

vello

IMPACT REPORT

IN-SCHOOL, DISTANCE, & SUMMER LEARNING

2019-2020

OUR PURPOSE

Vello offers students personalized reading tutoring sessions with a United Way volunteer. All tutoring sessions occur in a virtual environment allowing students and volunteers to read together without having to leave their classroom or workplace. Vello is grounded in the research-based practice of guided reading with a focus on fostering relationships that nurture and celebrate students' reading skills and progress. We prioritize student growth toward proficiency and seek to instill a lifelong love for reading.

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Vello is designed to yield specific outcomes based on our tutoring approach. These outcomes are most directly aimed at improving students' reading skills (i.e., fluency, accuracy, prosody, vocabulary, comprehension) and their overall engagement in reading activities such as asking questions and making connections. In addition, Vello is designed to directly improve volunteer engagement. As such, Vello impacts a total of six proximal outcomes.

Vello is further designed to improve instructional motivation of tutored students and their peers. For teachers, Vello offers improved lesson planning support. We are also interested in supporting parental engagement in their child's reading progress. As such, Vello impacts a total of four intermediate outcomes.

By way of our proximal and intermediate outcomes, Vello also seeks to affect two distal outcomes related to students' independent reading and growth mindset. The latter concept represents the most recent expansion of our theory of change. That is, we seek to instill a mindset that everyone can "get smarter" through extra time and hard work.

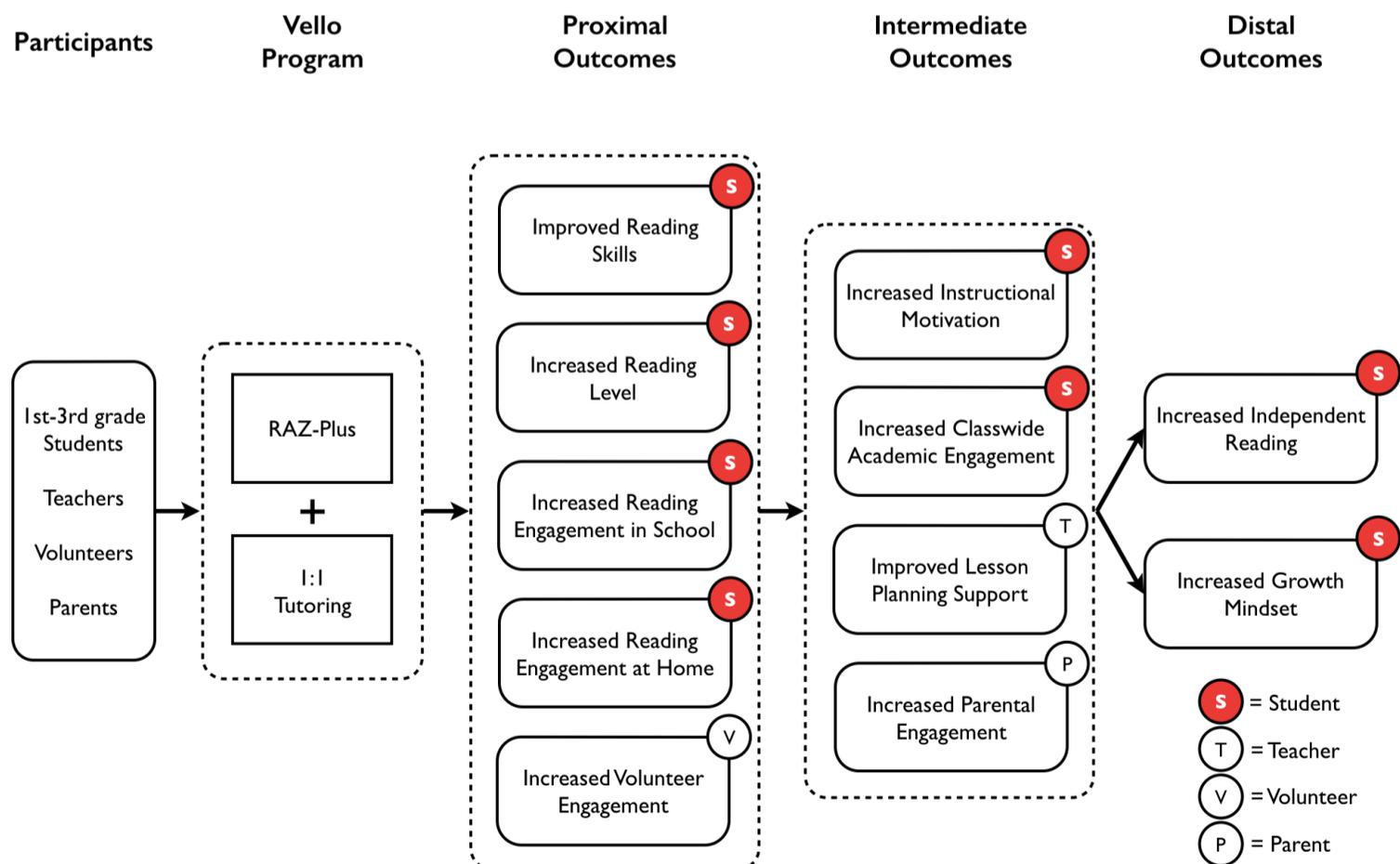


Figure 1. Theory of change developed by Alexander Kurz, PhD.

OUR PROGRAM

Vello consists of one-on-one tutoring and Learning A-Z's blended learning platform Raz-Plus. The Raz-Plus platform provides students, volunteers, teachers, and parents access to over 50,000 online resources including leveled books, lesson plans, activity sheets, and quizzes for each book. Our teachers have further access to online, data-driven reports that show individual and classwide activity and performance. Our tutoring program includes a teacher and volunteer curriculum and an all-in-one computer station for running Vello (or the new Vello App for connecting on personal devices - new in '20).

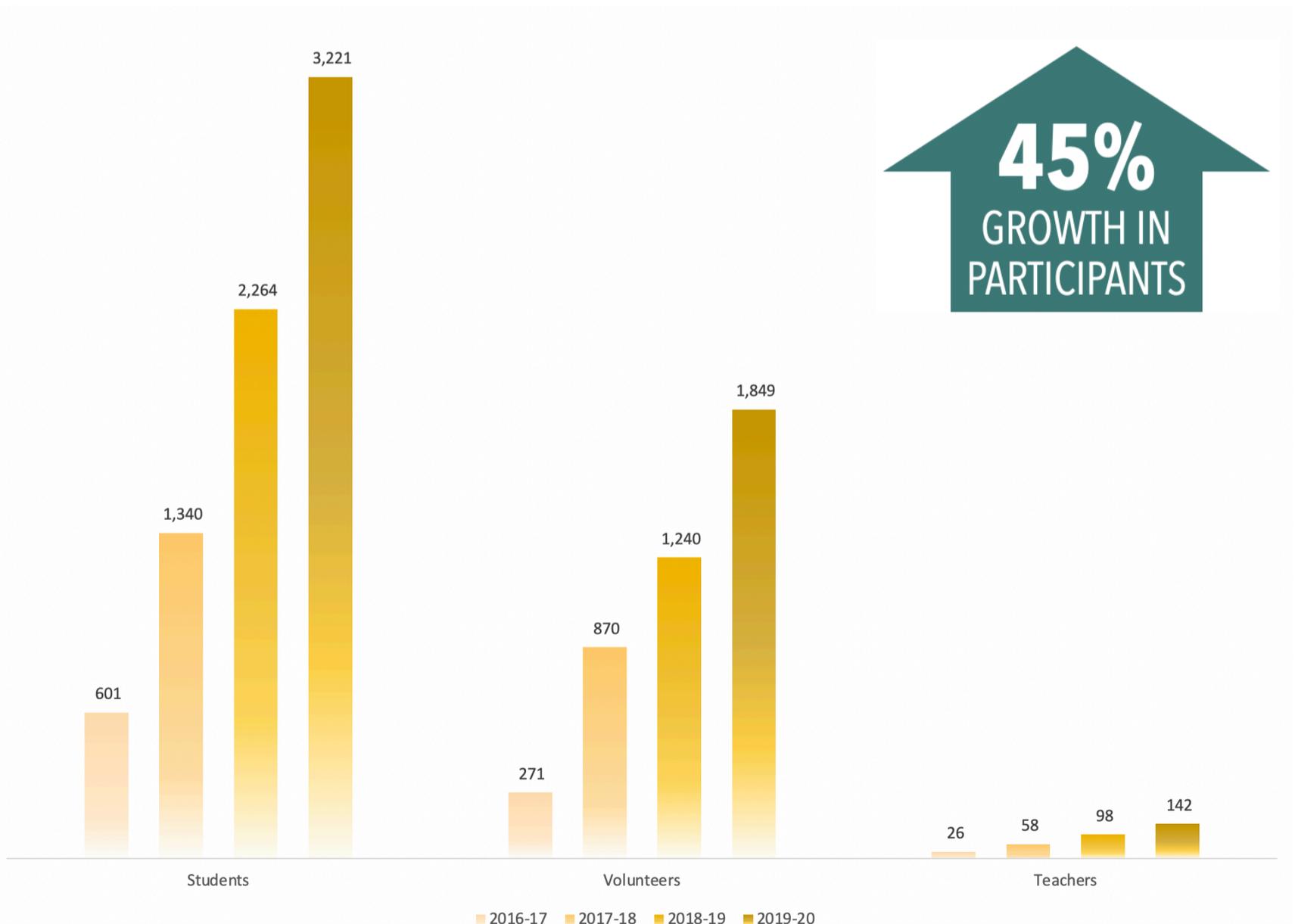
"One of my students was graphing his reading fluency scores and noticed that his scores had gone up. He pointed to the lower scores on the graph and said, 'these scores were before VELLO' and then pointed to his increased scores and said, 'this is with VELLO'. My kiddos love VELLO!"

Vello Teacher, Phoenix, AZ

Students typically receive two 30-minute tutoring sessions per week. Our online portal assists teachers and volunteers with training and scheduling. During a Vello session, students and volunteers connect with each other to explore the story's main ideas, characters, and plot lines.

OUR REACH

The 2019-20 school year was our fourth year of implementation. We expanded our reach to 16 communities across 13 states. We more than doubled our corporate partners, sponsors, and volunteer organizations to 136



supporting 1,849 volunteers who delivered nearly 125,000 minutes of tutoring. That's approximately 1.7 school years of reading tutoring based on six and a half hours a day for 180 days a year (about 1,170 hours).

We further experienced consistent growth in numbers across all participant categories. Our student numbers increased by 26% to 3,221 students, our volunteer numbers increased by 49% to 1,849 volunteers, and our teacher numbers increased by 45% to 142 teachers. Our student numbers represent all students in participating classrooms, because the benefits of Vello extend to tutored and non-tutored students.

ADAPTING TO A PANDEMIC

The global spread of COVID-19 brought new challenges to an already strained public education system. Our team adjusted quickly during the initial weeks of the pandemic to assess the needs of our school and community partners through surveys and direct outreach. We worked with teachers and other stakeholders to transition together into a distance learning format, and maintain Vello 1:1 reading sessions where capabilities existed. The Digital Divide became more evident as learning moved away from the school setting. Vello was drastically impacted by the reality of the situation. Access to internet and individual devices inhibited students from engaging in vital learning capabilities, thus many local United Ways formed local plans to support device distribution and internet connectivity.

Vello supported distance learning from March to May and then launched a COVID-19 Summer Response to assess how a new Vello model outside of a traditional school setting would work going forward. The Pilot included participants from Phoenix, Philadelphia, and Regina, Saskatchewan in Canada. The new approach focused on developing best practices for virtual reading sessions anywhere a student or volunteer could be, while maintaining safety/security, reading outcomes, a positive experience with Vello's functional elements, and scalability in the years ahead. Moreover, the Pilot positioned data outcomes against known Summer Slide research and the emerging research behind "Covid Slide" that is estimated to have caused a learning loss of nearly 50% from the '19-'20 school year (NWEA, 2020).

As local United Ways prepare for the new school year and Vello's role in the many learning environments, the new 'Vello Distance Learning' or 'Vello Anywhere!' approach will be the primary mode for delivery. Volunteers can be anywhere with an internet-connected device (as always), students can be anywhere with an internet-connected device and the new Vello App, and teachers are able to maintain progress monitoring and leverage resources provided by the Raz-Plus teacher suite.

"I just want to express my gratitude and the significance of your program for my grandchildren. I have seen improvement in confidence and reading techniques in both of my grandkids that participated. One grandchild has always complained, "I don't know how to read," but with your support I recognize that is not true. She just lacks confidence. I will continue to encourage her to empower reading and hopefully continue to strengthen her confidence."

Vello Parent, Philadelphia, PA

IN-SCHOOL & DISTANCE LEARNING

For the traditional in-person school year, which lasted from August 2019 through February 2020, 121 teachers across the nation engaged a cohort of 2,496 elementary school students in 87,648 books, 122,643 quizzes, and 12,845 hours of Learning A-Z reading tutoring resources—the equivalent of 214 full days of reading-related work.

With the commencement of distance learning following the global spread of COVID-19, 117 teachers continued with a cohort of 1,908 elementary school students and engaged them in 25,006 books, 35,470 quizzes, and 4,994 hours of Learning A-Z reading tutoring resources—the equivalent of 41 full days of reading-related work.

Despite an unprecedented pandemic, Vello was able to help students engage in over 100,000 reading opportunities delivering over 250 full days of fun-filled reading activities during otherwise challenging times. Based on a subsample who received progress monitoring ($n = 377$), students grew an average of 2.3 reading levels on the RAZ-Plus leveled reading chart indicating mastery of over 180 books. Correlations between RAZ-Plus reading levels and other popular measures can be found here: <https://www.raz-plus.com/learninga-z-levels/level-correlation-chart/>



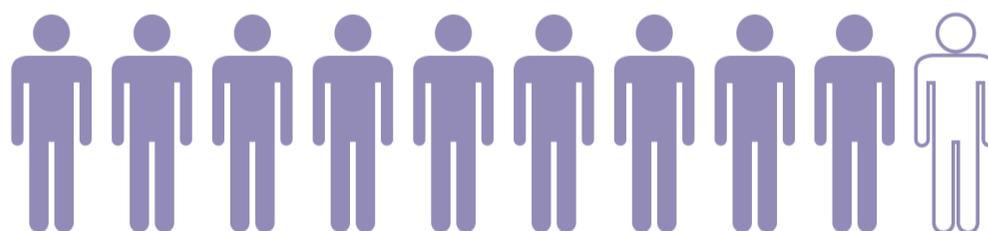
COVID-19 SUMMER RESPONSE

Between the summer months of June and August, 68 volunteers in Phoenix engaged a cohort of 171 elementary school students in 171 hours of intensive 1:1 reading tutoring. On average, each student in our summer cohort received 1 full day of reading tutoring through Vello. Through the dedicated work of our volunteers, the Phoenix cohort completed 342 guided reading sessions.

For subset of students who received regular progress monitoring, our volunteers in Phoenix engaged 32 elementary school students in 8,966 minutes of intensive 1:1 reading tutoring. On average, each student in our intensive summer cohort received 4.7 full days of reading tutoring through Vello. Through the dedicated work of our volunteers, the Phoenix cohort completed 464 guided reading sessions, 766 quizzes, and gained an average of 0.25 reading levels.

PARENT FEEDBACK

A total of 24 parents provided feedback about Vello's COVID-19 Summer Response. Our parents viewed Vello as having had a positive impact on a child's reading engagement: (a) 71% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that Vello improved their child's interest in reading books at home; (b) 71% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that Vello improved their child's frequency of reading books at home; (c) 79% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that Vello improved their child's ability to make connections between different books; and (d) 79% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that Vello improved their child's general excitement about books.



9 out of 10 parents agreed or strongly agreed that Vello **should be continued** during the school year.

In addition, parents viewed Vello as an overall positive program for their child: (a) 88% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that Vello has been a valuable experience for their child; (b) 92% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that Vello is a program they'd like to see continued for their child during the school year; (c) 79% of

parents agreed or strongly agreed that Vello has been a helpful program for connecting with the community; and (d) 79% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that Vello has made them curious about learning more about other learning opportunities offered through United Way.

OUR FUTURE

We are excited to announce that Vello is poised to enter into 15 new local communities and expand to a full international version in Canada. The new distance learning approach has unlocked the full potential of Vello by increasing the amount of students that can be served under a single Vello deployment, thus increasing the number of volunteer potential and 1-1 reading opportunities. Our team is working diligently to meet the needs of our partners through Vello Portal enhancements that strengthen cybersecurity without disrupting the efficiency of virtual connection. And the Vello App will benefit students and parents by creating a one-click entry point to join a reading session and access e-books. Together, United Way and its partners are expanding the world of possibilities for communities across the world. Now, let's read!.

YOUR IMPACT

We encourage you take an active step toward supporting the reading success of a child in your community. Get involved as a Vello volunteer through your local United Way, bring Vello to your workplace or school, or learn more about what United Way is doing to mobilize the caring power of your community.

Reid DeSpiegelaere, Vello National Director

Valley of the Sun United Way
3200 E Camelback Rd Ste 375
Phoenix, AZ 85018-2318
480.450.9043



Report prepared



Educational Consulting Firm
Research & Evaluation | Continuous Improvement | Data Visualization

by: