

RISE PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION

Read by 4th



Overview

Read by 4th is a consortium of organizations and partners delivering on a collective impact campaign that brings the Philadelphia community together around a common goal: increasing the number of students reading on grade level by the time they reach fourth grade. The Reading Captains initiative was one of the campaign's central bold ideas. Based on the political organizing model of block captains, reading captains are neighborhood leaders who connect kids and families with the literacy resources and supports they need to ensure children are reading on grade level and to promote lifelong reading. The volunteers represent a variety of groups – nonprofits, faith communities, library boards, or city or other governmental systems, and they are trusted bridges between families with young children and literacy supports.

“The idea really was to create a sense of connection to natural community leaders who were there to help make sure families and kids and organizations had direct access



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to resources,” said Wanda Mial, vice president of community initiatives at Global Citizen, the organization that coordinates, facilitates, and provides administrative support to Reading Captains. “Various systems and partners have come together to build a network of support for kids and families to ensure and protect a child’s right to read.”

Read by 4th is further enhancing its impact as one of 15 organizations selected to participate in the RISE Partnership’s “Implementation” phase.

“Coming to the RISE initiative and being able to put down our thinking about why the Reading Captains initiative works and how it works with a logic model was a huge step for us,” said Samuel Fischer, data and evaluation manager at Read by 4th. “To be able to document all the activities we’re doing and how we think we go from this network of grassroots leaders to having an impact on kids was a great step.”

With the help of RISE, Read by 4th has built an evaluation structure around the Reading Captains program to better measure impact. “The one tool that

has been really useful I think has been the logic model,” said Denise Henry, a Reading Captains volunteer in the West Philadelphia region. “Really looking at all of our outputs and looking at the different activities we’ve been doing over the course of these last several years and seeing, in a global way, where the work is and what we want to do and setting some goals for reading captains across the city and in our different regions.”

The logic model developed with RISE informed the use of data from their app, developed in partnership with MilkCrate, to track activities taking place throughout the network of volunteers across the city. At its peak, the app had approximately one hundred consistent users, including a few champions using it a great deal, producing a significant amount of useful data for Read by 4th.

Read by 4th has always collected data on current and prospective Reading Captains volunteers and the neighborhoods they served. Thanks to partnerships with RISE and MilkCrate, the consortium has begun to collect far more data and from a wider variety

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of stakeholders. On a quarterly survey, partner organizations indicate whether they want to work with Reading Captains, which allows Read by 4th to follow up by setting up meetings, sharing more information about the program, introducing partners to the captains, and learning about the projects they want to do.

Similarly, Read by 4th integrated Reading Captains questions into an annual partner experience survey to better understand how families, partner organizations, and reading captains themselves feel about the initiative. Results showed 90% of Reading Captains volunteers feel they are making an impact on their

community and 86% believe they have the necessary training and resources to make an impact on their community.

“The amount of data that we’ve been able to collect about the Reading Captains initiative has really grown through our participation with RISE,” said Fischer. “That has really helped with our program evaluation and has grounded a lot of our assumptions and feelings in data.”

Support from RISE not only helped Read by 4th better measure impact and improve data collection but helped build evaluation capacity overall at all levels of the Reading Captains program.



"[RISE] is not just an incredible partnership, but really increases the ability of staff at all levels, no matter how large or small the organization to think about and build capacity," said Mial. "When I say capacity, I don't just mean hire more people. I mean builds individual learning, experience, and understanding of evaluation and its

imperative relationship to the work and the story we want to build and tell on behalf of the work."

"So thankful for the RISE Partnership," said Henry. "I know that it's really helped me to see just the great value of data and understanding it more."



Established in 2018, The RISE (Readiness, Implementation, Sustainability for Effectiveness) Partnership supports promising Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey nonprofit organizations. The RISE Partnership Evaluation Funders Learning Community is the first convening supported by a network of funders in the region. The Learning Community is a collaborative effort with the Barra Foundation, Campbell Soup Company, Horner Foundation, Nelson Foundation, Philadelphia Foundation, PropelNext/Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, Scattergood Foundation, and United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey, and a partnership with YaleEVAL of The Consultation Center at Yale. The Partnership provides nonprofits with resources and training to strengthen organizational effectiveness and ensure a greater impact on social, economic, health, and educational conditions in communities, including the effects of racism, intergenerational poverty and trauma.