



***UNDERSTANDING THE
EXPERIENCES OF
TUTORS IN A YOUTH
LITERACY PROGRAM***

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Understanding the Experiences of Tutors in a Youth Literacy Program

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Table of Contents

<u>Executive Summary</u>	2
<u>Organization Context</u>	4
<u>Problem of Practice</u>	6
<u>Review of Literature</u>	8
<u>Conceptual Framing</u>	16
<u>Project Questions</u>	18
<u>Project Design</u>	19
<u>Data Analysis</u>	26
<u>Findings</u>	30
<u>Recommendations</u>	48
<u>Conclusion</u>	59
<u>References</u>	61
<u>Appendix A: READ USA Tutor Input Cognitive Interview Protocol</u>	70
<u>Appendix B: Conceptual Framework & Survey Question Connection</u>	72
<u>Appendix C: Survey Modifications Post–Cognitive Interviews</u>	75
<u>Appendix D: Final Survey Instrument</u>	78
<u>Appendix E: Analysis Metrics and Rationales</u>	82
<u>Appendix F: Quantitative Data Summary</u>	83
<u>Appendix G: Open Response Thematic Summary</u>	84
<u>Appendix H: Resources & Deliverable Product for READ USA Leadership</u>	90

Executive Summary

READ USA (RU) is a literacy non-profit organization founded in 2016 in Jacksonville, Florida as a result of a friendship between an elementary school teacher and a classroom volunteer. The organization offers free book fairs to all 95 Duval County public elementary schools, provides a peer-to-peer tutoring program in 16 schools, and offers stand-alone literacy coaching to schools in need. In 2023 RU implemented a more robust and targeted workforce development training program for its high school–age tutors. Under this model, tutors receive training and mentorship from professional teachers, earn a competitive hourly wage, and participate in workforce development activities.

Using a mixed methods approach, we sought to better understand the experiences and perceived career readiness gains identified by RU tutors. Aligned with our conceptual framework, we developed and administered a 39-question survey exploring tutor demographics, school site and program tenure, exposure to program inputs, tutor satisfaction, and perceived career readiness outcomes. We achieved a 68% response rate securing survey submissions from 160 current tutors.

This project explored two questions leading to six findings and four recommendations.

Project Question 1: How do RU tutors characterize the nature and quality of their program experience?

- *Finding 1:* The majority of tutors experienced all four program components: perceived support, mentorship, exposure and training.
- *Finding 2:* Tutors reported high satisfaction levels with the READ USA program.

- *Finding 3:* The RU tutor experience differed slightly by school site.
- *Finding 4:* The RU tutor experience was mostly consistent across socioeconomic status and racial/ethnic identities.

Project Question 2: What career readiness outcomes do RU tutors identify as a result of their participation?

- *Finding 5:* Tutors indicated RU positively impacted all four targeted workforce development outcomes: skill development, confidence, goals, and perceived career readiness.
- *Finding 6:* Perceived support was the strongest predictor of program satisfaction and all four workforce development outcomes.

Based on the findings, we offer four recommendations to help RU build upon this important foundation:

1. Maintain efforts to gather feedback from tutors.
2. Enhance future data collection efforts.
3. Expand pathways for personalization and choice.
4. Activate the power of mentors within workforce development training.

I. Organization Context

READ USA (RU), a literacy non-profit organization, was founded in 2016 in Jacksonville, Florida as a result of a friendship between an elementary school teacher and a classroom volunteer. Building on their joint passion for supporting kids' ability and interest in reading, they recognized a need in their community and cultivated the idea for a literacy program. RU began in one elementary school by providing access to a free book fair, three free books of choice for each child, and independent literacy support resources for the children and their families. The positive response to this pilot program led to future funding to host RU's book fairs in all 95 Duval County public elementary schools and numerous charter schools throughout the area. In 2019 RU launched a tutoring program employing high school students to tutor elementary school students. In 2023, RU implemented a more robust and targeted workforce development training program for the tutor staff. As of 2024, RU has thirteen full-time staff employees dedicated to advancing the mission of the organization (READ USA, 2024).

The Vision of READ USA

The vision for the organization has been clear since its beginning: end illiteracy in Duval County. The original program provided children with free books to support their reading growth and enhance access to literary engagement. While RU positively impacted reading engagement and book access for students, the community quickly recognized another need: a lack of individualized literacy support outside the classroom. In 2019, the organization expanded to include a peer-to-peer tutoring program. This new program was designed using evidence-based best practices and set out with a three-fold goal. The primary goal was to provide elementary students with individualized

reading support from reading-proficient high school students of similar backgrounds. Programs that provide career exposure, mentorship, and a workforce-aligned curriculum can improve the transition of racially minoritized youth into the workforce or postsecondary education (Wentling & Waight, 2001). For that reason, RU is committed to including workforce development efforts for the tutors and providing a working wage to reach another goal of their program: addressing poverty within Duval County (READ USA, 2023; E. Wiss, personal communication, September 15, 2023).

Current Organizational Standing

As of 2023, RU continues to offer free book fairs to the 95 Duval County public elementary schools, provides a peer-to-peer tutoring program in 16 schools, and offers stand-alone literacy coaching to schools in need. The organization's success is evident through its continued expansion and measurable growth in reading abilities of students and tutors, growth which is supported by formative and summative data collection and analysis. A recent randomized control study conducted by The Ohio State University highlighted the organization's impact. Results showed RU program participants were 68% more likely to increase their reading performance level on the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) compared to a control group of similar students not involved in the program. Additionally, on the Gray Oral Reading Test (GORT), RU participants had greater gains in all performance indicators (reading rate, reading accuracy, reading comprehension, and oral reading fluency) compared to the control group (READ USA, 2024).

RU also successfully transitioned from a team of community volunteers to a sustainable, salaried staff. Additionally, in 2024 RU extended their reach to Fort

Lauderdale with their first book fair outside of Duval County (READ USA, 2024). The organization has plans for continued growth and has successfully secured grants from several philanthropic organizations to help expand its efforts to end illiteracy (READ USA, 2023; E. Wiss, personal communication, September 15, 2023).

II. Problem of Practice

During initial project meetings, the CEO and board president of RU discussed the issues caused by a lack of formalized partner data (R. Kelly, personal communication, September 13, 2023; E. Wiss, personal communication, September 15, 2023). As the organization readies itself for expansion, the lack of an effective feedback mechanism is a significant barrier to future growth. In particular, it appears that this lack of formalized feedback impacts three main areas: communicating transparent metrics and organizational standing to stakeholders, program improvement potential, and program personalization.

Communicating Organizational Standing

The president of the RU board, Ellen Wiss, shared that the organization's goal is to be internally and externally transparent with ongoing communication about its standing and impact. RU leaders have made significant efforts to secure funding and gather literacy data to share within and outside the organization for growth and improvement opportunities. Nevertheless, partner feedback is currently only collected through informal means. Ms. Wiss recognized this as a missed opportunity for two reasons: (1) sharing positive and constructive real-time feedback throughout the organization could support improvement efforts, and (2) positive partner feedback could

help to attract new partnerships and funding (E. Wiss, personal communication, September 15, 2023).

Program Improvement Potential

The CEO, Dr. Rob Kelly, noted RU's motivation to refine and iterate on all of its programs and supports. The organization is consistently adapting as it works with new partners, schools, and staff to launch or expand programs. Given this fluidity, the organization is constantly looking for improvement opportunities. Dr. Kelly recognizes the value of partner feedback in their improvement efforts. Specifically, for the tutoring program, partner feedback would provide data that would expand RU's systemic view to prioritize future improvement efforts (R. Kelly, personal communication, September 13, 2023).

Program Personalization Opportunity

The organization would also like to offer greater personalization for workforce development for the tutors involved in the tutoring program. RU recently developed a survey to gauge tutors' professional interests before joining the program, perceived needs to access employment, and professional development following the program. The initial results of this informal survey highlight the variability in interests and needs of each tutor and a call to better understand how the program's workforce development model impacts the tutors. Dr. Kelly believes a more robust data collection of tutor experiences and perceived outcomes could provide the framework for a more systematic feedback system to inform internal planning and decision making. This effort will provide the organization with meaningful insights to aid in personalizing the tutor

experience, providing targeted career learning opportunities, and customized support aligned with their vocational needs and interests.

Problem Statement

After a thorough examination of the areas of opportunity that the leadership of RU determines as most critical, we were able to narrow our focus. RU aims to improve workforce development by supporting the professional skill development of its literacy tutors. While the tutors receive mentorship, a skill-building curriculum, and opportunities to explore careers, the organization is unaware of the program-specific impacts on the tutors' workforce development. As a result, RU tutors may not be able to fully maximize workforce development resources and training.

III. Review of Literature

Based on the problem of practice and RU's theory of practice, we determined five areas to target in our literature review; these are highlighted with the questions we asked of the literature in Table 1. Our team used both Google Scholar and the Vanderbilt University online library system to gather initial research findings corresponding to our questions of the literature. We then expanded our understanding of specific areas in the literature cited by the initial set of authors.

Table 1

Questions Asked of the Literature

Focus Area	Question(s) of the Literature
Career Readiness and Workforce Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the important components for effective workforce development and career readiness programs?• What factors influence the effectiveness of workforce development programs?
High School to College Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What experiences impact student transition from high school into college?
High School to Workforce Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What experiences impact the transition from high school into the workforce for racially minoritized students and poverty-impacted students?• What factors promote a positive high school-to-workforce transition for racially minoritized youth and poverty-impacted youth?• What factors limit the high school-to-workforce transition for racially minoritized youth and poverty-impacted youth?
Individualized Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What role does individual goal attainment play in measuring the effectiveness of workforce development programs?
Role of Mentorship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are there necessary conditions for mentorship to be effective?• How do mentorship experiences, specifically, impact the high school-to-workforce transition of racially minoritized youth and poverty-impacted youth?

Career Readiness and Workforce Development

Research examining high school workforce development efforts offers helpful insights to better understand the nature of successful programs. Early high school, specifically the 9th and 10th grades, is a critical period for college and career readiness interventions (Bhat & Stevens, 2021). Positive impressions of career readiness were associated with access to a range of career activities and positive interactions with adult supporters who provide mentorship and career advice (Lindstrom et al., 2022). A key 2013 study indicated that quality of work experience is more important than general exposure to work (Gamboa et al., 2013). However, a perceived lack of accessible

workforce exploration opportunities is a significant barrier to career readiness (Lindstrom et al., 2022). Organizations that deliver career programming through a group format may be more effective than individual programs in helping students develop self-efficacy and improving college and career knowledge (Martinez et al., 2017). Ultimately, gathering feedback from tutors will help to ensure RU is delivering career programs in a clear and accessible way.

Programs that integrate the lived experiences of students have a greater likelihood of impacting student development (Castro, 2021). The literature also suggests that successful interventions recognize the role of systemic inequality, focusing on addressing systems that reinforce inequities instead of “fixing” the individual (Castro, 2013). Further research has demonstrated that it is critical to foster a culture of trust when providing career support to minoritized students (Martinez & Baker, 2023). Several studies have demonstrated that teacher involvement in workforce development is critical for success (Education Development Center, 2021). Based on the literature, RU tutors may benefit from organizational efforts to prioritize trust building by engaging teachers and community mentors who share similar backgrounds to RU tutors to optimize program success.

High School to College Transition

Our review of the literature in this area seeks to understand what experiences impact students’ successful transition from high school into postsecondary education (i.e., enrollment in a community college or four-year institution). Research suggests that engaged learning, together with local partnerships and advanced skills articulation, play an important role in supporting the transition from high school to college (Bragg, 1999).

Several studies have examined how matters of social identity and structural inequity can affect students' experiences in navigating this transition. For example, students who have faced systemic racism in the K–12 system may lack exposure or support in their postsecondary education trajectory (Gaxiola Serrano, 2017). Lingering effects of negative experiences in the K–12 system can resurface later, as we see with students impacted by poverty who may seek alternatives to the traditional “college choice” transition, such as delayed college enrollment or attendance at two-year institutions (Cox, 2016).

Researchers have also found that barriers to a successful transition may exist for students who feel stressed or overwhelmed by a college readiness program. In these situations, students may disengage from activities aligned with the postsecondary transition (Martinez et al., 2020).

Our synthesis of the extant literature suggests that RU should consider providing supports that will enable its tutors to explore the full range of postsecondary opportunities available to them.

High School to Workforce Transition

The literature suggests that youth from racially minoritized backgrounds have significant challenges to overcome in the pursuit of entering the workforce. Wentling and Waight (2001) describe the lagging support for young people who are overcoming racial bias and systemic strains to obtain a career. The result, they suggest, is a growing proportion of unemployed racially minoritized youth and the subsequent risk of long-term unemployment and detriment to American productivity (Wentling & Waight, 2001). Kenny et al. (2003) add that even those racially minoritized youths who are successful

in entering the workforce often have limited past exposure to career opportunities aligned with their education and skills, which perpetuates entry into limited job roles and careers that lack advancement opportunities. The literature highlights the linkage of social connections and career experiences of racially minoritized youths to expanding career opportunities and access. The literature also suggests that specific social connections and experiences promote (or limit) a successful high school-to-workforce transition. It will be vital for our project team to understand those helping and hindering actions as we seek to interpret the workforce development experiences of RU tutors.

The two main areas of high school-to-workforce promoters emerging from the literature are linked to relational support and practical career or leadership exposure. Kenny et al. (2003) described the positive connection between urban high school students' reported level of social support, from both family and others, and their attitudes toward school, work, and career aspirations. They propose the potential for targeted relational support in this student population to positively impact their future career aspirations. Gushue and Whitson (2006) add to our understanding of optimal supports for the career pathways of racially minoritized students by highlighting the importance of students' career maturity and decidedness in career development and attainment. They found a positive correlation between high school students' reports of family or teacher support and their career decision self-efficacy, a measurement of their maturity and decidedness.

Practical career exposures and experiences have also been seen to have positive impacts on the school-to-workforce transition for racially minoritized youth. Wentling and Waight (2001) suggest that a number of different types of practical career

exposures—including work-based learning, mentoring experiences, and career exploration—can all have positive impacts on the transition into the workforce for racially minoritized youth. While the experiences themselves may have been the driving force for the improved transition, the relationships built through those experiences may also have been a factor. It may be important for our team to understand, as it is lacking in the current literature, how the combination of social connection and practical career exposure affects students, given that RU tutors are exposed to both.

Beyond promoting factors, the literature also suggests practices, experiences, and reported student attitudes that are seen to negatively impact the high school–to–workforce transition for racially minoritized youth. Wentling and Waight (2001) provide insight into many past experiences of high school students that were negatively associated with a more difficult high school–to–workforce transition. The students involved in their study who had unsupportive school personnel experiences, minimal cultural education, or no workforce skills integrated into their past education curriculum were seen to have more challenges with their transition into the workforce (Wentling & Waight, 2001). In addition to understanding how students’ past experiences may impact the workforce transition, Jackson et al. (2006) suggest the critical importance of determining how students perceive the barriers to entering the workforce. Their study found that those students who perceived greater workforce entry barriers had lower educational and career aspirations (Jackson et al., 2006). They suggest targeting students with the highest perceived barriers to educate and connect them with supportive resources. The current research is limited in the investigation of specific

practices that build a positive perception of the workforce transition for racially minoritized youth.

Individualized Programs

Identifying opportunities to individualize program delivery and assessment aligns with modern career development theories and approaches. For instance, previous research suggests that outcome-based evaluations should align with the specific goals of the individual (Lee et al., 2022). Several studies have demonstrated that a high level of self-efficacy is conducive to successful school-to-workforce transitions (Lent et al., 2017). Attaining self-efficacy requires significant individual effort, deeper self-awareness, and higher levels of confidence which can be measured through individual assessments (Savickas, 2012). Organizations that employ rigorous and ongoing quantitative evaluation may help create the case for policy support and financial investment (Cheng et al., 2018). Conducting ongoing assessment is necessary to demonstrate program impact and may attract funding and policy support for RU.

Role of Mentorship

Effective mentorship programs can support career and college readiness for young people in several ways. In particular, ecological theory suggests that youth-driven mentorship programs may have the greatest impact as they provide youth with greater agency in their personal and relational development (Varga & Zaff, 2018). Matching students with mentors who share similar backgrounds may foster further goal attainment and career readiness. Having input into the mentorship and matching process leads to increased commitment to the relationship and the process. In contrast, perceived forced participation is associated with lower-quality outcomes (Allen et al.,

2006; Spencer et al., 2016). Mentorship may work best when combined with other interventions or designed around specific objectives and behavioral changes (Eby et al., 2008). Evidence suggests that RU's current model, which offers a variety of interventions beyond mentorship, may help to generate greater career benefits for the tutors.

One specific type of practical career experience investigated in current research is students working as mentors—and the impact this experience has on their high school-to-workforce transition. This is a critical area for our team to understand given that RU tutors have the potential to act as mentors for their assigned elementary partners. Karcher (2009) describes how high school mentors, across numerous different mentorship areas and skills, report higher self-esteem and academic connectedness in the area of their mentorship. We note this finding to be particularly important given that the increase in self-esteem and connectedness was independent of the skills being used, which suggests that it may be applicable to mentorship areas outside of those captured by the study. Another positive finding that is likely transferrable to many different skill sets and job roles was highlighted by Coyne-Foresi and Nowicki (2021) as they recounted high school students reporting their communication skill improvement after serving in mentorship roles. In addition to increased communication skills, the students' teachers and connected school staff observed the mentoring students being called upon and taking on more leadership opportunities (Coyne-Foresi & Nowicki, 2021).

Quimby et al. (2023) cite the strength of the mentor–student bond as an important mediator to consider in the positive outcomes of mentoring for high school

students. The high school mentors in their study were seen to have increases in many career-promoting skills including empathy, self-efficacy, contribution, and academic performance during and months following the mentoring program—but the growth in those skills was mediated by the strength of the mentoring bond (Quimby et al., 2023).

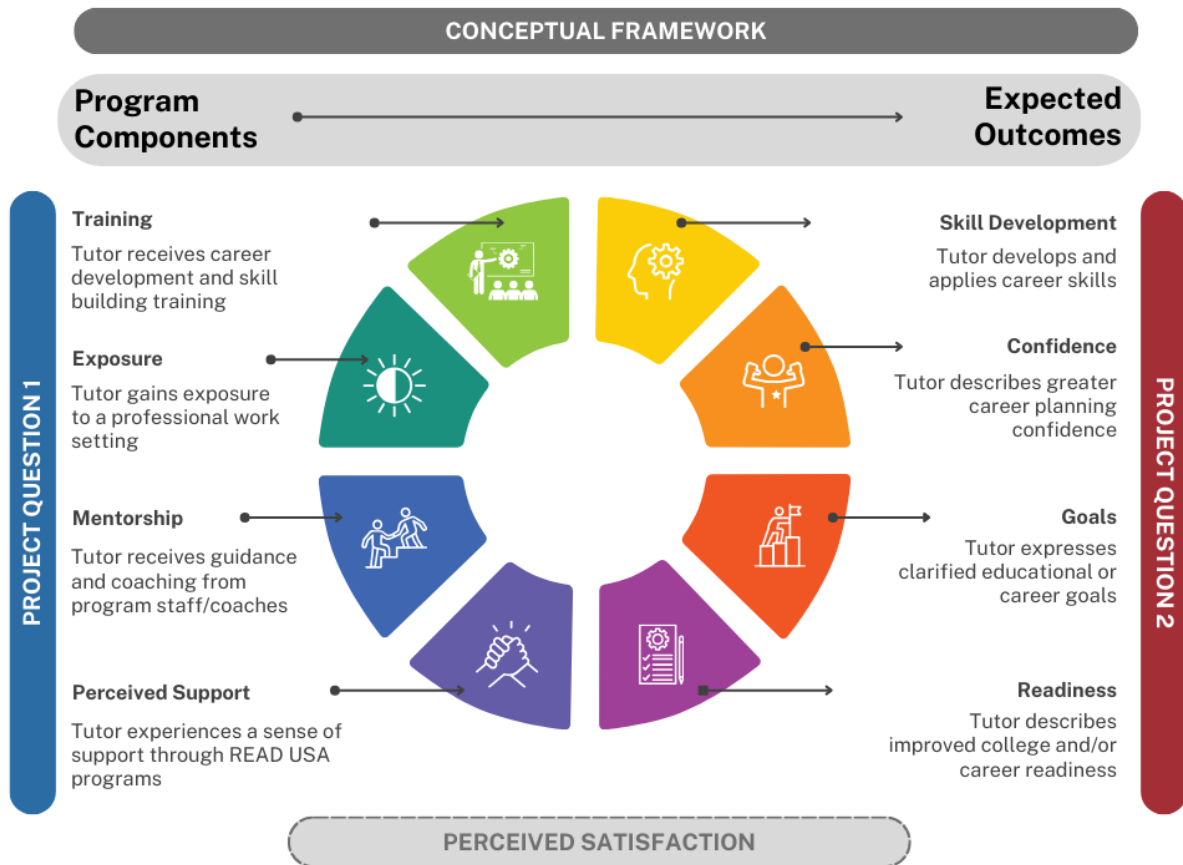
IV. Conceptual Framing

Our project aimed to aid RU leadership in understanding the tutor experience within its workforce development program (WDP). The tutors' voices would enlighten RU about the perceived outcomes of the current program implementation, providing the organization with invaluable future direction. Through critical data analysis, we provided RU with program feedback gleaned from tutor experiences and provided a tool they can use for future data collection and program improvement efforts.

We developed a conceptual framework to guide our exploration of tutor experiences and inform RU leadership of targeted areas of opportunity for program improvement. The conceptual framework was created by merging the program components and expected outcomes of a successful WDP within the literature and our understanding of the current RU WDP. To that end, we divided our conceptual framework into two corresponding sections: program components and expected outcomes. Program satisfaction was listed outside of our conceptual framework as a secondary data point desired by the READ USA leadership team.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of a Youth Tutor Experience Based on Perceived Program Components and Outcomes



RU's goal is to provide a WDP that promotes successful entry and retention in the workforce for their tutors. To achieve this goal, the literature suggests that the tutors must attain career skill development, career planning confidence, clarified career goals, and improved career readiness. The second section of our conceptual framework (right side) listed these four behaviors as the expected outcomes of the program involvement and guided our understanding of the career readiness outcomes identified by the tutors.

The literature suggests numerous components are necessary for a WDP to provide positive outcomes. Based on RU's current program design and the literature support, we assumed that providing tutors with career development and skill-building training, professional work exposure, mentorship from program staff, and a sense of support from those within the program would lead to the expected outcomes. The first section of our conceptual framework (left side) illustrated these necessary program components and directed our understanding of the tutor program experience.

Using our conceptual framework as a guide, we aimed to understand how the RU tutors experienced the different components of the program and the career readiness outcomes they perceive they gained through their involvement. We captured this data by using a program-wide tutor survey, validated by cognitive interviews conducted on a purposeful selection of 10 tutors prior to survey administration.

V. Project Questions

We developed two project questions, informed by our conceptual framework, to guide us in achieving the aim of our project.

Project Question 1: How do READ USA tutors characterize the nature and quality of their program experience?

Project Question 2: What career readiness outcomes do READ USA tutors identify as a result of their participation?

Our first project question will provide a deeper understanding of how the tutors experience each program component and how they perceive overall program quality. The second project question is crafted to illuminate the perceived outcomes and program impact from the tutors' perspectives.

VI. Project Design

We developed a survey instrument using questions informed by our literature review and existing assessments. We completed cognitive interviews with 10 current RU tutors to validate the tool using purposive sampling to capture tutors at four different program sites, tutors in their first term with the RU program, and tutors who have returned for multiple terms with the RU program. An invitation to complete a feedback survey was sent to all Spring 2024 RU tutors through RU's LMS platform, Canvas. We used the SurveyMonkey platform to manage the survey data collection. Given the structure of the RU program allowing for repeat tutor positions, data captured tutors at varying lengths of program exposure.

Data Collection

For cognitive interviews, RU leadership identified 10 tutors, including first-term and repeat-term tutors, from four program sites to participate. RU leadership informed the tutors of the voluntary nature of the interview and the anticipated time frame of 30 to 45 minutes. Prior to the start of the interview, our project team reminded the tutors of the time expectation, that their participation would be voluntary, and that they could end the interview at any time. Each interview took place in person at the tutor's assigned school site between one tutor and one project team member. Cognitive interviews were audio recorded to aid in coding and analysis.

For survey data collection, an electronic survey was provided to RU leadership in late March 2024. The RU team uploaded the survey link onto the tutors' LMS platform (Canvas) and sent an announcement to all tutors using text provided by our project team. The RU team asked tutor coordinators to allow tutors to complete the optional

survey within the tutor workday. We provided the RU leadership team with a regular update on response rates per school site to aid in their follow-up approach. Our initial aim was to secure at least 50 complete survey responses, approximately a 25% response rate.

Instruments

Our survey instrument was developed using insights gained from our literature review and existing assessments used with high school (Hamilton & Sumner, 2017; Kenny et al., 2023; LAUSD, 2023) or young adult populations (Dodd et al., 2022; Martinez & Baker, 2023). The survey included 34 multiple choice or Likert-scale questions and five open-ended questions designed to answer our two project questions. The first three survey questions established information on tenure (based on starting term) and working environment (based on current school site and any previous school site). One indicator question with 11 possible factors assessed tutor exposure to specific program components. Twenty-six questions offered respondents an opportunity to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement using a five-point Likert scale. Options included “strongly disagree,” “disagree,” “neither agree nor disagree,” “agree,” and “strongly agree.” For each question, tutors also had an option to indicate that they did not understand the question. A final set of four demographic questions asked tutors about their grade level, socioeconomic status (via free or reduced lunch), race/ethnicity, and gender identity. Each item on the survey corresponded to one or more items from our conceptual model, noted in the table below.

Table 2

Conceptualizations and Survey Question Alignment

Conceptualization		Survey Questions
Program Components (inputs)	Training	<p>During your READ USA experience, did you: Q4b. Complete a career assessment (e.g., a series of questions about your career interests) Q4c. Write a resume Q4e. Participate in a practice interview Q4f. Assess your strengths Q4g. Assess your weaknesses Q4h. Create a plan for your future career Q4k. Participate in workforce development programming</p>
	Exposure	<p>During your READ USA experience, did you: Q4a. Learn about different careers Q4d. Meet a working professional Q4j. Explore information about college The READ USA program ... Q12. Allowed me to experience a professional workplace</p>
	Mentorship	<p>During your READ USA experience, did you: Q4i. Receive feedback to improve your career skills (e.g. communication, workplace etiquette, teamwork, time management, work quality) During my READ USA tutor experience ... Q5. I received individual feedback from a mentor/coach during the program Q6. My mentor/coach helped me improve my career skills (e.g. communication, workplace etiquette, teamwork, time management, work quality) Q7. My mentor/coach supported my success Q32. Describe the mentorship you received during the READ USA program.</p>
	Perceived Support	<p>During my READ USA tutor experience ... Q7. My mentor/coach supported my success Q8. I knew who to turn to for support during the program Q26. There are adults within READ USA who believe in me Q27. There are adults within READ USA who can help me achieve my goals Q31. Please provide one or more examples of how the READ USA program has supported your career planning efforts.</p>
Expected Outcomes (outputs)	Skill Development	<p>The READ USA program ... Q9. Helped me to develop good teamwork skills Q10. Helped me to develop good work habits Q11. Showed me to how use communication skills (reading, writing, speaking) in job-related activities As a result of my participation in the READ USA program ... Q21. I will continue to work for my career goal even when I hit a barrier Q22. I can adapt to change in the world of work Q33. Tell us about any professional skills (communication, teamwork, leadership, workplace behaviors) you have learned through the READ USA program. Q34. Tell us about any personal gains (perseverance, confidence, self-esteem) you have made through the READ USA Program.</p>

	Confidence	As a result of my participation in the READ USA program ... Q15. I get excited when I think about my future career Q19. I believe I have the potential to succeed in college Q20. My career success will be determined by my efforts Q21. I will continue to work for my career goal even when I hit a barrier Q22. I can adapt to change in the world of work Q32. <i>Describe the mentorship you received during the READ USA program.</i>
	Goals	As a result of my participation in the READ USA program ... Q16. I know how to set goals for myself Q17. I can choose a career that fits with what I am good at Q18. I know how college can help me achieve my goals
	Readiness	As a result of my participation in the READ USA program ... Q13. I can identify careers that interest me Q14. I can identify specific employers/organizations relevant to my career interests Q25. I have a greater interest in a career in education/teaching Q28. The experiences with READ USA have prepared me for my next career steps. Q33. <i>Tell us about any professional skills (communication, teamwork, leadership, workplace behaviors) you have learned through the READ USA Program.</i> Q34. <i>Tell us about any personal gains (perseverance, confidence, self-esteem) you have made through the READ USA Program.</i>
Perceived Satisfaction		Q29. The READ USA program was a good fit for me Q30. I am satisfied with my READ USA workforce development experience Q35. <i>Please provide feedback on your READ USA workforce development experience (for example, activities you have enjoyed or recommendations for improvement).</i>

The survey was designed to collect information on four program components (inputs), four expected outcomes (outputs), and student perception of quality (secondary data point) as measured by perceived satisfaction.

The four program components were training, exposure, mentorship, and perceived support. Seven survey questions were designed to measure the training received by the tutor; checkboxes were used to indicate whether the student received specific workforce programming inputs. To measure exposure, three checkboxes allowed the tutors to indicate whether they received information on careers or college and whether they met a working professional through the program. Tutors rated the degree to which their READ USA experience offered exposure to a professional

workplace. Mentorship was measured with one checkbox indicating whether they received feedback to improve their skills and by asking three questions in which tutors rated the degree to which they received support through READ USA. For additional insight, there was an open-ended question asking the students to describe the mentorship they received during the program. The final program component of perceived support was measured through four Likert-scale questions. One open-ended question requested one or more examples of support the student received specifically connected to their career planning; this question provided a deeper understanding of the types of individual support being offered within the program. A composite score was formed for each of the program components and the open-ended questions were analyzed and thematically coded.

Expected program outcomes were measured by collecting information on perceived skill development, confidence, goals, and career readiness. Five Likert-scale questions were used to measure skill development specifically in the areas of teamwork, work habits, communication, working through hardships, and necessary adaptations. Two open-ended questions were also included to provide space for tutors to share other individual skills they developed in the program. Confidence was measured using five Likert-scale questions in which the tutor indicated their confidence in making career decisions. An additional open-ended question asking the students to expand on any personal gains they had made through the program was also used to appreciate the different personal gains the tutors identified. Three Likert-scale questions were used to explore how students perceived their ability to set and attain career or educational goals. Perceptions of college and career readiness was measured by four

Likert-scale questions indicating tutors' readiness for career planning actions.

Additionally, there was one open-ended question that allowed students to elaborate on the career skills and personal gains connected to their career planning. A composite score was generated for each expected outcome and the open-ended questions were thematically analyzed.

Tutors also answered two Likert-scale questions to measure program satisfaction. The first examined tutor perceived fit of the program and the second examined the student's overall satisfaction. These questions used satisfaction as a proxy for perceived program quality, a secondary data point desired by the READ USA leadership team. There was one open-ended question that provided a space for students to elaborate on any program feedback.

To provide evidence for construct validity of our instrument, we used previously validated tools as guidance for our survey design and cognitive interviews with 10 tutors prior to the full deployment of the survey. This process ensured survey questions were clear and that the meaning attributed to each question matched the concept we were attempting to measure. Figure 2 provides the basic outline of the cognitive interview protocol (see Appendix A for full interview protocol script).

Figure 2

Tutor Input Cognitive Interview Protocol

Tutor Input Cognitive Interview Protocol
(Adapted from the Remote Learning CSCI - Student Cognitive Interview Protocol)

1. Greet tutor.
2. Provide instruction and reminder of anonymity and voluntary nature of the interview.
3. Provide space for any pre-interview questions the tutor may have.
4. In the allotted 45 minute time period complete the following question review steps for as many survey questions as possible:
 - a. Read the question aloud.
 - b. Respond to the following:
 - i. What do you think this statement means?
 - ii. Can you describe an example of this within READ USA's tutoring program?
 - iii. How would you answer this question?
 - iv. Please explain why you chose that answer.

VII. Data Analysis

Data Collection

For the purposes of this project, we collected survey response data. The survey included quantitative (closed-ended response) and qualitative (open-ended response) data. To enhance the construct validity of our survey, we also conducted 10 cognitive interviews and used those responses to clarify and enhance the wording of our instrument. The responses gathered in our cognitive interviews served as another qualitative data source.

We used our conceptual framework to map our survey questions, taking care to go back and forth between our draft instrument and our conceptual framework (see Appendix B). This effort ensured that the data collected would produce robust answers to our project questions. The addition of open-ended questions offered an additional opportunity to gain individual insights from tutors. We received 160 responses to our survey, outperforming our initial target of 50. Our data collection timeline is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

Data Collection and Analysis Timeline

Date	Activity
February 19–23	Finalize survey instrument; collect parental consent forms
February 27	Conduct cognitive interviews
March 4–15	Analyze cognitive interview data and revise survey instrument
March 21–22	Meet with READ USA team to review survey collection methods and protocols
April 2–25	Administer survey (survey closed 4/25 at 11:59PM ET)

April 26–May 8	Compile results, data cleaning, and initial analysis
May 8–26	Analyze data, summarize results, and draft findings

Data Analysis

We completed our first phase of data analysis following the cognitive interviews to enhance the validity of our survey instrument. We assigned a validity score (0 to 4) to each question review based on question interpretation, elaboration, and answer consistency. All three researchers independently reviewed one interview and reviewed results to ensure coding was consistent across researchers. Any question that received a mean validity score of 3 or less was reviewed and revised. Appendix C outlines the survey modifications and rationale behind the decisions. A final version of our survey instrument is available in Appendix D.

The second phase of our evaluation focused on cleaning the data and examining outliers. We compiled our results and conducted our analysis using Excel. Incomplete survey responses were included but duplicate survey responses were excluded from the analysis. Given the nature of our project questions, a descriptive analysis was used to understand response trends and relationships between survey variables. Scoring the overall responses helped us identify outliers and normative responses. This process identified an average response time. We identified five responses that were completed at an unusually fast pace (three minutes or less) and chose not to include those in our analysis.

Our next phase focused on quantitative analysis, specifically examining the closed-ended survey responses. Using the groupings outlined in the previous section, an unweighted composite score was calculated for each input (i.e., training, exposure,

mentorship, perceived support), each output (i.e., skill development, confidence, goals, perceived career readiness), and program satisfaction. The composite score was based on percent positive, or those answering “agree” or “strongly agree” for the Likert-scale questions and those responding “yes” to the indication questions. We chose to use the percent positive score for our analysis in order to compare the program inputs, predominantly measured by yes or no questions, with the program outputs, predominantly measured by Likert-scale questions. By computing the percent positive scores for each unit of analysis we were able to analyze the relationships between the inputs and outputs more effectively. A summary of these scores is covered in Table 4.

Table 4*Composite Scores*

Area of Analysis	Construct	Composite Score (% Agree or Strongly Agree)
Program Components (Inputs)	Training	70.4%
	Exposure	62.2%
	Mentorship	80.2%
	Perceived Support	81.3%
Expected Outcomes (Outputs)	Skill Development	95.5%
	Confidence	94.3%
	Goals	89.2%
	Readiness	81.6%
Perceived Satisfaction	Satisfaction	81.0%

The internal consistency of our instrument was measured using Cronbach's alpha. All constructs in our survey instrument achieved an alpha of .7 or higher, suggesting strong reliability. Results of this analysis are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5*Survey Instrument Reliability Scores*

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha
Overall Program	.95
Combined Program Inputs	.82
Combined Program Outputs	.97
Skill Development	.93
Confidence	.94
Readiness	.78
Goals	.95
Satisfaction	.93

Our analysis also examined measures of central tendency and deviations for each variable. Correlations helped to determine relationships between program components, perceived quality, and expected outcomes. In addition to reporting on start date distributions, we conducted a comparative analysis to determine if program tenure or school sites influenced responses. We also investigated the percent agree rates for the input, output, and satisfaction composites as valuable, and impactful, program evaluation data to share with RU. The analysis metrics and rationales are outlined in Appendix E.

The final phase of our exploration focused on a qualitative analysis of our open-ended survey responses. We started with an inductive process by having all three researchers analyze open-ended responses to one question. This analysis included examining the tone of the response as positive, negative, neutral, or unclear and coding up to three themes for each response. After agreeing on a general framework, two researchers coded the remaining four open-ended responses using this same approach. We then applied a deductive process to match open-ended survey responses to the four inputs in our conceptual framework.

VIII. Findings

In this section we return to our conceptual framework and apply quantitative and qualitative analyses to answer each of our project questions. To answer Project Question 1, we calculated a composite score for each variable (i.e., the percent of respondents expressing “yes” to indication questions and “agree” or “strongly agree” to Likert-scale responses with each component of our framework). Appendix F lists the survey items included in each composite variable, the composite score for each

individual item, and resulting component variable. In order to investigate any impact that school site may have on the program experience we also calculated positivity scores by school sites for each program input and output. To answer Project Question 2, we conducted regression analyses using these composites to test the relationships set forth in our conceptual framework.

Project Question 1: How Do READ USA Tutors Characterize the Nature and Quality of their Program Experience?

Finding 1: The Majority of RU Tutors Experienced All Four Program Components (Perceived Support, Mentorship, Exposure, and Training)

Tutors had the opportunity to report on both the presence of program inputs as well as their satisfaction in the program to provide insight into both the nature and quality of their experience. Tutors reported receiving each of the inputs in our conceptual framework: training (70.4%), exposure (62.2%), mentorship (80.2%), and perceived support (81.3%).

Finding 2: Tutors Report High Satisfaction Levels With the RU Program

Tutors' survey responses indicated that their experience with the RU program was highly positive. We created a composite variable to assess tutors' satisfaction with their overall RU experience and established that 81% were satisfied with their RU experience. In addition to the satisfaction score we investigated the tenure of tutors as a reflection of satisfaction and quality of the program. Many tutors have renewed their work with RU multiple times, with 36% reporting start dates prior to summer 2023.

In order to qualitatively understand the tutor experiences that drive these quantitative results, we used a deductive process and matched open-ended survey

responses to the four inputs in our conceptual framework. Tutors' statements about the impact and value of several RU program components further reinforced the high positivity values for each composite variable. Taken together, the positivity scores and the responses to the open-ended survey items create a rich understanding of the nature and quality of their RU program experience. In the sections that follow, we share selected quotes from tutors that further validate elements of our conceptual framework. Appendix G includes a comprehensive listing of quotes that we have matched to the four inputs in our framework.

Perceived Support. Tutors described the RU environment as positive, motivating, and encouraging, suggesting that teachers, program staff, and their peers fostered an atmosphere where individuals felt valued, heard, and supported. Respondents perceived support that strengthened their work as tutors and support for their broader personal and professional goals:

“I have received guidance and help from my tutor coordinators when I need it most.”

“My teachers here have been incredibly supportive in terms of my struggles with students, as well as my personal successes.”

“My teachers have always supported me and encouraged me that I can do anything I put my mind to.”

“I was supported by both my fellow tutors and supervisors.”

“When I thought I was alone I could always count on Read USA.”

The majority of tutors (82%) expressed highly positive beliefs about the support they received within the READ program. We note that there were a few exceptions to this

trend, with four tutors highlighting a need for more support from their supervisors and the creation of an environment where their input is valued:

“I loved my girls and helping them however the adults could be more supportive and helpful with problems that arise.”

“READ USA needs to listen to their students more and ask the tutor coordinators to have patience.”

Mentorship. Tutors consistently shared that they had positive mentorship experiences during their time with RU. We believe this underscores the value of feedback and support in enhancing their RU program experience. Many tutors commented on the support and guidance they received from teachers or program staff, sharing that these connections enriched their individual RU experience. Tutor responses demonstrated that teachers offered targeted suggestions, advice for improvement, and encouragement throughout the program. Tutors specifically noted the value of receiving feedback and guidance, both on specific tasks related to their tutoring responsibilities and their overall personal and professional growth:

“I have received mentorship about my future goals from teachers.”

“The mentorship I received during this program was great. My mentors walked me through what I needed to do and how I can always improve, and they complimented me when I did well.”

“The mentorship that I have received during READ USA program has been helpful, encouraging, and positive.”

A few tutors reported that they had not (yet) experienced mentorship as part of their RU experience. One tutor indicated that although their mentorship experience was very

positive, they believed that a negative working environment may have affected their mentorship experience:

“I really like the mentorship given to the tutors, especially new tutors. I think something that could be improved on is the working environment.”

Exposure. Tutors described gaining work experience and exposure to different career options, particularly in the field of education:

“It [is] giving me the experience to work with kids and also gain the experience [of] what actual teachers do in their career.”

“I’ve learned about different careers and how to do resumes.”

“I have gotten the opportunity to meet a traveling nurse on the mock interview day.”

As with our other inputs, tutors also provided constructive feedback for improvement. They suggested that they could benefit from additional exposure aligned with their career interests as well as a wider range of careers:

“I enjoyed the mock interview. I think that it would have been better if there were more people that were catered to the specific careers that we were interested in going to.”

Training. Tutors shared that the program offered resources and information on professional skills and potential career paths. Several noted that the RU program encouraged them to explore their interests and passions. Many tutors noted that participating in a mock job interview organized by RU provided valuable experience, professional connections, and feedback to prepare for future job interviews. Responses also demonstrated an appreciation for the assistance

tutors received in crafting resumes and cover letters. Several students indicated that they did not have experience with this type of writing prior to the RU program:

“During workforce development, READ USA helped me in preparing for my career by helping me explore all of the different career fields that interest me, with the job titles and descriptions that fit.”

“The program taught me how to present myself to employers through my resume and cover letter. Also how to present myself in an interview.”

“READ USA provided [me] with information from many great sources that helped me with career planning. The workforce development [programs] are very helpful.”

While uncommon, some tutors suggested that their training was negatively affected by their specific supervisors:

“I feel maybe we could have more qualified teachers maybe. Some teachers don’t know a lot and make mistakes just like us.”

“I believe that there should be training for supervisors on how to talk to tutors and how to listen to them. I had an incident at my school where my boss was unprofessional and continued to give me an insincere apology. The other adults handled the situation well, but she ended up yelling with a tutor.”

Finding 3: The RU Tutor Experience Differs Slightly by School Site

After reviewing broad positivity metrics for the entire tutor population, we narrowed the investigation to determine any variation in school site. We began by

eliminating four school sites from which we had collected fewer than 10 survey responses per site. We then separated the tutor responses by school site and created percent positive averages for the program inputs and outputs by site. By comparing the input and output scores we can see that the tutor experience is generally consistent across school sites. There is also a suggested correlation, while not statistically significant, between the program input score and the reported program outcomes. Table 6 reflects the slight variation in input and output scores by site.

Table 6.

Program Experience by School Site

School Site	Average Input	Average Output
2	0.720	4.120
3	0.860	4.572
4	0.812	3.945
6	0.557	3.847
7	0.820	4.017
8	0.670	4.001
10	0.725	4.283
11	0.705	4.387
12	0.717	4.098
14	0.612	4.134
15	0.720	4.120

Note: Four schools with fewer than 10 responses were removed from this analysis.

This is an important finding as it suggests that the program fidelity is rather consistent across sites. However, this data is only inclusive of the tutors that remained in the program and may be more enlightening if RU is able to include data from tutors that choose to exit the program. Continuing to gather and analyze data across sites will

allow RU to monitor the program fidelity and provide feedback that may suggest opportunities for improved training or best-practice showcasing. The current outliers may be indications of areas where RU can start an investigation of site-specific best practices or additional support needs.

Finding 4: The RU Tutor Experience Is Mostly Consistent Across Socioeconomic Status and Racial/Ethnic Identities

The tutor survey was designed to capture demographic data of the participants to reflect the diversity within the population and determine if the program is serving all groups equitably. We specifically investigated socioeconomic status, defined by the participation in the free and reduced-price lunch program, and race. Table 7 reflects the demographic breakdown of the survey respondents.

Table 7

Demographic Breakdown of the Survey Respondents

Demographic Metric	Survey Participant Population Breakdown
Self-Reported Socioeconomic Status	54% Free and Reduced Lunch 27% No Free and Reduced Lunch 19% Other
Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity	4% Asian/Pacific Islander 49% Black or African American 12% Hispanic 20% White 13% Other

To determine the efficacy of the program for all demographic groups, we ran a multiple regression test of every input and output relationship with the inclusion of the demographic metric. Table 7 provides the potential inputs for socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity. Students reported either being a part of the free and reduced-price lunch

program, not participating in the program, being unsure, or choosing not to disclose. As for race, students chose to identify as Black or African American, White, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, another ethnicity, or not disclose.

For every relationship, when controlling for socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity, we see every input continues to predict every output with statistical significance. We also find that the demographic variables by themselves do not predict any of the outcomes. Table 8 presents these results for socioeconomic status and Table 9 presents these results for race/ethnicity. Taken together, these analyses suggest that RU is providing every program input, leading to every program outcome, for all demographic groups.

After analyzing each demographic as categorical variables, we focused on specific identities by creating binary variables to determine if any identity was a significant predictor for any program outcome. Table 10 shows the identities tested and any significant relationship. The three race identities—Black, White and Hispanic—remained insignificant as predictors for program outputs. However, for tutors who participated in the free and reduced-price lunch program, the inputs of mentorship, training, and exposure were seen to have a greater impact on readiness than for those who did not participate in the program.

Table 8*Input Correlation Strength with Socioeconomic Demographic*

Output	Input	Input Correlation	Socioeconomic Correlation
		t-stat (p-value)	t-stat (p-value)
Readiness	Perceived Support	10.209 (p < .05)	-1.039 (p = .300)
	Mentorship	7.914 (p < .05)	-1.362 (p = .175)
	Exposure	5.166 (p < .05)	-1.257 (p = .210)
	Training	3.347 (p < .05)	-1.290 (p = .198)
Confidence	Perceived Support	8.375 (p < .05)	-1.472 (p = .142)
	Mentorship	7.070 (p < .05)	-1.745 (p = .082)
	Exposure	4.971 (p < .05)	-1.636 (p = .103)
	Training	3.193 (p < .05)	-1.654 (p = .099)
Goals	Perceived Support	7.814 (p < .05)	-1.481 (p = .140)
	Mentorship	6.374 (p < .05)	-1.734 (p = .084)
	Exposure	4.669 (p < .05)	-1.644 (p = .102)
	Training	2.828 (p < .05)	-1.666 (p = .097)
Skill Development	Perceived Support	10.346 (p < .05)	-1.204 (p = .230)
	Mentorship	9.536 (p < .05)	-1.572 (p = .117)
	Exposure	5.668 (p < .05)	-1.397 (p = .164)
	Training	2.992 (p < .05)	-1.424 (p = .156)

Table 9*Input Correlation Strength with Race/Ethnicity Demographic*

Output	Input	Input Correlation	Race/Ethnicity Correlation
		t-stat (p-value)	t-stat (p-value)
Readiness	Perceived Support	10.351 (p < .05)	-1.099 (p = .273)
	Mentorship	7.937 (p < .05)	-.706 (p = .480)
	Exposure	5.218 (p < .05)	-.648 (p = .517)
	Training	3.374 (p < .05)	-.454 (p = .649)
Confidence	Perceived Support	8.525 (p < .05)	-1.192 (p = .235)
	Mentorship	7.092 (p < .05)	-.883 (p = .378)
	Exposure	5.031 (p < .05)	-.835 (p = .404)
	Training	3.222 (p < .05)	-.641 (p = .521)
Goals	Perceived Support	7.965 (p < .05)	-1.191 (p = .235)
	Mentorship	6.401 (p < .05)	-.892 (p = .373)
	Exposure	4.732 (p < .05)	-.859 (p = .391)
	Training	2.859 (p < .05)	-.677 (p = .499)
Skill Development	Perceived Support	10.489 (p < .05)	-1.105 (p = .270)
	Mentorship	9.545 (p < .05)	-.765 (p = .445)
	Exposure	5.718 (p < .05)	-.664 (p = .507)
	Training	3.021 (p < .05)	-.452 (p = .651)

Table 10*Identity Impacts with Significance*

Output	Input	Input Correlation	Free and Reduced Lunch Program
		t-stat (p-value)	t-stat (p-value)
Readiness	Mentorship	8.230 (p < .05)	2.377 (p < .05)
	Exposure	5.481 (p < .05)	2.141 (p < .05)
	Training	3.675 (p < .05)	1.986 (p < .05)

Project Question 2: What Career Readiness Outcomes Do READ USA Tutors Identify As a Result of their Participation?

Finding 5: The Majority of Tutors Indicate READ USA Has Positively Impacted All Four Targeted Workforce Development Outcomes

The tutor survey provided opportunities for tutors to rate the four program outcomes aligned with our conceptual framework: confidence, goals, perceived career readiness, and skill development. The tutors reported highly positive experiences with each of the outputs: confidence (94.3%), goals (89.2%), perceived career readiness (81.6%), and skill development (95.5%). Our regression analyses confirm that each of the four inputs (perceived support, mentorship, exposure, training) are positively associated with our four outputs (skill development, confidence, goals, perceived career readiness).

Skill Development. Open-ended tutor responses highlighted how the program helped them develop important skills for their future careers, particularly communication, teamwork, professionalism, and interpersonal growth. Several tutors highlighted the value of the mentorship they received in developing their professional writing skills (including resumes) and improving their teaching and tutoring abilities. While our conceptual framework clusters these various attributes into one output, skill development, we felt it was important to highlight the top four themes that emerged through our inductive process.

1. *Communication.*

This is the most commonly mentioned skill, with many tutors sharing improvements

in their verbal and written communication skills and their ability to express themselves.

“Through READ USA I really developed my communication skills because before I was unable to show patience and explain my ideas. Now, I can say that this job has showed me how to explain my thoughts to others effectively.”

“In the program, I’ve learned to speak out for myself and communicate problems and solutions to supervisors and coworkers. As well as to not be afraid to talk out and make myself seen in important situations.”

2. Teamwork.

Many tutors described the importance of collaboration, working with others, and supporting their coworkers and teachers.

“This program has helped me get better at teamwork because in high school I didn’t have any projects where I had to work with other people.

This job has made me realize how important teamwork is.”

“Through READ USA I improved in my teamwork skills, teaching skills and knowledge of how to build a resume and present myself professionally.”

3. Professionalism.

Tutors learned about appropriate workplace behaviors, professional dress, responsibility, work ethic, and became more aware of workplace expectations.

Improving time management, organizing tasks, and prioritizing responsibilities also emerged as examples of the professionalism theme.

“I never had a job like my job as a READ USA tutor, so I learned a lot about workplace professionalism, superiors and managers, and overall, how to carry myself around my peers and bosses. I've definitely grown to be more assertive and proactive.”

“READ USA has taught me to be organized a lot more and to be prepared. Also taught me time management.”

4. Interpersonal Growth.

Tutors described experiencing interpersonal growth through the RU program, including becoming more empathetic, assertive, adaptable, and confident in social situations. Responses also detailed the development of patience, particularly in working with children or navigating challenges. Several tutors mentioned developing leadership skills, including taking initiative, motivating others, and leading by example. Additional responses mentioned adapting to different tasks or situations, working with diverse individuals, and perseverance.

“What I have learned is to be patient because the students may not have it together right on spot but I have to be their biggest support or inspiration for them to strive in their success.”

“Leadership is a skill I learned during READ USA because anytime I did something well I was able to showcase that skill and lead my team in a new skill.”

Finding 6: Perceived Support Is the Strongest Predictor of Program Satisfaction and All Four Workforce Development Outcomes

We identified a consistent pattern across each of the four outputs and the satisfaction measure: While all four inputs tended to be statistically significant predictors of the outputs, there are relative differences in the strength of those associations. We used the coefficient of determination, or R-squared, to determine the relative strengths of each program input for each program output. Perceived support is consistently the strongest predictor, followed by mentorship, exposure, and then training. Table 11 presents the results of these regression analyses.

Table 11

Program Outputs Predicted by Program Inputs

Output	Input in Order of Impact R-Square (p-value)
Readiness	Perceived Support .40 (p < .05) Mentorship .28 (p < .05) Exposure .14 (p < .05) Training .06 (p < .05)
Confidence	Perceived Support .31 (p < .05) Mentorship .24 (p < .05) Exposure .13 (p < .05) Training .06 (p < .05)
Goals	Perceived Support .28 (p < .05) Mentorship .20 (p < .05) Exposure .12 (p < .05) Training .05 (p < .05)
Skill Development	Perceived Support .41 (p < .05) Mentorship .36 (p < .05) Exposure .17 (p < .05) Training .05 (p < .05)
Satisfaction	Perceived Support .43 (p < .05) Mentorship .36 (p < .05) Exposure .13 (p < .05) Training .02 (p < .05)

Open-ended feedback allowed tutors to use their own words and experiences to provide additional detail about their RU program experience. Using an inductive process, we coded their responses to identify reoccurring themes and then matched these to the four outcomes of our conceptual framework. These responses make clear that the RU program supports tutors in developing career readiness, confidence, goals, and skills by offering valuable exposure, training, mentorship, and support to help prepare them for their future in the workforce.

Confidence. Several tutors indicated that their confidence increased as a result of RU experiences such as working directly with students, being recognized, spending time in a professional environment, improving their communication skills, and overcoming challenges. Tutors shared that the RU program helped them with building confidence, setting goals, navigating challenges, and adapting to new situations. Several respondents also noted an increase in self-esteem and they expressed feeling a sense of pride in their personal achievements.

“The mentorship I’ve received has been beneficial in building my confidence to ask questions and accept feedback.”

“I would say that this job has boosted my confidence in a professional sense due to accolades and recognition I have received for my work.”

“As I continued to work with READ USA, I gained confidence in my abilities. In the beginning, I was nervous of my abilities, but after working with READ USA for a while, I grew more confident of what I can do.”

“I have gained a lot from my experience as a tutor. Besides the gained sense of comradery with my coworkers and connections with my students,

I have built a lot of confidence and assertiveness that I did not know I had any of before this job. I've learned to be quicker and more decisive, and my time management has noticeably improved."

"This mentorship equipped me with the tools and confidence to navigate challenges in my career journey, ensuring that I can apply the feedback I received to excel in professional settings."

Career Goals. The RU experience helped tutors gain clarity about their career goals and aspirations. Many tutors indicated that they plan to pursue a career in teaching as a result of their RU experience.

"READ USA has allowed me to further plan out my goals for my career. It also helped me map what I'm good at and what I can utilize that for my job."

"Going into READ USA I knew I wanted to be an educator of some sort, but READ USA solidified this as a dream of mine and led me to decide to pursue a career in elementary education."

"They helped me discover what my passion in life was."

"Read USA has made me realize I enjoy tutoring more than I thought I would and it's helped me realize I want to become a teacher in the future."

Readiness. Several tutors indicated that their RU experience contributed positively to their professional development and readiness. Tutors detailed improvements in their workplace behaviors such as responsibility, punctuality, professional attire, and respecting others. Tutors also described how the program helped them develop

perseverance, particularly navigating difficult situations or challenging students. They learned to persist through these struggles, noting a sense of responsibility and commitment to RU.

“READ USA helps me advance my skill set for future careers such as communication and adaptability.”

“Through the READ USA program, I have learned professional workplace behaviors such as appropriate attire, arriving to work at time, and being responsible for your own work.”

“Through READ USA, I have learned how to work in different environments and work with others around me in a responsible and professional manner.”

Additional Insight: Tutors Conceptualized Skills Learned for Tutoring as Distinct From Workforce Development Skills

In examining the open-ended responses and cognitive interview transcripts, we found that tutors were clearly able to articulate skills gained as a result of their RU experience. However, tutors often described the skills acquired for tutoring as distinct from other workforce development skills they developed through the program. Based on the open-ended responses from respondents, tutors appear to conceptualize tutoring skills as distinct from professional or workforce development skills. Open commentary from tutors did not directly connect tutoring skills to workforce development or career readiness. For example, participants offered the following examples when asked to describe their RU tutor or mentorship experience.

“They just taught me how to teach kids.”

“My teachers have helped me learn new skills to apply with the children.”

However, when asked specifically about the personal or professional skills gained through the program, tutors described professional skills but generally did not express skills related to teaching or tutoring.

“I have learned patience, adaptability and multitasking by working in the READ USA Program.”

“READ USA helps me advance my skill set for future careers such as communication and adaptability.”

IX. Recommendations

The findings of this project underscore the important workforce development experience RU is providing for its tutors. Based on our findings, open response commentary from tutors, and existing literature, we propose four recommendations to help RU build upon this solid foundation:

Recommendation 1: Maintain efforts to gather feedback from tutors.

Recommendation 2: Enhance future data collection efforts.

Recommendation 3: Expand pathways for personalization and choice.

Recommendation 4: Activate the power of mentors within workforce development training.

Table 12 outlines alignment between our project questions, findings, and the recommendations covered in this section.

Table 12.

Project Questions, Findings, and Recommendations Alignment

Alignment Table	
Q1: How do READ USA tutors characterize the nature and quality of their program experience?	
Finding	Recommendation
F1: The majority of RU tutors experienced all four program components	R1: Maintain efforts to gather feedback from tutors R2: Enhance future data collection efforts
F2: Tutors reported high satisfaction levels with the RU program	
F3: The RU tutor experience differs by school site	
F4: The RU tutor experience is mostly consistent across socioeconomic status and ethnic/racial identities	
Q2: What career readiness outcomes do READ USA tutors identify as a result of their participation?	
Finding	Recommendation
F5: The majority of tutors indicated READ USA has positively impacted all four targeted workforce development outcomes Tutors reported that RU supported their skill development in four main areas: communication, teamwork, professionalism, interpersonal growth	R1: Maintain efforts to gather feedback from tutors R2: Enhance future data collection efforts R3: Expand pathways for personalization and choice R4: Activate the power of mentorship within workforce development training
F6: Perceived support is the strongest predictor of program satisfaction and all four workforce development outcomes	R1: Maintain efforts to gather feedback from tutors R4: Activate the power of mentorship within workforce development training

Recommendation 1: Maintain Efforts to Gather Feedback From Tutors

This project supported RU's desire to significantly grow its organizational capacity by collecting feedback from its tutors with a new tool tailored to meet the organization's needs. We encourage RU to maintain its efforts to gather feedback from tutors by leveraging the tool developed for this project.

The cognitive interviews conducted prior to survey distribution help to support the content validity of our assessment tool. To measure the internal consistency or reliability of the instrument, we conducted a Cronbach's alpha analysis. The high scores ($>.70$) summarized in Table 5 further support the usefulness of this survey instrument.

Our findings indicate that the tutor experience is highly consistent across tutors' diverse social identities with some measurable differences across school site locations. Given its success at building and supporting a diverse community of tutors, RU will want to ensure that it continues to foster an equitable and inclusive tutor experience. Continuing to collect tutor specific data on the survey assessment will position RU to continue to monitor its impact across socioeconomic statuses, racial/ethnic identities, and school site locations.

Non-profit organizations face considerable pressure to demonstrate the value and effectiveness of their work to donors, partners, and constituents (Liket & Maas, 2015). However, the field lacks widely accepted tools (other than those focused on finances) to support this. With this first iteration of a feedback loop in place, we see that RU has an exciting opportunity to continue building its capacity for gathering and using feedback as part of its continuous improvement processes. Organizations that build clear mechanisms for monitoring, feedback, and evaluation have a greater capacity to

improve the strategic alignment of their programmatic efforts (Balsler & McClusky, 2005; Kelly et al., 2022). Gathering and using feedback supports positive internal team dynamics and organizational learning. Thoughtful planning and a shared understanding of the goals for collecting feedback maximize the impact of such efforts (Prugsamatz, 2010).

We will share our project's survey shell from the SurveyMonkey platform so that RU can use the tool we created to continue its feedback efforts with tutors. The organization can also use this tool as a model, creating variations that facilitate similarly robust feedback collection efforts with its many community partners (e.g., teachers, tutor coordinators, principals, parents) (Campbell, 2010).

We offer this recommendation with one caveat: A small number of tutors expressed a perception that RU conducts many surveys already. RU should be thoughtful in communicating the value and purpose of each data collection effort to tutors (or other partners). Likewise, we encourage the organization to coordinate the timing of each feedback or assessment effort internally to minimize the likelihood of survey fatigue for its tutors (Porter et al., 2004).

Recommendation 2: Enhance Future Data Collection Efforts

The RU tutors surveyed for this project reported an overwhelmingly positive experience with the program. This is further highlighted by the nearly 40% of tutors who reported serving RU for three or more terms. In order to fully understand the impact of the program and tutor satisfaction, the organization will benefit from conducting future assessments with past tutors and those who decide not to continue or depart RU before

their eligibility ends. Enhancing the representativeness of survey respondents will help RU better understand the impact of the program beyond current participants.

While there are a number of possible avenues to collect this information, a leading best practice is to implement a consistent offboarding or exit process to collect information from participants about their experience prior to their official departure (Benjamin et al., 2023; Carman, 2011; Labin, 2017). This is especially important for tutors who are eligible to continue with RU but elect not to (Labin, 2017). It is critical that data collection efforts also create space for tutors to offer feedback. Research suggests conducting assessments that allow for student feedback promotes learning and thoughtful reflection on the experience (Lake et al., 2017). Collecting data from departing tutors could be conducted electronically via a survey link or through a one-on-one exit meeting with the tutor coordinator. In addition to the questions used in the survey assessment for this project, RU might consider adding questions to better understanding the tutor's decision to leave. Potential questions to consider include:

- What prompted your decision not to continue with the RU program?
- Why are you leaving the RU program?
- What factors could have supported your decision to remain with the RU program?
- In what ways did the RU program meet your expectations? In what ways did it fail to meet your expectations?
- What suggestions do you have for RU?
- What can RU do to improve the tutor experience?

Taking time to gather information from exiting tutors will offer the organization important insight on the tutor experience, program satisfaction, and recommendations (Labin, 2017).

Comparing the results of tutors who continue with those who depart the program may offer a more holistic understanding of the full range of tutor experiences. Similar to the approach taken in our project, we encourage the organization to conduct both a quantitative and a qualitative analysis of this data. A statistical analysis could examine whether and to what extent differences between the two groups exist (Bruhl, 2018). A thematic analysis on open-ended comments may provide deeper insight into personal experiences and proposed improvements (Mayan, 2023). Expanding data collection efforts to include past tutors will further support RU's efforts to refine the program and improve future tutor recruitment (Topping et al., 2012).

Further, this project focused specifically on understanding the experiences of current RU tutors. As a result, our findings are based solely on student perceptions of exposure to program components and perceived outcomes. Moving forward, RU will be able to better measure the longer-term impact of the program by implementing processes to track actual postsecondary educational attainment and career outcomes (Sanders et al., 2020). Triangulating tutor perceptions with actual outcomes through a follow-up data collection will position RU to better understand its longer-term impact.

Effective tracking efforts start with collecting and maintaining accurate contact information for each tutor. While tutors are engaged in the program, RU should collect non-school affiliated contact information such as personal cell phone numbers, personal email addresses, and address information for a family member to ease later

outreach and tracking efforts. To maintain accurate records, RU should conduct an annual contact information audit (Robinson et al., 2007). Successful efforts undertaken by other organizations include sending meaningful program updates to grab the attention of the tutor and including a clear call to action to request current contact information. Research supports that ongoing communications with former tutors will foster deeper connection and ease future data collection efforts (Schudy & Utikal, 2017).

Maintaining accurate records and influencing former tutors to provide updated outcome information can be a taxing effort (Alverson, 2010). While contacting past tutors directly is the best source of educational attainment and career outcomes data, a national study found that contacting teachers may also be an effective source of information given the relationships they maintain with former students (Arnold et al., 2016). When a personal connection is not possible, some organizations rely on online sources and social media tools like LinkedIn. Researchers recommend proceeding with caution when using these tools as there may be limitations or inaccuracies in the information (Makela & Hoff, 2019). RU might consider partnering with a third-party vendor to support data collection efforts. Companies like Lightcast work with educational organizations and non-profits to gather career outcome data for a nominal fee (see Appendix H). In some states, employment data sharing efforts exist between government agencies and educational institutions and non-profit organizations (University of California, 2024). While it was unclear from our brief internet search what pathways might be possible with the State of Florida or Duval County, fostering deeper partnerships with FloridaCommerce may open up opportunities to gain access to

existing labor market data collected by the state (see Appendix H). Collecting data from past tutors and gathering actual post-program career outcomes of students will further enhance RU's knowledge of longer-term program effects.

Recommendation 3: Expand Pathways for Personalization and Choice

This project uncovered a theme of desired choice from the tutors in both the cognitive interviews and the open-response survey questions. The comments from tutors suggested their experiences would be improved if they could choose their workforce development activities to align with their interests and keep the work outside of their tutoring duties manageable. Tutors highlight their desires in the following quotes:

“The workforce development is helpful for some but it is time consuming and unnecessary for others.”

“For some the workforce development is beneficial but for others it is almost like a partial waste of time.”

Stokes and Wyn (2007) suggest that many youths consider the transition into work as a time of identity formation. During that process, it is imperative to incorporate choice, flexibility, and balance while maintaining well-being. RU has an opportunity to personalize the tutor experience by incorporating engaging workforce development activities, granting access to targeted career resources, and offering tutors a choice between different activities or delivery formats. Open-response commentary from tutors highlighted the limited or misaligned career exposures and training. One tutor pointed out the value of the mock interview but expressed their wishes for more alignment with their job interests:

“I enjoyed the mock interview. I think that it would have been better if there had been more people who catered to the specific careers that we were interested in going to.”

Another tutor shared during the cognitive interview that the program needed to expand a particular assignment in career explorations;

“There was an assignment that we did called ONET, and it had the potential if it was more broad. It was too limited to very stereotypical jobs. None of them added up to what I wanted and I feel like there’s a lot of people who feel that way because all of us have very different goals.”

These steps will ensure the tutors feel their development is sustainable and aligned with their career identity formation. Using free resources like Khan Academy’s career modules and Workforce Solutions’ hands-on career development activities for high schoolers, in addition to RU’s current activities, can provide more options in engaging activities. Simultaneously, if RU incorporates a more varied pool of resources for students to engage with, it will increase tutors’ exposure to a variety of careers and opportunities, maximizing the likelihood that they will connect with resources that align with their individual career interests.

RU is already working to identify local partnerships that can provide increased workforce exposure and training, which will help to offer tutors a more varied experience (R. Kelly, personal communication, 2024). Showcased in the newly designed RU Summer Leadership Academy, these efforts will provide enriching exposure experiences within various local organizations in sectors including fine arts, professional athletics, healthcare, and STEM (READ USA, 2024). In addition to these steps that indicate

leadership's clear focus on increasing RU's training and exposure program components, there are a variety of other training and exposure resources that RU could use to expand its offerings and increase the potential to match tutors to their individual interests. My Next Move and Candid Career are two free, interactive resources that RU could implement for additional career exploration opportunities and aligned training and education information. See Appendix H for a complete list of potential resources and tools.

Recommendation 4: Activate the Power of Mentors Within Workforce

Development Training

This project highlights the overwhelming success of RU's program implementation, as most tutors indicated they experienced every program input (training, exposure, mentorship, perceived support). However, the training and exposure program areas had the lowest experience scores and were the lowest predictors for all program outcomes. Wentling and Waight (2001) suggest that practical career exposures and experiences can aid in the transition from high school to the workforce. Kenny et al. (2003) add that variety in exposure and training can promote job placements with more considerable career advancement opportunities, specifically for students from minoritized backgrounds.

Lindstrom et al. (2022) argue that content is only one piece of supportive career and college readiness. Their research suggests that combining content with trusted mentors and their support can have the most significant impact (Lindstrom et al., 2022). It is evident through the findings of this project that the RU tutors feel supported by their mentors, opening up an excellent opportunity to infuse this personalized support into

workforce development activities. A 2011 study found that the absence of discussion in connection with career activities renders the activities nearly useless (Kuijpers et al., 2011). This strong claim points to a relatively simple, yet powerful, component of RU's mentor responsibilities: Ensuring mentors engage with tutors specifically in connection with their workforce development activities may lead to even more substantial impacts. Utilizing the designated professional development time during the tutor workday, RU mentors could incorporate discussion questions similar to the following:

- How are you applying the workforce development activity into your work/life now?
- How can the workforce development activity you completed be applied to your current or future career interest(s)?
- In what ways could you incorporate the skill you learned from the workforce development activity into various different career paths?
- How does the workforce development activity affect your thoughts about your future career?

The nuance in our findings, coupled with the strength of the literature, suggests that aligning career exposure and training with supportive mentorship from teachers and RU staff could help to support tutor success.

A final theme that emerged in reviewing the open-ended responses was that many of the tutors compartmentalized the training and skills they were developing for tutoring separately from those within the workforce development activities. Very few tutors spoke to the transferability of the skills they developed for tutoring to other roles. Phillips et al. (2002) suggest that students best positioned for successful transition into the workforce have generalizable professional skills. Mentorship aligned with tutor

training efforts could help RU participants better envision the applicability of tutoring skills to other professional areas. If RU can help participants identify and articulate how their tutoring skills apply to other professional settings through mentorship and personalized support, tutors will be increasingly adaptable in their entry into the workforce (Phillips et al., 2002).

X. Conclusion

This capstone project sought to support READ USA (RU) as it expands its capacity to collect feedback and enhance monitoring and evaluation processes. Building on existing research, we created a conceptual framework that identified four key program components (training, exposure, mentorship, perceived support) and four expected outcomes (skill development, confidence, goals, readiness). This framework enabled us to examine the nature and quality of the RU tutor experience and tutors' perceived career readiness gains.

Our survey of RU tutors found that their experience consistently included all four program components, was highly satisfying, differed slightly by school site, and was mostly consistent across tutors' socioeconomic status and racial/ethnic identities. Furthermore, the majority of tutors indicated that RU had positively impacted all four of the targeted workforce development outcomes. Results also indicated that perceived support was the strongest predictor of program satisfaction and all four workforce development outcomes.

Given this set of overwhelmingly positive findings, we offered RU four recommendations aimed at maintaining their efforts to gather tutor feedback, enhancing future data collection efforts, expanding pathways for personalization and choice, and

activating the power of mentors within workforce development training. To the extent that RU is able to act on these recommendations, we believe they will enhance the tutor experience, improve strategic alignment of their programmatic efforts, and deepen opportunities to measure the long-term impact of their programs.

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Appendix A: READ USA Tutor Input Cognitive Interview Protocol

Adapted from the Remote Learning CSCI (Student Cognitive Interview Protocol_

Greet the student upon their arrival. Once the student is seated, read the following statement:

Today I'll be asking you some questions about READ USA's tutoring program. The reason we are doing this is to make sure we have good questions on this survey.

A group of adults wrote these survey items and we want to make sure that they make sense to the tutors who are going to be taking the survey this year. No one will know your name. If you do not want to participate or if you do not want to answer any of the questions you do not have to and we can stop at any time. We will be recording your answers just so we can remember what you say and use it to go back and improve the survey questions.

I am going to ask you to read each item and then I will ask a couple of questions about the item before I ask you to tell me which answer choice you would pick. Then we will read the next item and so on.

There are no right or wrong answers, and if we come to something that is confusing or unclear, it is OK to tell us that. That is the type of information that we need to know.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Have the student read instructions and guidance for the first section.
2. At this point, instruct the student to read each item aloud. Say
 - a. **Ok, let's begin. Now I would like you to read the first question out loud.** *(Note: you should start with question #1. If the previous student did not get through all of the items, you can start at the next one on the list they didn't get to.)*
 - b. Make a note if they have any trouble reading the item (hesitation, reads a word wrong, etc.).
3. Once they have finished, ask the following questions after each item:
 - a. **What do you think this statement means?**
 - i. Note: If student says "I don't understand the question" or "This doesn't make any sense" or something similar, follow up questions are not required. You could probe to say "What part of the question didn't make sense?" or "What part of the question could we change to make it easier to understand?"

- ii. If student uses the majority of the item as their response, you can follow up with “Can you say that in a different way?” or “Can you say that in your own words?”
- b. **Can you describe an example of what this looks like in READ USA's tutoring program?**
 - i. Note: Tutor may describe adequate examples in question a.) If so, this question is not needed.
- c. **How would you answer this question?**
- d. **Please explain why you chose that answer.**
 - i. Probe: Can you tell me a little more about why you chose that answer?
 - ii. Probe: How many times per week does the teacher do this?

Continue asking about as many survey items as possible within 45 minutes.

Appendix B: Conceptual Framework & Survey Question Connection

Conceptual Framework Pillar	Code	Questions
Program Component: Training	PCT	Q4b, Q4c, Q4e, Q4f, Q4g, Q4k, Q4h
Program Component: Exposure	PCE	Q4a, Q4d, Q4j, Q12
Program Component: Mentorship	PCM	Q4i, Q5, Q6, Q9, Q32
Program Component: Perceived Support	PCPS	Q7, Q8 Q26, Q27, Q31
Experience Quality	EQ	Q29, Q30, Q35
Expected Outcomes: Skill Development	EOSD	Q9, Q10, Q11, Q21, Q22, Q33, Q34
Expected Outcomes: Confidence	EOC	Q15, Q19, Q20, Q21, Q22, Q32
Expected Outcomes: Goals	EOG	Q16, Q17, Q18
Expected Outcomes: Readiness	EOR	Q13, Q14, Q25, Q28, Q33

Question Number	Question	CF Connection	Source
Q1	When did you begin your READ USA tutor role?	N/A	N/A
Q2	Please select your current READ USA school site	N/A	N/A
Q3	Have you worked at more than one READ USA site?	N/A	N/A
Q4a	During your READ USA experience, did you: Learn about different careers	PCE	LAUSD CCRS
Q4b	During your READ USA experience, did you: Complete a career assessment (e.g., a series of questions about your career interests)	PCT	LAUSD CCRS
Q4c	During your READ USA experience, did you: Write a resume	PCT	LAUSD CCRS
Q4d	During your READ USA experience, did you: Meet a working professional	PCE	LAUSD CCRS
Q4e	During your READ USA experience, did you: Participate in a practice interview	PCT	LAUSD CCRS
Q4f	During your READ USA experience, did you: Assess your strengths	PCT	SCRI
Q4g	During your READ USA experience, did you: Assess your weaknesses	PCT	SCRI
Q4h	During your READ USA experience, did you: Create a plan for your future career	PCT	LAUSD CCRS
Q4i	During your READ USA experience, did you: Receive feedback to improve your career skills (e.g. communication, workplace etiquette, teamwork, time management, work quality)	PCM	

Q4j	During your READ USA experience, did you: Explore information about college	PCE	
Q4k	During your READ USA experience, did you: Participate in workforce development programming	PCT	
Q5	During my READ USA tutor experience... I received individual feedback from a mentor/coach during the program	PCM	HSTW
Q6	During my READ USA tutor experience... My mentor/coach helped me improve my career skills (e.g. communication, workplace etiquette, teamwork, time management, work quality)	PCM	
Q7	During my READ USA tutor experience... My mentor/coach supported my success	PCM, PCPS	
Q8	During my READ USA tutor experience... I knew who to turn to for support during the program	PCPS	
Q9	The READ USA program... helped me to develop good teamwork skills	EOSD	HSTW
Q10	The READ USA program... helped me to develop good work habits	EOSD	HSTW
Q11	The READ USA program... showed me to how use communication skills (reading, writing, speaking) in job related activities	EOSD	HSTW
Q12	The READ USA program... allowed me to experience a professional workplace	PCE	
Q13	As a result of my participation in the READ USA program... I can identify careers that interest me	EOR	SCRI
Q14	As a result of my participation in the READ USA program... I can identify specific employers/organizations relevant to my career interests	EOR	SCRI
Q15	As a result of my participation in the READ USA program... I get excited when I think about my future career	EOC	
Q16	As a result of my participation in the READ USA program... I know how to set goals for myself	EOG	Martinez
Q17	As a result of my participation in the READ USA program... I can choose a career that fits with what I am good at	EOG	SCRI
Q18	As a result of my participation in the READ USA program... I know how college can help me achieve my goals	EOG	Martinez

Q19	As a result of my participation in the READ USA program... I believe I have the potential to succeed in college	EOC	Martinez
Q20	As a result of my participation in the READ USA program... My career success will be determined by my efforts	EOC	
Q21	As a result of my participation in the READ USA program... I will continue to work for my career goal even when I hit a barrier	EOC	SCRI
Q22	As a result of my participation in the READ USA program... I can adapt to change in the world of work	EOC	
Q23	As a result of my participation in the READ USA program... I developed new skills that will support my future career	EOSD	
Q24	As a result of my participation in the READ USA program... I know how to apply my career skills to a new workplace	EOSD	
Q25	As a result of my participation in the READ USA program... I have a greater interest in a career in education/teaching	EOR	
Q26	There are adults within READ USA who believe in me	PCPS	
Q27	There are adults within READ USA who can help me achieve my goals	PCPS	
Q28	The experiences with READ USA have prepared me for my next career steps.	EOR	Kenny
Q29	The READ USA program was a good fit for me	EQ	Kenny
Q30	I am satisfied with my READ USA workforce development experience	EQ	NPS
Q31	Please provide one or more examples of how the READ USA program has supported your career planning efforts.	PCPS	
Q32	Describe the mentorship you received during the READ USA program.	PCM	Martinez
Q33	Tell us about any professional skills (communication, teamwork, leadership, workplace behaviors) you have learned through the READ USA Program.	EOR, EOSD	Kenny
Q34	Tell us about any personal gains (perseverance, confidence, self-esteem) you have made through the READ USA Program.	EOR, EOSD	Kenny
Q35	Please provide feedback on your READ USA workforce development experience (for example, activities you have enjoyed or recommendations for improvement).	EQ	

Appendix C: Survey Modifications Post–Cognitive Interviews

Questions Under Review	Modification Decision	Interview Insights & Modification Rationale
How many hours per week do you work for READ USA?	Elimination	The interviews uncovered that all tutors worked the same hours as part of their RU commitment but some tutors were including outside of work prep time and others were not. This distinction was minimally valuable.
During your READ USA experience did you... participate in a practice interview	Modification: During your READ USA experience did you... participate in a mock job interview	The modification was in alignment with the vocabulary most often used by the tutors
During your READ USA experience did you... create a career plan	Modification: During your READ USA experience did you... create a plan for your future career	During the interviews most tutors were not familiar with the term 'career plan' but they did report activities that they created future career plans which is the information we are seeking
I have an adult/mentor coach who worked with me throughout the program	Elimination	There was confusion on the word 'throughout' and whether that meant the same mentor throughout the program or just the presence of a mentor throughout the program. To gain more insight into the mentorship relationships the team decided to create a short answer question instead of the Likert-scale response
I received feedback from a mentor/coach during the program	Modification: I received individual feedback from a mentor/coach during the program	After review this modification was more aligned with conceptual framework
The READ USA program encouraged me to develop good teamwork skills	Modification: The READ USA program helped me to develop good teamwork skills	After review this verb seemed more appropriate for the training information we were hoping to gather
The READ USA program encouraged me to develop good work habits	Modification: The READ USA program helped me to develop good work habits	After review this verb seemed more appropriate for the training information we were hoping to gather
I can identify employers/organizations relevant to my career interests	Modification: I can identify specific employers/organizations relevant to my career interests	The addition of 'specific' seemed important after some tutors were able to articulate these specifics and others were not. The specificity is an important factor of our conceptual framework.

I know how post-high school education can help me achieve my goals	Modification: I know how college can help me achieve my goals	The original word choice was confusing to some tutors and ultimately our conceptual framework was aligned to college readiness.
I believe I have the potential to succeed in post-high school education	Modification: I believe I have the potential to succeed in college.	The original word choice was confusing to some tutors and ultimately our conceptual framework was aligned to college readiness.
I can adapt to change in the world of work	Modification: I can adapt to change in the workplace	The original word choice confused some of the tutors.
There are people within READ USA who believe in me	Modification: There are adults within READ USA who believe in me	During the interviews some tutors gave examples of other tutors and students who believed in them and this was not the information we were hoping to gather.
There are people within READ USA who can help me achieve my goals	Modification: There are adults within READ USA who can help me achieve my goals	During the interviews some tutors gave examples of other tutors and students who believed in them and this was not the information we were hoping to gather.
I would recommend the READ USA tutor program to a classmate	Elimination	This question was trying to gather program satisfaction information but the tutors really tried to determine if their classmates would be a good fit for the program. This was not the information we were hoping to gather and we created a new question all together in order to capture more targeted satisfaction information.
How did the READ USA program influence your knowledge about education beyond high school?	Elimination	This question was designed to provide space for students to reflect on how READ has impacted their knowledge about college and/or college readiness. Most tutors thought the question was asking about their knowledge about the education system.
How did the READ USA program influence your thoughts about your career after high school?	Modification: Please provide one or more examples of how READ USA has supported your career planning efforts.	This question was intended to provide space for students to describe how READ has impacted their career planning but there was confusion by the wording during the interviews. We modified to be more direct.

Added Survey Questions	Rationale
During your READ USA experience did you... participate in workforce development programming	The interviews enlightened us to the fact that some of the students had not started any of their workforce development work and therefore any negative answers would reflect poorly on the program rather than showing that they just had not completed the program.
I developed new skills that will support my future career	In review of our conceptual framework we felt we were lacking in skill development focused questions.
I know how to apply my career skills to a new workplace	In review of our conceptual framework we felt we were lacking in skill development focused questions.
I have a greater interest in a career in education/teaching	This was something that many tutors discussed in the interviews but did not have space to showcase in the survey. It was also a program goal of RU to increase education/teaching interest in the tutors therefore we felt compelled to gather information to show any progress towards that goal.
Please provide feedback on your READ USA workforce development experience (for example, activities you have enjoyed or recommendations for improvement).	During the interviews this was a question that we naturally asked before ending our time with the tutors and we gained a lot of feedback and noted an appreciation from the tutors to have a space to share their voice. We felt it was a powerful addition to the survey.

Appendix D: Final Survey Instrument

READ USA Workforce Development Tutor Survey

The following questions are about your READ USA tutor experience.

Please answer each question to the best of your ability.

Q1. When did you begin your READ USA tutor role?

Select one

- Fall 2020
- Winter 2021
- Summer 2021
- Fall 2021
- Winter 2022
- Summer 2022
- Fall 2022
- Winter 2023
- Summer 2023
- Fall 2023
- Winter 2024
- Other, Please Specify

Q2. Please select your current READ USA school site.

Select one

- Arlington Elementary
- Beauclerc Elementary
- Hogan-Spring Glen Elementary
- Lake Lucina Elementary
- Long Branch Elementary
- Mamie Agnes Jones Elementary
- S. A. Hull Elementary
- Susie Tolbert
- Westview
- Annie R Morgan
- Jax Heights
- Rutledge Pearson
- Ramona
- Biltmore
- Northshore

Q3. Have you worked at more than one READ USA site?

- Yes
- No

Q4. During your READ USA experience, did you

Check all that apply

- Learn about different careers
- Complete a career assessment (e.g., a series of questions about your career interests)
- Write a resume

- Meet a working professional
- Participate in a mock job interview
- Assess your strengths
- Assess your weaknesses
- Create a plan for your future career
- Receive feedback to improve your career skills (e.g. communication, workplace etiquette, time management, work quality)
- Explore information about college
- Participate in workforce development programming
- None of the above

Questions 5–30

Below is a list of statements about your READ USA tutor experience. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

#	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	I do not understand this
During my READ USA tutor experience ...							
Q5	I received individual feedback from a mentor/coach during the program						
Q6	My mentor/coach helped me improve my career skills (such as communication, workplace etiquette, time management, work quality)						
Q7	My mentor/coach supported my success						
Q8	I knew who to turn to for support during the program						
The READ USA program ...							
Q9	Helped me to develop good teamwork skills						
Q10	Helped me to develop good work habits						
Q11	Showed me how to use communication skills (reading, writing, speaking) in job related activities						
Q12	Allowed me to experience a professional workplace						
As a result of my participation in the READ USA program ...							
Q13	I can identify careers that interest me						
Q14	I can identify specific employers/organizations relevant to my career interests						
Q15	I get excited when I think about my future career						
Q16	I know how to set goals for myself						
Q17	I can choose a career that fits with what I am good at						

Q18	I know how college can help me achieve my goals						
Q19	I believe I have the potential to succeed in college						
Q20	My career success will be determined by my efforts						
Q21	I will continue to work for my career goal even when I hit a barrier						
Q22	I can adapt to change in the workplace						
Q23	I developed new skills that will support my future career						
Q24	I know how to apply my career skills to a new workplace						
Q25	I have a greater interest in a career in education/teaching						
Please answer the following questions based on your READ USA experience							
Q26	There are adults within READ USA who believe in me						
Q27	There are adults within READ USA who can help me achieve my career goals						
Q28	The experiences with READ USA have prepared me for my next career steps.						
Q29	The READ USA program was a good fit for me						
Q30	I am satisfied with my READ USA workforce development experience						

Q31. Please provide one or more examples of how READ USA has supported your career planning efforts.

Q32. Describe the mentorship you received during the READ USA program.

Q33. Tell us about any professional skills (communication, teamwork, leadership, workplace behaviors) you have learned through the READ USA Program.

Q34. Tell us about any personal gains (perseverance, confidence, self-esteem) you have made through the READ USA Program.

Q35. Please provide feedback on your READ USA workforce development experience (for example, activities you have enjoyed or recommendations for improvement).

Q36. What is your current grade level?
Please choose only one

- 9th Grade
- 10th Grade
- 11th Grade
- 12th Grade
- High School Graduate
- I am currently a college student

Q37. During high school, were you/are you part of a free or reduced lunch program?

Yes

No

Unsure

I prefer not to answer

Q38. Which race or ethnicity best describes you?

Please choose only one

American Indian or Alaskan Native

Asian / Pacific Islander

Black or African American

Hispanic

White / Caucasian

Multiple ethnicity/ Other (please specify) _____

I prefer not to answer

Q39. Which gender do you identify with?

Man

Non-binary

Woman

Prefer to self-describe _____

I prefer not to answer

Appendix E: Analysis Metrics and Rationales

Data Analysis Metric		Rationale	
% Agree	Input Composites Output Composites Satisfaction Composite	Provides indication of program efficacy Providing valuable insight into current satisfaction - a metric of interest for RU leadership	
Correlations	Readiness	Training	Readiness is the target outcome for RU indicating measurement of any possible correlation
		Exposure	
		Mentorship	
		Perceived Support	
		Satisfaction	
	Confidence	Mentorship	Literature supports quality mentorship and support impacting student confidence
		Perceived Support	
		Satisfaction	
	Goals	Exposure	Literature supports career exposures impact career goals for students
		Satisfaction	
Skill Development	Training	Literature supports targeted career skill training impacts career skill development	
	Satisfaction		
Demographic Impact	All program input/output relationships	Socio-economic Status	Providing insight into the impact, if any, of demographic on program experience
		Race/Ethnic background	
School Site Impact	Satisfaction Composite Perceived Support Composite Mentorship Composite	Providing insight into the program fidelity across school sites and potentially particular areas deserving more attention	
Thematic Analysis	Open-Ended Question Review	Coding for themes that evolve and for sentiments that align with quantitative findings	

Appendix F: Quantitative Data Summary

Area of Analysis	Unit of Analysis	Unit + Composite Score	Composite Score
Input Analysis	Training	Q4b (.588), Q4c(.715), Q4e(.835), Q4f(.803), Q4k (.784), Q4h (.487) Composite: .704	70.4%
	Exposure	4a (.632), 4d (.607), 4j (.398) Q12 (.853) Composite (.622)	62.2%
	Mentorship	Q4i (.721), Q5 (.903), Q6 (.797), Q7 (.802) Composite (.802)	80.2%
	Perceived Support	Q7 (.802), Q8 (.859), Q26 (.860), Q27 (.74) Composite (.813)	81.3%
Output Analysis	Skill Development	Q9(4.20), Q10 (4.32), Q11 (4.30), Q21(4.36), Q22(4.24) Composite (4.28)	95.5%
	Confidence	Q15 (3.98), Q19 (4.21), Q20 (4.41), Q21 (4.36), Q22 (4.24) Composite (4.24)	94.3%
	Goals	Q16 (4.12), Q17 (4.05), Q18 (4.02) Composite (4.06)	89.2%
	Readiness	Q13 (3.98), Q14 (3.80), Q25 (3.37), Q28 (3.96) Composite (3.78)	81.6%
Satisfaction Analysis	Satisfaction	Q29 (4.16), Q30 (3.95) Composite (4.05)	81.0%

Appendix G: Open Response Thematic Summary

Exposure

Tutors described gaining work experience and exposure to different career options, particularly in the field of education.

“Going into ReadUSA I knew I wanted to be an educator of some sort, but ReadUSA solidified this as a dream of mine and led me to decide to pursue a career in elementary education.”

“Read USA has made me realize I enjoy tutoring more than I thought I would and it’s helped me realize I want to become a teacher in the future.”

Feedback that the tutors provided in the area of exposure was around more exposure alignment with their career interests as well as a wider range of careers.

“I enjoyed the mock interview, I think that it would have been better if there were more people that were catered to the specific careers that we were interested in going to.”

Training

Tutors shared that the program offered resources and information on potential career paths. Several noted that the RU program encouraged them to explore their interests and passions, supporting their career exploration efforts.

“During workforce development, Read USA helped me in preparing for my career by helping me explore all of the different career fields that interest me, with the job titles and descriptions that fit.”

“The program taught me how to present myself to employers through my resume and cover letter. Also how to present myself in an interview.”

“READ USA provided with information from many great sources that helped me with career planning. The workforce development are very helpful.”

In review of the tutor feedback some of the tutors believed that their training was negatively impacted by their specific supervisors.

“I feel maybe we could have more qualified teachers maybe. Some teachers don’t know a lot and make mistakes just like us.”

“I believe that there should be training for supervisors on how to talk to tutors and how to listen to them. I had an incident at my school where my boss was unprofessional and continued to give me an insincere apology. The other adults handled the situation well, but she ended up yelling with a tutor.”

Mentorship

Tutors specifically noted the value of receiving feedback and guidance, both on specific tasks and their overall personal and professional growth. A few tutors (n=3) reported that they had not (yet) experienced mentorship as part of their RU experience.

“During the Read USA program, I received invaluable mentorship that prepared me for the real world. My mentor provided constructive feedback on my work, helping me refine my skills and develop a better understanding of my strengths and areas for improvement. This mentorship equipped me with the tools and confidence to navigate challenges in my career journey, ensuring that I can apply the feedback I received to excel in professional settings.”

“I have received mentorship about my future goals from teachers.”

“The mentorship I received during this program was great. My mentors walked me through what I needed to do and how I can always improve and they complimented me when I did well.”

“The mentorship that I have received during Read USA program has been helpful, encouraging, and positive.”

“I received quality mentorship through management in my workplace that allowed me to realize my full potential.”

“The mentors were great at managing the entire group while also giving us individual attention and guidance.”

“The mentorship in the Read USA program has helped me become better and help me adapt to the program.”

One student provided feedback that while the mentorship they received was very positive they do think that a negative working environment may be impactful on their mentorship experience.

“I really like the mentorship given to the tutors, especially new tutors. I think something that could be improved on is the working environment.”

Perceived Support

Tutors described the RU environment as positive, motivating, and encouraging suggesting that teachers and program staff fostered an atmosphere where individuals felt valued, heard, and supported.

“I have received guidance and help from my tutor coordinators when I need it most.”

“My teachers here have been incredibly supportive in terms of my struggles with students, as well as my personal successes.”

“My teachers have always supported me and encouraged me that I can do anything I put my mind to.”

“I was supported by both my fellow tutors and supervisors.”

“It was very motivational and it made me feel like I have a great community I'm in.”

“When I thought I was alone I could always count on Read USA”

Some tutors highlight a need for more support from their supervisors and an environment where their input is valued.

“I believe that there should be training for supervisors on how to talk to tutors and how to listen to them. I had an incident at my school where my boss was unprofessional and continued to give me an insincere apology. The other adults handled the situation well, but she ended up yelling with a tutor.”

“READ USA needs to listen to their students more and ask the TCs to have patience.”

Skill Development

Responses highlighted how the program helped tutors develop important skills for their future careers, such as communication, time management, interpersonal skills, and teamwork.

1. Communication

This is the most commonly stated theme (n=73), with many tutors sharing improvements in their verbal and written communication skills and their ability to express themselves.

“Through Read USA I really developed my communication skills because before I was unable to show patience and explain my ideas. Now, I can say that this job has showed me how to explain my thoughts to others effectively.”

“I have learned teamwork and communication skills through Read USA with better understanding and talking more clearly and confident.”

2. Teamwork

Many tutors described the importance of collaboration, working with others, and supporting their coworkers and teachers.

“This program has helped me get better at teamwork because in high school I didn't have any projects where I had to work with other people this job has made me realize how important teamwork is.”

“Through Read USA I improved in my teamwork skills, teaching skills and knowledge of how to build a resume and present myself professionally.”

3. Professionalism

Tutors learned about appropriate workplace behaviors, professional dress, responsibility, work ethic, and became more aware of workforce expectations.

Improving time management, organizing tasks, and prioritizing responsibilities, also emerged as a theme.

“I never had a job like my job as a READ USA tutor, so I learned a lot about workplace professionalism, superiors and managers, and overall, how to carry myself around my peers and bosses. I've definitely grown to be more assertive and proactive.”

“Read USA has taught me to be organized a lot more and to be prepared. Also taught me time management.”

4. Interpersonal Growth

Tutors also described experiencing interpersonal growth through the RU program, including becoming more empathetic, assertive, adaptable, and confident in social situations.

“What I have learned is to be patient because the students may not have it together right on spot but I have to be their biggest support or inspiration for them to strive in their success.”

“Leadership is a skill I learned during READ USA because anytime I did something well I was able to showcase that skill and lead my team in a new skill.”

“In the program, I've learned to speak out for myself and communicate problems and solutions to supervisors and coworkers. As well as to not be afraid to talk out and make myself seen in important situations.”

“I have gained a lot from my experience as a tutor. Besides the gained sense of comradery with my coworkers and connections with my students, I have built a lot of confidence and assertiveness that I did not know I had any of before this job. I've learned to be quicker and more decisive, and my time management has noticeably improved.”

Confidence

Several tutors indicated that their confidence increased as a result various RU experiences.

“The mentorship I've received has been beneficial in building my confidence to ask questions and accept feedback.”

“I would say that this job has boosted my confidence in a professional sense due to accolades and recognition I have received for my work.”

“I have more confidence in myself and my future and for my ability to get good jobs after read USA.”

“As I continued to work with ReadUSA, I gained confidence in my abilities. In the beginning, I was nervous of my abilities, but after working with ReadUSA for a while, I grew more confident of what I can do.”

"I have gained a lot from my experience as a tutor. Besides the gained sense of comradery with my coworkers and connections with my students, I have built a lot of confidence and assertiveness that I did not know I had any of before this job. I've learned to be quicker and more decisive, and my time management has noticeably improved."

"Over the course of the program, I've gained confidence and communication in the work environment."

Career Goals

The RU experience helped tutors gain clarity about their career goals and aspirations. A few students (n=18) indicated that they plan to pursue a career in teaching as a result of their RU experience.

"Read USA has allowed me to further plan out my goals for my career. It also helped me map what I'm good at and what I can utilize that for my job."

"Going into ReadUSA I knew I wanted to be an educator of some sort, but ReadUSA solidified this as a dream of mine and led me to decide to pursue a career in elementary education."

"READ USA has helped me further know what I want to do."

"READ USA gave me more career options."

"They helped me discover what my passion in life was."

Readiness

Several tutors indicated that their RU experience contributed positively to their professional development and readiness.

"Read USA helps me advance my skill set for future careers such as communication and adaptability."

"Through the READ USA program, I have learned professional workplace behaviors such as appropriate attire, arriving to work at time, and being responsible for your own work."

"READ USA had taught me to be more professional and responsible, really opened my eyes to show me what needs to/needed to be worked on."

"Through READUSA, I have learned how to work in different environments and work with others around me in a responsible and professional manner."

"I learned interpersonal connections and it helped me prepare myself for experiencing what it's like to have a real job."

Inputs and Outputs Coded per Survey Question

Item	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Inputs					
Training	39	6	0	0	45
Exposure	21	0	0	1	22
Mentorship	0	17	0	0	17
Support	7	86	0	0	93
Outputs					
Skill Development	25	12	106	43	186
Confidence	1	1	2	82	86
Goals	16	0	0	0	16
Readiness	0	0	21	6	27
Additional					
Other	7	12	0	1	20

Additional items included: Financial support (saving money for college) and broad descriptions of a positive experience

Appendix H: Resources & Deliverable Product for READ USA Leadership



UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF TUTOR IN A YOUTH LITERACY PROGRAM

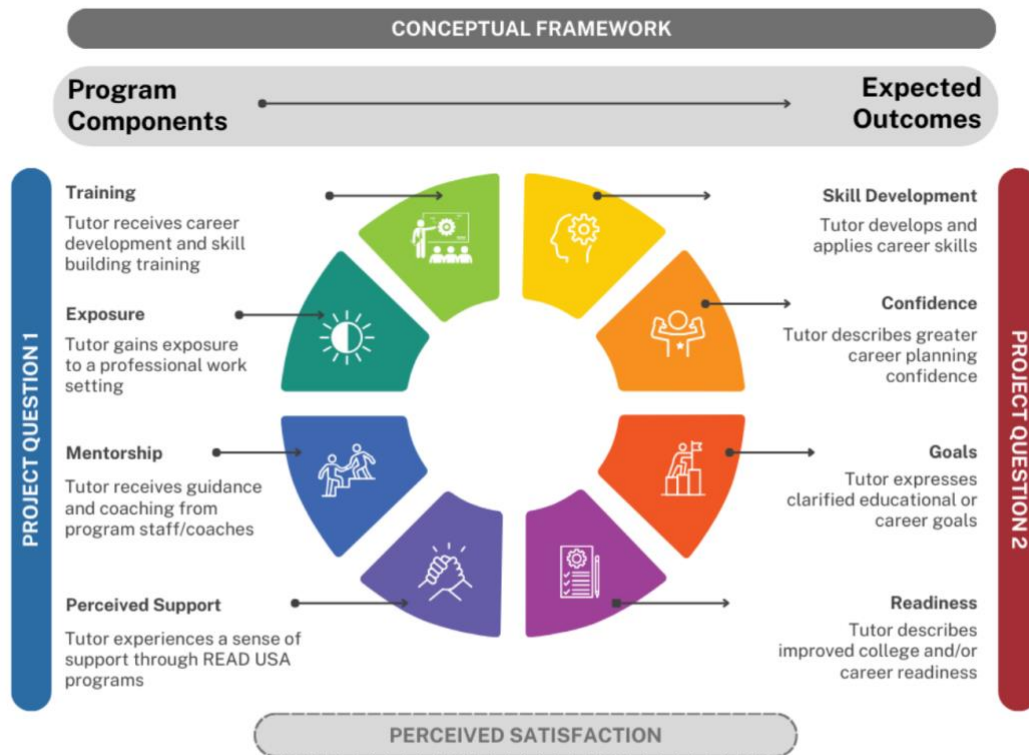
PROJECT SUMMARY FOR READ USA

PROJECT GOAL

Better understand the *experiences and perceived career readiness gains* identified by READ USA tutors

METHOD

39 question survey exploring tutor demographics, school site and tenure, exposure to program inputs, tutor experience, and career readiness outcomes



VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
LLO CAPSTONE PROJECT
SUMMER 2024

Prepared
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UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF TUTOR IN A YOUTH LITERACY PROGRAM

PROJECT QUESTION 1

How do READ USA tutors characterize the **nature and quality of their program experience?**

Finding 1

The **majority of tutors experienced all four program components:** perceived support, mentorship, exposure and training.

Finding 2

Tutors report **high satisfaction** levels with the READ USA program.

Finding 3

The READ USA tutor experience **differs slightly by school site.**

Finding 4

The READ USA tutor **experience is mostly consistent** across SES and ethnic/racial identities.

PROJECT QUESTION 2

What **career readiness outcomes** do READ USA tutors identify as a result of their participation?

Finding 5

Tutors indicate READ USA **positively impacted all four targeted workforce development outcomes:** skill development, confidence, goals and perceived career readiness.

Finding 6

Perceived support is the strongest predictor of program satisfaction and all four workforce development outcomes.

Tutors also report skill development in four main areas: **communication, teamwork, professionalism, interpersonal growth.**





UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF TUTORING IN A YOUTH LITERACY PROGRAM

Recommendations

1: MAINTAIN

Maintain efforts to gather feedback from tutors

ALIGNED WITH FINDINGS 1-6

2: ENHANCE

Enhance future data collection efforts

ALIGNED WITH FINDINGS 1-6

3: EXPAND

Expand pathways for personalization and choice

ALIGNED WITH FINDING 5

4: ACTIVATE

Activate the power of mentors within workforce development training

ALIGNED WITH FINDINGS 1 & 4- 6

In their words ...



"I love how READ USA focused on not only helping elementary school students with their reading, but their high school age employees' professional skills."

"This mentorship equipped me with the tools and confidence to navigate challenges in my career journey, ensuring that I can apply the feedback I received to excel in professional settings."





UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF TUTORS IN A YOUTH LITERACY PROGRAM

Resources

RESEARCH
SUMMARY

<https://tinyurl.com/READUSAResearchSummary>

TOOLS +
RESOURCES

<https://tinyurl.com/READUSAProjectResources>

SURVEY
INSTRUMENT

<https://tinyurl.com/READUSATutorSurvey>

PRESENTATION
DECK

<https://tinyurl.com/READUSAPresentation>

With appreciation

Thank you for an amazing collaboration. We are grateful for this opportunity and can't wait to see what READ USA accomplishes moving forward!