A little over ten years ago, I was teaching second grade in an urban school in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Two years prior, I had spent a year in Los Angeles as an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer, working right here at JEP implementing innovative literacy programs at two of our current USC ReadersPlus partner schools – Foshay Learning Center and Weemes Elementary. That year of service introduced me both to the richly diverse neighborhood surrounding USC, and the incredible programs and staff here at JEP.

Let me first say that I absolutely love teaching. When Dick Cone, the Executive Director of JEP at the time and my VISTA supervisor, emailed me in the dead of winter in Wisconsin, telling me first about the 80 degrees and sunny weather in Los Angeles and then about President Clinton’s America Reads initiative, I was not looking to leave the classroom (Wisconsin weather, yes; the classroom, no). Truly, if any other university had contacted me, offering me the position of director of this new program I would not have been inclined to take it. However, JEP (now celebrating its 35th anniversary) is a different sort of university program, and taking the position was like coming home.

USC ReadersPlus is celebrating its own anniversary as a JEP program this year – 10 years! During this time, I have had the incredible opportunity of working with so many amazing college students who are impacting children in our neighborhood classrooms in ways that classroom teachers cannot. As a former classroom teacher, I know how frustrating it is to try to give each child in a classroom the individual attention they require for their unique learning needs and styles.

Our USC Readers and Math Mentors are perfect role models for our students as they continue to learn and grow through their interactions with students, staff and families at our schools. For every “aha” moment that we observe as children suddenly make connections in learning to read or understanding a new math concept, our college students experience similar “aha” moments as their eyes open to new understandings.

Being a part of USC ReadersPlus has impacted my views on community involvement and the importance of education. I now realize the importance of policy planning on education and community development, and I have recognized that education policies is a new interest of mine and may become a future goal after graduation.

-- Clurina Cooper, USC Reader, Norwood Elementary School, fall '05 - present

USC ReadersPlus has really impacted me as an individual by strengthening the love I have for helping children learn and it has also helped me recognize that I would like to go into the field of education as a profession.

-- Chey Gaston, USC Reader, Foshay Elementary School, fall '05 - present

In its ten years, approximately 1,250 college students have worked with the USC ReadersPlus program providing nearly 240,000 hours of individualized academic assistance in reading and math to more than 5,000 neighborhood children. We look forward to many more years impacting the lives of college students and young learners alike, and would like to express our thanks to all the principals, teachers and school staff who have provided invaluable support to all of our students over the years. Ten years and counting!

Peace,
Tina
Results of the Fall 2006 Assessments

Every fall and spring semester our program administers assessments with our students to help evaluate improvement and the hard work of our tutors and USC Readers staff. Each semester these assessments have demonstrated the impact our mentors have on the academic growth of their students, and this past fall semester was no exception. The goal of the assessment is for the mentor to determine what their student has learned, what skills and concepts need further attention, and which strategies were successful in helping them learn. Pre-assessment is administered at the beginning of the semester to help set goals, and the post-assessment provides us with an evidence of progress.

Our set of data taken from the assessments demonstrates that our students improved in both math and reading levels last semester. Fifty percent (12 out of our 24) of our students who are mentored in reading were graduated prior to the end of the assessment period or recommended for graduation from our program based on post-test improvements. Those students who didn’t graduate, still showed significant growth. For example students who were administered the alphabet assessment could recognize on average 24% more upper case letters, and 22% more lower case letters than at post assessment. Beyond qualitative data, the reading “interviews” demonstrate attitude changes that emerge through the one-on-one literacy assistance of our USC Readers.

Our math students also demonstrated strong improvements in understanding grade level math objectives. The graph below demonstrates the pre and post-test data for the students that completed both parts of the math assessment:

![Graph showing number of math questions missed pre-test vs. post-test for different students.]

Welcome new readers and math mentors!

Erica Edwards, Freshman, English
Claudia Munoz, Senior, American Studies
Katie Souther, Junior, Psychology
Zach Baumgartner, Sophomore, Cinema
Lauren Barbato, Freshman, Writing
Grace Lam, Sophomore, Neuroscience
Emily Smith, Freshman, Business
Ginny McDowell, Sophomore, Undeclared
Christopher Lasic, Freshman, Neurology
Julia Rachowiecki, Freshman, Political Science
Celeste Mendez, Freshman, Communication

Nicole Sharma, Freshman, Political Science and Communication
Ellen Giuliano, Junior, Italian, Communication
Emily Smith, Freshman, Business Administration
Gregg Parker, Senior, English (Creative Writing)
Joyce Stuedin, Senior, Music Industry and Creative Writing
Anthony Bautista, Freshman, Psychology
Katie Souther, Junior, Psychology
Eliza Betke, Senior, Education
Michelle Hoang, Junior, Communication
Victor Cota, Senior, Psychology
Have you ever wondered how JEP started and how long the beloved house on the brink of campus has housed the JEP project at USC? On March 2nd, the JEP house hosted a 35th Anniversary celebration in which past and current program assistants, Readers, and volunteers were able to share in the ways that JEP has impacted both the students at USC and the surrounding community for the past three decades.

JEP was born in 1972, founded by Dr. Barbara Seaver Gardner, who had a vision to provide students at USC with the opportunity to have an impact on the surrounding community. The JEP program was based on the concept of "service learning", which allows students to take what they learn in the classroom and share their knowledge with kids in USC neighborhood schools. Since JEP’s beginnings, the program has expanded to one of the largest service learning programs in the country, and encompasses various outreach programs such as Trojan Health Volunteers, The Literacy Project, and our very own USC Readers Plus!!

Readers Race for the Cure!

This semester USC readers and math mentors have come together to help towards fighting a greater cause. Each Family of Five school has pledged to participate in the "Relay for Life" by sending at least 5 members from their site, who would each raise $100 dollars to go towards cancer research. With the help of Cristina Garcia and Barbara Leung, the campaign was a success. On March 30-April 1st 16 Readers and Math mentors attended the event, raising over $2,000. The Readers Plus Team was even awarded with the “Best Rookie Team Award”! Congratulations to everyone who contributed!

Barbara and Leung and Danielle Schutz Represent the USC ReadersPlus Team at Race for the Cure

Students at 32nd St. working hard in after school...."fight on"

Having Fun in After School!

Pen Pal Project at Weemes

This semester the students at Weemes Elementary School had the opportunity to write penpal letters to students in Ashigawa, Japan.

Spring into Spring at 32nd St.

The afterschool program at 32nd St. has been celebrating the coming of Spring this semester with daily activities that include studying the vernal equinox and planting seeds and watching them sprout.

Typing Program at Norwood

The Norwood students have had a chance to get out of the classroom and explore the world of computers at the school computer lab. The students are working on research projects, typing poetry, and sharpening their computer skills all at the same time!

Readers Theater at Foshay

Come watch the Foshay after school students use their theatrical skills April 27th at 3:30 as the after school puts on a Readers Theater featuring Fairytales.
March 28, 2007 was the first annual USC Readers Plus Science Extravaganza. This Extravaganza was designed by Readers Plus staff members Sarvy Aliabadi, Lauren Carter, and Danielle Schutz. The layout of the evening was a little bit different from other Extravaganzas we have done in the past. Science lesson plan stations were set up around the JEP House and USC Readers and Math Mentors were all invited to participate in this interactive design. Once arriving at the JEP House the USC Readers and Math Mentors had the freedom to go through each lesson plan “station” and discover different science activities at their own pace. The different lesson plans and activities covered a wide range of science topics. The lessons included: Animal Migration, Comets, Distance between Planets, Healthy Eating, Heart Rate/Physical Exercise, Layers of the Earth, Light, Mapping of the Earth/Cartography, Mars, Properties: Floating and Sinking, Recycling, and Sugar. Each science activity was unique and offered Readers and Math Mentors the opportunity to learn new ways to incorporate science into the lessons they teach at their individual school sites. In addition, each science activity was designed with a clear connection to both reading and math and was even accompanied by a book from our USC Readers library that went along with the topic to enhance learning. Please stop by the Readers Plus office for copies of the science lessons or additional information and don’t forget to check out our Science Extravaganza Bulletin Board outside the Readers Plus office.

-Sarvy Aliabadi (USC Readers Plus Science Coordinator)

What Readers had to say....

"All the lessons were so creative and fun. I learned I need to expand my mind making science activities"

"We are going to use the solar system activities, the recycling activity, and the nutrition activities as weekly themes for our after school program"

"I learned that it is actually possible to teach kids about nutrition in a fun and interesting way"

"I didn’t know so many books could be used to incorporate science"
"Layers of the Earth"

Materials: "Magic School Bus Inside the Earth" by Joanna Cole, globe, apple, plastic knife, blue, red, orange, yellow and white construction paper marked with appropriate diameter circles, scissors, glue, black and white crayon.

What to do: Use the apple as a demonstration as the composition of the globe-a round sphere that has a "crust" (apple skin), "mantle" (fruit) and a "core". Read the book together The Magic School Bus inside the Earth, pointing out the different features of each layer of the earth. Have them add details about the different compositions if they have time.

"Properties: Floating and Sinking"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Properties</th>
<th>Sink</th>
<th>Float</th>
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<tbody>
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Materials: bowl with water, ping pong ball, spoon, cork, washer, sponge, other objects, graphic organizer.

What to do: Explain to the student that you will be doing an experiment to see which different size properties are more likely to sink, and which are more likely to float. Have the student make predictions for each object, and record their thoughts on a chart. Put each object into the bowl and record the actual results. After each object is tested, have the students make conclusions about which properties cause objects to float or sink.

Science Books to Use in the JEP Library

"The Monster Health Book: A guide to eating healthy" Edward Miller

"Let's Try is out in the Water" Simon Seymour

"Liquid and Buoyancy" Barbara Tuyt

"Gregory the Terrible Eater" by Mitchell Sharmat and Jose Aruego

"Magic School Bus Inside the Earth" by Joanna Cole

"The Everything Kids Science Experiments Books", by Tom Robinson

"The Oxford Children's Book of Science", by Charles Taylor and Stephen Poole

"The Reasons for Seasons", by Gail Gibbons

"Just a Dream", by Chris Van Allisburg
Family of Five Teachers

Welcome To Family of Five Schools!

Mrs. Lynn Brown, new principal at Weemes Elementary tells us a little about herself:

Career History: This is my sixth year as a principal. I was principal at Cienega for five years. I started my career as a elementary teacher at Saturn Elementary. After seven years I moved to 24th Street Elementary to be a Title One Coordinator.

What brought you to Weemes Elementary? I came to L. B. Weemes because I wanted a new experience.


Favorite Adult Book: The Color Purple -- which I have read three times!

I also enjoy Harry Potter--I have read all six of them and I can hardly wait for number 7 this summer.

What has your experience been working with USC ReadersPlus so far? I have seen the USC readers working with children daily -- I think consistency is extremely important. I don't have any advice at this point -- just a thank you for all USC readers does for L.B. Weemes!

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Teacher Communication

As part of our regular paperwork the Readers and Mentors complete monthly teacher communication forms which gives a venue for both the mentor to fill the teacher in on how their sessions are going, as well as a chance for the teacher to give any helpful advice or suggestions. Below is a model of a perfect dialogue Erica Edwards had on her communication form with her student's teacher, Ms. Rowe at 32nd Street:

Erica's Report: Alex has improved immensely in the last few visits I've had with her. At first, Alex had a difficult time concentrating. To solve this problem, I created alphabet cards, and as a game, I make her put letters together to make words.

Ms. Rowe's Response: I too have noticed improvement in her attention. Your game sounds wonderful! Practicing reading aloud with the paper books in her desk would be beneficial for her progress!

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Tips for Communicating With Teachers:

- Make sure to stop in regularly either before or after school hours to chat with your student's teacher to see how they feel your student is doing.
- When you first pick up your student, make sure to introduce yourself and give any necessary contact information.
- Don't be late/miss sessions without notifying the teacher, they are expecting you (and your students)!
Farewell to our Seniors....

Name: Tamara Krulisky, Foshay  Years with Readers: 1
After Graduation: Graduate school at Mount St. Mary's for my BSN (Nursing)
Always remember Patience...

Name: Maureen Osborne, Vermont  Years with Readers: 4
After Graduation: going to grad school for anthropology to study second language acquisition and access to education for people in lower socioeconomic situations.
Always remember; stay strong in your resolve to make a difference.
These kids will remember you when you’re gone.

Name: Gregg Parker, Foshay Years with Readers: 1 (I’m new)
After Graduation: Grad School? (Fingers Crossed)
Always remember you can totally judge a book by its cover. If it’s got dogs on it, it’s probably good.

Name: Chelsey Rask, Norwood  Years with Readers: 4
After Graduation: Working for a non-profit or Teach for America
Always remember...that it’s all about the kids. I know it seems simple, but when it comes down to it, that’s all that matters.

Name: Jordan Howard, Foshay Years with Readers: 1
After Graduation: Traveling to Spain for a semester, then attending medical school in Fall 08
Always remember...If you do afterschool, never offer to carry a student’s backpack, they will ALL want you to carry their backpacks!

Name: Francisco Pus, Foshay  Years with Readers: 1.5
After Graduation: Hopefully be an audit accountant for a public accounting firm.

Name: Alisa Cohen, Foshay  Years with Readers: 3
After graduation I will be going on to get a masters in teaching and teach elementary school.
Always remember: The more you believe in what you are teaching, and are excited about it, the more it will rub off on your students.

Name: Jason Yano, Weemes Elementary  Years with Readers: 2.5
After Graduation: Hopefully Teaching in either Chicago, NY, Oakland, or Los Angeles.
Always Remember: When kids “don’t get it”, it’s nobody’s fault, but it is our responsibility to figure out how to get them to “get it!”

Name: Elyse Derian, 32nd St  Years with Readers: 4
After Graduation: Moving to Washington D.C. to work on Capitol Hill
Always Remember: Stickers work wonders!

Name: Adriana Ovalle, Weemes  Years with Readers: 4
After Graduation: take a year off to work, then go to grad school for psychology.

Name: Jordan Rice, 32nd Street  Years with Readers: 4, plus 1 summer
After Graduation: Pursuing a career in broadcast journalism (it could be anywhere in the U.S., I don’t know yet)

Name: Barbara Leung, Weemes Elementary School  Years with Readers: 2 1/2 years
Always remember ... Work as though your students will always remember you ... because they will. =)

Name: Claudia Muñoz, Vermont School  Years with Readers: 1 semester
After graduation: I plan on becoming a teacher’s aid, study for the GRE, and eventually get my Master’s in Education.
Always remember: Do your best so you can go to USC!

Name: Julie Brown, Foshay elementary  Years with Readers: 1
Always remember: Keep track of what your student responds to. If they like dinosaurs, read books about dinosaurs. Most of all, you want them to know they should be proud of themselves for everything they accomplish.

Name: Chris Jones, Norwood  Years with Readers: 2
After Graduation: Account Executive for an equipment finance company in downtown Los Angeles.
Always remember: Each student is unique and has unique needs. You cannot apply a standard method of tutoring for every student.

Name: Sarai Juarez, 32nd  Years with Readers: 2.5
After Graduation: Perhaps teaching abroad in Spain
Always remember: Be very patient and motivate the child. Sometimes they struggle not because they don’t know or aren’t capable, it’s simply because they don’t have confidence.

Name: Lauren Luskey, 32nd Street  Years with Readers: 1 1/2
After Graduation: I plan to go to grad school for education.
Always remember: have fun with your students!

Name: Yesenia Guerra, Weemes Elementary  Years with Readers: 1.5
After Graduation: Teach for America and/or Grad School
Always remember: The reasons you decided to join USC Readers because those reasons are helpful motivators to overcome obstacles you face as a tutor

Name: Danielle Schutz, Office staff  Years with Readers: 4
After Graduation: Teach public elementary school in S.F.
Always Remember: To be passionate in all that you do, but to also be equally committed

Name: Clatrina Cooper, Norwood  Years with Readers: 4
After Graduation: Teaching/Grad School
Always remember: Be very patient with children!
Our Favorite Part of being a USC Reader

"Hanging out with the kids, crazy dancing, and reading some great books!" - Joyce Sutedja

"Having a chance to work with the kids and be back in the elementary school atmosphere." - Emily Smith

"Look forward to seeing my kids' eyes brighten up once I open that door to pick them up. Not only are you tutoring these kids, you develop personal relationships with them." - Celeste Mendez

"I enjoy what I do, I love my work environment, my peers, and most of all, the kids" - Luis Carlos Lopez

"I have really learned how creative I can be" - Chey Gaston

"I see myself helping the students, who will later help our neighborhood" - Agnes Tang

"Before I started working, I remember worrying that there would be cultural barriers that would prevent me, a small girl from Pennsylvania, from making strong bonds with the mostly minority students that I would be tutoring. But I quickly learned that a kid is a kid anywhere you go, and they value the special attention that comes with having a readers. I don't have to try to make them like me; all I had to do was be myself and share with them my enthusiasm for learning." - Jordan Rice

Celebrate Reading!

~ Month of April: Poetry Month
~ April 12: DEAR DAY (Drop Everything and Read)
~ Reading is Fun Week: May 13-19

Have a Wonderful Summer!!