A Thank You to Readers\textsuperscript{Plus}

By: Elizabeth Inglese, Literacy Director

Three years at Readers\textsuperscript{Plus}—how could it go by so fast? When I began working as Literacy Director in 2009 I never could have envisioned all the lessons I would learn from this program. The summer before I joined JEP, I reflected on my experiences tutoring children in Rhode Island and during my time interning for non-profits. I thought about the ways I could incorporate my poetry background into our lesson plans and adapt the activities I had learned at arts conferences to get the kids to think in new ways. Then I arrived at the JEP fall retreat. Norwood Coordinator, Chelsea Snyder, told me at dinner that Readers\textsuperscript{Plus} was at the center of her college experience, it came first before all else. The other Readers around her nodded. I came to realize, Readers\textsuperscript{Plus} is not a campus job for the students it employs, it is an experience that challenges them, rewards them, and teaches them who they are. It is something they pour hours into and become experts at before graduating and moving onward. Listening to the wisdom of our coordinators at weekly Monday staff meetings, observing tutoring sessions at our seven schools, planning training with my Co-Directors and Tina, I came to learn so much more than I ever taught. In our Readers\textsuperscript{Plus} reflection question, we try to help tutors consider what they are gaining as they give back to their community—service-learning, the exchange of lessons and service, is at the heart of what we do at JEP. I realize looking back on my time at Readers\textsuperscript{Plus}, that I alone could never give back to Readers all that its kids, tutors, and staff have given to me. I’ll move on to the next stage of my life, though, looking for ways to give forward. Thanks to JEP for all the ways you’ve made me better!
Readers Extravaganza!  
By: Jesse Papia, Math Director

There was laughter. There was candy. There was more food than the kitchen could contain. And there were lesson plans. So many lesson plans.

On the first Wednesday in March, Readers Plus hosted our 2nd Annual Extravaganza. This was an opportunity for all of our Readers across our seven school sites to come together and gather lesson materials and ideas to take back and use with their own students. Each school had its own booth where Readers took turns modeling math and literacy lesson plans, with enough copies for their fellow tutors to take. Some of the lessons were more straightforward, with packets of handouts. Other booths were filled with laughing Readers and intricate board games – It was easy to see why these were lessons they had found successful with their young students.

For two hours, we had the exciting and too-rare opportunity to see all of our Readers come together in one space and talk about what they are doing at their schools. Our Coordinators and Assistant Coordinators do a phenomenal job representing their schools and sharing their tutors’ questions and successes. Hearing so many passionate Readers swapping stories from the field made for a unique and powerful evening.

“It’s nice because we forget there are other Readers at other sites and we’re all doing the same job…Seeing other people results in getting new ideas that we wouldn’t have had otherwise,” said Miles du Mosch, Coordinator for our 32nd Street school site.

Our goal when we planned for the 2nd annual Extravaganza was to modify what we had done last year and focus on harnessing these new ideas from our Readers. You see, in its first year, Extravaganza was held in the fall and themed around the upcoming Halloween festivities. Both directors created and modeled lesson plans, which Readers could take in their entirety and use at their own sites.

For this reincarnation, we wanted to showcase the great things happening across our schools while still allowing Readers to walk away with a plethora of lessons and materials to use in their own sessions.

Our Readers – we observe on a regular basis – are the creative experts, adapting lesson plans to suit their students’ individual interests and creating lesson plans that suit their needs. Elizabeth and I have the opportunity to learn about their great work through school site visits or during our one-on-one meetings, and we wanted this event to allow all tutors the chance to learn from one another as well.
For the second year in a row, the Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts & Sciences sponsored a tent at the LA Times Festival of Books for JEP and the USC Readers Plus program to highlight its work with the community. For two days, April 21st and 22nd, our tutors shared poetry and hands-on math and reading activities related to the featured poems with children from our immediate community and beyond. Over 400 free books were distributed to children from our USC Family of Schools, along with tote bags packed with Festival of Books pencils, buttons and “I love JEP” temporary tattoos.

The participation at our booth nearly doubled from that of last year, with a total of 686 children and 307 of their parents interacting with our tutors over the course of the two day event, for a grand total of 993 Festival participants!

Many thanks to our tutors and the many friends of JEP who made the event a huge success!

JEP parent, Rushika Suriyakuma, assisting the 32nd Street School Readers Plus staff reading poetry to kids and distributing free books.

Congratulations 2012 Graduates!

Thank you for all the time and energy you have dedicated to the children, families, and schools in our community. Best wishes as you embark on your new endeavors, and please stay in touch with your JEP family. You will be missed!

Junping Chen  Gina Hakim  Shelly Nakamura
Evelyn Cintron  Elizabeth Inglese  Briana Neveras
Yesenia Cuarenta  Amanda Johnson  Jesse Papia
Wenlei Gu  Jenny Lee  Natasha Snegova
Jorge Guerreiro  Esther Mojica  Anne-Marie White
**Student Spotlight: Leilani Ramirez**  
*By: Paola Garcia, Tutor*

The ultimate goal of a USC Reader is to instill passion and confidence within every student they help. Second grader Leilani Ramirez has shown throughout her year with us that she has gained confidence and passion for reading and writing.

When I first met Leilani, she struggled with reading and was too timid to read out loud. However, as time progressed, so did her learning.

She started picking up books to read for fun, her reading and comprehension skills improved, and she now enjoys doing her homework. Leilani’s teacher, Mrs. Cristales noted, “Leilani started off being able to write three words a minute. Now, she can write forty-three words a minute!”

Leilani has become a role model to her little sister, Yuri, who is also a student served by ReadersPlus, and other children in the program by learning how to dedicate time to her homework.

**Easter Eggs in Afterschool**  
*By: Kenny Martin, Tutor*

On the last Thursday before 32nd Street went on Spring Break, Jenn Choi went above and beyond the call of duty to make a wonderful activity for the students in our afterschool program, bringing in three Easter Eggs filled with candy for each child.

The children were encouraged, once they found their own eggs, to help others find their eggs. The amount of teamwork shown was fantastic and inspiring.

Everyone wanted to see each other succeed, and Jenn did a fantastic job setting up this fun activity!

**A New Addition: Kendall Robertson!**  
*By: Briana Neveras, Assistant Coordinator*

As a new reader, Kendall Robertson has truly gone above and beyond this semester. Since she's unable to work many after school hours, Kendall currently tutors six students during the school day - and even asked if she could have more!

In observing her in her sessions, it is clear that Kendall genuinely enjoys coming up with fun and engaging lesson plans catered to each one of her students. When asked to comment about Kendall, her students rave about how “fun,” “pretty,” and “smart” she is. Her fellow Readers feel the same way.

“She’s great with the kids and is always so patient and understanding,” says Chris Barundia.

Truly, Kendall is an excellent addition to our 32nd Street team, and we look forward to watching as she continues to make an impact in the years to come!
Spotlight on a Student!  By: Gina Hakim, Coordinator

Gabriela has been a pleasure to work with all year long! She has a great attitude and is always completely focused on the task at hand. This became especially clear during our WonderKids activity for Ecology.

I was going to read “The Giving Tree” to the students and when Gabby saw the book, she immediately got excited and said it was her favorite.

She loves the book so much that she had it almost completely memorized – when I was reading the book to the students, she recited all the lines along with me from memory.

When we started flipping through the book together and I asked her what her favorite part of the book was, she said “All of it is my favorite part!”

After-School Program (ASP)  By: Tracy Yen, Tutor

I enjoy ASP because it gives me a chance to meet many different students. My favorite parts of ASP are when the kids share their own writing. I think our projects on writing help bring out creativity and storytelling.

The children are always very excited and enthusiastic when working on these projects. We put them in groups in order for them to learn to share and cooperate with each other. They become very attached to their teammates which creates for a very lively and competitive atmosphere that's all in good fun.

They love when the readers give them team points and rewards! These kids are so bright and clever, and I enjoy being with them every ASP.

The Fun of One-on-Ones!  By: Drew Matsuda, Assistant Coordinator

Spending one-on-one tutoring time with my students is the best part of Readers’ Plus. It’s a time to get creative with your lesson plans and to let your students get creative with you!

I like integrating lesson plans and games because it encourages learning. I enjoy when the kids are excited to learn because it makes it more fun and easier on both of us.

Sometimes I let my students make up their own games and I let them play after they're able to answer questions about the subjects we're working on. A lot of the time, the games help them overcome their feelings of discouragement. It’s very rewarding every time I see a smile on one of their faces when they get a question right and get to play a game.
**ASP at its Finest**  
By: Dimiana Saad, Coordinator

Our after school program at Mack Elementary has changed a great deal since Mr. Morales took over as the head teacher. He works for KYDS, the after school program at Mack and his ideas have helped our ASP program grow and improve.

Mr. Morales loves to focus on culture, and is always open to hearing new ideas from our ReadersPlus staff. One of my favorite activities lately, was when the children got to make their own authentic Egyptian vases while simultaneously learning about the heritage and culture of the Ancient Egyptians.

The kids were having the time of their life, especially Edward Umana.

---

**Student Spotlight: Zoe Perdomo**  
By: Karina Rhem, Tutor

As a tutor, having Zoe as a student has been truly enjoyable. From day one, Zoe came into the classroom with one thing on her mind and it was to learn.

Being a freshman at USC, this was my first year with ReadersPlus. Zoe’s openness to learning made an atmosphere where I felt comfortable to create challenging lessons specific to her needs.

Zoe has a great understanding of pronunciation and comprehension. She even knows when to provide emphasis while reading.

As a tutor I continued to challenge her skills with vocabulary and writing activities. I see her graduating very soon, if not this year. Zoe definitely has the desire to learn and with the proper encouragement, she can be whatever she wants.

---

**Lesson Planning**  
By: Matt Ramirez, Tutor

First encounters are usually accompanied with a silence or awkwardness that can never really be duplicated. Fortunately for me, my first meeting with Tyree, a third grader from Mack was anything but silence or awkwardness.

He engaged in conversation with his opening question, “You got a girlfriend?” I replied semi-embarrassingly “No.” He laughed and said, “That stinks cuz I have 8!”

As he went through the list of girls he was exclusive with, it made sense to me that if there was one thing that Tyree was interested in it was girls. I asked him what his feelings were about math, and it was clear they were no where near his level of interest in girls.

This made lesson planning easy as I came up with a couple of multiplication and subtraction lessons that revolved around Tyree’s one (or multiple) true loves. The lessons were a hit and got this tutoring gig off to a great start. Tyree was able to stay interested and grasp the concepts because who doesn’t love a smart educated young man?
Lesson Plan Highlight
By: Maggie Ching, Tutor

One of the lessons that worked great with my student, Michael, is playing an Easter hunt game.

Before playing, we went over several sight activities. Then, I put the words we worked on in different plastic eggs and hid them around Norwood. I had him go on an Easter egg hunt and he absolutely loved it!

After finding each egg, Michael had to say the word and then form sentences with those words as well.

When he successfully read the word and used it in a sentence, he received a sweet prize!

Example of sight word activities planned by Maggie.

Graduating Senior
By: Jenny Lee, Tutor

I’ve been with ReadersPlus for the past three years and I can honestly say this program has been the most rewarding part of my time here at USC. Working with my students and seeing each one grow inspired me to pursue a career in education! I have loved every lesson, every game, every laugh and every story shared with these students and I will miss them all so dearly.

I even remember this year during our Spring Break when we didn’t teach, I DREAMT about working with our after school program!

One of the most precious students I’ve had the pleasure of mentoring is now a 1st grader named Eliana. I worked with her last year when she was in kindergarten and was struggling with reading, phonics, and blending. But over the course of our sessions, her enthusiasm for learning shone through. She would tell me each day how she practiced reading at home with her mom, and how much she LOVES learning.

This year I work with her again in after school. One day she came up to me and said,

“I remember you! You were my teacher in Kinder! You helped me learn so much. Now I’m a smart girl.”

My heart melted! Eliana finishes her homework so quickly and happily. I’m overjoyed everyday that I was able to be part of her educational career.

Student Spotlight: Dayana Justo
By: Danielle Starr, Tutor

Dayana is the type of student every tutor wants. Her drive and enthusiasm for learning is phenomenal and makes me look forward to going to Norwood every Friday.

Dayana began working on second grade standards like adding, subtraction, fractions, multiplication, and each week she wants to learn more challenging material once she understands the concepts I teach her.

With this amazing attitude and her beautiful smile, there is no way any tutor will pass up the opportunity to teach her. She comprehends lessons very quickly and at the pace she is going she is on track to graduate from the ReadersPlus program! Dayana is the sweetest girl and a pleasure to teach.

Daniella working on a lesson plan for Dayana.
Experience of a Posse Student  
By: Mushfiqur Chowdhury, Tutor and Posse Student

ReadersPlus has truly been a memorable experience within my first year of college. Paired with the opportunity to contribute personal experiences and lessons learned from Posse, I feel that ReadersPlus has been truly beneficial to my growth as an individual.

Posse is not a scholarship, but it’s a didactic process to empower students and allow them to mature into leaders. In this way, ReadersPlus allows the freedom to their tutors to mature from tutors to teachers who are tackling real problems that are faced by real people. We are changing the world from early on so that we may have long lasting effects. Posse compliments that.

It has empowered the cohort of 12 New York students who received the scholarship this year, in order to come to campus and show how students can contribute a special, different type of leadership—leadership by diversity and experience.

I have worked with students in the projects in New York, and also with students in low-income neighborhoods. I see consistency in problems and lessons to be learned. In this way, I have been able to relate. But with all scenarios, there is something new to be learned. The struggle to overcome this barrier with students is what makes us all teachers. I am able to take Posse’s lessons in persistence and apply it to ReadersPlus.

This experience as a tutor is incredible. One thing that will never change the time given to change the lives of these children. We could do so more with so much more time, but the skill is when you can take a small amount of time allotted and use it to benefit and change the lives of students. Thank you ReadersPlus! Keep fighting on!

Poetry Winner  
A poem by Meghan Smith, Tutor

Haikus, action poems, odes and more—That’s what this Poetry unit has in store.

Learning new styles and making new rhymes.  
Our poetry skills will be the best of time.

Now only what to write about?  
It must be the best, without a doubt!

Finally decided, it’s time to start, 
To write the best poem with all our heart!

Who knew talking about a dolphin’s dinner 
Would give our site a poetry winner?

Esmeralda Hernandez was really hesitant to write her own poem but after we decided it would be about her favorite animals, dolphins, she couldn’t stop writing!

Behavior Improvement  
By: Ethan Boswell, Tutor

This year I had the privilege to tutor a 3rd grade girl named Zaida in mathematics. During our first training session Zaida didn’t cooperate and had a tendency to misbehave.

Whenever I asked her to solve a math problem, her visage clearly darkened. She told me she hated math. So I decided to patiently instruct Zaida and encourage her to appreciate math by engaging her with fun activities.

Slowly Zaida has opened up and has come to enjoy our tutoring sessions together. She has learned that sometimes we must do tasks we do not feel like doing, but over time we may gain a new perspective on what we once dreaded.
Wonderkids Sandman  By: Angela Bullon, Tutor

My favorite after school activity so far has been when we learned about erosion. It was my favorite because the students were not only able to learn about it through the book we used to teach it, but they also got a chance to have hands on experience with erosion.

The activity consisted of the students separated into teams building the tallest building they could make with the sand and water provided. At first our team began building a mountain looking structure, but then we came up with the idea of making a sandman; a sandman being like a snowman, but made of sand.

The kids seemed really excited by this idea and quickly got to work. They gathered other supplies such as branches and rocks for arms and eyes. During our first attempt of making the sandman, we stuck a stick on his side and he completely collapsed. We were very saddened by this, but we didn’t let it affect us. The kids quickly got to work and we began rebuilding the snowman. Being more careful the second time, they were able to rebuild him to his original glory.

At the end of the day our group definitely had the best sand object.

“Engineering” with Marshmallows  By: Connie Ge, Tutor

“Aaaaah!” yell a group of first, second, and third graders as an “earthquake” hits Southern California. Each student has carefully built a house out of toothpicks and marshmallows that are being tested in room 47 at Vermont Elementary School. The challenge was to build a sturdy home that would outlast an earthquake based on their intuition's understanding of engineering. This activity was part of the Wonderkids engineering lesson.

Each student was given fifteen minutes to build a complete home (and munch on a few marshmallows). While most students, like Dani, Oscar, Yanira, Joshua, Brayan, and Anaya, built square bases and cubic structures following the example I built, one student, Nathan, built a very unique, irregularly-shaped structure that looks something like a conglomeration of connected triangles. When I complemented him on his house, he acted shy, hid his house with his hands, and told me “No looking!” so I went back to observing the energetic kids excitedly construct. In the end, after a few seconds of exciting table-shaking and earth-quaking, all the homes survived and were left standing. And no marshmallows were left uneaten.

Student Spotlight  By: Annelisha Dixon, Tutor

At Vermont I work with Alvaro, a funny, energetic, and imaginative 1st grader. Learning for Alvaro is a little difficult only because he has trouble memorizing letters, sounds, words, and concepts. From the beginning of the semester until now, Alvaro has improved tremendously.

In February, he had trouble pronouncing almost all of his vowel sounds and many of the consonant sounds. Now, he is sounding out words and recognizing chunks of words. I discovered that he learns so well and so efficiently when his learning is accompanied with a fun and creative visual activity.

I realized that although Alvaro struggles to memorize all the rules of beginning reading and writing, he has the capability of succeeding in those areas as long as he has practice and a fun way of learning it all.
Words From a Graduating Senior  
By: Amanda Johnson, Tutor

My name is Amanda Johnson, and I have been with Readers\textsuperscript{Plus} since I was a freshman, four years ago. My favorite part of being a tutor is watching my students learn and grow both academically, and as individuals. Their victories are my victories. I will not only miss seeing them grow and succeed, but I will also miss learning from them; before my time at Readers\textsuperscript{Plus}, I was a less patient and less understanding person.

Working with children has shaped me into a person who is able to relate to others, regardless of who they are or what their background is. I cannot choose only one moment with Readers\textsuperscript{Plus} that I would call my favorite; there are too many. However, there is one moment that I will never forget. It may not be my favorite, but it is my most memorable.

When I returned my kindergartner back to his class for the last time, I told him how proud I was of his accomplishments and that he would be graduating from the program. That means I would not pick him up again for tutoring. He looked at me with teary eyes and said, “Does that mean you don’t love me anymore?” I gave him a great big hug and told him that of course I still love him, and I always will. He asked if we could still be friends. I assured him that we would be, and that I would never forget him. We parted ways that day, but today, almost three years later, I still remember him.

Stepping Up to Assistant Coordinator  
By: Vicki Ju, Tutor

Hey everyone! I am so excited to be the new assistant coordinator for Weemes next semester.

I have thoroughly enjoyed working with Readers\textsuperscript{Plus} for the past year, and am looking forward to becoming more and more involved. This semester I started participating in the after school program, and it has been a wonderful experience. I love working with a group of kids, and I always look forward to seeing the after school children.

Although it hasn’t been a piece of cake, working with the other tutors as my site has truly helped me grow as a mentor, and I hope to help the program expand within the remaining years that I have left at USC.

I can’t wait for the Readers\textsuperscript{Plus} retreat in the fall to meet all the other coordinators in this program!
Welcome to our Fall 2012 Team of Coordinators and Office Staff!

32nd Street
Coordinator: Miles du Mosch
Assistant: Kenny Martin

Science Center
Coordinator: Anne-Marie White

Vermont Elementary
Coordinator: Cesar Magdaleno
Assistant: Yeini Guardia

Weemes Elementary
Coordinator: A’aron Heard
Assistant: Julie Gu

Foshay Elementary
Coordinator: Gina Hakim
Assistant: Drew Matsuda

John. W. Mack Elementary
Coordinator: Dimiana Saad

Norwood Elementary
Coordinator: Esther Mojica
Assistant: Sequoia Tully

Tina Koneazny
JEP Associate Director,
Administration and Educational Outreach

Elizabeth Inglese
Literacy Director

Jesse Papia
Math Director

Natasha Snegova
Central Office Coordinator

Tina Koneazny
JEP Associate Director,
Administration and Educational Outreach

Matt Ackels
Literacy Director

Elizabeth Thompson
Math Director

Nick Cuccia
Central Office Coordinator
USC ReadersPlus is an “America Reads/America Counts” literacy and math tutoring program under the USC Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences.

The program is administered by the Joint Educational Project and funded in part through the Good Neighbor’s Campaign. Our mentors work with seven of the “Family of Schools” surrounding USC.

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