

Garden City Early Literacy Afterschool Reading Programs Help Close the Learning Gap

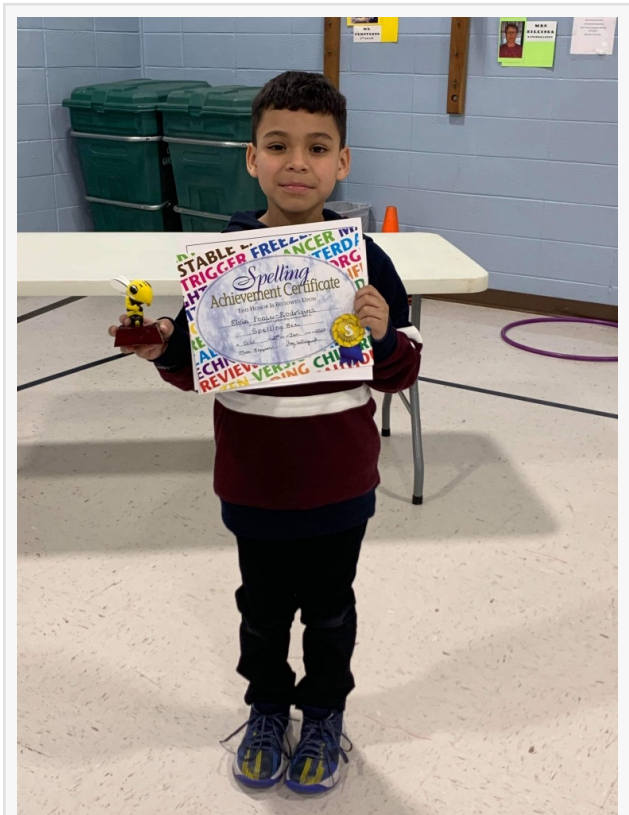
Reading Roadmap Model Holds Promise as Educators Seek Solutions to Address COVID-19 Learning Shortfall

GARDEN CITY, KS, USA, July 15, 2020

/EINPresswire.com/ -- Garden City Public Schools and its Reading Roadmap afterschool literacy programs are being recognized today as a promising effort to help schools overcome COVID-related literacy learning loss. As part of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading's [GLR Week 2020](#), events are being held across the country to highlight efforts targeting early learning, providing support for parents and addressing learning loss. A study released today in Garden City shows success in the Kansas-born program's efforts to boost reading proficiency among striving readers, something increasingly important due to reductions in instructional time resulting from COVID-19.

An [independent matched comparison study](#) conducted of Garden City, Kansas elementary students indicates that those attending the Reading Roadmap afterschool programs tested higher on school reading assessments than their non-attending peers. According to the study, the Reading Roadmap afterschool program offered attendees a boost in reading success that could prove to be valuable in closing COVID-related learning gaps. The study will be submitted to the United States Department of Education's [What Works Clearinghouse](#) this Fall for review.

The study involved the entire 2nd and 3rd grade student population attending Garden City schools during 2018-2019. Following over 1,000 students, the analysis found a statistically significant association between attending Reading Roadmap afterschool programs and student Spring assessment scores. The impact of the program meant—all things being equal—3rd grade students had 16% higher reading scores if they attended the afterschool literacy program at any



Elvin, a Garden City student who attended the Reading Roadmap program for 4 years and is now reads above grade level.

time during the year.

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, 63% of Kansas fourth graders are not considered proficient readers. COVID-related school closures are frustrating efforts to address this gap.

Teachers and administrators are working around the clock to identify ways to support student learning before school, during school and after school. The Garden City study suggests that supplemental afterschool programming and tutoring connected with high-quality school day instruction can help accelerate literacy achievement.

“With an urgent COVID-related learning gap emerging, the results of the Garden City study suggest that structured afterschool programs like the Reading Roadmap can be valuable tools to help boost reading growth among students,” said Tabitha Brotherton, Kansas Director of the Reading Roadmap. “As states across the country look for effective, evidence-based strategies to help close the reading gap, Kansas has an excellent model to offer.”

The Garden City study was conducted by Mustafa Yilmaz, a Lawrence, Kansas-based Data Analyst and Researcher, and reviewed by Mark Dynarski of Pembleton Research, former Director of the Institute of Education Sciences’ What Works Clearinghouse.

Garden City is a rural city located in southwestern Kansas and features a highly diverse population with migrant families from Central and South America, Asia and Africa. With many students designated as English Language Learners, the Garden City District has utilized a Multi-Tiered System of Supports, or MTSS, to provide individualized instruction for each student.

Garden City Superintendent Steve Karlin commented, “I believe that it is the connection and alignment of the Reading Roadmap with our schools’ MTSS that makes it especially effective. This alignment means that out-of-school lessons targeting discreet skills gaps of specific students are coordinated with school data and strategy.”

The study controlled for seventeen different variables including individual, classroom and school-level characteristics such as student ethnicity, teacher experience and levels of community poverty. Further, multiple matching methods were used to minimize any bias in the control sample.



A KRR tutor works with a student on reading skills during the afterschool program.

“Because the Reading Roadmap specifically targets at-risk readers, a study that selected students randomly for treatment was not possible,” said Mustafa Yilmaz. “Therefore, to ensure a rigorous analysis with reliable results we conducted a quasi-experimental study that employed multiple sample matching methods. Every method used provided statistically significant results of the positive impact of the program on students' reading development,” said Yilmaz.

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