



EVALUATION REPORT

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Houston Real Men Read: What was the experience of mentors during the sixth year of the program, 2014?

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Houston Real Men Read is chaired by Texas Senator Rodney Ellis and spearheaded by the Houston Independent School District (HISD) Board Trustee Paula M. Harris. Houston Real Men Read is a mentoring program in which men from the Houston community committed one hour, once a month, to read to second, fifth, and seventh-grade students. The program reinforced three fundamental principles: reading is fun, the community cares, and a commitment to education can ensure success. An estimated 200 mentors were assigned to 48 participating schools. This brief was designed to summarize the results from the Houston Real Men Read mentor survey. Responses indicated that overall mentors enjoyed participating in the program. Also, the reading performance of participating schools was higher than the district at second and seventh grades.

Data and Methods

This was the sixth year of the Houston Real Men Read program. The reading dates were November 21 and December 19, 2013, as well as January 16, February 20, and May 15, 2014. During the 2013–2014 school year, an estimated 200 mentors participated in the program at 48 elementary and middle schools. Of these schools, three have participated in the program all six years. There have been a total of 100 campuses that have participated in Houston Real Men Read over the six past years.

Campus representatives were asked to submit the names of their mentors along with their email addresses to HISD’s Library Services. About 52 emails for mentors were collected. Mentors were asked to complete an electronic survey stored on-line using the survey tool, Survey Monkey. A total of 24 mentors completed the survey during May of 2014. This accounted for a 46 percent response rate of those who received the survey. The majority of the mentor respondents (67 percent) were assigned second grade, followed by 42 percent who were assigned fifth grade, and none were assigned to seventh grade (percentages do not total 100 due to mentors who were assigned multiple grade levels). Percentages were based on the total

number of responses. The survey also included open-ended questions.

Results for the Stanford 10 reading subtest were examined at the second, fifth, and seventh grades for participating schools. Specifically, Normal Curve Equivalents (NCEs) were aggregated across the participating schools. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) results on the reading portion were aggregated at the fifth and seventh grades for participating schools. Achievement results for participating schools were compared to the district.

How did mentors hear about the Houston Real Men Read program?

Houston Real Men Read mentors were asked to indicate how they heard about the program. **Figure 1** displays the percent of mentors that heard about the program via a friend, employer or media. The largest percent of mentors (42 percent) heard about the program through a friend, while 29 percent of mentors heard about the program through their employer. Also, four percent of mentors heard about the program through the media. The category “other” included responses, such as church, school librarian and fraternity (25 percent).

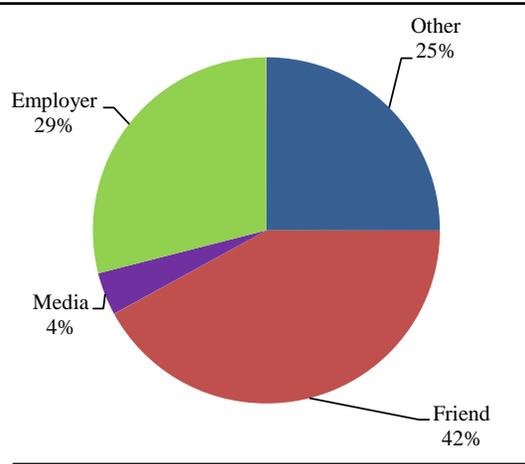


Figure 1. How mentors first heard about the Houston Real Men Read program.

How did mentors rate the various components of the Houston Real Men Read program?

Mentors were asked a series of questions about the various components of the Houston Real Men Read program. **Tables 1a** and **1b** present a comparison of mentor response rates from 2009–2014. In 2014, the majority of mentors rated the following components as “excellent:” welcome by school (88 percent), classroom experience (78 percent), communication from campus representative (67 percent), book selection (52 percent), and

Table 1a. Mentor Survey Response Rates on Components of the Houston Real Men Read Program, 2009–2014

Components	Very Good						Excellent					
	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14
Application Process	32	49	39	52	42	57	31	27	42	32	40	39
Orientation	36	40	36	40	44	57	30	27	41	40	36	39
Book Selection	32	31	39	33	29	30	45	35	41	46	44	52
Timeliness of Book Distribution	29	37	27	31	35	38	36	40	55	50	47	42
Lesson Guides	33	36	33	46	30	46	46	33	50	38	52	46
Communication from Campus Representative	28	16	20	24	24	33	55	70	73	66	69	67
Communication from Central Administration	32	38	24	26	34	41	38	34	44	26	31	50
Welcome by School	19	21	18	26	16	13	77	74	79	73	79	88
Classroom Experience	18	18	20	20	24	22	78	74	79	80	73	78

Note: “Bold” indicates the highest rating for that component by year.

Table 1b. Mentor Survey Response Rates on Components of the Houston Real Men Read Program, 2009–2014

Components	Needs Improvement						Okay					
	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14
Application Process	7	7	0	0	2	0	30	17	20	16	16	4
Orientation	8	7	6	0	5	0	26	26	17	21	15	4
Book Selection	7	8	5	6	12	0	16	26	15	16	16	17
Timeliness of Book Distribution	14	3	3	4	5	8	21	21	15	14	14	13
Lesson Guides	3	7	2	3	2	0	17	25	15	13	16	8
Communication from Campus Representative	7	3	0	3	0	0	10	12	8	7	7	0
Communication from Central Administration	4	5	5	12	9	0	26	23	27	35	26	9
Welcome by School	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	5	3	1	5	0
Classroom Experience	1	3	0	0	1	0	3	5	2	0	2	0

Note: “Bold” indicates the highest rating for that component by year.

communication from central administration (50 percent). Compared to previous years, this was the first time that the book selection was rated as “excellent” by the majority of mentors. HISD’s Department of Library Services made changes to the book selection based on the previous year’s mentor and student survey results. **Table 2** provides a list of the book selections for the 2013–2014 school year.

The program component with the highest percent of mentors rating it as “needs improvement” or “okay” was timeliness of book distribution (21 percent). One of the comments was, “I would like to receive the books prior to the time I will meet with the children. I would like to have enough time to read the books.”

Overall, throughout the six years of the program, the overwhelming majority of mentors have rated all of the program components as “very good” or “excellent.”

How did the mentors describe their experience with the Houston Real Men Read program?

Mentors had an opportunity to describe their experience in the Houston Real Men Read program. There were a total of 24 comments that were all categorized as a “positive experience.” Some of the responses included:

- Wonderful, it is a great opportunity to participate with other like-minded men for the advancement of helping children and

Table 2. HISD Real Men Read Book Selections for the 2013–2014 School Year by Grade

<u>Month</u>	<u>Second Grade</u>	<u>Fifth Grade</u>	<u>Seventh Grade</u>
November	<i>A Cool Drink of Water</i>	<i>My Havana</i>	<i>Heat</i>
December	<i>Tia Isa Wants a Car</i>	<i>The Dreamer</i>	<i>Handbook for Boys</i>
January	<i>Grandma's Gift</i>	<i>Nic Bishop's Spiders</i>	<i>Face to Face with Sharks</i>
February	<i>Not Norman</i>	<i>Bud, Not Buddy</i>	<i>The Jumping Tree</i>
May	<i>My Name is Yoon</i>	<i>Broken Bike Boy and the Queen of 23rd St.</i>	<i>Esperanza Rising</i>

taking an active part in their lives.

- My experience has been nothing less than a positive life changing event. I have a better appreciation for teachers and their challenges. I feel like I have the ability to inspire a child or help bring brightness to their day.
- To sum up my experience: The Real Men Read program has a certain 'feel good' factor for all, but what I personally find the most gratifying is seeing the first-hand evolutionary development of the children's reading skills and the boost of confidence while reading.

Mentors were also asked "Do you plan on volunteering as a mentor for the Real Men Read program next school year?" Approximately, 79 percent indicated "yes," eight percent "maybe," and 13 percent "no." **Figure 2** shows the number of years that surveyed mentors have volunteered in the Houston Real Men Read program. Most of the mentors indicated that this was their first time to volunteer in the program (33 percent). About 29 percent had volunteered

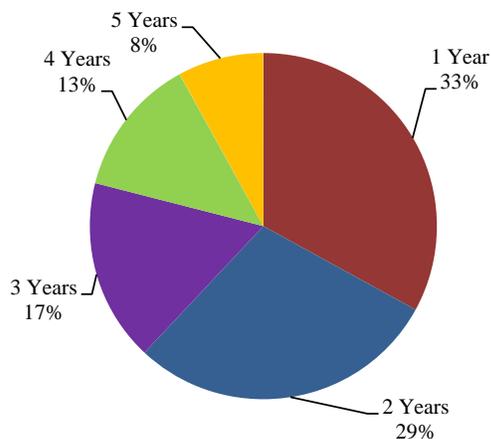


Figure 2. Number of years mentors have volunteered in the Houston Real Men Read program.

for two years; 17 percent for three years, 13 percent had volunteered four years, and eight percent for five years. None of the respondents had volunteered all six years of the program. All of the mentors stated that they would recommend others to participate in the Houston Real Men Read program. Lastly, mentors were asked, "Has your participation in the Real Men Read program encouraged you to increase your involvement in other volunteer opportunities at your current campus or another campus?" Thirty-eight percent stated "yes," 46 percent "maybe," and 17 percent "no."

What were the reading results of participating schools?

Table 3 shows the aggregated 2014 STAAR reading results for Houston Real Men Read campuses compared to the district for fifth and seventh grades. Specifically, the percent met satisfactory under phase-in 1 standards and the percent who met advanced standards were presented. There was no difference in the percent of students who met satisfactory performance between Houston Real Men Read campuses and the district in fifth grade. There was a one percentage point difference between Houston Real Men Read campuses and the district for the percent met advanced standard in favor of HISD at fifth grade. Approximately, 74 percent of seventh-grade students at Houston Real Men Read campuses met the satisfactory standard compared to 67 percent for the district. Also, a higher percent of seventh-grade students at Houston Real Men Read campuses (20 percent) met the advanced standard compared to the district (16 percent).

Table 3. STAAR Reading Results for Houston Real Men Read (HRMR) Campuses compared to the District, 2014

<u>Grades</u>	<u>% Satisfactory</u>		<u>% Advanced</u>	
	<u>HRMR</u>	<u>HISD</u>	<u>HRMR</u>	<u>HISD</u>
5	68	68	15	16
7	74	67	20	16

Source: Data Warehouse

Table 4 shows the Stanford 10 reading results for Houston Real Men Read campuses and the district for second, fifth, and seventh grades. Specifically, the National Percentile Rank (NPR) and Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) scores were presented. At second grade, Houston Real Men Read campuses had a mean NCE of 43 compared to 42 for the district. At fifth grade, there was no difference in performance for Houston Real Men Read campuses compared to the district. Performance on the reading subtest at seventh grade showed that Houston Real Men Read campuses had a higher mean NCE than HISD. **Figure 3** shows the percent at or above the 50th percentile. Approximately, 41 percent of seventh-grade students at a Houston Real Men Read campus scored at or above the 50th NPR compared to 35 percent for the district.

Conclusions

Survey results indicated that mentors enjoyed participating in the Houston Real Men Read program. This was evident in that the majority of mentors plan on participating in the program

Table 4. Stanford 10 Reading Results for Houston Real Men Read (HRMR) Campuses compared to the District, 2014

<u>Grades</u>	<u>NCE</u>		<u>NPR</u>	
	<u>HRMR</u>	<u>HISD</u>	<u>HRMR</u>	<u>HISD</u>
2	43	42	37	36
5	43	43	37	37
7	46	42	42	34

Source: Data Warehouse

Percent At or Above 50th NPR Stanford 10 Reading

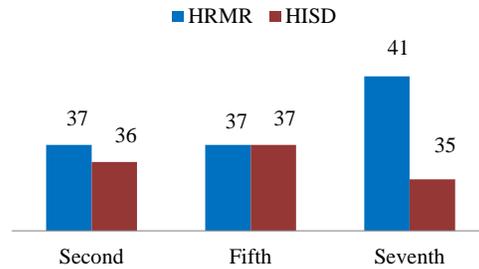


Figure 3. Percent At or Above 50th NPR Stanford 10 Reading.

during the next school year. Also, the majority of the program components were highly rated by mentors. The HISD Library Services Department made updates to the book selection to reflect the reading interests of students surveyed during the 2012–2013 school year. These updates may have been an influence in the majority of the mentors rating the book selection as “excellent.” Mentors did indicate that they would like to receive the books prior to the reading dates. Program personnel may want to consider ordering book sets for mentors to distribute during the orientation so schools could pass out the book sets during the first reading.

Achievement data suggest some impact of mentoring at seventh grade; however, it is difficult to draw conclusions based on overall performance at the campus. The Houston Real Men Read program is a mentoring program that functions to create a culture of reading, community involvement, and positive male role models with regards to reading. Survey results from the previous school year showed that students enjoyed having men from the community give their time to read to them.

For additional information contact the HISD Department of Research and Accountability at 713-556-6700 or e-mail Research@Houstonisd.org.