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Mapping the Reading Improvement Sector in New York City The Role of External Support Providers in Improving K-3 Reading Outcomes

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Mapping the Reading Improvement Sector in New York City The Role of External Support Providers in Improving K-3 Reading Outcomes

Abstract

This report shares the results of a project designed to help build the collective capacity and increase the impact of the external support providers working to improve K-3 reading outcomes in New York City public elementary schools. In the first phase of the project, we identified all the programs in what we call the K-3 reading improvement sector in NYC 2014-15. In the second phase, we examined the extent to which a sample of these programs have the goals, resources, and personnel to improve reading outcomes system-wide. In the third phase, we mapped the relationships among a sample of programs in the sector in 2016-17, the sources they rely on to support their work, and the NYC schools with whom they partner. Making these relationships visible shows the extent to which students from different backgrounds and schools can get access to information, resources, and expertise, and the extent to which programs are in a position to increase their collective impact through coordination and collaboration.

Among the findings:

- Over 100 programs are working in the K-3 Reading Improvement Sector in NYC
- The sample programs in the sector focus on a wide range of reading-related goals, but a limited number of programs have demonstrated effectiveness
- Twenty-six sample programs are connected to 161 different schools comprising 16% of all elementary schools in NYC (including 28% of the elementary schools in the Bronx and 26% of the elementary schools in Manhattan); and the programs are partnering with schools with relatively high levels of need in terms of both performance and poverty
- Just over half of the sample programs describe themselves as collaborating or partnering with at least one other sample program, but almost half were not in regular contact with any other sample program
- Sample programs received support from 57 different funders and 75 different sources for literacy expertise with little overlap

These results suggest that sector programs have the goals, services, and personnel that could help improve K-3 reading outcomes in New York City; they have the connections to share resources and expertise with a large percentage of elementary schools; and several clusters of connected programs could serve as a powerful force for increased focus and collaboration in reading improvement across the city.

However, the collective impact of the sector suffers from the evidence that goals vary considerably. Student and teacher programs differ in terms of their goals and personnel, and only a few programs have had formal outside evaluations completed. In addition, many of the sample programs in the sector are working in isolation from other sample programs and are informed by a wide range of sources of funding and expertise that are themselves likely to be only loosely connected. Although the clusters of collaborating and frequently connected programs could serve as a basis for expansion within the sector, the unconnected programs and the disparate sources of funding and expertise suggest that explicit strategies will need to be developed to support greater coherence in the sector and to increase the effectiveness of the sector overall.

Disciplines

Education | Elementary Education | Language and Literacy Education



CONSORTIUM *for* POLICY
RESEARCH *in* EDUCATION

Mapping the Reading Improvement Sector in New York City

The Role of External Support Providers in Improving K-3 Reading Outcomes

Thomas Hatch, Meesuk Ahn, Daniel Ferguson, Alyson Rumberger

National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools & Teaching | Teachers College, Columbia University

Mapping the Reading Improvement Sector in New York City

The Role of External Support Providers in Improving K-3 Reading Outcomes

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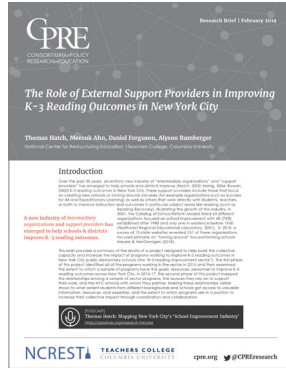
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[RESEARCH BRIEF]

The Role of External Support Providers in Improving K-3 Reading Outcomes in New York City

[PODCAST]

Thomas Hatch: Mapping New York City's 'School Improvement Industry'

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Executive Summary

This report shares the results of a project designed to help build the collective capacity and increase the impact of the external support providers working to improve K-3 reading outcomes in New York City public elementary schools. In the first phase of the project, we identified all the programs in what we call the K-3 reading improvement sector in NYC 2014-15. In the second phase, we examined the extent to which a sample of these programs have the goals, resources, and personnel to improve reading outcomes system-wide. In the third phase, we mapped the relationships among a sample of programs in the sector in 2016-17, the sources they rely on to support their work, and the NYC schools with whom they partner. Making these relationships visible shows the extent to which students from different backgrounds and schools can get access to information, resources, and expertise, and the extent to which programs are in a position to increase their collective impact through coordination and collaboration.

Among the findings:

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- The sample programs in the sector focus on a wide range of reading-related goals, but a limited number of programs have demonstrated effectiveness
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However, the collective impact of the sector suffers from the evidence that goals vary considerably. Student and teacher programs differ in terms of their goals and personnel, and only a few programs have had formal outside evaluations completed. In addition, many of the sample programs in the sector are working in isolation from other sample programs and are informed by a wide range of sources of funding and expertise that are themselves likely to be only loosely connected. Although the clusters of collaborating and frequently connected programs could serve as a basis for expansion within the sector, the unconnected programs and the disparate sources of funding and expertise suggest that explicit strategies will need to be developed to support greater coherence in the sector and to increase the effectiveness of the sector overall.

Introduction

Over the past 30 years, an entirely new industry of “intermediary organizations” and “support providers” has emerged to help schools and districts improve (Hatch, 2002; Honig, 2004; Rowan, 2002). These support providers include those that focus on creating new schools or turning around old ones (for example organizations such as Success for All and Expeditionary Learning) as well as others that work directly with students, teachers, or both to improve instruction and outcomes in particular subject areas like reading (such as Reading Recovery). Illustrating the growth of this industry,

A new industry of intermediary organizations and support providers has emerged to help schools & districts improve K-3 reading outcomes.

in 2001, the Catalog of School Reform Models listed 63 different organizations focused on school improvement with 48 (76%) established after 1980 and only one in existence before 1960 (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001). In 2018, a survey of 13 state websites revealed 151 of these organizations focused primarily on “turning around” low-performing schools Meyers & VanGronigen (2018).

Philanthropic initiatives as well as a series of federal policies have fueled both the demand for these kinds of organizations and the supply. For example, the New American Schools Development Corporation’s break the mold design competition (NAS, 1991), the Annenberg Challenge, the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program (CSR, 1998), and the Investing in Innovation (i3) of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA, 2009) all offered funding that contributed to the development of a wide range of support providers. Policies including CSR, No Child Left Behind (2002), and the School Improvement Grants program of ARRA (2009) have also required low-performing schools and districts to make improvements and encouraged them to draw on external support or approaches that have “proven results” in doing so.

These initiatives and policies build on two key ideas: First, that, on their own, many schools do not have the capacity they need to make sufficient improvements in students’ learning and development (Goertz, Floden & O’Day, 1995; Hatch, 2013); and second, that there are “external support providers” that do have the capacity – the technical, human, and social capital – that can help large numbers of schools make those improvements (Datnow & Honig, 2008; Newman, King & Youngs, 2000). Technical capital refers to money and material resources; human capital refers to the skills, knowledge and expertise of individuals and groups; and social capital refers to the access to resources and expertise provided by social relationships and networks (Corcoran & Goertz, 1995; Putnam, 2002; Spillane, Hallett, & Diamond, 2003). For example, external support providers can offer access to instructional materials and other resources and



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trained and expert personnel that many school districts may not have or be able to develop on their own (Gamoran et al., 2003; Coburn et al., 2008). Furthermore, as “intermediaries” these programs may offer access to information, expertise and networks that can serve as a bridge between schools and researchers, policymakers and others (Coburn, 2005; Honig, 2009; Kerr et al., 2006).

Despite the benefits that support providers can bring to schools, evaluations show that, in practice, the overall impact of support providers is often unclear or, at best, limited (Burch, 2007; Muñoz, Potter, & Ross, 2008; Rowan, 2008). Furthermore, in many cases, multiple support providers work in an uncoordinated fashion, which can actually hinder rather than help school and district efforts to build their own capacity (Hatch, 2002; Park & Datnow, 2008). Thus, external support providers that are disconnected from one another and isolated are likely to operate inefficiently and with redundancies and gaps in service.

These findings call into question the basic assumption that external support providers will make it possible for large numbers of schools and districts to develop the capacity to reach student outcomes that they have not yet been able to reach on their own. Several steps could be taken to address these problems, however. For example, further investments could expand the number and reach of effective support providers. More coordinated, strategic efforts to connect providers and schools could increase the chances of success, particularly in targeted areas like reading and in districts where schools have access to significant external resources and expertise. This kind of increased access to materials, people, and relationships within and across organizations can facilitate joint problem solving, innovation, and organizational performance (French, 2001; Honig, 2004; Supovitz, 2008; Kania & Kramer, 2011; Reckhow, 2012). Connecting external support providers makes it possible for them to share resources and expertise, coordinate the deployment of their resources, and share information that can facilitate service delivery and the development of new tools and strategies. For schools that serve large concentrations of students living in poverty, access to support providers that are part of a robust social network may be particularly crucial because these programs can serve as gatekeepers to the information, resources, expertise, and power that contribute to more equitable outcomes for all students (Reckhow, 2012).

Determining the most appropriate next steps to improve the effectiveness of support providers, however, depends on developing a much better sense of the number, goals, strategies, and connections among those providers currently at work in a given location. To fill this gap, with the support of the New York Community Trust and the Brooke Astor Fund for New York City Education, we launched a three-phase project to assess the collective capacity of the programs working in New York City public elementary schools to improve K-3 reading outcomes.

We assessed the collective capacity of this K-3 reading improvement sector by addressing four questions:

1. **How many programs focus on improving reading outcomes at the K-3 level in New York City public elementary schools?**
 2. **To what extent do these programs have goals, resources, and personnel that can contribute to improved K-3 reading outcomes?**
 3. **Which New York City public elementary schools have access to the resources and support of the sector?**
1. **To what extent are the programs in the sector positioned to increase their collective impact in the future?**

This report presents the context, background, findings, and implications from all three phases of the project.

Methods

Context

Reading at the elementary level is an especially productive area for external support because there is some consensus on approaches to instruction that are supported by research and at least some programs and approaches that have been identified as effective (e.g. Duke et. al., 2011; Slavin et. al., 2009). New York City is also a particularly interesting place in which to carry out such a study of the collective capacity of reading improvement programs. Historically, New York City education policies have supported the development of external support providers. In particular, the Children's First initiatives during mayor Michael Bloomberg's administration from 2001-2013 relied on the development of external support providers (O'Day, Bitter, & Gomez, 2011). The current administration of Bill De Blasio has eliminated some of the previously established supports for external providers, but schools and principals continue to have the authority to make their own selections of reading programs and other external partners. Lastly, a fund set up through the estate of the late Brooke Astor and overseen by the New York Community Trust has also invested \$21.4 million to help 18 nonprofit support providers work with New York City public elementary schools to improve K-3 reading outcomes. The Brooke Astor Fund for New York City Education also provided the funds to carry out this study and produce this report.

Data collection and analysis

The three phases of this project were designed to explore the technical, human, and social capital of the programs working in the K-3 reading improvement sector in New York City. The first phase of this project identified all of the programs working in the sector in 2014-15. The second phase examined the extent to which a sample of programs at work in the sector in 2014-15 have the goals, resources, and personnel – the technical and human capital – needed to improve K-3 reading outcomes across New York City. In 2016-17, the third phase of this project mapped the relationships among a sample of sector programs, the sources they rely on to support their work, and the NYC schools with whom they partner. This work in the third phase provides a look at the social capital in the sector by making visible the relationships between the programs, their sources of support, and the schools with which they partner. The mapping of these social networks shows to what extent students from different backgrounds and schools have access to valuable information, resources, and expertise, and reveals the extent to which sector programs are in a position to increase their collective impact through coordination and collaboration. For the three phases of the project, we collected survey and interview data in a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006),

Phase I: Identifying programs in the sector (2014-2015)

To determine which programs were working in the reading improvement sector in New York City in the 2014-15 school year, we established four criteria. The program:

- Provides direct services to teachers, students, or both
- Focuses on improving reading
- Works with students or teachers from at least one grade at the K-3 level
- Takes place in one or more New York City public school

In order to find programs that might meet these criteria, we reviewed six sources:

- The list of applicants for an open call for proposals in 2013-14 for external support providers seeking to receive funding to work on improving reading outcomes in NYC elementary schools
- Grantee lists of the top 15 grant-awarding foundations in 2013-14
- The New York State Department of Education approved supplemental providers list
- The NYC Department of Education's list of organizations eligible for contracts with schools
- The What Works Clearinghouse

Nominations from literacy experts and NYC educators

We used a saturated model approach to identify as many programs as possible that might meet these criteria (Marcja & Toffalori, 2012). This process yielded an initial list of 283 potential programs in the sector. We then employed an iterative crosschecking procedure to review publicly available program documents to determine whether each program on our initial list met all four criteria (Patton, 2002). At the end of this process, we identified 112 different programs that met our criteria for working in the K-3 reading improvement sector in New York City public schools in 2014-15.

Phase II: Documenting the goals, strategies, resources, and expertise of sample programs (2014-15)

As an in-depth analysis of all 112 programs was beyond the scope of the project, we sought to estimate the technical and human capital available in the sector by documenting the goals, strategies, resources, and expertise of a sample of those programs. To develop a representative sample of 32 programs out of the 112 programs, we used a two-step stratified random sampling procedure with proportional allocation based on a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of 15. First, to gain an overall sense of the nature and variety of the programs, we conducted an initial review of the program goals, approaches, and literacy terms used in the websites and public documents of all 112 programs. The initial review revealed differences in three aspects of the programs that seemed most likely to be associated with different approaches to reading:

- Program Foci — (1) Reading; (2) Reading and Writing; (3) Reading and Other (e.g. literacy connections to art, content areas, or socio-emotional development)
- Program Type — (1) Direct Service to Teachers; (2) Direct Service to Students; (3) Direct Service to Both Teachers and Students
- Program Timing (for "student" and "both" programs) — (1) In-School; (2) Outside of School; (3) In- and Outside of School

Second, we randomly selected programs from each of these sampling categories proportional to the overall sector. If a program declined to participate or was unreachable after multiple attempts, we replaced it with a program from the same sampling category.

Once the sample was established, we reached out to representatives from each selected program to request a survey and interview. Our first aim was to identify someone at each program knowledgeable about the overall goals, strategies, and service provided for each program. Given that programs ranged substantially in size, the exact personnel differed. However, in most cases, an executive director or assistant, or the program manager for the specific reading program agreed to participate.

Each program representative was then asked to complete a five-minute online survey prior to a 30- to 45-minute phone interview. The survey asked for basic descriptive program information such as program timing; dosage and duration; type and focus of services provided; and the number of schools with whom the program worked on an ongoing basis. The interview addressed in greater detail the reading program's background, goals, strategies, and approaches, such as what problem the programs tries to address and the focus of the program as it relates to reading and/or literacy. Other questions centered on the program's personnel, methods for assessing/evaluating the success of the program, and school partnership information. We also collected relevant documents such as publicly available annual reports, program descriptions, and program resources that provided further detail on the nature of each reading program.

To analyze the surveys, interviews, and documents, we drew on our research questions to develop a coding tree focusing on the goals, assessments, and personnel qualifications of the programs. We also looked for terms and references related to reading instruction and educational approaches in general across the program materials and interviews. Examples of codes used included Common Core, comprehension, balanced literacy, reading at grade level, differentiation, and cultural diversity. The software program Atlas.ti was used to facilitate this process and to establish intercoder reliability (Tinsley & Weiss, 2000), as the coded data were crosschecked through a systemic process of codebook revision and recoding.

After we coded the surveys, interviews, and materials of each sample program, we looked for trends and patterns in terms of the nature of the goals, assessments, and personnel across the programs and looked for similarities and differences among the different categories of programs (among the programs focusing on students, on teachers, and on both, for example). To facilitate this analysis, we drew from research that has identified characteristics of policies that are likely to lead to improved outcomes in practice (Finnigan et. al., 2009; Porter et. al., 1988). This work suggests that policies that are specific and consistent are more likely to be effective. Correspondingly, we noted the extent to which the goals, materials, personnel, and assessments of the programs were linked to specific or general goals, strategies, or outcomes related to reading. We then looked at the extent to which there is a consistent reading-related focus across programs and categories.

Phase III: Mapping the social connections and sources of funding and expertise of a sample of programs (2016–2017).

Phase III assessed the social capital of the sector by looking at the social network connecting a sample of programs in the sector in 2016-17 and their partner schools; the network connecting the sample programs themselves; and the networks connecting the sample programs with their sources of funding and the sample programs with sources of expertise in literacy and professional development. Although it would have been preferable to include all the programs working in the sector in this analysis, the demands for collecting this data on relationships from over 100 programs exceeded time, personnel, and resources available.

Therefore, to collect the relationship data on a sample of programs in 2016-17, we first reviewed the list of programs working in the sector in 2015 and determined that four of the 112 programs were no longer working in New York City public elementary schools. We then sought to develop a representative sample of the 108 programs working at that time that was as consistent as possible with the initial sample in Phase II. To that end, we contacted all of the participants from Phase I, as well as new programs following the same protocols as in the original sampling procedure in Phase II. Of the 32 sample programs from Phase II, 21 programs also participated in Phase III. Of those that did not participate, two programs were no longer working in New York City elementary schools; five programs did not respond to us within our data collection period, and four programs declined to participate in the third phase. These programs reflected the range of those in the sample and, therefore, were replaced by programs from the same sampling categories, contributing to a total of 30 participants for the Phase III sample.

Social network surveys. To examine the relationships among the programs, the sources they drew on for support, and their school partners, we used social network analysis (Scott, 2017). To carry out the social network analysis, we first developed a social network survey that asked a lead staff member from each of the representative programs to indicate the frequency of interaction with the members of each of the other 108 programs in the sector during the previous year (never contacted; contacted once or twice; contacted every two to three months; contacted every month; contacted every week). In addition to asking about the frequency of contact, we also asked respondents to rate the strength of the relationships between programs (no interaction, communication, collaboration, and partnership) based on a scale adapted from Frey et al. (2006). We defined communication, or what Frey et al (2006) referred to as "coordination," as the sharing of information and resources. We defined collaboration as "working together without a formal agreement," and partnership as "working together formally to achieve common goals."

The survey also asked participants to indicate any organizations, people, or resources within or outside of the sector that they go to for:

- Funding
- Literacy expertise
- Expertise in professional development

These areas were selected because of their relationship to key elements of capacity-building and to the stability and expansion of the work of programs in the sector.

Follow-up interviews. Interviews lasting approximately thirty minutes were conducted after program personnel had completed the social network survey. In the interview, we asked

program personnel to elaborate on the relationship with the other sector programs. Specifically, we asked with whom their program communicated, the format of their communication, and the content of their communication. We also asked interviewees to elaborate on the format and content of their relationships with the funders and sources of expertise they identified. To identify the school partners, the interview also asked respondents to provide a list of schools where their programs had an agreement to offer their services on a regular basis.

Data analysis. As a first step in the analysis, we assessed the extent to which the programs were making the resources and expertise of the sector available to schools in general and schools most in need of support. To do so, we compared characteristics of schools partnered with one or more of the sample programs to the schools that had no partnerships with sample programs. We focused particularly on comparing the Economic Index of schools partnered with one or more sample programs to the Economic Index of schools with no partnerships with sample programs. (The Economic Index of schools is calculated using three numbers: the percentage of students in temporary housing, the percentage eligible for Health Reimbursement Arrangements (HRA), and the percentage eligible for free lunch.) We also looked at the average percentage of students achieving proficiency or advanced proficiency on the third-grade ELA test because of the emphasis in research and practice on ensuring that students can read by third grade. In this case, we compared the average ELA percentage of schools with sample program partners to the borough average.

To analyze the data from the social network surveys, we used two-mode social network analysis to examine the relationships between the sample programs and: 1) the organizations they go to for funding; and 2) the groups and individuals they go to for expertise in reading, in developing literacy expertise, and in developing professional development expertise. Two-mode networks summarize the association between one entity and another, which can be a quick way of understanding the web of relationships. Programs were examined by degree: the number of links between an entity in one set and an entity in another. The subsequent interview focused on the nature of the interactions among programs and on the program's key sources of information and support. We then examined a series of network measures using UCINET software (Borgatti et al., 2002) to better understand the connections among sample programs, between programs and funders, and between programs and the sources of their expertise. To give a systemic overview of the social structure in the sector, we graphically represented network data in maps that make visible the connections through which information, resources, and expertise related to reading might flow.

Limitations

Our ability to identify programs in the sector depended on publicly available information. Therefore it is possible that there are programs at work in the K-3 reading improvement sector that provide little public information and that therefore are not captured in our lists. To mitigate this issue, we finalized the lists only after a review by a small group of reading experts and local educators who concluded that there were no programs they were aware of that were missing.

The collection of data from the sample programs also depended on self-reports by individuals at each program who completed the survey and participated in the interview. Therefore, we also cross-checked that data with documents we collected from the programs (including, where possible, annual reports submitted to funders), and we shared the initial results of our data collection with the participating programs and distributed drafts of our findings and analysis with participating programs for feedback and to check for accuracy.

Although we see it as a design choice rather than a limitation, analysis focused on the nature and specificity of the reading goals and reading-related strategies of the sample programs. Thus, this study does not take into account the extent to which these programs might support the achievement of other valued goals and purposes that go beyond conventional K-3 reading outcomes. It is also worth noting that our criteria for program selection excluded some programs that could be viewed as part of the reading improvement sector. For example, we excluded those organizations that produce reading curricula but do not work directly with students or teachers because curricula in reading in particular have already been a subject of considerable research (Kragler & Martin, 2012; Bingham & Patton-Terry, 2013). We also excluded early literacy programs that work exclusively at the preschool level, as well as programs that operated independently of New York City public schools, such as many private tutoring programs. In short, this study illustrates one way, but not the only way, to conceptualize and

"map" the work among the many programs that could affect students' reading outcomes at the K-3 level.

Results

How many programs focus on improving reading outcomes at the K-3 level in New York City public elementary schools?

In Phase I, we identified 112 programs that were working in the K-3 reading improvement sector in New York City in 2014-15. These programs were operated by a variety of different kinds of organizations including local/community-based nonprofits, university affiliates, and consulting companies. Of the 112 programs, 49 (44%) focused specifically on reading, 33 (29%) focused on both reading and writing, and 30 (27%) focused on other topics like the arts or socio-emotional learning along with reading. Fifty-eight programs (52%) provide professional development to teachers, 45 (40%) provide support directly to students, and nine (8%) work with both teachers and students. Of 54 programs that serve students or both teachers and students, 18 (33%) operated during school hours, 21 (39%) took place outside-of-school time, and 15 (28%) served students at both times.

These programs varied considerably in the specific ways that they worked with students and/or teachers. For example, one program provided customizable professional development and coaching to help teachers develop their skills in balanced-literacy instruction. Another program trained volunteers to implement a reading intervention program during school for low-performing students. A third program brought together a community organization and a local university to pilot a storytelling curriculum for English Language Learners in an after-school setting.

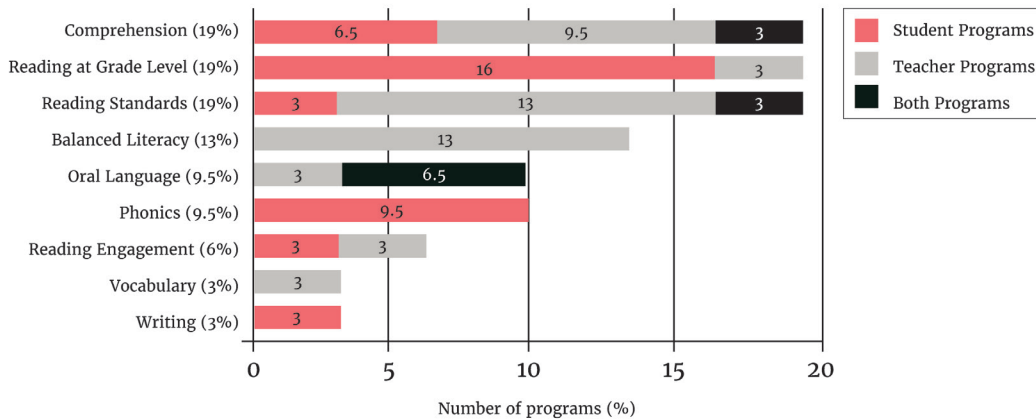
The review of the websites and available program documents of the 112 programs in the sector revealed the use of 255 unique literacy terms, with many programs using multiple terms. Nonetheless, there was relatively little consistency across the programs in the terms used. Even the most frequently-used term – Common Core – was mentioned by less than half of the programs (48) and only thirteen programs specifically stated that they were aligned with the Common Core. In a few cases, programs highlighted a specific Common Core related goal or practice such as "close reading" (mentioned by eight programs), but most mentions referred to the Common Core in general. The specific literacy skills cited included comprehension (29 programs), vocabulary (21), phonics (15), fluency (13), and phonemic awareness (13). These goals reflect those discussed in the report of the National Reading Panel (2000) and identified as the five essential components of reading instruction as defined in the Reading First program of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

To what extent do programs have goals, resources, and personnel that can contribute to improved K-3 reading outcomes?

In order to assess the extent to which the sector has the technical, human, and social capital that can contribute to improved reading outcomes among a large number of schools, in Phase II we examined the survey results, interviews, the mission and goal statements, program descriptions, and instructional materials of the 32 sample programs. Consistent with the broad examination of the goals of the 112 programs in the sector, the review of the sample programs also revealed a wide range of different reading foci and no single dominant approach. Almost half of the sample programs (13 or 41%) emphasized a specific aspect of reading highlighted by the National Reading Panel such as comprehension, but other programs described goals such as getting students to read at grade level (19%) or supporting standards-based reading instruction (see Figure 1). Figure 1. Reading goals by program type (%)

Notable differences in the approaches of the programs serving students and the programs working with teachers also emerged. Four out of the six programs focused on Common Core reading standards, and all four of the programs focused on balanced literacy, were programs working with teachers. In contrast, five of the six programs focused on reading at grade level

Figure 1. Reading Goals by Program Type (percentage)



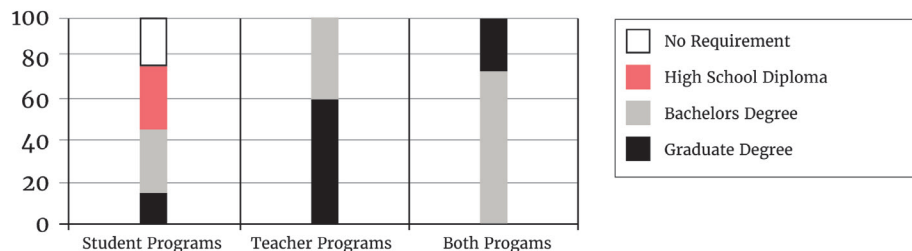
worked directly with students. In terms of specific skills, all three of the programs focused on phonics were student programs. In contrast, all three of the programs that centered on oral language worked with teachers or both teachers and students, while comprehension was a focus of two student programs, three teacher programs, and one program serving both teachers and students.

The programs working with students, working with teachers, and working with both teachers and students also differed substantially in their overall approaches to reading instruction. For example, the 15 programs that worked with teachers typically provided a series of professional development workshops or coaching for individual teachers or both. The 13 programs working directly with students provided staff and/or volunteers who implemented a specific reading program or provided tutoring. The four programs that worked with both students and teachers (including three arts-based programs) developed their own curriculum or approach and provided trained staff or "artists-in-residence" who could work directly with students, but those staff members and artists also offered professional development workshops to help the school-based educators learn how to implement the program's approach.

In terms of program dosage, sessions for the 13 student programs ranged from 30 to 90 minutes, with most lasting for a 45-minute class period. Six of the 13 programs for students provided regular (weekly or daily) services for a full school year, either in school or in an afterschool program at a partner school. Five programs provided their services both during the school year and over the summer. The other two programs worked with students for a shorter period of time.

Six of the 19 programs that worked with teachers or both teachers and students provided weekly services to teachers over an entire school year. The other 13 programs provided a variety of services, such as individual coaching, online support, or modeling with the amount and type of support differing for each teacher served.

Figure 2. Hiring Requirement by Program Type (%)

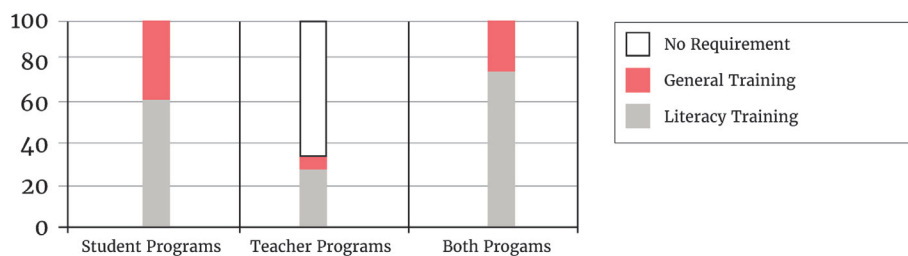


The review of the extent to which the programs provide schools with access to reading-related knowledge and expertise revealed another difference between the student and teacher programs. Programs working with teachers or with both teachers and students reported requiring new personnel to have more education and teaching experience than programs working directly with students (see Figure 2).

In fact, every program working with teachers or working with both teachers and students required staff to have either a bachelor's or a graduate degree, and all but one of the programs working directly with teachers required their staff members to have teaching experience. In contrast, three (23%) of the programs working directly with students reported no specific qualifications for staff and four (31%) only required a high school diploma. Only one of the 13 student programs required staff to have teaching experience.

However, the results for training were almost the opposite. In fact, all of the programs working directly with students provided training for their staff members and eight (62%) required training specifically related to reading. Among the programs working with teachers or both teachers and students, just under a third provided training specifically related to reading (27%), and almost two thirds (66%) did not require any training (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Training Provided by Program Type (%)



We also reviewed the sample programs' approaches to assessment and evaluation to ascertain the extent to which they had in place mechanisms for improving their performance and had external evaluations demonstrating their effectiveness. Of the 32 sample programs, 23 programs (72%) employed assessments focused explicitly on students' reading abilities, such as Fountas and Pinnell (2011) reading-level assessments or state ELA exam scores. We classified three programs (9%) as using other assessments because they did not directly assess students' reading abilities. Two of these programs were programs that worked with teachers and used rubrics to assess instruction. The third program focused on reading and visual arts standards and assessed these standards through examinations of student work. Six programs (19%) did not use assessments for students or teachers.

Of the 32 programs, six (19%) had publicly available evaluations carried out by external evaluators (not employees of the program), with results from two of these evaluations published in academic journals. Eight programs (25%) produced their own internal summative evaluation reports (usually shared with their funders). However, another eleven programs (34%) only carried out internal progress monitoring through formative assessments of student outcomes, and seven programs (22%) did not carry out formal evaluations or report ongoing internal monitoring of their outcomes at all (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Evaluation Approach Reported (%)

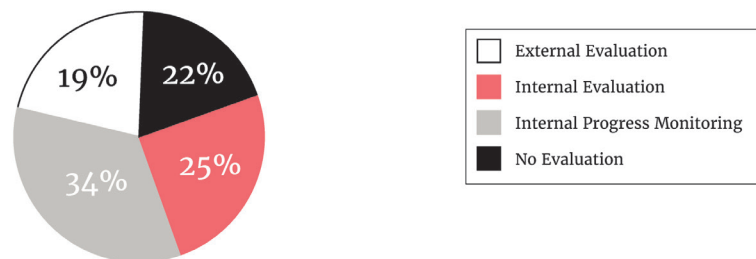
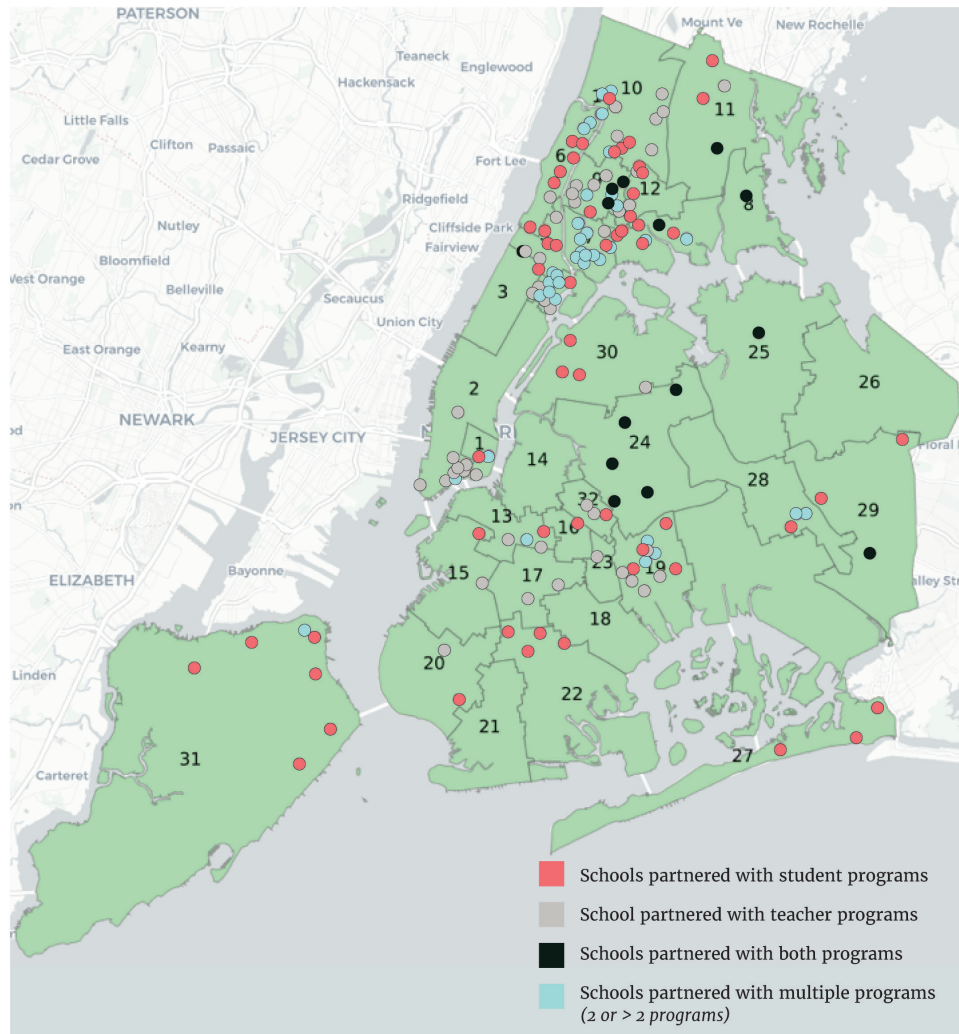


Figure 5. Geographic map of partner schools



Although these results show that less than a quarter of the programs produced external reports, a substantial majority, 23 programs (72%), employed assessments focused explicitly on students' reading abilities. Two of those 23 programs relied on state ELA exam scores, while the other 21 used performance assessments such as Fountas and Pinnell (2011) reading-level assessments, with many referring to state ELA exam scores as well.

In sum, the results showed that teacher and student programs took somewhat different approaches to evaluation and assessment. In fact, the five programs that did not use any assessments were afterschool programs working directly with students; four of these programs also did not carry out any evaluations while one monitored progress internally. In addition, the four programs classified as using "other" assessments were teacher programs that focused on reading standards. Two of these programs worked with teachers and used rubrics to assess instruction in general. A third program focused on reading and visual arts standards and assessed these standards through examinations of student work.

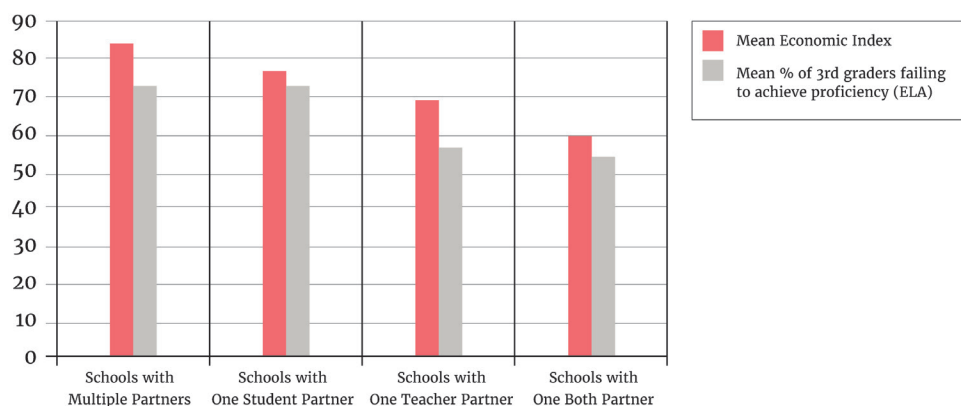
Which New York City public elementary schools have access to the resources and support of the sector?

To analyze which schools in New York City are getting access to the resources, services, and personnel of the programs in the sector, we reviewed the number and characteristics of schools the sample programs worked with in 2016-17. These analyses were based on data from the 26 sample programs that provided complete lists of their school partners that year. Two programs did not provide data on specific school partners, and two reported partnering with so many schools that they could not list them all.

The 26 programs worked in 161 different schools across all five boroughs of New York City. That means these sample programs were working in about 16% of all the public elementary schools in New York City. The 161 partner schools are spread across all boroughs, but a much larger percentage of schools in the Bronx (28%) were partnered with sample programs. Manhattan had the next highest percentage (26%), and Staten Island the third highest (16%). Even though the largest number of schools overall are in Brooklyn (10%) and Queens (9%), they had the lowest percentages of partner schools (see Figure 5). The significant majority of partner schools (75%) worked with only one of the sample programs, but 40 schools worked with two sample programs or more.

Overall, the programs in the sector appear to be sharing their resources and expertise with schools with lower-performing students and with schools with relatively high rates of students living in poverty as measured by the school's Economic Index. However, there are also indications that different kinds of schools are getting access to different kinds of resources and expertise. For the most part, schools that partner with multiple programs or with student programs have a lower mean percentage of students passing New York's English Language Arts exam in third grade, and they have higher levels of economic need than schools that partner with teacher programs and programs serving both students and teachers (see Figure 6). A statistical comparison (one-way ANOVA) shows that the percentage of third-grade students who pass New York's

Figure 6. School Partners Mean % Economic Index and % Failing to Reach Proficiency



English Language Arts exam is significantly lower in schools with multiple program partners (M=27.88, SD= 12.86, p = .000) and in schools with one student partner (M=27.40, SD=13.51, p = .000) than in schools with one teacher program partner (M=42.79, SD=21.44, p = .000) or with a program partner that works with both teachers and students (M=45.33, SD=17.01, p = .003). In addition, the average poverty rate is significantly higher in schools with multiple program partners (M=83.58, SD= 7.85, p = .000) than in schools that partner with one teacher program (M=68.85, SD= 21.76, p = .000) or in schools that partner with a program that works with both teachers and students (M=59.72, SD= 17.59, p = .000). Schools with one student program partner also have a significantly higher average poverty rate (M=75.96, SD= 13.13, p = .003) than schools with a partner that works with both teachers and students (M=59.72, SD=17.59, p=.003), but there

was no significant difference between the average poverty rate of schools with one student program partner and with one teacher program partner.

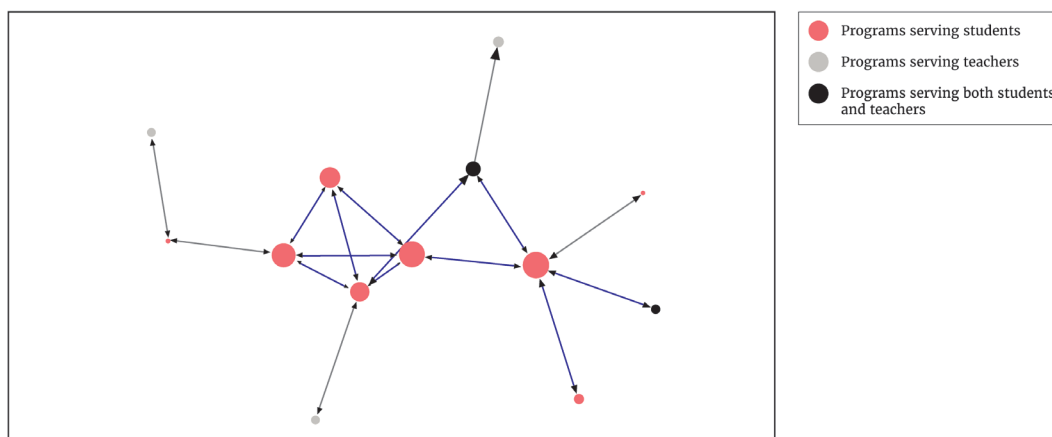
To what extent are programs positioned to increase their collective impact in the future?

To get a sense of the extent to which programs in the sector are positioned to share information with one another, to coordinate services, and to increase their collective impact, we explored three questions:

- How are the programs in the sector connected to one another?
- Where do the programs get their funding?
- What sources do the programs turn to for expertise?

How are the programs in the sector connected to one another? The analysis of the social network surveys shows that 13 of the 30 sample programs (43%) were in contact with at least one other sample program on a monthly basis (monthly contact is generally considered "frequent contact" and serves as the standard for regular exchanges of information, resources, and expertise) (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Network of relationships between sample programs showing frequent contacts



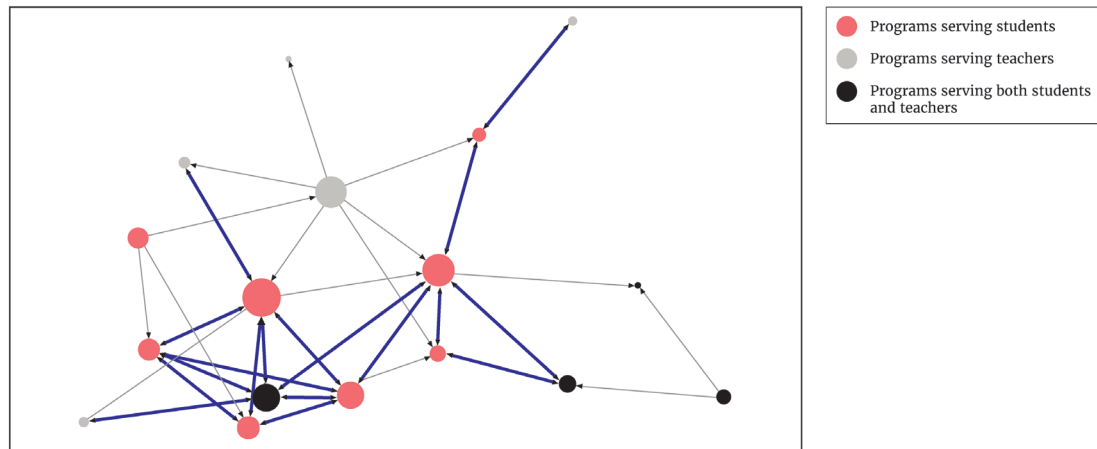
The connections among many of those 13 connected programs were also reciprocal (each program named the other as a frequent contact). In general, these two-way reciprocal connections are considered to provide a strong foundation for the sharing of information, resources, and expertise. Further, the network of 13 connected programs included a number of programs that could serve as "hubs" and "brokers" that help share information and resources throughout a network. The larger red circles represent these hubs and brokers, with the size of the circle representing the number of times that program was listed as a frequent contact by other programs. Thus, the largest of these circles can be considered the most "popular" programs. Together, the number of popular programs and reciprocal ties suggest that the network among connected sample programs has a strong central core. However, 17 of the sample programs were not in frequent contact with any of the other sample programs, suggesting that they have limited access to the information and resources shared among the connected programs.

The network maps also reveal several "sub-networks," distinct groupings among different kinds of programs. In fact, 10 of the 13 sample programs that were in frequent contact are programs that provide direct services to students or direct services to both teachers and students. Only three of the programs that provide direct services to teachers were in frequent contact with other sample programs, and each of those three programs was only connected to one student program (a different student program in each case). No teacher programs were in frequent

contact with other teacher programs in the sample. In short, there was a strong network among a group of student programs, but many programs (including almost all teacher programs) were isolated from other programs in the sector.

In addition to the frequency of contact, we also asked sample programs to identify which programs they collaborated with and those with whom they had a partnership. Collaboration was defined on the survey as "working together without a formal agreement," and partnership was defined as "working together formally to achieve common goals." In this case, 17 sample programs (57%) were reported to be in collaboration or in a partnership with at least one other program (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Network of program relationships reported among sample programs



Of these 17 programs, 13 were the same programs that reported being in frequent contact with at least one other sample program. In addition, 10 of those 13 (33% of the all the sample programs) were involved in multiple partnerships. Of those 10, seven were student programs, one was a teacher program, and two were programs serving both students and teachers. These results suggest that a slightly larger number of programs view themselves as working closely with other sample programs, but, again, almost half of the sample programs were not in collaboration or partnership with any other sample programs. Reinforcing the earlier results, student programs were much more likely to report that they were working in collaboration or partnership with other sample programs. Although five teacher programs reported working in collaboration or partnership, the majority of teacher programs were not working in collaboration or partnership with any other sample programs.

We also looked at the program characteristics and our interview data to get a sense of the factors that might explain why some programs were more closely connected than others. Notably, we found that the programs cited most frequently as partners often participated in collaborative groups (for example, those organized by the Pinkerton Foundation or the New York City Council or those funded by the Brooke Astor Fund for New York City Education).

Interviews with members of the programs involved in four or more partnerships also suggested that these programs partnered with those with whom they shared interests and strategies. For example, respondents from some of these programs noted that they were engaged in efforts to collaborate on after-school programs and some pointed to expanded-day initiatives and summer initiatives as reasons for forming partnerships. Respondents from two other programs noted that they were involved in collaborations involving community-based organizations (CBOs) with a variety of different goals. As one respondent stated, they saw the other CBOs as allies and had regular meetings where they communicated closely.

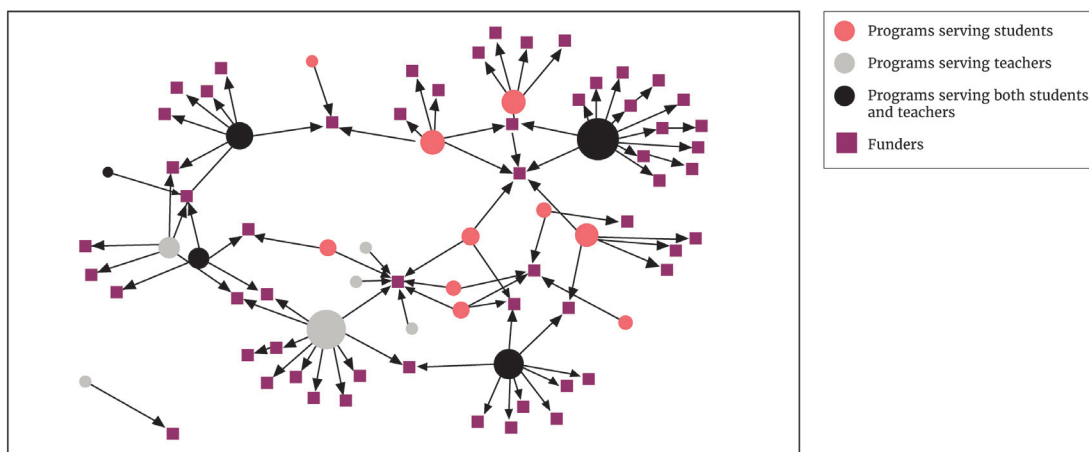
In contrast, of the ten sample programs that were not frequently connected and were not in any collaboration or partnership, six were teacher programs. Respondents from these programs noted that the programs did not need the help or support of others. One respondent, for example, stated that they "don't use any of these programs, because I have my own program,

so I don't use any of their services." Another mentioned, "I don't have any desire to connect with other organizations... I would be open to it if we could structure it in a way that would make sense for everybody... I'm not running up against problems that I can't solve. I feel like I'm solving these problems that everybody says they have, and no one is listening."

Although obtaining surveys from all programs in the sector went beyond the scope of this study, the social network surveys with the sample programs asked them to use the same scale to describe the frequency of their interactions with each of the other 78 programs in the sector. These results of this analysis of "one-way relationships" showed that only nine of the thirty sample programs (30%) reported frequent contacts with at least one of the other 78 programs in the sector. Those nine sample programs reported frequent contacts with a total of fourteen of the 78 other programs in the sector. Interestingly, a much larger number of sample programs (16 or 53%) reported being in collaborations or partnerships with one of the other 78 programs in the sector. This percentage was almost the same as those reporting collaborations or partnerships with other sample programs. Of the thirteen sample programs that reported no frequent contacts or collaborations or partnerships with other sample programs, only three reported frequent contact or a collaboration or partnership with one of the other 78 programs in the sector. Thus, ten sample programs (33%) did not report any frequent connections or collaborative or partnership relationships with any of the other programs in the sector. Paralleling the findings of the relationships among the sample programs, the student programs in the sample were most likely to report frequent connections, collaborations or partnerships with other programs in the sector, while teacher programs were most likely to report no connections. These results need to be treated with caution, but they provide no evidence that the relationships among the sample programs are substantially different from their relationships with all of the other programs in the sector.

Where do the programs get their funding? The sample programs get most of their funding from contracts with individual schools (7 programs) or from contributions, grants, or donations from charitable foundations, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations (21 programs). Of the seven programs relying on contracts, four were for-profit organizations, and six were professional development providers. The 21 programs that relied on contributions and grants reported receiving funding from 57 different organizations (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Network of relationships between sample programs and charitable foundations, corporations, government agencies, and non-profit organizations



The majority of organizations named as funders by the sample programs were charitable foundations (64%), such as the Gates Foundation or the Ford Foundation. Another 17% of funders were corporations such as Bloomberg LP or Target. Government agencies, such as the Institute of Education Sciences and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs comprised 12% of the sample's funders. Lastly, 4% of funders named were nonprofit organizations, such as Americorps or the United Way, who are often themselves funded by foundations, corporations, government grants, and private donations.

Of the 57 organizations named as funders, the vast majority (75%) supported only one program in the sample; 12% funded two sample programs; and a small handful of funders were named several times by sample programs. Those funders included the Brook Astor Fund for New York City Education (8 programs), the Pinkerton Foundation (6 programs), the US Department of Education and the NYC Department of Youth and Community Services (4 programs each); and the Hecksher Foundation for Children (3 programs). At the same time, on average, programs in this network reported having three different funders; responses varied substantially, however, with one program identifying 14 different funders.

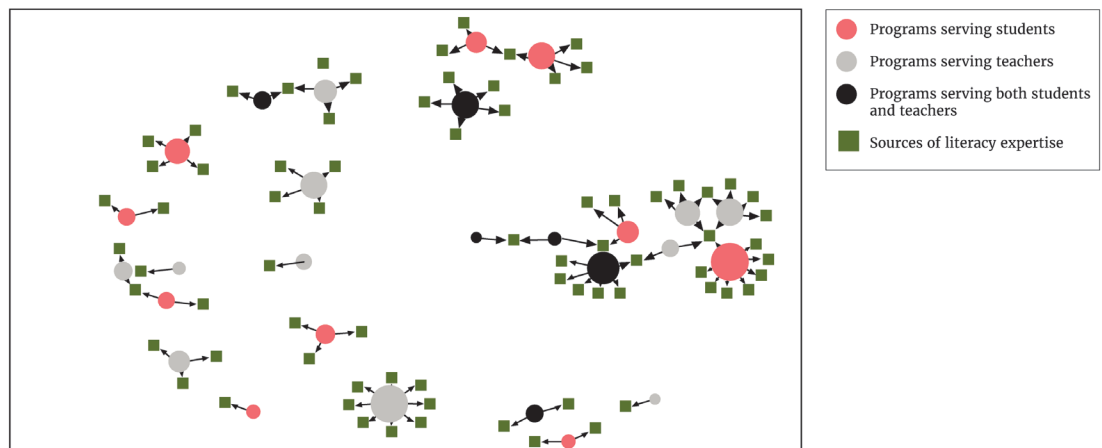
In interviews, a number of members of the sample programs described their funders as actively working to support their grantees beyond simply providing funding. Several respondents talked about their funders as wanting to be "thought partners who deeply want to understand what we're doing and how it's going." Others described their funders as wanting to have "high-touch relationships" and as "hands-on," scheduling meetings, offering professional development sessions, and conducting site visits. Several interviewees also described ways in which their funders provided opportunities for collaborations and partnerships with other programs. For example, one respondent reported that one of their funders organized a professional learning community around school topics and invited a handful of similar programs to share expertise and learn from one another. Several interviewees also described how formal collaboratives with multiple programs helped to alleviate the pressures of competing for funds. One respondent said a funder asked the members of their collaborative, "if you didn't have to think about money how would you all work together to address this problem of students not reading on grade level?"

At the same time, interviewees also articulated a number of challenges associated with the competition for funding and related demands from funders. "One of the challenges," a respondent declared, "is that we are all looking for business... whether you're a nonprofit, or a for-profit, we all need work. That's one thing that sometimes can get in the way of connecting or partnering." In fact, interviewees from several of the teacher programs explicitly stated that their program will not work in a school if it is already working with another reading program.

Even when the programs were working together in a collaborative, concerns about competition and funding can haunt the work. As one interviewee stated, "initially you consider these programs working in the same space to be competitors for the same funds, and it's hard to change from a competitive mindset into a partnership mindset." Another respondent whose programs was part of a collaborative explained, "in the next school year there will be a reduced financial award from the foundation, so we need to figure out as a group how to work together to fill that gap, and that will take our partnership to a new realm, and everyone's a bit skeptical and cautious... you don't want to bring [a funder] out and get them fascinated in your partner's program and fund them instead. That's happened to [us] in the past."

Some interviewees also talked specifically about the challenges of meeting the stipulations and expectations of their funders, particularly if funding is only available through requests for

Figure 10. Network of relationships between sample programs and sources of literacy expertise



proposals (RFPs). As one respondent put it, “we’re kind of stretching ourselves to meet all of their compliance and regulations that comes with those strings.” Another mentioned that the specific focus of their program often makes securing funding a challenge, as they “haven’t been able to find a funder to pitch this to because New York City has a different focus.”

What sources do the programs turn to for expertise? Sample programs in the sector drew on extensive and disparate sources for literacy expertise and for expertise in professional development. In terms of literacy expertise, three programs (10%) reported that they did not seek out literacy expertise from any individuals or organizations, but the other 27 programs named 75 different sources that they drew upon for literacy expertise (see Figure 10). The number of sources named by each of these 27 programs ranged from one to eight.

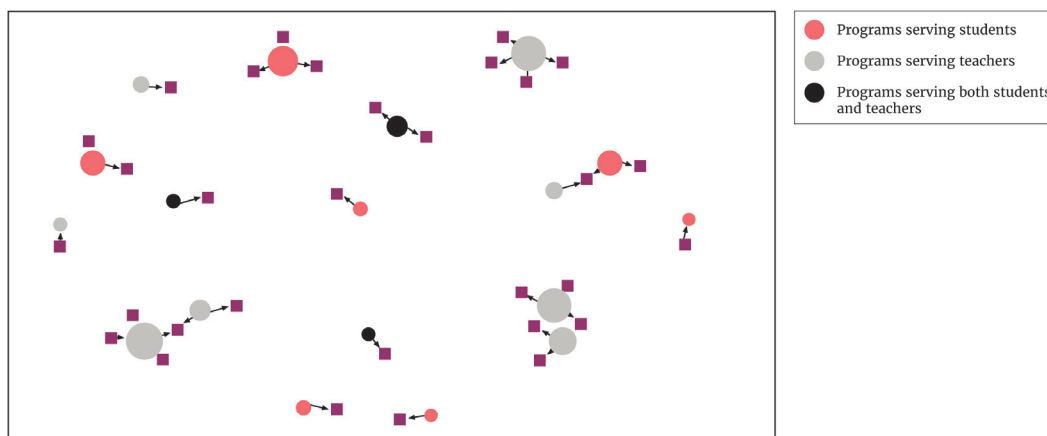
The sources of literacy expertise included professional organizations, university professors, consultants, websites, and conferences. University-affiliated faculty and organizations accounted for the largest category of literacy expertise, with 19 different university-related sources mentioned. Curriculum providers and curricular materials were the second-largest category of literacy expertise, mentioned 13 times. Finally, professional organizations and national/local service providers were mentioned 11 times each.

Notably, only a few sources were named by more than one program. In fact, of the university-affiliated organizations - the largest category of literacy expertise - only two organizations, both of which offer professional development around literacy, were mentioned by more than one program. University-affiliated faculty were often connected with only one program, and, in interviews, program staff explained that university faculty typically served as a program advisor or a curriculum developer.

A cluster of two student programs, three teacher programs, and three programs working with both students and teachers (seen on the right side of Figure 10) included links to a group of professional organizations included the National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE) (mentioned by four programs); the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) (mentioned by two programs); and the International Literacy Association (ILA) (mentioned by two programs). The multiple mentions of professional organizations, and particularly the conferences that they organize, suggest that conference formats may be one of the most popular sources for expertise on literacy. The only remaining organizations with more than one mention were the NYC Department of Education and Engage NY (an online resource created by the New York State Department of Education). These were mentioned three and two times, respectively.

Since many teacher programs provided literacy services in the form of professional development, we also asked programs whom they go to for expertise in professional development. Overall, 18 programs (60% of the sample) named 31 unique sources (see Figure 11). University-affiliated individuals/organizations accounted for 26% (eight sources) of the professional development sources mentioned. Professional organizations, curriculum providers,

Figure 11. Network of 30 sample programs showing frequent contacts (once a month or more)



and service providers each accounted for 23% of the mentions (seven organizations each). Finally, one national network and one foundation were mentioned (3% each). For the most part, the 31 sources of professional development expertise were named only once, and there were only four sources that were named more than once. Two teacher programs named NCTE and ILA (both professional organizations that also hold conferences) as a source. Student Achievement Partners, a curriculum provider, and a university professor, were also named as a source by two different programs.

While programs serving teachers were much more likely to name a source of professional development expertise than student programs were, we found that a mix of both teacher and student programs reported drawing on sources of professional development expertise. Of the 18 programs that named a source of professional development expertise, eight were teacher programs (44%), seven were student programs (39%), and three were programs serving both students and teachers (17%). However, 12 sample programs (40% of the sample) did not report a source of expertise at all and five of those were teacher programs, meaning 38% of all teacher programs did not name a source. Four (36%) of the student programs did not name a source, and three (50%) of the programs serving both students and teachers did not name a source. Of the teacher programs that did not name a source, a respondent from one program stated that they themselves were the source of professional development that they provided, and so they did not seek professional development expertise elsewhere.

Summary of the relationships and sources among sample programs. The social network maps reveal for the first time the extent to which programs in the sector are connected with one another and the extent to which they are operating in independent and isolated ways. These findings suggest that in 2016-17 the sample programs formed three different groupings: a group of about half of the programs who were isolated; a group of programs that were in regular contact (monthly or more) with at least one other program; and a group of almost one third of the sample programs who describe themselves as working in collaboration or partnership with multiple programs and were making some explicit efforts to coordinate their work.

The relatively tight connections among the programs that are frequently connected and working in collaboration or partnership suggest that some sector programs are well positioned to share information, expertise, and other resources. However, almost all of the most tightly connected programs were programs serving students and many of the programs that are isolated are teacher programs. That suggests that teacher programs are much more likely to be operating independently of other programs and have fewer opportunities to share information, expertise and other resources.

Along with the limited connections among many programs in the sector, the fact that programs draw on a disparate array of sources of funding and expertise indicates a lack of coherence and consistency in the support offered to schools by the sector. Nonetheless, many of the most frequently connected programs participated in collaboratives supported by organizations like the Pinkerton Foundation and the Brooke Astor Fund for New York City Education; this suggests that explicit and direct support for programs to work together and collaborate could have a beneficial impact on the development of the social networks and the collective impact of the sector as a whole.

Summary and Implications

When we launched this study, there was no clear sense of how many programs might be working with New York City elementary schools to improve K-3 reading outcomes, and little was known about the nature or collective potential of their work. This analysis shows that there are over 100 different programs in New York City focused broadly on improving reading at the K-3 level. Our analysis of a sample of those programs shows that almost half of those programs hired personnel with at least a bachelor's degree or provided training for their staff members who worked in schools. In addition, most programs use specific assessments related to reading outcomes and make some effort to evaluate their work or monitor their progress. Although only about a fifth of these programs have had external evaluations, most of these programs have in place or could develop mechanisms for assessing their effectiveness and improving their outcomes in the future.

In order for these support providers to have a collective impact on reading outcomes at any significant scale, they also need to have the relationships that enable them to bring their resources and expertise to a large number of schools. In this case, 26 of the sample programs were working in 16% of the public elementary schools in New York City. The sheer number of the sample programs already working in areas like the Bronx suggests that the programs working in the reading improvement sector have the reach to be a valuable lever for system-wide improvements in reading instruction. Furthermore, there are several clusters of programs that are frequently connected and working in collaborations or partnerships. These clusters could serve as a powerful force for focus and collaboration in reading improvement across the New York City.

At the same time, to have a strong positive impact on K-3 reading outcomes across the sector, schools partnering with one of the sector programs should be able to access comparable resources and expertise. However, this analysis shows that there are some important differences in the nature of the programs, their expertise, and the way they are distributed among schools that have important implications for the collective capacity of the sector:

- There is considerable variability in the goals, personnel, and approaches to assessment and evaluation of the programs overall. Notably, the programs show no consistency and varying levels of specificity in their reading goals. Instead, the language used in program descriptions and program documents reflects the extent to which policies change and policymakers promote different and sometimes conflicting approaches to reading instruction. For example, some of the programs emphasize specific skills like comprehension and vocabulary that echo the language championed in policies like the Reading First program of NCLB (2001) while others adopt the language of reading standards from the Common Core (National Governors Association, 2010). Thus, the shifts in priorities and policies may contribute to a lack of coherence in the sector, making it more difficult for programs to coordinate their work and to have focused, sustained, collective impact.
- There are distinct differences between the programs working with students and the programs working with teachers. On the one hand, the student programs tend to be focused on goals like grade level reading and discreet skills like phonics in activities that outside staff and personnel bring into the schools. These programs depend on finding time during the school day or after school and/or during the summer when they can be added on to the reading instruction students get in school. Many of the student programs tend to be connected to groups and networks, providing their school partners with access to information and resources from other programs within the sector. On the other hand, teacher programs tend to focus on helping teachers to improve their overall instruction through approaches like balanced literacy or alignment with standards. These programs are designed to be integrated into students' reading instruction during the regular school day, but also require professional development time with teachers. For the most part, the teacher programs are working independently, with at least some indicating that they specifically choose school partners that do not work with other programs. As a consequence of these differences, schools working with different kinds of programs get access to different kinds of resources and support.
- Different kinds of schools work with different kinds of programs. Overall, programs in the sector work with high percentages of schools that are lower performing and that serve students from families with high levels of poverty. However, the schools that partner with student programs or that partner with more than one program tend to have higher levels of need than schools that partner with teacher programs and programs serving both students and teachers. These findings suggest that schools in different locations and with different populations of students may be getting access to different kinds of resources, support, and expertise. Although it is too early to tell how significant these differences are and how they might impact schools, the implications for equity and for effectiveness warrant further examination. For example, schools that work with multiple programs may benefit from having access to more resources and approaches, but those schools may also encounter increased demands and challenges in coordinating the work of different programs.

Taken together, the lack of consistency across the programs in terms of the goals and expertise and access they provide, and the fact that different elementary schools are likely to be getting access to different kinds and of reading-related support, limits the collective capacity of the sector. Essentially, schools have access to a variety of different goals and services that may

or may not be aligned with their needs and the demands they face, and they have limited information to help them decide which programs to work with.

In addition to the variety of goals, the differences among the student and teacher programs, and the differences in access among partner schools, the collective impact of the sector also suffers from the evidence that the programs in the sector are informed by a wide range of sources of funding and expertise that are themselves likely to be only loosely connected. The unconnected programs and the disparate sources of funding and expertise mean that most of these programs have to demonstrate their effectiveness while working independently of other programs. The fact that only three of the teacher programs reported frequent contact with other sample programs, and that five teacher programs did not name a source of professional development expertise, also indicates that these programs may be operating even more independently than the student programs within the sector. These results show that many of the programs in the sector have to compete for funding and develop their resources and services with relatively limited information about what other programs are doing or where they are working, and with little or no information about the specific needs of schools.

Recommendations

Given these results, no single strategy will be sufficient to build the collective capacity of the sector moving forward. Instead, different approaches are needed to take advantage of the different strengths of the programs working with students and those working with teachers and to promote greater collective impact on reading outcomes across the city.

Create an inventory and “map” that shows all the programs working in the sector and the schools with which they partner. Instituting a regular inventory of programs and “mapping” of the partner schools could identify gaps in services and underserved schools and neighborhoods. Schools and programs could also use this information to make more strategic choices about who to work with and to facilitate coordination when schools have multiple program partners.

Identify common needs, assessments, and tools to promote coherence across the sector. The NYC Department of Education, an alliance of sector programs, or another local organization could establish common areas of focus or standards to help ensure the quality and consistency of work. Programs could continue to address different goals and needs but the shared understanding would facilitate alignment and consistency. In addition to articulating key local needs or goals related to elementary reading, productive developments might include standards for the “dosage” or extent of services support providers should offer; sharing of common reading assessments; identification of core practices for reading instruction; and creation of workshops for program personnel to support their use of common assessments and core practices.

Foster strategic alliances among programs working with students and programs working with teachers. Productive collaborations among student and teacher programs could both deepen their work and expand their reach. “Matching” support from afterschool programs for students and in-school programs for teachers and/or students would be particularly effective, and the adoption of complementary goals and common assessments could help to magnify effects. Identifying the obstacles and opportunities for collaborations among a small number of complementary programs could also help to provide a foundation for more coordinated work in the future.

Build broader coalitions for neighborhood impact. Schools can benefit from the support of sector programs, but many different people and institutions can help to create opportunities for students to learn to read that support collective impact in different communities and neighborhoods. In New York City, for example, East New York Reads (in Brooklyn) and the Neighborhood Literacy Initiative (in South Jamaica, Queens), already bring together some sector programs with local community organizations and institutions like the Brooklyn and Queens public libraries.

Create a local “hub” for the sharing of information and expertise around reading instruction and reading improvement in New York City. Education leaders, policymakers, and funders can support coordination in the sector by creating an annual forum for educators, community

members, funders, and researchers. Such a forum could facilitate the development of relationships among programs, promote the sharing of information about reading research, and support reflection on overall progress and sector development.

Investments in building the collective impact of the sector, however, should take into account that schools and districts that already have some capacity – a foundation of strong relationships, instructional coherence, internal accountability, or student performance that is already relatively strong – are most likely to benefit from external support (Hatch, 2009; Newman, King, & Youngs, 2000; Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Further, improvements may most likely be achieved when schools have the expertise to pick their external partners carefully and already have the capacity to adapt external services to match the needs of their students and staff (Datnow, 2000; Hatch, 2002).

Under these circumstances, education leaders, policymakers, and funders have to balance efforts to promote coordination and coherence in the sector with the recognition that imposing narrow goals and limited sets of evaluation measures can also reduce flexibility and adaptations designed to meet local goals and needs of students and schools. In short, despite the assumptions that external support providers already have the resources and expertise that schools need to improve outcomes, strategies like these begin with the recognition that investments need to be made in building the capacity of both external support providers and schools; but they also establish a middle way between piling on bureaucratic controls, mandating collaboration, and letting "1000 flowers bloom."

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