



NEWSLETTER

ENDINGS AND BEGINNINGS...

TINA KONEAZNY, JEP ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Here we are at the end of another academic year and, for many of our graduating seniors, an end of an era. It is the end of their four-year undergraduate university experience – one like no other, having spent a good deal of it studying, learning and growing, and navigating life during a world-wide pandemic. For some it also marks the end of their ReadersPLUS “career”. I call it a career for a unique and highly dedicated group of our students from our team who joined our program the fall of their freshman year and are still here, this, their final semester at USC. We have a total of 17 student staff who are graduating, with ten of them belonging to this special cohort of “career Reader”.

As difficult as it will be to say good-bye to all of our graduating seniors – nine of whom are peer leaders who have lovingly coordinated the program at various schools and/or at the central office level; students who have demonstrated amazing growth in maturity, confidence and professionalism over the years – I am inspired by the energy and poise already exhibited by the new group of leaders we have hired for next year to carry the program forward as the world continues to come out of the challenging COVID years.

For all of our students, graduating seniors, new and continuing tutors and our incoming peer leadership team as you continue your journey in life, I share this quote from the beautiful 13th century poet, Rumi:

“There is a morning inside you waiting to burst open into light.”

I look forward to seeing the morning burst in those who will continue with us, and to those of you moving on – I hope you keep in touch. You will all be missed.

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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

BLAST FROM THE PAST

Lizette Zarate, Ed.D

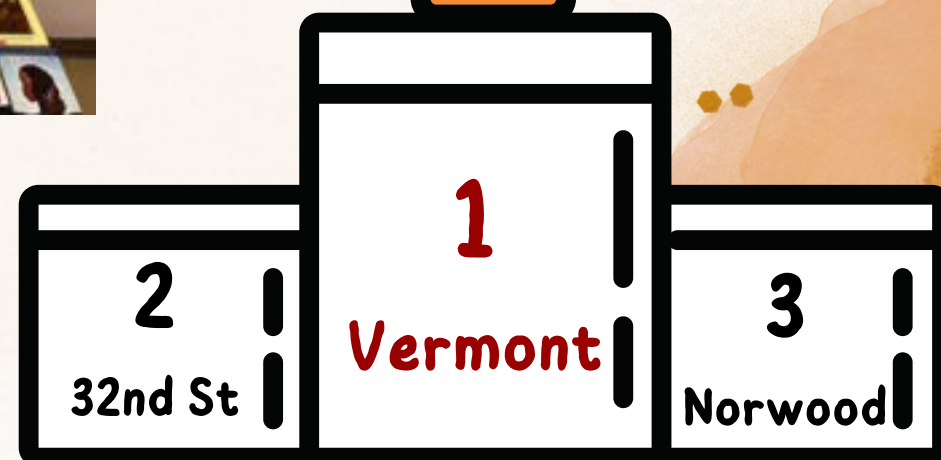
My name is Lizette Zarate and I serve as the program director of the USC McMorrow Neighborhood Academic Initiative, or USC NAI. In this role, I am privileged to get to live out my dream of serving students from my own community. I grew up around USC and I was fortunate to be a student in the NAI program. NAI was my community as I navigated the college pathway. Once I got to USC however, I found a community at JEP. After reading an ad in the Daily Trojan that the Readers Plus program was looking for student workers, I made my way over to the JEP house. I applied and landed a job as a Reader at Foshay Learning Center, where I'd gone to school! JEP was more than a work study job, it became a place of belonging and comfort and truly, where I found my calling. Working one on one with students gave me a sense of purpose. This wasn't work...going to Foshay to read with amazing kids was fun - the highlight of my days.



My work as a reader in the USC Readers Plus program allowed me to see what a life of service to youth could be and thus, I embarked on a career in education. I don't know that I would have wound up where I am today had it not been for the life changing experience that I had through JEP.

HOUSECUP – A FRIENDLY COMPETITION

6 schools. 60 tutors. And only 1 winner. Every semester, we hold a friendly competition between the sites for the grand housecup prize. Tutors can gain points for their site by turning paperwork in on time, attending staff meetings, and winning mini competitions for best lesson plan. Coordinators track the points for their sites and can earn their team extra points by responding to TWIR (weekly emails), finishing their weekly tasks first, and opting for social media takeovers! This semester, we had a very close match between Vermont, 32nd St, and Norwood. And with great guidance from Tania Apshankar, the Vermont Coordinator, the Vermont team won Housecup! However, in our hearts, all the tutors are winners <3



Vermont Coordinator Tania Apshankar shares some of the social media content she sent in this semester that contributed to Vermont taking home the House Cup title.

GRADUATING SENIORS

WE WILL MISS YOU!

Nicole Wong-Franklin, Literacy Director

Readers Plus has been one of the highlights of my graduate career at USC. Coming into my first year of graduate school was intimidating. I wasn't sure what to expect or how I would build community as a new student. Readers Plus has been a joy because I've had the privilege of working with the most dedicated, compassionate, hardworking individuals at USC. Witnessing everyone's growth over the course of two years has been absolutely incredible. I always look forward to meeting with tutors to hear about their students' progress. I love seeing the passion ignite in tutors as they speak about their students and educational equity as a whole. Two years in this program have flown by, and I am in disbelief that I will be leaving. Thank you Readers Plus for being a place for me to learn, grow, and make mistakes. It has been an honor to serve as literacy director and connect with such passionate tutors, ACs, coordinators, and staff. I am so excited to see where the program goes, and I will always be grateful for the special memories created. Readers Plus is a one of a kind experience, and I wouldn't trade it for the world. I love you Readers Plus!!



Christine Nguyen, Central Coordinator

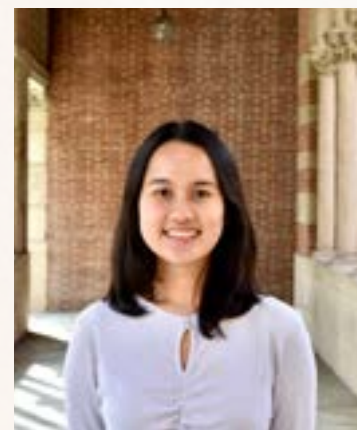
Words cannot describe how much I will miss ReadersPLUS. It has been my home away from home for all 4 years of college. The work we did, with the tutors, coordinators, assistant coordinators, and other staff, did not feel like actual work because I loved it so much. I joined ReadersPLUS because I had a hard time adjusting to USC, a school known for its prestige and its "spoiled children". Thus I found Readers. It became my safe haven where I met some of the best people at USC and helped me adjust to college life. And I loved it so much that I stayed for four years. ReadersPLUS truly attracts the BEST people who has the same motivations, values, and goals to help students in the neighborhood that USC has gentrified. I'm so grateful for having met so many wonderful people and have had the opportunity to work with such brilliant kids with math, literacy, and yoga. I feel like I got the best of both worlds because in addition to working with students during summer tutoring and yoga during ASP, I got to work with a wonderful leadership and central staff team. I am so grateful for you all. You have been so supportive and I really hope the future generations will continue to leave a mark on the schools and enjoy it as much as I did.



WORDS FROM OUR COORDINATORS AND ASSISTANT COORDINATORS

Vy Ngo, 32nd St Coordinator

When I started my freshman year at 32nd St. with ReadersPLUS, I was often stressed about my own effectiveness as a tutor and even more so during COVID when the program was virtual. I've since recognized that students will more likely remember the way you made them feel rather than what you taught them. It was apparent during my tutoring experience that once you build the students' confidence and help them feel empowered in their own abilities, learning would follow. Celebrating my students' successes, even in really small ways, was something I loved and strived to do as a tutor. I also made this a personal objective when I assumed the coordinator role for the next 2 years, encouraging our tutors to make their students feel seen and recognized for things that they can do. Witnessing the supportive relationships that our tutors foster with their students has made me much more appreciative for the community that our program cultivates with regular tutoring as well as our after school program (ASP). There were many challenges that emerged, but I'm grateful for the support I received from Central Staff and our AC, Greg. There's a saying that ReadersPLUS attracts a certain demographic of college students. Having been in the program for 4 years, I can attest there is truth to that statement. Our program gathers numerous dedicated individuals who are passionate about learning and serving the local community. I have no doubts that ReadersPLUS will continue to thrive in the coming years and leave a remarkable impact on our schools.



Kelly Nguyen, Norwood Co-Coordinator

ReadersPLUS has taught me the importance of the reciprocal relationship between mentor and student, and how both parties are able to learn and grow from each other. When I was initially a tutor, I experienced immense skepticism and self-doubt. I was uncertain if I was going to help the student significantly improve or use the "right" techniques to keep the student engaged. However, with the support of other tutors and learning from each other during trainings and open discussions, I found ways to transform learning into an interactive and personal experience for my students. My goal became focused on individualized learning, where I spent time to understand the students and their strengths and weaknesses to craft lesson plans best suited to their learning abilities. As Coordinator of Norwood, I have grown tremendously in my leadership, communication, and reliability. I have learned how to serve as a support system for the other tutors, keeping my door open for tutors to seek clarity in their assignments.



GRADUATING SENIORS

WE WILL MISS YOU!

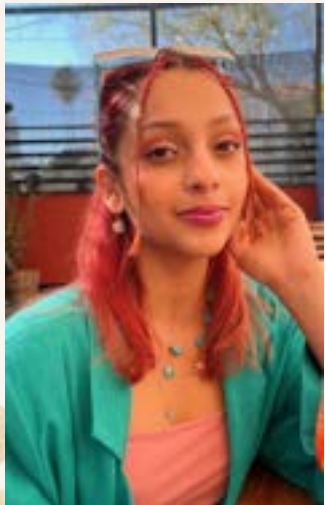
Grace Scheg, Mack Assistant Coordinator

ReadersPlus has been the highlight of my USC experience. I feel so lucky to have found a job that's brought me so much joy these past four years. I love working with my students each week, catching up with them about their weekends over UNO games. Seeing the impact I've been able to have on my students – whether I'm noticing greater confidence in a student while they read to me, or I'm being told by my student's teacher that my student is now reading at grade level – I have learned that small, slow progress can have a big impact. I've become more confident in the idea that I can be an agent of positive change in the world, however small. This confidence has reinforced and reshaped my goals of working in medicine and public health. I want to use my love of human biology and commitment to service to respond to inequities I see in the world, like the educational inequities that ReadersPlus has opened my eyes to. I'm so grateful for my ReadersPlus experience and to have found such a wonderful community of such kind, inspiring people dedicated to USC's surrounding neighborhoods. I will miss ReadersPlus!



Tania Apshankar, Vermont Coordinator

My Freshman year, I joined JEP ReadersPlus, eager to work as a tutor with elementary students in the USC neighborhood to help bring them to their grade level. I have been with ReadersPlus for 8 semesters now, and I am graduating with such enriching experiences and memories with the growth-oriented ReadersPlus team, and wonderful students I tutored over the years. When I entered Vermont Avenue Elementary on my first day of sessions, I felt an immediate sense of community, waving back to the friendly children on site, almost skipping to pick up my students from class and share with them the lesson plan I had created. With my students, we wrote novels together, built on top of existing stories and created worlds around them, painting these new worlds and their characters. The one hour sessions twice a week didn't feel like enough for my student and I to explore our creativity together! Navigating online education during the pandemic was challenging for our team of tutors, but we have only grown from this experience as educators and mentors to our students, gaining invaluable lessons on adapting and experimenting with new teaching methods. 8 semesters later, I have come out of the organization with a renewed understanding of fostering communities in the education space, and prioritizing mental wellbeing to thrive.



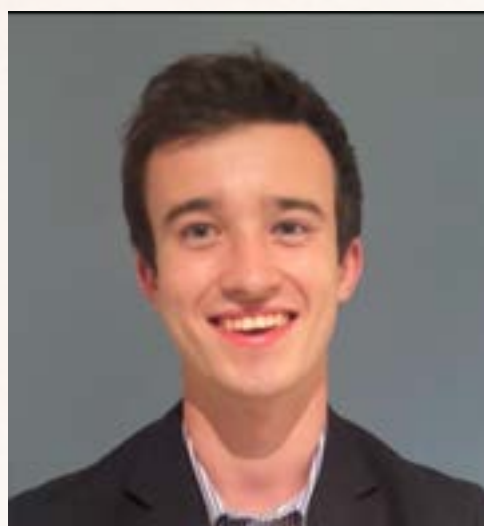
Ananya Shah, Science Center Coordinator

It has been a joy and an honor to work with ReadersPlus for four years. I started out working as a tutor at Mack, first in-person and then virtually. I then worked as an Assistant Coordinator at Foshay, and finally become a Coordinator with Science Center. Getting to work at so many sites, in so many capacities, has given me a huge appreciation for the work done by our tutors and our staff. The past few years have been deeply challenging, but getting to support teachers, students and educational staff, even in a small way, has been an incredible experience. There is so much kindness and happiness in the world, and the kids that we work with show that to us every day. I am very thankful for all of my amazing colleagues, my tutors and for our Central Staff. Working with ReadersPlus has been my favorite part of college, and I can't wait to see where the program goes in coming years.



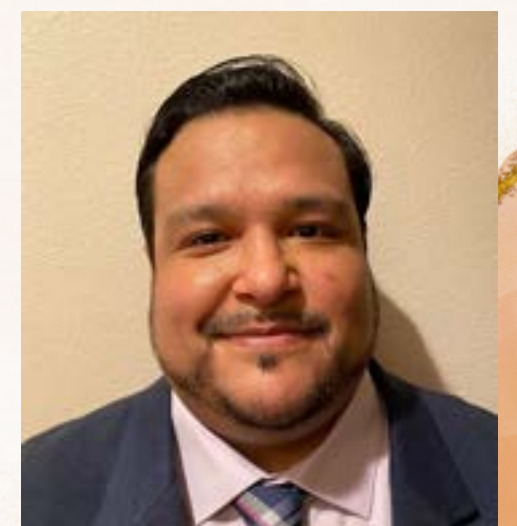
Greg Bishop, 32nd St Assistant Coordinator

Greg has been with ReadersPLUS for 8 semesters and has been such a great team player. He helps Vy run 32nd St ASP. Greg's friendliness and his enthusiasm is why the 32nd St ASP students love him so much. He will be missed so much by all of us at ReadersPLUS!



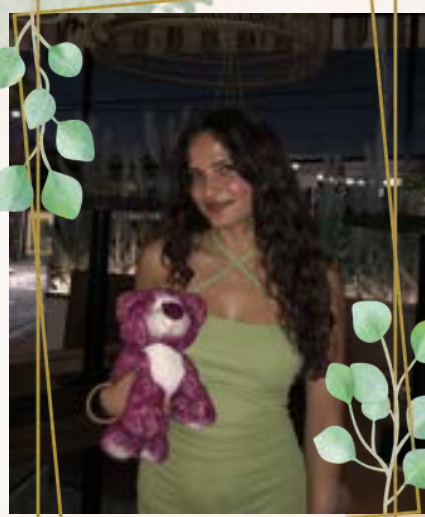
Robert Rodriguez, Weemes Co-Coordinator

Robert has been with ReadersPLUS for 2 semesters and has been a great coordinator! His passion for working in education and policy change has made him such a huge asset to the team. We wish Robert the best of luck in his future endeavors!



GRADUATING TUTORS

WE WILL MISS YOU!



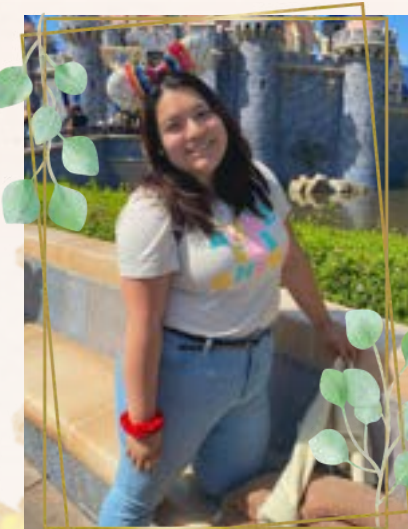
Grace Prakasim (1) – Science Center

- **Favorite Memory:** One of my learners was telling me about his lucky stick he kept in his pocket. I thought it was a funny lucky object to have lol. He said with his lucky stick he got his first girlfriend.. but then she moved schools later. I'm not sure how lucky his stick is, but he still has it!
- **Favorite Quote:** "all for one and one for all" - Three Musketeers



Sabrina Medina (2) – Science Center

- **Favorite Memory:** One time I went to get my student for the session, and she loudly said "Finally you're here! This class is SO boring."
- **Favorite Quote:** "Life is a journey to be experienced, not a problem to be solved" - Winnie the Pooh



Jeniffer Velazquez (2) – Vermont

- **Favorite Memory:** Going on a walk with my student to measure different items around her school!
- **Favorite Quote:** "Not everyone can become a great artist, but a great artist can come from anywhere." - Anton Ego



Ashley Le (1) – Vermont

- **Favorite Memory:** When my students first began to tell me about their day as soon as they saw me without me asking first. It was when I first felt like they really began to trust me as their tutor and feel comfortable enough to tell me what's on their mind.
- **Favorite Quote:** "Kindness makes the world a better place." - Stephen Carter



Keyrin Velazquez (10) – Vermont

- **Favorite Memory:** My kids saying they miss me and are excited whenever we have a session <3
- **Favorite Quote:** "Normal is an illusion. What is normal for the spider is chaos for the fly." - Morticia Addams



Lupita Gutierrez (3) – Mack

- **Favorite Memory:** One of my favorite memories I have at readers was when one of my students that I tutored surprised me with a bracelet. It looked like the same one I had complimented her on at our previous session. She had made a second one for me so that we could match (:
- **Favorite Quote:** "Life goes on, days get brighter." - Mac Miller



Jonathan Diaz (8) – Science Center

- **Favorite Memory:** I will never forget how at Science Center when tutoring resumed in-person my student, Nevaeh, recognized me as her old tutor even before I noticed her, which was touching! I didn't think she'd recognize me.
- **Favorite Quote:** "I've learning that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." - Maya Angelou



Clio Klapsis (6) – 32nd St

- **Favorite Memory:** My students!! I love seeing them every week, and I love moments when they discover they love the same books I loved in childhood.
- **Favorite Quote:** "Without justice there can be no love." - Bell Hooks

GLIMPSE INTO THE SITES

32nd St Magnet School

KAYLANA KANIAUPIO, 32ND ST INCOMING COORDINATOR



Coming from a completely different state, I did not have a full understanding of what LAUSD schools are like. In addition to that, I did not fully realize how much learning loss was caused by Covid, especially for students who are so young. Working with students in Kindergarten and First grade, I found that these unfortunate circumstances severely impacted their engagement in a learning environment and the ways in which they learn.

The way I worked to address these issues with my students also empowered me to grow as a tutor. I had to think outside of the box and go through a lot of trial and error to create effective lessons for my students. I learned that coloring pages and worksheets were not sufficient nor were they the most effective in teaching students. I adapted to the needs of my student which required lots of creativity (and a lot more physical activity than expected). The chance to work with JEP has allowed me to engage and connect with the local community surrounding USC. In the few short months that I have been at USC, JEP enabled me to have my first interaction with the community. I recognize how crucial it is to have programs like ReadersPLUS to support youth from the community while also addressing issues of educational disparities and literacy.

Norwood Street Elementary School



MARISOL PÉREZ, NORWOOD MATH TUTOR

Working with the JEP program I gained a better understanding of the barriers within Los Angeles. When one usually thinks of USC they think of high income students who are given the best life and the best opportunities. This idea of USC has been proven to me correctly although I myself do not come from a privileged family and I am a person of color that is aware of the issues that spark within the PWI that I attend. JEP has given me the opportunity to make a small impact.



JEP has made me want to continue to do this because for me to have the chance or the access to share my knowledge, what I see as limited knowledge makes me happy. As I have a younger brother who is eight years old (around the same age as the kids I tutor) and in 3rd grade I know what it's like to work with younger people with short attention spans. I think it's important to realize when you do acts of service that may seem small to you, it may be more than beneficial to another group of people. I wish to continue to tutor as many students as possible with my given time here because I think I could help make a change in their lives and hope they remember me for more than just my name but the time we got together.

Lenicia B. Weemes Elementary School



ANDREW KIM, WEEMES MATH TUTOR



The biggest way JEP has helped me develop a stronger connection with my local community is by immersing me in a part of the world around USC. It wasn't until the middle of my freshman year that I even knew that there were elementary schools right outside our gates. Not only that, neither of the kids I tutored knew that there was a college less than a mile away from their school. Learning this blew my mind.

I've experienced both worlds everyday, and walking to and from both campuses always makes me ponder how different each environment feels: in USC, I can only describe the atmosphere of advanced education and theoretical aspirations behind the collective student population to create a better world around them. For the longest time, I had found myself blended into this environment, but being a tutor at Weemes made me realize that this was a complete contrast from the real world: faculty going on strikes, kids having trouble focusing and some not even wanting to go to school, we tutors being treated with high respect by most students and faculty. It was through JEP that I was able to land an advising internship over the summer, and I certainly wouldn't have been as successful actualizing my strengths and understanding of myself if not for my experiences with JEP.

GLIMPSE INTO THE SITES

Alexander Science Center School

GRACE STICKNEY PRAKASIM, SCIENCE CENTER LITERACY TUTOR

Being a part of JEP has helped me grow and learn in various aspects. Looking back at my time at USC, JEP was definitely a special part of it. One example is how I have grown in the ability to be creative and think on my feet. Throughout my time as a tutor, I have realized the power in games, autonomy, flow, and genre of book. I could see the thrill in their faces when I said we would play hang snowman at the end of our sessions. Autonomy is something that children value because they are learning how to be independent. I noticed that providing not many, but a few choices to my learners was beneficial because: one, they could pick something they would be more interested in to learn about; and two, they could feel like they contributed and know that their voices were heard by me.

In addition to their voices being heard, another important aspect of lesson planning is taking into account your learners' likes, such as their hobbies and favorite genres. I love animal books and initially would pick them. Later I learned that one of my learners did not like animal books. This was important because he seemed bored and uninterested while we were reading. So, I started picking people-books with people-characters, and this made all the difference. While I have grown in many other ways, I am proud of improving in this aspect of lesson planning as it shows growth in my creativity, intuition, and communication.



Vermont Ave Elementary School

CARINA IRAHETA, VERMONT LITERACY TUTOR



JEP has allowed me to create a stronger relationship with my community, because I myself come from a low-income background. As a former student of an LAUSD school I always struggled to find ways in which I could be helped in such as tutoring resources. It is amazing to see how USC has created this program and allowed children to have this opportunity. I feel like it's not only an opportunity for the students to learn, but also for us to see how our community is changing. I hope that this program continues to expand throughout LA, and really make a difference. Personally, if I was provided this when I was in elementary school, I would've been more than grateful because I always struggled with English due to my family only speaking Spanish at home.

Fortunately, I am now able to help students that were in the same place as me and they can receive the help they need to be successful. I really hope to make a difference in my community and allow these students to grow so that they can one day be a student at USC. Education is very important and these programs are so crucial in students' lives as not only do we motivate them, but we become. I am always happy to see how my student looks up to me and tells me every day that she also wants to come to USC and become a forensic major. I feel like my journey in helping others has not stopped here, and I hope to make many more changes in our community.

John Mack Elementary School

GRACE SCHEG, MACK ASSISTANT COORDINATOR

There's a persistent narrative that USC's neighborhoods are full of drug dealers, gang members, and thugs, but this isn't what my experience of the community has been at all. Instead, the parents I've met have reminded me a lot of my own: hard-working and wanting the best for their children. I talk to the students I work with about the same movies and topics I talk to my siblings about. USC students and community members are more alike than we may realize. Unfortunately, most students stay in the bubble that is USC's campus, and leave their biases towards the surrounding communities. The best way to challenge these superficial assumptions is to engage with people in the community, through service opportunities like those provided by JEP. These programs are important for building the bridge between USC students and the communities just outside campus.

But while it's important to engage with the community, it's also important to think about whether the engagement is actually beneficial to the community. Lots of programs engage in short-term community work, which may be eye-opening for a USC student but can cause more harm than good for community members; students being pulled out of class for non meaningful work are losing valuable time in the classroom. Being involved in a consistent, long-term commitment to local students through ReadersPlus has inspired me to not only want to get more involved with community service and better understand the communities in underserved parts of Los Angeles but to also be mindful of how I'm engaging in this service.



SPRING 2023 WRITING CONTEST

IF YOU COULD TRAVEL ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD, WHERE WOULD YOU GO AND WHY?

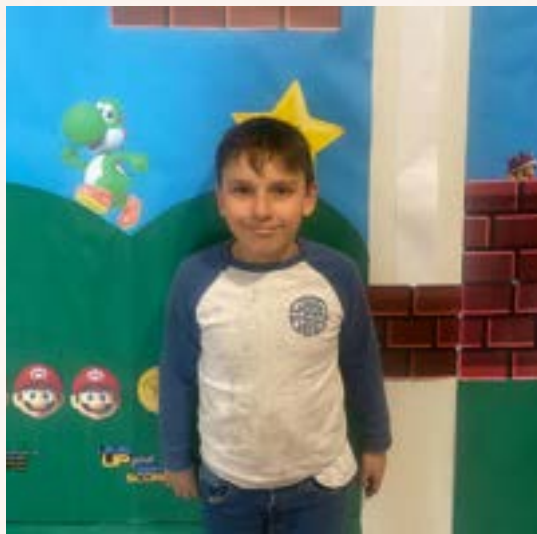
Every Spring, we hold a writing contest for our partner schools. The first place winner from each grade receives a \$50 gift card to the USC bookstore. This year, the prompt was "If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go and why?" We had 168 total submissions from all 6 sites, with one winner from each! We had so much fun reading all of the submissions. It was so hard picking just one winner, that we decided to give "Honorable Mentions" for one student per grade as well! Take a look at them below:



Honorable Mentions:

- 1st grade: Sherwin Sutprom (32nd)
- 2nd grade: Ximena Refugio (32nd)
- 3rd grade: Leyu M Tadesse (SC)
- 4th grade: Jamin Castro (Weemes)
- 5th grade: Mia Escobar (SC)

CONGRATS TO OUR 5 WINNERS!



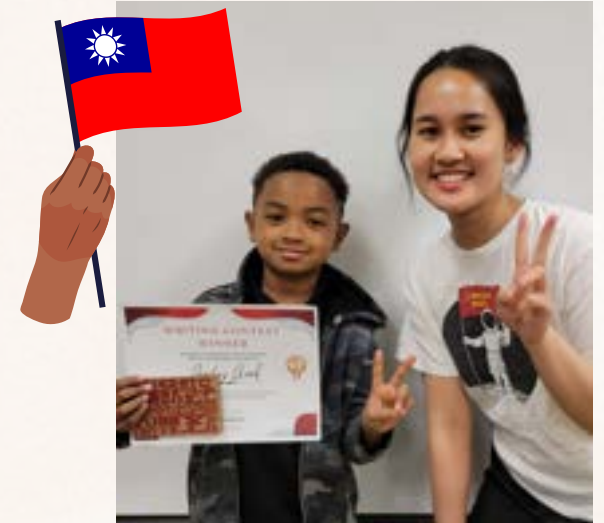
Isaac Tirado, 1st Grade Winner from John Mack Elementary

"If I could go to anywhere in the world, I would go to Guatemala because I can see the rest of my family. It would be fun to see them and where they live. I would like to go to the beach with them. We can go in the water to catch fish. We would bring a big bucket to catch the biggest fish in the ocean. After we catch it, we will throw it back into the water. After, I will swim to the sharks and give them the third biggest fish. I swim away from the tunas and sharks. After I swim, we will go fishing for the little fish. Then, I will build sand castles. This will be really fun. I would like to play golf with my family in Guatemala. This would be exciting because I have never played golf before. Then, I will go to Mexico and then come home. It was fun."



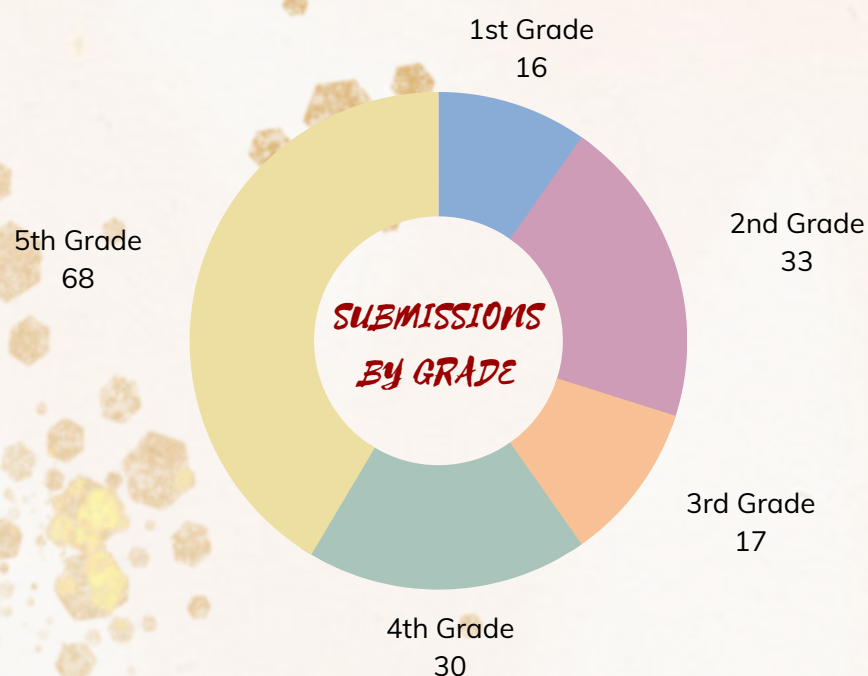
Charles Clark, 2nd Grade Winner from 32nd St Magnet School

"I wish to go to Taiwan to give out money to the poor people. Also I want to learn my culture because I'm Taiwanese and learn about other people who live there. What I know about Taiwan is that it is very far and you will have to fly there. My mom told me that it takes 16 hours to get to this country. I'm really curious about Taiwan. My grandparents are Taiwanese and I don't see them very often. After meeting them once, I want to learn more about my identity. I would want to see what food they eat, what cars they drive, and even learn mandarin. One day, when I see my grandparents again, I know about Taiwan. I want to keep their traditions alive."



Natalie Johns, 3rd Grade Winner from Vermont Ave Elementary

"If I could travel anywhere in the world I would go to Pandora because I would see lots of colorful animals. I can also watch a pink sunset. I can also see the beautiful spirit tree. I want to see an elephant that is big and purple. The animals eat a lot of vegetables. Also James Cameron's Avatar is funny and has lots of colors like blue, purple, and red. These are my favorite colors. Even if it's not real, I want to be in a movie. If I ever got a chance I would take it right away! I want to go there because I want to get a chance to ride on a rocolerif. If you are wondering, what is that? It is a flying animal. Most of the animals don't fly but this one does. It is purple and blue and has a lot of different colors. It seems so fun. I love Avatar so much that I have a room that looks like Pandora. That is why I would like to visit Pandora."



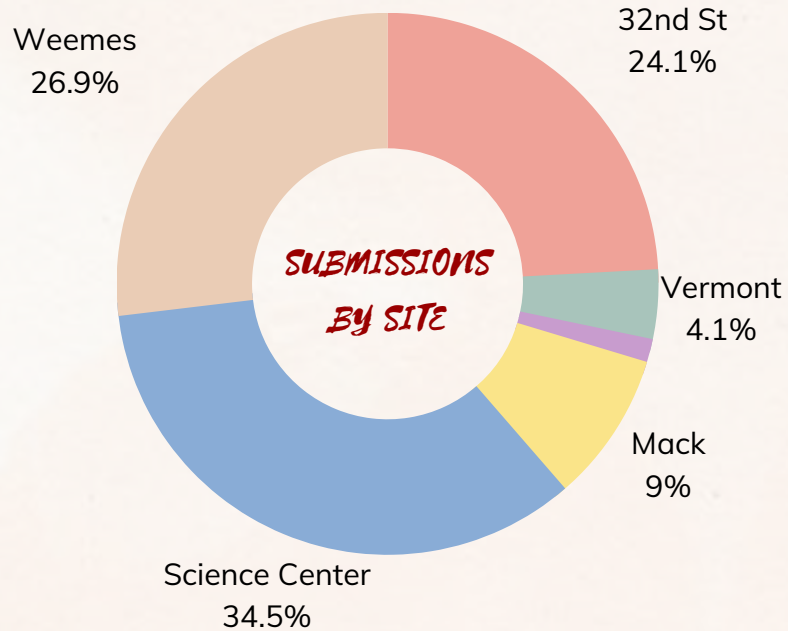
SPRING 2023 WRITING CONTEST

IF YOU COULD TRAVEL ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD, WHERE WOULD YOU GO AND WHY?



Micheal Argueta, 4th Grade Winner from Lenicia B. Weemes

"If I could travel anywhere, I would go to El Salvador because I could try different foods and visit different beautiful places in El Salvador. Also, I could try pupusas that they sell in El Salvador. Also, to see the natural wonders. El Salvador has places of dreams that will surely leave visitors wanting more. El Salvador also has such colorful little towns and I would like to see them. I also want to go because of how people treat you. I feel like the people of El Salvador treat visitors, family, and the people they speak with, with respect. What's more, if you need something and if we can give it to you, we would. I would also like to travel to El Salvador for the food, and that's because not all countries sell Salvadoran food like pupusas, empanadas, enchiladas, elote loco, yuca, rice pudding, mango, fish, or bread.



I would like to go to places in El Salvador such as Izalco Volcano, Coatepeque Lake, Santa Ana Volcano, Suchitoto, Tazumal, National Park, Cerro Verde, Costa del Sol Beach, Puerta del Diablo, Ruta de las Flores, and Museum of Salvadoran art. Also if I could go to El Salvador while I'm on the plane it will improve my mood and decrease stress. This will allow you to forget about all the negative and your health can also improve and I also like the climate of El Salvador. And El Salvador is also the smallest country in America and the only one that does not have a border with the Caribbean Sea. With almost 7 million inhabitants and that is why I would like to travel to San Salvador."

Cynthia Valladares, 5th Grade Winner at Alexander Science Center School

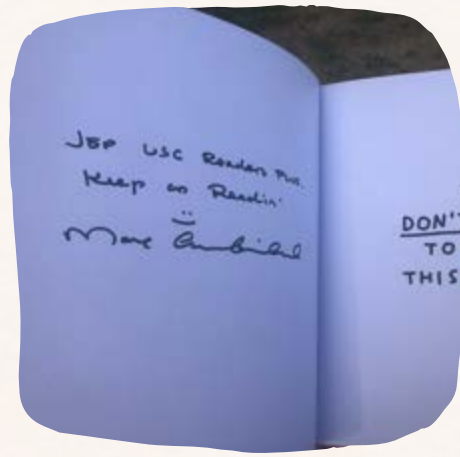
"In my opinion I would like to go to Mexico. Not just regular Mexico but Chihuahua, Mexico. I would like to go to Chihuahua, Mexico to see the night lady and to try some of their food. What I would do there is get a hotel and wait for it to get dark. As I wait for it to be dark I will go and try some of their famous hot dogs that are so big. (Even though I don't like hot dogs I will still like to try some.) As soon as it gets dark, my dad, and my sister will go outside and start to record. If I see her, I will try to get her on camera and chase her. The legend says that the night lady takes kids while they sleep. One person took a picture of her on a roof. But I want to see her with my own two eyes, to see if she is real. I also want to see la llorona. The legend of her is the same as the night lady but a little bit different. She also takes grownups too. I don't know what she does to them. But even though I'm scared of that type of stuff I still want to see one of them. It's like a ghost hunter that's what I want to be when I grow up. I want to interview some people that have expressed some scary stuff. I want to hear if anyone has seen a finger like a gordon gnome. The legend goes that if you see a store or the tiny people in the middle of the woods and talk to them and think you spent a little bit of time and go home it's been a year already. That's because the time with the little people is different from the one in our world. It's really weird how that happens.

One more reason I would like to go to Mexico is to see my family members. I would like to see where my mom and dad grew up. I also want to talk to them about my life and I would like to know more about their life. I would like for them to teach me how to cook. Some things I would like to cook are tacos, pozole, and tortas. My dad said that when he was over there something scary happened. He said that when he went to use the bathroom (outside) he saw a lady in a dress (not la Llorona). I wanted to see if I could catch her. Or if it was his imagination messing with him. I just want to see how my family members are doing. I know one day I will see them. That is why I want to go to Mexico. To see the night lady and eat some of their food."



CONGRATS TO OUR 5 WINNERS!

SPRING 2023 FESTIVAL OF BOOKS



The Los Angeles Times Festival of Books is a public festival that honors the written word and is open to all for free. It is the biggest book festival in the U.S., attracting around 150,000 visitors each year. Established in 1996, the Festival takes place on the second-to-last weekend of April and is hosted by the University of Southern California. It showcases vendors, authors, and publishers, and offers panels where authors discuss various topics, storytelling performances for children, and the presentation of Los Angeles Times book prizes.

Each site was assigned one country to focus their lessons, sharing information about each country and reading aloud a folk or fairy tale for that country, aligning to our Writing Contest theme of travel around the world. Each team created 2 fun lesson plans – one for math and another literacy – to share with the kids at Festival of Books! We had approximately 400 students come visit us at our booth, doing fun activities. Take a look below to see what kind of activities each site prepared!

JOHN MACK



Mack's country was Perú and students created their own beaded necklaces to represent the birds in the book!

ALEXANDER SCIENCE CENTER



Science Center's country was China and students created a garden full of their individual flowers that had their best personal strengths!

32ND ST MAGNET



32nd St.'s country was Papua New Guinea and students created their own pipe cleaner turtles to understand the story!

VERMONT AVE.



Vermont's country was India and students learned about what rumors are. They colored and cut various animals to put on a map of India!

NORWOOD ST.



Norwood's country was Cuba and students created their own Gallito and a unique story about it!

LENIGIA B. WEEMES



Weemes' country was Mexico and students colored their own "suns" to fit into a giant rock to learn about the size of the sun relative to other things!

LITTLE YOGINIS HIGHLIGHTS

Christine Nguyen, Little Yoginis

Every time I go to 32nd St. and Norwood for Little Yoginis, I always joke with Katrina (fellow USC Yogi) how you never know what to expect. And yet I love it every time. Kids toppling over doing tree pose and holding competitions of who can hold airplane pose the longest is usually how it goes. Other times, they will want to wrap themselves in a "burrito" with the yoga mat and skip right into the sleeping pose (AKA savasana). Yet these unexpected instances is what makes little yoginis so fun and unique. We've learned how to problem solve through the challenges the kids threw at us and even made yoga fun for kids who found it "boring".



Students at 32nd St ASP doing bow pose



Enrique (left) and Ethan (right) doing crow pose at 32nd St ASP

One particular student, Matthew, was hesitant at first, not wanting to participate. And yet we always caught him enjoying yoga every session, even though he won't admit it if you ask him. I will never forget when I saw one of our 32nd St. ASP students, Enrique, perfect a crow pose out of nowhere. When we asked him how he knew one of the hardest yoga poses, he just shrugged and said he just thought it was a good idea to balance his knees on the arms. By the last day of yoga, we had 2 kids perfect crow pose.

Our goal is not to have the kids perfect the poses to the best of their abilities. However, like "Horton Hatches the Egg" a story we read to students that teaches us about resilience and perseverance, our kids took lessons from the books very seriously and did not give up until they were able to know they were doing their best in the pose, as I still struggle to do. Our ultimate goal is to encourage creativity, mindfulness, and spread kindness with every lesson we do. Through my 3 years of teaching Little Yoginis, I've seen this goal in action so many times. The fact that our kids persevered and mastered crow pose shows their dedication and how impactful the lesson were. It's honestly one of the highlights of my week and I hope the kids spread everything they've learned from our sessions with their friends and families.



Yogi Katrina Dang doing partner boat pose with Noah at 32nd St ASP

VILLAGE BOOK BUILDERS

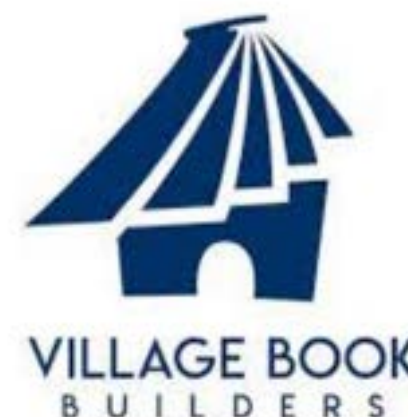
SUPPORTING GLOBAL COMMUNITY THROUGH EDUCATION

Rachael Somers, Weemes Co-Coordinator

Village Book Builders (VBB) works to improve access to education for those who do not always have access, and it has been a pleasure working as a virtual mentor for this program. VBB has global chapters in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and I was given the opportunity to work with students in Uganda. Overall, Village Book Builders is a powerful example of mutual aid as everyone involved in the learning process both play the role of teacher and student. It is always a pleasure to work with young people with a passion for knowledge, seeking to further their education and develop their skills.

As a tutor in the VBB mentorship program, I have firsthand experience with the organization's commitment to education and empowerment. Through my work with mentees in Uganda, I have been able to make meaningful connections with young people from different cultures, and have gained valuable insights into their lives and experiences. This experience as a VBB mentor has taught me the importance of flexibility and personalization in education. Firstly, I have learned flexibility and patience with waiting for wifi to allow me to talk and connect with my students. Secondly, the program gives me the freedom to determine the structure of my lesson plans - allowing me to focus on the specific interests and needs of my mentees. I feel that I have been able to make a real impact in their lives by helping them explore their interests and create tangible plans to achieve their goals.

Overall, my experience with VBB's mentorship program exemplifies the power of education and mentorship in creating social change. It is truly a joy to feel so connected to the global community. I enjoy witnessing the power of educating and empowering young people so that we can create a more equitable and just world for all.



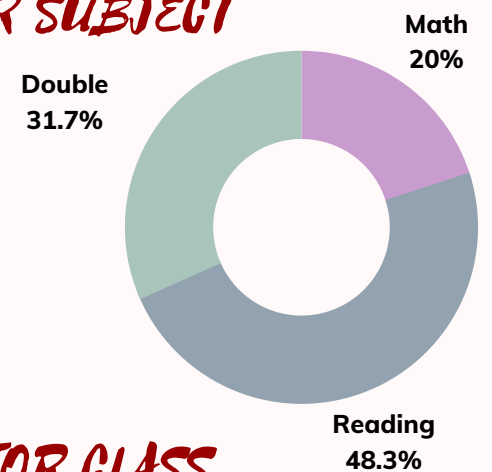
MORE ABOUT US



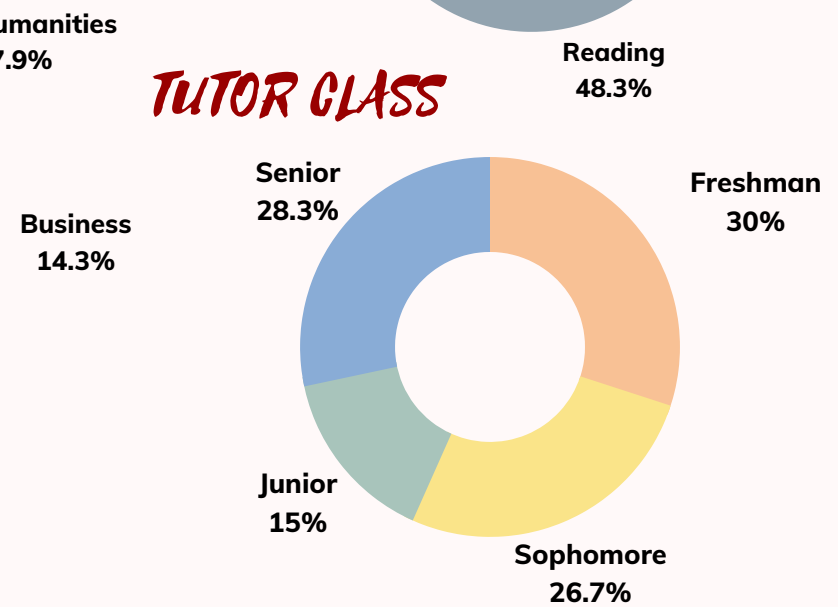
USC ReadersPLUS is an America Reads America Counts program founded in 1997 to provide USC students (and college students at other universities throughout the nation) with meaningful work-study opportunities. Our tutors work on-on-one with students K-5 in our 6 partner schools: John Mack, Vermont Ave Elementary, Alexander Science Center, Lenicia B Weemes, 32nd St Magnet School, and Norwood St Elementary. Tutors are required to work at least 7 hours a week, with a minimum of 2 students throughout the semester, providing academic support and mentorship to boost their confidence in lesson plans tailored to their student's interests. This semester, we had 25 new tutors join our team. Let's look at the statistics about our team to see how well-rounded our cohort was this semester!

Our tutors come from many different majors, fields, and specialties. This semester, we had a total of 60 tutors, 29 reading, 19 math, and 12 double certified. The average tutor has been with ReadersPLUS for 2.38 semesters, ranging from 1 to 10 semesters.

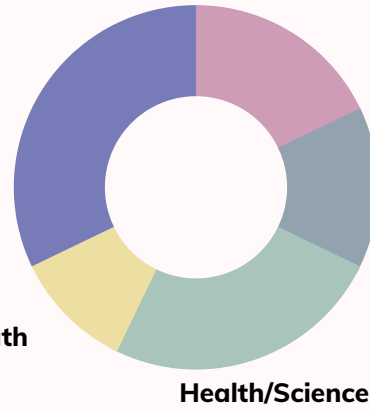
TUTOR SUBJECT



TUTOR CLASS



Social Sciences
32.1%



TUTOR MAJORS

STELLAR LESSON PLANS



Carla Collier (ccollier@usc.edu) Nicole Wong-Franklin (nwongfranklin@usc.edu)

Lesson Plan Template

Tutor Name: Dominic Lau	Reading or Math: Math	
Student Name: DeAngelo White-Reid	Grade: 3rd	
Choice of Literature: Hercules	Materials:	Time (mins): 10
Learning Outcome (what should your student be able to do by the end of your session ie: demonstrate ability to identify, name, explain, evaluate) : My student should be able to understand fractions as numbers on the number line Common Core Standard (reinforce the learning outcome- how does this align with what is being taught in class): 3.OA.C.7 Fluently multiply and divide within 100, using strategies such as the relationship between multiplication and division (e.g., knowing that $8 \times 5 = 40$, one knows $40 \div 5 = 8$) or properties of operations.		
Bridge in (excite students about learning outcome/connect your literature choice with the learning outcome) & Formative Assessment (What does your student already know?) : Ask them if they've seen the Hercules Movie. What can they see on the cover?	Materials: whiteboard, markers.	Time (mins): 15

Tutor Activities (I do)	Learner Activities: (You do)	Materials:	Time (mins)
After the book, create a custom character for DeAngelo, and create monsters for him, in the form of multiplication being attacks, to defeat. With each defeat, he can upgrade the look of his character.	Go through monsters found in the book for him to defeat. Answering multiplication problems lets them attack and lower the health of his foes.	Pencil, worksheet, random cutouts	20
Alternative Tutor Activities: (what to do if your student demonstrates mastery / is really struggling with this learning outcome)	Alternative Learner Activities:	Materials:	Time (mins):

Start showing more drawings to reflect multiplication, such as spiders being multiplied, or minions. Easier to comprehend.	Use the games on the common core site for faster practice.	Paper, pencil	10
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Summary/Formative Assessment/Student Reflection (how you will gauge your student's understanding/ whether learning outcome was achieved) : DeAngelo will face Hades, and go through three multiplication problems that will figure out if he could multiply by all one place values.	Materials: group of objects, pencil, paper	Time (mins): 10
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Every week, our tutors create a detailed lesson plan catered to their students' interests. One type of paperwork they complete is turning in their "Best Lesson Plan". This semester, 2 tutors from Vermont won this competition - Ashley Le and Dominic Lau. Congrats to the Vermont team!



Carla Collier (ccollier@usc.edu) Nicole Wong-Franklin (nwongfranklin@usc.edu)

Lesson Plan Template

Tutor Name: Ashley Le	Reading or Math: Reading		
Student Name: Ethan Castro	Grade: Kindergarten		
Choice of Literature: Pop Pop Pop Pop Pop	Materials: Book	Time (mins): 5	
Learning Outcome (what should your student be able to do by the end of your session ie: demonstrate ability to identify, name, explain, evaluate) : Student should be able to write the entire alphabet. Common Core Standard (reinforce the learning outcome- how does this align with what is being taught in class): Recognize and name all upper letters of the alphabet.			
Bridge in (excite students about learning outcome/connect your literature choice with the learning outcome) & Formative Assessment (What does your student already know?) : What is a balloon? Do you like balloons? What is your favorite balloon color? How high do you think balloons can fly? Where have you seen balloons before?	Materials: none	Time (mins): 5	
Tutor Activities (I do)	Learner Activities: (You do)	Materials:	Time (mins)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cut circles/ovals out of different colors of construction paper Cut out tiny pieces of strings Provide materials to student 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student will write the alphabet in uppercase on each circle and glue them to a piece of string to make their own balloon letters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction paper Scissors tape/glue marker 	35
Alternative Tutor Activities: (what to do if your student demonstrates mastery / is really struggling with this learning outcome)	Alternative Learner Activities:	Materials:	Time (mins):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cut circles/ovals out of different colors of construction paper Cut out tiny pieces of strings Write the alphabet for the student 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student will glue string on the oval Student use the balloons the tutor made to spell their name 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction paper Scissors tape/glue marker 	35
Summary/Formative Assessment/Student Reflection (how you will gauge your student's understanding/ whether learning outcome was achieved) : Point at random balloon letters the student made and ask them to identify them.		Materials: none	Time (mins): 5

