



## Community Education

CITY OF LAKES AMERICORPS

## Evaluation Report Impact Evaluation PYs 2017-18 and 2018-19

### Executive Summary

This report provides an analysis and evaluation of the City of Lakes AmeriCorps program, specifically if the program is accelerating academic language growth of middle school LTELs. The method of analysis was a comparative growth analysis of standardized test scores using students served versus a control group. Results of the comparative growth analysis indicate that CoL services are accelerating academic language growth of students served. Recommendations based on these findings include further identifying the specific characteristics of students for which the program is successful, as well as which components of the program have the highest effect on this positive outcome. It is also recommended that the program examine its classification of dosing, and potentially redefine that based on the timing of the WIDA ACCESS test.

### Background and Purpose

As a program that receives less than \$500,000 annually in CNCS funds, City of Lakes AmeriCorps (CoL) utilizes an internal evaluation process. Program Director Lisa Lambert oversees all components of the evaluation, working closely with the district's Research Evaluation Assessment and Accountability Department, who completes quantitative analyses for the program. For the 2017-18 and 2018-19 program years, CoL conducted an Impact evaluation which fits into the Preliminary Evidence tier.

City of Lakes AmeriCorps has been serving middle school English Learner students since 2011. Our program deepened that focus to Long-Term English Learners in 2014 as the unique needs of that student group came to light as a result of national research. All activities outlined in our logic model (Appendix A) are designed to address our identified need, namely that Long-Term English Learners (LTELs) are not succeeding academically on par with their peers. LTELs are students with 5 or more years of Limited English Proficiency status. To be classified as an LTEL, a student has to have been enrolled in ESL services for at least five school years, during which they attended at least 135 days of school per year.

As a group, LTELs tend to have lower grades, lower standardized test scores, and face a higher risk of dropping out than non-LTELs. This difference begins due to a language barrier, but after years of falling behind, many LTELs also develop habits of disengagement in school (Laurie Olsen, 2014), which further exacerbates the problem. 76% of the 1,182 middle school English Learners (ELs) in Minneapolis Public Schools (or 898 students) are LTELs. 91% of Minneapolis Public Schools EL students are scoring as not proficient on standardized tests, with 36% of them scoring in the "Falling Behind" categories of growth.

City of Lakes AmeriCorps' Theory of Change is that by providing small group evidence-based English language instruction and support, supplemented by after-school programming that utilizes literacy skills in engaging ways, and by involving parents, LTELs in grades 6 -8 will significantly improve their academic outcomes. Participation in the CoL program will result in increased engagement in school as well as increased academic language skills, as evidenced by teacher and student surveys, pre- to post- test assessments, and a comparison of standardized test scores.

**Existing research:** Previous year's impact results give us reason to believe our program's approach is working, because they consistently show a positive effect from the City of Lakes program. CoL began using English 3D in PY 2015-16. At the end of that program year, an ANOVA test of significance completed by our district's REAA department showed that overall average growth on MCA Reading scores was higher for CoL students than for eligible (but not served) students. This is also true when we looked at percentile rankings of scores. Students served by CoL had an average percentile ranking growth of 3.84 on MCA Reading scores; the average percentile ranking growth of middle school English Learners overall was 3.28.

In PY 2016-17, our district piloted use of the FAST assessment (Formative Assessment System for Teachers) to look at student growth over the course of the year. This assessment ranks a student as Low, Some or High Risk of not meeting grade level standards by the end of the year. For students served by CoL, the number of students ranked at High Risk fell from 74% in Fall to 53% in Spring. Comparatively, districtwide, that number went from 39% in Fall up to 41% in Spring.

**Purpose:** This impact evaluation focused on determining whether the City of Lakes program was having an impact on academic language acquisition of the target students, namely middle school Long-Term English Learners. The evaluation focused on middle school Long-Term English Learners in Minneapolis Public School for both the served and comparison groups.

Results of this evaluation are being shared with the Corporation for National and Community Service at the end of the 2018-19 grant year. Results are also being shared with program management staff and other internal stakeholders to assess effectiveness of the CoL program. The scope of the evaluation will look at data from all CoL sites over the 2017-18 and 2018-19 program years. It will analyze overall effect from all activities on a standardized measure of academic language growth, the WIDA ACCESS.

### **Evaluation Methods and Data Analysis**

**Questions** The evaluation will address the following key question:

- 1) Do students participating in the CoL program have higher growth in academic English skills than students who are not receiving our services?

**Evaluation Design:** This evaluation is an Impact Evaluation, designed to examine how well the program is meeting the stated effect of increasing academic language acquisition for the target group of students.

#### *Data Collection*

Program data of who is served by City of Lakes is collected from members with their first quarter reports, due in early December. Members report the first name, last name, grade, and student ID number of any students receiving the full range of program services (Academic Language instruction, push-in support, and parent communication). Students added to caseloads throughout the year are done so as they join, with a deadline of being added by the next quarterly report due date. All reports from members are submitted through Google Reporting Spreadsheets. These spreadsheets are only accessible to members logging in with MPS login info, and once entered, are not editable by members. The MPS Research Evaluation Assessment and Accountability Department (REAA) oversees data collection and management of standardized test scores both for CoL students and for the comparison group.

**Comparative Analysis:** To ensure that CoL is accelerating growth for LTELs, comparative growth on standardized test scores is evaluated between CoL caseload students and a matched comparison group. This is measured through WIDA ACCESS scores as well as through another standardized test, FAST (Formative Assessment System for Teachers). WIDA ACCESS is our district's measure of language proficiency for ELs in MPS and is administered annually to all students receiving ESL services.

Growth targets have been recently developed for WIDA ACCESS and are based on English Learners students showing higher growth in earlier years, then slowing a bit in later years. This is a typical trend for English Learners, whose language skills develop quickly as they are newly learning the language, then tend to stall as they move from conversational language development to more academic language development. All growth targets are set based on a student achieving full language proficiency within seven years. An accountability index of 1 indicates that a student met their target; anything less means they fell short of their target, and anything more means that exceeded their target.

We anticipated seeing students receiving higher amounts of CoL services meeting their WIDA ACCESS accountability index score (score of 1.0 or higher) when compared to a match sampling group. To evaluate this, we looked at both the percentage of students who received a 1.0 or higher Accountability index (are on track with growth), and at the mean accountability index for students (sum of student change divided by target change). With FAST scores, we also looked at the percentage of students meeting their growth targets.

To determine growth comparison using WIDA ACCESS or other standardized test scores, an evaluator from the district's REAA (Research Evaluation Assessment and Accountability) Dept. completed an analysis of growth scores for COL participants (treatment) vs. eligible students (control). This evaluation involved a comparison of growth from students who received services from a CoL member to students who did not receive services from a CoL member but shared the following characteristics: is in middle school, is an LTEL (student with 5 or more years Limited English Proficiency status), and attends a CoL site as their school. Data to identify these students

came from Google Reporting forms submitted by CoL members on students they had served, and from district databases with student demographic and test score information.

**Timeline & Logistics:**

<b>Evaluation Element</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Conducted By</b>
Clear definition of eligible students and identification of matching variables	August 2018	Program Director Lisa Lambert and Evaluator Melody Jacobs-Cassuto
Members trained in data collection elements	August/September 2017, August/September 2018	Program Director Lisa Lambert
Caseload students and comparison group identified	September 2017, September 2018	Members, Program Director Lisa Lambert, and Evaluator Melody Jacobs-Cassuto
Data checks to ensure accurate and timely member report submissions	2017 – October and December 2018 – April, October, and December 2019 – April and July	CoL Program Staff
WIDA ACCESS administered	February/March 2018 and February/March 2019	Members and partner ESL teachers
Data analysis of WIDA ACCESS growth	July-September 2018 and July – September 2019	REAA Evaluator Melody Jacobs-Cassuto
Evaluation Report created	October and November 2019	Program Director Lisa Lambert
Internal stakeholders meeting with evaluation data reviewed and continuous improvement decisions made	December 2019	Program Director Lisa Lambert

**Budget**

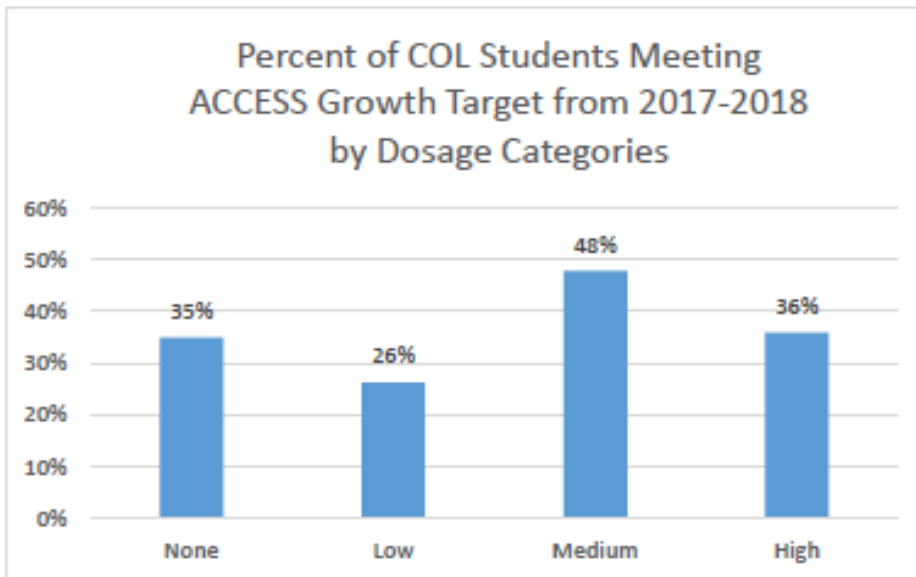
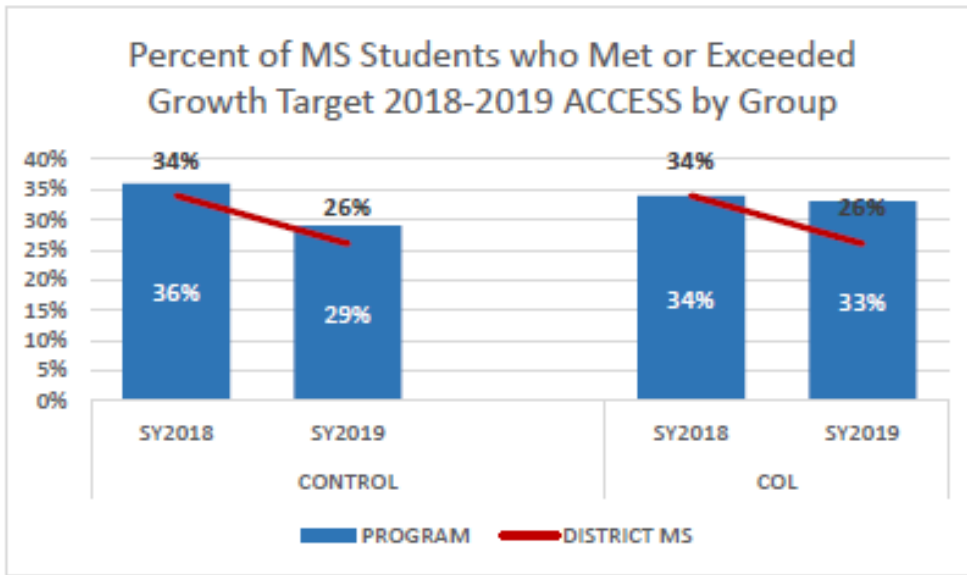
The evaluation budget for our program is \$4,000 per year, which covers approximately 80 hours of evaluation time from our district’s REAA Department. REAA provided this estimate of time and the rate of \$50 per hour to complete this evaluation. This allotted budget covers both the Impact Evaluation and Process/Implementation Evaluations being completed by December 2019.

This amount is less than 1% of our overall yearly budget. Since much of the data collection and analysis was done online and with equipment provided to members by their site (ie computers), no additional budget was required for supplies. The greatest material needed was time -- both by members in doing data collection and by Program Director Lisa Lambert who completed data analysis. Time to complete these items is included in position descriptions for both members and the Program Director, and no additional budget was needed to support these activities.

**Results**

For both PY2017-18 and PY2018-19, in comparing growth of students receiving CoL services with a control group of middle school LTELs attending the same schools who did not receive CoL services, data trends tell us that students receiving CoL services make more growth than students in the control group.

At first look of overall ACCESS growth targets for 2017-18, students in the control (no CoL services) group appear to be higher, with 36% meeting or exceeding their growth targets compared to 34% of students who received CoL services. However, when broken down by program dosage, students receiving either a Medium or High dosage of CoL services met their growth targets at a higher rate than students receiving no services or a Low dosage of services. This data indicates that there is a minimum dosage required for effect, but that once that minimum dosage is met, student growth is positively affected.



The same is true when looking at the mean accountability index for students (the proportion of the ACCESS growth target met). Students receiving CoL services in PY2017-18 grew average of 60.1% of their growth target, while students not receiving services grew an average of 49.9% of their target. In PY2018-19, students receiving CoL services grew an average of 53% of their target compared to average of 44% for those not receiving services.

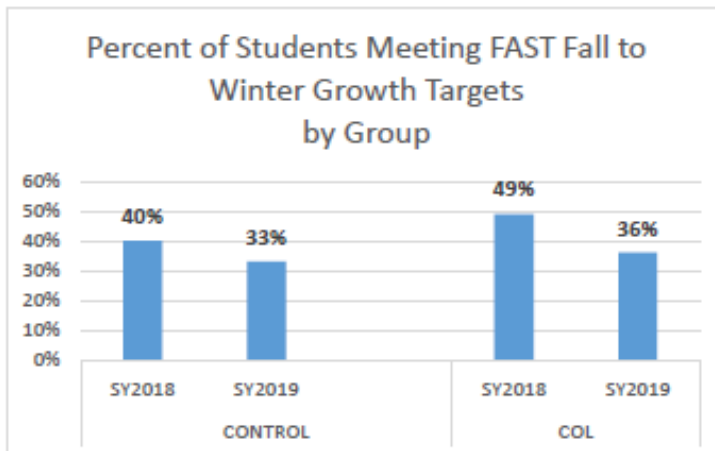
**MEAN ACCOUNTABILITY INDEX**

		CONTROL		COL	
		N	Column %	N	Column %
2017-18	Mean Proportion of target Scale Score Change Met	143	49.9%	192	60.1%
2018-19	Mean Proportion of target Scale Score Change Met	185	44%	187	53%

This trend continues when comparing the average Accountability Index for students served by CoL to a wider range that includes the district and the state. As the below chart illustrates, the Accountability Index for the Control group hovers near MPS and State results for both PY2017-18 and PY2018-19, whereas the Accountability Index for students served by CoL is significantly higher.

Mean Accountability Index	Year	MPS	State	Control Group	CoL Served Group
Middle School	PY2017-18	53.30	50.58	49.9	60.1
	PY 2018-19	45.50	42.26	44.0	53.0

Beyond ACCESS, this result is further enforced when we examine the effect on FAST scores. In both program years, students receiving CoL services met their winter growth targets at a higher rate than the control group of students not receiving CoL services.



Cohesively, these results indicate that students participating in the CoL program have higher growth in academic English skills than students who are not receiving CoL services.

### **Limitations:**

This study does have potential limitations. Pre-existing differences between the intervention and comparison groups at the outset of the intervention may have led to inaccurate estimates of the program's effects, either by underestimating for some groups or overestimating for others. The groups were based on sharing three characteristics: being in middle school, being a LTEL, and attending a school where CoL services were offered. Groups were not propensity matched further to account for other characteristics such as home language, receiving other ESL services, or qualifies for free or reduced-price lunch, to name a few. Matching based on the additional characteristics could illustrate exactly what effect CoL services have for each specific population.

Another limitation is the timing of the WIDA ACCESS. This assessment is given in late February and throughout March, while our program continues to serve students through May. The dosage we use in reporting a student's level of received services as Low, Medium or High is based on services received for the entire program year. However, utilizing the ACCESS as a measure of academic language growth really only measures growth based on the amount of services received through February or early March. Students who started the program late, and are therefore reported as having a Low or Medium dosage, may show less growth than they actually had during the course of the entire school year based on the early timing of the test. A pre- and post-test is given to CoL students to fully measure their academic language growth for the entirety of the program year; however, it is not given to the comparative group of students due to the increase in testing burden it presents to those students. Therefore, WIDA ACCESS remains the one standardized measure of language growth we can use for both control and served groups.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The City of Lakes program is demonstrating positive effects on advancing middle school LTEL's academic achievement. Students receiving CoL services have shown higher growth on both WIDA ACCESS and FAST standardized tests than their fellow middle school LTEL peers who are not receiving CoL services. Moving forward, it will be important to further identify the specific characteristics of students for which the program is successful, as well as which components of the program have the highest effect on this positive outcome. It is also recommended that the program examine its classification of dosing, and potentially redefine that based on the timing of the WIDA ACCESS test.

### **Appendixes –**

A. Logic Model

B. Example data collection tool - English 3D Logs



## References

Olsen, Laurie (2014). "Meeting the Unique Needs of Long-Term English Language Learners: A Guide For Educators," National Education Association, published March 2014.  
[http://www.laurieolsen.com/uploads/2/5/4/9/25499564/lo\\_nea\\_ltel\\_publication.pdf](http://www.laurieolsen.com/uploads/2/5/4/9/25499564/lo_nea_ltel_publication.pdf)

APPENDIX A : Logic Model

	Project Resources	Core Project Components	Evidence of Project Implementation and Participation	Evidence of Change		
PROBLEM/NEED	INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES		
				Short-Term	Medium-Term	Long-Term
The community problem that the program activities (interventions) are designed to address.	What we invest (# and type of AmeriCorps Members	What we do	Direct products from program activities	Changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes and opinions	Changes in behavior or action that result from participants' new knowledge	Meaningful changes, often in their condition or status in life
<p>English Learners (ELs) are the fastest growing student population in MN.</p> <p>Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) educates significantly more ELs than elsewhere in the state: 22% at MPS vs. 8.4 statewide.</p> <p>The majority of MPS's ELs (74% or 1,186 students) are Long-Term English Learners (LTELs).</p> <p>Long-Term English Learners are students with 5 or more years of Limited English Proficiency status in schools. On average, LTELs tend to have</p>	<p>8 partner middle schools in the MPS school district, including among the lowest-performing schools in the district, plus strategic partnerships with MPS Departments</p> <p>35 total members (25 full-time, 10 part-time), at least one-third of whom are bilingual or multilingual</p> <p>Over 200 hours of training per member</p> <p>2 full-time Program Coordinators and 1 part-time Program Director</p> <p>In-kind time from MPS teachers and staff</p> <p>Evidence-informed curriculum, English 3D,</p>	<p>Members serve 200 Long-Term English Learners (LTELs) in grades 6-8 (ED1).</p> <p>Small group tutoring for LTELs during the school day using the English 3D curriculum (30 min per day, 4x per week for 18+ weeks).</p> <p>Tutoring includes research-based strategies to support language development, transferring language strategies to learning in content areas, and focused assistance on academic vocabulary.</p> <p>Monthly progress meetings to review student progress data with a licensed ESL teacher.</p> <p>To promote an increase in student engagement, students participate in</p>	<p>200 middle school LTELs will receive tutoring from a City of Lakes AmeriCorps member.</p> <p>140 (70%) of 200 participating LTELs will complete the program by mastering at least 20 lessons in the English 3D curriculum (ED2)</p> <p>106 (53%) of 200 participating LTELs will engage in after school activities provided by City of Lakes members as tracked by Google Reporting forms</p> <p>9 recorded student progress meetings per student will occur with a licensed ESL teacher</p> <p>140 (70%) of 200 parents receive at least two positive parental contacts per month</p>	<p>98 (70%) of 140 LTELs completing the program will demonstrate at least 10% growth using the English 3D curriculum pre- and post-tests. (ED5)</p> <p>84 (60%) of 140 LTELs completing the program will demonstrate an increased rate of growth in language acquisition through a higher than average growth score (top 3 quintiles) on the state standardized WIDA ACCESS test of language proficiency.</p>	<p>98 (70%) of 140 LTELs completing the program will demonstrate increased academic engagement as evidenced by a pre- to post-program teacher survey that will report improvements in student attendance, assignment and homework completion, and participation in class. (ED27b)</p> <p>112 (80%) of 140 parents of students completing the program will report via survey that because of CoL member outreach activities, they feel a stronger connection to their child's school community, have a higher likelihood of attending school events, and/or a higher likelihood of initiating contact with teachers.</p>	<p>Increases in students' skills and engagement, as well as increases in parental involvement, will increase the number of LTELs on track to obtain a high school diploma and graduate college or career ready.</p>

<p>lower grades, lower standardized test scores, and face a higher risk of dropping out than non-LTEs.</p> <p>This lack of progress is exacerbated by a lack of engagement - many LTEs have developed habits of non-engagement, passivity and invisibility in school.</p> <p>Parents of LTEs struggle to support their students' success due to language barriers and/or limited or negative prior experiences with schools.</p>	<p>which was designed for LTEs.</p> <p>Local and Federal funding</p>	<p>enrichment activities after school for 1-2 hours per day, at least 2 days per week for 18+ weeks.</p> <p>Communication of student progress to parents through newsletters, phone calls, and/or emails at least two times per month. In addition, members plan quarterly parent nights with workshops on educational topics of their choice.</p> <p>Members will recruit at least 30 community volunteers to act as role roles, guest speakers, or assistants in the after school program.</p> <p>Members will support caseload students in MPS summer schools to prevent summer learning loss for six weeks during the summer.</p>	<p>(Nov - May) as tracked by Google Reporting forms</p> <p>100 (50%) of 200 parents engage in at least one Parent Night as tracked by Google Forms reports submitted by members.</p>	<p>98 (70%) of 140 LTEs completing the program will demonstrate via student survey that they feel more confident in class as a result of working with a CoL member.</p>	<p>84 (60%) of 140 parents of students completing the program will report via survey that because of CoL member outreach activities, they have a higher likelihood of attending school events and/or a higher likelihood of initiating contact with teachers.</p>	
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