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**DRAFT**



### **Zero to hero: The effects of after-school reading tuition for children**

One day, out of the blue, two parents visited one of our reading clinics and said, “We have come about the after school reading program. Our girl has gone from a zero to a hero, from feeling a failure to feeling that she’s a success. She now reads to us without us prompting and actually enjoys reading. We never thought this would happen.”

We mention this anecdote because it reinforces our belief that after-school reading programs are a worthwhile idea for schools to consider. We are suggesting a program that children enjoy going to and that is a positive experience. We are certainly not suggesting it as a punishment for not achieving school standards. The good thing about an after-school program is that it is exactly the opposite. Our experience is that it is possible to create a successful program that helps children to improve their reading and that they will really enjoy.

What exactly does it take to start an after-school reading program? Here are some questions that you have been thinking about how we got started – and some answers:

1. **How is the programme funded?** To recruit tutors schools will need funding. Some teachers may tutor as volunteers but a better incentive is to provide some payment either in dollars or vouchers.
2. **Where was the program located?** We had to decide where to offer the reading tuition and we both agreed that a local school would be better than at the University. We both worked in different Universities about 100 miles from each other but we each were able to find a local school prepared to give us some space to run the program.

3. **How were children selected for the program?** In order to let schools and parents know about the program we asked our local newspapers if they would run a free article indicating that free lessons for struggling readers were available.
4. **What was the application process?** We were both at Universities and both programs had a research aspect to them in that we were monitoring the children over time to see if they made progress. This meant we needed to apply to our University Ethics Committees for approval to run the programs.
5. **Where did the children travel from?** Some parents travelled up to 20 miles to bring their children to the program. Most children, however, were from the city area.
6. **How many children attended the program?** Each year we had 30-40 children in the program.
7. **What were the operating times?** In the first few years the program ran Monday to Friday from 3.30 to 5.30.
9. **How did we recruit tutors?** We have been lucky at both our Universities in that we have been able to recruit our teacher trainee and liberal arts students and postgraduate students.
10. **How was the program managed?** We both have a coordinator who meets and greets the parents, opens and shuts the classroom, trains the tutors, and keeps the books. The coordinator works two to four hours each teaching session.

### **The results of the program**

To date, the after-school tuition program has had very positive results in that children have made statistically significant gains in reading comprehension. We used the Neale Test of Reading Ability (Neale, 1999). Its internal consistency reliabilities range from .7 to .9.

As can be seen in the attached chart (which has the Auckland results) the reading comprehension gains show a closing of the gap – children have moved into higher stanines. These results are after one year. If the program went for more than one year the gains would be even better. Many of the children were predominantly minority children who typically struggle with reading and other subjects. The after-school program produced medium to large effect sizes for them which suggests that the program is suitable in culturally diverse schools.

Of course, we like to think that the positive assessment results we obtained were due to our after school tuition but even if we can't prove that they were completely (because we did not have a control group) we have been encouraged by parent feedback. Parent feedback for both programs has been positive. Here are some comments from parents:

- “She is actually finishing books and able to tell me the storyline. Her attitude toward reading is way more positive.”
- “He is proud of this class. He learn more vocabulary and has improved understand story.”
- “Before, he used to cry when the word ‘homework’ was mentioned, but now he can sit each night and read three books and do his homework and extra work for over an hour.”

**Stanine Descriptor**

9 Very high

8 High

7 Above average

**4,5,6 Average**

3 Below average

2 Low

1 Very low

**Reading Comprehension – Changes in Stanines 2001 -2008****Time 1 – beginning of year****Time 2 – end of year****Estimated Marginal Means of MEASURE\_1**