



**Let's Read
Family Literacy
Program**

Impact & Outcomes Report

ALL PARTNERS

2022 - 2023

Why Family Literacy Matters

The ability to read increases our access to positive life opportunities and outcomes. Developing the skills essential to learning to read and becoming a reader starts early.

There is overwhelming academic consensus that children's early years of life are a crucial period of literacy development and that children of families who foster literacy and language-rich home environments are more likely to start kindergarten with the skills they need to learn to read successfully.

However, parents and caregivers from systemically disadvantaged communities often lack quality early literacy experiences that support their children's learning, which can limit their access to future opportunities and can lead to difficult life circumstances.

Let's Read supports families in developing enriching literacy practices that nurture young children's language, curiosity, creativity, and play. This year, to purposefully bridge home and school connections for deeper literacy learning, the Let's Read Family Literacy Program expanded to serve children in 15 Title I public schools across San Diego.

In each Let's Read session, books, and crafts serve as invitations for developing the mindset and practices of readers. Intentionally designed lessons encourage children to be curious and responsive readers who ask questions, apply their meaningful background experiences to books, as well as share their thoughts and feelings to infer and make connections.

The books distributed in Let's Read sessions create opportunities for families to reread familiar books, strengthening connections between the texts and their lives.

Thank you to the following partners who courageously collaborated to connect families with experiences to read, think, create, and play:

Community Partners:

- Diamond Educational Excellence Partnership
- Episcopal Community Services
- Fullerton School District
- Neighborhood House Association
- Oceanside Public Library
- SAY San Diego

Public School Partners:

- Burbank Elementary School
- Carver Elementary School
- Chollas Mead Elementary School
- Edison Elementary School
- Emerson Elementary School
- Encanto Elementary School
- Field Elementary School
- Freese Elementary School
- Fullerton Public Schools
- Hamilton Elementary School
- Hancock Elementary School
- Harriet Tubman Charter School
- Johnson Elementary
- Porter Elementary School
- Rolando Park Elementary School
- San Diego Unified School District
- Webster Elementary School

How Do We Connect Families to the Power of Reading?

THE WORDS ALIVE WAY

Bring People Together

A total of 1,411 families participated in the Let's Read Family Literacy program in the 22-23 school year.



Create Access

Families took home 8,466 new children's books and learning kits, increasing the number of families who own at least 15 children's books by 30%.

Build Habits

On average, families looked at books together for 4 additional minutes each day and 1 more day each week!



Practice What Works

100% of survey respondents understood the power of play in their child's learning after participating in the program.

Impact Framework

Reading is a non-negotiable skill set for personal agency and self-sufficiency. It is also through knowing the stories of others that we deepen our humanity and connection to one another. Words Alive's work connects people to the power of reading through the simple, essential, and effective act of reading together.

Using research-based program models and tools identified or developed by our third-party evaluative partners at the University of San Diego and Dialogue in Action, our Family Literacy Program focuses on three key areas of impact. That participants:

Develop an enduring commitment to reading.

Objective: Caregivers internalize the value of reading and develop durable family reading habits as they experience positive shared reading interactions with their young children.

Become life-long learners.

Objective: Caregivers experience positive attitudinal shifts about learning and their role as their child's first and foremost teacher. They expand knowledge of children's brain and reading development, and practices that support their young children's learning.

Become advocates for themselves and their future.

Objective: Caregivers are empowered to invest in the future of their family by increasing self-confidence as their child's first and foremost teacher.

Across our programming, Words Alive supports student achievement, and inspires motivation to read, through five learning anchors:

1. **Read:** We read fresh and relevant texts that reflect the communities we serve.
2. **Talk:** We talk about what we read to build vocabulary and sharpen self-expression skills.
3. **Write:** We write about the stories we read to think through and present our ideas. Our youngest learners draw until we are ready to write.
4. **Connect:** We place the stories we read within the context of our lives, our community, and our world.
5. **Do:** We do something with what we read to play with ideas and bring it all together.

Methods & Process Conditions

At Words Alive, we believe that empowering experiences turn parents and caregivers into agents of change and advocates for their families. We also believe that reading is the foundation of community and economic development and that when everyone can read, whole communities thrive!

During the 2022-2023 program year, our "Let's Read" program and approach supported strategic goals of all our partners:

- To engage the whole community in working together to ensure that children are ready for school.
(School Readiness)

- To develop programs, competencies, and linkages that support and promote parent empowerment and self-sufficiency. *(Parents – Empowerment/Self-Sufficiency)*

As well as supporting commonly adopted school readiness goals for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers:

- **Social & Emotional Readiness:** Children will demonstrate appropriate social skills to engage with adults and peers.
- **Language & Literacy:** Children will increase their phonemic awareness, letter recognition, and concepts of print.
- **Approaches to Learning:** Children will demonstrate attention, persistence, engagement, curiosity, and initiative.

Research tells us that the most effective forms of family engagement are those that involve families working directly with their children on learning activities at home. Our research-based, six-week Family Literacy Program provides parent education on topics of early literacy development for preschool and school-aged children. Each program session includes a group story time with guided activities for parents and children, as well as supplemental materials and skill-building extensions to support families with further learning at home.

To meet the process conditions needed to build strong family engagement, each of our program sessions are:

- **Linked to learning:** Content and activities are directly connected to age-appropriate developmental milestones and what children are expected to do academically.
- **Relational:** Activities help families build relationships, get to know one another, and build trust.
- **Developmental:** Families are learning new skills, and after participating, better understand how to support their child’s literacy development at home.
- **Collaborative:** Families are working together to learn a new skill as a group and with their children.
- **Interactive:** Families practice new skills they are expected to use at home and have opportunities for corrective feedback.



ABOUT THE TITLES WE USED

Lack of access to relevant books in the home – especially for families with young children – is a significant contributor to persistent and pervasive educational disparities. Research shows that if children grow up in a home with 100 or more books, and read every day, they are far more likely to be proficient readers.

As such, creating a home environment conducive to learning is a critical element of our program model. Let's Read with Words Alive participants receive the following materials for each six-week series of workshops:

- 6 book bags, each containing 1 new book, published in either Spanish, English, or Bilingually, as well as family learning guides and craft materials.
- Step-by-step instructions for an engaging caregiver-child activity that stimulates fun and meaningful connection to text.
- 1 tote containing basic school supplies.



In addition to selecting titles and creating materials that are accessible to both Spanish and English speakers, Words Alive carefully curates the 6 books reading list for each workshop series to enhance phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

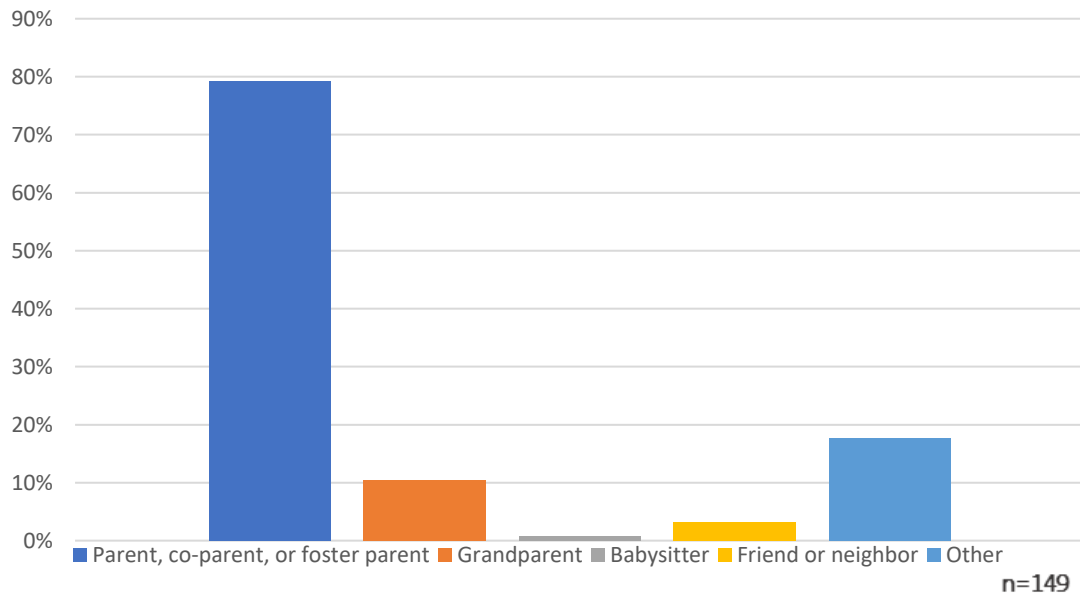
ABOUT THE FAMILIES WE SERVED

In the 2022-2023 program year, Let's Read with Words Alive served 1,411 families and distributed 8,466 unique books and learning kits in Orange County (Fullerton) and San Diego County (Escondido, Oceanside, City of San Diego, and National City). Of **149** reporting families:

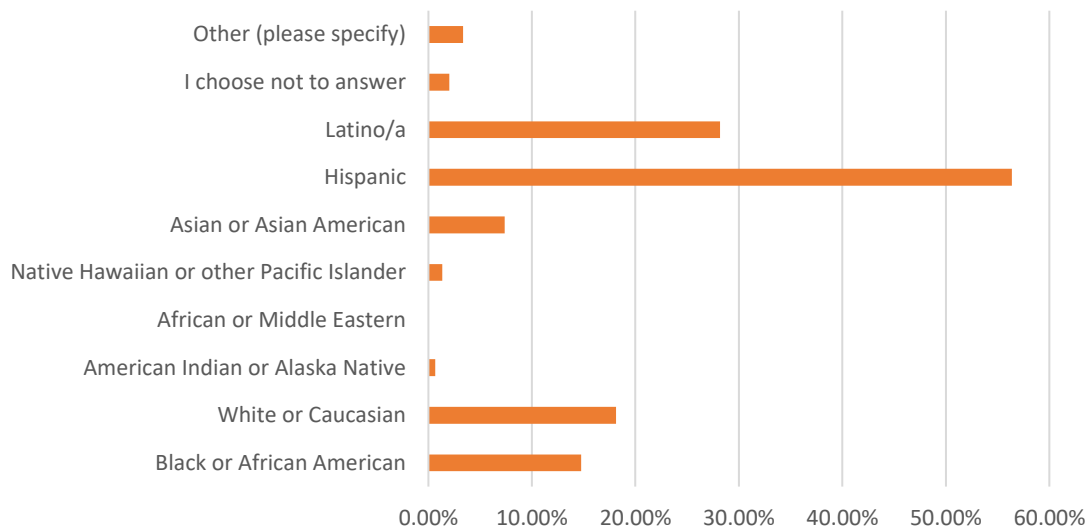
- **22%** of families speak languages other than, or in addition to, English, including Spanish (61%), Vietnamese (2%), Chinese (1%), Tagalog (1%), and Cambodian, Russian, Arabic, and Creole (less than 1%).
- **73%** of participants reported that additional caring adults attended at least one session with their child. The extended community of caring adults included co-parents, foster parents, and other primary caregivers such as grandparents (10%), friends or neighbors (3%), and babysitters (1%).
- **85%** of survey respondents indicated that their racial identity includes Latino/a/x or Hispanic.



Types of caregivers participating in the program



Racial Identity



Words Alive’s programming is always delivered in partnership with community organizations working directly with children and families in historically underserved areas. During the 2022-2023 school year, Words Alive partnered with like-minded leadership and family engagement teams from six community providers to deliver Let’s Read with Words Alive Family Literacy Program with families attending 27 different Head Starts, Title I elementary schools, and public libraries.

While most families were served directly by Words Alive staff and volunteers, we continue to deliver programming to hundreds of families through our Train-the-Trainer program model which empowers partners to build capacity to deliver and sustain the program within their own communities. Data and outcomes from this group of participants is not reflected in this report.

Train-the-Trainer partners include Fullerton School District and Oceanside Public Library, who are trained by Words Alive staff in the theory, process, and practice of delivering the Let's Read family literacy program.

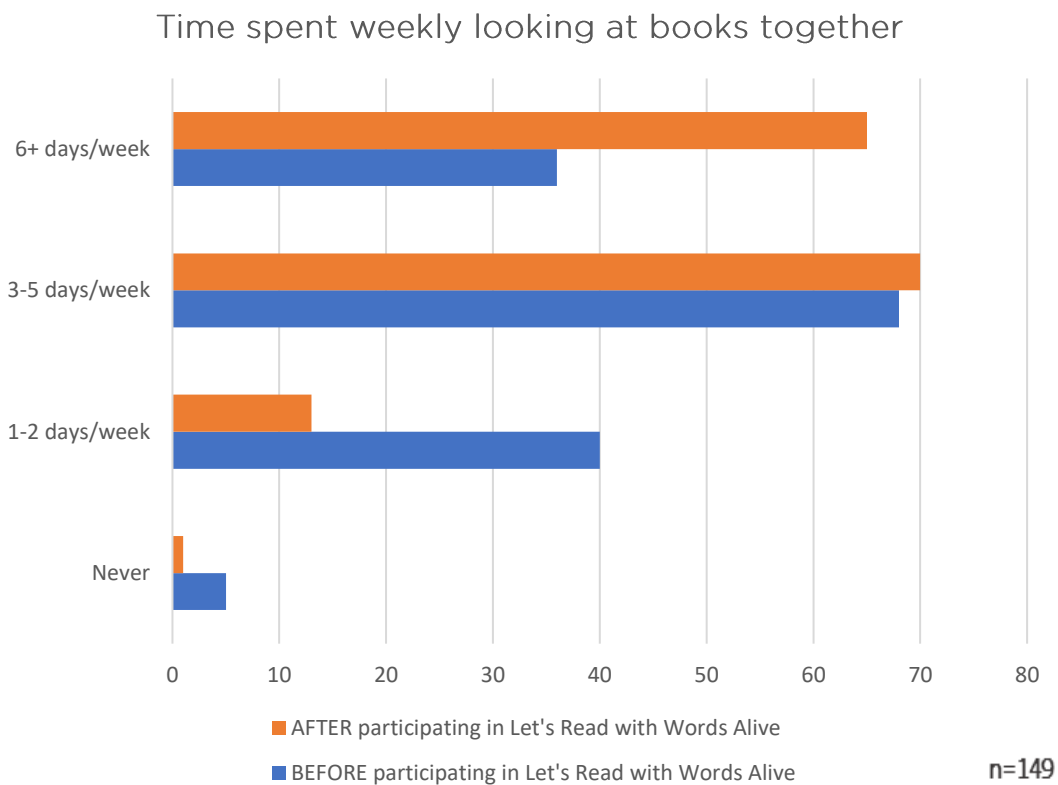
Our partners are equipped with the curriculum, books, and learning kits needed to implement Let's Read and are offered follow-up coaching calls to support their program development including best practices with facilitators. Through this version of the program, community partners and agencies are empowered to deliver high-quality literacy programming that can be tailored to meet their families' unique or specific needs.



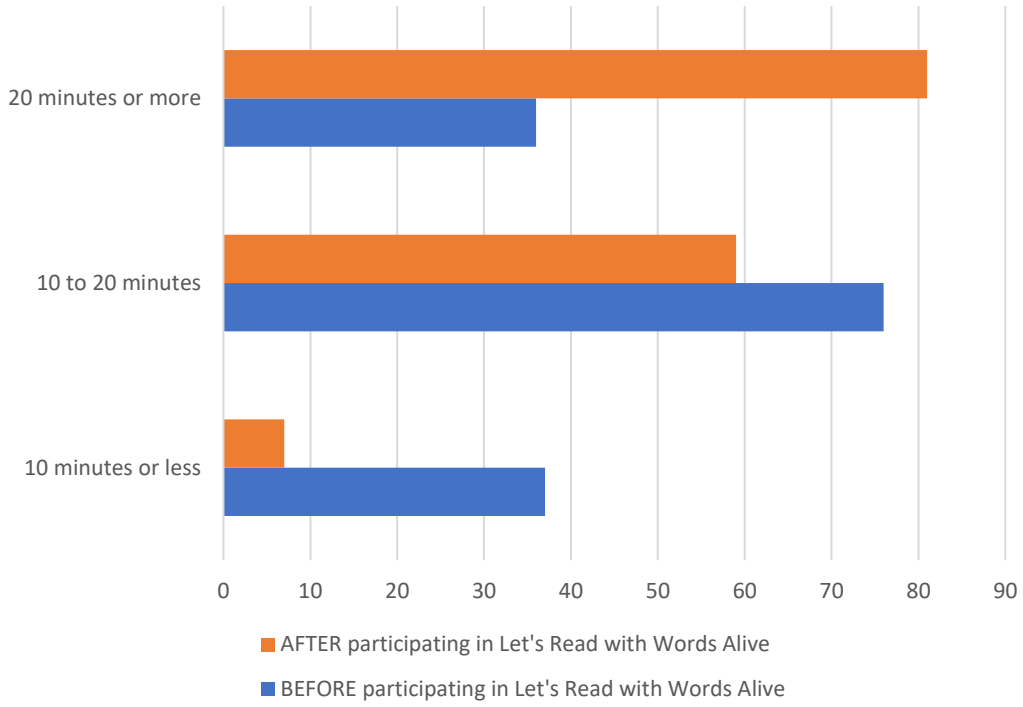
OUTCOMES – WHAT CHANGED FOR FAMILIES

What Caregivers Said – Quantitative Survey Summary

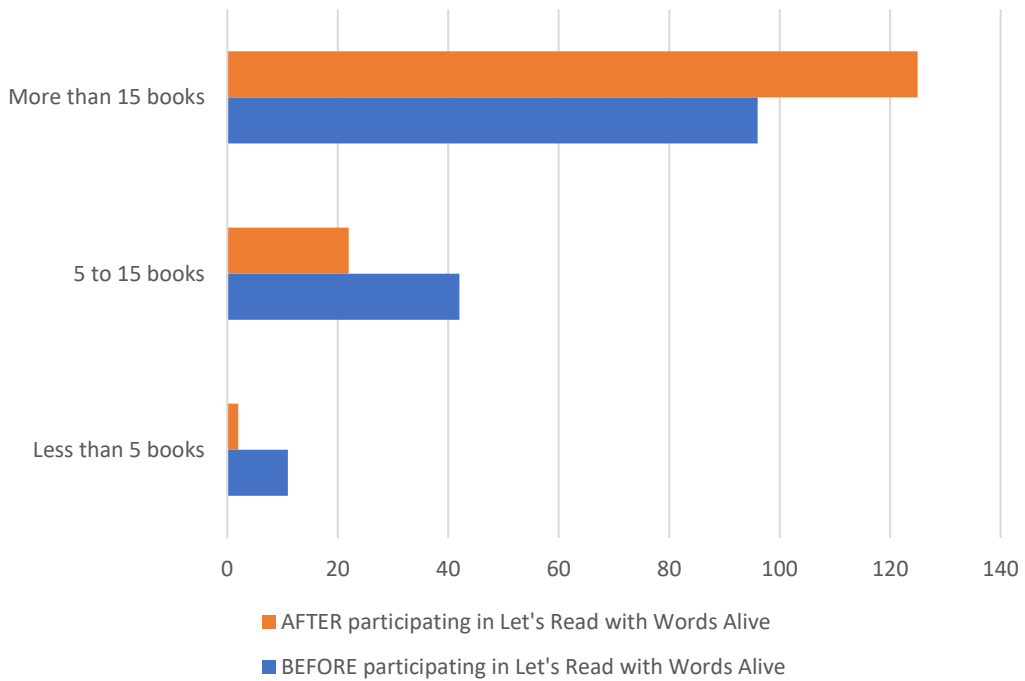
- The number of families who reported looking at books together every day increased by 81%.
- 100% of respondents understood the power of play in their child’s learning after participating in the program.
- All children participating in the program expressed an increased interest/joy in reading with their caregiver.
- The number of families who spend 20 minutes or more when looking at books together grew by 125% by the program’s end, which is a conservative average of 4 more minutes per day.
- The number of families who own at least 15 children’s books at home increased by 30%.



Time spent daily looking at books together



Number of children's books at home



What Parents Said – Creating a Habit of Reading

When asked what activities they completed, families indicated high levels of engagement, especially around rereading books on their own.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Attending the virtual sessions	68%
Rereading and talking about the books	82%
Trying an activity from the learning kits	60%
Other – Open-Ended Responses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Asking questions to encourage more dialogues</i> • <i>Re-doing the kits and creating more as well</i> • <i>Platican de que se trat el libro y comentan que mas pudieran hacer las personajes</i> • <i>Creating different craft activities about the book</i> • <i>Going over the stories verbally</i> • <i>Cada noche antes de dormir</i> • <i>Attending the in-person session</i> • <i>Sharing with other family children</i> • <i>Sharing with his cousins libros en la biblioteca</i> • <i>Re-doing the activity with the baby</i> 	8%

Families were asked to reflect on *their child’s perceived level of engagement* when reading together, *how confident they were in their ability* to be their child’s first teacher, and *their understanding of the importance of play* in their child’s learning.

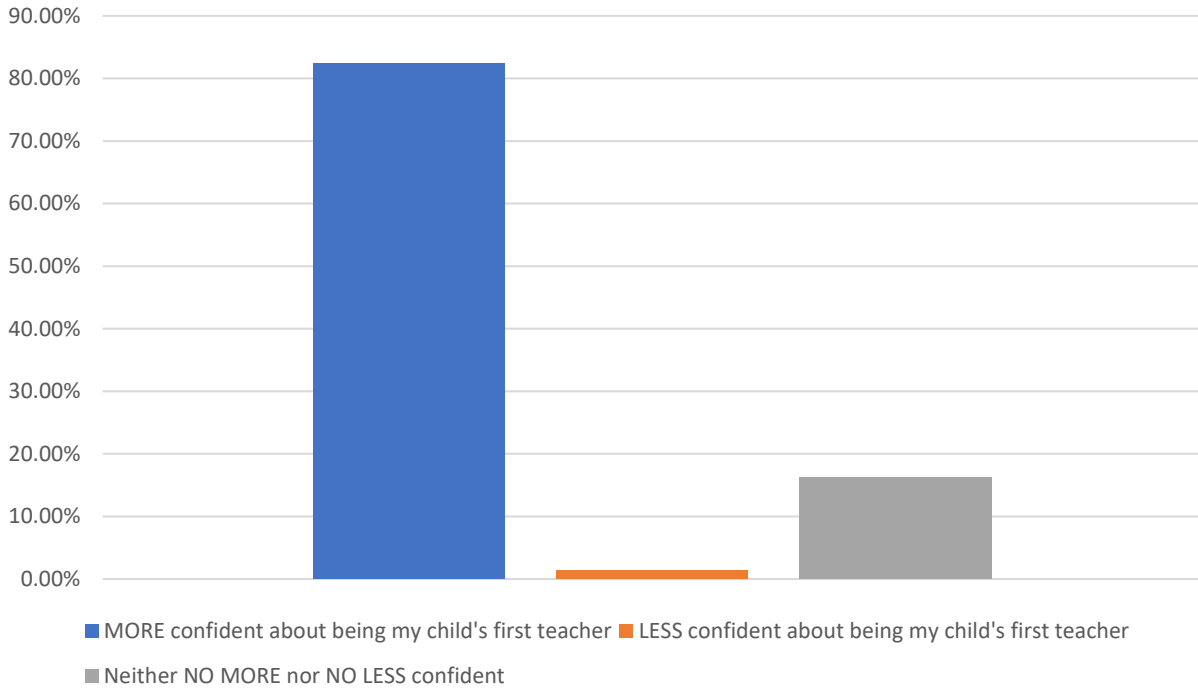
Participating families make meaningful connections between reading and play. *Key program impact area: Develop an enduring commitment to reading.*

The number of families who reported fully understanding the importance of play in their child’s learning increased by 24% after the program. The number of families who said their child always enjoyed looking at books and was engaged when looking at books together increased by 68%.

Participating caregivers are more confident in their ability to help develop their child’s identity as a reader. *Key program impact area: Become life-long learners.*

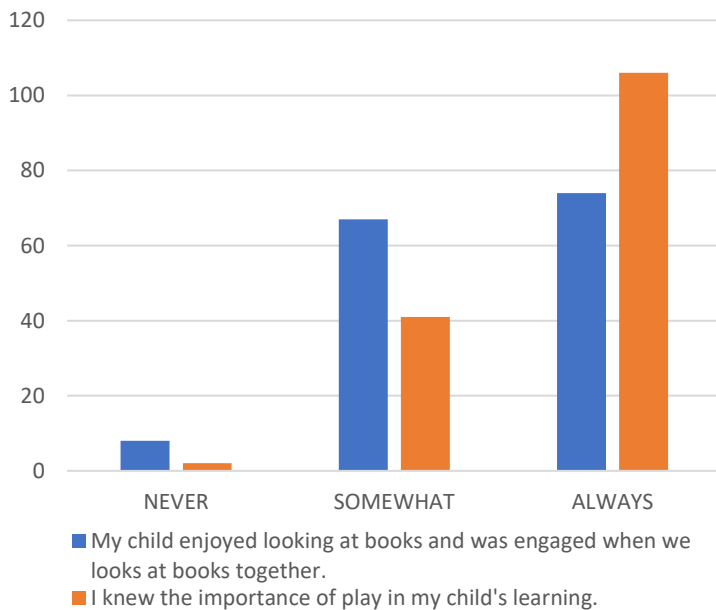
After participating in the program, 82% of caregivers reported an increase in confidence about being their child’s first teacher.

Confidence Level

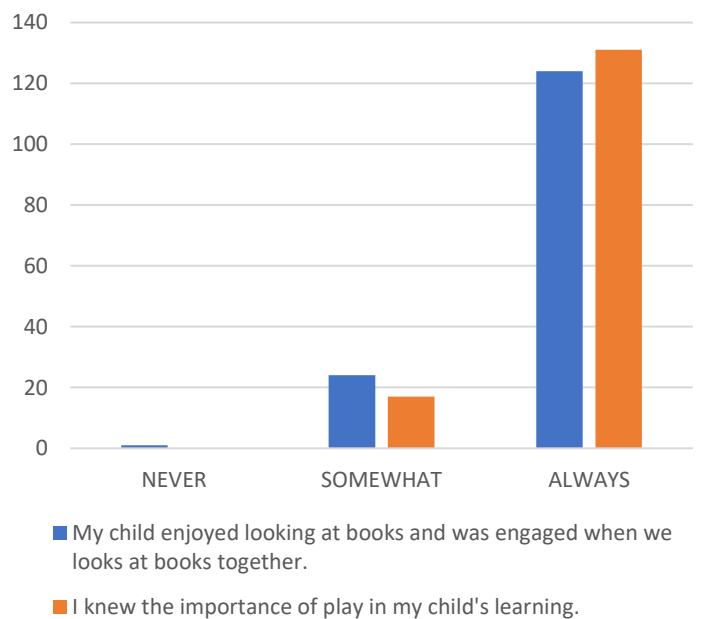


- The number of families reporting their child enjoyed reading doubled after participating in Let's Read with Words Alive. *Key program impact area: Develop an enduring commitment to reading.*
- Interestingly, if we compare the previous table to the below data, we can see that even the caregivers who did not report greater confidence still demonstrated positive change in habits around reading. *Key program impact area: Become life-long learners.*
- On average, participants showed substantial growth in their child's engagement with reading. *Key program impact area: Become advocates for themselves and their future.*

"Before participating in the program _____"



"After participating in the program _____"



Caregiver Comments: Open-Ended Responses

Caregiver comments about changes in thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors included:

“

Thanks to the program my daughter started asking more questions during our bedtime reading time.

We enjoy the participation of my daughter. She was more involved in the program. Usually she is quiet.

Helped a lot to increase a love of reading for my child.

The creative activities engaged my daughter to think about the story in different ways.”

Caregiver comments about their child identifying as a reader:

They always are engaged in books when reading but this took them to another level of involvement and comprehension of the stories and has really just elevated their love for reading.

My daughter was excited about logging in and reading a new book.

Mi niño de 4 años ya le interesan los libros. / My 4-year-old boy is already interested in books.

[The most valuable thing] was seeing my son have fun with the instructor and the other students reading the books and participating in the activities. He enjoyed the sessions every Saturday morning. He would get up early and remind me.

”

What Caregivers Said – Qualitative Interviews Summary

In qualitative discussions, participating caregivers' responses reflect positive outcomes impacting the thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors of young readers. Common themes were identified around reader engagement, initiative, independence, confidence, and a deeper connection to reading.

Theme 1: Engagement (Key program impact area: *Develop an enduring commitment to reading*)

Because of their participation in the program, children demonstrated increased engagement with books. Families noticed, after participating in Let's Read, that their children showed an authentic interest in books. When reading together, their children talked more about what they saw on the page, spent more time looking at pictures, asked questions, and pointed out parts in the books.

“ Before 'Let's Read' we'd open the book and read. She was interested and would respond back repeating the words. Now she reads the book by herself. She describes the pictures and is not just repeating back the words. She describes the story. I let her read and she reads solo first.

I noticed she makes more connections with the story and real-life experiences. She is able to understand the story better.

Theme 2: Initiative and Independence (Key program impact area: *Become advocates for themselves and their future.*)

Because of their participation in the program, children's independence as a reader emerged. Families noted that their children now initiate reading by bringing books to them to read and saying, "It's time to read." Reading together shifted from something that felt like a "chore" to an activity that the kids want to do and are motivated to seek out.

“ She got to learn more than one genre of book and she is motivated to read more.

Theme 3: Confidence (Key program impact area: *Become life-long learners.*)

Because of their participation in the program, children increased their confidence in their abilities as readers. Parents shared their observations of their children as increasingly willing to participate, reporting their children are speaking more and demonstrating greater confidence in their abilities as readers.

Being in Let's Read has really helped and encouraged her. Now she actually tries to read. Everywhere we go she reads signs on the road or in stores. Reading has helped her become more confident and independent.

Theme 4: Deeper Connection to Reading *(Key program impact area: Develop an enduring commitment to reading.)*

For families with existing reading practices, they reported their children demonstrated increased curiosity, used more inflection when reading, and asked more questions when reading together.

“

We read every day, several books a day. The program encourages him reading more. It didn't change, but it supported what we were already doing. Saturdays kept our reading going 7 days a week.



[I learned] that it's so important to take more time while reading and let the kids imagine and predict.



We are all reading together every night. It got us to be more united.

They love reading, but now they are reading constantly more. They are also picking different books.”

REFLECTION

The Let's Read with Words Alive Family Literacy Program has been a highly impactful and successful part of Words Alive programming for more than a decade. As the program continues to expand regionally to new partners and simultaneously deepen its reach within existing community partnerships, we are constantly seeking areas and opportunities to improve the program to deepen our impact.

Meeting children and families where they are is a vital component of the program's strategy and implementation. To better do that as we look to the future, we plan to:

- **Encourage Return Participation.** This program was initially imagined as a model a family participates in once. However, parents and caregivers are increasingly showing interest in participating in multiple waves of the program, over multiple years. To respond to their interest and enthusiasm, we will need to develop additional curricular tracks.
- **Better Leverage Technology.** We believe we can enhance family engagement and extend impact by better leveraging technology to develop systems and processes that improve communications and better support interactions with families and partner sites. To do this, we will need to add technical (learning design, e-learning) staff capacity.

- **Remain Nimble.** The flexibility of our virtual or in-person 6-week/6-book model continues to prove itself to be the most accessible version of the program that can best flex to meet the unique needs of our partners and communities we serve.

Above all, Words Alive remains dedicated to fostering a culture of reading for families, especially in communities who have been impacted by systemic injustices and disinvestment. By meeting children and families where they are with research-backed programming, high-quality curriculum, and diverse books, we nurture readers in every zip code and at every age.

SPECIAL THANKS

Words Alive and participating families share deep gratitude to the philanthropic leaders who invest in our movement to make reading matter and who ensure that each child participates in the Let's Read program at no cost to their family:

Literacy Legends (\$100,000+)

- Bentivoglio Family Fund
- Karen & Jeff Silberman

Transformational Leaders (\$50,000-\$99,999)

- Century Club of San Diego
- Dr. Seuss Foundation
- San Diego Foundation
- William Gumpert Foundation

Impact Investors (\$25,000 - \$49,999)

- Carleton Management Inc.
- The Conrad Prebys Foundation
- Walter J. & Betty C. Zable Foundation

Learning Advocates (\$10,000 - \$24,999)

- Christensen Family Foundation
- The Fischer Family Fund *
- The LJ Galinson Advised Fund*
- Hologic
- Nordson Corporation Foundation
- PNC Foundation
- Karen & Jeffrey Silberman Family Fund*
- Walter J. & Betty C. Zable Foundation

Reading Patrons (\$5,000 - \$9,999)

- Anonymous
- The Baratz Family
- S. Bernstein Fund*
- Boys and Girls Foundation
- Cushman Foundation
- Toby Eisenberg
- Roberta & Mark Emerson

- Marjory Winkelman Epstein
- Samuel H. French & Katherine Weaver French Fund
- Kimberly & Jeffrey Goldman
- Norm Hapke
- Hunter Industries
- Gail & Don Kohn
- Leslye & Scott Lyons and family
- PGA Tour Wives Association, Inc.
- Lorne Polger & Lori Weiner
- Rice Family Foundation
- The Schoenith Foundation
- David & Tina Thomas Family Charitable Fund **

* Fund of the Jewish Community Foundation of San Diego

** Fund of the San Diego Foundation