

# READY for the Grade 2020 – Rockville / West Haven Report

Evaluator: Anita M. Baker, Ed.D.

Evaluation Services, Lambertville, NJ

Rockville conducted an on-demand video-based 5-week READY for the Grade program<sup>1</sup> focused on customized individual tutoring for 8 children (including 3 from West Haven) during summer 2020. The program was designed and overseen by Maureen Kearney, a reading specialist with 36 years of teaching experience who has directed the program for multiple years, with Jennifer Johnston, Library Director of the Rockville Public Library. Although no formal family engagement programming was conducted, parents/guardians were integrally involved in the individualized lessons provided for their children, making sure videos were viewed, work was done and response videos were re-submitted. Through both the Rockville Public Library and the West Haven Public Library, families also had access to books through curbside circulation, and both libraries also helped ensure that families got the incentives provided for participation (West Haven also paid for their incentives and the fees for time dedicated by Mrs. Kearney to the family from West Haven). Though formal assessments were not possible, the instructor clarified that all 8 participants received the support they needed to maintain or enhance their reading skills and help prepare them for either in-person or virtual learning scheduled for the 2020-21 school year. Details about the program follow.

## **Program Implementation**

The Rockville Instructor planned to serve 5 – 10 families for summer 2020. She knew that the customized video development work was very labor intensive and was also aware that students were “burned out,” with online learning. While there had been initial hopes that she would be able to teach children one-on-one through Face Time or other phone/computer virtual applications, because teachers are mandated reporters and therefore required to report suspicion of violence or neglect in the home, Rockville would not allow teachers to use teaching methods that allowed them to “see” inside a child’s home. Instead, Mrs. Kearney used the document camera she had acquired spring 2020 from her district to help children see books and other printed and 3D materials she was using in her video lessons and then interacted multiple times per week to get and receive content to and from students. Each lesson included learning targets with steps to meet the targets, modelled examples of skills, and use of other tools like graphic organizers. Children were asked to view their videos and respond directly via *Seesaw*<sup>2</sup> an app (also being used by Vernon Public Schools) designed to help students demonstrate and share their learning. Mrs. Kearney responded specifically to students’ submissions and then developed additional videos per each child’s specific learning objectives.

### **West Haven – Rockville Connection**

The West Haven Public Library, faced with multiple local challenges beyond COVID-19, including budget limitations and the likely need to move locations was not able to host a program for summer 2020.

The Rockville RfG site instructor and the Rockville Library Director extended an offer to help West Haven families whose children could benefit from READY for the Grade. West Haven provided lists of prior participants and Rockville conducted recruitment and developed a plan to engage a 2<sup>nd</sup> teacher if needed. Ultimately 1 family, with 3 children was served.

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<sup>1</sup> The Rockville program was originally designed to be 6 weeks in length, but weather and electricity outages, followed by the local Superintendent’s decision to start Vernon Public school programming early limited the number of weeks the program could continue.

<sup>2</sup> Students are able to share their learning in their Seesaw portfolio so teachers and families can gain insights into what their students know and can respond to and better support their development.

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### **Enrollment**

The Rockville/West Haven READY for the Grade program served eight children, all of whom were from families that had previously participated in the program or were known to the site administrators as in need of program assistance (including for most, being below grade level in reading and being free lunch eligible). The total number was a small and therefore manageable number for the intensive nature of the individualized work with a single instructor (target had been to serve 5 – 10 families, 6 were served).

- The group included one pre-kindergarten child (the RfG age/grade range was relaxed for summer 2020), one rising 1<sup>st</sup> grader (who had also been a 1<sup>st</sup> grader 2019-20), two rising 2<sup>nd</sup> graders, and 4 rising 3<sup>rd</sup> graders. Two children were girls; six were boys.
- The students were diverse in terms of race/ethnicity; 1 participant was identified as Hispanic/Latinx, 1 participant was identified as Black/African-American, 3 participants were identified as Asian and 3 participants were identified as White/Caucasian.
- Most students spoke English as their primary language at home (the 3 students from 1 West Haven family reported speaking Bengali as their primary language).

### **Attendance, Achievement and Parent/Guardian Feedback**

- Attendance, like the specific training videos, was individual. Some students participated more than others; all participated every week the program ran, reviewing and responding to 3 – 5 videos per week. All received \$5 gift cards and other rewards (pizzas, amazon cards) for themselves and their families as they completed assignments. The instructor described 6 of the 8 children as especially diligent.
- While it was challenging to conduct official assessments of the children strictly remotely, all maintained their skills and most increased their reading levels and could demonstrate other skill development. The program also helped all children keep going and prepare for the new school year.
- The parents/guardians of all but one child were described as very engaged in the process. They reviewed the videos together with their children and helped them practice skills. The site instructor reported (via daily phone conversations in many cases) that parents gave her great feedback about their children's progress, and how easy it was to engage with the instructor and the videos.

### **Conclusions and Issues for Further Consideration**

As stated previously, the program ended after only five-weeks of instruction including an interruption due to the power outage that affected all of the Rockville and West Haven areas, and after the Rockville superintendent announced plans to initiate an early start to the 2020-21 school year. Despite the limitations the site instructor reported she was very happy that she conducted the program, even though she had had reservations given the restrictions. Her commitment to READY for the Grade and the NewAlliance Foundation motivated her efforts and she summarized the program saying: *“the students and families followed-through, and it did make a difference.”* Mrs. Kearney and the Rockville Public Library are definitely on board for summer 2021 and now know that they will be able to do in-person virtual instruction via Zoom next year.