Literacy First
BRIGHT FUTURES AHEAD

LITERACY FIRST EVALUATION:
AUSTIN ISD IMPACT ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The vision of the Literacy First program is to ensure that every student in Central Texas will be a successful reader before third grade. To do so, the program serves struggling readers in Grades K, 1, and 2 at Title 1 campuses in the Austin area (30 schools in 2014-15). After being selected for Literacy First tutoring, each student receives daily one-on-one, 30-minute lessons tailored to his or her literacy level and reading needs. Each child continues working with the same tutor until he or she reaches or exceeds program-determined benchmarks on critical reading skills and "graduates" from the program.

Previous work has shown significant, positive effects of the program using internal data collected by Literacy First staff. This report is the first to use external data to examine the short- medium- and long-term effects of participation on student outcomes. Students in the study were in Grades 1 and 2 in 2013-14 and 2014-15. After being paired with a cohort of students with statistically similar reading abilities before they entered the program, data from the DRA and TPRI reading assessments, STAAR, Special Education status, and attendance were collected until 2016-17.

OVERALL

Literacy First has strong effects on:

- Student reading skills, especially as measured by the DRA and TPRI reading assessments

- Retention – students in Literacy First are more likely to be promoted on time

SHORT TERM EFFECTS

Differences between Literacy First and matched comparison students at the End of Year (EOY) of service

- Higher scores on the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) at EOY for all four cohorts

- Less likely to be flagged as below grade level on DRA at EOY for three of four cohorts.

- Fewer errors on the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) at EOY

- Grade 1 2014-15 cohort had higher TPRI Story 2 total scores, and more likely to meet the benchmarks for both stories

MEDIUM TERM EFFECTS

Differences between Literacy First and matched comparison students on DRA/TPRI the year after service, able to be assessed for students who were in the Grade 1 2013-14 and 2014-15 cohorts

- Higher DRA scores at Beginning of Year (BOY)

- Even higher DRA scores at EOY – gap in performance widened for both cohorts

- Fewer errors on TPRI at BOY and EOY

- Grade 1 2014-15 Cohort had higher TPRI Story 1 total scores and were more likely to meet the benchmark for Story 1

- More Literacy First students were promoted to Grade 2 on time in both cohorts (as indicated by TPRI grade level)

LONG TERM EFFECTS

Differences between Literacy First and matched comparison students one to two years after service

- Students in the Grade 1 2014-15 Cohort had higher STAAR Grade 3 Reading Scale Scores and were more likely to meet the standard than their peers (75% vs 61%).

- Students in the Grade 2 2013-14 Cohort were less likely to be in Special Education.

EVALUATED BY

Agile Analytics

AUSTIN, TEXAS