



**Literacy First**

# 2019-2020 **IMPACT REPORT**

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# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The 2019-2020 school year was unlike any other I've experienced in over two decades with Literacy First. Longstanding racial injustices, now exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, disproportionately impacted the vulnerable communities we serve. Students fell even further behind in their reading journeys when schools shut down in mid-March. Literacy First did all that we could to mitigate those reading losses by pivoting to virtual tutoring for the remainder of the school year (you can read more about the program's pandemic response on page 8). At the same time, our team deepened our commitment to embed Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in every aspect of our work, as well as our commitment to be better allies for our students and their families. Moving forward, we know that students will continue to face unprecedented challenges in the classroom and in their lives. As we shared this past summer, we believe strongly in the power of early literacy in addressing educational inequities and racial disparities, and so we remain deeply committed to our mission of teaching all students to read. I hope you'll join us.



**Mary Ellen Isaacs, Literacy First Director**



## HOW YOU CAN HELP

**Invest in the future** today with a monthly gift to Literacy First

**Volunteer** with Leaders for Literacy, the Study Social, or the Spring Fundraiser

**See us in action** when you attend a virtual Literacy First site visit

**Follow us** @literacyfirst on Facebook and Instagram, @literacy1st on Twitter



# RENEWED PURPOSE

As part of our strategic planning process, Literacy First updated our guiding statements to better reflect the purpose of the organization today.

## VISION

Every child in Central Texas develops reading skills that allow them to realize their full potential with regard to education, economic opportunity, civic engagement, and personal development.

## MISSION

Literacy First partners with school districts to ensure all children are reading at or above grade level by third grade.

## VALUES

Our work is grounded in four core values to help us lead with integrity in all we do.

- > We embody the spirit of service in pursuit of educational equity and every child's right to read.
- > We achieve quality impact through continual learning, meaningful evaluation, and advancing expertise in literacy.
- > We embrace community strengths through respectful and intentional collaboration with students, parents, tutors, teachers, and partners.
- > We nurture an inclusive culture where our diverse staff, tutors, partners, and participants engage in honest, supportive interactions and find a sense of belonging.





# TRUSTED SOLUTION

## ONE-TO-ONE

Literacy First tutors work with each child one-to-one for 20-30 minutes every day, providing lessons tailored to each student's needs.

## HIGHLY TRAINED

Tutors receive more than 60 hours of literacy training during the year, plus weekly coaching from Literacy First staff.

## BACKED BY SCIENCE

Literacy First lessons target the most critical early reading skills — letter-sound knowledge, phonological awareness, phonics, and fluency.

## DATA DRIVEN

The progress of every student is monitored weekly. Data is shared regularly with our school partners to ensure students receive the support they need.

## BILINGUAL

On average, 45% of our tutors are bilingual (Spanish and English), so we can meet the needs of our student population.

# LASTING IMPACT

## SUSTAINED IMPROVEMENT

Literacy First students score higher on early reading tests and maintain those gains years after leaving the program.

## CLOSING THE OPPORTUNITY GAP

On average, more than 80% of Literacy First students make accelerated and measurable progress and more than 50% reach or exceed grade level benchmarks in one year.

## REDUCED RETENTION RATES

On average, 99.7% of students served by Literacy First are promoted to the next grade.

## FULFILLING POTENTIAL

Literacy First tutors worked with 80% of those K-2 students that moved from being identified as at-risk to not-at-risk over the course of a year.

## STAAR STUDENTS

Literacy First 2nd graders who reach grade level pass the state-mandated reading assessment (STAAR) at a 30% higher rate than their peers not in the program.



# AMERICORPS MODEL STATS

DATA REPRESENTS SERVICE PERIOD OF SEPTEMBER 2019-MARCH 2020

Literacy First hires and trains AmeriCorps members dedicating a year of service to the community.

15 AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT SCHOOLS 1 AUSTIN ACHIEVE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

**45,000** TUTORING SESSIONS

**22,500** INSTRUCTIONAL HOURS

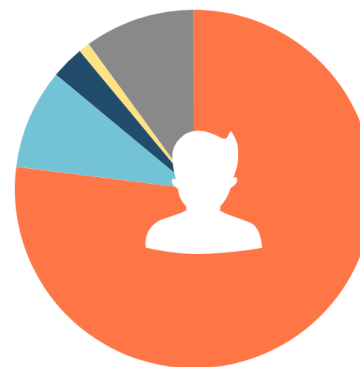
**814** STUDENTS SERVED



Kindergarten (41%)

1st Grade (31%)

2nd Grade (28%)



Hispanic (77%)

Black (9%)

White (3%)

Two or More Races (1%)

Other/Unknown (10%)

**55** AMERICORPS MEMBERS

15 Leadership Academy Participants

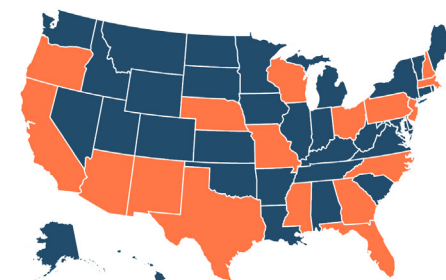
17 First Generation College Graduates

5,384 Professional Development Hours

3,546 Community Partnership Hours\*

\*In addition to Literacy First, members volunteer at community nonprofits such as Boys & Girls Club and Latinitas.

MEMBERS CAME FROM  
**17** STATES TO SERVE  
OUR COMMUNITY



7 MEMBERS COMPLETED THE  
**REGION 13 EDUCATION CERTIFICATION**  
PROGRAM. ALL 7 ARE NOW EMPLOYED AS  
**TEACHERS IN CENTRAL TEXAS.**

# DISTRICT MODEL STATS

DATA REPRESENTS SERVICE PERIOD OF SEPTEMBER 2019-MARCH 2020

Literacy First staff train school district staff (full-time tutors and Instructional Coaches) to deliver the Literacy First program, with the goal of building community capacity over time.

9 DEL VALLE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT SCHOOLS

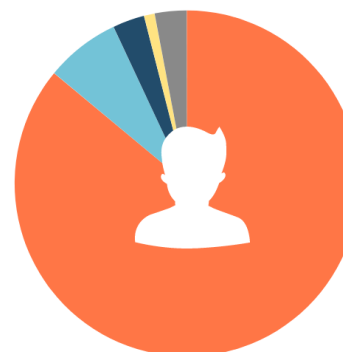
19,000 TUTORING SESSIONS

9,500 INSTRUCTIONAL HOURS

448 STUDENTS SERVED



Kindergarten (36%)  
1st Grade (30%)  
2nd Grade (34%)



Hispanic (86%)  
Black (7%)  
White (3%)  
Two or More Races (1%)  
Other/Unknown (3%)

**Paraprofessionals** making the transition to classroom teaching

**Parents** of school-age children who enjoy working in schools

**Retired educators** who want to continue working in schools

26 TUTORS FROM THE DEL VALLE COMMUNITY



IN JUST 3 YEARS OF IMPLEMENTING THE DISTRICT MODEL IN DEL VALLE ISD, **2 FORMER TUTORS** HAVE GONE ON TO BECOME **TEACHERS IN THE DISTRICT.**

# MEETING THE CHALLENGE

In spring 2020, following the closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our staff and tutors were able to pivot our work to provide virtual support to students, teachers, and parents in a variety of ways from March through June.

- > AmeriCorps tutors provided virtual tutoring to 50-60 students.
- > Del Valle tutors provided virtual tutoring to 20-30 students.
- > Tutors worked alongside teachers in their virtual classrooms to support instruction for small groups of students.
- > We created take-home early literacy packets for students in homes with limited technology.
- > Tutors provided classroom support during summer school programs in Austin ISD and with community partners.

Our efforts in the spring and summer demonstrated that we can effectively support and monitor students' progress to grade level goals in the virtual space. We were fully prepared to begin the 2020-2021 school year providing effective virtual tutoring. And, we are ready to return to in-person tutoring when conditions allow. We have re-envisioned our work and remain steadfast in our goal to teach students to read so they may be empowered to learn in this new reality.



To learn more about recovery efforts in the wake of COVID-19, [watch Literacy Now](#), our May 2020 expert panel discussion on the critical role of early literacy.



# MARICELA & ABBY: A SERVICE STORY

***Maricela, a 2019-2020 Literacy First tutor at Hornsby-Dunlap Elementary in Del Valle ISD, and mom to an energetic 3-year-old, joined the program because she wanted experience in a school setting before going back to college to obtain a teaching degree. When schools closed in March 2020, Maricela was able to continue tutoring her students virtually.***

I loved my job as a Literacy First tutor. It was one of the best experiences I've ever had, and I miss all of my students. There was one Kindergarten student, named Abby, who I was only able to work with for about a month before the quarantine happened. She is one of the sweetest students, and was always excited to come with me for lessons. When schools closed, she was progressing right on track, her data chart was looking amazing, and she was learning more and more letter sounds each week.

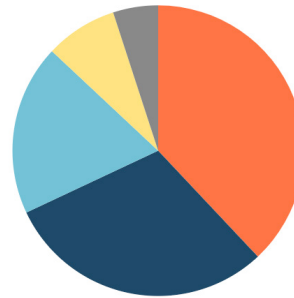
In mid-April, I was able to get in touch with Abby's mom to set up virtual tutoring. Each Monday, I would send Abby a list of activities from the virtual learning packet the Literacy First team had developed, and she would work on those throughout the week. Then, her mom or grandma would take pictures and send them to me to show that Abby had completed the activity.

I'm so proud of Abby and all of my students for the determination and hard work they put in while learning online. Two of my 1st graders were actually able to graduate from the program! And, with just a bit more time together, I am sure that Abby would have been right there alongside them.

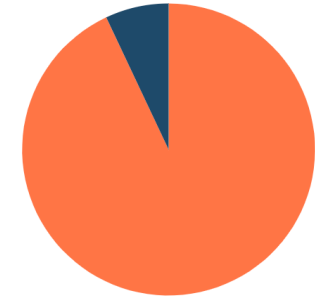
***-Maricela, 2019-2020 Literacy First Tutor***



# BY THE NUMBERS



AmeriCorps 38%  
Districts Fee for Service 29%  
Foundations 20%  
Individuals 8%  
Corporations 5%



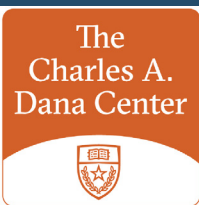
Direct Program 92%  
Core Mission Support 8%

*Without critical administrative, fundraising, and other support services, we would be unable to efficiently carry out our mission.*

*TOGETHER, WE'VE EMPOWERED 23,000 STUDENTS TO LEARN TO READ SINCE 1994*



AmeriCorps is a network of national service programs that gives people the chance to serve in locations across the country. AmeriCorps\*Texas programs give members the opportunity to strengthen Texas communities while being part of a national service movement.



Literacy First is a program of the Charles A. Dana Center in the College of Natural Sciences at The University of Texas at Austin, which works with our nation's education systems to ensure that every student leaves school prepared for success in a post-secondary education and the contemporary workplace.

[WWW.LITERACYFIRST.ORG](http://WWW.LITERACYFIRST.ORG)

