start centers, and community-based preschools. To do so, administrators and teachers must subscribe to a similar philosophy as that followed by the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program, as well as enact the principles of SEEDS. In addition, they must support daily implementation of the Literacy Rich Schedule and conduct ongoing assessments. Lead teachers (whether experienced or novice) that host a Community Corps member in their classroom should be open to learning, particularly in implementing evidence-based approaches. Lead teachers must fully support Community Corps members' contributions to language and literacy instruction and facilitate their active participation in the classroom. Internal Coaches serve as mediators between successful Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program implementation and student outcomes, as they provide expert guidance and support to the Community Corps members to ensure the fidelity of the interventions delivered. All of these components are integral to the purposeful integration of the PreK program into diverse early childhood settings.

Appendix A. Classroom Language and Literacy Observation Tool

MINNESOTA READING CORPS PREK PROCESS ASSESSMENT

Classroom Language and Literacy Observation Tool

NORC at the University of Chicago

TIES

revised Spring 2014

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How to Use this Guide

The purpose of this tool is to document the daily literacy activities that occur in PreK classrooms that participate in the Minnesota Reading Corps (MRC) and in non-MRC PreK classrooms. The tool conforms to the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) tool used by MRC to assess the implementation fidelity and quality of the Literacy Rich Schedule in PreK classrooms. This tool was adapted slightly from the version used by the research team in Fall 2013 for use in MRC and non-MRC settings.

1. **ELLCO Observation Record:** Fill in the form with information that you either receive in advance of the meeting or while on-site. We will redact any proper names once the data are entered.
2. **Before the Children Arrive: Initial Data Collection in the Classroom -** The following sections of the ELLCO can be completed before the children arrive in the classroom or while they go outside to play. If possible, set aside about 30 minutes to complete these five sections.

    - ☐ **Organization of the Classroom (#1)**
    - ☐ **Contents of the Classroom (#2)**
    - ☐ **Environmental Print (#19)**
    - ☐ **Organization of the Book Area (#12)**
    - ☐ **Characteristics of Books (#13)**

3. **Documenting PreK Literacy activities at MRC and non-MRC sites/schools with the ELLCO -** Once the day begins, we will be observing and documenting the activity in the classroom associated with literacy activities in the MRC and non-MRC classrooms. Each literacy activity will be documented as it occurs. There are blocks such as the one below for each component of the daily schedule. Please note that activity has its own page in (e.g., **REPEATED READ ALOUD).** You may not observe all of them: That's OK. For each activity, note the duration (bring a watch or use your phone), the grouping of children involved (all children, small groups) and the adults involved (as noted below). Indicate who is leading the activity, as well.

Time:	**Child grouping(s) and #:**
Adults involved and #:	**Indicate whether the activity is led/supervised by:** ☐ Educator Corps (MRC) or Teacher (MRC or non-MRC) ☐ Community Corps **(MRC)** ☐ **Assistant Teacher (non-MRC** ☐ **Other**
Activity/Task: Briefly describe the content; nature of activity; what children are doing, what the teacher is doing; what materials are used; where the activity is occurring; other. Use the ELLCO Evidence-Based Element on the left as a reference and check what you observe.	

4. The ELLCO Evidence-Based Element will be provided already. **Check them off as you observe and describe the activity.** (This will help with your ratings later). You can also refer to the "At-a-Glance Activities Booklet" to identify some of the MRC-specific activities. Briefly describe what children are doing, what the teacher is doing, what materials are used, and where the activity is occurring. There are three blank blocks to fill in if there are other activities to capture.
5. **Scoring:** At the end of the visit, go somewhere quiet and private (away from the site/school) to score the ELLCO and discuss and obtain consensus on the ratings.

TIP! Review the MRC Literacy Rich Classroom handout from the training before you go onsite.

REMEMBER! Be OBJECTIVE in your descriptions, not SUBJECTIVE.

Observation Record [56]

Fill out the form below. Some information may be provided in advance by the site/school.

Observer:	
Program or District:	
Center or school:	
Teacher:	
Date of observation:	
Start time of observation: AM PM	End time of observation: AM PM
Duration of entire classroom day:	
Days in session during the school week: M T W TH F	Number of days per week:
Number of teachers:	
Number of other adults:	
Number of girls:	Number of boys:
Age range of children:	
Number of children with identified disabilities:	Number of English language learners:
Primary language used by teachers:	
Primary language spoken in the classroom:	
Languages spoken by other students:	
MRC specific information: [57]	
☐ Number and type of AmeriCorps member:	
☐ Year of MRC implementation:	

Roles and responsibilities of the Community Corps Member (MRC only):

1-1 Instruction:

Small group:

Whole class:

Other duties:

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[57] Adapted for use in MRC Process Assessment to indicate type of member (i.e., Educator or Community Corps).

Before the Children Arrive: Initial Data Collection in the Classroom

Organization of the Classroom (ELLCO #1)

Part 1: Begin the observation by documenting how the classroom is organized. Spend about 10 minutes doing this. Draw a map of the classroom on the facing page that shows the following:

- Traffic flows doors, windows, arrows,
- Activity centers (e.g., reading, writing, science, math, art, dramatic play and/or kitchen) along with tables, chairs, soft furnishings, bookshelves, etc.
- General area for circle time
- Use of floor and wall space
- Quiet and active areas
- Location of cubbies, sink, toilet, etc.
- Whether materials are accessible to children

TIP! Focus on high level mapping (e.g., kitchen area, computer station). Label sections on the map.

REMEMBER! Ask *before* the visit if you can take photos. We cannot take photos of children!

Part 2: At the end of the observation period, go back and reflect on the following questions:

1. Does the classroom include appropriately-style furnishings? *Describe them.*
2. Is the environment arranged for smooth traffic flow and different size groups? *Provide an example.*
3. Is there space for quiet activities that are separate from active noisier activities? *Describe.*
4. Does the classroom environment allow for children to be independent? *If yes, provide an example of what you observed.*
5. Are writing and reading materials available in the activity centers? In how many? *List the activity centers and identify what materials are available.*
6. Can self-help skills be completed independently (washing, toileting, access to materials)? *If yes, provide an example.*

Organization of the Classroom (ELLCO #1)

Is there evidence of a physical environment that is well-organized for learning? [58]

[58] Sources of evidence are: Appropriate furnishings; Appropriate classroom arrangements; Traffic flow conducive to classroom management; and Children are independent.

Contents of the Classroom (ELLCO #2)

Is there evidence that classrooms materials are well organized, appealing, accessible, and coordinated with ongoing learning goals?

After you have drawn the map of the classroom, complete Parts 1 and 2 below. This should take about 10-15 minutes.

Part 1: Observe and provide responses to the following questions. Refer to the sources of evidence. [59]

1. Are materials organized into conceptually-related groups that suggest clear purposes?
2. What are the conditions of the materials (e.g., excellent, good, variable, poor)?
3. Are there enough materials (e.g., ample, adequate, limited, insufficient supply)?
4. Can children access materials on their own?
5. How do the children engage with the materials (e.g., purposefully, with assistance)?
6. Is children's art and print work displayed? How? What is the content? Is the content original?
7. Are teacher or commercially generated materials displayed? Do they predominate? Or is there a mix of child-generated and teacher/commercially produced materials?
8. Does the children's work reflect their diverse backgrounds, languages, and approaches to classroom tasks?

[59] Sources of evidence are: Evidence of organization; Condition and supply of materials; Accessibility; Child-generated work.

Contents of the Classroom (ELLCO #2), continued

Part 2: Review each activity below. Check whether the activity/component is present and provide a brief description. If you do not observe the activity during the observation because it is not on the schedule, that's OK, just indicate "NOT OBSERVED."

Activity	Description
☐ Centers with clear boundaries and classroom theme-related materials	
☐ Have a sign-in sheet for appropriate centers (computer for taking turns)	
☐ Have appropriate props so children can be independent	
☐ Demonstrate how materials and props are to be used	
☐ Each center should have materials to read, write, and talk about	
☐ Label areas together (child and teacher)	
☐ Children and teachers create labels and place them around the room	
☐ A word wall is used and changed with theme	
☐ Teacher and child print present in the classroom and reflects theme[60]	

[60] Prior to the visit we will ask the lead teacher or Internal Coach to identify the theme.

Environmental Print (ELLCO # 19)

Is there evidence that there are targeted efforts to engage children in the development and use of environmental print?

Observe areas of the classroom where environmental print is provided or displayed. This can be done in conjunction with ELLCO area #1 and #2. Complete Parts 1 and 2 below

Part 1: Observe and provide responses to the following questions. Refer to the sources of evidence. [61]

1. Identify types of environmental print in the classroom (e.g., calendar, charts, arrows, labels for areas and spaces)?
2. Record whether environmental print is actively and purposefully used by teachers and children.
3. Is environmental print integrated into classroom routines?
4. Does environmental print model print conventions (i.e., correct use of upper and lower case letters, spelling and spacing between words, teacher-created print as a model)?

[61] Sources of evidence are: Children's use of environmental print; Routines to expand print knowledge; and Modeling of accepted behaviors.

Part 2: Review each activity below. Check whether the activity/component is present and provide a brief description. If you do not observe the activity during the observation because it is not on the schedule, that's OK, just indicate "NOT OBSERVED."

Activity	Description
☐ Teacher creates a print rich environment with six or more examples of teacher dictation and uses in daily lessons	*Provide number of examples observed.*
☐ Teacher creates a print rich environment with six or more examples of children's writing and uses that in daily lessons	*Provide number of examples observed.*
☐ Teacher integrates environmental print into daily lessons to enhance children's print knowledge	
☐ Teacher models correct print and print conventions	

Organization of the Book Area (ELLCO # 12)

Is there evidence of a thoughtfully designed area set aside for the use and display of books?

Visit the book area and address each activity below. You may also need to revise this section once the daily activities begin. Complete Parts 1 and 2 below.

Part 1: Observe and provide responses to the following questions. Refer to the sources of evidence. [62]

1. Is the book area distinct from other classroom areas? How is it organized?
2. Can children select, read, and replace books on their own? Can children see the covers?
3. What does the book area look like? Is it attractive and comfortable?
4. Were children reading there during the observation period?
5. What conditions are the books in? How many are there?
6. Did any children freely and independently access books in the book area during the observation period?

[62] Sources of evidence are: Distinct area; Comfort and attractiveness; Condition and supply of books; and Children's use.

Part 2: Review each activity below. Check whether the activity/component is present and provide a brief description. If you do not observe the activity during the observation because it is not on the schedule, that's OK, just indicate "NOT OBSERVED."

Activity	Description
☐ Teacher will develop a book center that is organized, accessible, and displays books so that children can read the titles	
☐ Teacher will include soft furniture or appropriate sized furniture for children to sit on	
☐ Teacher will monitor the conditions of books in the book center	
☐ Teacher will ensure that children have access to books and can participate in the book center independently	

Characteristics of Books (ELLCO #13)

Is there evidence that available books offer variety in content, level, genre, and characters that reflects the diversity and abilities of the children in the classrooms?

Identify the areas in the classroom where books are provided. Complete Parts 1 and 2 below.

Part 1: Observe and provide responses to the following questions. Refer to the sources of evidence. [63]

1. What are the topics of the books (e.g., feelings, social experiences, events of daily life, subject area content)?
2. Is there variety in the difficulty of the text (e.g., wordless, labeled, first reader) and graphics (e.g., illustrations, photos, cartoons)?
3. Are the text and graphics appropriate to the age and ability of the children?

[63] Sources of evidence are: Distinct area; Comfort and attractiveness; Condition and supply of books; and Children's use.

4. Are multiple book genres evident?

Check all that apply:

- ☐ Board Books
- ☐ Picture Books
- ☐ Early Reader
- ☐ Pop-up books
- ☐ Fiction
- ☐ Non-Fiction
- ☐ Concept books (counting, alphabet, etc.)
- ☐ Issue books (introduces controversial issue in society)
- ☐ Informational books
- ☐ Rhyming books
- ☐ Counting books
- ☐ Alphabet books
- ☐ Nursery rhymes
- ☐ Alphabet books
- ☐ Folktales and fables

5. Do the books include diverse representations of characters and family structure?
6. Do the books reflect diversity found in the classroom community and the world?

Part 2: Review each activity below. Check whether the activity/component is present and provide a brief description. If you do not observe the activity during the observation because it is not on the schedule, that's OK, just indicate "NOT OBSERVED."

Activity	Description
☐ Teacher will provide books that represent a range of topics such as feelings and social experiences	*Note the titles of books*
☐ Teacher will incorporate books related to monthly themes	
☐ Teacher will include books that range in difficulty from books with no words to four or more sentences on a page	
☐ Teacher will include magazines, charts, homemade books and both fiction and nonfiction	
☐ Teacher will make sure that at least 26 or more books are included in the book center	*Count the number of books.*
☐ Teacher will make sure to include books with a diverse focus.	*Describe the Content of the books.* *Describe the Cultural Diversity of the books.*

Documenting Daily Literacy Activities with the ELLCO in MRC and non-MRC sites/schools

Daily Literacy Activities with ELLCO

The focus of the classroom observation period will be on the activities associated with the daily literacy activities in the MRC and non-MRC sites. **Are they conducting similar activities?**

TIP! Ask for a copy of the schedule in advance.

Daily Literacy Activities in MRC and non-MRC sites:			**ELLCO Evidence-Based Element**
	MRC	**Non-MRC**	
Arrival	☐ Greet children		1 3 8 9 10 11
Sign-in (or sign out)	☐ Write name		11 17 18
Meal time	☐ "Strive for 5"[64] conversation using them and/or functional vocabulary		8 9 10 11
Large Group	☐		Not Applicable
Daily Message	☐ Daily message		17 18 19
Repeated Read Aloud	☐ Theme-related read aloud		8 9 10 11 15 16
Tier 1 Small Group	☐ Week 1 &2: Read theme-related book ☐ Week 3 & 4: read rhyme/alliteration book or nursery rhyme		8 9 10 11 15 16
Journal Weekly	☐ Draw or write ideas in journal		17 18
Choice Time/Active Learning	☐ Theme-related vocabulary props in 3 or more centers: 1. Dramatic Play 2. Writing Center 3. _____ 4. _____ ☐ Provide opportunities to TALK, READ & WRITE		1 2 3 5 6 9 10
Tier 2 0r Tier 3	☐ Interventions done daily		10 11 18
Big 5 Transitions	☐ Vocabulary/Oral language ☐ Letter names ☐ Letter sounds ☐ Rhyming ☐ Alliteration		10 11

[64] This means for teachers to seek extended and deeper conversations with students, where both the teacher and the student will talk five times in an interaction; the teacher may ask more questions to reach 5 responses

Daily Literacy Activities in MRC and non-MRC sites:			ELLCO Evidence-Based Element
	MRC	**Non-MRC**	
Family	☐ Talk, Read, and Write with Me! done weekly [65]		18
Other	☐		

Observing Classroom Activities

On the following pages describe what you observe for each literacy activity in the daily schedule.

For each Activity record the following: [66]

1. The duration of the activity
2. The group(s) of children involved
3. The adults involved
    - For MRC sites, indicate whether the activity is led/supervised by a Lead Teacher or Community Corps member. For non-MRC sites, indicate how leads the activity (Teacher, Assistant Teacher, Other).
4. The type of activity or task that 1) the teacher and children are conducting as a large or small group or 2) activities that children are conducting independently. Provide descriptive information regarding the content, what the teacher and children are doing, where the activity is being conducted, what materials are being used.
5. There will be two observers in the classroom. Both observers should observe and record any large group activities. As their will be multiple activities going on at once during small group activities or choice time, the team can independently observe independently.
6. Be sure to always focus on what the Community Corps member or his/her corollary in the non-MRC classroom is doing. For the MRC sites/schools, pay particular attention to the role, responsibilities, and behavior of the Community Corps member in the classroom. Be sure that you are able to answer the following questions:
    - How does the Community Corps member interact with the children and other adults?
    - How well is the member integrated into the classroom and its activity?
    - What activities does s/he lead?
    - Does the Community Corps member appear to be well-utilized/occupied during the period of your observation?
7. In the left-hand column on each page, identify the ELLCO evidence-based element that relates to each activity. Check the box next to the element.

As you record the activity in the classroom, refer to the list of MRC activities in the Booklet. Check off the various activities that you are observing and jot down the activity involved.

Note that the order of some activities may change and that some may not be conducted during the time frame of your visit.

---

[65] May not occur on day of observation. Need to ask lead teacher about this.

[66] The Activity has already been identified.

ARRIVAL

ELLCO Evidence-Based Element

1-Organization of the Classroom

- ☐ Appropriate, comfortable furnishings; welcoming atmosphere
- ☐ Interest areas arranged for optimal use
- ☐ Established traffic flows
- ☐ Physical environment supports independent activity

3-Classroom Management

- ☐ Children have internalized rules and routines
- ☐ Clear expectations for child behavior; expressed through multiple strategies
- ☐ Teacher intervention is calm and nonthreatening; leads to peaceful resolution

9-Opportunities for Extended Conversation

- ☐ Teachers select topics & use strategies to engage children in conversation
- ☐ Teachers create varied opportunities for intervention; engage children in individual, small or large group talk
- ☐ Teacher/child "talk" informs learning (extends content knowledge or oral language skills)

10-Efforts to Build Vocabulary

- ☐ New and challenging words are introduced
- ☐ Age-appropriate efforts to elucidate meaning of new words
- ☐ Teachers show excitement for words through playful interactions

11-Phonological Awareness

- ☐ Teachers engage children in varied interactions designed to build awareness of sounds via planned & playful activities
- ☐ Teachers are observed using terms that describe instructional goals (rhyming, syllable, initial sound) as they engage children in PA activities

SIGN-IN

ELLCO Evidence-Based Element

11-Phonological Awareness

- ☐ Teachers engage children in varied interactions designed to build awareness of sounds via planned & playful activities
- ☐ Teachers are observed using terms that describe instructional goals (rhyming, syllable, initial sound) as they engage children in PA activities

17 – Early Writing Environment

- ☐ Multiple opportunities are thoughtfully provided across settings that motivate children to use writing skills
- ☐ There are varied and appropriate materials and tools integrated throughout the classroom in a designated writing area
- ☐ There are multiple examples of the written word (children's work, posters, class-generated big books) that exemplify varied purposes of writing

18 - Support for Children's Writing

- ☐ Teachers provide opportunities that motivate children to write; Engage with children to generate interest; serve as models; support children's writing
- ☐ Planned and spontaneous support for children's writing efforts
- ☐ Children are observed writing as part of several teacher-organized routines (daily sign-in, turns list, labeling art work) & play

MEAL TIME/SNACK

ELLCO Evidence-Based Element

8 – Discourse Climate

- ☐ Teachers deliberately foster a climate in which individual opinions and ideas is valued; listen attentively; encourage children to listen to each other
- ☐ Teachers explicitly and appropriately encourage participation of all children (diversity)

9 - Opportunities for Extended Conversation

- ☐ Teachers select topics & use strategies to engage children in conversation
- ☐ Teachers create varied opportunities for intervention; engage children in individual, small or large group talk
- ☐ Teacher/child "talk" informs learning (extends content knowledge or oral language skills)

10 - Efforts to Build Vocabulary

- ☐ New and challenging words are introduced
- ☐ Age-appropriate efforts to elucidate meaning of new words
- ☐ Teachers show excitement for words through playful interactions

11 - Phonological Awareness

- ☐ Teachers engage children in varied interactions designed to build awareness of sounds via planned & playful activities
- ☐ Teachers are observed using terms that describe instructional goals (rhyming, syllable, initial sound) as they engage children in PA activities

LARGE GROUP

ELLCO Evidence-Based Element

8 – Discourse Climate

- ☐ Teachers deliberately foster a climate in which individual opinions and ideas is valued; listen attentively; encourage children to listen to each other
- ☐ Teachers explicitly and appropriately encourage participation of all children (diversity)

9 - Opportunities for Extended Conversation

- ☐ Teachers select topics & use strategies to engage children in conversation
- ☐ Teachers create varied opportunities for intervention; engage children in individual, small or large group talk
- ☐ Teacher/child "talk" informs learning (extends content knowledge or oral language skills)

10 - Efforts to Build Vocabulary

- ☐ New and challenging words are introduced
- ☐ Age-appropriate efforts to elucidate meaning of new words
- ☐ Teachers show excitement for words through playful interactions

11 - Phonological Awareness

- ☐ Teachers engage children in varied interactions designed to build awareness of sounds via planned & playful activities
- ☐ Teachers are observed using terms that describe instructional goals (rhyming, syllable, initial sound) as they engage children in PA activities

15 – Approaches to Book Reading

- ☐ At least one full book reading observed
- ☐ Evidence of enjoyment and use of books
- ☐ Book read aloud is thoughtfully selected or in response to child input

16 – Quality of Book Reading

- ☐ Book selected at appropriate level with high-quality text & of interest to children
- ☐ Advanced teacher planning & preparation evident via comments & questions posed
- ☐ Teachers attend to text, pictures, ideas to encourage active engagement
- ☐ Teachers, reading is expressive, fluent; support children's understanding

LARGE GROUP, continued

DAILY MESSAGE

ELLCO Evidence-Based Element

17 – Early Writing Environment

- ☐ Multiple opportunities are thoughtfully provided across settings that motivate children to use writing skills
- ☐ There are varied and appropriate materials and tools integrated throughout the classroom in a designated writing area
- ☐ There are multiple examples of the written word (children's work, posters, class-generated big books) that exemplify varied purposes of writing

18 - Support for Children's Writing

- ☐ Teachers provide opportunities that motivate children to write; Engage with children to generate interest; serve as models; support children's writing
- ☐ Planned and spontaneous support for children's writing efforts
- ☐ Children are observed writing as part of several teacher-organized routines (daily sign-in, turns list, labeling art work) & play

19 – Environmental Print

- ☐ Environmental print is actively and purposefully used by teachers and children for a variety of purposes.
- ☐ Environmental print integrated into classroom routines?
- ☐ Print created by teachers models print conventions (i.e., correct use of upper and lower case letters, spelling and spacing between words)

REPEATED READ ALOUD

ELLCO Evidence-Based Element

8 – Discourse Climate

- ☐ Teachers deliberately foster a climate in which individual opinions and ideas is valued; listen attentively; encourage children to listen to each other
- ☐ Teachers explicitly and appropriately encourage participation of all children (diversity)

9 - Opportunities for Extended Conversation

- ☐ Teachers select topics & use strategies to engage children in conversation
- ☐ Teachers create varied opportunities for intervention; engage children in individual, small or large group talk
- ☐ Teacher/child "talk" informs learning (extends content knowledge or oral language skills)

10 - Efforts to Build Vocabulary

- ☐ New and challenging words are introduced
- ☐ Age-appropriate efforts to elucidate meaning of new words
- ☐ Teachers show excitement for words through playful interactions

11 - Phonological Awareness

- ☐ Teachers engage children in varied interactions designed to build awareness of sounds via planned & playful activities
- ☐ Teachers are observed using terms that describe instructional goals (rhyming, syllable, initial sound) as they engage children in PA activities

15 – Approaches to Book Reading

- ☐ At least one full book reading observed
- ☐ Evidence of enjoyment and use of books
- ☐ Book read aloud is thoughtfully selected or in response to child input

16 – Quality of Book Reading

- ☐ Book selected at appropriate level with high-quality text & of interest to children
- ☐ Advanced teacher planning & preparation evident via comments & questions posed
- ☐ Teachers attend to text, pictures, ideas to encourage active engagement
- ☐ Teachers, reading is expressive, fluent; support children's understanding

SMALL GROUP TIER 1

ELLCO Evidence-Based Element

8 – Discourse Climate

- ☐ Teachers deliberately foster a climate in which individual opinions and ideas is valued; listen attentively; encourage children to listen to each other
- ☐ Teachers explicitly and appropriately encourage participation of all children (diversity)

9 - Opportunities for Extended Conversation

- ☐ Teachers select topics & use strategies to engage children in conversation
- ☐ Teachers create varied opportunities for intervention; engage children in individual, small or large group talk
- ☐ Teacher/child "talk" informs learning (extends content knowledge or oral language skills)

10 - Efforts to Build Vocabulary

- ☐ New and challenging words are introduced
- ☐ Age-appropriate efforts to elucidate meaning of new words
- ☐ Teachers show excitement for words through playful interactions

11 - Phonological Awareness

- ☐ Teachers engage children in varied interactions designed to build awareness of sounds via planned & playful activities
- ☐ Teachers are observed using terms that describe instructional goals (rhyming, syllable, initial sound) as they engage children in PA activities

15 – Approaches to Book Reading

- ☐ At least one full book reading observed
- ☐ Evidence of enjoyment and use of books
- ☐ Book read aloud is thoughtfully selected or in response to child input

16 – Quality of Book Reading

- ☐ Book selected at appropriate level with high-quality text & of interest to children
- ☐ Advanced teacher planning & preparation evident via comments & questions posed
- ☐ Teachers attend to text, pictures, ideas to encourage active engagement
- ☐ Teachers, reading is expressive, fluent; support children's understanding

JOURNAL WEEKLY

ELLCO Evidence-Based Element

17 – Early Writing Environment

- ☐ Multiple opportunities are thoughtfully provided across settings that motivate children to use writing skills
- ☐ There are varied and appropriate materials and tools integrated throughout the classroom in a designated writing area
- ☐ There are multiple examples of the written word (children's work, posters, class-generated big books) that exemplify varied purposes of writing

18 - Support for Children's Writing

- ☐ Teachers provide opportunities that motivate children to write; Engage with children to generate interest; serve as models; support children's writing
- ☐ Planned and spontaneous support for children's writing efforts
- ☐ Children are observed writing as part of several teacher-organized routines (daily sign-in, turns list, labeling art work) & play

CHOICE TIME / ACTIVE LEARNING

ELLCO Evidence-Based Element

1-Organization of the Classroom

- ☐ Appropriate, comfortable furnishings; welcoming atmosphere
- ☐ Interest areas arranged for optimal use
- ☐ Established traffic flows
- ☐ Physical environment supports independent activity

2 – Contents of the Classroom

- ☐ Materials are organized conceptually; appealing and with purpose
- ☐ Materials are in excellent condition & in ample supply
- ☐ Children access materials independently
- ☐ Child-generated work is displayed effectively

3-Classroom Management

- ☐ Children have internalized rules and routines
- ☐ Clear expectations for child behavior; expressed through multiple strategies
- ☐ Teacher intervention is calm and nonthreatening; leads to peaceful resolution

5 – Approaches to Curriculum

- ☐ Materials, activities, and interactions use themes meaningful to children
- ☐ Teachers value and build on children's contributions

6 – Opportunities for Child Choice and Initiative

- ☐ Flexible scheduling and grouping practices support children's initiative
- ☐ Teachers organize and provide interesting experiences
- ☐ Classroom routines support children's self-directed activities

9 - Opportunities for Extended Conversation

- ☐ Teachers select topics & use strategies to engage children in conversation
- ☐ Teachers create varied opportunities for intervention; engage children in individual, small or large group talk
- ☐ Teacher/child "talk" informs learning (extends content knowledge or oral language skills)

10 - Efforts to Build Vocabulary

- ☐ New and challenging words are introduced
- ☐ Age-appropriate efforts to elucidate meaning of new words
- ☐ Teachers show excitement for words through playful interactions

CHOICE TIME / ACTIVE LEARNING, continued

TIER 2 OR TIER 3 (MRC)
SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION (non-MRC)

ELLCO Evidence-Based Element

10 - Efforts to Build Vocabulary

- ☐ New and challenging words are introduced
- ☐ Age-appropriate efforts to elucidate meaning of new words
- ☐ Teachers show excitement for words through playful interactions

11 - Phonological Awareness

- ☐ Teachers engage children in varied interactions designed to build awareness of sounds via planned & playful activities
- ☐ Teachers are observed using terms that describe instructional goals (rhyming, syllable, initial sound) as they engage children in PA activities

18 - Support for Children's Writing

- ☐ Teachers provide opportunities that motivate children to write; Engage with children to generate interest; serve as models; support children's writing
- ☐ Planned and spontaneous support for children's writing efforts
- ☐ Children are observed writing as part of several teacher-organized routines (daily sign-in, turns list, labeling art work) & play

BIG 5 TRANSITIONS

ELLCO Evidence-Based Element

10 - Efforts to Build Vocabulary

- ☐ New and challenging words are introduced
- ☐ Age-appropriate efforts to elucidate meaning of new words
- ☐ Teachers show excitement for words through playful interactions

11 - Phonological Awareness

- ☐ Teachers engage children in varied interactions designed to build awareness of sounds via planned & playful activities
- ☐ Teachers are observed using terms that describe instructional goals (rhyming, syllable, initial sound) as they engage children in PA activities

FAMILY

ELLCO Evidence-Based Element

18 - Support for Children's Writing

- ☐ Teachers provide opportunities that motivate children to write; Engage with children to generate interest; serve as models; support children's writing
- ☐ Planned and spontaneous support for children's writing efforts
- ☐ Children are observed writing as part of several teacher-organized routines (daily sign-in, turns list, labeling art work) & play

ACTIVITY #1

ACTIVITY #2

ACTIVITY #3

Scoring the Observation using the ELLCO

Scoring: To score the ELLCO, use the "Score Form" on page 43 of the ELLCO tool. You will need to carefully review the five level rubrics for each section—exemplary, strong, basic, inadequate, deficient—and review the anchor statement for each to make a decision based on what you saw, heard, and recorded. Scores are 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1. If you did not observe reading under item 16, indicate "0". Remember to round down, not up. Then fill in the subscale scores and determine the averages.

Interrater Reliability (IIR): Record your scores and your partner's scores on the form below. Compare them. Did you agree or disagree? Some items may require some discussion. You may revise your score if your partner provides convincing evidence. Use subscores to guide the discussion of score differences, and to help determine the final agreed upon composite score.

To determine the degree of agreement between your scores, calculate the percentage of agreement by adding the number of items given *identical* ratings divided by the total number of items. Fill in the % here: _____. If you achieved between 70-80% or greater IRR, that's fine.

	Score				**Composite**	
	Subscores	**Rater 1**	**Subscores**	**Rater 2**	**Score**	**Final Score**
Section 1: Classroom Structure						
1. Organization of the Classroom						
2. Contents of the Classroom						
3. Classroom Management						
4. Personnel						
Section II: Curriculum						
5. Approaches to Curriculum						
6. Opportunities for Child Choice and Initiative						
7. Recognizing Diversity in the Classroom						
Section III: The Language Environment						
8. Discourse Climate						
9. Opportunities for Extended Conversation						
10. Efforts to Build Vocabulary						
11. Phonological Awareness						
Section IV: Books and Book Reading						
12. Organization of the Book Area						
13. Characteristics of Books						
14. Books for Learning						
15. Approaches to Book Reading						
16. Quality of Book Reading						
Section V: Print and Early Writing						
17. Early Writing Environment						
18. Support for Children's Writing						
19. Environmental Print						

Appendix B. Glossary

Glossary

AmeriCorps: AmeriCorps is a national service program run by the Corporation for National and Community Service that engages members to serve at nonprofit organizations, public agencies and faith-based organizations nationwide. In exchange for their service, AmeriCorps members receive a modest living stipend and Education Award. Minnesota Reading Corps is the nation's largest state AmeriCorps program.

"Big Five" Transitions: Big Five transitions are brief songs or games that are conducted with students during the time between scheduled activities. This time may include when students are waiting in line to put their coats on, or go outside to play, or during clean up time. The activities focus on at least one of the "Big 5" Essential Early Literacy Predictors. Examples of Big Five Transitions are the "What is it? Bag" game, a Rhyme Song, Alliteration Game, a "Letters have Names/Sounds" song.

CNCS: The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is a federal agency that engages more than 4 million Americans in service through Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and the Social Innovation Fund, and leads President Obama's national call to service initiative, United We Serve. CNCS is the primary federal funder of the Minnesota Reading Corps program, and commissioned the current evaluation of the Minnesota Reading Corps.

Community Corps: Community Corps members are embedded in preschool classrooms and collaborate with the classroom's lead teacher to help develop children's language and emergent literacy skills in preparation for kindergarten. Community Corps members are responsible for enhancing the literacy-rich environment within the classroom, implementing Tier 2 and 3 interventions and conducting progress monitoring for students.

Educator Corps: Educator Corps members are current employees who are in a teaching position at the site, typically lead teachers or assistant teachers. This member continues to fulfill their regular teaching responsibilities, but also incorporates specific Minnesota Reading Corps strategies in their instruction.

ELLCO: The Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) tool is used to assess five key elements of a classroom's literacy environment: classroom structure, curriculum, language environment, books and book reading, print and early writing. According to the ELLCO, a "Literacy Rich Classroom" is one that embeds literacy activities among daily routines.

Head Start: Head Start is a Federal early childhood program designed to promote school readiness for low-income pre-Kindergarten students by enhancing their cognitive, social and emotional development. Through Head Start programs, enrolled children and families can also receive health, nutrition and other social support programs depending on eligibility.

IGDI 1.0: The Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDI) is a set of standardized, individually administered assessments that are used to evaluate children's language and emergent literacy skills. IGDIs assess three key areas of emergent literacy: 1) Rhyming (Phonological Awareness); 2) Picture Naming (Vocabulary); and 3) Alliteration (Phonological Awareness).

Internal Coach: An individual trained by the Reading Corps to provide on-site literacy support and oversight to the Minnesota Reading Corps AmeriCorps member. Internal Coaches provide an on-site orientation for the member, develop a daily schedule, assist in the implementation of literacy assessments, conduct integrity checks of assessment and intervention implementation, review student data and ensure the member is accurately reporting student data. The Internal Coach is a school employee, not a Minnesota Reading Corps member or staff person.

K-3: Kindergarten through third grade

Literacy Rich Schedule: Members in the PreK program work to implement and support a standard instructional regime/schedule that focuses on the "Big Five" emergent literacy skills (i.e., conversation skills, vocabulary and background knowledge, book and print rules, phonological awareness-rhyming and alliteration, and alphabetic knowledge). Members assist the teaching team in implementing the literacy rich schedule and fostering a literacy rich classroom environment as defined by the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO), including name chart, theme-related books and props in five or more centers, sign-in area, writing center, word wall, etc.

Master Coach: Provides literacy coaching support to Internal Coaches and AmeriCorps members at multiple sites. The Master Coach schedules regular on-site visits to support and guide the site and its members in fulfilling the Minnesota Reading Corps program goals and ensures fidelity of implementation. The Master Coach provides training to members, conducts integrity checks, and reviews students' progress monitoring data. The Master Coach is an experienced literacy educator who serves as a consultant to Minnesota Reading Corps.

Member: A person to who serves in the Minnesota Reading Corps AmeriCorps program. Member may refer to a volunteer in the K-3 program, or a PreK Educator Corps or Community Corps. Members deliver the one-on-one tutoring (PreK and K-3) and support implementation of the literacy rich schedule in PreK classrooms. In recognition of their service, members receive a modest living stipend and Education Award.

Member Meet-Up: A monthly professional learning group (PLG) program with five or more tutors for professional development purposes. This activity is led by the master coach and serves as a time for program staff, coaches, and tutors connect. The four PLG meetings are embedded into the member meet-up meetings.

MDE: Minnesota Department of Education.

Minnesota Reading Corps: The Minnesota Reading Corps was started in 2003 to provide reading and literacy tutoring to children in PreK programs and students in Kindergarten through third-grade. The goal of the program is to ensure that students become successful readers and meet reading proficiency targets by the end of the third grade. Minnesota Reading Corps engages AmeriCorps members to provide literacy enrichment and tutoring services to PreK students. AmeriCorps members serve as one-on-one tutors and provide research-based interventions to both PreK and K-3 students who are just below proficiency in reading. As of the 2013-2014 school year, more than 1,100 AmeriCorps members implemented the program in 712 schools or sites and 213 school districts across the state of Minnesota.

PreK: Preschool.

Program Coordinator: An employee of Minnesota Reading Corps, responsible for providing administrative oversight to the Minnesota Reading Corps program on a regional level, including member management, site management, and compliance with all AmeriCorps regulations. The Program Coordinator oversees regional recruitment efforts, works together with service sites in the interviewing, selection, and placement process for members.

Progress monitoring: A scientifically-based practice using regular assessments to track students' academic performance and evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention. Progress monitoring data helps teaching teams determine the effectiveness of interventions then make adjustments to instruction to ensure students reach their next benchmark target. For K-3, progress monitoring is conducted with all students receiving Minnesota Reading Corps tutoring each week by members using 1-minute fluency tests. For Pre-K students receiving Tier 2 and 3 one-to-one intervention services, progress monitoring occurs monthly.

RtI: Response to Intervention (RtI) is a practice of academic and behavior interventions designed to identify and provide early effective assistance to underperforming students. Research-based interventions are implemented and frequent progress monitoring is conducted to assess student response and progress. When students do not make progress, increasingly more intense interventions are introduced.

SEEDS: A relationship-based instructional approach that maps out for teachers five ways to *intentionally* interact with children in order to promote academic growth and social/emotional well-being. SEEDS high quality interactions include the following five elements:

- **Sensitivity:** Look, listen, and ask questions to become aware of each child's needs, thoughts, abilities and feelings;
- **Encouragement:** Use intentional affirmations and positive non-verbal communication to create a shared positive learning environment;
- **Education:** Embed the "Big 5" literacy skills in daily routines (vocabulary, conversation, phonological awareness, book and print rules, and letter knowledge);
- **Development of Skills Through Doing:** Help children explore their world through hands-on learning; and
- **Self-Image Support:** Balance the SEEDS quality interactions to support a child's feeling of being respected and capable.

"Strive for Five": A strategy used to intentionally create extended conversations between children and adults in an interaction. It can be between one adult and one child or one adult and a small or large group of children. It was designed to encourage adults to go beyond the typical interaction that adults have with children. It encourages adults to "watch, wait, and listen", make a comment, ask a question, send a positive non-verbal message that the adult is listening, and build a conversational volley back and forth.

ServeMinnesota: State Commission on AmeriCorps programs in Minnesota and responsible in Minnesota Law for Minnesota Reading Corps.

Service hours: The required hours of service AmeriCorps members must complete in order to fulfill their 11 months of service to AmeriCorps, and in return receive a living allowance and an education award to pay for college or pay back student loans. All

full-time members, K-3, Community Corps, and Educator Corps, must complete 1700 hours of service. Part-time members must complete 920 hours. Service hours can be fulfilled not only through members' time tutoring or working in the classroom, but also through participation in community and other school activities.

SMART goals: These type of goals are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely. Within the context of the Minnesota Reading Corps PreK program, members are required to identify smart goals, and Internal Coaches are required to discuss them on a monthly basis. This process helps to ensure intervention integrity.

Summer Institute: A multi-day training program conducted over the summer to introduce new and old members, Internal Coaches, and Master Coaches to the Reading Corps program. The Institute consists of learning about the theories behind the program, the techniques used to implement the program, and the administrative components of the program. Education experts train Members and Coaches on all aspects of the program, and also provide time for practicing the techniques and the interventions. The Institute is also the time when most members will meet their Internal and Master Coaches for the first time.

Talk, Read, and Write with Me!: A family involvement program through the Minnesota Reading Corps designed to help children develop their vocabulary and emergent literacy skills at home by guiding families in incorporating effective talking, reading, and writing activities into family routines. Talk, Read, and Write with Me begins soon after fall benchmarking with at least five targeted children in the class. Each week throughout the rest of the year, a child is given materials to take home, including a book and a journal. The child and family read the book throughout the week and draw and write in the journal.

Tier 1-3: Tier 1, 2, and 3 are the three "tiers" of the multi-layered instructional process at the core of the RtI model. Student scores on general outcome measures (e.g., FAST or IGDI) referenced to specific benchmarks determine a student's tier placement. The instruction that is then provided to students is based upon their respective tiers. Tier 1 students, approximately 75-80% of the population, are at the "Universal Level" and benefit from the standard whole class core literacy curriculum. They do not require supplemental instruction. Students who score in Tier 2 range, 15-20%, are those whose assessment scores are below the expected levels of achievement (benchmark) and are at risk for academic failure but are still above levels considered to indicate a high risk for failure. Tier 2 students typically are eligible for supplemental small group instruction. Students whose scores place them into Tier 3, approximately 5-10% of students, are considered to be at high risk for academic failure. They are typically offered one-to-one supplemental interventions and individualized educational plans.

- **Tier 1 Instruction:** In PreK programs, this is instruction that students receive in the general education classroom. It includes Reading Corps directed intentional teaching with embedded and explicit instruction. In K-3 programs, this is considered the core literacy instruction provided in the classrooms for all students.
- **Tier 2 Instruction:** Provides additional, more intense instruction to children identified as needing extra help in targeted skill areas. Tier 2 instruction is in addition to Tier 1 instruction.
- **Tier 3 Instruction:** Provides the most intense intervention approach for children identified as needing extra help in a targeted skill area. Tier 3 instruction builds onto Tier 2 instruction by providing more individualized and intense instruction.