

# An Evaluation of Reading Corps

ANNUAL EVALUATION REPORT



2024-2025



NATIONAL  
**Science & Service**  
COLLABORATIVE

Powerful Insights. AmeriCorps Ingenuity.



## **About the National Science & Service Collaborative**

We believe partnerships between researchers, AmeriCorps programs, and communities can transform research and practice, leading to sustainable, community-driven solutions. We value a broad and inclusive definition of "collaboration" because improving societal outcomes is maximized when the tools of science, expertise of communities, and resources of AmeriCorps are deployed in a truly collaborative way.

The Center's portfolio includes projects to evaluate the impact of AmeriCorps programming, projects to advance the existing knowledge base in education, and development projects to bring new and innovative programming to communities across the nation.

<https://nssc.serveminnesota.org/>

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# Executive Summary

Reading Corps is an AmeriCorps program that provides schools with trained literacy tutors to support reading development for students in Kindergarten through grade 3. Reading Corps tutors are trained to implement evidence-based literacy instruction and assessment protocols. Tutors receive intensive, information-filled training and are supported by a multi-level coaching model that includes site-based and external coaches.

Tutors work with students individually or in pairs for 20 minutes each day. The research-based tutoring interventions are supplemental to the core reading instruction provided at each school. External evaluators have conducted numerous rigorous evaluations across multiple states, and these evaluations show Reading Corps has a positive impact on student reading skills. Reading Corps has been thoroughly reviewed by independent experts at Stanford University's National Student Support Accelerator, Johns Hopkins University's Evidence for ESSA clearinghouse, and the Institute of Education Science's What Works Clearinghouse. In all cases, the program was determined to have the highest possible levels of evidence.

## Key Findings from the 2024-25 Evaluation

### ***Reading Corps served nearly 40,000 students, delivering over 2,000,000 tutoring sessions.***

In the 21st year of program operation, 1,754 Reading Corps tutors served a total of 39,379 students in 1,032 schools across 10 states. Tutors delivered 2,428,551 evidence-based tutoring sessions. Students received an average of 62 tutoring sessions across 19 weeks. Coaching observations show program assessments and interventions were conducted with high levels of mean fidelity (>95% accuracy) and in accordance with their established evidence base.

### ***98% of students improved their reading skills during tutoring.***

Tutors administer measures of elementary literacy to identify eligible students and track student progress during intervention. The measures assess phonics skills (i.e., knowing sounds and simple word-level phonetic relationships) and reading fluency skills (i.e., how well the student reads connected text). Weekly progress monitoring scores on these assessments show 98% of students improved their reading skills. Additionally, 71% of students exceeded target growth, indicating their pace of improvement was greater than one year's worth of learning, closing their individual achievement gap.

### ***Tutors and coaches see the positive impact of the program.***

When asked in a survey about the impact of the program on students, 99% of tutor and 98% of Internal Coach respondents indicated participation in Reading Corps had a positive impact on students. Furthermore, 97% of tutors indicated they would recommend serving in Reading Corps to others, and 98% of tutors agreed or strongly agreed that Reading Corps had a positive impact on them personally.

# Reading Corps Program Model

Launched in 2004, Reading Corps is an AmeriCorps program that places community members in schools across the country to provide evidence-based literacy support to students from Kindergarten to grade 3. The theory of change underlying



Reading Corps is that high-dosage tutoring provided by AmeriCorps members will help schools meet the literacy needs of students and increase

the number of students achieving reading proficiency by third grade.

The Reading Corps model aligns with Response-to-Intervention (RTI) or Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS), which are two descriptions of a framework for delivering educational services effectively and efficiently. The key aspects of that alignment include the following:

- Benchmark assessment three times a year to identify students eligible for individualized interventions
- Clear literacy targets at each grade level
- Evidence-based interventions
- Regular progress monitoring during intervention delivery
- High-quality training in program procedures, coaching, and observations to support fidelity of implementation

## Benchmark Assessments

Reading Corps screens students for program eligibility three times a year using empirically-derived grade- and content-specific performance benchmarks developed by FastBridge Learning. The measures assess phonics skills (i.e., knowing sounds and simple word-level phonetic relationships) and reading fluency skills (i.e., how well the student reads connected text). The specific measures are listed below:

- Test of Letter Sounds
  - Kindergarten
- Test of Nonsense Words (English)
  - Grade 1
- CBMReading
  - Grade 1
  - Grade 2
  - Grade 3

The assessments are administered by Reading Corps tutors at each screening period or “benchmark window” (fall, winter, and spring). Tutors assess students who were previously tutored by Reading Corps and students identified by classroom teachers as potential candidates for tutoring. Benchmark scores are compared to seasonal grade level targets that predict future reading success. Students who score below target are eligible to receive Reading Corps individualized tutoring interventions.

## Evidence-Based Interventions

Reading Corps tutors are trained to deliver evidence-based interventions focused on the “Big Five Ideas in Literacy” as identified by the National Reading Panel, including phonological

awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Tutoring interventions promote development of these skills, and are supplemental to the core reading instruction provided at each school.

The Reading Corps interventions are:

- Letter Sound Correspondence
- Pairs Letter Sound Correspondence
- Blending Words
- Pairs Blending Words
- Sound Awareness
- Sound Awareness Pairs
- Word Construction
- Newscaster Reading
- Duet Reading
- Connected Text Pairs
- Repeated Reading with Comprehension Strategy Practice
- Pencil Tap
- Stop Go

Tutors serve in schools in either a full-time or part-time capacity. Full-time tutors work with a minimum of 15 students each day while part-time tutors work with at least 10 students. Tutors deliver literacy intervention to individuals or pairs of students for 20 minutes each day.

### **Regular Progress Monitoring During Intervention Delivery**

The program's literacy assessments are also used to measure the progress of students while they are receiving tutoring. Tutors "progress monitor" each student they are tutoring one time per week using a brief, one-minute assessment. Each student's weekly score is graphed on the Reading Corps Data Management System.

Tutors and coaches monitor student graphs to track progress toward the proficiency targets and make data-based decisions on intervention effectiveness. Students' weekly scores are also used by coaches to determine if students have made enough progress to "exit" the program and no longer receive tutoring.

### **High-Quality Training and Ongoing Coaching**

Reading Corps tutors receive training through an online Learning Management System (LMS). The intensive, information-filled courses on the LMS provide foundational training in the research-based literacy interventions employed by Reading Corps. Throughout the courses, tutors learn the skills, knowledge, and tools needed to serve as literacy interventionists.

Tutors are provided with detailed literacy manuals as well as online resources that mirror and supplement the contents of the manual (e.g., videos of model interventions and best practices). Both the manuals and online resources are intended to provide tutors with just-in-time support and opportunities for continued professional development and skill refinement. Additional training is provided throughout the tutors' year of service.

In addition to extensive training, Reading Corps provides tutors with multiple layers of supervision to ensure integrity of program implementation. Schools identify a staff member to serve as an Internal Coach, who is typically a literacy specialist, teacher, or curriculum director, to serve as immediate on-site supervisor, mentor, and advocate for tutors. The Internal Coach's role is to

monitor tutors and provide guidance in the implementation of Reading Corps assessments and interventions. As the front-line supervisor, the Internal Coach is a critical component of the supervisory structure.

Coaching Specialists, who are either program staff or contracted consultants for Reading Corps, provide both tutors and Internal Coaches with expert support on literacy instruction and ensure implementation integrity of Reading Corps program elements.

Both Internal Coaches and Coaching Specialists conduct ongoing monitoring and observation of tutors. During regular coaching sessions, Coaching Specialists and Internal Coaches discuss student selection for service, track student progress for data-based decisions, and observe tutors administering assessments and delivering interventions. The observations allow coaches to build on a tutor's formal training and to help tutors improve their implementation of the Reading Corps model.

In addition to these two coaching layers, a third layer consisting of AmeriCorps program support helps ensure a successful year of AmeriCorps service. Program support staff are Reading Corps employees who provide administrative oversight for program implementation to schools participating in Reading Corps.

## Program Evidence

Several impact evaluations form the core of evidence for Reading Corps. These evaluations employed highly rigorous methods and produced statistically significant and practically meaningful results.

Combined these evaluations

included 3,565 students across 99 schools and four states, demonstrating the positive impact of the program on a large number of students across a wide variety of contexts.

The Reading Corps program has also been thoroughly reviewed by independent experts at Stanford University's National Student Support Accelerator, Johns Hopkins University's Evidence for ESSA clearinghouse, and the Institute of Education Science's What Works Clearinghouse. In all cases, the program was determined to have the highest possible levels of evidence.

For more information on the Reading Corps evidence base visit <https://nssc.serveminnesota.org/ameri-corps-impact/reading-corps>.

Numerous rigorous evaluations across multiple states show Reading Corps has a positive impact on student reading skills.

# Reading Corps Delivers Over 2,000,000 Tutoring Sessions

## Tutors and Students in 2024-25

Reading Corps started in Minnesota in 2004 and has since expanded to 10 states across the country. Most schools have one or two tutors per year, but in some situations a school could have as many as 9 tutors.

Table 1 displays the number of participating cities, districts, and schools that had at least one tutor and the number of tutors in each state. A total of 1,754 tutors served in 1,032 schools across 393 districts and 473 cities.

**Table 1. Cities, Districts, Schools, and Tutors by State**

State	Cities	Districts	Schools	Tutors*
California	25	25	82	158
Colorado	26	17	57	79
Georgia	24	7	62	78
Idaho	7	16	23	42
Iowa	16	7	40	51
Michigan	33	30	68	111
Minnesota	247	207	470	893
Mississippi	5	5	22	33
North Dakota	17	16	42	44
Wisconsin	73	63	166	265
<b>Total</b>	<b>473</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>1,032</b>	<b>1,754</b>

\*Defined as having entered tutoring minutes for at least one student in the program's data management system.

Students are identified as good candidates for Reading Corps participation through a two-step process. First, teachers or other school staff recommend students for Reading Corps based on student performance or previous service. Second, tutors administer 1-minute benchmark assessments to recommended students. Students who score below benchmark targets that are linked to future academic success are eligible to receive Reading Corps tutoring.

After identifying eligible students, the tutor works with their Internal Coach to select which students will be served

based on a number of factors such as the school's schedule and other services available to eligible students. Full-time tutors aim to serve 15 or more students each day while part-time tutors work with at least 10 students each day. Table 2 displays the number of students served by grade in each state. 39,379 students received tutoring. Grade 2 had the greatest number of students tutored while Kindergarten had the fewest number of students.

Reading Corps tutors served 39,379 students across 10 states.

**Table 2. Students Tutored by State and Grade**

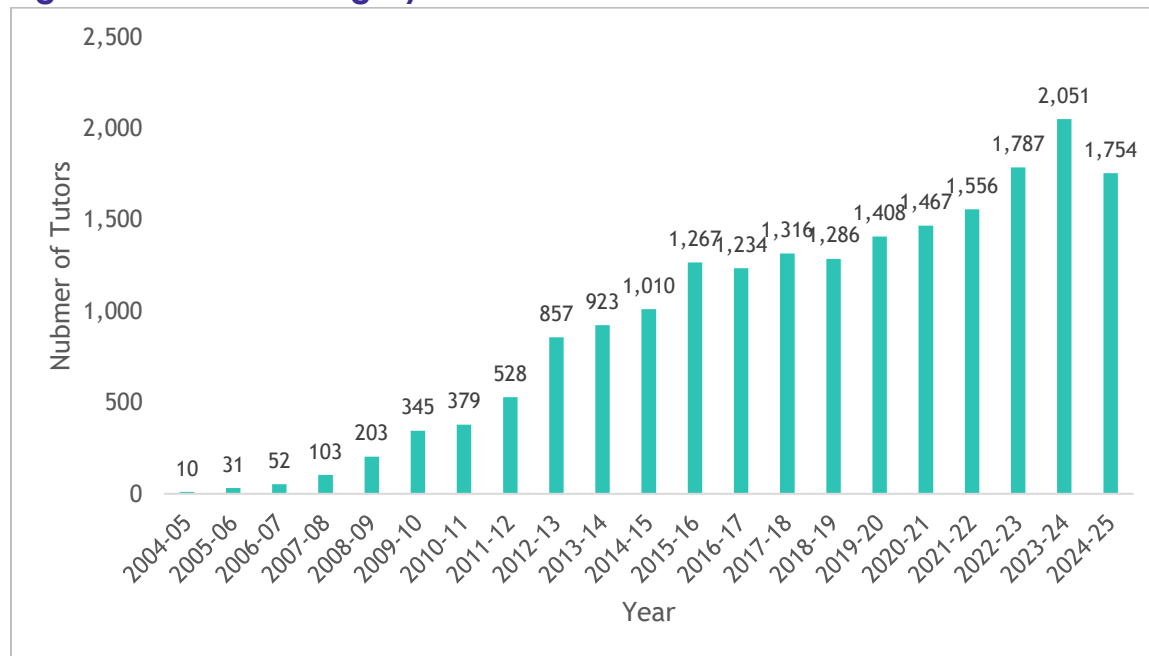
State	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Total
California	533	810	1,013	931	3,287
Colorado	373	469	519	528	1,889
Georgia	438	514	590	501	2,043
Idaho	287	263	262	264	1,076
Iowa	359	306	277	249	1,191
Michigan	306	605	682	720	2,313
Minnesota	4,729	4,920	4,923	4,780	19,352
Mississippi	102	137	151	211	601
North Dakota	251	243	156	158	808
Wisconsin	1,400	1,887	1,817	1,715	6,819
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,778</b>	<b>10,154</b>	<b>10,390</b>	<b>10,057</b>	<b>39,379</b>

**Tutors and Students by Year**

Reading Corps started during the 2004-05 school year with just 10 tutors serving in Minnesota. The program then grew each year by adding more tutors and states, reaching its peak in the 2023-24 school year with over 2,000 tutors. The

number of tutors serving in any year is based on a number of factors including federal grants awarded, private funding, and tutor recruitment. Figure 1 displays the number of tutors who served each year of the program. 1,754 tutors served in 2024-25, the third most tutors serving in any year in the program's history.

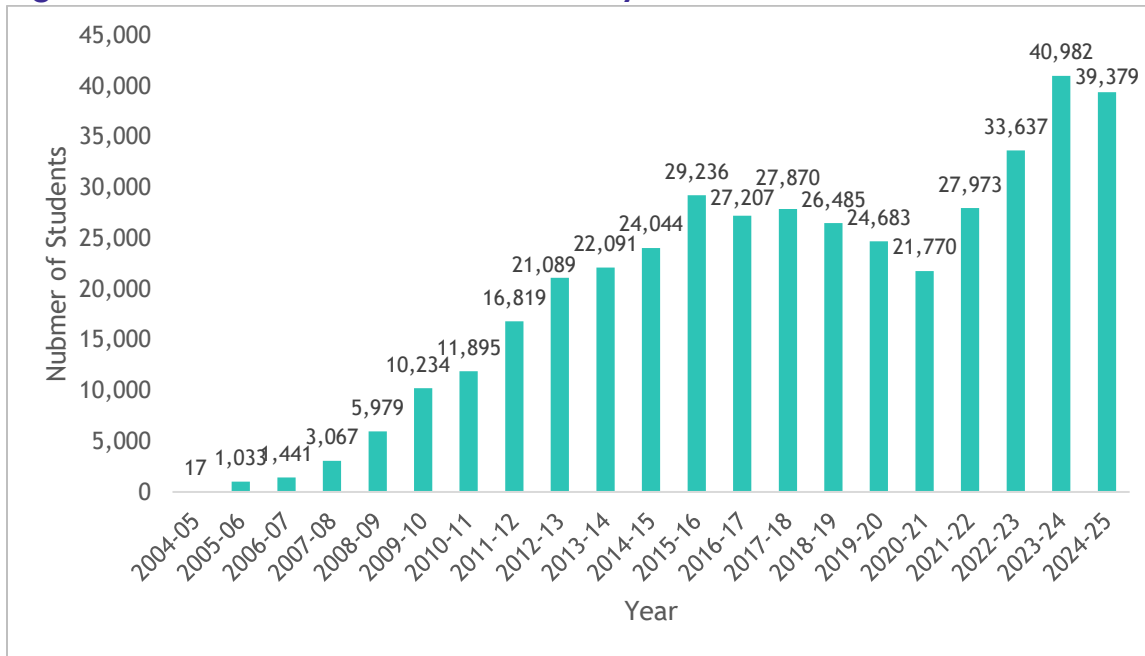
**Figure 1. Tutors Serving by Year**



The number of students served varies by program year based mostly on the number of tutors serving, but is also impacted by the types of tutors serving (i.e. full-time or part-time), whether students are receiving one-on-one or paired intervention, and the frequency of students exiting or graduating from the program.

Figure 2 displays the number of students who were tutored each year of the program. 39,379 students were tutored in 2024-25. Note the number of students served in 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22 were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Figure 2. Number of Students Tutored by Year**



### Tutoring Sessions

Tutors work with each student every day for 20 minutes to deliver an intervention that matches individual student needs. About half of tutoring is completed one-to-one and half in groups of two students. Tutors record each student's daily minutes in the online Reading Corps Data Management System. Table 3 shows the total number of tutoring sessions and the average

number of sessions and weeks of tutoring students received in each grade.

Reading Corps tutors delivered a total of 2,428,551 tutoring sessions. Students averaged 62 tutoring sessions across 19 weeks.

Reading Corps tutors delivered nearly 2.5 million tutoring sessions.

**Table 3. Tutoring Dosage by Grade**

Student Grade	Students Tutored	Total Tutoring Sessions	Average Tutoring Sessions per Student	Average Tutoring Weeks per Student
Grade K	8,778	424,762	48.4	14.9
Grade 1	10,154	651,398	64.2	19.3
Grade 2	10,390	709,470	68.3	20.5
Grade 3	10,057	642,921	63.9	19.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>39,379</b>	<b>2,428,551</b>	<b>61.7</b>	<b>18.7</b>

### Tutor Fidelity

During coaching sessions, Coaching Specialists and Internal Coaches complete a fidelity checklist for each assessment or intervention they observe. Each checklist lists the important steps for accurate completion such as starting the timer immediately when child says the first word or letter during an assessment or the tutor using appropriate pacing during a reading fluency intervention. After completing each assessment or intervention fidelity observation, coaches enter the number of checklist items that the tutor delivered correctly into the online Reading Corps Data Management System. The percent fidelity is then calculated by dividing the number of items delivered correctly by the total number of items.

If tutors do not properly administer an assessment coaches will provide targeted training and observe the tutor

delivering the assessment again. Ongoing observation and coaching continue until the tutor achieves at least 90% accuracy. This process helps to ensure assessment data are properly collected and that the results accurately measure each student's literacy skills. If a tutor does not deliver an intervention aligned with evidence-based practices, coaches will offer direct feedback and additional practice as needed.

Table 4 displays the total number of fidelity checks completed and the average fidelity from assessment and intervention observations. Coaches completed 51,359 fidelity checks during their coaching observations. Tutors averaged 99% fidelity on assessments and 96% fidelity on interventions, indicating assessments and interventions were delivered in alignment with their evidence base.

**Table 4. Assessment and Intervention Fidelity**

Fidelity Type	Total Checks Collected	Average Fidelity
Assessment	28,341	98.5%
Intervention	23,018	95.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>51,359</b>	<b>97.3%</b>

# Students Improve Reading Skills

## Student Performance

A student's weekly progress monitoring score allows the program to measure the student's growth while receiving tutoring. This growth can be compared to "target growth", the amount of weekly growth a student who is on target in the fall would need to maintain throughout the year to remain on target in the spring. Students exceeding target growth are growing at a rate exceeding one year's worth of growth.

Table 5 displays the percentage of students who improved their reading skills during tutoring and the percent of students exceeding target growth. 98% of students improved their reading skills.

Additionally, 71% of students exceeded target growth, indicating their pace of improvement was greater than one year's worth of learning, closing their individual achievement gap. Kindergarten students were the most likely grade to make substantial progress, with 99% of students improving their letter sound skills and 82% of students exceeding target growth.

98% of students improved their reading skills during tutoring.

**Table 5. Student Growth**

	Grade K	Grade 1	Grade 1*	Grade 2	Grade 3	Total***
	Test of Letter Sounds	Test of Nonsense Words (Eng.)	CBMReading			
Number of Students**	7,486	6,586	7,101	9,487	8,995	35,033
Percentage of Students Making Growth	98.9%	96.0%	97.5%	97.8%	96.6%	97.8%
Percentage of Students Exceeding Target Growth	81.8%	70.7%	45.4%	61.5%	74.2%	71.4%

\* Students in this group may have also participated in Grade 1 Test of Nonsense Words (Eng.).

\*\* Students must have at least 6 progress monitoring data points to be included in the growth rate calculations.

\*\*\* Students counted in both the Grade 1 Test of Nonsense Words (Eng). and Grade 1 CBMReading columns are counted in the total number of students one time and in the number of students above target total if they exceeded the target on at least one of the two measures.

# Perceptions of Student Performance

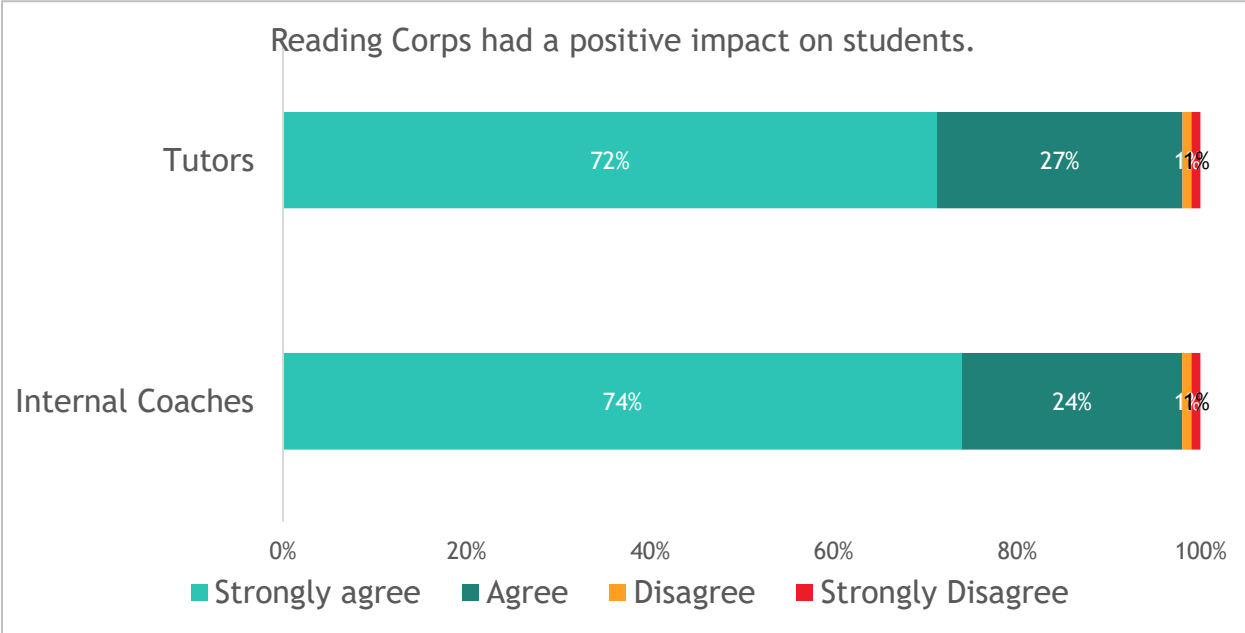
In the spring of each program year Reading Corps evaluators distribute an online survey to tutors and Internal Coaches. The survey asks a wide-range of questions regarding their experience with Reading Corps and potential impact of the program.

respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that Reading Corps had a positive impact on students.

“This program is highly effective in delivering reading interventions to students who are performing below benchmark.”  
 – Reading Corps Internal Coach

Figure 3 displays the percentage of respondents who agreed or disagreed that Reading Corps had a positive impact on students. The survey results are notably positive with nearly all

**Figure 3. Survey Results on Student Impact**



Note: Coaches were asked to agree or disagree with the statement “Partnering with the program(s) has had a positive impact on my site’s primary beneficiaries (e.g., students)” while tutors were asked “My service has had a positive impact on the primary beneficiaries of the program (e.g., students).”

# Reading Corps Service Positively Impacts Tutors

## Service Experience

While supporting student literacy growth is the primary goal for the program, Reading Corps also strives to provide tutors with an overall positive experience. As previously described, Reading Corps evaluators distribute a survey to tutors in the spring of each program year. The survey asks tutors a series of questions on their experience in Reading Corps and the impact the program had on them, their students, and their school. Survey results are used to evaluate the program's impact on the tutors themselves.

Figure 4 shows that 97% of tutors would recommend serving as a member of Reading Corps, with the majority of

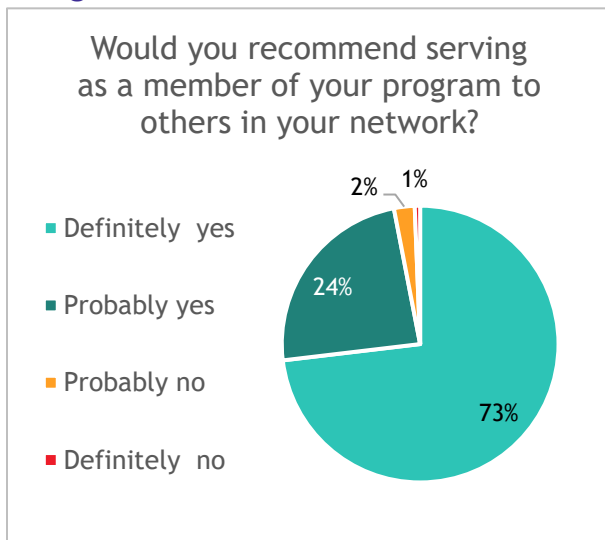
these respondents indicating they definitely would recommend the program. These results suggest tutors had a highly positive experience while serving with Reading Corps.

The survey also asked tutors if serving in Reading Corps had a positive impact on them personally.

Figure 5 shows that 98% of tutors agree or strongly agree service had a positive impact on them, demonstrating the positive personal impact of serving.

"It is extremely rewarding to help students learn to read."  
- Reading Corps Tutor

**Figure 4. Tutor Satisfaction**



**Figure 5. Impact on Tutor**

