



ReadersPLUS team during the first in-person Extravaganza since 2019

CELEBRATING NEW TUTORS, NEW FRIENDS AND NEW ENERGY-- EVEN AFTER 25 YEARS!

Tina Koneazny, JEP Associate Director

This has been an exciting semester! For the first time, since the COVID-19 pandemic, ReadersPLUS hired a new cohort of tutors to bring into our fold--- we also returned, to most of our partner schools, with in-person work with students. While ReadersPLUS will be celebrating 25 years this coming July, it almost felt as though we were starting over and learning together, as if it were our first year. It was a delight to re-introduce in-person training sessions to welcome and prepare our new tutors. It has been refreshing and inspiring to observe the excitement and enthusiasm of the new team. While saying good-bye to our graduating seniors is always hard, especially when so many of them have been with us for half, or even their full college career here at USC, there is still a sense of excitement as we have just recently interviewed and hired our 2022-23 Leadership Team to help us continue to rebuild our program.

Beyond our regular programming, we have also made some new friends who helped us assemble materials to share with children from our ReadersPLUS schools and beyond. On March 9th, USC Associates joined the JEP Family for Day of SService constructing science kits for JEP's STEM programs, and assembling reading kits for our ReadersPLUS program. The reading kits will be distributed at the LA Times Festival of Books on our USC campus April 23rd and 24th. The books included in the kits were donated by the Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation and the other materials, including pencils, sharpeners, and personal cards, handwritten by our Associates, were generously sponsored by USC Alumni, Karen Wong and Scott Lee. We appreciate all the time, energy and care that went into making the kits so special. We know they will be well received by all the elementary school age children.

All of this new energy, enthusiasm and collaboration is a sign of more good things to come as this academic year draws to a close. We look forward to more wonderful events and connections coming this year as we celebrate JEP's 50th Anniversary. Stay tuned and Serve On!



USC Associates joined the JEP Family for Day of SService constructing science Kits for JEP's STEM programs, and assembling reading Kits for ReadersPLUS.

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Meet the team!



Central Staff

Tina Koneazny, JEP Associate Director
 Stacey Lau, Math Director
 Nicole Wong-Franklin, Literacy Director
 Christine Nguyen, Central Coordinator



Coordinators and Assistance Coordinators

Norwood



Nisey Berry
Coordinator



Alicia Adiwidjaja
Assistant
Coordinator

32nd St



Vy Ngo
Coordinator



Angelina Lim
Assistant
Coordinator

Vermont



Tania Apshankar
Coordinator



Landin Green
Assistant
Coordinator

Mack



Carla Collier
Coordinator

Foshay



Claribel Salazar
Coordinator

Weemes



Monse Alegria
Coordinator

Science Center



Beatrice Hahn
Coordinator



Ananya Shah
Assistant
Coordinator



Misha Hassan
Assistant
Coordinator

Welcome New Tutors!

- Foshay: Lane Farrell
- 32nd St: Esther Cho, Landon White
- Mack: Lupita Gutierrez, Marlen Macias
- Science Center: Sofia Pires, Ally Mendoza
- Weemes: Geoffrey Lewin, Rachael Somers, Amali Cole
- Norwood: Anthony Chang, Jade Almodovar, Bayley Camp
- Vermont: Nataly Lozano, Ana Baez, Leon Espinoza Cruz



ReadersPLUS team during all tutor training with new tutors and veteran tutors!

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Evan Monroe, Class of 2018



Evan at team staff meeting as a Coordinator

My name is Evan Monroe, and during my time at USC I worked as a Literacy Tutor, Math Tutor, Assistant Site Coordinator, and Site Coordinator at ReadersPlus (32nd St.). The unique experience of working together with my fellow tutoring staff, the wonderful Central Staff teams, and everyone else involved to assist local students with their Reading and Math performance was easily one of the highlights of my time at USC.

From the moment I began my application to USC, I always knew that I wanted to participate with JEP somehow and to work with students in the immediate area of the campus. I think that ReadersPlus is a great example of USC's commitment to giving back and to uplifting the University Park community. Whether it was through creating lesson plans, coordinating the after school program at 32nd st., helping tutors to plan their sessions, or preparing material for the Festival of Books, ReadersPlus helped me develop vital communication, problem-solving, and organizational skills that I still make use of every day.

Currently, I work as a commercial real estate investment agent, and no two days are ever the same. No two days ever felt the same at ReadersPlus, and I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to work with so many passionate Readers, motivated students, and knowledgeable mentors. Just as importantly, ReaderPlus also taught me to prioritize a commitment to integrity and strong values in everything I do. Thank you!



Recent photo of Evan now!

WE WILL MISS YOU!!

MATH GRAD DIRECTOR GOODBYE LETTER

Stacey Lau

The spring semester is always bittersweet. As we welcome new members to the team, we must also say goodbye to familiar faces. Thinking back on the past 6 years with ReadersPlus, my mind is flooded with so many happy memories. From my first tutoring session and having to learn what it means to listen to my student's needs, to leading my first team at #WinningWeemes. From learning the ins and outs of the program as central coordinator, to supporting new and veteran tutors as they navigate working with their own students, I am grateful for all of it. Most importantly, I am grateful for the people I came to know - especially all you tutors.



Getting to know one of Stacey's first students

I am humbled by the ingenuity and compassion that each of you possess, and want to thank you all for your continued service to our students. A few hours every week may not seem like much to you, but your students deeply appreciate it. This is what some of them had to say about working with their tutors: *"I love working with a tutor because it is fun, and I can get better on my reading skills". "I really like my tutor! The sessions are fun, and I enjoy getting to learn new things"*.



Stacey's first time on Leadership Team

My hope is that the character traits you have built up during your time with ReadersPlus - whether you are new to the family or a long-time veteran - stay with you throughout your USC career and beyond. Be intentional. Share empathy. Persist in resilience. As you go on to being successful leaders in your respective fields, may you always remember to listen humbly and respond with kindness.

GRADUATING COORDINATORS & ASSISTANT COORDINATORS



Angelina Lim, 32nd St. AC

Thank you so much R+ for being such a central part of my college experience! I have learned so much, and I am so honored to have been AC for a year and a half. I have loved tutoring my students, and I'm going to miss all the tutors at my site. Special shout out to Vy, I have loved working with you, and I know you're going to continue to be an amazing coordinator next year! Love you all <3

Landin Green, Vermont AC

I have been with ReadersPlus for 2.5 years. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time with the program and have loved working with different students over the semesters. Any time I get to laugh with my students are my favorite memories. Seeing students improve in their reading and math skills and building their confidence has been the most fulfilling aspect of ReadersPlus for me.



Nisey Berry, Norwood Coordinator

I've been with Readers since the beginning of my USC journey, so at this point they're truly synonymous. When I learned about the program, I knew I wanted to be a part of it. I found an incredibly loving community both within the JEP house and Norwood itself over these past 4 years. Even through the pandemic, our team only got stronger :) I'll never forget what a powerful influence Readers has had on my life, molding me into a leader and aligning me with my deep passion for educational equity.

Alicia Adiwidjaja, Norwood AC

It's been 8 semesters here at USC-- 8 semesters as a Trojan, 8 semesters as a student, but also, 8 semesters as a tutor for ReadersPLUS. This program wasn't just part of my college experience, it **was** my college experience. When I first joined, I don't think I realized how meaningful being a part of this community would be. I've met so many wonderful people and brilliant students along the way that not a week went by in which I wasn't excited to do my job. Now, I have 4 years of memories that I'll always keep with me :)



Claribel Salazar, Foshay Coordinator

ReadersPlus has allowed me to grow not only as a leader but also as a person in the eight semesters I have been here. One of my favorite memories is when I was tutoring a student and everytime we learned a new word we would create a dance move for it. By the end of the semester we learned so many new vocabulary words and also created a really fun dance! It is bittersweet to leave the program but I am incredibly grateful for everyone I met and for the time I spent in the program <3

Misha Hassan, Weemes AC

I've been with Readers for the last 5 semesters and it's been such an important part of my USC experience. I'm so grateful for the Readers team and their constant support, my coordinator for being the very best, and tutors at Weemes, who brought so much joy and laughter to our 8 am staff meetings. We play Jenga at our staff meetings and if there's any team I would be okay losing all the Jenga rounds to, it would be this one. I also have so much gratitude for the Weemes staff and students. Going to Weemes every week and getting to be a small part of the Weemes community is something I'll always cherish. I'll miss it all so much.



GRADUATING TUTORS

HIGHLIGHT



BAO NGUYEN - WEEMES

- 4 semesters with Readers
- Creative, Thoughtful, Playful
- Quote: "Ngồi uống cà phê đến tối" (Sitting, drinking coffee here until the night-time)
- In 10 years, I'll hopefully be a tenured professor.

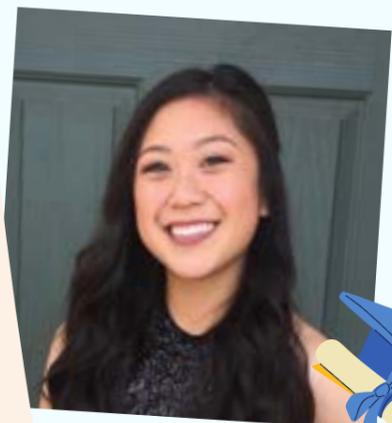
ABIGAIL ABDELLA - NORWOOD

- 5 semesters with Readers
- Energetic, Hardworking, Practical
- Quote: "If it's meant to be it'll be"
- In 10 years, I'll either be working in LA real estate or completing medical school and working in a hospital.



CAROLYN TRUONG - VERMONT

- 7 semesters with Readers
- Driven, Empathetic, Attentive
- Quote: "Be the change you wish to see in the world"
- In 10 years, I hope to be a Doctor working in a hospital.



SAM MESFIN - SCIENCE CENTER

- 6 semesters with Readers
- Enlightening, Charismatic, Perseverant
- Quote: "Live, laugh, love" - Proverbs
- In 10 years, I hope to be somewhere on a beach



TAM HOANG - MACK

- 6 semesters with Readers
- Optimistic, Goofy, Easy-Going
- Quote: ""If your dreams don't scare you, they aren't big enough"
- In 10 years, I'll be on the sands of a Hawaiian beach with family and friends..



JENNIFER NGUYEN - NORWOOD

- 5 semesters with Readers
- Determined, Calm, Planner
- Quote: "Is mayonnaise an instrument?" - Patrick Star
- In 10 years, I hope to be working as a physician assistant in Seattle!



CECYLIA SEIN - WEEMES

- 5 semesters with Readers
- Indecisive, Empathetic, Dynamic
- "Nothing is impossible; the word itself says 'I'm possible!'" Audrey Hepburn
- In 10 years, I hope to be working as an occupational therapist and taking my fur babies on long walks on the beach.

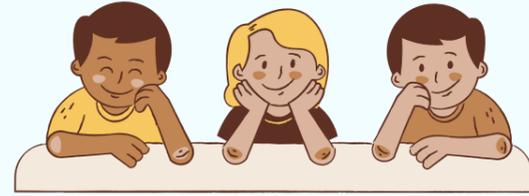




STORIES FROM TUTORS



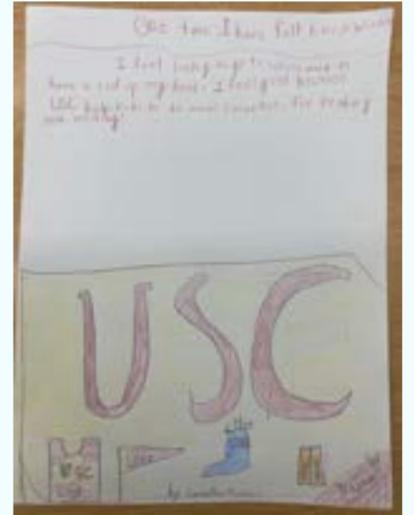
Relating to my students Amali Cole – Tutor at Weemes



I relate to my students in a few ways. They are bright and curious about the world, which I admire. This desire to learn is something that I see in myself as well. Since a young age, I have always enjoyed learning. I loved school so much that in elementary school I used to give myself homework. One of my students tells me how she reads at night under her blankets when she is supposed to be asleep, too enthralled with the story to put the book down. I remember doing the same thing when I was younger and that rush of excitement trying to finish a book.

My other student loves history. History has always been my favorite subject in school. Connecting with my student through our love of history has been so rewarding. He teaches me some things about history, and I teach him others, and together we marvel at human history.

Both of my students struggle with reading and writing at times, and I did as well. I can tell, however, that just like me, that their curiosity and ache to learn will take them far in life.



Student Samantha Mendez's Writing Contest submission

Building my students' confidence Grace Scheg – Tutor at 32nd St.



I build confidence with my students by ensuring that they feel safe and supported during our tutoring sessions. Even if my students are initially shy, once I've built trust with them they feel less worried about making mistakes, and are more willing to give their best effort when reading unfamiliar words or solving confusing math problems. Part of building this trust is learning their interests and catering my lessons to them. My 2nd grade student's favorite book is Green Eggs and Ham, so we've been reading a lot of Dr. Seuss which gets her excited about reading. Because Dr. Seuss also uses a lot of made-up words, she feels less insecure about not knowing how to pronounce certain words in these books. Because trust goes both ways, I also like sharing my own interests with my students.

When I was younger, I was a big fan of Nancy Drew books, so I've introduced my 5th grade student to these books. She had never heard of Nancy Drew before we began tutoring but now she looks forward to getting to read these books at the start of every session.



Grace and her student doing a fun literacy lesson!

My student's growth over the semester Jade Almodovar – Tutor at Norwood

Building my students' confidence has been something we have to work on every lesson. Oftentimes when we are working on something they don't understand their first reaction is to say "I don't know" or "I can't do it" or some other variation of that phrase. To combat this I always have them take a minute after reassuring them they do know how to do it. This gives them the opportunity to try again and more times than not they complete the problem without my help. If they do need help I coach them through the problem and make sure to highlight again that they can do it, or that they worked through something hard. Many of the kids I've worked with underestimate themselves before even beginning the problem because it feels too daunting. They often just need verbal encouragement and to have someone they look up to tell them they believe they're capable. As I continue tutoring, it's been amazing watching my students' confidence grow as they tackle challenging problems which they would have immediately shut down when presented previously.



Student Jaireli Alvarez's drawing of Jade!



STORIES FROM TUTORS



A learning experience with ReadersPLUS Lane Farrell – Tutor at Foshay



ReadersPlus has taught me the importance of civic engagement. Having access to an inner-city elementary classroom allowed me to see the excellence of a school despite systemic inequities within education. I remember walking into my student’s classroom to pick her up for our first session when hearing the entire class recite a line in unison: “We are going to college”. I came to find that this was one of Ms. Brown’s daily affirmations that she goes through with her class. Working as a tutor at Foshay has offered me a depth of insight into the conditions that foster educational process despite policymakers failing to provide sufficient resources. Excellent teachers and volunteer work from organizations create the conditions to manifest educational growth and confidence within a student’s life. With that said, as a student pursuing a career in law, I have been given a unique glimpse into the American education system and how it desperately needs to be reformed to ensure our youth have the vital instruments to help this nation form “a more perfect union”.

When the tutor becomes the student Sofia Pires – Tutor at Science Center



Working with students through JEP/ReadersPlus has been a real treat. Students are so fun to work with! They are always eager to learn, to have an example to look up to, and to have someone who’s really there to help them grow as individuals! I would say the most rewarding thing about working with students this semester is just learning from them. I’ve learned a lot about how to go about helping someone, not only academically, but also personally. If my student isn’t feeling confident about themselves, I change my lesson plan to help them in this sector, since I feel emotional knowledge is just as important as mental, academic knowledge. I’ve grown a deeper sense of empathy for my students, which in return has helped me change my view about others including myself. This experience has been nothing but an amazing learning experience, both as a mentor and as a student!

The most rewarding part of being a tutor Lupita Gutierrez – Tutor at Mack



The most rewarding part of working with students is the enthusiasm they have coming into our sessions. Going into tutoring, I didn’t think I was going to build such a positive and playful relationship with my students. In my previous experience, there was a lot of structure and guidelines I had to follow so sometimes the kids were bored or I felt like I often had to play a “bad cop” role. My experience with ReadersPlus has been the exact opposite. The freedom to structure our sessions and lesson plans for unique student needs and interests has made it easier to build a less formal/power-based relationship with the students. Kennydi, one of the students I tutor, always looks forward to seeing me on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I was out sick one day, and when I came back I heard that she cried when I didn’t show up. Although I was sad to hear that she cried, it in some way warmed my heart to know that she looked forward to seeing me that much. I didn’t realize how much I meant to my kids until that very moment.

My growth as a tutor this semester Nataly Lozano – Tutor at Vermont



Nataly and her student during a zoom tutoring session!

At the beginning of this semester, I was very nervous about making lesson plans and coming up with fun activities for the tutoring sessions. However, through much practice and help from everyone on the central staff it was a lot easier for me to overcome these challenges. Now, whenever I have to create a lesson plan I no longer feel panic take over. I am able to complete the task calmly and confidently. And, in terms of actually going about teaching the content, it has been so rewarding to see my student enjoy herself during our sessions. Although I still have much to learn, I feel confident that I can handle each and every task that comes my way if I take it one step at a time and remember that with time and practice that task will become much easier to accomplish.

SITE PHOTOS

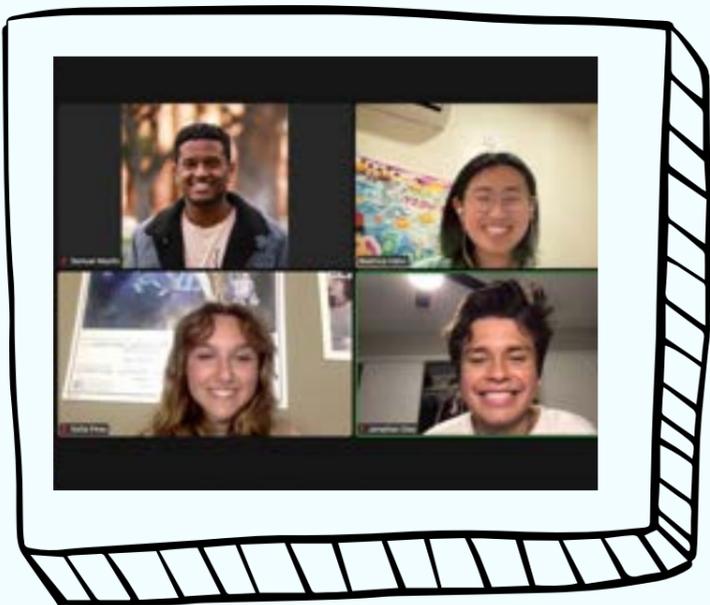
32nd St.



Norwood



Science Center



Foshay



Mack



Vermont



Weemes



TEACHING RESILIENCE THROUGH YOGA IN THE CLASSROOM



Rachel Heil, USC Yogi



Rachel Heil and Suhas Peela teach upward facing bow pose to third-grade students from Alexander Science Center School

When JEP announced that student workers would be returning to the physical classroom this semester, I found myself simultaneously elated and uncertain. On one hand, I was thrilled to be teaching yoga in-person again, where we could engage in lessons uninhibited by the limitations of Zoom. But on the other hand, I was nervous—how would students respond to our presence after two years of being remote?

In January, our small but mighty team of five Yogis prepared to conduct weekly lessons in three local elementary schools. On the surface, our preparations each week resembled those of any other semester: meeting with our partners, choosing books to discuss, identifying poses to teach. But these preparations now also included factors that hadn't been relevant in semesters past: obtaining enough yoga mats, allocating classroom set-up time, learning in-person class management techniques to gain the students' attentions.

For me, the adjustment was definitely jarring. But more importantly, I was amazed and astounded by the transformations I began witnessing in the students—transformations that outmatched those I'd observed on Zoom. Within the classroom, my partner and I engaged in more extensive discussions about yoga, mindfulness, and self-love with our students. Both their ability and eagerness to self-reflect at such young ages astonished me, as our second-graders excitedly told us things like, "I really liked Warrior III, because it made me feel strong and balanced, and then I was able to calm down and relax during savasana."

The resilience of our little yoginis served as a source of inspiration for me the entire semester. Whether they were in first grade or fifth, each student eagerly opened themselves up to yoga, reminding me just how transformative and impactful these teachings about inner strength could be. And I know, more than anything, that our students have been empowered to channel their own inner strength whenever needed—for rare is the third-grader who understands the power of yoga, "I felt like I was on a mountaintop sitting under a cherry tree, and I felt calm."



"I FELT LIKE I WAS ON A MOUNTAINTOP SITTING UNDER A CHERRY TREE, AND I FELT CALM."

SPRING EVENTS

SPRING 2022 LA TIMES FESTIVAL OF BOOKS

By: Christine Nguyen, Central Coordinator

For the first time since 2018, The LA Times Festival of Books, one of the largest book festivals in the nation, returned to our University Park campus April 23-24. USC Dornsife sponsored our JEP booth located in McCarthy Quad, where our ReadersPlus school teams read books aloud - all with the shared theme of *confidence*. Our student staff designed and presented hands-on activities connected to the books to children visiting our booth. Over a thousand books donated by the Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation, along with fun reading kits assembled by USC Associates through the generosity of Karen Wong and Scott Lee, were gifted to over 500 K-5 children who shared time with our tutors at our booth for a day of celebrating books and reading!



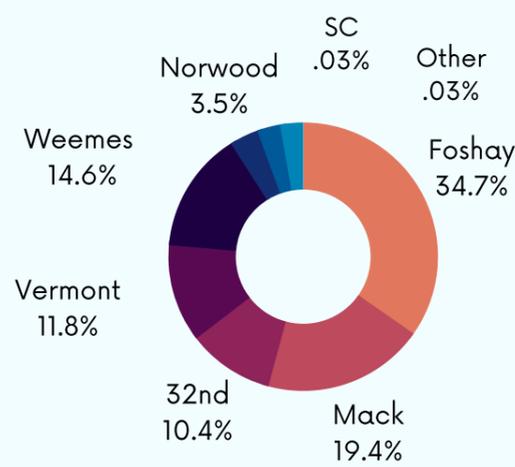
Students join ReadersPLUS tutors with fun lesson plans and activities at the Festival of Books!



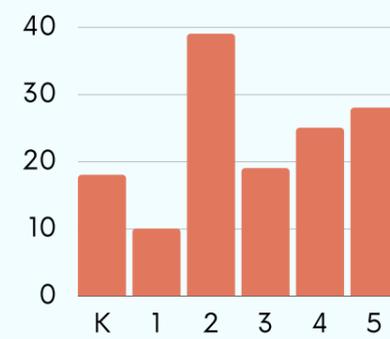
SPRING 2022 WRITING CONTEST PROMPT: WRITE ABOUT A TIME YOU FELT LIKE A WINNER

By: Christine Nguyen, Central Coordinator

Every Spring semester, we host a Writing Contest for the 7 USC JEP partner schools grades K-5! This year, we had a total of 144 submissions! Children wrote about winning sports games, playing video games, teacher strikes, graduating, acing tests, and even becoming the future president! We had so much fun reading this year's submissions which were also displayed at the Festival of Books. One winning essay was selected per grade level, and the authors of those essays received \$50 gift cards to the USC Bookstore as well as a book set. We are so proud of all our students who submitted essays, all of whom received a certificate of participation!



Submissions By School Site



Submissions By Grade

Kindergarten



Zoe Pollard
Foshay Learning Center

1st



Oscar Salgado
Mack Elementary

2nd



Amy Paiz
32nd St. USC Magnet

3rd



Clayton Rochez
Weemes Elementary

4th



Christopher Corea
Foshay Learning Center

5th



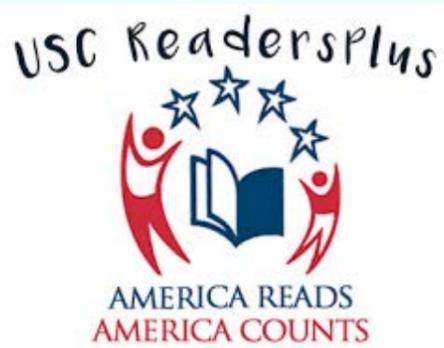
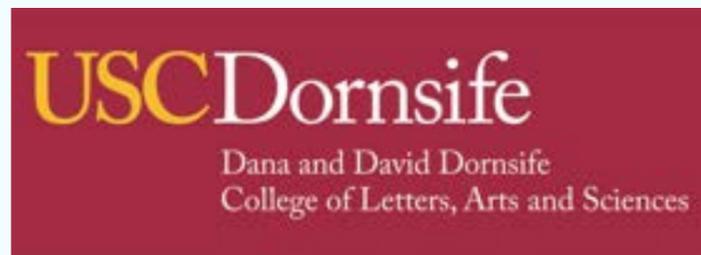
Jazmine Rojas
Mack Elementary

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.



USC ReadersPlus
801 West 34th St.
Los Angeles, CA
90089-0471

<https://dornsife.usc.edu/joint-educational-project/readersplus/>

(213) 740-1834

uscreadersplus@gmail.com

Newsletter Created by: Christine Nguyen
Edited by: Tina Koneazny

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@uscreadersplus
uscreadersplus@gmail.com