

Teaching literacy: Fulfilling, exciting

Written by Tiffany Renando Special to Insight News
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I have spent the last ten months of my life in a flurry of excitement. I spent this past school year working with kids at Sheridan Global Arts and helping them learn. I have to admit, it's tough to sustain such a level of excitement when you know that your responsibility is to change lives. I watched children who could barely speak English on the first day of school grow to be successful readers by the end of the year. I helped kindergarteners with no experience with letters become readers. These things happened, in part, because I was there as a literacy tutor. I watched these kids grow daily, feeling so blessed that I could be a part of their growth and success. This flurry of excitement and amazement at the impact of being a literacy tutor wouldn't have happened without the Minnesota Reading Corps.

There are a lot of big problems in our world, and it can be overwhelming to think about what we can do about it. It is a lot easier to not think, not worry and not act. Last year, however, I was too bothered by Minnesota's achievement gap to not do anything. When I heard that nearly one in

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five third graders in Minnesota is failing to reach basic levels of literacy, I was shocked. That's 13,000 children each year who aren't reading at grade level and who are not on track for future success in learning. I loved reading as a child, and I couldn't believe that this was such a huge issue. So, I joined Minnesota Reading Corps as a full-time literacy tutor.

The program is seeing results. It saw 80% of its successfully exited students pass the standardized reading assessment. This surpasses the statewide pass rate of 78%! They are expanding to place more than 1,000 literacy tutors like me this August. This past school year the program reached approximately 20,000 students with 780 tutors. Imagine what the Minnesota Reading Corps will achieve this coming school year with its expanded corps in 600 sites across Minnesota, including in North and Northeast Minneapolis. In addition, its sister program Minnesota Math Corps will nearly double to more than 100 math tutors. Tutors work individually, in pairs or in small groups to implement research-based strategies to help catch kids up to grade level. Of course, these programs can only achieve when people like you, neighbors, grandparents, parents, college students, or even just someone looking to make a difference, apply. So give it a try, after all, the life you change just might be your own. Learn more about full-time positions at www.MinnesotaReadingCorps.org or www.MinnesotaMathCorps.org

Tiffany Renando served this year as a Minnesota Reading Corps literacy tutor at Sheridan Global Arts school.