

USC ReadersPLUS

fall 2022 Newsletter

A Peak Inside



Fall 2022 Leadership Team during Fall Training

Honoring the Past, Celebrating the Present, Inspiring our Future

By: Tina Koneazny, JEP Associate Director

I randomly fell upon the phrase above in a "Positive Promotions" advertisement I passed by, but it perfectly describes this fall 2022 semester. What timing! We certainly have been honoring the past this semester as JEP celebrated its 50th Year Anniversary with plenty of fanfare, friends, and fun. Former JEP staff and student alumni, including many former USC Readers, returned to campus to re-connect and honor JEP at the 50th Gala, JEP Open House and/or the Dornsife Homecoming Picnic and Football Game (with our own JEP Block of Seats). Having former JEP-ers return meant so much to us, and we are grateful that it was equally meaningful to many of them:

"As Central Coordinator for over 3 years with USC ReadersPlus, I was energized when attending the 50th anniversary gala. Everything truly comes full circle and I am so lucky to have so many mentors including Susan, Tina, & Tammy. They truly are family to me! JEP will always have a special place in my heart!" - Nicole Sharma, Class of 2010, Public Policy B.S. and Political Science B.A.

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"Whenever anyone asks what the best job I've ever had was, my answer is the same as everyone else who worked there in college: ReadersPlus. In addition to the fun, fulfilling work we did helping kids in the community, I also met my best friends through the program. I suppose it makes sense that such like minded people would get along so swimmingly. Returning to the JEP House this year, nearly a decade after graduating, invoked that warm feeling of "Homecoming" more than anything else the entire weekend. Walking through the house with my friend from college, seeing the wonderful staff who were always so supportive, it brought back so many fond memories of lesson planning, Little Yoginis, and sharing our after school activities. Returning to the JEP house was a wonderful walk down memory lane and a beautiful reminder of the community that's fostered there, one that extends throughout our lives long after graduation." - Kenneth Martin, Class of 2010, Writing for Screen and Television

It is this - both our past and our present - that truly inspire our future. We are ever grateful for our alumni as well as both new and old friends of JEP, including community members and gracious donors, who have and continue to inspire us. And, in many ways, it is our current cohort of student staff leading the charge in these new and challenging times, rebuilding from the past few pandemic years, who inspire us to SERVE ON into the future in new and innovative ways as we continue to work collaboratively, respectfully, and gratefully with all our community partners.

JEP and ReadersPLUS would not be what we are without all of you. It takes a FAMILY. Thank you all for being a part of ours.

JEP Fall Writing Project Submissions

This semester we had a Fall Writing Project asking K- 5 students in our USC JEP partner schools to share what the love about JEP in writing and drawing! We had 26 submissions from students who wrote about how much they love yoga, learning new concepts, and reading with our student staff. We had so much fun reading all the submissions and showcasing them at our JEP 50th Anniversary Celebration Events!



JEP 50th Anniversary Gala and Highlights

Visits from Alumni



Tina Koneazny, Kenny Martin (32nd St.), and Vivian Breckenridge (Vermont) at the JEP Open House



Nicole Sharma (Central Coordinator) and Tina at the JEP 50th Gala



ReadersPLUS Leadership Team at the Gala



Tina with Stacey Chiu (32nd St.) at the USC Homecoming Game



Cesar Ignacio (Vermont) with Kenny, Vivian, and Tina at the Dornsife Homecoming tailgate



JEP Full Time Staff at the JEP Open House

Meet The Dream Team

Central Staff



Tina Koneazny
Associate Director



Nicole Wong-Franklin
Literacy Director



Carla Collier
Math Director



Christine Nguyen
Central Coordinator

Coordinators & Assistant Coordinators



Jade Almodovar
Norwood Coordinator



Kelly Nguyen
Norwood AC



Tania Apshankar
Vermont Coordinator



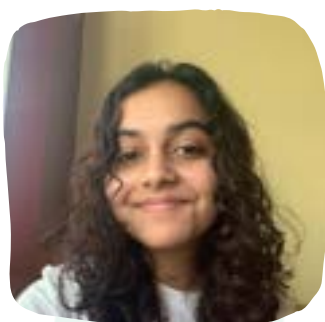
Nataly Lozano
Vermont AC



Vy Ngo
32nd St. Coordinator



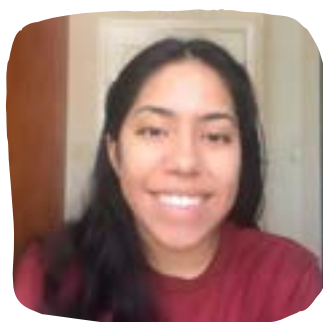
Greg Bishop
32nd St. AC



Ananya Shah
Science Center
Co-Coordinator



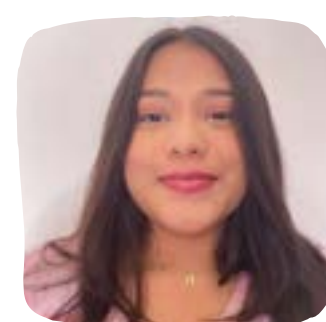
Beatrice Hahn
Science Center
Co-Coordinator



Monse Alegria
Weemes Coordinator



Rachael Somers
Weemes AC



Marlen Macias
Mack Coordinator



Grace Scheg
Mack AC

Welcome New Tutors!

32nd St

Neil Apshankar
Jeanine Bautista

Vermont

Dominic Lau
Rigo Reyes
Lindsay Huerta
Jeniffer Velasquez

Mack

Britney Garcia
Maximus Allen
Eduarda Vivanco
Alyssa Arana
Aaliyah Evans

Norwood

Robert Rodriguez
Sharis Flores
Yvette Casteneda
Franchesca Brown

Science Center

Sabrina Medina Real
A.J. Domingo
Bryant Comunidad
Janette Fu
Janelle Laflin

Weemes

Ariyana Griffin
Imani-Unheri Whyte
Seanna Latiff

Alumni Spotlight

By: Erica Edwards, Class of 2010 B.A. English, minors in Classics and Anthropology



Erica in 2010 as a USC Reader

I look back on my time with USC ReadersPLUS with such gratitude and reverence. When I first attended USC in 2006, I remember feeling eager, yet clueless. I was unsure of my chosen major, uncertain how to make new friends in a new city, and unclear how I would carve out a career path. Serendipitous circumstances led me to JEP and forever altered my path. Guided by the mentorship of the JEP and 32nd Street Elementary School staff and bolstered by the friendship and creative collaboration of the other USC ReadersPLUS tutors, I learned to implement student-centered lesson plans, establish rapport with the students I served, build community with their families, and develop confidence in my own abilities.

The ReadersPLUS program opened me up to the idea of teaching, and after graduation, I accepted a Pre- Kindergarten teaching position with Teach For America. While the challenge felt daunting, I knew my time with ReadersPlus, along with USC Troy Camp, provided me with foundational skills. After teaching for three years, I eventually realized that I wanted to support my students' well-being outside of a classroom and I enrolled in a Counseling Psychology Masters Program at the California Institute of Integral Studies. I feel inspired to support others to find healthy ways to process and express their feelings and am now proudly a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in private practice in San Francisco, specializing in companioning all types of people through grief, anxiety, and life transitions. I also have another new position to add to my resume: Mother. My daughter Ember reminds me every day of the importance of play, emotional attunement, and the joys of literacy, as she brings her favorite books everywhere she goes. The USC Readers Plus program provided me with such an amazing learning experience that I continue to benefit from. Best of all, some of the students I tutored back in the day have reached out and shared their gratitude for our time together and the impact USC ReadersPLUS made on their lives! It's beautiful to see the ripples of change that a positive experience can create.



Current photo of Erica and her daughter, Ember

A Special Shoutout to Gail Wilson Kenna

By: Jeffery Prough, Associate Director of Development, USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences



JEP School Coordinator with Gail's book donations during Fall Match-ups at the JEP House

All of us here at the Joint Educational Project (JEP) would like to recognize the generous donation of books we received recently from USC Alumna, Gail Wilson Kenna. After graduating from USC in Letters, Arts and Sciences (LAS) in 1965 with a degree in English, Gail went on to become a prolific, award-winning author, as well as an educator. Among her published books, Gail recently donated copies of *Here to There & Back Again* and *The Story of a Contrary, Contumacious Cat*, in support of JEP's ReadersPlus program. Along with her work as a writer, Gail has taught literature and writing for over 50 years in secondary schools, colleges, universities, both in the United States and five foreign countries. Since 2016 she has served as the Creative Nonfiction judge for the Soul-Making Keats Literary competition in San Francisco. At present she continues to teach at a local community college in the Northern Neck of Virginia. Gail's passion for reading, writing, and education is something we deeply respect and appreciate. On behalf of the entire JEP staff, teachers, and most importantly, our students in the surrounding USC community, we want to say a collective and sincere, Thank You!



The Dynamic Duo - Grad Directors Nicole & Carla



Can you quickly introduce yourselves to us?

Nicole: My name is Nicole Wong-Franklin and I am the Literacy Director for ReadersPLUS. I'm a second year Masters in Social Work student with a concentration in children, youth and families. I am currently interning with the Pasadena Unified School District in the hopes of becoming a school social worker.

Carla: My name is Carla Collier and I am the Math Director for ReadersPLUS. I am a Human Biology major, getting my masters in Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine. I have been with JEP since my freshman year at USC (4 years now!). Some of my involvements on-campus throughout my undergraduate career are Interaxon, Colleges Against Cancer, USC Convergent Science Institute in Cancer, REACH program, and LSA.

How would you describe the other director? Add a spirit animal and office object too!

Nicole: Carla is absolutely fantastic. She gives cat vibes because she's very analytical and introverted at times, but fierce when needed. I would say Carla is a post-it note because she's always reminding me of things and keeping me accountable!

Carla: Nicole is such a great director! She cares so much about the program and always finds a way to get things done. I cannot imagine ReadersPlus without her. I think her spirit animal should be the Tiger since she is such a strong, assertive, and determined person. An office supply I would use to describe her would be glue since I see her as the glue of the program!

How did you find out about ReadersPLUS and what made you go in this role?

Nicole: Aspen Cole, the literacy director from 2019-2021 told me to interview for the position. I wanted this position to continue my work in educational equity and advocacy for resources.

Carla: A friend introduced me to the program, but I had always loved tutoring. Having a mentor from a young age helped me in my own life, so I wanted to offer that same service to others. I have always been interested in service learning organizations as I am very passionate about the important role of mentorship in young people's lives.

What has been the most unexpected part about your role? Most challenging? How about most mundane?

Nicole: The best part of this position is meeting such creative, driven, compassionate coordinators and tutors. The most challenging is balancing between school, JEP, and my internship.

Carla: The most challenging part of the job is probably always having a busy week no matter what point in the semester we are at. There is always more to do and problems that randomly arise. However, the best part of the job is having amazing people to find solutions to those problems. Our amazing team is always up to the challenge, and they will always make sure to do everything they can to best serve our students.

What do you wish to do in this role before you leave?

Nicole: I hope to be a constant source of support for all Reader's Plus tutors/staff that encourages creativity, innovation, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Carla: I hope to provide our coordinators and tutors as much help as they need in order to best serve the students in our community. I would like to best equip our tutors to not only understand their communities, but also learn how to best serve them. I hope that by learning how to do it at USC, they are able to take it with them to every community they are a part of in the future.

A Glimpse into the Sites

John Mack Elementary School



Math Lesson Plan Winner - Eduarda Vivianco

Carla Collier (carlacol@usc.edu) Nicole Wong-Franklin (wongfran@usc.edu)

Lesson Plan Template

Tutor Name: Eduarda Vivianco		Reading or Math: math	
Student Name: Student		Grade: 4	
Choice of Literature: Room on the Broom by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler	Materials: Book	Time (mins): 20 mins	
Learning Outcome (what should your student be able to do by the end of your session i.e. demonstrate ability to identify, name, explain, evaluate) 1 Evaluate multiplication problems with numbers from 0-10			
Common Core Standard (reinforce the learning outcome- how does this align with what is being taught in class): 3.OA.A.3 Use multiplication and division within 100 to solve word problems in situations involving equal groups, arrays, and measurement quantities, e.g., by using drawings and equations with a symbol for the unknown number to represent the problem.			
Bridge in (excite students about learning outcome/connect your literature choice with the learning outcome) & Formative Assessment (What does your student already know?) 1 Multiplication flash cards : work on simple multiplication problems and ask if they can explain the process of solving it	Materials: Multiplication flash cards	Time (mins): 10 mins	
Tutor Activities (I do) Multiplication Cauldron! We can have a "cauldron" and throw in "ingredients" (a specific number of something)	Learner Activities: (You do) Work with me by throwing in things(numbers) to the cauldron and showing their multiplication on a	Materials: A box or bowl (anything that could act as a cauldron).	Time (mins): 20

and perform "magic" (multiplication) and the cauldron will return to us the product of the two numbers we put into the cauldron	white board (magic spell)	whiteboard, markers, imagination	
Alternative Tutor Activities: (what to do if your student demonstrates mastery / is really struggling with this learning outcome) We can make the numbers smaller or bigger depending on their level or even switch to adding and subtracting	Alternative Learner Activities: Same as before	Materials: A box or bowl (anything that could act as a cauldron), whiteboard, markers, imagination	Time (mins): 20
Summary/Formative Assessment/Student Reflection (how you will gauge your student's understanding/ whether learning outcome was achieved) 1 I would like to hear what they thought about the book and if they saw any connected between our math problems and the theme of the book		Materials: n/a	Time (mins): 10



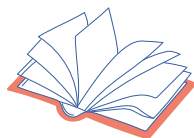
Finding a Balance with Lesson Plans - Maximus Allen

For me, I have never been in a position that is so hands-on and self-managed. There is a wonderful sense of independence that can be found within my sessions. At first, this was daunting, and I put a lot of pressure on myself to feel adequate enough as a tutor and not feel like I was "wasting my students' time" with unhelpful lessons. When I realized that the learning process was collaborative, those thoughts were done away with. As long as we are both learning and having fun while doing so, I feel as if my job is complete.

Lenicia B. Weemes Elementary School

Why I Joined ReadersPLUS - Imani-Unheri Whyte

I originally joined ReadersPLUS because I knew that if I was going to get a job, it would have to be one that I enjoyed. Readers Plus offered that. I am able to work with children, which I love because every child has so much potential and I'm so lucky to spend time helping and encouraging them. I was drawn to this program because it is about giving back to the community. I feel like as a USC student, it is important for me to remember that LA is so much greater than the campus I live on, and it's important for me to respect and serve the communities that I now share the city with. I know I am not a savior. I am just tutoring kids, but even that small act of kindness is important. I feel like I have gained fulfillment while working with ReadersPLUS. It makes me so happy when I get to go to the elementary schools and see the kids and also see how excited they are to see me and learn as well. I couldn't imagine having any other job!



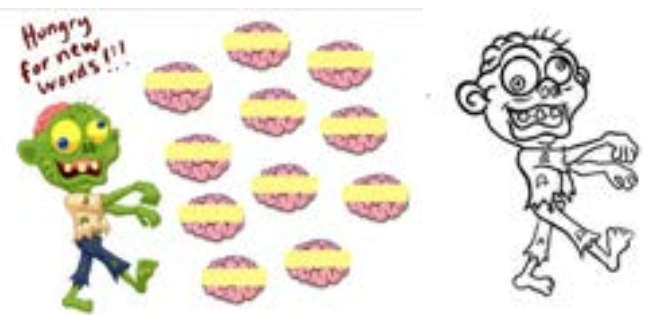
Reading Lesson Plan Winner - Seanna Latiff

Carla Collier (carlacol@usc.edu) Nicole Wong-Franklin (wongfran@usc.edu)

Lesson Plan Template

Tutor Name: Seanna Latiff		Reading or Math: Reading	
Student Name: David Vasquez		Grade: 4	
Choice of Literature: worksheet	Materials: Digital Worksheet, paper cutouts, bag, written worksheet	Time (mins): 55	
Learning Outcome (what should your student be able to do by the end of your session i.e. demonstrate ability to identify, name, explain, evaluate) 1 The student will learn how to read, pronounce, and use new words within their given contexts. Common Core Standard (reinforce the learning outcome- how does this align with what is being taught in class): Vocabulary and story structure			
Bridge in (excite students about learning outcome/connect your literature choice with the learning outcome) & Formative Assessment (What does your student already know?) 1 He will skip over difficult words for him, or pronounce a word but not be able to identify its meaning in the given context.	Materials: Digital Worksheet, paper cutouts, bag, written worksheet	Time (mins): 60	
Tutor Activities (I do) I will ask him to pick a word from a bag (filled with words we have encountered in his chapter book that he hasn't been able to pronounce or identify the meaning of). He then will sound the word out, and write the word down on the digital worksheet as a brain for the zombie to eat. From the words in the brain bank he will then write a story for the zombie in the drawing. As a reward and reflection at the end of the lesson he will color the zombie on the worksheet.	Learner Activities: (You do) I will have all the materials prepared, and help him sound out the words. Then write an outline with him for a story using the words from the lesson he has just learned.	Materials: Digital Worksheet, paper cutouts, bag, written story; paper, writing tools	Time (mins): 55

Alternative Tutor Activities: (what to do if your student demonstrates mastery / is really struggling with this learning outcome) To read his chapter book and review the words he has issues pronouncing.	Alternative Learner Activities: To read his chapter book, make predictions about what will happen, and learn the meaning of words he didn't previously understand from the book.	Materials: I Survived chapter book	Time (mins): n/a
Summary/Formative Assessment/Student Reflection (how you will gauge your student's understanding/ whether learning outcome was achieved) 1 He will color in the zombie on the worksheet, and review the story he just wrote for the zombie using the words he just learned as his zombie character comes to life in the form of a drawing. Here we will go over any challenges and celebrate the story and character he has created.		Materials: n/a	Time (mins): 5



Vermont Avenue Elementary School

The Improvements in my Students - Rigo Reyes

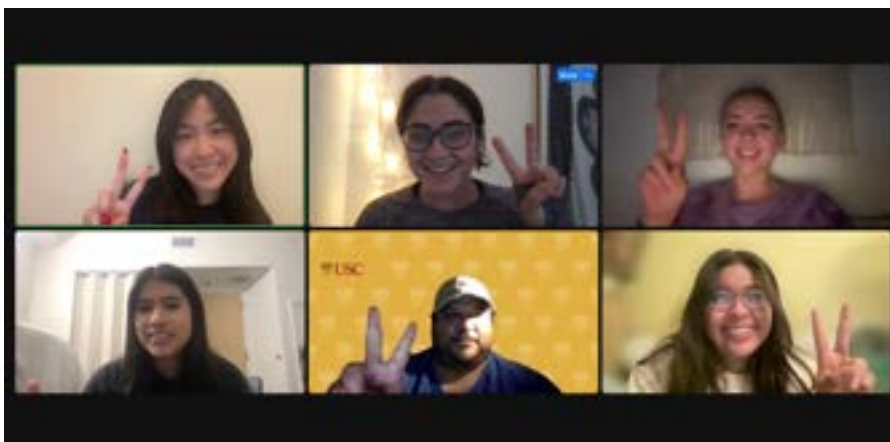
I tutor a Kindergartener and 2nd grader at Vermont Elementary School. Some changes I have noticed in my students over the semester have been performance, attitude, and mindset. My 2nd grade student is always ready and wants to improve her reading skills. I had noticed that when I first began tutoring her she would guess on the words that she found difficult. I also realized that the training provided by JEP was really helpful as it helped me create a positive and encouraging learning environment as she is now sounding out words and I can notice improvements in her reading. Asking her questions about the book while she reads has also been very helpful for her as she is understanding the key details in the text. Her mindset and attitude are a big part of this as she is always willing to try and give her best efforts even when she is unsure of a word. You can tell she wants to read and has a positive mindset!



Norwood Street Elementary School

How ReadersPLUS Inspired Me - Franchesca Brown

I joined ReadersPLUS for the opportunity to do work-study while also giving back to the community. I moved from Seattle to LA this year, and being a part of Readers seemed like a great way to get to know a different side of the area around USC. I love to work with kids, and I hoped tutoring would be a challenging but rewarding experience. Tutoring with Readers has taught me many new skills, like practicing patience, creative problem-solving, and communication. Tutoring in math has broadened my understanding of education and learning as a whole. I had never thought of going into education for my career, but working at Readers has inspired me to be involved in the education system in the future, whether it is related to work or volunteering!



32nd Street School / USC Magnent

Skills I've Gained Through ReadersPLUS - Jeanine Bautista

My passion for working with children was the key factor in my decision to join ReadersPLUS. I hoped to improve my teaching, organization, and leadership skills and I believe I have developed these skills. Making time to create lesson plans for my students on top of a busy school schedule has made me develop better time management skills and thus has made me more organized. Also, tutoring for ReadersPLUS has helped me become a better educator by motivating my students. In addition, monitoring students' behavior during our ASP (After School Program) and keeping them engaged during tutoring has made me grow as a leader. Before joining ReadersPLUS I struggled with many of these skills but I have slowly worked on them through this program with the support from my coordinator. Learning and growing through this community has made me truly appreciate the importance of education and the impact that academic programs have on underrepresented communities.



Alexander Science Center School

Promoting STEM to LAUSD Schools - Bryant Comunidad

Before coming to USC, I knew I wanted to work with children and teach them about various topics in STEM, specifically with coding. However, I had never worked with children before, so I didn't know where to start. Thus, I joined ReaderPlus to gain experience working with the youth and the best method of teaching them STEM, in this case math. I've learned how to create effective lesson plans that are both engaging and informative, vital skills to know when working with children. If a lesson lacks any of these two, it can be detrimental to the student's comprehension of the topic. ReadersPLUS also taught me how to create trust with my students. I've noticed that many of these students need individualized attention to push them towards their goals. However, like the schools I attended growing up, many of the neighboring schools around USC are underfunded. The program has given me a new perspective on the education system and its faults, but it's also taught me how a small change, like tutoring, can make a big difference on students' lives.



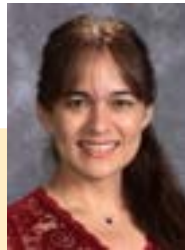
Interview with our Teachers

- Q1: When did you become a teacher?
- Q2: What is the most rewarding part of your job?
- Q3: What is your favorite thing about your school?
- Q4: How has ReadersPLUS affected your students?
- Q5: What hopes do you have for your students?

Mr. Dan Nakama, 2nd Grade, Vermont

1. I knew in high school that I wanted to become a teacher.
2. The most rewarding part of the job is when I see progress.
3. I think that we have super students, wonderful parents, fantastic staff, and awesome support staff.
4. I feel that anytime a student works with a young bright, and motivated college student, the student always benefits. It could be emotionally or academically. In my case, my student comes back with a smile. That is enough to show me that something positive took place.
5. I hope that all of my students will be prepared for the next step, which is third grade. I try to take it one day at a time.

Ms. Cristales, 2nd Grade, 32nd St



1. August 2001
2. The most rewarding part of my job is seeing my scholars grow academically as they gain new knowledge and applying across subject areas.
3. My favorite thing about my school is the opportunity to see our scholars grow and turn into young men and women as we are a K-12 school. We become a family.
4. ReadersPLUS tutors have affected my scholars in a very positive way. Receiving that one on one assistance is gold. As a general teacher it is a challenge to meet each one of our students on that one on one basis. It is a blessing to have programs such as these, whose only objective is to help our scholars achieve academic success.
5. My only hope for my scholars is for learning to take place. That they are able to achieve and apply new knowledge throughout the school year and after they leave my room. Hoping I impact their lives in a powerful way that after years they can look back and remember their second grade teacher.

Ms. Natasha Molina, 3rd Grade, Weemes

1. 12/02/2021
2. Noticing students' progress and achievements
3. ELA / Writing essays
4. It has been a great asset; collaboration & teamwork!
5. Adopting a love for reading and writing!

Mrs. Moreno, 2nd Grade, Norwood



1. I became a teacher in 2004. I was a teacher's assistant for five years before I became a teacher.
2. There are so many regarding aspects of being a teacher. One that makes me proud to be a teacher is to see my students succeed. It makes me proud to see my students grow and make breakthroughs and understand concepts they have struggled with.
3. Our school has great administrators, teachers and students.
4. ReadersPlus tutors encourage my students to read. ReadersPlus tutors help students get that one to one individualized attention they need. Thank you for this wonderful program and thank you to all ReaderPlus tutors for all your hard work and dedication!
5. I hope my students continue improving with the help of the ReadersPlus tutors.

Ms. Chamul, 3rd Grade, Weemes

1. 2012
2. Seeing the children's faces when they grow, the smile when they grasp something new: the "ah ha" moment is not only rewarding but fulfilling.
3. It's close to home, and I feel part of the community. I've worked here since 2012.
4. I have first hand witnessed how tutored student participate more in class with discussion. They've shown confidence in their ability to verbalize their thoughts. The student perceivably is more apart of the learning community.
5. So many. I hope to make a positive impact as role model: specially with my unique identity as an education being a Latina, Persian woman. In the class room I exemplify my love of reading. I also hope to encourage growth, and for my students to take accountability for their learning.

Dr. Purcell, 1st Grade, 32nd St



1. 2001
2. Seeing the growth of students' knowledge and intellect and watching how this unlocks further learning and goals.
3. That we are a K-12 school and connected to USC through so many programs. You can watch kids grow up over the years from child to adult.
4. My students really enjoy the USC Readers. ReadersPlus has been great for motivation and engagement of students because they love having college mentors who spend time working with them. They quickly see that college is something they want in their future.
5. That they all go on to higher education and get a chance to experience a lot of things before deciding what they really want to pursue as a career.

ReadersPLUS After School Programming

ASP Returns After 2 Years Since the Pandemic at 32nd St

By: Vy Ngo, 32nd St Coordinator

The After School Program (ASP) finally returns at 32nd St. after two years since the pandemic! ASP hosts approximately 15 students and runs Tuesday to Friday from 3-5:30 PM. The program, which has been integral to ReadersPlus at several school sites within the USC community, is made possible by much help and support from our tutors and Central Staff.

One of ASP's primary focuses is homework help during the first hour. Often many of our students may have been taught the concepts, but many of them also need that extra push to persevere through. At ASP, our tutors work with the students in a small group setting with weekly spelling words, reading logs, and math models. Tutors would also guide students and check their work to make sure they understand the methods that they apply to their reading and math skills, such as sound blending, combining digraphs, or visualizing numerical relationships. Our purpose is to supplement the students with the instruction they would not otherwise be able receive due to their parents working later or not being there during homework time. We further enrich the students' experience with WonderKids, a fun, hands-on STEM program, and teach them about mindfulness and mental wellness with our Little Yoginis program.

ASP does require a lot of coordination and efforts to maintain, and the key in making it happen is the consistency of tutors who show up to help run the program. The reward that we feel working ASP is tangible, and the positive effect is evident in the students' increased confidence in reading and math, the development of their sense of self-competency, and their interpersonal growths.



Students working during 32nd St ASP



A WonderKids guest speaker helping ASP student, Justin, do the strawberries online stimulation

Breaking Barriers through ASP at Norwood Elementary

By: Jade Almodovar, Norwood Coordinator

The After School Program (ASP) is something ReadersPLUS is so excited to be a part of at Norwood Elementary. At ASP, tutors and coordinators alike are able to work with groups of students on a variety of different projects. One of the highlights of the program is the homework help provided. With the help of the ReadersPlus tutors, students can work on their homework as soon as the school day is done, and ask questions as needed. A major barrier to students completing their homework is feeling overwhelmed and unmotivated. Providing homework help and insight allows the students to work through these problems and go home with their homework already done. Once students have completed their work, tutors are able to bond with the students during after-school activities. Whether it is Wonderkids, Little Yoginis, or simply playing games with the students, tutors are able to help foster a fun and welcoming environment, providing attention and help to students who need it!



Students working on a science project during Norwood ASP

ASP Program Highlights

Peace, Love, and Child's Pose

By: Karina Patel, USC Yogi, Sophomore studying Human Biology and Business Administration



Norwood Elementary ASP Cobra Pose

Now that we've (mostly) found peace with the pandemic, we've returned to a sense of normalcy with Little Yoginis. With the help of the other USC Yogis, Katrina Dang (Junior studying Health and the Human Sciences) and Christine Nguyen (Senior studying Human Biology and Spanish), we have been able to transition back to fully in-person lessons. We're teaching at 2 elementary schools this semester, 32nd Street and Norwood, and I've loved meeting the students at both.

Our lessons follow the same structure: we start by reading a children's book, discussing the story's major themes and how we can implement those themes into that day's practice. After brainstorming ideas, we practice deep breathing exercises and then learn some new yoga poses. We finish with a savasana and a recap of the lesson for that day, encouraging our students to keep our practice and its message in their heads and try to integrate these values in their daily lives.

Although some students are only in kindergarten, I'm always impressed by their eagerness and genuine interest. Our Coordinator at Norwood, Jade Almodovar (Junior studying Psychology), mentions how the students sometimes ask her repeatedly when it is time for our yoga lesson. Oftentimes, the minute we arrive, they run up to us and ask "When are we doing yoga? Are we starting soon?" Our students seem to enjoy the meditation, noting that they feel "calm", "peaceful and not as worried", and "collected". They also notice improvements after practicing poses multiple weeks in a row: a student last week was pleasantly surprised how she was able to hold tree pose for a longer amount of time than the previous week. Our sessions are after school, so several students get picked up during the lesson. A particularly special moment was when one of our students, Carla, had to leave because her mom arrived to pick her up. Carla didn't want to leave, so she made her mom wait for an hour until the lesson was over because she wanted to participate. Little moments like this make teaching yoga all the more worth it, and I love seeing students growing to appreciate yoga as much as I do.



32nd St. ASP Downward Dog



32nd St. ASP Chair Pose

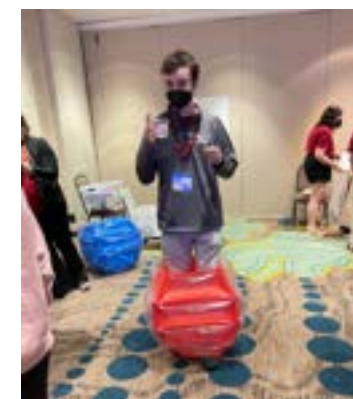
WonderKids Returns to In Person After-School Programs!

By: Dieuwertje Kast, Maya Yanez and Jessica Stellmann

Fall 2022 was the first semester post-Covid that WonderKids rebooted its in-person programming. Two ReadersPLUS sites hosted after-school programs this fall: 32nd Street Magnet School, with a group of 15 students participating; and Norwood Street Elementary with a group of 25 students. With the guidance of their ReadersPLUS teams, the WonderKids students explored 3 different STEM units full of hands-on activities this semester.

Soft Robotics

This unit introduced students to the design and construction of robots with physically flexible-bodies and electronics. Students explored various swatches of robotics materials, ranging from hardest to softest and created their own mini robot made out of soft materials, they investigated robotic arms of various materials, and even learned how to program a humanoid soft robot.



Coordinators at JEP Leadership Training experimenting with the soft robotics unit

(continued on page 11)

Stem Cells

Students learned about stem cell research through a variety of lessons including one in which they built a Play-doh model of how various cells make up different tissues and organs which make up our bodies' organ systems and another in which they made a model of human blood using a water bottle and grocery store ingredients, such as corn syrup and kidney beans! Dr. MacLean and his postdoctoral student, Jesse Kreger, introduced students to a web-based computer simulation game that taught them about balanced blood cells.



Students at 32nd St ASP building play-doh models



Students at 32nd St ASP creating edible Saturn models

Astrobiology

The study of and search for life beyond Earth (or aliens!) is a tough field to nail down. Students began by learning about our planets and Solar System. Students created edible Saturn models following the steps of Solar System formation; learned about space by building a model of the Cassini spacecraft; and pretended to be different microbes, with different advantages or disadvantages in each environment, making predictions about whether one type of microbe was more likely to survive than the other. To tie it all together, our guest speaker, USC Ph.D. Student Maya Yanez presented a lesson entitled Bacteria Soup! where students helped Maya build a bottle full of all the vitamins, nutrients, and minerals that are needed to grow bacteria!

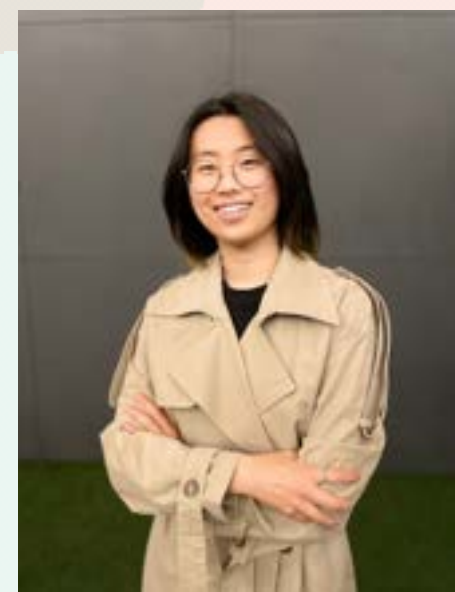
Graduating Coordinators

Monserrat Alegria - Lenicia B. Weemes Elementary School Coordinator

Twenty years from now when I look back at my college career, my involvement with ReadersPLUS will be the main highlight. I joined Readers because I loved tutoring Elementary school students as I often tutored my little neighbors at home - but I could not have imagined the profound impact this program would have on my time at USC. When I first joined my second semester, I was immediately met with incredible kindness from my fellow site tutors and coordinators, Stacey and Zoe, at Weemes. They set the standard for what a ReadersPlus team should look like - a team of passionate, kind, and hard-working tutors going above and beyond for each other and their tutees. This is a standard I have tried to carry throughout my 8 semesters with Readers. I'll leave this program with fond memories of tutoring; laughs and food shared with my tutors; and the incredible kindness of everyone at JEP. This program has been the one constant I could always count on at USC, I will forever miss it and can only hope to be a part of a program as impactful as this one again.



Beatrice Hahn - Alexander Science Center School Coordinator



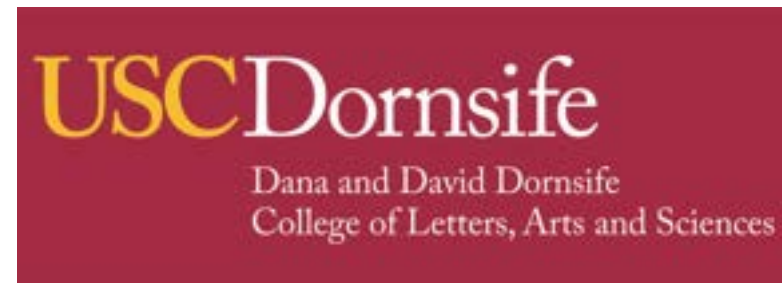
I remember I first heard about ReadersPLUS a few weeks before I started school at USC. When I read about the opportunity, I knew it was exactly what I was looking for at the time. My involvement in ReadersPLUS has shaped and influenced me so much in the last 4 years. I am thankful for the opportunity to work with JEP through this program because it helped shape me into a leader unafraid to facilitate open conversations and suggest new ideas. As a tutor, my favorite part was coming up with lesson plans that challenged me to design an activity that incorporates learning and fun. My favorite lesson plan was a board game I created for a reading student. It was super rewarding to watch my student play the game I had made, and to see that it was helping engage his attention. This is one moment of many that have stayed in my mind since then. As a coordinator, my interest in engaging design remained and I think it partly influences my recent desire to develop educational video games. I've started being involved in educational video game development and plan to continue pursuing my ideas further after graduation.

About Us

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

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

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



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