

**A Feasible Evaluation Plan for BRYTE**  
**(Brown Refugee Youth Tutoring and Enrichment)**

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**Prepared for BRYTE**

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## **Introduction**

While all immigrants face challenges after moving to the United States, refugees face unique stresses stemming from the circumstances of their previous lives. This is why support services for refugees, and the children of refugees in particular, are especially important. Brown Refugee Youth Tutoring and Enrichment (BRYTE) is a student-led program at Brown University that provides tutoring and mentoring to refugee families that have recently relocated to Providence.

This evaluation proposes to examine one process-related question:

- How much time do tutors spend with students?

Working with BRYTE, we have also identified three main outcome questions that this evaluation will examine:

- Does the program improve participants' English proficiency?
- Does the program improve participants' academic performance in school?
- Does the program improve participants' self-esteem, self-confidence, and cultural literacy?

The evaluation is designed to be implemented with the limited resources of the BRYTE program and includes formative elements that can help provide feedback to individual tutors, shaping their instruction over the course of the school year. In addition, there are summative measures that help examine how students progress on the outcomes that BRYTE has identified as important.

## **About BRYTE**

Brown Refugee Youth Tutoring and Enrichment is a student-led program at Brown University that provides one-on-one, in-home tutoring to refugee families that have recently relocated to Rhode Island. BRYTE partners with the International Institute of Rhode Island (IIRI) and the Swearer Center for Public Service at Brown University. The International Institute's Refugee Resettlement department helps match refugee families with BRYTE. IIRI's most recent factsheet noted that it served 626 refugees last year; about 150 to 200 are settled each year, and about 450 are provided case management and employment support services on an ongoing basis (International Institute Rhode Island, 2012).

Refugee families come from a variety of countries across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, including Iraq, Rwanda, and Nepal (Brown Refugee Youth Tutoring and Enrichment, 2011). The BRYTE program serves about 125 students in 50 families, which is a significant portion of the recently arrived refugee community (Brown Refugee Youth Tutoring and Enrichment, 2011). Over half of BRYTE participants are in elementary school with the remainder enrolled in secondary school. The program does, however, serve some adults.

The goal of BRYTE is to develop English language skills and cultural fluency, while creating relationships that are meaningful and enlightening for both the student and the tutor. Volunteers spend at least three hours per week with students, assisting in homework, building language

skills, and taking part in activities. While the refugee participants are the focus of the program, BRYTE hopes to foster reciprocal learning that will help both tutor and student learn about each other's cultures and lives. (See the appendix for BRYTE's logic model.)

BRYTE also coordinates activities outside of its tutoring program. These include a six-week summer camp, where students participate in field trips and activities that aim to help them explore and increase their comfort level in Providence. Several times per school year, participants and tutors in the BRYTE program take part in community events, such as arts and crafts fairs and trick-or-treating. BRYTE also has a commitment to art and includes art projects and showcases as part of its community events and summer camps.

## **Reviewing the Literature on Refugees**

The refugee population is a large group with unique needs. According to Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services (BRYCS), a national organization committed to refugee child welfare, 1.8 million refugees have been invited to live in the United States since the passage of the 1980 Refugee Act, which formalized the process and criteria for refugee status. The number of refugees arriving in the United States typically falls between 40,000 and 75,000. These are people who do not leave their homes by choice, and are usually forced out because of the threat of violence and human rights abuses (McBrien, 2003, p. 77). As the IIRI notes, these are "some of the most vulnerable people on the planet" (International Institute Rhode Island, 2012). Research suggests that refugee children are at a higher risk for mental health problems, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, and delinquency (Hyman, Vu, & Beiser, 2003).

The research literature also discusses unique stresses faced by refugees, and the role of education in alleviating those stresses. Beyond the trauma of their past, refugee children are faced with adjusting to a new school and a new culture. Lack of English proficiency exacerbates these stresses (Hyman et al., 2003). Research suggests that refugee students themselves have high expectations for education, and see education as a pathway to future prosperity. In addition, teachers are often ill equipped to meet the needs of refugee students. The literature notes that instruction outside of school can be "essential" to meet these needs, especially concerning literacy (Naidoo, 2009, pp. 262-263).

The BRYTE tutoring program is positioned to provide the outside instruction that can help alleviate the language and cultural stresses faced by refugee children. This evaluation design attempts to examine both of these areas of instruction, to determine the effectiveness of the program and help shape future program activities.

## **Prior Evaluations**

There is a fairly robust collection of prior evaluations concerning tutoring programs. The Harvard Family Research Project website includes a database of out-of-school-time programs and evaluations conducted of those programs. Two evaluations in particular stand out, because of similarities between those programs and BRYTE.

Project HOPE (Holistic Opportunities Plan for Enrichment) was a tutoring program in Durham, North Carolina from 2002-2009 that attempted to "improve academic and social outcomes for children." Like BRYTE, the program used college-age volunteers, and attempted to build

relationships between the college and the community. The evaluation used pre-test and post-test surveys of students, tutors, and teachers, along with grade point averages (GPA) and a summative reading and math test in the public schools.

The evaluation found that a majority of students maintained or improved their GPA over the course of the program. Tutors reported feeling more empathetic and understanding toward their students, and a significant majority of teachers felt the program improved their students homework skills. The lack of a control groups means these results are not very scientifically rigorous, and it is hard to draw definite conclusions about the program (“Evaluation of Project HOPE,” 2013).

Another noteworthy evaluation comes from the Hmong Youth Pride (HYP) program, an after-school program for Hmong youth in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota that began in 1990. The Hmong people, while now well established, were originally a refugee group from Southeast Asia. The program tries not only to boost academic achievement, but also prevent substance use and foster cultural pride.

The HYP evaluation was more scientifically rigorous than the Project HOPE evaluation because it employed comparison groups. These comparison groups included students whose program was cut due to lack of funding or who attended a school without after-school programs. Evaluators performed pre- and post-test reading and math assessments in addition to surveys, interviews, and site visits. Most cohorts showed gains in assessment scores although there were also gains in the comparison groups. Only a handful of the gains among program participants were statistically significant. Almost none of the results from the youth survey, for participants or non-participants, were statistically significant (“Evaluation of Hmong Youth Pride,” 2013).

These prior evaluations demonstrate the challenges that face evaluators of small tutoring programs. While scientifically rigorous evaluations with comparison groups are possible, they might not always be feasible. This is probably why BRYTE, which is a mostly volunteer program, has no evaluation mechanism in place other than an end-of-year survey of its tutors. Progress among students in tutoring programs is often hard to prove in a scientifically convincing manner. Despite these issues, we believe there are several elements of each of these evaluations that are worth emulating in our design strategy.

## **Design Strategy**

Our evaluation design consists of four measures, which together attempt to answer the single process question and three outcome questions for the BRYTE program. It is important for parents in the BRYTE program to be fully informed about each of these measures, and they should provide consent for their children to take part. (See figure 1 for an overview of the design strategy.)

### DIBELS

The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) test is a literacy assessment developed in the 1970s and used widely across the country. The DIBELS component we recommend that BRYTE adopt is Oral Reading Fluency and Retell Fluency, which can be used from kindergarten to grade 6. The assessment tests reading ability and comprehension, and this

would be the primary way to measure student improvement in English proficiency. The DIBELS system includes benchmarks for each grade level, which will help the program judge the progress of its students compared to the overall student population. DIBELS is available at no cost (University of Oregon, 2012).

Student Survey

We recommend administering a survey to every student in the BRYTE program. This survey would be the primary mechanism to determine changes in student self-esteem and self-confidence over the school year. Other survey question will ask students about their comfort level with English, and how they perceive school and their performance in school. There will be three separate surveys: one for elementary (grades K-5), one for middle (grades 6-8), and one for high school (grades 9-12).

Report Cards

Families will be requested to provide access to their child’s report cards. Tutors will note each of the grades, and also calculate a GPA for the child for each report card.

Tutor Assessment

While BRYTE already administers a yearly survey to all their tutors about the program, this assessment only provides limited opportunity for the tutor to give feedback on their students. Tutors will be asked to report on the English proficiency and apparent self-esteem of the students they tutor. In addition, this assessment will serve as the primary means to answer the process question about BRYTE, concerning how much time the tutor spent with the student.

*Figure 1: Which Measurement Tools Are Used to Answer Which Questions*

	<i>Evaluation Questions</i>			
<i>Measurement Tool</i>	<b>Process</b>	<b>English Proficiency</b>	<b>Academic Performance</b>	<b>Self-Esteem and Self-Confidence</b>
<b>DIBELS</b>		Primary Measure		
<b>Student Survey</b>		Secondary Measure	Secondary Measure	Primary Measure
<b>Report Cards</b>			Primary Measure	
<b>Tutor Assessment</b>	Primary Measure	Secondary Measure		Secondary Measure

## **Data Collection**

While all these measurement tools taken together may seem daunting, we believe that data collection should be relatively straightforward. We designed this evaluation with BRYTE's limited resources and personnel in mind. These measurements are designed to be undertaken over the course of a school year (thus, this evaluation is not designed for use with BRYTE's summer camp). The goal should be to have every tutor and student take part in the evaluation. Because BRYTE is a relatively small program, with one-on-one instruction, we believe this is feasible. (See figure 2 for the data collection schedule.)

### DIBELS

The DIBELS test is fairly short, and is designed for one-on-one administration, meaning it should work well with BRYTE. There are specific instructions about how tutors should administer the test, and all that is needed is the passage for the child to read, a corresponding copy for the tutor to mark down any incorrect answers, and a stopwatch. There are specific steps for scoring the assessment. For \$1 per student, BRYTE can take advantage of the University of Oregon's DIBELS data system, where they can enter student scores, track progress, and generate reports (University of Oregon, 2012).

The DIBELS test is designed to be administered three times per year, but we recommend that it administered in the fall (within the first two weeks of tutoring) and in the spring (within the last two weeks of tutoring). This will serve as the pre-test and post-test which can help determine the growth in literacy experienced by each student.

### Student Survey

Like DIBELS, the student survey will be administered at the beginning and the end of the year. The tutor can choose to administer it the same day of the DIBELS test but may choose not to in order to avoid fatiguing the child. The survey should be conducted orally, and the tutor is only allowed to provide minimal help in interpreting the questions. The survey is designed to be simple enough so that even students with limited English skills should be able to complete it. (See the appendix for example survey questions.)

### Report Cards

Most schools operate on a quarter system, so tutors will collect grades for each quarterly report card issued by the school. Report cards should be simple enough that tutors will be able to write down all of the subjects and grades by hand, before inputting them into a database operated by BRYTE.

### Tutor Assessment

Tutors will complete these assessments four times per year: within the first two weeks of the semester, just before Brown's winter break, just before Brown's spring break, and within the last two weeks of the semester. Only the assessments before winter break and at the end of the year will include process questions about how the tutor is implementing the BRYTE program. Tutors are expected to complete the assessments on their own time, and input them using a Google form. (See the appendix for example assessment questions.)

Figure 2: Time of Data Collection for Each Measurement Tool

Measurement Tool	Academic Period			
	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter
DIBELS	X			X
Student Survey	X			X
Report Cards	X	X	X	X
Tutor Assessment	X	X	X	X

### Challenges and Limitations

The major challenge for this evaluation is that, as designed, there is no comparison group. As theory indicates, and as some of the prior evaluations cited here attest, students naturally mature over the course of the school year (Trochim, 2006). Teasing out what portion of that growth is due to BRYTE itself is problematic. We considered using the waitlist for the BRYTE program, but some years that waitlist only consists of a few families.

There are several ways around this issue that fit within our current evaluation framework. Because DIBELS has benchmarks, there is some comparison that BRYTE can make between the progress of its students and other students. Obviously, this is complicated by the fact that BRYTE students, as refugees and English language learners, are unique. But this should help.

It is worth noting that there are some who dispute the reliability of the DIBELS test, and claim that it inadequately measures reading comprehension (Manzo, 2005). The fact that the test is in wide use, including (at one time) in the Providence Public Schools, suggest the test is not fatally flawed. In addition, the ease of use and the lack of cost are strong points in its favor.

There is also the issue that DIBELS is meant to be used until grade 6, and there are participants in the program who are older. Because these refugees are recently arrived, we are assuming that even the older participants will not have developed English skills. So while these older students might make it harder to use DIBELS benchmarks, the test should still be a useful indication of their English fluency.

This evaluation also raises some ethical concerns. BRYTE will have access student data which will be tied to individual students and teachers. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, a federal statute, protects student data from release by schools (U.S. Department of Education). Because parents are voluntarily providing this data to BRYTE tutors, there should be no legal issues. However, BRYTE should get written consent before collecting any data from students. In addition, BRYTE should take measures to secure the database where it collects this data.

There is also the concern that tutors are evaluating their own students. Because BRYTE wants to get information about the effectiveness of individual tutors, there might be some incentive for

tutors to lie on their assessments, or assist students in order to provide better answers on the DIBELS test or the student survey. BRYTE will have to make clear that these measures are not meant to punish the students or the tutors, but rather meant to establish best practices and evaluate the overall effectiveness of the program.

Finally, there is the issue that students might react differently to their tutors during different surveys, as they get to know and become more comfortable with their tutors. Like maturation, this will have the effect of biasing post-test results upward. It is important for tutors to have a survey script, and to stick closely to that script. The best way to compensate for this bias would be to examine the survey results from families who participate in the program for multiple years, but change tutors at some point. If survey results show improvement in self-esteem and self-confidence despite a change in tutors, these results may be more attributable to BRYTE.

## **Next Steps**

There are several next steps that can be taken in order to create a more scientifically rigorous evaluation. These steps are not part of our initial evaluation design because we wanted to create a plan that BRYTE could implement quickly and with available resources.

BRYTE could consider asking students for their state standardized test scores. Because these tests are only administered once per year, it will not be possible to measure progress over the school year. However, a database of several years of test results could be used to compare the results of BRYTE students with other similar students across the state. The state publishes test results by school and subgroup, and by choosing similar groups at certain schools BRYTE could attempt to discern the effect of its program.

The student survey could be administered to other refugee youth not in the BRYTE program, in order to create a comparison group that can be used to determine an accurate measure of BRYTE's effect. Because BRYTE works closely with the IIRI, the IIRI could help find a group that could take the survey at the beginning and end of the semester. After communicating with IIRI, we believe there is some organizational capacity and desire for such a survey.

The issue bias caused by the interaction between tutor and student can be solved by using people outside the tutor-student relationship to administer surveys. Because we recommend surveying every student, it does not seem feasible to assign every family an impartial interviewer. However, if BRYTE ever chooses to focus on a subset of its program participants for a more intensive evaluation, it could use outside interviewers to ensure unbiased surveys.

## **Conclusion**

BRYTE is a relatively new program, with limited resources, but a big mission: improving the literacy, academics, and cultural confidence of its students. This evaluation differs from other evaluations in that it is meant to be implemented immediately, and is meant to be completed annually. We believe it will help BRYTE establish best practices, help shape instruction, and also provide information about the effectiveness of the program.

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### Appendix: Current BRYTE Logic Model

<b>Inputs</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
<p><b>Volunteers and coordinators</b> Brown students, must go through application process</p>	<p><b>Volunteer training</b> 1 full day per year</p>	<p><b>Number of hours tutored</b></p>	<p><i>For students:</i></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>Improved English language skills</b></div>
<p><b>Partnerships</b> Brown’s Swearer Center and International Institute of Rhode Island (IIRI)</p>	<p><b>Matching of refugees and tutors</b> IIRI helps in this process</p>	<p><b>Number of activities and field trips undertaken</b></p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>Improved academic habits and skills</b></div>
<p><b>Refugees</b> Recently arrived to Providence, mostly youth but some adults</p>	<p><b>In-home tutoring</b> At least 3 hours per week</p>	<p><b>Weekly progress reports</b> Submitted by volunteers</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>Developed social skills and confidence in being part of Providence Community</b></div> <p><i>For tutors:</i></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>Knowledge and appreciation of refugee culture and challenges</b></div>
	<p><b>Field trips</b> At discretion of volunteers</p>	<p><b>End-of-the-year volunteer survey</b></p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>Teaching and community engagement skills</b></div> <p><i>For coordinators:</i></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>Knowledge and appreciation of refugee culture and challenges</b></div>
	<p><b>Community events</b> Bring entire group together several times per year</p>		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>Organization and management skills</b></div> <p><i>For everyone:</i></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>Meaningful relationships between tutors</b></div>

## Appendix: Sample Survey Questions

### Student Survey (English Proficiency)

*Based on four of the six components of English proficiency identified by the Rhode Island Department of Education (2011).*

How do you feel about the following statements?

- |    |  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|----|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| 1. | “I am comfortable <u>reading</u> English.”                   |                   |          |         |       |                |
|    |  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 2. | “I am comfortable <u>writing</u> in English.”                |                   |          |         |       |                |
|    |  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 3. | “I am comfortable <u>listening</u> to others speak English.” |                   |          |         |       |                |
|    |  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 4. | “I am comfortable <u>speaking</u> English with others.”      |                   |          |         |       |                |
|    |  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither | Agree | Strongly Agree |

### Student Survey (Academic Performance)

*Based on University of Richmond, Academic Skills Center Tutoring Evaluation.*

- |    |   |                   |          |         |       |                |
|----|---|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| 1. | Tutoring helped me improve my academic skills.              |                   |          |         |       |                |
|    |   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 2. | Tutoring has helped me succeed in school.                   |                   |          |         |       |                |
|    |   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 3. | When in school, I am able to (please check all that apply): |                   |          |         |       |                |
|    | • Generally get good grades.                                |                   |          |         |       |                |
|    | • Complete all of my work.                                  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|    | • Fix a specific problem.                                   |                   |          |         |       |                |
|    | • Create a goal.  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|    | • Meet a goal.  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|    | • Learn an effective strategy.                              |                   |          |         |       |                |
|    | • Communicate in English.                                   |                   |          |         |       |                |
|    | • Manage my time  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|    | • Take responsibility for my own success                    |                   |          |         |       |                |

### Student Survey (Self-Esteem/Self-Confidence)

*Based on the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory.*

- |    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|----|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 1. | Would you say these statements are “Like Me” or “Not Like Me”? |  |  |  |  |  |
|    | • I’m a lot of fun to be with.                                 |  |  |  |  |  |
|    | • I get in trouble a lot.                                      |  |  |  |  |  |
|    | • I always do my best.   |  |  |  |  |  |
|    | • I can make friends easily.                                   |  |  |  |  |  |
|    | • It is tough being me.  |  |  |  |  |  |
|    | • I am proud of my work.                                       |  |  |  |  |  |
|    | • I am unhappy.  |  |  |  |  |  |

- I am trustworthy.
- I like myself.

*(Note: These are example questions that will be adapted to each individual grade level survey for elementary, middle, and high school students.)*

Tutor Assessment (Process)

*Based on current BRYTE tutor survey.*

- |    |   |                   |          |         |       |                |
|----|---|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| 1. | Provide a log of hours spent with your student since the last assessment. |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 2. | Do you feel prepared to tutor?  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|    |   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 3. | Tutoring has added to my college experience.                              |                   |          |         |       |                |
|    |   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 4. | I learned about other cultures while working with BRYTE.                  |                   |          |         |       |                |
|    |   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither | Agree | Strongly Agree |

Tutor Assessment (English Proficiency)

- |    |  |            |                |          |                 |             |
|----|--|------------|----------------|----------|-----------------|-------------|
| 1. | How would you describe the verbal linguistic improvement (listening and speaking) you have seen since you began tutoring your current student? |            |                |          |                 |             |
|    |  | Much Worse | Somewhat Worse | The Same | Somewhat Better | Much Better |
| 2. | How would you describe the written linguistic improvement (reading and writing) you have seen since you began tutoring your current student?   |            |                |          |                 |             |
|    |  | Much Worse | Somewhat Worse | The Same | Somewhat Better | Much Better |

Tutor Assessment (Self-Esteem/Self-Confidence)

*Based on current BRYTE's tutor survey.*

- |    |   |                   |          |         |       |                |
|----|---|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| 1. | I have seen an improvement in the student's comfort in environment. |                   |          |         |       |                |
|    |   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 2. | I have seen an improvement in the student's level of engagement.    |                   |          |         |       |                |
|    |   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 3. | I have seen an improvement in the student's self-confidence.        |                   |          |         |       |                |
|    |   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither | Agree | Strongly Agree |