2018 Read to be Ready Summer Grant Report

READ TO BE READY
Building thinkers in Tennessee

TN Department of Education

Introduction

In February 2016, Governor Bill Haslam, First Lady Crissy Haslam, and Commissioner Candice McQueen launched a statewide literacy campaign led by the Tennessee Department of Education called Read to be Ready. **The campaign set a statewide goal to have at least 75 percent of Tennessee third graders reading on grade level by 2025.** By design, Read to be Ready is a multi-faceted approach to address the literacy challenges in Tennessee. The centerpiece of the initiative—a statewide cadre of literacy coaches—is focused on improving educator expertise, but there are other initiatives working in tandem to support reaching the goal as well; one of the these initiatives is the Read to be Ready Summer Grant Program.

The summer grant program was launched in 2016 through an initial contribution from the Dollar General Literacy Foundation and the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development. After its first year, the Tennessee Department of Human Services invested $30 million over three years to expand the program so it could benefit more students and families across the state.

As a result of these partnerships, the summer grant program just completed its third year serving early grades students who are most at risk for summer reading loss. **Specifically, the program awards funding to public schools for educators to lead tuition-free, literacy-based summer camps to provide rich, authentic literacy opportunities for economically disadvantaged students entering first, second, and/or third grade who are not yet proficient in reading and writing.** This targeted group of students is the most at risk for summer slide and not being on grade level in reading as they enter the next school year. The primary goal of Read to be Ready summer literacy camps is two- old. First, the summer camps develop students' overall comprehension and vocabulary while building foundational skills to help the student get on track. Second, camps reduce summer slide by cultivating students' love for reading and writing over the summer months by providing them with access to a multitude of high-quality, high-interest texts and literacy experiences. **For the second year in a row, students that participated in the program had statistically significant gains in their achievement and motivation.**

Access to High-Quality Books

The cornerstone of Read to be Ready summer literacy camps is to promote equity and access to high-quality, authentic texts for students who need it most. To support this goal, all camps are required to send a minimum of six new books home with students. Not only are grantees encouraged to address the quantity of books sent home but the quality of these books as well. To support the selection of books, educators had the opportunity to explore a room with over 650 new, award-winning titles during training. Through the summer grant program, over 193,000 high-quality books were sent home with students this summer, an increase of over 13,000 books from last year. In the past two summers, the grant program has placed over 370,000 books in students' home libraries across the state.

This summer, each student received an average of 25 new books for his or her home library. These new, often student-selected texts provide families with additional resources in their homes to continue to practice reading, which will further foster students' love of reading.

> "One student was just so excited to be able to have so many books at home. She said, 'I feel fancy; now I have my own library!'"

2018 Quick Facts

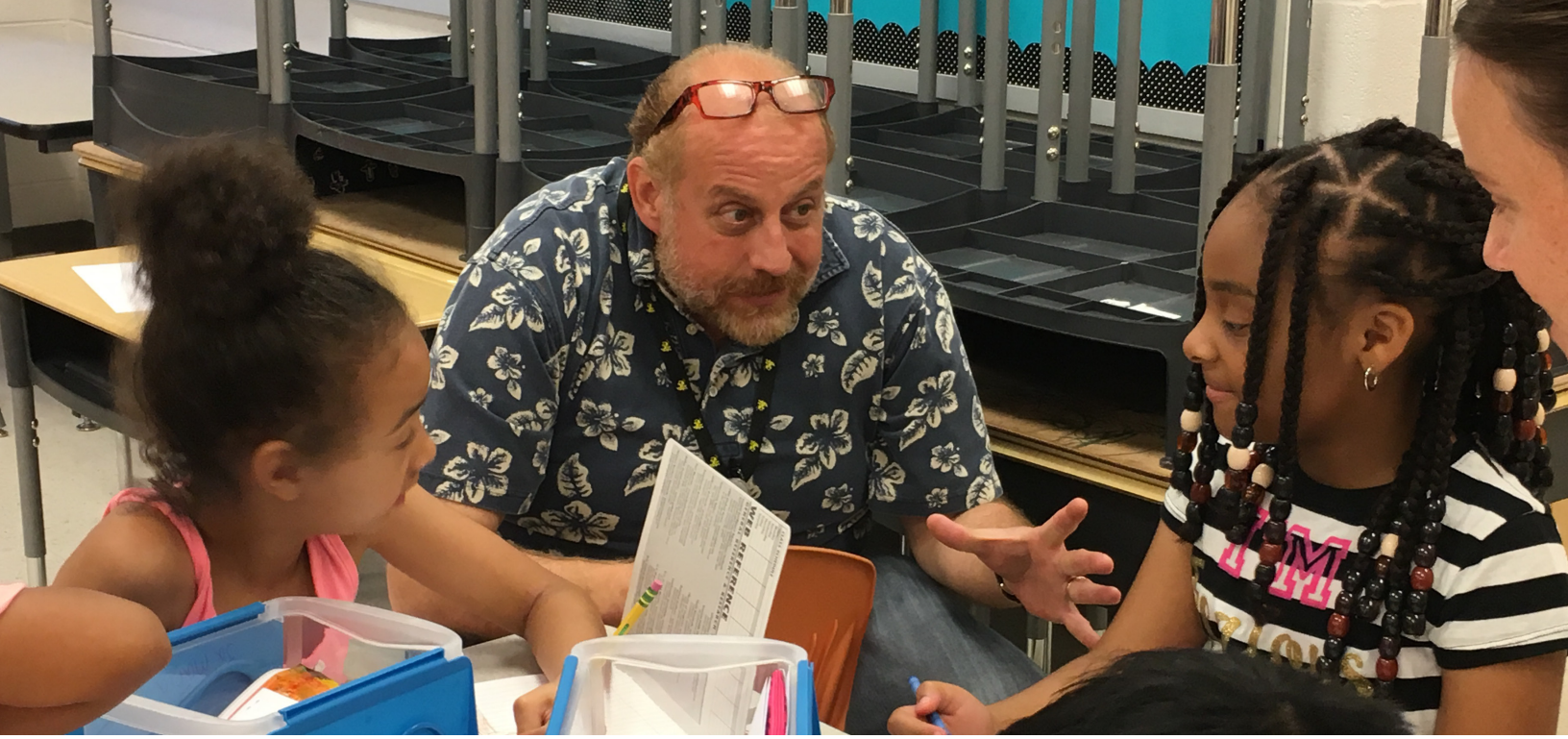
7,700+ students took part in 2018 Read to be Ready summer camps

250+ summer camps took place in 116 of Tennessee's 147 districts

193,000+ high-quality books were provided to students across the state

On average, students received **25** books for their home library

2,200+ teachers were trained to lead summer camps



Access to High-Quality Training

A key component of the summer grant is robust training for educators. **Recipients of the grant are required to send all educators to a department training that focuses on delivering strategies to support student choice, motivation, and growth, not only in the summer, but in the school year as well.** In 2016 and 2017, the training emphasized how to integrate authentic reading and texts into camps and explained how the integration positively influenced student outcomes and motivation; in 2018, the training prioritized writing and modeled how to effectively implement it throughout the day to increase student interest and stamina.

As Read to be Ready moves into its fourth year, training will focus on building knowledge through literacy and will further expose educators to the ways they can leverage the reading, writing, and enrichment experiences that students are engaged in to build concrete connections about the world around them.

Training Academy

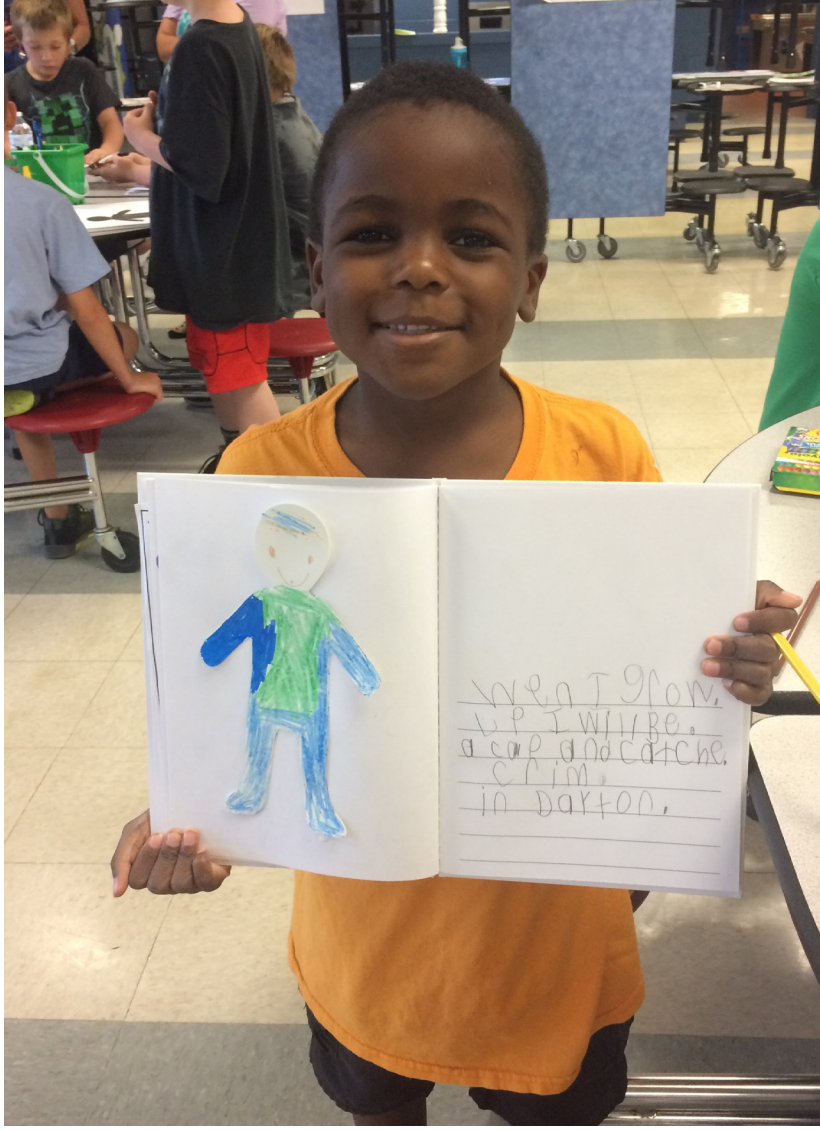
This summer the department initiated a new project, the Read to be Ready Training Academy, to support the expansion of the summer grant program into five new districts. Districts were identified based on their chronic absenteeism data as well as achievement data. Participating districts received exclusive supports strategically placed throughout the grant cycle to ensure success in their first year. These supports included a one-on-one meeting with a member of the summer grant team to assist in the writing of the proposal, additional scaffolding at the required training, and assignment of a mentor that previously served as a Read to be Ready program director to assist with logistical and instructional planning. Data showed that those who participated in the Academy saw the same statistically significant gains as our other camps.

Extended Learning Workshops

In an effort to continue integrating strong literacy practices into educational spaces that exist outside of the regular school day, the Read to be Ready Summer Grant team partnered with the Office of Extended Learning to provide an abridged version of the summer grant training to extended learning program directors and staff. The purpose of providing this training was to connect extended learning personnel to the reading initiative and teach them how to further integrate authentic literacy practices into their extended learning programs. Extended learning grantees that opted to attend and participate in this workshop received a $2,500 stipend to purchase new, high-quality texts that will benefit the students in their programs. This partnership highlights the important role all educators play in the development of all students' reading and writing abilities and leverages the expertise of those teaching in our extended learning programs to best serve the students in Tennessee.

> "My teachers feel like using the strategies in camp are the best way to teach. Students respond best to learning when they have a voice and choice."

Access to Community Resources



Families, educators, businesses, and community members all play a significant role in students' literacy development. Grant recipients are required to create at least one community partnership to support their summer camp. For the second year in a row, communities were deeply engaged and answered the call to assist students in their literacy development. This year, grant recipients reported that over 3,100 community partners contributed to the success of their camps. From providing food and transportation to supporting field trips for students and families, communities are key players in the grant's success.

In addition to these partnerships, five grant recipients participated in a pilot organized by the Tennessee Department of Health. Participating sites received a physical activity curriculum as well as an equipment package, and students spent an hour of each day engaged in physical activity. The sites that participated had additional time built into their schedules that extended beyond the number of literacy-related hours required by the grant, so these students received the same amount of time devoted to instruction as students who did not participate in the pilot. This partnership not only provided students with a rich physical activity experience throughout the summer, but also provided pilot participants with physical activity resources that can be used throughout the school year.

> "When children recognize they have the ability to acquire desired information from reading, or imagine themselves having the same experiences as the characters in a book, only then do they truly develop their own desire to read. The design of this program creates that very situation."

Student Outcomes

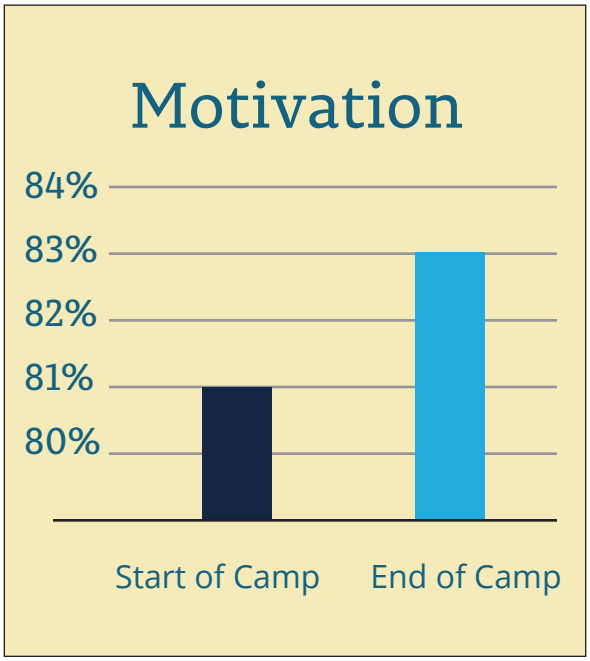
Recipients of the grant are required to recruit economically disadvantaged students who are not yet proficient in reading and writing and are most at risk of experiencing summer slide. Summer slide is when a student's test results decline from the spring to the fall (Borman, Benson, and Overman, 2005). The effects of this learning loss can have a significant impact in the classroom; on average, children lose approximately one month of grade-level reading and math skills during summer vacation (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsey, and Greathouse, 1996).

Read to be Ready summer literacy camps are meant to prevent summer slide and help students enter the new school year excited and ready to learn. To track success, the department required summer camps to conduct a pre- and post-survey and interview and a pre- and post-assessment on skills gained. The survey/interview and assessment were selected because of their ability to provide teachers with important information about each reader that would then allow them to tailor literacy experiences for each student. **For the second year in a row, students made statistically significant gains in their comprehension and accuracy skills and increased their motivation to read.**

> "Before I came to summer camp I did not like to read. Now I think books are fun!"

Motivation Interview and Survey

Students were asked to take a motivation survey and participate in a conversational interview at the beginning and at the end of camp. The Motivation to Read Profile-Revised (Malloy, Marinak, Gambrell, & Mazzoni, 2013, 2015) was used to assess students' self-concept as readers, the value they placed on the task of reading, and their attitudes about "literacy out loud" (i.e., being read to, talking about books, and the social nature of literacy instruction) for the second year in a row. Surveys were administered one-on-one, and students responded verbally to questions regarding their perceptions about reading. Among the 5,832 students with pre- and post-camp surveys, overall reading motivation increased by an average of two percent. Literacy research shows that engaged reading—which includes access, opportunity, and choice in reading—increases motivation and literacy achievement (Guthrie, Shafer, & Huang, 2001, Allington et al., 2010, 2011). **By enhancing the motivational aspect of reading and writing, the department hopes that students will take their increased love of learning back into their classroom this school year.**



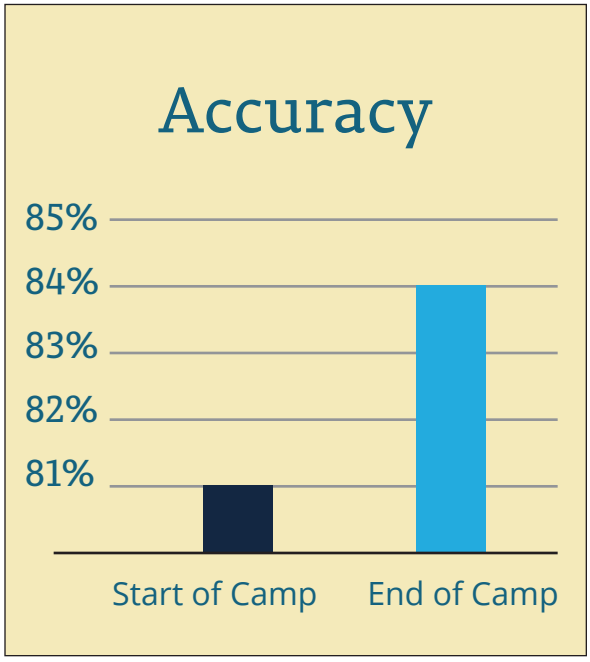
Skills-Based Assessment

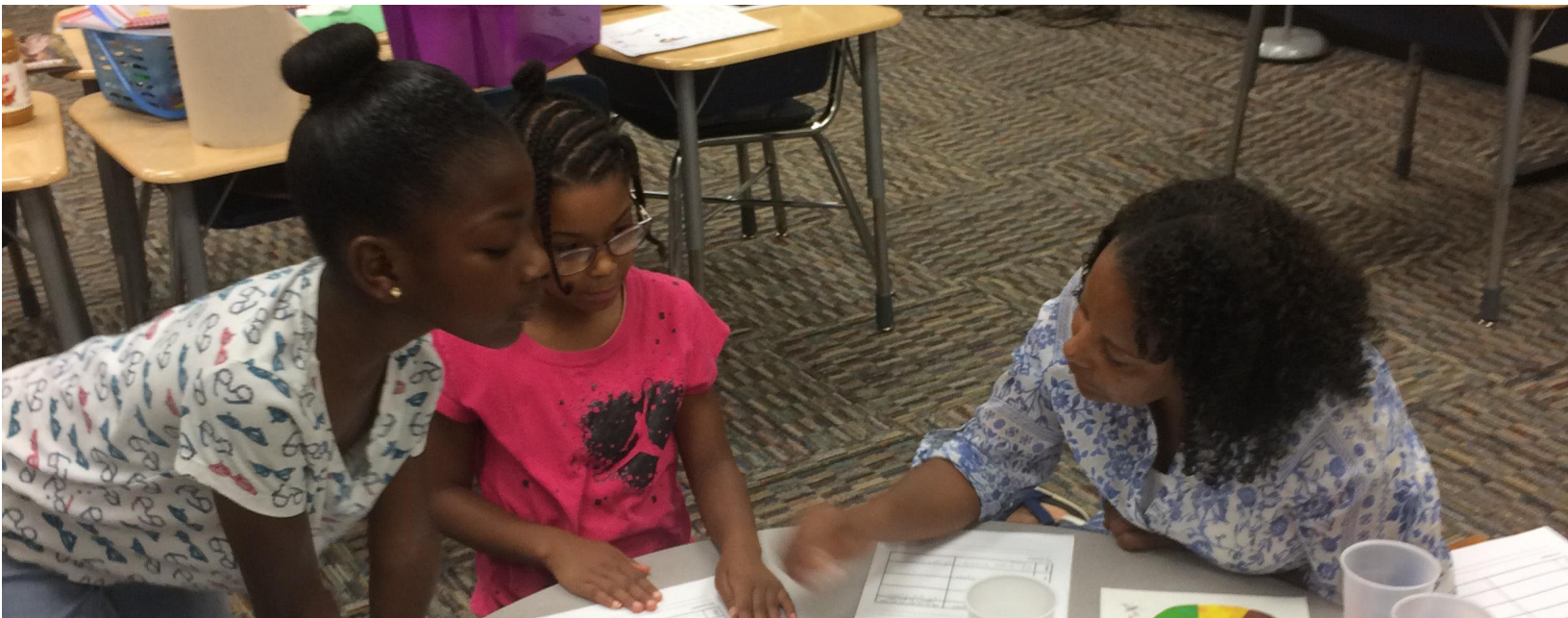
In addition to the survey and interview, students took a skills-based assessment that measured essential reading skills at the beginning and at the end of camp. During this assessment, students were asked to read aloud an untimed grade-level passage one-on-one with a teacher. As the students read, teachers noted accuracy, miscues, self-corrections, comprehension, and ability to use metacognitive strategies. From this interaction, teachers were able to determine students' reading accuracy, fluency, and strategic approach to unknown words. After the student finished reading the passage, the teacher asked a set of comprehension questions to gauge the student's understanding. As a part of the summer grant assessment guidelines, an additional question was added to the assessment that a subset of students answered after reading the passage, "What were you thinking as you were reading?" This question helped teachers understand student comprehension around the text and promoted the idea of students' transactional role as readers.

Accuracy Rate

The accuracy rate was calculated by dividing the number of words read correctly (including self-corrections) by the total words attempted then multiplied by one hundred (words correct / words attempted * 100).

Among the 5,832 students who completed both a pre- and post-benchmark assessment, their accuracy rate improved from 81 to 84 percent. This statistically significant increase translates to an average of three fewer reading errors per passage. **As accuracy increases, students spend less time analyzing words and pay more attention to meaning—improving overall comprehension.**

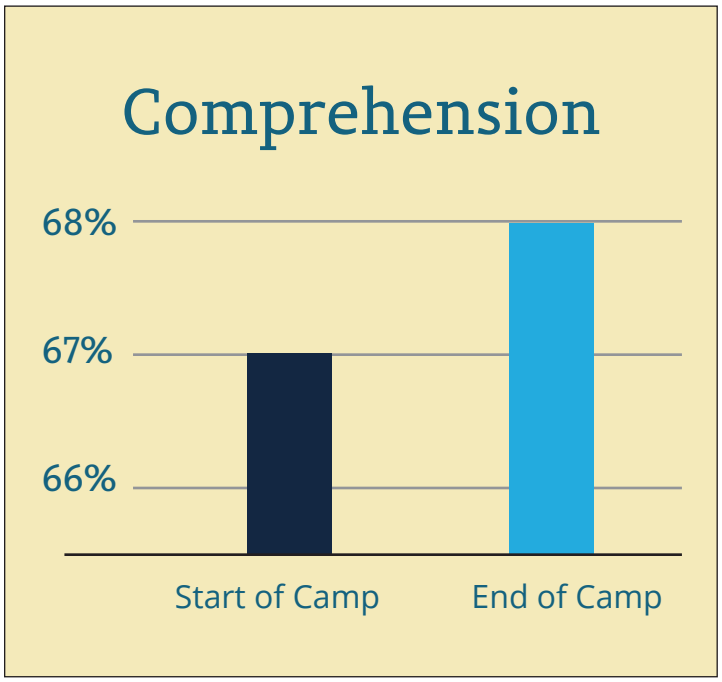


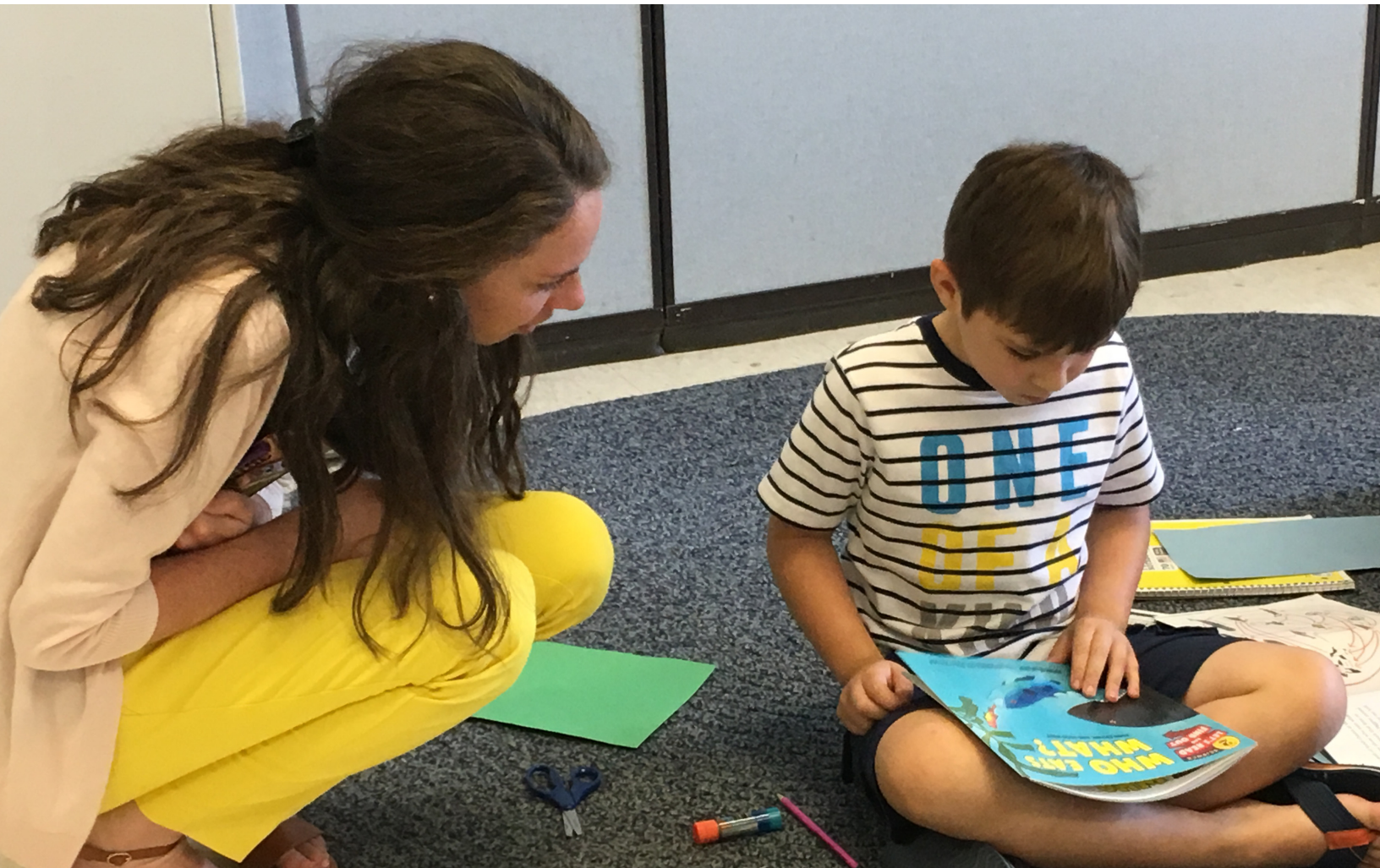


Comprehension Rate

Students responded verbally to three or four grade-appropriate reading comprehension questions at the end of each passage. On average, students who completed both a pre- and post-assessment responded accurately to 67 percent of the comprehension questions at the beginning of camp and 68 percent at the end of camp. **This statistically significant increase in comprehension of around one percent suggests that students were not sacrificing meaning and understanding of texts for the sake of increased accuracy.**

According to the vision for third grade reading proficiency released by the department (2016), "Proficient reading is all about making meaning from text." An increase in comprehension signals that students who participated in a summer camp made gains toward being proficient readers.





Metacognition

In pre- and post-assessments, a subset of students answered the question, “What were you thinking as you were reading?” This question assessed students’ metacognition, or thinking about their thinking, as they read (Brown, Armbruster, & Baker, 1986). This question allowed teachers to gain a more holistic picture of children’s comprehension, as it required students to generate their own ideas about the text instead of only providing answers to comprehension questions. Quantitative results showed that the pre-test results of a 16 percent non-answer decreased to a 13 percent non-answer to this question. Meaning that from the beginning of camp to the end of camp more students could verbally explain what they were thinking about while reading the passage, demonstrating increased metacognition skills.

Positive Third Grade Trends

Another positive result this year is that students who attended camp in previous years showed improvement on state assessments between second and third grade. Among students who scored in the lowest performance category on the second grade assessment and who attended camp in 2017, one-third moved up at least one performance level on the third grade assessment in 2018. This trend reinforces the positive results gained each summer of the reading camps and points to encouraging school year gains that should continue to be monitored each year.

Closing

The outcomes from the third year of the Read to be Ready Summer Grant Program show that it continues to be a success. The additional access to high-quality training and resources provided by the grant allow educators the opportunity to continue build their students' literacy skills and motivation outside of the regular school year. Because of this, for the second year in a row, students will enter the new school year more prepared to learn and grow. It is also encouraging to see that community members, new districts, and even new state departments are leveraging their expertise and resources to support students' literacy development.

> "This has been the most positive, life-shaping, literacy-rich experience for every child that attended. Thank you for the opportunity to run this camp. It was hands-down the best thing I've been a part of during my 12 years as an educator."

As the department looks forward to 2019, it hopes that educators will reapply to host a summer camp and continue to implement the practices they used over the summer in the classroom. Integrating literature into all parts of the day, allowing student choice, and encouraging students to engage in high-level thinking will help them develop the skills they need to become proficient readers, which is essential for them to be able to choose whatever path they want to pursue in life. The literacy gains made by Tennessee students through the Read to be Ready Summer Grant Program continue to be promising. **By continuing this work together, we can maintain our momentum toward our goal of 75 percent third grade students reading proficiently by 2025.**

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