Reading by Third
Evaluation the University of Florida Lastinger Initiative in Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester Counties

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Executive Summary

In the Spring of 2017 Trident United Way submitted a request for proposal (RFP) to the four school districts in the Tri-County area: Berkeley County, Charleston, Dorchester Two and Dorchester Four. The intent of this RFP was to fund a three-year demonstration project aimed at improving third grade reading proficiency. In April 2017 TUW received two proposals from the four school districts all intending to contract with the Lastinger Center at the University of Florida, Zucker School of Education. The University of Florida Lastinger Initiative (UFLI) is an ongoing effort by UF faculty and students to improve literacy outcomes for struggling readers. UFLI began in 1998 as a tutoring model for struggling beginning readers. After a decade of results based primarily on teacher interviews and difference of means comparisons, the Lastinger Initiative now encompasses a range of literacy projects from K-12, centered primarily on teacher professional development.

Three school districts, Berkeley, Dorchester Two and Dorchester Four submitted a joint proposal to TUW that utilized the standard UFLI intervention model. This model begins by identifying struggling readers in grades K-2. Utilizing the intervention in K-2, the goal is to have students reading on the third grade level by the end of grade two. This intervention instructs teachers in a specific pedagogical approach to be used first one-on-one with struggling readers, then in a small-group setting (3-4 students). Charleston County School District submitted a proposal aimed at working with students in three and four year old pre-Kindergarten courses. This proposal did not seek the traditional UFLI intervention; rather it sought to engage in an early literacy content clinic and a community of practice workshop. This form of intervention is a scaled version of

the community of practice intervention typically provided by Lastinger to principals, combined with a more in-depth focus on the early literacy training provided in the traditional UFLI model.

Teacher Satisfaction

All of the teachers surveyed stated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the training they received and with the implementation of the program. A common refrain was that their ability to be in control of their students' learning and their students' growth was motivational for them. One example of this that was provided recounted an English Language Learner student what began at a level A-1 (non-reader) and in three months was at a DRA level 10 (mid-first grade capability).

Teachers were initially reluctant towards the intervention but over the course of the first nine-weeks of school bought into the technique and began to promote the Lastinger Initiative to their colleagues – so much so that requested attendance for the year two training outstripped the available seats. Teachers formed a community of practice around the Lastinger Intervention. In discussions with District staff and with the Lastinger Trainers, both recounted the support that teachers provided to each other and how the level of buy-in and pride in performance increased among the Lastinger trained teachers.

Challenges to the Evaluation

Challenges existed from a data collection and an implementation standpoint. All of the districts faced challenges in finding time to implement the one-on-one sessions. In the first quarterly meeting of 2017-2018 Dorchester District Two and Berkeley County School District volunteered some strategies they used to address these challenges.

These included pulling students from related arts/computer lab to conduct one-on-one trainings or having a colleague take over their class while they conducted a one-on-one session with a student. The district representatives reiterated that while the teachers found it difficult to fit the sessions into their schedules, they nonetheless were eager to engage in the UFLI sessions. When asked about this, the representatives responded that the teachers felt that they were empowered with regards to how to teach their students and that the success they saw in their students was motivating for them.

Challenges in data collection included willingness or ability of the districts to provide socioeconomic data on students, i.e. WIC, TANF, Medicaid status. Given the known effects of poverty on educational outcomes this makes it difficult to provide accurate feedback as to the success of the program since we cannot control for socioeconomic priors that are known to affect educational outcomes. To address this, the author reached out to the South Carolina Department of Education about providing student level poverty data.

A second challenge for data collection was in the consistency of the tests used for assessments. State testing requirements left the districts with multiple options, so coordination was key to collecting measures that were comparable across all districts. The districts initially stated that they would all conduct the DRA-2 assessments along with the TOWRE-2 assessment. The South Carolina State Department of Education changed requirements from DRA-2 to KRA as the kindergarten assessment prior to the beginning of the 2017-18 academic year, leaving districts with a choice of which test to administer.

The lack of consistency in the exams does not hinder the ability to evaluate changes in student reading since all districts administered exams aimed at measuring the ability to read informational text. The lack of consistency does hinder the ability to determine the depth of student learning since informational text scores do not provide information on automaticity in student reading, i.e. whether reading was an automated response or whether students were simply able to read, but with increased levels of effort.

Fidelity of Implementation

The fidelity with which the teachers implemented the trainings in their classes was assessed using both self-evaluation and peer evaluations. Self-evaluations occurred on a semi-monthly basis using a 19 question (binomial – yes/no) instrument created by Lastinger to address the teacher's use of the UFLI model. The same instrument was used by peers to evaluate the teachers as well. Peer evaluations were conducted quarterly with one evaluation by another Lastinger-trained teacher and one by an Interventionist. It soon became apparent that this method of addressing fidelity of implementation did not provide useful feedback because teachers did not behave the way they normally would when not being monitored. Additionally, teachers stated that they felt as though they were being inspected for errors rather than provided instruction for improvement. To address this, the Lastinger trainers determined that it would be most useful to engage in less intrusive monitoring sessions. This means the teachers were recoded – typically using a smartphone camera and the lesson was uploaded to a shared and encrypted website. The Lastinger trainers then provided feedback to the

teachers and offered suggestions for improvement, modifications of techniques, and general feedback on the lessons.

General Findings

Each of the districts met the required training and reporting requirements. Student growth coefficients equate to between 0.025[1] and 0.445 additional grade-levels of growth on the Developmental Reading Assessment – 2nd Edition (DRA-2). These coefficients are effects on other remediation efforts and a student's prior performance respectively. This corresponds to approximately an additional half-year of growth, e.g. if a 2nd grade student whose prior performance predicted that they should be reading at mid-year 1st grade received the intervention, then they would end up reading at Spring 1st grade/Fall 2nd grade level. There were no statistically significant effects for Dorchester Four given that performance among non-remediation students is still relatively low.

In CCSD the early literacy and community of practice model showed corresponding increases in the probability that students were in their upper performance quartiles in Sound Recognition and Object Naming of 2.5% and 17%. This is in conjunction with decreases in the probability that students would be in the bottom quartile of performance of 16% and 23% respectively.

Dorchester District Two
Dorchester Two trained 31 teachers, administrators and reading coaches. This is below the district's projection of 36 individuals. These individuals accounted for 256 students which is below the anticipated student count of 380. The teachers were provided with

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[1] This coefficient is based on performance of remediation students in second grade only, e.g. Dorchester District Two's intervention model.

six days of training and four additional virtual follow-ups sessions. 100% of the teachers

attended at least 80% of the trainings in compliance with the grant.

- UFLI has a multiplicative effect on other remediation activities
- Without UFLI students lose 0.031 Spring points for every minute/week of remediation
- With UFLI, students gain 0.025 Spring point for every minute/week of remediation.
- Average minutes/week = 148, e.g. an 8.29 point difference.

Berkeley County School District

Berkeley trained 20 teachers accounting for 415 students, e.g. a 20.75: 1

teacher-student ratio of UFLI teachers to remediation students. BCSD did not sign a

data sharing agreement and memorandum of understanding until April of 2018.

Therefore, no annual targets were set for year one. Each of these teachers participated

in 9 in-person and virtual trainings. 100% of the teachers attended at-least 80% of the

trainings offered, in compliance with the grant requirements.

- Fall scores are strongest predictor of Spring scores
- Without UFLI, remediation students gain 0.309 Spring points for every Fall point.
- With UFLI, remediation students gain 0.405 Spring point for every minute/week of remediation.
- This means up to an additional 3 points or ½ grade level due to UFLI

Dorchester District Four

Dorchester Four trained 17 teachers and administrators in the UFLI model. This

accounted for 220 students, e.g. a 12.9: 1 teacher to student ratio for UFLI trained

teachers and remediation students. Each of these teachers participated in seven in-

person trainings. 100% of the teachers rated the training and implementation as

effective or highly effective. 100% of the teachers attended at-least 80% of the trainings

offered, in compliance with the grant requirements.

There was not a statistically significant difference in RIT performance between

UFLI remediation students and traditional students, e.g. the performance of students receiving UFLI is not distinguishable from their non-remediation peers. There was a statistically significant difference between remediation students were not in UFLI.

Charleston

CCSD trained 15 paraprofessionals and child development 13 teachers accounting for 294 students. This does not approach the projections provided by CCSD of 576 student and 123 teachers and paraprofessionals. The district's not meeting this target is addressed herein and does not present a concern for the ability of the district to fulfill the terms of the grant. Each of the teachers were provided with 11 days of training and three virtual follow up sessions. 100% of the teachers attended at least 80% of the trainings in compliance with the grant requirements.

Only effects for teacher knowledge are in the Naming and Sound component of MyIGDIs

Naming Component

- As teacher knowledge increases the probability that a student is at Upper Quartile increases by 17%
- There is also a decrease in the probability that students will be at Lower Quartile or Median of 16%, e.g. even student at the bottom quartile are progressing into the top quartile.

Sound Component

- As teacher knowledge increases the probability that a student is at Upper Quartile increases by 2.5%
- There is a 23% decrease in students being in the Lowest Quartile and a 9.4% increase in students being in the Median.
- *In general, the largest movement is one level up.*

There were significant effects from both poverty and parental education with students in poverty performing on average 1.928 points worse than their peers. This is an effect that is significantly larger than the effect size of UFLI save UFLI and significant (at least an additional hour) of remediation activities per week. Parental education contributed approximately 1.5 points to a student's final DRA-2 score. This means that a

student whose mother holds a graduate degree performs on average 6 points higher than a student whose mother did not finish high school.
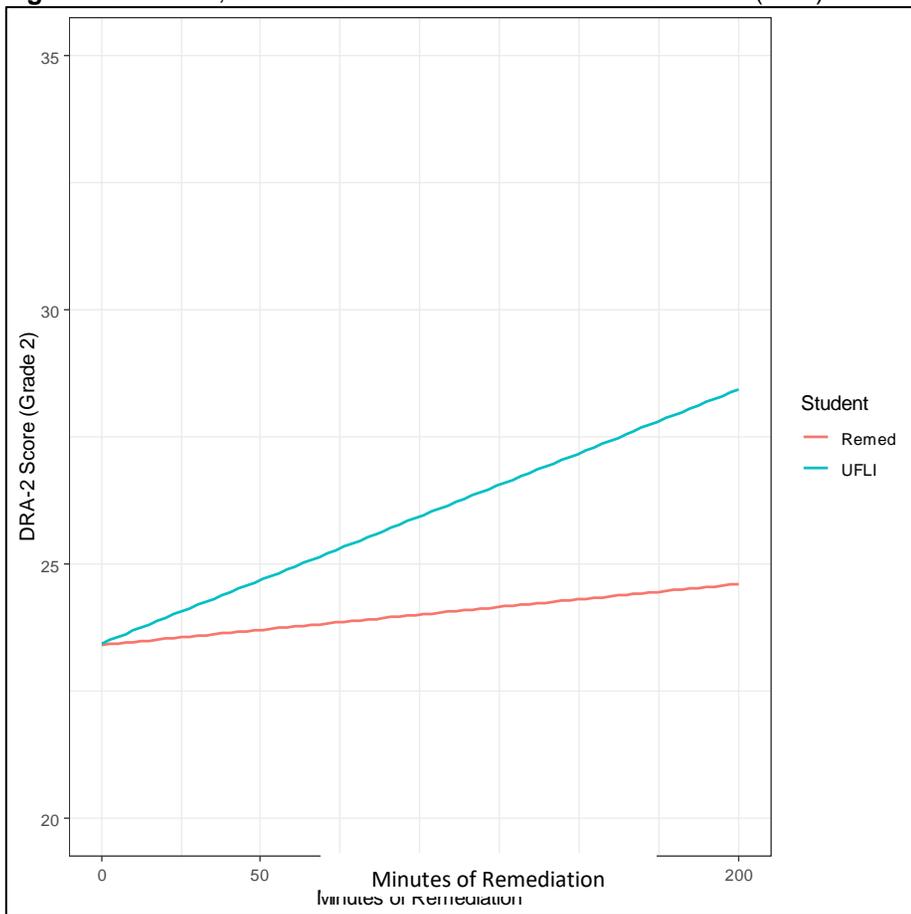
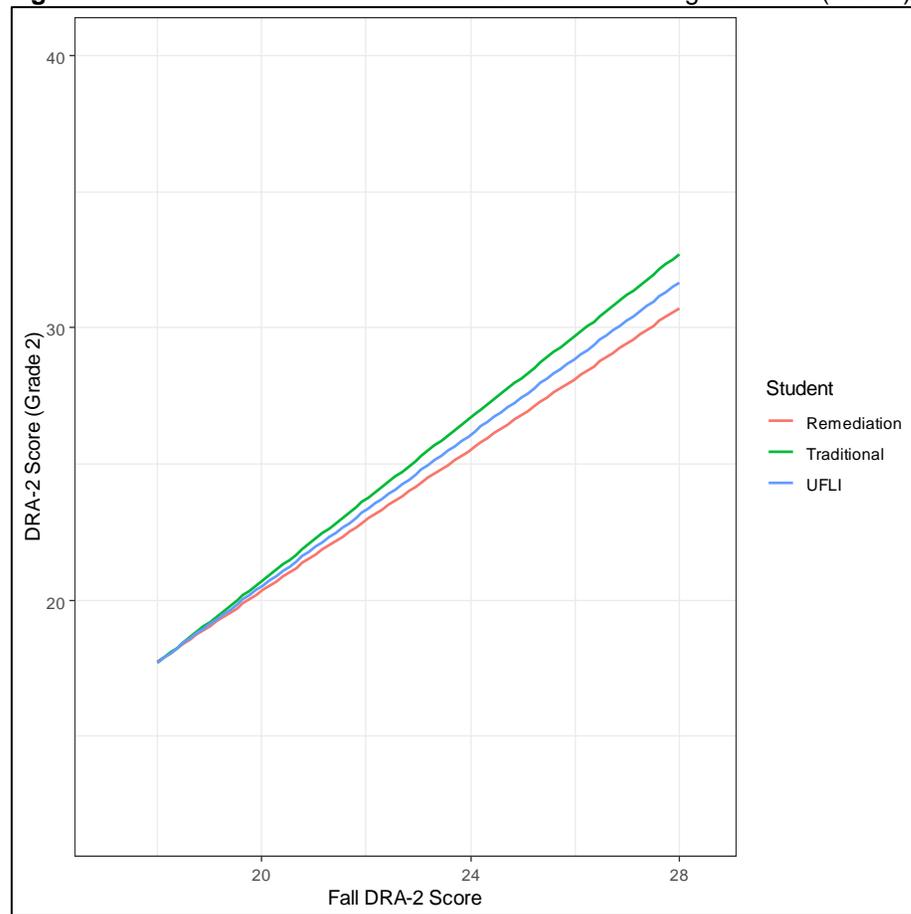**Figure E1.** Probability of Being at Level on Naming Scores
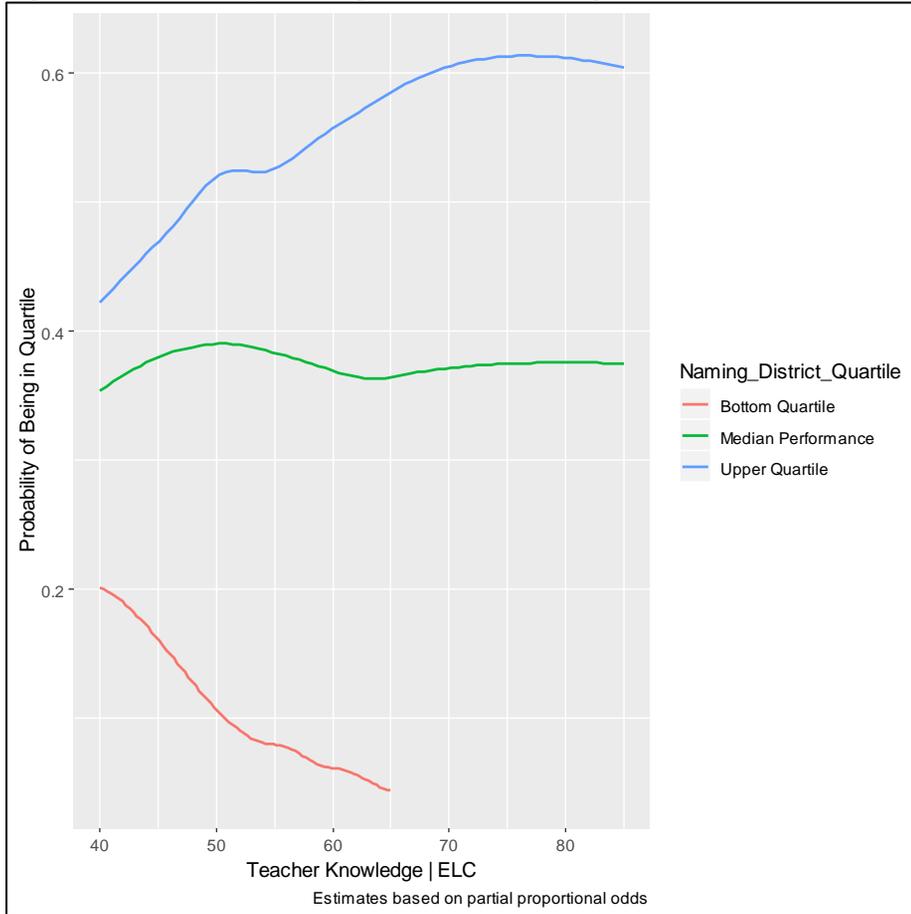
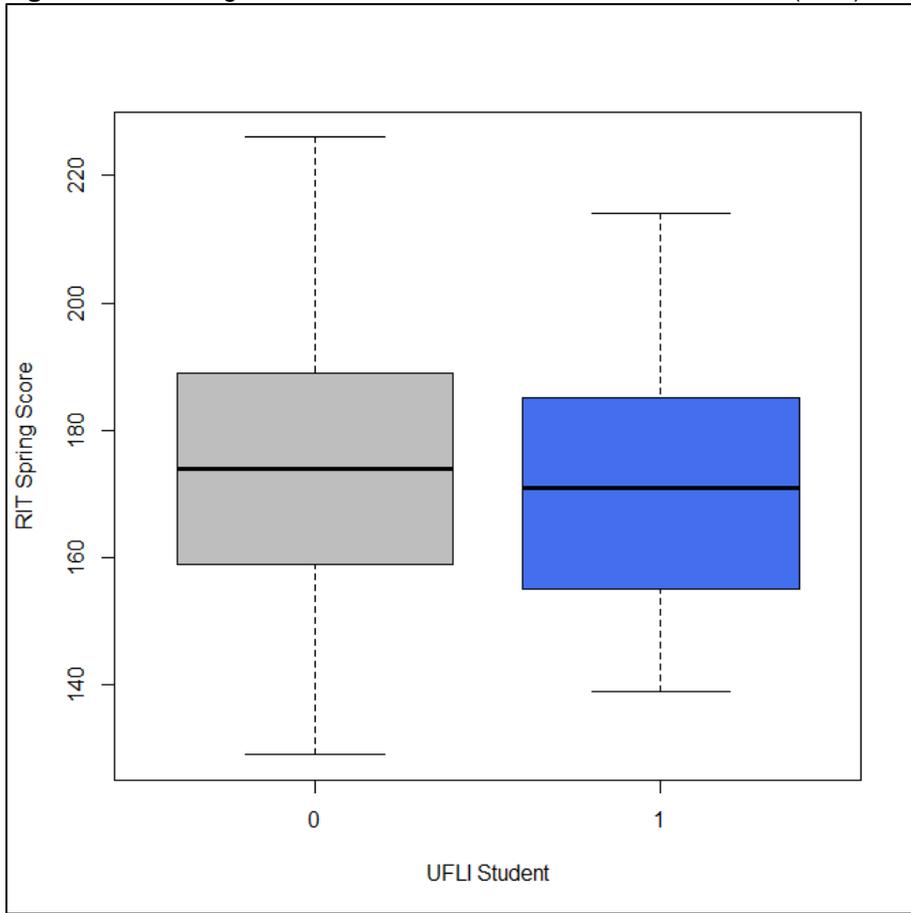**Figure E2.** Probability of being at level on Naming Scores
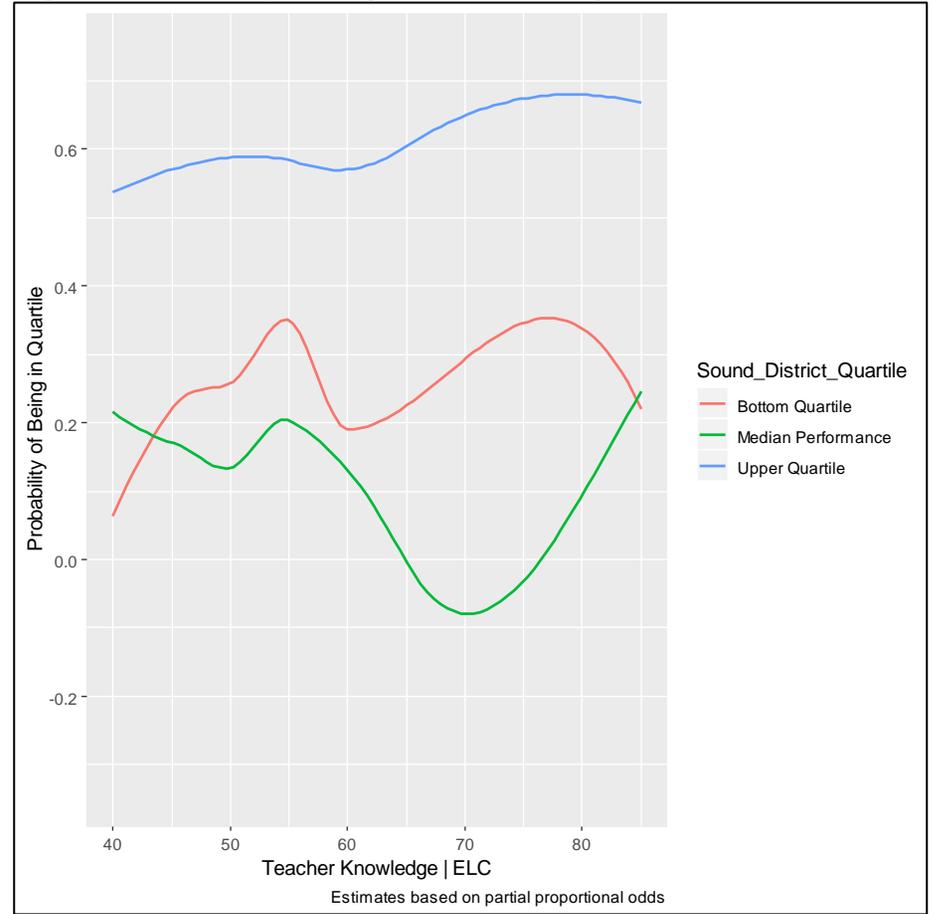
Figure E3. DRA-2, Second Graders & UFLI Remedial Students (DD2)

Figure E4. DRA-2 Performance for UFLI Student & Average Student (BCSD)

x

Figure E5. Reading Informational Text Score for UFLI & Non-UFLI (DD4)

Figure E6. Lexile Scores for UFLI and Non-UFLI students (DD4)