Building Strong Readers, Together

2025-26 Impact Report

READINGASSIST.ORG

Reading Assist

LITERACY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL

Reading Assist

Thank you...for your invaluable commitment to supporting childhood literacy. Literacy is a key that unlocks countless opportunities, and it's an evergreen mission. As long as we want to offer our children brighter futures, we have to support them in becoming strong readers.

Chrissy Houlahan, U.S. Representative

A Letter From Our CEO

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Strong readers aren't built by schools alone. They thrive when they're given the specialized, evidence-based support they need, wherever learning happens. At Reading Assist, we've long believed that every child deserves access to high-quality literacy instruction, whether it's in the classroom during the school day, after school, or throughout the summer. This year, we continued to expand that support across our region.

In 2025–26, Reading Assist served over 2,300 students across 70+ partner schools and community sites in Washington, D.C., Delaware, Pennsylvania, and this year, New Jersey. While expanding into a fourth state and growing our reach into Philadelphia, we also strengthened the foundation of our work by deepening school partnerships, expanding professional learning for educators, growing relationships with community partners, and advancing evidence-based literacy through advocacy.

We celebrated the graduation of the first Tutors to Teachers Delaware cohort, preparing the next generation of educators with training in the Science of Reading. We continued to invest in schools through professional learning and coaching while working alongside policymakers and partners to advance evidence-based literacy across our region. Most importantly, 90% of Reading Assist students reached benchmark levels in at least one foundational reading skill—a testament to the dedication of our Fellows, staff, and school partners.

While we're proud of what we've accomplished together, we know the work is far from finished. Too many children still lack access to the literacy support they need to thrive. But this year reaffirmed what we know to be true: when students receive the high-quality, individualized literacy support they need, they learn to read. Every child deserves that opportunity.

Thank you for being part of the Reading Assist community. Whether you served as a Fellow, partnered with us, volunteered your time, invested in our mission, or championed literacy in your own community, you helped make this year possible.

Together, we're building stronger readers, stronger communities, and brighter futures.

With gratitude,

Caroline O'Neal
Chief Executive Officer

Reading Assist welcomed Pennsylvania State Senator John Kane to Stetser Elementary School in Chester, PA

Our Staff

Caroline O'Neal
CEO

Jeannine Bedford
Program Director

Lindsay Bedford
Development and Marketing Manager

Amanda Carreiro
Program Manager

Jen Clinton
Program Director

Debbie DeGrosky
Director of Instruction

Leigh Fairley
Managing Director of Programs

Judith Graham Kane
Managing Director of Development & Marketing

Amy Iobst-Zunino
Program Manager

Christopher Kettering
Director of Operations and Data Systems

Christie Lodge
Program Manager

Jennifer Lunger
Program Manager

Kelly Preston
Program Manager

Robert Raup
Finance Director

Phyllis Russo
Program Manager

Stuart Sherman
Managing Director of Operations

Tinesha Sykes
Recruitment Manager

Emma Warnick
Program Manager

Rodnesha Woodland
Grants and Compliance Manager

Our Board

Pamela Scott
President

Madeleine Bayard
Vice President

Israel Mercado
Treasurer

James Boyd
Secretary

Gary Camp

Kae Keister, Ed. D.

Pete Leida

Darren Mahoney

LaRetha C. P. Odumosu, Ph.D.

Terra Wallin

Virginia Biasotto
(Founder)

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MISSION:
Reading Assist provides intensive services for young, at-risk children with the most significant reading challenges so they can achieve measurable reading progress and long-term proficiency.

AMBITION:
Reading Assist will become the leading regional expert and trusted provider of reading instruction and intervention.

GOAL:
Serve 10,000 students with 90% reaching benchmarks in foundational skills within one year.

Core Values

EXCELLENCE

We are committed to delivering high-quality, data-driven work achieved through careful planning, thoughtful review, curiosity, and seeking improvement.

DEDICATION

We pledge to consistently show up for our students and advance educational opportunity through success for struggling readers.

PARTNERSHIP

We believe in the power of partnership and that the best outcomes are achieved when diverse perspectives, skills, and strengths are brought together.

ENTHUSIASM

We foster a vibrant workplace where enthusiasm sets our pace, fuels our mission, honors every achievement, and builds a joyful, positive culture.

Why Reading Assist Works

HIGH-IMPACT, EVIDENCE-BASED INSTRUCTION — Reading Assist delivers high-impact, evidence-based literacy support through direct student instruction, professional learning for educators, and school-based coaching. Whether working one-on-one or in small groups, our trained instructors use the accredited Reading Assist program, a structured literacy curriculum grounded in the Orton-Gillingham approach.

DATA-DRIVEN — Reading Assist measures student growth using Acadience Reading K–6, a nationally recognized assessment of critical foundational reading skills. Students complete benchmark assessments three times throughout the school year, along with weekly progress monitoring. Our Program staff review progress data weekly to make data-driven adjustments to each student's tutoring and reading goals.

HIGH-QUALITY TRAINING AND COACHING SUPPORT — Reading Assist invests in the people who make literacy growth possible. Reading Assist Fellows, educators, and community partners receive intensive training in structured literacy and ongoing coaching from our experienced program team. This layered support ensures consistent, high-quality implementation while helping schools build lasting capacity to support young readers.

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS — Reading Assist partners with schools, colleges and universities, community organizations, and government leaders to expand access to literacy support. Collaborations with organizations like CitySchools Collaborative, Read by 4th, United Way, and the YMCA help connect more students and families with the resources they need to thrive.

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2.3K+
Students served across our regional network

90%
Students reaching benchmarks in at least one foundational reading skill

180+
Tutors deployed across the region

More than
3x
the expected rate of oral reading fluency growth

80%
Kindergartners successfully meeting critical grade-level benchmarks

70+
School and community partners

50+
Educators trained

152%
average oral reading fluency growth (46% expected)

> **This is the most rewarding work experience I have ever had. It is an honor and privilege to make a difference in and be a part of these children's lives in such a positive and powerful way.** - Joseph, 2025–26 Fellow

Student Demographics

Gender:

52% Boys

48% Girls

Race:

65% Black/African American

15% White/Caucasian

14% Hispanic/Latino

6% Multiracial/Other

Grade:

23% K

22% 1

20% 2

15% 3

11% 4

8% 5

1% 6

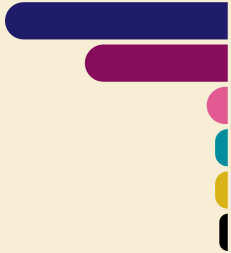
Tutor Demographics

69% Female

20% Male

11% Undisclosed

Veteran Status



53% Black/African American

34% White/Caucasian

5% Multiracial/Other

3% Asian/Asian American

3% Hispanic/Latino

2% American Indian/Indigenous

Age:

26% 18–24

32% 25–34

10% 35–44

5% 45–54

10% 55–64

15% 65–74

2% 75+

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Where We Serve

SCHOOL & DISTRICT PARTNERS:

DELAWARE SCHOOLS:

Appoquinimink School District
- Brick Mill Elementary School
- Bunker Hill Elementary School

Christina School District
- Stubbs Early Education Center
- The Bayard School
- Pulaski Early Education Center

Colonial School District
- Castle Hills Elementary School
- Carrie Downie Elementary School
- Harry O. Eisenberg Elementary School
- Pleasantville Elementary School
- Southern Elementary School
- Wilmington Manor Elementary School

Capital School District
- Booker T. Washington Elementary School
- South Dover Elementary School
- North Dover Elementary School
- Hartly Elementary School
- Towne Point Elementary School
- Central Elementary School

Red Clay Consolidated School District
- Joseph E. Johnson Jr. Elementary School
- Evan G. Shortlidge Academy
- Warner Elementary School
- William C. Lewis Dual Language Elementary School

Milford School District
- Benjamin Banneker Elementary School
- Morris Early Childhood Center

Indian River School District
- Long Neck Elementary School

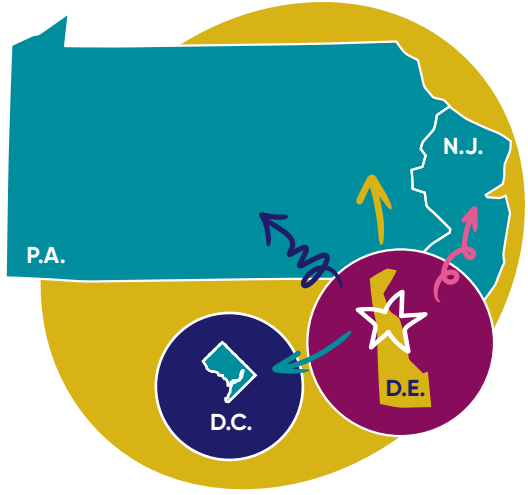
Delaware Charter and Independent Schools
- Academia Antonia Alonso Charter School
- Charter School of New Castle
- East Side Charter School
- First State Montessori Academy
- Las Américas ASPIRA Academy
- Sussex Montessori School
- Holy Angels School
- Odyssey Charter School
- Thomas Edison Charter School

PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOLS:

Chester Upland School District
- Chester Upland School of the Arts
- Edgmont Scholars Academy
- Main Street Elementary School
- Stetser Elementary School

West Chester School District
- East Goshen Elementary School

Pennsylvania Independent Schools
- St. Raymond of Penafort School
- St. Frances Cabrini School



NEW JERSEY SCHOOLS:
Magnolia School District
- Magnolia Elementary School

WASHINGTON DC SCHOOLS:
DC Public Schools
- Garfield Elementary School
- J.C. Nalle Elementary School
- C.W. Harris Elementary School
- Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School

DC Public Charter Schools
- Bridges DC Public Charter School
- DC Scholars Public Charter School
- Harmony DC Public Charter School
- Rocketship Rise Public Charter School
- Roots DC Public Charter School

KIPP DC Public Charter Schools
- Arts & Technology Academy
- Connect Academy
- Discover Academy
- Grow Academy
- Heights Academy
- Inspire Academy
- Lead Academy
- Pride Academy
- Promise Academy
- Quest Academy
- Spring Academy

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COMMUNITY AND INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS:
- AmeriCorps
- Bookish Notions
- Chester Education Foundation
- CitySchools Collaborative
- City of Wilmington, Office of the Mayor
- Delaware Claims Processing Facility
- Delaware Literacy Alliance
- JPMorganChase
- M&T Bank
- Office of U.S. Senator Chris Coons
- PA Literacy Coalition
- Police Athletic League of Wilmington
- Power Home Remodeling
- Read by 4th
- Rotary Club of Wilmington
- Sleeping Bird Coffee
- Spur Impact Association
- Teach Plus Pennsylvania
- United Way of Delaware
- William "Hicks" Anderson Community Center
- Wilmington Library
- Wilmington University
- Wisp Bookshop
- WSFS Bank
- YMCA of Delaware

Reading Assist has given me the materials and support in order to achieve my career goal.

– Scarlet, 2025–26 Fellow

Advancing Literacy Beyond the Classroom

Reading Assist works beyond school walls to advance literacy through advocacy, policy, and strategic partnerships. By engaging with educators, elected officials, and national organizations, we're helping shape stronger systems that support young readers.

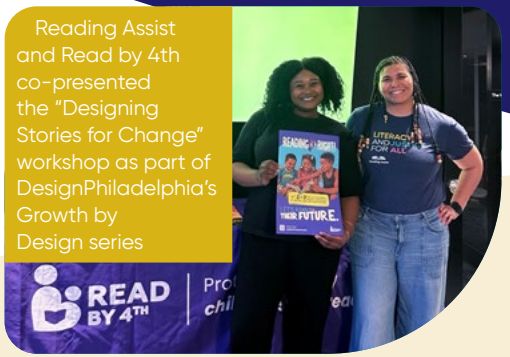
HIGHLIGHTS

ADVANCING LITERACY THROUGH ADVOCACY

This year, Reading Assist strengthened its connection with organizations such as the Pennsylvania Literacy Coalition and Read by 4th, joining educators, advocates, and elected officials to champion evidence-based literacy. From Harrisburg to Washington, DC, our team helped elevate the importance of investing in strong literacy instruction and policies that support young readers.

Reading Assist participated in PA Capitol Day to advocate for the continued funding of evidence-based literacy

Reading Assist and Read by 4th co-presented the "Designing Stories for Change" workshop as part of DesignPhiladelphia's Growth by Design series



Reading Assist joined educators and advocates at the Pennsylvania Literacy Coalition Summit

BRINGING LEADERS INTO THE CLASSROOM

We welcomed elected officials and education leaders into Reading Assist partner schools to experience high-impact tutoring firsthand. These visits created meaningful opportunities to showcase the impact of evidence-based literacy instruction while strengthening relationships with leaders committed to improving outcomes for students.

Pennsylvania State Senator John Kane visited Reading Assist at Stetser Elementary School to see our program in action

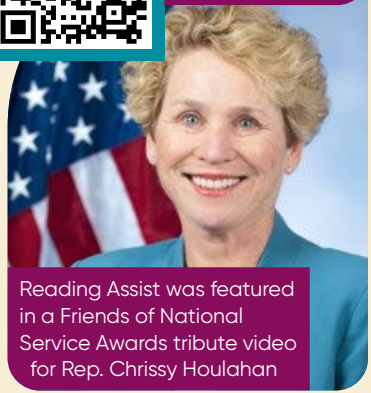
Reading Assist participated in the U.S. Department of Education's National Literacy Convening

Pennsylvania State Representative Leanne Krueger visited Reading Assist at Main Street Elementary School

CONTRIBUTING TO THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION

Reading Assist contributed to conversations shaping the future of literacy and national service. From participating in the U.S. Department of Education's National Literacy Convening and presenting at the Council of State Governments Annual Meeting to joining partners nationwide in recognizing Congresswoman Chrissy Houlahan's leadership in protecting AmeriCorps, we helped elevate evidence-based literacy and national service on local and national stages.

Click or scan QR to watch video.



Reading Assist was featured in a Friends of National Service Awards tribute video for Rep. Chrissy Houlahan

HIGHLIGHTS

Investing in Educators

Strong readers need strong educators. This year, Reading Assist strengthened the educator pipeline through professional learning, workforce development, and innovative programs like Tutors to Teachers Delaware.

PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION OF EDUCATORS

Reading Assist continued strengthening Delaware's educator pipeline through Tutors to Teachers Delaware. This year, we celebrated the graduation of our first cohort and introduced the program to aspiring educators at the Delaware Teacher Pathways Showcase. In partnership with Wilmington University and education leaders across the state, we're helping prepare future educators with the knowledge, experience, and confidence to lead classrooms from day one.

Click or scan QR to watch Wilmington University and Reading Assist's Tutors to Teachers Delaware promotional video.

Reading Assist celebrated the graduation of the first Tutors to Teachers Delaware cohort

Reading Assist presented as an event partner at the Delaware Teacher Pathways Showcase

INVESTING IN EDUCATORS ALREADY IN THE CLASSROOM

Reading Assist expanded professional learning opportunities through partnerships with Brandywine School District, Red Clay Consolidated School District, and Academia Antonia Alonso Charter School. Brandywine educators participated in Science of Reading professional learning, while Red Clay and La Academia partnered with Reading Assist to implement its Literacy Leaders coaching model. Together, these partnerships supported more than 50 educators this year with practical, evidence-based strategies that strengthen literacy instruction and build lasting school capacity.

Reading Assist presented at Delaware Charter Schools Network's CharterCon conference

SHARING OUR EXPERTISE

Throughout the year, Reading Assist staff shared their expertise at conferences and statewide convenings, contributing to conversations about evidence-based literacy instruction, high-impact tutoring, and building stronger pathways into the teaching profession.

"This student has grown in confidence to the point where he wants to make the world his oyster. And, as he always says, "The first step is to be able to read and spell words like oyster."

- Sam, 2025-26 Fellow

Connecting Literacy and Community

HIGHLIGHTS

Literacy grows when communities come together. From corporate volunteers to neighborhood organizations, our partners helped expand access to books, learning opportunities, and meaningful experiences for students and families.

POWERED BY PARTNERSHIPS

Strong partnerships expand access to literacy. This year, Reading Assist partnered with the City of Wilmington to bring summer literacy programming to the Police Athletic League of Wilmington (PAL) and the William "Hicks" Anderson Community Center. We also joined United Way of Delaware's Get Delaware Reading: Summer initiative and expanded after-school tutoring with the YMCA of Delaware, with support from the Partnership for Student Success (PSS). Together, these partnerships brought high-quality literacy support to students where they learn, play, and grow.

J.C. Barker, CEO of the Delaware Symphony Orchestra, read to local children at the Lattes and Literacy pop-up at Sleeping Bird in Wilmington, DE

Reading Assist partnered with the City of Wilmington to expand summer literacy programming at the Police Athletic League of Wilmington

Reading Assist CEO Caroline O'Neal read with students at Shortlidge Academy's March Madness celebration

SHOWING UP WHERE WE SERVE

Building stronger readers starts with building stronger relationships. Throughout the year, Reading Assist staff and Fellows participated in community events, volunteer service projects, school celebrations, and family engagement opportunities, connecting with the communities we serve while sharing the importance of literacy.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT IN ACTION

This year, Reading Assist launched its first-ever Literacy Lift, creating a new volunteer initiative that brings corporate and community partners together to directly support our Fellows and students through hands-on service. Businesses and organizations also rallied around our mission through employee book drives, donations of new books, and opportunities to share Reading Assist's story within their workplaces, helping introduce our work to new audiences and expand our impact.

Reading Assist Fellows and staff kicked off Do More 24 Delaware at the Chancery Market

Reading Assist was featured in Power Home Remodeling's "Power for Good: Building Better Futures" video

Volunteers from WSFS and M&T Bank packed back-to-school supplies during Reading Assist's inaugural Literacy Lift

Recognizing Excellence

HIGHLIGHTS

This year, Reading Assist's commitment to evidence-based literacy instruction and innovation was recognized through national awards and program recognition, highlighting the impact of our work and the strength of our tutoring model.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES HONOREE

LITERACY AWARDS
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Reading Assist was named a 2025 Literacy Awards Program Successful Practices Honoree by the Library of Congress, receiving a $10,000 award in recognition of our evidence-based tutoring model and its success in helping young readers build foundational literacy skills.

PARTNERSHIP FOR STUDENT SUCCESS COMMUNITY COLLABORATION CHALLENGE AWARDEE

Reading Assist was selected as a 2026 Community Collaboration Challenge awardee by the Partnership for Student Success. With support from the Leon Lowenstein Foundation, the award recognizes communities working to expand evidence-based student supports and provides funding to help Reading Assist strengthen local partnerships while sharing promising practices with communities nationwide.

PARTNERSHIP FOR *Student Success*

NSSA TUTORING PROGRAM DESIGN BADGE

Reading Assist earned the National Student Support Accelerator (NSSA) Tutoring Program Design Badge, recognizing our alignment with rigorous, research-based standards for high-impact tutoring. The badge is awarded following an independent review by education leaders, affirming the quality and effectiveness of our tutoring model.

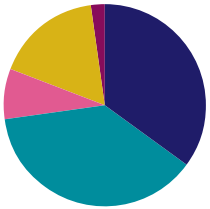
Our Support

Thank you to the entire Reading Assist community for powering our work. From our dedicated tutors to the donors, funders, board members, and partners who make our work possible, we're grateful for your commitment to helping every child become a confident reader. As our funding model continues to evolve, this shared investment ensures we can reach more students, in more places, with the high-quality literacy support they deserve.

FOUNDATION AND CORPORATE SUPPORTERS:

- Arsht-Cannon Fund
- Dollar General Literacy Foundation
- Ellice & Rosa McDonald Foundation
- Fund for Children's Literacy
- Incyte Charitable Giving Foundation
- Laffey-McHugh Foundation
- Longwood Foundation
- M&T Charitable Foundation
- Middle Run Foundation
- Partners in Giving – The Community's Foundation & The Foundation for Delaware County
- PSS Community Collaboration Challenge
- Richard D. Donchian Foundation
- Rotary Club of Wilmington
- Speedway Children's Charities
- Sun East Foundation
- TD Charitable Foundation
- The Anthony and Catherine Fusco Foundation

FUNDING BREAKDOWN (2025-26)



38% Program Fees
35% AmeriCorps
17% Foundation & Corporate
8% Government Sources
2% Individual Giving

I'm grateful as well for organizations like Reading Assist that continue to invest in time, energy, and commitment to support students and their families...and that work happens one student at a time, one classroom at a time, one school and community at a time.

- Cindy Marten, Delaware Secretary of Education

Reading Assist
100 West 10th Street, Suite 910
Wilmington, DE 19801

Help Us Reach More Readers

Every gift helps us bring high-impact literacy support to more students, schools, and communities. As demand grows and our programs expand, your support ensures we can continue reaching the children who need us most.

Many of our supporters give in different ways, but the goal is always the same: ensuring every child learns to read.

DONOR ADVISED FUNDS (DAFs) are one of the most powerful tools for making a lasting impact. If you have a DAF, recommending a grant to **READING ASSIST INSTITUTE (EIN 51-0317415)** is simple, flexible, and one of the most effective ways to sustain Reading Assist's mission.

CLICK OR SCAN THE QR
or visit readingassist.org/donate to join our growing community of supporters.