

WE ARE READERSPLUS

A SEMESTER LIKE NO OTHER: A LOOK INTO BEHIND THE SCENES OF OUR PROGRAM AND TUTORS



Rebuilding Our Community

BY TINA KONEAZNY, JEP ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

To say that this has been a strange and unique year is a gross understatement. However, rather than giving more attention to the situations and circumstances that dominate most conversations and over which we have no control, I would like to take this opportunity to share and celebrate what we have accomplished despite it all.

At this time last year, we had approximately 100 reading and math tutors engaging with Kinder through 5th grade students in our seven schools – providing individualized academic assistance during the school day, and homework help and enrichment after school. As schools closed in the spring, we immediately began planning for how to continue support for our teachers, young learners, and families, and recruited active JEP student staff to work with children remotely during the summer months knowing that academic and socio-emotional support would be needed more than ever.

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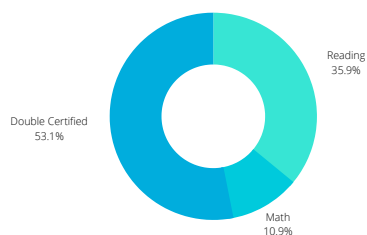


A committed cohort of 42 JEPers – including 31 USC ReadersPLUS tutors – answered the call and provided support to children and families through Tutorbird, a virtual tutoring platform.

Lessons were learned from our summer pilot program, and further planning began almost immediately to prepare for the fall semester and the 64-strong team of ReadersPlus student staff eager to return to the program despite so much uncertainty. I want to thank and celebrate this amazing group of tutors and the peer leadership team, who on average have dedicated four full semesters to our program. I am impressed by and grateful for the commitment, trust, patience, and adaptability they have graced upon us as we considered how best to serve our partner schools as the new academic year approached.

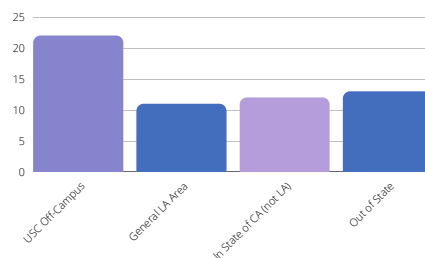
The process of recruiting K-5 children to serve was considerably more complicated as, due to LAUSD guidelines, all tutoring took place after school. This new format required extra

Our Tutoring Certification



steps (and time) determining students to be serve and collecting additional documentation that is not required when tutors are working live at the schools. As a result, we served a smaller number of K-5 students than a we do in a typical fall semester; but with all the wheels in now place, we are confident and eager that our spring efforts will be all the more effective and impactful.

Where We Are



My own sanity has truly been saved by the incredible “Central Staff” team with whom I typically share an office – our Graduate Directors, Aspen Cole and Stacey Lau, and undergraduate Central Coordinator, Cecilia Nguyen. They have provided inspiring professional and loving support to our seven undergraduate Program Site

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Courage is not having the strength to go on; it is going on when you don't have the strength.

– THEODORE
ROOSEVELT

Coordinators as well as our large tutoring team, and worked incredibly hard in between unless zoom meetings with me and one another to maintain the integrity of our work. We have a beautiful, wonderful diverse team and my thanks go to each and every one of them.

Alumna Spotlights: A Blast from The Past



CAROL ABRAJAN

Hellooo! I'm Carol and I graduated from USC in May 2020. I was with ReadersPlus for all 8 semesters, 2 of those as a tutor and 6 as the coordinator for Science Center. Currently, I am a Special Education teacher for some amazing 9th grade scholars at a charter school here in Los Angeles.

I just graduated in May of 2020, and post grad life has been an insane experience, to say the least. I started my job as a Special Education teacher and went from attending online classes to hosting them. I have learned so much about all the effort educators put into their job and just how challenging it can be to keep students engaged and motivated, while also remembering to do the same for myself. However, despite my experience not being the same as a traditional teacher, I have been blown away at the dedication and humor my students and fellow staff members bring to the classroom!

Post grad, I had planned to move permanently to Los Angeles with my significant other and take him to all of my favorite spots in LA on the weekends, while I taught high school and attended classes at LMU during the week. Now, while we've moved in, our trips have been limited to grocery shops and walks in the park, and I find myself sitting at my desk for the majority of the day. I've found that students share the same frustrations, and I make sure to give them grace and the space to share out their thoughts and feelings in my class. My empathy levels are through the roof, but I am also learning to still maintain expectations for my students to ensure we find a balance of productivity and self care.

IVY LAW

Hi, My name is Ivy. I am an Alumna of JEP USC ReadersPLUS where I was both tutor and coordinator during my 4 years with the program. I am currently a special education teacher at a local charter school in Richmond, California. I work with 7th grade students who have various learning impairments and may also be in the third percentile of students.

I graduated in May of 2020. Post grad life has been insightful, eventful, and challenging. I entered the teaching force mid-pandemic. Teaching during this time has made educational discrepancy clearer than ever. In that regard, it has been challenging to find a balance between academic and social emotional support. Each day there is something new and there is always a weekly shift. The lack of consistency is real for students, parents/ families, and teachers. In these moments, we are all trying to survive with a hope that in the end we have learned something and shown some growth.

It has been a curveball trying to adjust to new teacher life mid pandemic, considering I have never had a traditional educational specialist experience. In that regard, I have to always be quick on my feet and ready to adjust. I have realized that I have tapped into my empathy and sympathy reservoir quite often, in order to support students and their needs. Students really just want to be heard and need a space to vent because their normal school environment is not the same. What would have been said during recess and lunch, is now bottled up. I have been implementing yoga or some mindful activity or reminder at the end of every session with my students.



How have your students responded to online learning?

Carol -- My students are frustrated. We usually spend the first 10-15 minutes of class just talking about school, life, and everything in between. My class only has seven students, so they've all grown comfortable speaking to each other-- whether it's offering sympathy for their stresses or encouraging each other when they get an answer correct! I make sure to emphasize culture building in my classroom, and now we take brain breaks by playing Among Us altogether! Many of them do struggle to find the time to do school between family responsibilities and a lack of motivation, but I know they are trying their best, and I make sure they are reminded of that constantly.

Ivy -- Some students have adjusted better than others. I have a few students who do not even complete work or engage with their learning. I have other students who are going above and beyond to make sure they are successful. These moments have made it clear which students have additional support to help with autonomy and which students are still working on that intrinsic motivation. I understand that it is especially hard right now to find that motivation when the school and learning environment is not the same and things change constantly. Regardless, I have faith that the students I work with will be stronger and have grown in some capacity at the end of this.



How has your experience at ReadersPlus influenced your TFA experience/future goals?

Carol -- ReadersPlus was extremely influential in guiding me towards where I am now. While I grew up volunteering at schools for a couple of hours a week, ReadersPlus really cemented my love for working in schools and made me passionate about working against the discrepancies within our educational system. The longer I stuck with Readers, the more I realized it was a job I loved being a part of and wanted to continue doing post-grad. Having had this experience within the school system and building relationships with teachers, principals, and parents helped me gain skills that I now use in order to keep the students' best interest at the top of my mind. It all boils down to the idea that I loved what I was doing at Readers so much that I decided to continue doing it. :)

Ivy -- ReadersPlus has influenced my TFA experience tremendously. Without having worked in a local elementary school with students who were already receiving additional support outside of ReadersPLUS, I wouldn't have acquired the skill of navigating how to talk to various professionals, consider student's different schedules, and student overload. I remember specifically talking with a teacher about a student's busy schedule on Thursdays and realized how it was better if they didn't attend ReadersPlus on Thursdays. We agreed the student may



experience burn out, which is more harmful than beneficial to their success. In terms of future goals I know that my experience with JEP is always in the back of my mind. This is true especially as I develop and continue to make adjustments in my teaching style and the goals I have for my students. ReadersPlus will always have a special place in my heart and influence my future no matter what field I pursue. I learned so many valuable skills that I don't think I could have learned anywhere else and so I'm grateful for ReadersPlus.

Do you have any advice for current Readers?

Carol -- Times are tough, but you are tougher. These past few months have been hard on everyone, and you are definitely not alone in any of it. If you think about it, even amidst a global pandemic, you still chose to dedicate your time to helping students who are also struggling to get used to this new style of learning. Cherish the bonds you create with them (even if you have to spend 4 sessions reviewing the same multiplication facts over and over again). Celebrate all of the little victories with them, because sometimes, ReadersPlus and that individualized attention really is the highlight of their days. ReadersPlus is an amazing experience in and of itself, but take the time to learn from your peers, your students, and leverage each other! Share great tactics that you found work for engaging students, but also don't forget to check in on each other. ReadersPlus is a program that is really built on community, so know you have that to rely on at all times. :)

Ivy -- As a tutor during the pandemic, bank this experience. These times are unprecedented and it's requiring a lot from you emotionally, mentally, and physically

but the things that you're learning now are going to be so important moving into an educational setting (or any setting). This will help you navigate many different platforms that were once not available. The skills you've learned will always be helpful in case other future emergencies or distance learning reoccur. Take advantage of the technological advancements that you've used/learned and take these valuable experiences to speak out against the discrepancies that you're seeing within the educational system. I've witnessed so much educational discrepancies in my short time teaching on a local and district level, and have found mentors to support me in taking the big step to say "hey this isn't okay" and rather "this is my idea of how we can do it better." Remember to put students' needs first by taking advantage of this experience to uplift growth, success, and academic spaces for students. Use the tools at your fingertips and don't let them slip away.

What is your fondest memory with ReadersPlus?

Carol --It's so hard to pick just one! I'd definitely say that my best memories involve all of the friendships I built while I was in Readers. My staff at Science Center was (is) truly the best and I knew I could always count on our staff meetings to cheer me up. Whether we were fighting about snacks, doing scavenger hunts, or sharing stories about our students, it was always the best time. I also really enjoyed any time my tutors collaborated with one another to create joint lessons for their students; playing game shows or making TikToks. Outside of Science Center, I also had the best support system with Central Staff and I have the best memories of our hang outs, study sessions, and morning bagels for early staff meetings. ReadersPlus was overall just an unforgettable experience and one of my favorite parts of USC. <3

Ivy -- I have so many fond memories but my favorites are moments of when I saw students get excited about completing an assignment or getting 100% on a spelling test after working on a lesson. Not only will I always remember moments when my students expressed, "I can do this," but also cherished memories of staff meetings with my colleagues. We would just laugh or take time to uplift each other to love and support one another. Those moments allowed us to pour back into our own pool so we would be able to give more to the kids we work with. This kind of team dynamics has been so helpful especially now when I manage my new teams; it's great to have that background knowledge and pull for my own funds of knowledge. I just am so thankful for every moment at ReadersPlus and my college experience would not have been the same otherwise; I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world.



Who We Are



Central Staff



Aspen Cole
Literacy Director
EST 2018
"Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today." - Malcom X



Cecilia Nguyen
Central Coordinator
EST 2017
"Sleep is for the strong, and I am weak. Or I may just be an orange juice drinking vampire." -Cecilia

Tina Koneazny
JEP Associate Director
EST 1997
*"Let the beauty of what you love, be what you do."
- Rumi*



Stacey Lau
Math Director
EST 2016
*" $B > [(sum of terms)/(number of terms)]$
Be greater than average" -Stacey*



Coordinators and Assistants



Olivia Motter
32nd St. Asst. Coord.
EST 2018
"My favorite part of Readers is getting to know the kiddos during ASP-- they always love the activities and I feel like you really get to know them in their group settings." -Olivia



Ebony Gonzalez
Foshay Asst. Coord.
EST 2018
*"It's all a construct"
-Ebony*

Daniela Cruz
32nd St. Coordinator
EST 2018
"I'm gonna need coffee today" -Daniela



Claribel Salazar
Foshay Coordinator
EST 2018
"I cannot remember any of the things that were on my list of things to do. I will just have to sit here and do nothing" -Toad, from Frog and Toad Together by Arnold Lobel





Nisey Berry
Norwood Coordinator
EST 2018
"Don't stress!! You make me stressed when you're stressed!!!" -Nisey



Beatrice Hahn
Science Center
Coordinator
EST 2019
"I'm a gram peeved."
-Beatrice



Jose Gonzalez
Mack Coordinator
EST 2018
*"The world's a stage,
I'll just play my part"*
-J. Cole



Alicia Adiwidjaja
Norwood Asst. Coord.
EST 2018
"livin' like larry"
-Patrick Starfish



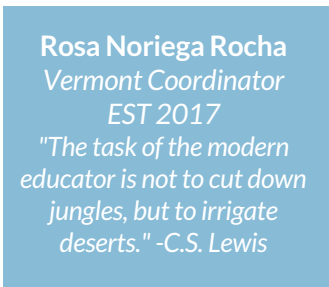
Misha Hassan
Weemes Asst. Coord.
EST 2020
"The supportive environment has been one of my USC highlights. I'm forever grateful for being a part of this team and tutoring the kids every week." -Misha



Tania Apshankar
Vermont Asst. Coord.
EST 2019
"Tutoring my students brings out the inner child in me and I have absolutely loved doing it since my first semester at USC" -Tania



Monserrat Alegria
Weemes Coordinator
EST 2019
"I'm forever grateful to be part of the ReadersPlus family. Not only have I gained invaluable leadership experience, but I've also connected to the South Central community on a deeper level." -Monse



Rosa Noriega Rocha
Vermont Coordinator
EST 2017
"The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles, but to irrigate deserts." -C.S. Lewis



Congratulations to our Graduating Senior!

Words from Aisha Herself

My favorite part of Readers is watching the students learn and grow.

Thank you to Stacey, Michelle, and Monse for being phenomenal and encouraging coordinators. Thanks to all my coworkers for sharing tips and tutoring strategies. Shoutout to Daniela from 32nd Street School. It was a pleasure working with you during the after school program. Thanks to everyone at the JEP house for making ReadersPlus a welcome and supportive environment!

Next Steps:
I plan to attend graduate school and pursue a career in occupational therapy.

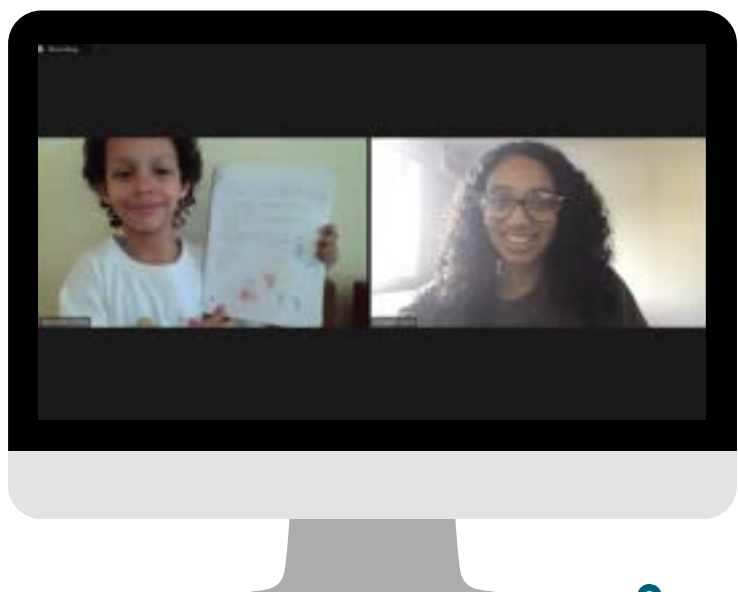
Advice to current and future Readers:
You are brilliant, resourceful, and can make a difference in these children's lives. Be an attentive tutor and listen to your students. Ask about their hobbies and interests and use that to motivate students and teach them different concepts. Lastly, always communicate and ask for help when you need it.



Aisha Abdullah has been a ReadersPLUS tutor at Weemes for 4 semesters during her time at USC, and has graduated this Fall semester of 2020!

PHOTO BOOTH

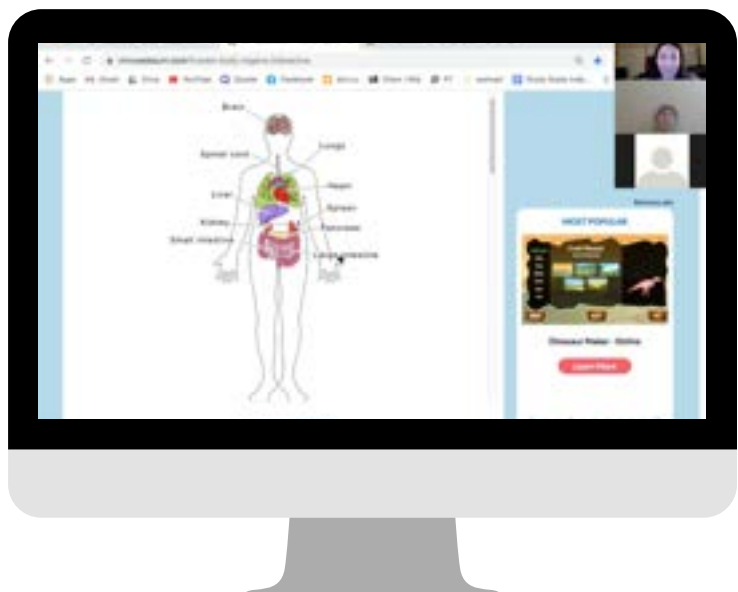
SNAPSHOTS OUR TUTORS TOOK DURING SESSIONS
FROM ALL OF OUR 7 PARTNER SCHOOL SITES



WEEMES: NATHAN+ANTHONY

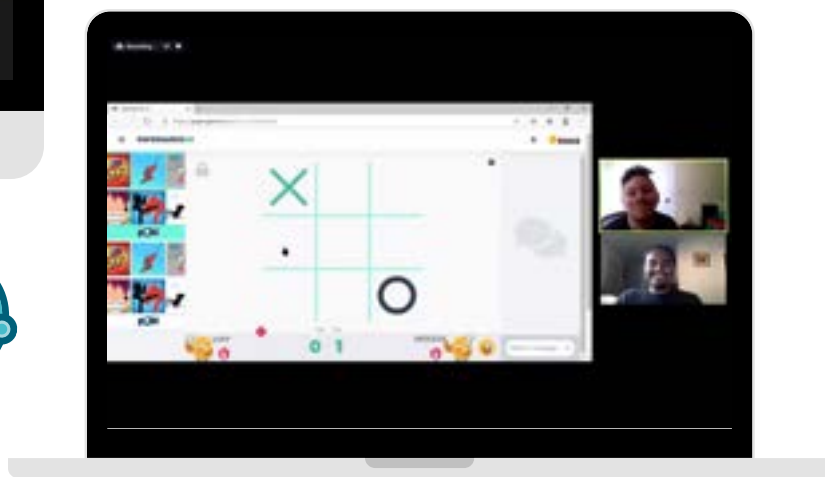


"Anthony has been working very hard on his schoolwork for the past couple of tutoring sessions, so I thought it would be a great idea to reward him with a couple of games of Tic-Tac-Toe. During these games, he has had a very hard time defeating me. However, this screenshot was taken immediately after Anthony finally defeated me in a game of Tic-Tac-Toe, where you can see the look of pure satisfaction on his face."



FOSHAY: ZAHARAH+KENNETH

"In this lesson, Kenneth and I practiced learning about a text from both the words and illustrations. We read The Berenstain Bears Play a Fair Game by Stan and Jan Berenstain with Mike Berenstain. Then, we practiced describing and writing about pictures from one of Kenneth's favorite shows, Spongebob Squarepants. Here's Kenneth and I with his writing and drawing of Spongebob characters!"



NORWOOD: JENNIFER+DANIA

"In this session, Dania and I focused our attention on human anatomy! For each session, we usually allocate half the time to reading and the other half to a science activity. We went over a diagram that pointed out specific internal organs within the human body and discussed their functions. Afterward, we quizzed ourselves on where each organ is located. Being a science major myself, I absolutely love teaching Dania about science and hope to encourage her to pursue more science classes throughout her schooling career."



32ND ST: GRACE+JESUS

"My student Jesus and I had Halloween themed tutoring sessions in honor of Halloween. We worked together to find all the words in a Halloween word search and learned about bats through a free interactive bat exploration activity on Scholastic.com called 'Soar with Bats.' It was a lot of fun. Both Jesus and I learned a lot of new facts about bats that we hadn't known before. The link for the scholastic activity is:

teacher.scholastic.com/activities/explorations/bats/index.htm"

VERMONT: TANIA+KEVIN

"Kevin is in the first grade and we are learning alphabets. I realized that he loves to draw so we use drawings and guessing games to learn the alphabets and the sounds of the letters. This screenshot has some drawings that I did, and some that he did. I have learned that his favorite color is blue and he loves to play tag with his siblings. He is also really curious and asks me questions like: 'How do I see the people on TV?'"



MACK: NETRA+KAMILA

"During this session Kamila and I were reading a book about alliteration called Daisy's Defining Day, which we had discussed in prior lessons. She was working on identifying the alliterations in the book and learning new words through it! We also worked on some math after as well. This specific moment was funny because Kamila thought the main character was being very demanding to her friends."

SCIENCE CENTER: JULIA+EMMA

"During our lesson, on the topic of Halloween, I asked her if she was scared of monsters, and she said 'I'm not scared of scary monsters, they're scared of me.' And honestly that's the type of energy I'm trying to have on the daily too."



DIRECTORS' WORDS

Adapting, Together

By Stacey Lau, Math Grad Director

This year has been a whirlwind, but I have found comfort in the continuity of Readers Plus. After returning from my study abroad last spring, I was nervous that I would return to a changed program with many new faces. Instead, I was welcomed back with friendly excitement and lots of patience. Spring 2020 was my first time working as part of Central Staff. I took on the role of interim Central Coordinator while Cecilia was studying abroad. I had a blast learning what happens behind the scenes and saw how much work Tina and the grad directors put into building and sustaining a vibrant work environment for our tutors.

But, by mid-March we were told to pack up and head home because COVID restrictions were put into effect. While the Readers Plus office has been virtual for the past 8 months, we have still been meeting regularly via Zoom.

Meeting with everyone a few times a week has given me some peace of mind as we have tried to piece together the best possible virtual version of the program we all love so much. My main focus for this semester as Math Director has been to support tutors as they face the challenge of a shortened tutoring semester. Without the collective efforts of everyone on the team, we would not have been able to work through burnout, technical difficulties, navigating the overwhelming amount of online resources, and more. In a time when uncertainty has become the norm, we've learned to adapt together.



A Semester Restarted

By Aspen Cole, Literacy Grad Director

From the beginning of a semester unlike one we've seen before, there have been numerous changes to the way our program operates. Currently, we are offering remote tutoring via zoom outside of school hours. Given the challenges of remote elementary education, at this point we are prioritizing ensuring our students

feel supported academically on an individual level. Our tutors have been working with students to fill in the gaps in student contact that teachers are unable to fulfill remotely. While the pandemic has caused us to completely change the way our program has operated, it has given us a unique opportunity to step back and re-evaluate what our students need most at this time. We've altered our approach to center on the mental well-being and self-efficacy of our students.

By prioritizing students' self-efficacy we are hoping to make a long-term difference in improving student attitudes towards learning and focus on combatting the effects of systemic racism that have been isolating historically marginalized and BIPOC students from education. In doing so, we hope to not only facilitate academic improvements this semester but also inspire positive outlooks on education and better attitudes toward school and learning in general.



LITTLE YOGINIS

MOVING AND BREATHING THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

By Christine Nguyen, USC Yogi



Leading yoga sessions during a pandemic through Zoom wasn't exactly what USC Yogis anticipated before this semester began, but it has turned out to be better than any of us expected. Despite our inability to work with children in person, our team of four who returned from last year have been able to provide lessons to nearly 100 children. We worked with four 1st and 2nd grade classrooms through teachers' Zoom rooms, and an additional 24 children who practiced in their own homes in six separate after school small group sessions through USC Yogis' zoom rooms.

Sharing yoga themes, breathwork and practice has been something that I personally look forward to each week, especially after being glued at the same chair and desk after hours of Zoom online classes and meetings every day. Even though most kids didn't have much yoga experience to start, I have had fun along with the kids laughing when we toppled over during tree pose or airplane pose and trying it again.

During each lesson, we read a book with a grounding theme such as perseverance or kindness, and then lead some breathing exercises before moving on to our yoga poses and savasana (final resting pose) to end the session. Even with the limitations of these virtual sessions through Zoom the kids have been engaged, participating in our yoga games and sharing their favorite poses. Some of the kids have enjoyed it so much that they have attended two sessions a week even though they only signed up for one, and others have been doing yoga outside our lessons because they say it helps them during this pandemic. For us USC Yogis, Little Yoginis has been our outlet for creativity and it definitely provides the kids an outlet to move, breathe, laugh and play. Though this new platform posed its own set of challenges, it also opened new avenues for creativity and growth for both us USC Yogis and for the "little yoginis" in our neighborhood schools.



TUTORS' QUOTES OF REFLECTION AND INSPIRATION

We Will Persevere

“

"There is no glory in a grind that literally grinds you down to dust." Elaine Welteroth

ReadersPLUS is dedicated to creating a safe, welcoming, and friendly work environment. People care. I've had a Mid-Semester summary meeting with Aspen that was meant to be 30 minutes but went to 2 hours because she cared that much about how I was functioning.

JOSEPH, NORWOOD

“

It has been a joy seeing my student's faces during the quarantine and laughing with them.

LAPAULA, 32ND

“

Finally being able to tutor my students has really made the days go by a lot faster. It's also nice to know that you're helping them with whatever they need help in

ABIGAIL, NORWOOD

“

With the monotony of zoom university, tutoring is one of few things I look forward to during the day

MISHA, WEEMES

“

Working with elementary school students via Zoom is sincerely one of my highlights every week. I love interacting with the parents and getting to know my student better. It helps me learn more about being a better educator and person overall.

EBONY, FOSHAY

“

"Sometimes being uncertain is okay"

CLARIBEL, FOSHAY

“

During these days that seem to blend into each other, ReadersPlus continues to provide me a stable source of joy and purpose. I always leave my tutoring sessions with a smile on my face.

GRACE, 32ND

“

It just makes me feel great that I can help a student enjoy a lesson because my student does not enjoy going to school over zoom.

RANDY, FOSHAY

“

Don't disqualify yourself

DIANA, WEEMES

“

Ever since I started tutoring my student, we've been connecting so well and even became good friends! We both are very interested in the sciences, so I try to incorporate easy at-home science experiments that we both would love to try.

JENNIFER, NORWOOD

“

Being able to do something on Zoom other than schooling has been great for me! Work Zoom meetings are the only zoom meetings I look forward to!

MONSE, WEEMES

“

ReadersPLUS has given me a break to do something I'm passionate about! It's been fun for me to explore new ways to engage my student with news articles, readings, and other fun interactive games. Remote tutoring has definitely been a challenge, but the immense amount of resources exchanged among us tutors has facilitated the process.

KELLY, NORWOOD

“

I loved reading with my student and seeing how much she enjoys it.

CECYLIA, WEEMES

“

Readers has given me something valuable to do as I love being able to teach and uplift students.

ZAHARAH, FOSHAY

“

Has shaken up my routine which has been a bright positive development in the last few weeks.

GRACE, 32ND

“

The weekly staff meetings have been a great way to keep in touch with other tutors during quarantine, and, it's nice to get back to tutoring; it's great to feel like I'm being useful and helping someone else!

NETRA, MACK

“

Tutoring has helped maintain feeling of routine and responsibility

MINA, FOSHAY

“

I look forward to tutoring now. It's a little break from being a college student and instead, being able to help other students who are struggling as well and rewarding to see them understand your lessons and grow as we have more sessions.

JONATHAN, SCIENCE
CENTER

“

I try to do my best to provide a safe space for them to talk about anything they want, and I give them lessons that will help them not only academically but emotionally as well.

CARLA, MACK

“

Connecting with my students has been fun, outlet, I get to see how they are doing and really help them with anything they might need.

SARAH, 32ND

“

I know things aren't normal and the world feels like a mess, but tutoring gives me hope because these students are going to be the ones that help shape our future.

HUNTER, VERMONT

“

Being able to tutor during quarantine has been a constant source of happiness... Tutoring my student and seeing their face light up during lessons makes me really happy knowing that... I can still make an impact in the community.

TAM, MACK

“

Working with my student has been a bright spot in otherwise monotonous weeks!

CARISSA, WEEMES

“

Tutoring sessions have been bright spots in my own week. Being able to spend an hour dedicated to education and to having a fun time with my student have helped me through bad days.

ANANYA, MACK

“

In some parts tutoring has been more fun, other times it got really stressful so I would say ReadersPlus has been pretty normal

VY, 32ND

“

Tutoring my students every week has been an amazing way to interact with people during this time. I look forward to seeing my students and make sure they are doing okay during this hard semester.

HANNAH, 32ND

“

Tutoring is a little more difficult to do online but it's refreshing to be helping someone

CRISTINA, WEEMES

“

When times were better, being able to go to the elementary school to tutor individual students was much more enjoyable than zooming.

GENE, VERMONT

“

Tutoring provides me with an opportunity to continue to support the community with what little I have to offer and also helps me to learn more about the students I work with.

PETER, 32ND

“

JEP tutoring has given me back a sense of normalcy and gives me something to look forward to in the week.

ZOË, WEEMES

“

I'm always so glad to see my students!

CLIO, WEEMES

“

I like getting that interaction with my students! It always cheers me up when I see how excited they are to see me.

VICKI, 32ND

“

I really like how supportive everyone is. It makes me feel more motivated with tutoring the students.

JOLIE, MACK

“

I think tutoring has been beneficial towards my mental health, as it gives me something to look forward to doing.

NATHAN, WEEMES

“

Has shaken up my routine which has been a bright positive development in the last few weeks.

ANDREW, NORWOOD

“

A silver lining in my life

VICTORIA, WEEMES

“

The lessons have been something to look forward to, since they're constant and it feels great to form a relationship with the students and have them excited to come and learn.

AAROHI, 32ND

“

My student told me that she misses me on days we don't have our lessons and it brightened up my entire day,

ARIELLA, FOSHAY

“

Tutoring students has definitely made my quarantine experience more fun! I've gotta say that a 4th grader explaining ocean spirits to me is a lot more fun than solitude.

ALICIA, NORWOOD

“

*"Just keep swimming"
-Dory*

AISHA, WEEMES

2020 Fall House Cup

A COMPETITION BETWEEN 7 SITES
EMERGING 1 VICTOR AFTER 13 WEEKS



KEEPING THE SPIRIT ALIVE

BY CECILIA NGUYEN, CENTRAL COORDINATOR

A physically and more significantly, socially distant semester called for a new means to keep the ReadersPlus family spirit alive. When I first stepped into my role as Central Coordinator, I vowed to strengthen tutors' relationships across sites through fellowship and social opportunities. In previous semesters, this meant Halloween themed movie nights of Disney throwbacks (Twitches to be specific) or a Readers field trip to a multi acre corn maze. However, as it's abundantly evident by now, the pandemic has deterred our plans and forced us to rethink what being social means. Thanks to our technological disposal, our new social events adapted to game nights of playing Among Us and Skribbl.io, answering Survival game questions during staff meetings, and of course, a good ole online competition.

The House Cup competition was officially declared, and all seven sites ran off to compete in a race for the most points accumulated by the end of the semester. Each week, a new leaderboard was updated once points were tallied for common tasks such as attending a staff meeting or completing paperwork. However, special bonus points opportunities would appear for events like attending a training or having the most tutors follow the @USCReadersPlus Instagram. At first, 32nd led by veteran coordinating team, Daniela and Olivia, emerged out of the gate with a commanding lead, but Mack captained by new coordinator, Jose, fought hard soon and the two sites seesawed for first place. However, midway through, Norwood, a site lead by a newly minted coordinating team, Nisey and Alicia, proved as true warriors by jumping to first place--cruising with their lead all the way to the end! Though we cannot forget Vermont, led by veteran coordinator, Rosa, and rookie Assistant, Tania, who saw the largest jump from 6th place all they way to top three by the end. In all, we're so proud of you all for keeping the ReadersPlus family very much alive, and for continuously producing amazing and impactful work for the community. It was one of the hardest semesters any of us has faced, stacked with insurmountable challenges and impossible situations, yet we persevered. Congratulations Readers!



Our reigning Norwood champions pose for a quick photo during their Zoom staff meeting!



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR SITE MVTS!

Most Valuable Tutors



32ND



FOSHAY



MACK



NORWOOD



SCI CENTER



VERMONT



WEEMES



32nd: Vy Ngo

Foshay: Mina Shabaz

Mack: Carla Collier

Norwood: Kelly Nguyen

Science Center: Jonathan Diaz

Vermont: Hunter Wilkinson

Weemes: Dianna Jimenez

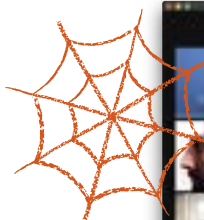
"Vy is super great with her students; she is patient and kind. The two students she works with have very different personalities and she's so flexible and great at framing her lessons so that they cater to her students. I appreciate that Vy asks questions whenever she needs any clarification and she's always on top of all her paperwork." -Daniela

"Hunter is a great team member at Vermont. She is deeply committed to the overall wellbeing of her students and her worth ethic is worth recognition!"
-Rosa

"Carla is a wonderful addition to our always stellar Mack staff. She is always maximizing her impact to students, whether it is through tutoring or her constant participation in K2C!!" -Jose

GAME NIGHT HALLOWEEN ED.

Try to spot all of our Halloween costumes! Do you see the UCLA student? How about Spencer, our certified frat boy? Also, check out our special guest, Carol who is also the Alumna spotlight!



THE GENEROSITY OF THE ELLA FITZGERALD CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

by Tina Koneazny, JEP Associate director



JEP's USC ReadersPlus program has been graced by the generosity of Fran Morris Rosman and the Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation for the past several years. In a typical year, we request and receive approximately 500 books for children to take home to build their own personal libraries 3 – 4 times a year for Back to School, Winter Holiday Reading, LA Times Festival of Books take-aways, and End of Year/Summer Reading. In total, this means nearly 2000 books per year. This unprecedented and especially challenging year, our partnership with the Foundation is appreciated more than ever.

Since March, as children from our seven partner schools do all their learning remotely, Fran and the Foundation have reached out tirelessly to offer additional support and inspiration to young readers from our USC urban neighborhood. Since this past July, over 5000 books at the cost of nearly \$10,000 have been delivered to our schools and safely distributed to children and families to take home, along with over \$2000 in school supplies (pencils, sharpeners, notepads, crayons), ordered and delivered directly to each of our schools through Amazon and/or Dollar Days for a grand total contribution of \$11,364 from July to end of November and additional donations on the way (See photos from book distribution at 32nd Street/USC Magnet School).

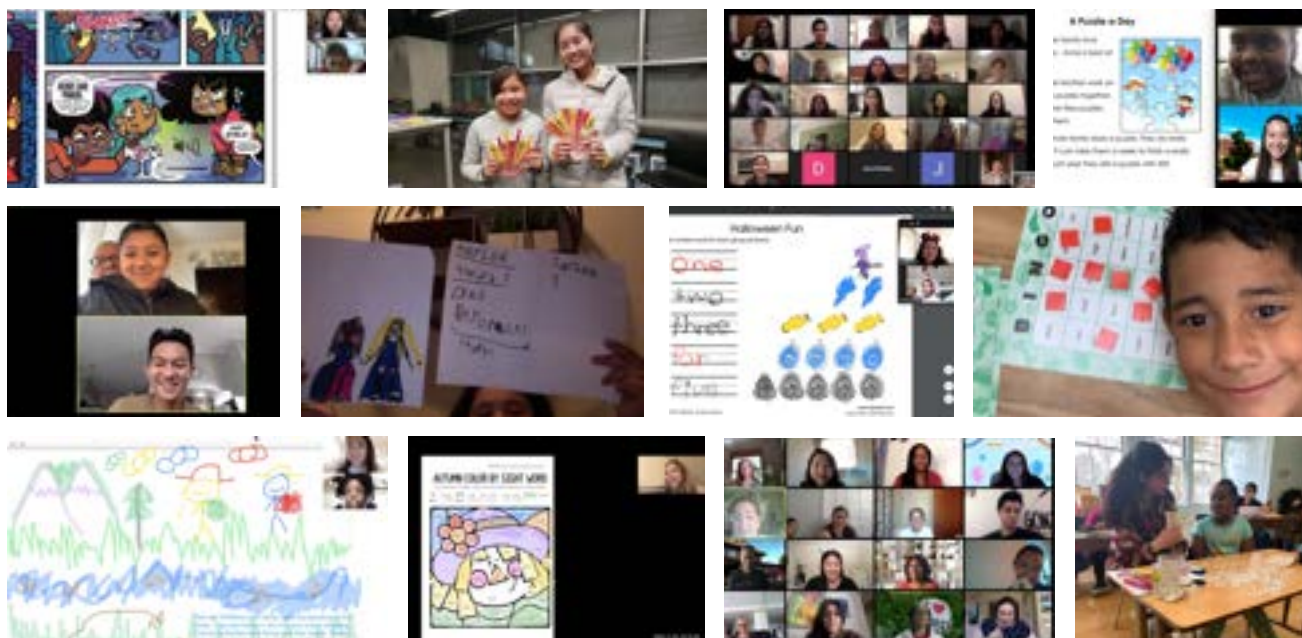
We are forever grateful to the Foundation and Fran's hard work, and are happy to keep the spirit of Ella Fitzgerald alive through the donations received. To learn more about the Foundation, please visit, "like" and follow their Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/EllaFitzgerald



ABOUT US

SPECIAL THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



USC ReadersPLUS is an “America Reads/America Counts” literacy and math tutoring program housed within the USC Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences.

In 1997, President Clinton launched legislation that would provide additional work-study money to colleges and universities with the condition that a large portion of it go to one-on-one literacy programs for children grade K-6. The JEP version of America Reads was the first in the nation to begin working under these guidelines, launching in May 19, 1997. In May of 1999, America Counts was added to include math education and it was at this time that the USC Readers program was changed to USC ReadersPLUS.

The Program is administered by the Joint Educational Project and funded in part through the USC Good Neighbor’s Campaign with the support of the USC Financial Aid Office. Our tutors work with seven of the “Family of Schools” surrounding USC.



USC READERSPLUS

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USC Dornsife
Dana and David Dornsife
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