

**Seniors for Schools
Evaluation Results
1999-2000 School Year**

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SENIORS FOR SCHOOLS EVALUATION RESULTS 1999-2000 SCHOOL YEAR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This report describes the results achieved by the Seniors for Schools initiative during its third year of operation, school year 1999-2000. The Corporation for National Service adopted the goals of America Reads and, as part of the effort, launched *Seniors for Schools*. This initiative was designed to recruit adults over age fifty-five to help children read independently by the end of the third grade.

Seniors for Schools sites located in Florida, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Texas have participated in this initiative for the past three years. Each year, Senior volunteers were recruited, trained, and placed in elementary schools to provide literacy services, including tutoring in reading, to students in primary grades. This report incorporates the findings from both the analysis of the local evaluation reports and from an analysis of teacher, principal and staff surveys regarding the impact of the program on their students, school and community.

During the past three years the number of schools served has increased from 25 to 51, the number of volunteers more than doubled from 234 to 486, and the number of students served more than tripled from 1,642 to 5,462. Surveys of teachers, principals and other school staff at Seniors for Schools sites indicate a solid base of support for the initiative among teachers and principals. Although the Seniors for Schools initiative is not the only source of literacy assistance for children at the schools served, and the increases in test scores provided are by no means attributable only to the work of Senior volunteers, teachers and principals state that the initiative is an important component in the success of the students served.

Results

The students targeted for one-on-one and small group tutoring by the Seniors for Schools initiative were among the lowest achievers in their schools, as determined by pre-tests, current grades, or through teacher-identification. Of those pre-tested using tests that measured reading levels, 94 percent started below grade level, indicating that in past years they had not gained the full reading level per year expected. By the end of the year, 58 percent of students measured improved a full reading level and 39 percent were reading at their grade level.

Working at nine sites across the United States, the Seniors for Schools initiative provided one-on-one, small group and large group in-class reading/literacy assistance for 5,462 students served by 486 Senior volunteers during the 1999-2000 school year. Two thousand and ninety two (2,092) children received substantial one-on-one or small group tutoring.

The Seniors for Schools initiative had a positive impact on students' reading abilities:

- Ninety-two percent of the 1474 students measured using standardized and non-standardized reading skills tests, *improved their reading skills* during the project year.
- Eighty-five percent of teachers reported observing positive changes in student literacy including *increases in reading ability*, and 74 percent of teachers reported observing *positive changes in reading or assessment test results*.
- Seventy-five percent of teachers indicated a *positive impact on student literacy* due to non-tutoring literacy activities.
- Over 81 percent of the principals, staff, and teachers surveyed indicated that students displayed *increased positive attitude toward reading, self-confidence in reading ability*, and *improved overall self esteem* because of the program.

The Seniors for Schools initiative had a positive impact on schools:

- Ninety-four percent of the principals, staff, and teachers surveyed want to *continue to have Seniors for Schools volunteers present* in their institutions next year.
- All principals/staff and over 91 percent of teachers surveyed noted that the *seniors were positive adult role models* and *increased children's respect for older adults*.

Those who work with Senior volunteers and see students on a daily basis confirmed the success of the initiative:

- **Boston, MA:** “We have seen tremendous improvements on the part of the students academically and in most cases socially.”
- **Lake County, FL:** “The volunteers were great. We saw a tremendous improvement in reading/phonics and decoding skills for the students they worked with.”
- **Minneapolis, MN:** “The seniors work individually with students who need support. This has been an important piece in helping students to achieve academically.”

Successes And Challenges

Successes

The Seniors for Schools initiative has been successful in serving students and achieving positive learning outcomes. It has made connections that provide for continuing school and community support and has steadily improved in its ability to document accomplishments and outcomes.

Successes during this third year include:

- **Site Accomplishments** In the three years of the project the number schools served has almost doubled, the number of volunteers has more than doubled, and the number of students receiving help has more than tripled.
- **Site Outcomes** Across all nine sites, over 92 percent of students who received one-on-one and small group tutoring demonstrated measurable improvement in reading skills.
- **Data Collection Sophistication** Sites continued to increase their level of sophistication in the timing and methods of data collection, with 73 percent of one-on-one and small group tutees successfully measured.

- **Establishing Connections within Communities** Five sites reported that they had been successful in generating donations of funding, materials, and books, and through increasing awareness of the Seniors for Schools initiative in their communities.

Challenges

The challenges site directors and teachers encountered during this third year included:

- **Resource Constraints** Teachers noted that they did not have enough volunteers in their classroom to meet the need, or that they would have liked students to spend even more time with volunteers.
- **Clarification and Communication of Roles** Twenty-nine percent of teachers indicated that they would have liked more opportunity to communicate with volunteers and to determine their roles.
- **Recruiting, Keeping and Managing Volunteers.** Three programs and 39 percent of teachers noted some difficulty related to volunteer management. These difficulties included provision of adequate tutoring training, recruiting enough volunteers to meet program goals and keeping volunteers for the entire school year.
- **Scheduling Services** Six programs and 30 percent of teachers completing the teacher survey noted difficulties in scheduling tutoring sessions or other services.

Conclusions

During the first three years of this initiative, the Seniors for Schools site staff have developed the skills to conduct internal outcome evaluations, project services have continued to improve, sites have increased the number of students participating and students have shown growth in reading ability. In all, the data collected for the Seniors for Schools initiative shows a project that is well received, supported by schools and communities, and affects positive change in students.

Seniors for Schools continues to have a positive impact on the students tutored. Ninety-two percent of the tutored students improved in their reading skills. While 94 percent of students tested started the year below their expected reading level (some by 2 levels or more), 58 percent of the tutored students gained one full reading level or more and 39 percent were reading at their expected grade level by post-test.

In addition to the academic value of tutors available to these students, teachers, principals and school staff appreciated the intergenerational benefits of Senior volunteers who served as role models and connected the school and community. As this initiative completes its final year, it is important to consider how this successful program structure can be continued.

SENIORS FOR SCHOOLS EVALUATION RESULTS

1999-2000 SCHOOL YEAR

I. INTRODUCTION

This evaluation report describes the results that the Seniors for Schools initiative achieved during its third year of operation, school year 1999-2000. The Corporation for National Service has adopted the goals of America Reads, to ensure that every child can read independently by the end of the third grade and, as part of the effort, launched the *Seniors for Schools* initiative in the fall of 1997. Specifically, the Seniors for Schools initiative was designed to recruit adults over age fifty-five, of any income, having the time, talent, experience, and resources to help children read independently by the end of the third grade. Special emphasis was placed on demonstrating that the service activities of the Seniors directly affected student outcomes, especially those related to reading and literacy.

All nine sites, located in the states of Florida, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Texas, continued for their third year of participation in this initiative of the National Senior Service Corps (NSSC). The site staff recruited, trained, and placed Senior volunteers in elementary schools to provide literacy services, including tutoring in reading, to students in primary grades.

Seniors for Schools sites were required to conduct an internal evaluation to measure the outcomes of services they provided. They received training and technical assistance from Project STAR¹ (Support and Training for Assessing Results) on how to develop and implement outcome evaluation plans and report on their results. In addition, Project STAR, with input from Senior Corps staff, the Office of Evaluation of the Corporation for National Service, and Seniors for Schools sites, developed two surveys, a *Seniors for Schools Project Survey* for principals and staff and *Seniors for Schools Project Survey* for teachers. These instruments were tested in project year 1997-98, modified to better meet the information needs of the sites, and administered at the end of the 1998-99 and 1999-2000 project years.

During the months of May and June 2000, Seniors for Schools program directors asked principals, staff and teachers to complete the surveys. They then collected the surveys and sent them to the Corporation for National Service. Project STAR analyzed the Principal/Staff Surveys and the Teacher Surveys for this project year.

In addition, the Seniors for Schools sites were required to conduct an internal outcome evaluation. Project STAR provided technical assistance to the sites, using an empowerment evaluation approach², helping them modify existing evaluation plans, develop new evaluation plans, and implement the plans. The sites wrote evaluation reports for each evaluation plan developed and implemented. Project STAR also conducted an analysis of the sites' local

¹ Since 1995, Project STAR has had a cooperative agreement with the Corporation for National Service to provide technical assistance in evaluation to Corporation funded programs.

² The focus of an empowerment evaluation approach is to provide program staff with the training, tools and information needed to conduct the evaluation of their own program.

evaluation reports. This report incorporates the findings from both the surveys and the content analysis.

Program Background

Between 1995 and 1997 the National Senior Service Corps initiated a Senior Demonstration project known as the Experience Corps. This demonstration project, which built on a solid base of research, best practices, and innovation, was operated in cooperation with Public/Private Ventures and Johns Hopkins University. This was a five-city pilot program that tapped into the leadership and organizational skills of older adults, who then served youth in urban elementary schools. This demonstration carried a powerful message, that older adults not only care about youth, but also are willing to act on these convictions, and that the contributions of older Americans can make a significant difference.

The Experience Corps model had ten key elements: focus on elementary schools, intensive service, incentives, diversity of participants, a variety of meaningful service roles, leadership and initiative, training, learning and growth, critical mass, and the team concept. Acknowledging that the talents and interests of older adults are diverse, and the needs of schools many, the adults were encouraged to serve young people both directly and indirectly in concentrated efforts that provided for a "critical mass" of participants. These adults made a major commitment to serve in teams of six to ten participants for a minimum of 15 hours a week throughout the school year, and received a small stipend to cover the costs of serving.

From this demonstration NSSC learned that when these core elements are incorporated into senior service programs, it facilitates both "Getting Things Done" and providing a high quality experience for Senior volunteers. In the fall of 1997, the Corporation launched the Seniors for Schools demonstration initiative in nine communities, building on and refining the core elements of the Experience Corps model, and narrowing the focus by adopting the goals of "America Reads", that all students will learn to read by the end of third grade.

As shown in Table 1, below, during the past three years the Seniors for Schools initiative has grown, with the number of schools served increasing from 25 to 51, the number of volunteers increasing from 234 to 486 and the number of students served increasing from 1,642 to 5,462. For the past three years, surveys of teachers, principals and other school staff at Seniors for Schools sites indicate a solid base of support for the initiative among teachers and principals. The initiative also shows consistent student benefits, as indicated both by test results and by teacher reports, and an ever-increasing ability of sites to document success.

Table 1 Senior Volunteers and Student Participation by Site

City	State	Schools			Volunteers			Students		
		1997	1998	1999	1997	1998	1999	1997	1998	1999
Boston	MA	3	5	6	42	60	79	51	71	82
Cleveland	OH	4	4	4	21	36	29	329	923	452
Kansas City	MO	2	2	3	22	28	36	88	82	97
Lake County	FL	3	6	7	21	65	65	113	370	332
Minneapolis	MN	4	5	6	30	52	40	387	674	667
New York ³	NY	2	4	4	25	52	52	96	137	720
Philadelphia	PA	2	7	9	34	85	103	380	360	2037
Port Arthur	TX	3	4	5	27	28	31	148	131	120
Portland	OR	2	2	7	12	22	51	50	88	955
Total		25	39	51	234	428	486	1642	2836	5462

II. SENIORS FOR SCHOOLS AS A NATIONAL INITIATIVE: SITES, ACTIVITIES AND SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Sites

All nine sites that participated during the first year of the Seniors for Schools initiative continued their efforts for a third full year during 1999-2000. During the past three years, the Seniors for Schools initiative has served in more than 51 schools in nine states, and served over 10,000 students. Spread throughout the United States and serving in a variety of communities, the Seniors for Schools volunteers conducted tutoring in one or more grade levels, from kindergarten through sixth grade. Table 2 provides summary information for each of the nine sites relating to location, number of sub-sites, volunteers engaged, and students served.

³ The New York and Philadelphia projects are funded both through the Corporation and private foundations. The sites did not separately report activities; thus these numbers represent activities undertaken using dual funding.

Table 2 1999-2000 Senior Volunteers and Student Participation by Site

City	State	Schools	Volunteers	Number of			Grades Served
				Students Receiving Only Large Group Help*	Students Receiving Tutoring**	Total Students	
Boston	MA	6	79		82	82	2, 3
Cleveland	OH	4	29	315	137	452	K, 1, 2, 3
Kansas City	MO	3	36		97	97	1, 2, 3,
Lake County	FL	7	65		332	332	K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 6
Minneapolis	MN	6	40		667	667	K, 1, 2, 3
New York	NY	4	52	646	74	720	K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Philadelphia	PA	9	103	1650	387	2037	K, 1, 2, 3
Port Arthur	TX	5	31		120	120	1, 2
Portland	OR	7	51	759	196	955	K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Total	9	51	486	3370	2092	5462	K-6

* Large group help may include in class support, story telling, group literacy activities or other support.

**Students may be tutored one-on-one or in small groups.

In addition to the intensive one-on-one and small group tutoring provided during the past two years, the New York, Philadelphia and Portland sites all also reported a substantial number of students served through large group in-class or group reading activities. Also, although services to kindergarten through third grade students were still the mainstay of tutoring provided, due to teacher and school requests, and great need in upper grades, some fourth through sixth grade students also received tutoring from the senior tutors.

Activities

The volunteers identified in Table 2 were specially trained in literacy-related activities by site staff and reading specialists from the school district and local universities. The services the Senior volunteers performed included one-on-one tutoring, small group tutoring, and storytelling. The number of hours volunteered per person varied from site to site and even within each site. Some volunteers worked a few hours per week while others were a consistent presence in the classroom, volunteering fifteen hours or more each week. Similarly, some employed a one-on-one tutoring model, resulting in a high volunteer-to-student ratio, while others engaged in activities such as storytelling or classroom assistance that reached a broader audience. In general, the literacy measures reported here reflect the results of the one-on-one and small group tutoring efforts.

A portion of sites did not report all students who were served by Senior volunteers because absenteeism and transference to or from other schools or school districts did not allow students to complete both the pre- and post-tests. Therefore, the number of students identified in Table 1 represents a portion of the total number of students who participated in literacy-related activities. The types of activities reported in year-end reports by the Seniors for Schools sites are summarized in Table 3 and described further throughout this report.

City	State	Activities Conducted		
		Tutoring	Parent Involvement	Other Support
Boston	MA	X	X	Conducted service learning activities with Seniors for Schools students as tutors
Cleveland	OH	X	X	Books for kids (used book collection), Book Fair, Reading Challenge
Kansas City	MO	X	X	Seniors for Schools day event
Lake County	FL	X		
Minneapolis	MN	X		
New York	NY	X		General classroom assistance
Philadelphia	PA	X	X	
Port Arthur	TX	X	X	Show and Tell breakfast
Portland	OR	X	X	Provided English as a Second Language services to parents of tutored children, after school academic programs, First Book Giveaways, student incentives and bowling club, lunch hour academic support clubs, and a music program

Each site took its own approach in how Senior volunteers provided tutoring to improve student literacy. A brief overview of the site's efforts provides insight into the breadth and depth of the interventions.

- **Boston, MA:** Senior volunteers worked with AmeriCorps volunteer reading coaches to implement the Leaps in Literacy program. Volunteers worked with students two or four days a week in 30-minute sessions. All students were below grade level and participated in at least 50 sessions.
- **Minneapolis, MN:** After receiving 16 hours of pre-service training on a variety of topics, as well as monthly follow-up team trainings, the Senior volunteers engaged students in one-on-one tutoring and small group reading sessions. Most volunteers worked with 16 to 18 students while a few were matched with two or three students with special needs.
- **Kansas City, MO:** After receiving over 24 hours of literacy training, each Senior volunteer worked with two to four students over the course of eight months. Students and their tutors met for 30 to 45-minute one-on-one tutoring sessions three times each week. Mentoring sessions were 45 to 60 minutes in duration.
- **New York, NY:** This site teamed with the University of Virginia's McGuffey Reading Center to implement the *Book Buddies* one-on-one tutoring model. This structured model, developed at the University of Virginia, provides individualized reading instruction to students four times per week, 30 to 45-minute sessions. In addition, volunteers provided general assistance to classrooms.

- **Cleveland, OH:** Students at the 25th to 50th percentile of their class received one-on-one tutoring outside the classroom, during school time. Tutoring was also provided during two summer programs. Tutors took direction from teachers, used activities learned at trainings, and drew upon personal experience to tutor students.
- **Portland, OR:** Following a 15-hour pre-service orientation, Senior volunteers met with their students at least twice per week for 20-minutes per session, one-on-one over the course of at least six weeks.
- **Philadelphia, PA:** At-risk students received two to three one-on-one tutoring sessions each week for eight months. Working together, the Senior volunteer, project staff person, and the student's teacher developed instructional guidelines for implementation during the forty-five minute tutoring sessions.
- **Port Arthur, TX:** Senior volunteers received approximately 30 hours of training. They provided one-on-one tutoring to students who were below grade level two to four times per week for 30 to 45-minutes each session.

Compared to the 1998-99 school year, some schools expanded the number of grade levels and/or students served. Cleveland added kindergarten; Philadelphia added grade 3; Port Arthur added grade 2. Although the vast majority of students served were in Kindergarten through third grade, several sites added higher grade levels, often in response to teacher requests or a high level of need at older grade levels. Specifically, Lake County added grades 4 and 6, and New York and Portland expanded the program to include grades K through 5. The programs in New York, Philadelphia, and Portland also increased dramatically the number of students served by their entire programs by incorporating large group literacy activities or classroom assistance into their programs.

Six sites included significant parent involvement activities throughout the school year. The majority of the site staff and Senior volunteer efforts were focused on bringing parents into the schools for activities such as parent teacher conferences and book fairs, and showcasing student work. For these sites, such activities were outside of their primary focus on tutoring students. Although the sites documented their activities, they rarely ventured into assessing their impact. Table 4 shows the numbers of parents or families involved in Seniors for Schools and school activities at the three sites that included this information in their reports.

Type of Outreach	Type of Measure	Number of Sites Using Measure	Number of Parents or Families Served
Involvement in school meetings and/or projects	Sign-in Sheets Attendance Records	4	454
Parent participation in Book Fair.	Sign in Sheets Attendance Records	2	205
Involvement in home literacy activities.	Participants List Mailing List	2	195

The four sites reporting data indicated that 659 parents participated in at-school activities, more than doubling the number of the previous year. The two sites that reported promoting literacy enrichment in the home provided 195 parents (whose children were being tutored) with literacy materials, including information on reading development and sample reading activities.

Examples of parent involvement activities include:

- **Portland, OR:** Volunteers tutored parents in English language skills, which they reported was crucial to having follow through in children's home literacy activities.
- **Boston, MA:** Volunteers provided activities at each of the schools, including a parent pizza party, attendance at parent teacher conferences, and translation of child information into Spanish for parents.
- **Port Arthur, TX:** Volunteers and staff hosted a literacy breakfast where students read to their parents.

All sites also engaged in a range of auxiliary school and literacy support activities that involved Senior volunteers in activities other than tutoring and parent involvement. Three sites (OR, OH, MO) included examples of these activities in their reports:

- **Portland, OR:** In Portland, volunteers helped write grants to raise funds for books and other activities; they tutored families in basic English skills, ran after-school programs, including a successful bowling program, lunch-hour academic support clubs, and a music program.
- **Cleveland, OH:** The program includes an objective of providing new and used books to students. This year, "gently used books" were collected from libraries, community groups, schools, and individuals. Money for new books was raised in the community; bookstores, publishing companies, and the community also donated new books.
- **Kansas City, MO:** The Kansas City site received funds and in-kind contributions from local organizations. These were used for parent events, training, and volunteer recognition.

During the third year of the Seniors for Schools initiative, the number of schools, students, and volunteers involved in and served by Seniors for Schools have all increased. Figures 1, 2 and 3 illustrate the increase in each of the three areas between 1997-98 and 1999-2000. Figure 4 demonstrates how the ratio of adult volunteers to students has changed during this time period, with the number of students almost doubling, but the number of volunteers increasing at a slower rate.

Figure 1: Schools Served by Year

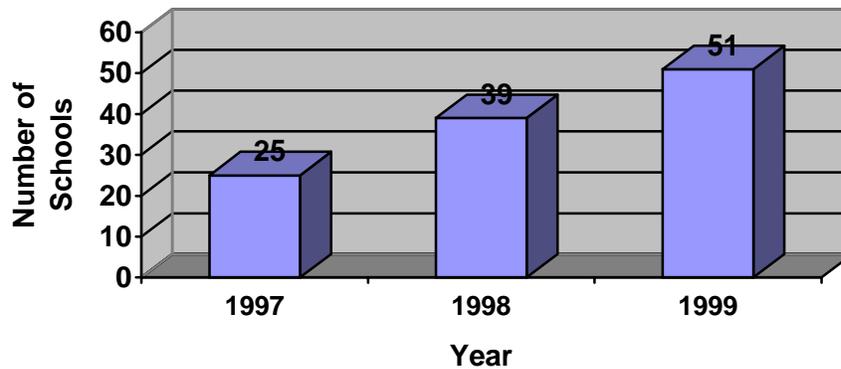


Figure 2: Students Served by Year

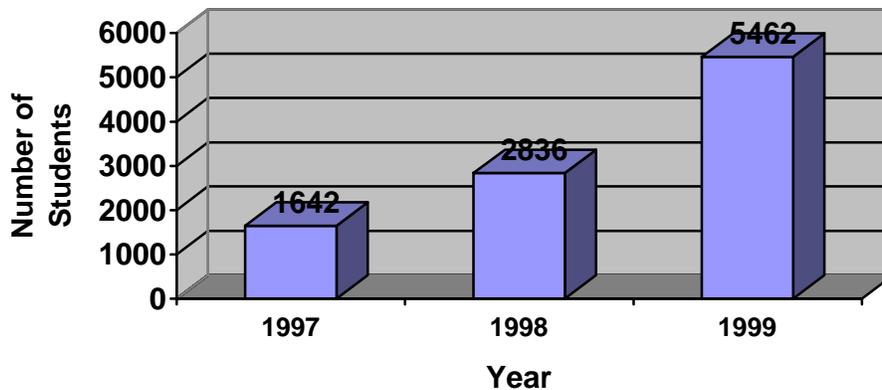


Figure 3: Number of Volunteers by Year

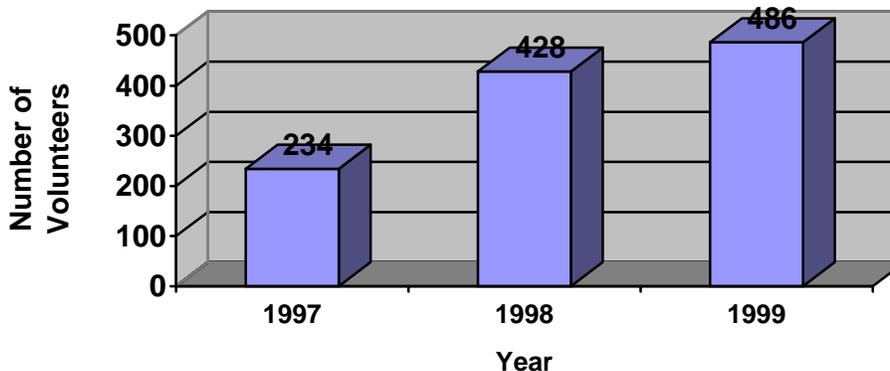
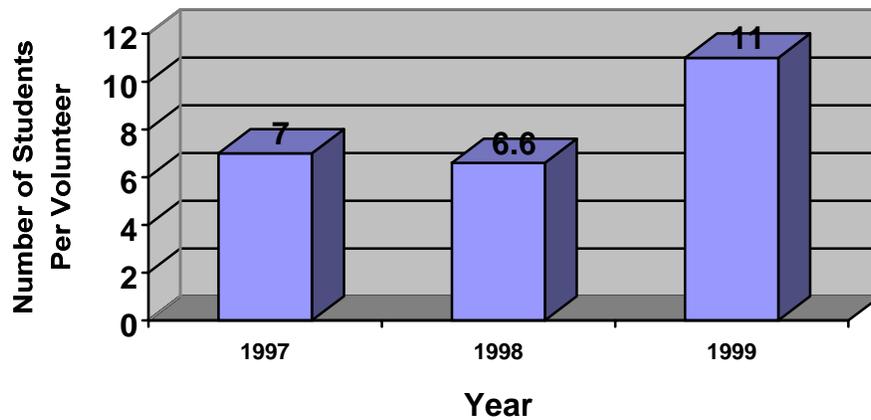


Figure 4: Ratio of Volunteers to Students Served by Year



Survey Respondents

In addition to conducting and reporting internal evaluation, respondents from all nine sites also turned in completed surveys from principals/staff and surveys from teachers. However, because the total number of teachers participating in the initiative was not reported, it is not known whether every teacher participating at each site responded to the survey. Table 5 provides the number of respondents for each survey.

Table 5: Respondents of the Principals/Staff Survey and Teachers Survey				
City	State	Number of Schools	Number of Principals/Staff	Number of Teachers
Boston	MA	6	6	35
Cleveland	OH	4	4	20
Kansas City	MO	3	12	34
Lake County	FL	7	12	36
Minneapolis	MN	6	12	31
New York	NY	3	4	21
Philadelphia	PA	3	4	25
Port Arthur	TX	5	9	21
Portland	OR	6	7	50
Total	9	43	70	273

In all, seventy principals/staff responded to the surveys, reflecting an increase over previous years. Similarly, the 273 teachers who responded represented an increase over previous years. The teachers responding taught in levels K-6, with the 235 of the 260 teachers who reported a

grade level teaching in grades K-3. The breakdown of teachers' grade levels by site can be seen in Table 6.

City	State	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	Grand Total
Boston	MA			19	15				34*
Cleveland	OH	8	4	4	4				20
Kansas City	MO	8	10	6	10				34
Lake County	FL	11	5	10	6	3		1	36
Minneapolis	MN	5	7	5	7	2	1		27*
New York	NY	2	9	3	3	3	1		21
Philadelphia	PA	7	9	6	2	1			25
Port Arthur	TX		13	6					19*
Portland	OR	8	10	5	9	7	5		44*
Total	9	49	67	64	56	16	7	1	260

* Please note that not all teachers specified a grade level.

III. RESULTS

Satisfaction with Program

- All principals/staff responding (68 of 68) want Seniors for Schools volunteers to work with them next year.
- Ninety-three percent of the teachers (250 of 270) would like Seniors for Schools in their school next year.
- Eighty-eight percent (58 of 66) of the principals and staff were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their involvement with the Seniors for Schools initiative.
- Eighty-seven percent (232 of 268) of the teachers were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their involvement with the Seniors for Schools initiative.

Ninety-four percent of the survey respondents, including principals, staff and teachers, wished to have the Seniors for Schools initiative return to their schools next year. This continues to demonstrate an overwhelmingly positive response to the services provided. The six percent who do not wish to have the Seniors for Schools initiative return to their school state varied reasons, the majority being unrelated to the Seniors for Schools program, such as school scheduling difficulties, a need to minimize school day interruptions caused by pulling students out of class and a desire to identify the individual needs of next year's students before requesting volunteer services.

The individual testimony of teachers and principals/staff is the strongest evidence of the desire and the need for tutoring such as that provided by Seniors for Schools sites. Both groups spoke of multiple benefits, including improvements in academic performance, positive role-modeling, and an improvement in the attitude of the students.

- **Boston, MA:** “The children receive intense, thorough tutoring in reading interesting children’s literature. They also benefit greatly from identifying with one person.”
- **Minneapolis, MN:** “The volunteer has been in my classroom for the past three years. She has a great sense of humor, loves children, and wants to see them do their best. She’s such a positive influence!”
- **New York, NY:** “The program is wonderful. The children connect and learn a lot from the seniors. Seniors tell of life experiences that relate to social studies, such as memories of Martin Luther King, Jr. They are a wonderful asset to the classroom.”
- **Portland, OR:** “The Senior volunteers reinforce the skills taught in the classroom and provide extended experience to children.”
- **Lake County, FL:** “Many children don't have the opportunity to have a relationship with older adults and this is a great opportunity for both sides.”

Survey respondents rated their satisfaction level in response to the question, “How satisfied were you with your involvement with the Seniors for Schools project?” Tables 7 and 8 break down satisfaction level by state.

City	State	Unsatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Unsatisfied	Satisfied	Number of Teachers
Boston	MA	6%	9%	85%	35
Cleveland	OH	5%		95%	19*
Kansas City	MO	3%	9%	88%	33*
Lake County	FL		11%	89%	36
Minneapolis	MN		10%	90%	31
New York	NY			100%	21
Philadelphia	PA	4%	12%	84%	25
Port Arthur	TX	5%	9%	86%	21
Portland	OR	10%	15%	75%	47*
Total	9	4%	9%	87%	268

*Please note that not all teachers responded to this item.

Table 8 Satisfaction of Principal/Staff Involvement in Project by Site

City	State	Unsatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Unsatisfied	Satisfied	Number of Principals/ Staff
Boston	MA			100%	6
Cleveland	OH	25%		75%	4
Kansas City	MO	10%	10.0%	80%	10*
Lake County	FL		8%	92%	12
Minneapolis	MN		15%	85%	13
New York	NY				*
Philadelphia	PA			100%	4
Port Arthur	TX		11%	89%	9
Portland	OR	11%		89%	9
Total	9	5%	7%	88%	67

* Please note that not all principals/staff responded to this item.

With 87 percent (232 of 268) of the teachers and 88 percent (59 of 67) of the principals responding that they are "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their involvement in the project, the initiative has many supporters. However, of those teachers who were dissatisfied, these low ratings stemmed from a few broad areas: insufficient time and/or volunteers to cover students in need of help; scheduling sessions with volunteers; and interruptions caused by volunteers leaving before the year is out or needing the teachers' attention.

Benefits to Students – Testing Results, Survey Results and Alternative Assessments

- Ninety-two percent (1393 of 1520) of the students measured using standardized and non-standardized reading skills tests improved their reading skills during the project year.
- Fifty-eight percent (428 of 733) of the students measured using assessments that reported reading-level-equivalents increased their reading level by one full level or more.
- Eighty-four percent (217 of 258) of teachers indicated a positive impact on student reading ability.
- Seventy-five percent (182 of 244) of teachers indicated a positive impact on reading test results and/or reading assessment levels.
- Seventy-five percent (151 of 202) of teachers indicated a positive impact on student literacy due to non-tutoring literacy activities.
- Over 81 percent of the principals, staff, and teachers surveyed indicated that students displayed *increased positive attitude toward reading, self-confidence in reading ability, and improved overall self-esteem* because of the program.

Testing Results

Teacher recommendations or placement tests were used to identify students for placement with senior tutors. In those sites (MA, OH, FL MN, OR, PA) that used pre-tests to identify students

for service, 98 percent of the students (1193 of 1212) began below grade level. Overall, the students served by the Seniors for Schools initiative showed improvement in their reading skills on a variety of standardized and non-standardized measures. Non-readers developed the skills to begin reading and those who were ready to read took their first steps into the world of books. At least 92 percent of the tutored students improved their reading skills over their pre-test scores.

More students were served by the Seniors for Schools initiative than were assessed due to such factors as student absences, transience, and transfers to more intense projects serving students with special needs beyond the ability of Seniors for Schools. However, the proportion of students who were measured this year increased from 50 percent of all students tutored in 1998-99 to 73 percent of all students tutored in 1999-2000.

Table 9 presents data on the number of students measured and the number of students showing improvement on pre/post-test scores. It should be noted that the Seniors for Schools initiative is not the only source of literacy assistance for children at the schools served, and the increases in test scores provided are not attributable only to the work of Senior volunteers. However, teachers and principals surveyed state that the initiative is an important component in the success of the students, as it provides valuable one to one and small group assistance that would otherwise not be available.

City	State	Measure Used	Students Formally Measured	Number Showing Improvement	Percent Showing Improvement
Boston	MA	Jerry Johns BRI	82	75	91%
Cleveland	OH	Brigance	52	51	99%
Kansas City	MO	Brigance	86	71	82%
Lake County	FL	Jerry Johns IRI	202	187	93%
Minneapolis	MN	CBM	655	632	96%
New York	NY	PALS	46	46	100%
Philadelphia	PA	Jerry Johns BRI	149	125	84%
Port Arthur	TX	Brigance	95	73	77%
Portland	OR	Running Records	153	133	87%
Total	9		1,520	1,393	92%

Table 9 tells only part of the story. Students not only improved but excelled. Of the six sites (MA, OH, FL, PA, TX, OR) reporting number of children improving by one or more reading levels, 58 percent (428 of 733) of the children tutored improved. Thus, 58 percent of the children, all of whom demonstrated significant reading difficulties at the beginning of the year, achieved up to or exceeded the expected traditional gains for children their age, as illustrated in Table 10.

City	State	Measure Used	Students formally measured	Number improving one or more reading levels	Percent improving one or more reading levels
Boston	MA	Jerry Johns BRI	82	66	80%
Cleveland	OH	Brigance	52	33	63%
Lake County	FL	Jerry Johns IRI	202	144	71%
Philadelphia	PA	Jerry Johns BRI	149	40	27%
Port Arthur	TX	Brigance	95	52	55%
Portland	OR	Running Records	153	93	61%
Total	6		733	428	58%

Student assessments of reading skills also revealed that, of the six sites (MA, OH, MO, FL, OR, MN) reporting the number of children who were brought to grade level as measured by tests with established reading grade levels, 39 percent (451 of 1151) of the children tutored brought their reading up to grade level (see Table 11, below). This is an excellent result, given that almost all of the children (94 percent) started the year below grade level and that most of these children were among the lowest achieving in their classroom when the year began.

City	State	Measure Used	Students formally measured	Number Below Level at Pre-Test	Number at Level at Post-Test	Percent Reading at Grade Level by Post-Test
Boston	MA	Jerry Johns BRI	82	82	51	62%
Cleveland	OH	Brigance	52	52	26	50%
Kansas City	MO	Brigance	86	37**	71	83%
Lake County	FL	Jerry Johns IRI	202	202	50	25%
Minneapolis	MN	CBM	576*	558	210	36%
Portland	OR	Running Records	153	153	43	28%
Total	6		1151	1084	451	39%

*Reading grade level standards for the CBM are only provided for 1st grade and older students, therefore kindergarten students are excluded from this number.

** Kansas City selected students for tutoring based on teacher recommendation, not pre-test scores.

Survey Results:

A majority of the teachers responded positively when asked to rate the overall benefits the Seniors for Schools services had on the students, as shown in Table 12. Over 74 percent of the respondents felt that there was a positive impact (defined as a rating of 4 or 5) in the areas of overall reading ability and test results and/or reading assessment levels, due to Seniors for Schools tutoring. Seventy-five percent felt that the non-tutoring activities undertaken by Senior volunteers, such as storytelling, had a positive impact on student literacy.

Table 12 Overall Project Benefits as Reported by Teachers						
	Very Negative 1	2	3	4	Very Positive 5	Total
What was the impact of Seniors for Schools tutoring activities on student reading ability?		<1% (2)	15% (38)	40% (102)	45% (115)	100% (257)
What is your assessment of the impact volunteer tutors had on student reading test results and/or reading assessment levels?	<1% (1)	1% (3)	24% (58)	42% (103)	32% (79)	100% (244)
What was the impact of Seniors for Schools non-tutoring literacy activities on student literacy?		2% (4)	23% (47)	38% (77)	37% (74)	100% (202)

Table 13 details the multiple benefits selected by teachers and principals/staff as accruing to the tutored students. Over 81 percent of the principals/staff and teachers surveyed indicated that students displayed increased positive attitude toward reading, self-confidence in reading ability, and improved overall self-esteem because of the program. Conversely, improved behavior, writing skills, and parental involvement were the least often observed student benefits.

Table 13 Benefits to Students as Reported by Teachers and Principals/Staff		
Type of Student Benefit	% of Principals/Staff reporting this student benefit occurred in their school	% of Teachers reporting this student benefit occurred in their school
Increased self-confidence in reading	90% (60)	82% (220)
Increased positive attitude toward reading	87% (58)	83% (223)
Improved overall self-esteem	85% (57)	81% (217)
Increased reading ability/scores	82% (55)	69% (185)
General academic improvement	79% (53)	69% (185)
Increased interest/participation in class	64% (43)	61% (165)
Improved writing skills	60% (40)	45% (119)
Improved behavior	58% (39)	35% (93)
Improved parental involvement	45% (30)	17% (45)
	N = 67*	N = 269*

* Not all principals and teachers responded to this section of the survey.

When asked which student benefits are most important to their school, teachers chose most often, “Increased positive attitude toward reading,” while principals/staff chose “increased self-confidence in reading”

In addition to those benefits presented in Table 13, respondents also noted other positive outcomes. The words of the principals, staff, and teachers involved in the initiative attest to the effectiveness the initiative had on students:

- **Boston, MA:** “Positive self-esteem grew within the students who took part. Others students saw them as smart. Students’ reading tests improved, and they are now interested in picking up library books of their levels.”
- **Minneapolis, MN:** “The reading scores of the students served all increased. Many students were tutored in math skills such as telling time, counting money, and problem solving. The one-on-one attention is invaluable.”
- **Cleveland, OH:** “Direct involvement with the Senior volunteer brought about close, meaningful relationships which fostered a determined attitude in many students.”
- **Portland, OR:** “Student language skills increased with the adult-child verbal interaction.”
- **Port Arthur, TX:** “The volunteers greatly assisted my students with language, reading, and math. Each and every student made progress that they would not have made without the help of the volunteers. As well, the children enjoyed the classes and looked forward to going to them.”

Additional Assessment Measures:

Many sites attempted to assess the outcomes of their project through multiple measures. In addition to the standardized and non-standardized tests that each site used to measure reading skills, and the Teacher and Principal/Staff surveys all sites were required to administer, many sites conducted other measures. Table 14 summarizes these other measures that each site reported and the outcomes each identified.

Table 14 Additional Assessment Measures on Literacy Achievement				
City	State	Measure Used	Respondents	Outcome
Boston	MA	Reading Feedback Survey	9 Teachers	79% of students (as reported by their teachers) improved in two or more reading involvement and interest areas, including Attitude toward books, Involvement in reading activities, Interest in reading activities and Confidence as a reader.
		End of Year Volunteer Survey	46 Volunteers	93% agreed that they had noticed an improvement in their students reading ability and 87% noticed an improvement in the confidence level of their students.
Cleveland	OH	Reading Confidence Survey	Teachers	Teachers saw positive improvements in the students’ attitudes towards reading. (No statistics were reported from this survey.)
Kansas City	MO	Tutorial Goal Form	Tutors	68% of students improved on at least 40% of their reading/ work habit or behavior goals.
Lake County	FL	Lake County Phonographix Test	Kindergarten Students	58 students showed an average gain of 28%.

When looked at through these multiple lenses, the site outcomes are varied and consistently positive. The sites not only are showing positive results from their work, but also are exploring ways to collect data that provides information for continuous program improvement and captures their accomplishments. Some site staff continued to struggle with low response rates to their surveys or turned to other methods of evaluation this year.

The benefits of this initiative can also be seen in the subtle changes that occur as a child builds confidence in his or her own abilities. In their own words, stakeholders in the Seniors for Schools initiative share how this has changed schools and lives:

- **Kansas City, MO:** “Two of my slowest children were able to make progress and felt as if they were part of the classroom academic environment.”
- **New York, NY:** “Working with the volunteer, my student’s self-esteem increased. She began to enjoy school and her attendance improved.”
- **Portland, OR:** “My volunteer provided one-on-one tutoring to a non-English-speaking student. He has made so much progress and having that individual attention made his day happier.”
- **Port Arthur, TX:** “One of the students was having an attitude problem, and the volunteer was able to communicate with the student daily; attendance greatly improved.”

Benefits to Teachers, Communities, and Volunteers

- Seventy-eight percent of the teachers reported that they benefited from the Seniors for Schools initiative because of an increased ability to target instruction to specific student needs.
- One hundred percent of principals/staff and 91 percent of the teachers surveyed agreed that the benefits of having older volunteers in the schools included providing positive role models and increasing children's respect for older adults.

Table 15 identifies some of the benefits to teachers arising out of the Seniors for Schools initiative.

Table 15 Teacher Benefits	
Type of Teacher Benefit	% of Teachers reporting this type of teacher benefit occurred in their school
Increased ability to target instruction to specific student needs	78% (212)
Increased student interest/participation in classroom activity	65% (177)
Opportunity to connect/consult with another supportive adult	63% (170)
Enhances or supports classroom management	51% (139)
	N = 271*

*Please note that not all teachers responded to this section.

Site directors reported that teachers repeatedly spoke positively of the one-on-one attention that Seniors for Schools tutors brought to the classroom as well as the value of having another adult with whom to share insights and responsibilities. Examples of teacher comments are stated below.

- **Lake County, FL:** “It gives the students much needed one-on-one attention, and I appreciate the help, especially in teaching phonographic and guided practice.”
- **Kansas City, MO:** “Some students need one-on-one attention that I can’t give. The tutors help a lot.”
- **New York, NY:** “The program really gave those students who need extra help some one-on-one guidance.”
- **Philadelphia, PA:** “It was great to be able to talk to the volunteer about the needs of the children.”

A variety of different Seniors for Schools services are offered at each site, with some focusing strictly on in-school tutoring while others include an after-school or parent-involvement component. Turning to the words of the respondents themselves may shed light on the benefits observed in the school and community context:

- **Portland, OR:** “ESL parents came to school to learn English- this was very helpful in getting parents involved.”
- **Portland, OR:** “Parents have responded well to having a quality tutor for their student. They enjoy the Experience Corps "Welcome Table" for parents during fall conferences, offering donuts, cookies, and coffee to the families. After school Explorers Club and Readers/Homework Club offered to students were exceptional! What a great team we have!!”
- **Minneapolis, MN:** “(The Seniors for Schools initiative) connects the school with the community.”
- **Minneapolis, MN:** “(We have seen) increased requests for the use of the building for community meetings. They feel it's safe and students are learning.”

Seniors for Schools has brought students and seniors together in the classroom and school setting. The benefits accrue on both sides of the relationship. Table 16 summarizes responses of teachers and principals/staff who were asked about the benefits of having, specifically, older volunteers in the schools. Most frequently, the seniors were noted for being positive adult role models.

Table 16 Benefits of Having Senior Tutors		
Type of Benefit	% Principals/Staff reporting type of benefit in their school	% Teachers reporting type of benefit in the classroom
Provided students with positive adult role models	100% (69)	91% (247)
Increased children’s respect for older adults	97% (67)	88% (238)
Positive Senior/child relationships among tutors and students	97% (67)	93%(251)
Provided students with an adult mentoring relationship	96% (66)	89% (240)
Tapped into skills Seniors had to offer the community	94% (65)	83% (225)
	N = 69	N= 271*

*Please note that not all Teachers responded to this section.

The teachers and principals/staff noted the unique nature of the positive intergenerational relationships. Repeatedly, they spoke of the way the Seniors changed the tenor of the school environment. In their own words:

- **Kansas City, MO:** “Having the seniors with us helps connect all children with older adults. Children saw the seniors as members of an extended family. Their appearance was a connection of the past, present, and future.”
- **Minneapolis, MN:** “It’s more like the real world to have a variety of ages working together.”
- **New York, NY:** “The volunteers bring a wonderful balance into the lives of children.”
- **Lake County, FL:** “We need them with our students- They are teachers, parents, grandparents, helpers, and friends all at one time!”
- **Philadelphia, PA:** “Children knew they were with a loving, caring, and stable person—it made them feel special.”

The Boston, Massachusetts site surveyed the Senior volunteers to assess their response to participating in the initiative. One hundred percent of the Senior volunteers who were surveyed felt more connected with the community, and 93 percent felt more aware of children’s educational needs and more confident and capable regarding their own abilities.

IV. SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

Successes

The Seniors for Schools initiative has been successful in serving students and achieving positive learning outcomes. It has made connections that provide for continuing school and community support and has steadily improved in its ability to document accomplishments and outcomes. Successes during this third year include:

- **Site Accomplishments** In the three years of the project the number schools served has almost doubled, the number of volunteers has more than doubled, and the number of students receiving help has more than tripled.
- **Site Outcomes** Across all nine sites, over 92 percent of students who received one-on-one and small group tutoring demonstrated measurable improvement in reading skills, and, in several sites, tests measuring reading level increases showed that 58 percent of students measured gained one or more levels during this school year.
- **Data Collection Sophistication** Sites continued to increase their level of sophistication in the timing and methods of data collection, with 73 percent of one-on-one and small group tutees successfully measured.
- **Establishing Connections within Communities** Five sites reported that they had been successful in establishing fiscal and in-kind support in their communities or with their state government by generating donations of funding, materials, and books, and through increasing awareness of the Seniors for Schools initiative in their communities. The New York site reported raising over \$280,000 in monies from state and federal (non-Corporation) sources to support their efforts for the next five years.

Challenges

Both site directors and teachers encountered challenges during this third year of the Seniors for Schools initiative. These challenges included:

- **Resource Constraints** When teachers were asked to comment on the challenges they faced in regard to the Seniors for Schools initiative, they were likely to respond that they did not have enough volunteers in their classroom to meet the need, or that they would have liked students to spend even more time with volunteers. Some were frustrated due to scheduling conflicts that inhibited optimal use of the available volunteers. Seniors for Schools staff at three sites also noted that resources such as time or space to provide service were a challenge.
- **Clarification and Communication of Roles** Twenty-nine percent of teachers indicated that they would have liked more opportunity to communicate with volunteers and to determine their roles. Some teachers wanted more voice in the program's curriculum and activities; others wanted more time to communicate with volunteers and to clarify how they interacted

in the classroom. Seniors for Schools Staff at three sites also noted that they had communication difficulties with teachers and volunteers.

- **Recruiting, Keeping and Managing Volunteers** In every program, some individual volunteers are easier to work with and more effective than others. Three programs and 39 percent of teachers noted some difficulty related to volunteer management. These difficulties included provision of adequate tutoring training, recruiting enough volunteers to meet program goals and keeping volunteers for the school year. Some volunteers left their programs before the end of the school year, due to health concerns and other personal matters. These instances are a disappointment to teachers, though the difficulties are outweighed by the larger number of volunteers who are of great help.
- **Scheduling Services** Six of eight programs that provided reports and 30 percent of teachers completing the teacher survey noted difficulties in scheduling tutoring sessions or other services. Frequent changes in school day schedules for tutoring, and difficulties in scheduling parent involvement activities after working hours occasionally hampered service delivery.

V. CONCLUSION

During the past three years Seniors for Schools sites have expanded services, begun to develop resources for sustainability, developed the skills to conduct internal outcome evaluations and to implement, analyze and use initiative wide survey data, and provided substantial academic and social benefits to students and school communities.

Continuous improvement of project services has also occurred during this third year. Sites increased the number of students participating in the Seniors for Schools initiative and responded to teacher requests to meet more student needs by supplementing one-on-one tutoring with reading groups and in class assistance. Students receiving one-on-one tutoring have shown growth in reading ability, and teachers and principals report that they value this program and that they hope it will continue. Sites are generally improving in documenting project outcomes. In all, the data collected for the Seniors for Schools initiative shows a project that is well received, supported by schools and communities, and effects change with students.

The third year evaluation results of the Seniors for Schools initiative shows that the literacy-related activities continue to add value to the efforts of the Corporation for National Service's effort to meet the "America Reads Challenge." In addition, several sites are responding to teacher and school concern about lack of resources for upper grade (fourth and fifth grade) students by expanding services to meet some of those needs. There is overwhelming evidence that the initiative is viewed as a positive contribution to the schools in which the Senior volunteers serve.

The data collected both by Seniors for Schools site staff, volunteers and the data from teachers and principals/school staff surveyed indicate that Seniors for Schools continues to have a positive impact on the students tutored. Ninety two percent of the tutored students improved their reading skills. While 94 percent of students tested started the year below their expected

reading level (some by two levels or more), 58 percent of the tutored students gained in their reading level by one full level or more and 39 percent reading at their expected grade level by post-test.

To place the Seniors for Schools evaluation results in a larger context, other studies of individual tutoring programs such as the recent “AmeriCorps Tutoring and Student Reading Achievements” study conducted by Abt Associates (2000) have shown that children provided with sufficiently intense tutoring services by tutors using appropriate methods can have a positive effect on children’s reading performance. Although, due to differing statistical approaches, the results of the Abt study and the evaluation data from the Seniors for Schools initiative cannot be directly compared, the results of the Seniors for Schools program support this finding. In addition to the data presented in this report on the number of students showing increases in reading ability and attaining grade level, during the past three years several Seniors for Schools sites including Philadelphia and New York have conducted independent evaluations showing that students made statistically significant gains in reading ability which parallel those found in Abt’s national study of students tutored by AmeriCorps members.

It is important to note that students served by the Senior volunteers are also supported by others including teachers, reading specialists and other programs and that the results seen are not entirely attributable to the tutors’ efforts. However, student test results show that they are making reading gains, and teachers report that the senior tutors’ efforts play an important role in making this increase possible. In addition to the academic value provided to students, teachers, principals and school staff appreciated the intergenerational benefits of older role models who connected the school and community. As this initiative completes its final year, it is important to consider how this successful program structure can be continued and expanded.