

TTS Literacy Project For Children

Sole Source And ESSER Information

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The TTS Literacy Project For Children is the sole source provider for Reading To Daisy and Max, the Book Read-Along Educational Phone System, TTS Enhanced Book Vending Machines, TTS Enhanced Classroom Libraries, TTS Read Day Events, and Classroom Reading Puppies.

The United States Department of Education specifies that:

An SEA or LEA may use ESSER and GEER funds to develop or implement an innovative approach to providing instruction to accelerate learning and mitigate the effects of lost instructional time for students most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

All of the TTS Literacy Project For Children programs listed have been design to meet this ESSER requirement.

In addition, ESSER guidelines recommend that these educational resources:

“demonstrates a rationale based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other relevant outcomes”; and includes “ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention.” This could include emerging technology-based or technology-enabled approaches, including educational technology platforms, that meet this definition.

There is considerable research demonstrating the rationale for these educational resources being “likely to improve student outcomes”.

For example, the TTS Enhanced Book Vending Machines are designed to provide an easy and highly-effective program for quickly and easily providing students with books to take home to read and to help them build their at-home reading library. The United States Department of Education, through their National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has extremely strong research supporting the need for schools to provide students with more books for at-home reading. These books are free to the students. Most school programs for acquiring and distributing books to students typically have very limited effectiveness because they require too much teacher and administrator time. Our programs are easy, effective, fun, and student centered.

The students are simply given free “Golden Tokens” and use the TTS Enhanced Book Vending Machines to select the books that are of interest to them. This increases the probability that the students will read the books, since they selected the book, rather than being assigned by their teacher or classroom paraprofessional. In addition, our TTS Enhanced Book Vending Machines have a Read-Along feature. Inside the cover of most books is a phone number that a student can call from home and listen to a recording of the book as the student reads along. This feature is especially important for educational inclusion and equity in under-served communities. Most schools quickly discovered during the COVID-19 pandemic that approximately half of their students living in under-served communities lack at-home access to a reliable Internet connection. Fortunately, unlike Internet services, phone services are a regulated utility. The federal government guarantees that every home in the United States will have access to affordable or free phone services. This provides the only inclusive and equitable option for providing at-home extended learning academic activities for ALL students, especially those living in under-served communities.

Here is a short sample of the research showing the effectiveness of increasing at-home reading:

Reading Proficiency and Home Support for Literacy - Vol. 2, No. 1, NCES 96-814

... on average, students who reported having more types of literacy materials in their homes also had higher average reading proficiencies.

ACCESS TO READING MATERIALS - Circulation of children's library materials, by school district. — U.S. Department of Education

Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows that students who report having more books in their homes performed better academically. Specifically, while less than 15 percent of students with between 0 and 10 books scored proficient in 2015, 50 percent of students with more than 100 books did. The data and research are clear – children who have access to print reading materials have better literacy outcomes.

Mol SE, Bus AG. To read or not to read: a meta-analysis of print exposure from infancy to early adulthood. Psychol Bull. 2011 Mar;137(2):267-96. doi: 10.1037/a0021890. PMID: 21219054.

For all measures in the outcome domains of reading comprehension and technical reading and spelling, moderate to strong correlations with print exposure were found. The outcomes support an upward spiral of causality: Children who are more proficient in comprehension and technical reading and spelling skills read more; because of more print exposure, their comprehension and technical reading and spelling skills improved more with each year of education.

Joanna Sikora, M.D.R. Evans, Jonathan Kelley, Scholarly culture: How books in adolescence enhance adult literacy, numeracy and technology skills in 31 societies, Social Science Research, Volume 77, 2019, Pages 1-15

Abstract: Here, we document advantageous effects of scholarly culture for adult literacy, adult numeracy, and adult technological problem solving. Growing up with home libraries boosts adult skills in these areas beyond the benefits accrued from parental education or own educational or occupational attainment. The effects are loglinear, with greatest returns to the growth in smaller libraries.

The above research studies show the effectiveness of at-home reading. We have enhanced these programs and have included additional features that have resulted in significant increases in at-home reading compared to traditional programs. The Reading To Daisy and Max program has been highly-successful at encouraging students to read more books.

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry has found that on average, children in the United States spend 4-6 hours a day watching TV or other electronic entertainment, and teens spend up to 9 hours. Few children are reading books at home. We have programs that give children a reason to read. For example, when children hear that by simply reading every night they are helping to save the life of scared and stressed dogs at animal shelters, they now have a reason to read. Their at-home reading increases significantly, as well as their reading levels.

An animal shelter is a very scary place for a dog. Everyone, and everything, they have ever known is now gone. They are locked in a cage. They can't play and run. They don't know what will happen next, or if they can ever trust anyone again. Most are afraid and stressed. This can lead to cowering in a corner, jumping, barking, and lunging when people come to look for a dog to adopt. Since most people will not adopt a dog that displays these behaviors, high stress levels can be deadly.

Fortunately, animal researchers have found when shelter dogs listen to recordings of people reading books, they have much lower stress levels. They were only stressed 26.39% of the time, while the average dog at a shelter was stressed 75.92% of the time. What was most exciting was that the dogs loved listening to recordings of children reading books.

Teachers, principals, parents, and animal shelter managers are all looking for options to encourage children to read more books. Since many children across the nation do not have at-home Internet access and/or computers, schools needed a program that could help ALL children. So we created a phone based solution. Unlike Internet service, the government considers telephone service a utility. Therefore, low-cost or free phone service is available in every community through government programs.

The children simply pick up a phone and call the educational phone number provide by their teacher. Everything is super easy. Even kindergarten students are using the system without any help. The system has many educational programs and resources, but the "Reading To Daisy and Max" program has been the most popular. The system asks the student to say the name of their book, and then asks the student to read their book. The system then processes the recordings to remove noise, gaps of silence, and handles sound level processing for our soft-spoken readers.

All students are completely anonymous for student privacy. The educational phone system only asks the children to read their book. The system does not ask for student identifiable information, such as names.

Children are excited to read. Many are starting their sessions with encouraging statements, such as "Hello Doggie. I'm going to read a book to you to make you happy". You can hear the excitement and fun in their voices as they read. Some students are also ending their reading session with, "Good-by Doggie ... have a good night and I'm going to read to you again tomorrow". The children are now reading many more books than ever, so their reading levels are now improving very quickly.

Here is a short sample of the research showing the effectiveness of children Reading to Dogs:

Kropp, J.J., & Shupp, M. (2017). Review of the Research: Are Therapy Dogs in Classrooms Beneficial?

Abstract: Numerous studies have found that literacy skills can be improved from reading to dogs and that children gain confidence in reading and report an increased love of reading (Fine 2015).

Jill Steel, Joanne M. Williams & Sarah McGeown (2021) Reading to dogs in schools: an exploratory study of teacher perspectives, Educational Research, 63:3, 279-301, DOI: 10.1080/00131881.2021.1956989

Results: Teachers' perspectives on RTD (Reading To Dogs) were generally very positive; perceptions of benefits to social, emotional and behavioural outcomes were more positive than those associated with reading outcomes. Furthermore, teachers perceived greater benefits to children's reading affect (e.g. motivation, confidence) than their reading frequency or skill. In general, teachers reported low concerns about the challenges associated with RTD; qualitative responses suggested that, while these challenges were real, they were not seen as insurmountable. Finally, teachers with greater knowledge and/or experience of RTD were more positive about its benefits and had fewer concerns about the challenges, although there were some exceptions. Additional written responses provided qualitative insights into teachers' experiences of RTD.

Sorin, Reesa & Brooks, Tamara & Lloyd, Janice. (2015). The impact of the classroom canines program on children's reading, social and emotional skills, and motivation to attend school. International Journal of Literacies. 22. 23-35. 10.18848/2327-0136/CGP/v22i02/48840.

Bassette and Taber-Doughty (2013) found that on-task behavior increased in primary school students with emotional and behavioral disabilities through a dog reading program. Increasingly, the value of dogs within a variety of learning environments, is being recognized ... All students had been identified as falling below, or being at risk of falling below, the academic benchmarks for their year level. The study used both quantitative and qualitative data, including reading scores, attendance records, classroom observations, interviews with teachers and students, and researcher journals. The study found that reading scores and attendance improved, but further that children were more motivated to learn, felt better about themselves as learners, and seemed to get along better with their peers.

Hall, Sophie & Gee, Nancy & Mills, Daniel. (2016). Children Reading to Dogs: A Systematic Review of the Literature. PLoS ONE. 11. 10.1371/journal.pone.0149759

Conclusion: The evidence suggests that reading to a dog may have a beneficial effect on a number of behavioural processes which contribute to a positive effect on the environment in which reading is practiced, leading to improved reading performance.

Paradise, Julie, "An Analysis Of Improving Student Performance Through The Use Of Registered Therapy Dogs Serving As Motivators For Reluctant Read" (2007). Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 2004-2019. 3288.

Abstract: Repeated measures analyses and descriptive statistics clearly revealed that students assigned to registered therapy dogs demonstrated more reading growth than their peers who were not assigned to registered therapy dogs.

Beetz, A., & McCardle, P. (2017). Does reading to a dog affect reading skills. In N. R. Gee, A. H. Fine, & P. McCardle (Eds.), *How animals help students learn: Research and practice for educators and mental-health professionals* (pp. 111–123). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

Abstract: Reading programs including animals, mostly dogs, have become quite popular in the US and Europe since the introduction of this animal-assisted education approach by Inter-mountain Therapy Animals in 1999.

Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Programs Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Programs:

A-22. May an SEA or LEA use ESSER and GEER funds to develop or implement an innovative approach to providing instruction to accelerate learning and mitigate the effects of lost instructional time for those students most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic?

Yes. An SEA or LEA may use ESSER and GEER funds to develop or implement an innovative approach to providing instruction to accelerate learning and mitigate the effects of lost instructional time for students most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. To the extent an innovative approach is evidenced-based, an LEA may use the ARP ESSER funds it reserves to implement the innovative approaches to address the impact of lost instructional time. As described in FAQ A-10, one of the tiers of evidence included in the definition of “evidence-based” refers to an approach that “demonstrates a rationale based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other relevant outcomes”; and includes “ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention.” This could include emerging technology-based or technology-enabled approaches, including educational technology platforms, that meet this definition.

C-19. May an LEA use ESSER and GEER funds to support distance learning, including the purchase of educational technology for student use?

Yes. An LEA may use ESSER and GEER funds for activities that support distance education and promote long-term improvements in technology infrastructure and operations and their effective use. These activities might include providing online learning to all students, including students with disabilities, English learners, students experiencing homelessness, and students in foster care; and training educators the effective implementation of online learning. To support the continuity of learning, an LEA may use ESSER and GEER funds to purchase educational technology for student and educator use, including:

- Mobile technology devices such as tablets and laptops;
- Providing off-campus access to reliable, high-speed internet for students and teachers through the purchase of internet-connected devices/equipment, mobile hotspots, wireless service plans, or installation of Community Wi-Fi Hotspots, especially in underserved communities;
- Teleconferencing applications or programs;
- Software/online/virtual programs, screen capture/recording software, online/virtual cultural curriculum/programs, online/virtual tutoring curriculum/programs, learning management systems;
- Technology accessories, such as headphones, speakers, laptop cameras; and
- Assistive technology devices, such as dedicated communication devices and applications for text-to-speech, graphic organizers, or word prediction.

Supporting distance learning requires the effective use of technology by educators. Funding may also be used to provide professional development, including through professional learning communities, to support educators in effectively using technology to provide meaningful learning opportunities for students that are aligned with grade-level expectations. Funds may also be used to support other school personnel such as speech therapists, guidance counselors, and social workers, to effectively provide student services virtually as needed.