



Let's Read Family Literacy Program Outcomes Report

All Partners 2021-22 PY

FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM OUTCOMES REPORT 2021-2022

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 from historically under-resourced communities often lack quality early literacy experiences that support their children's learning, which can put their children at higher risk for poor education and life consequences.

The Let's Read with Words Alive Family Literacy Program supports families in developing enriching literacy practices that nurture young children's language, curiosity, creativity, and play. This year, to purposefully continue bridging home and school connections for deeper literacy learning, the Let's Read Family Literacy Program extended its programming to include children in pre-K through second grade Title I public school classrooms whose teachers were also participating in our Read Aloud Program.

In each Let's Read session, books and crafts served as invitations for developing the mindset and practices of readers. Intentionally designed lessons encouraged 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 used in Let's Read sessions were also provided to teachers' classroom libraries which created opportunities for students to reread familiar books strengthening home and school collaboration.

OUR SHARED PURPOSE

At Words Alive, we believe that empowering experiences turn parents 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 2021-22 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.

PARTNERS

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

Diamond Educational Excellence Partnership
 Chollas-Mead Elementary
 Encanto Elementary
 Johnson Elementary
 Webster Elementary

Episcopal Community Services

Fullerton School District - Parent Engagement

Harriet Tubman Village Charter School

Neighborhood House Association – Head Start
 Altadena Head Start Site
 Clairemont Mesa Head Start
 Home Avenue Head Start
 Karen D. Love Head Start
 Mercado Head Start
 North Park Early Head Start
 STEM Institute of Early Learning
 Urban Village 1 Head Start
 Urban Village 2 Head Start
 Walker Head Start
 Webster Head Start

Oceanside Public Library

San Diego Unified School District
 Burbank Elementary
 Carver Elementary
 Edison Elementary
 Emerson Elementary
 Freese Elementary
 Porter Elementary
 Rolando Park Elementary
 Webster Elementary

This program and approach supported strategic goals of all 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*)

Our partnerships also supported 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.

PROGRAM METHOD & PROCESS CONDITIONS

Research shows that the most effective forms of family engagement are those that involve families in working directly with their children on learning activities at home (Cotton et al., 1989). Our program is designed to meet the *process conditions* needed to build this strong family engagement that leads to positive learning routines and improved achievement. As such, 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.

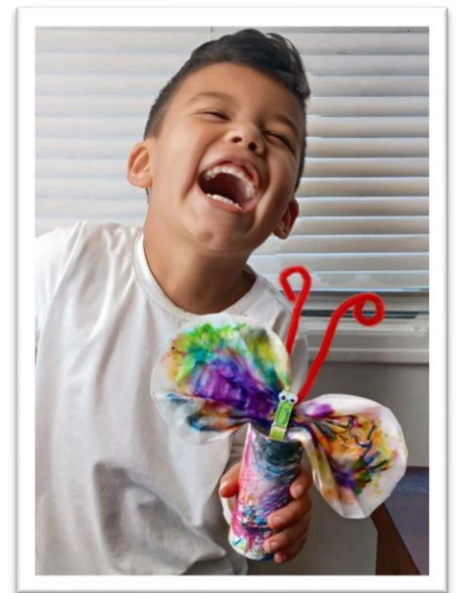
Relational: Activities help families build relationships, get to know one another, and build trust.

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.

This past year, the virtual iteration of our research-based, six-week family literacy program provided 5.5 hours of parent education on topics of early literacy development for preschool and school aged children. Each program session included a group story time with guided activities for parents and children, as well as information and skill-building extensions to support families with further learning at home.



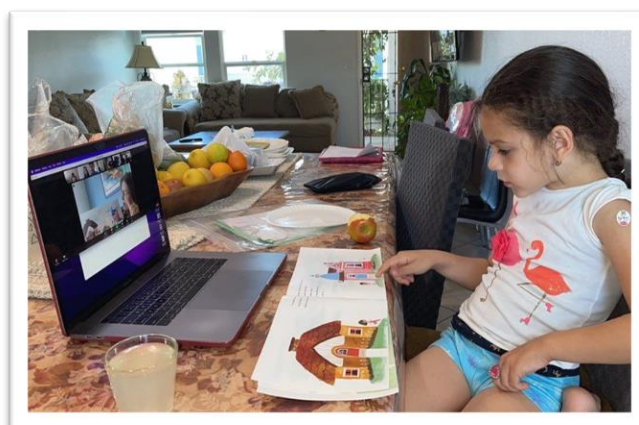
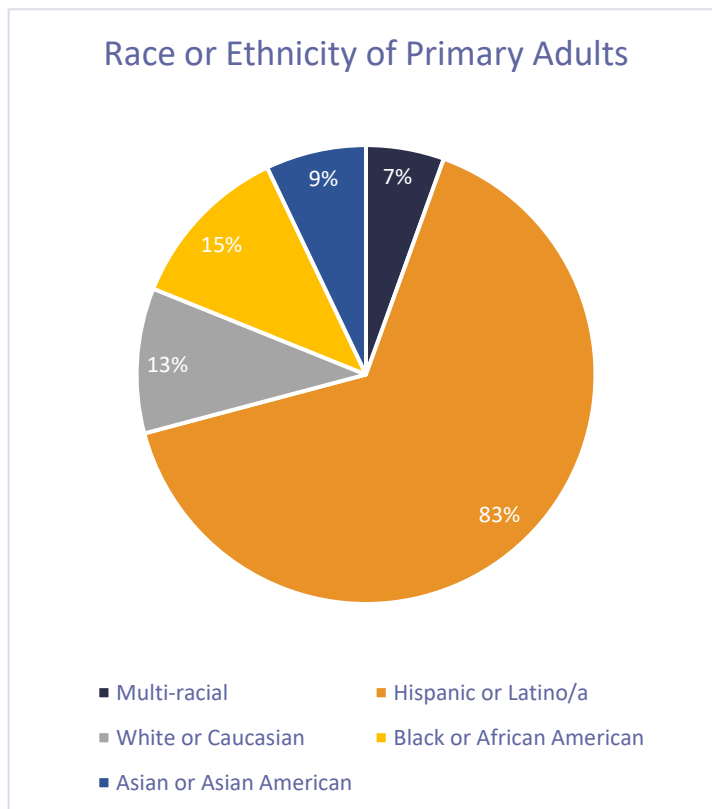
PICTURED: A YOUNG READER SHARES HIS CREATION, A METAMORPHOSIS RETELLING TOOL, AFTER READING *THE VERY IMPATIENT CATERPILLAR*.

FAMILIES SERVED

During the 2021-22 school year, 930 children from 882 families participated in the Let's Read with Words Alive Family Literacy Program, a 133% growth in children served during the previous year.

Of 127 reporting families...

- 94% were represented by a female family member.
- 66% speak a language other than English with their children at home. Represented languages include:
 - Arabic
 - French
 - French Creole
 - Italian
 - Mandarin Chinese
 - Oromo
 - Spanish
 - Tagalog
 - Tibetan
 - Vietnamese
 - Yoruba
- average age of the attending adult was 35 years old.
- 48% reported that additional caring adults attended with their child or took turns with the primary adult to attend sessions. The extended community of caring adults included co-parents, grandparents, great grandparents, adult siblings, aunts, babysitters, and family friends.
- average number of children living at home was 2.



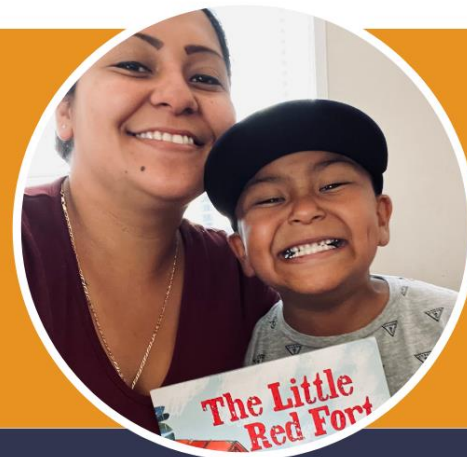
PICTURED: A YOUNG READER FOLLOWS ALONG IN HER COPY OF THE BOOK AT HOME DURING A VIRTUAL PROGRAM SESSION.

How Do We Connect Families to the Power of Reading?

THE WORDS ALIVE WAY

Bring People Together

A total of 930 children from 882 families participated in the Let's Read Family Literacy program in the 21-22 school year.



Create Access

Families took home 11,740 new children's books, with 31% more families reporting ownership of at least 30 books by program's end.

Build Habits

By program's end, the number of families who reported looking at books everyday grew by 49%.



Practice What Works

Families focused on learning strategies that support the power of play and children's innate sense of wonder.

OUTCOMES – WHAT CHANGED FOR FAMILIES

Research shows that providing books alone is not enough to jumpstart or strengthen reading habits at home. Instead, the most successful family literacy program models target (a) changing *parent behavior* and their understanding of their role in children’s pre-literacy development and (b) increasing *parent understanding* of the impact of a positive learning environment on a child’s education (NCFL, 1995; Tao et al., 1998; Dwyer, 1995; Gadsden, 1996).

Using this research base as a guide, and evaluative tools identified or developed by our third-party evaluative partners at the University of San Diego’s Caster Center for Non-Profit and Philanthropic Research, our Let’s Read Family Literacy Program focuses on three key impact goals. That:

Parents develop an enduring commitment to reading, meaning parents internalize the value of reading and develop durable family reading habits as they experience positive, shared reading interactions with their young children.

Parents and children become life-long learners, meaning parents experience positive attitudinal shifts about learning and their role as their child’s first and foremost teacher. Parents expand knowledge of children’s brain and reading development, and practices that support their children’s learning.

Parents become advocates for their children and their futures, meaning parents are empowered to invest in the future of their family by increasing self-confidence in their role as their child’s first and foremost teacher.

Our ultimate objective is that children and their parents believe in the power of reading and love what reading means in their lives. That is the tipping point between someone who can read and someone who calls themselves a *reader*. To get there, our program aims specifically to influence how parents *feel*, what they *know*, and what they *do* about their child’s reading development and enjoyment.

In our tenth year delivering the program, the workshop series increased child interest in reading and provided parents tools and confidence to change reading behaviors at home.



WHAT PARENTS SAID

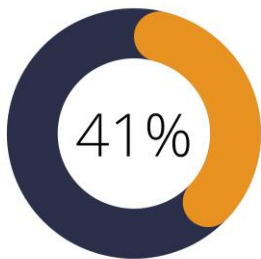
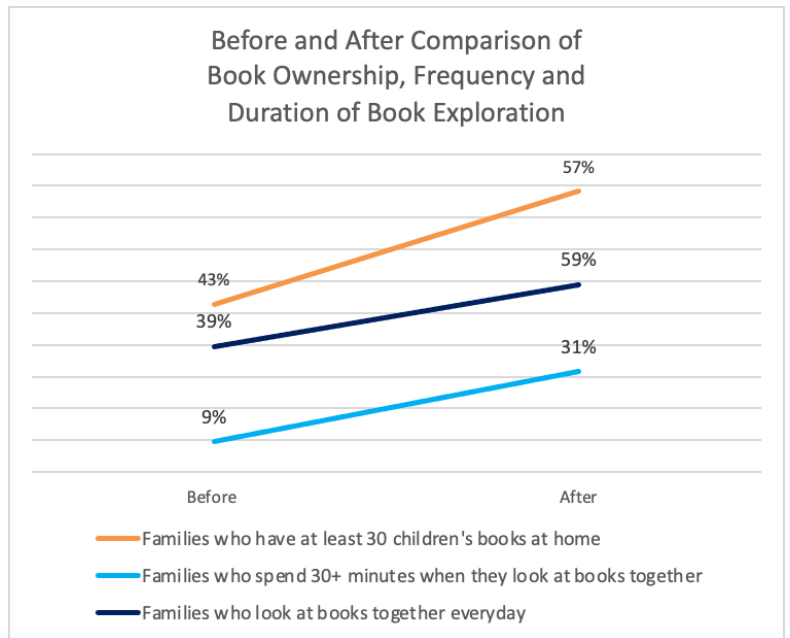
Parents who participated in the program were asked to complete an electronic, retroactive evaluation survey in the week following the program. This survey measured parent confidence in reading to their child and understanding of how small children develop as readers, with importance placed on literacy building activities and literacy behaviors before and after the program.

Survey responses from parents who participated in the virtual program were 100% positive. Parents stated they were reading more with their children, that they learned more about literacy development in young children and were better prepared to support their children while learning at home.

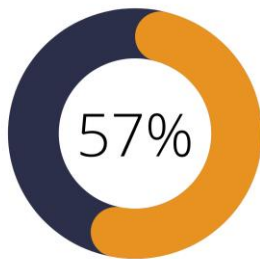
SURVEY RESPONSES AT A GLANCE

As shown at right, key indicators of pre-literacy skills each showed gains on the parent retrospective evaluation:

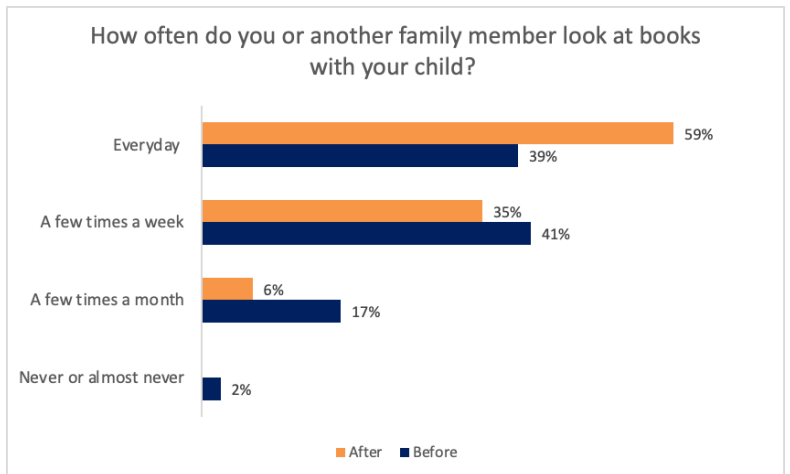
- The number of families who reported **looking at books together** every day increased by 49%.
- The number of families who **spend 30 minutes or more** when looking at books together grew by 233% by program’s end.
- The number of families who own at least **30 children’s books** at home increased by 31%.

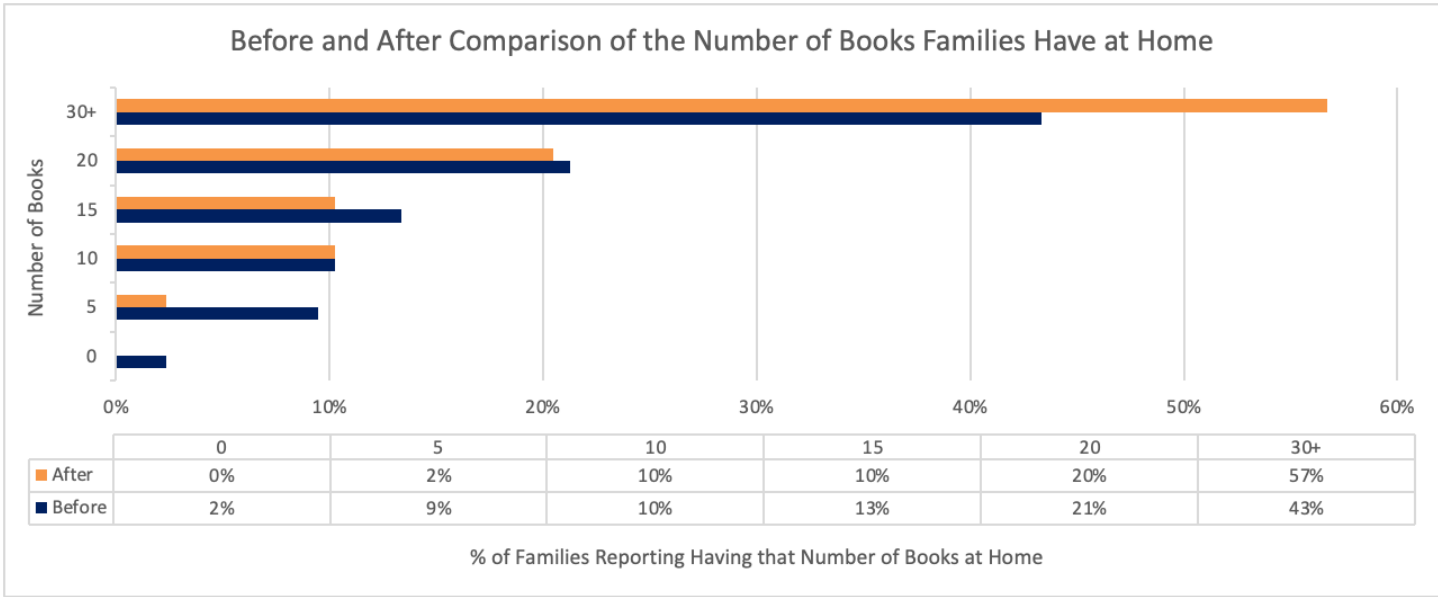


41% of families reported looking at books together more frequently after participating



57% of learners reported spending longer periods of time looking at books together after participating

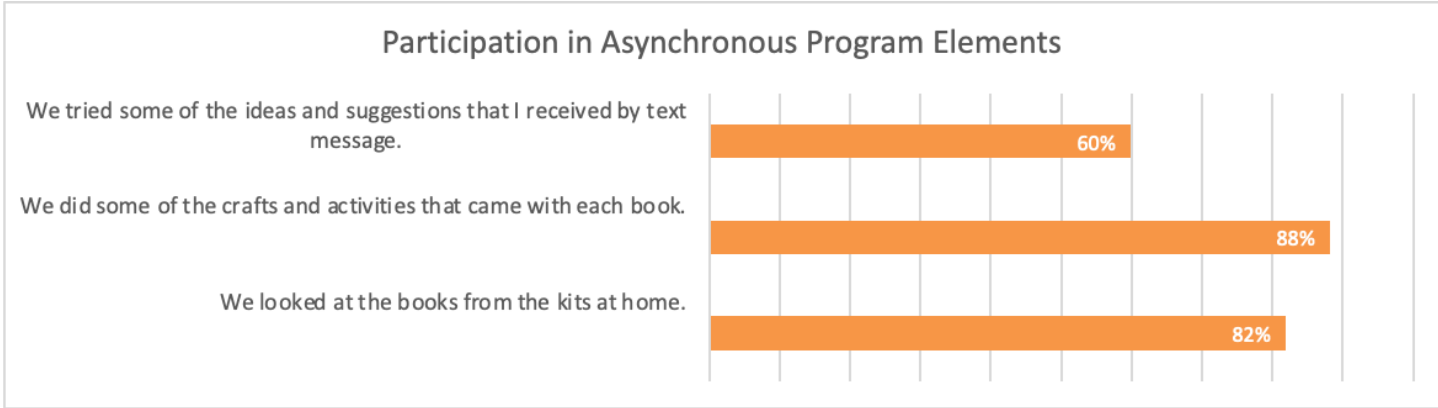




ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to live program sessions, families were encouraged to take part in asynchronous learning opportunities. Talking Points, a multilingual messaging app, was implemented in the 2021-2022 year. This platform allowed Words Alive to communicate with families efficiently and effectively through text messages in the language of their choice. Each week videos describing the Let’s Read program and purpose, details about the books used in the sessions, as well as ideas for ways to extend and further connect the learning from the session were shared. Let’s Read session time and Zoom links reminders were also shared along with local community opportunities for families at local museums and libraries. The app permitted an ease of communication for relationships to develop between Words Alive and families wherein advocacy and agency exist. For example, caregivers could request attending a different session time, communicate an absence, or ask a question about materials or supplies. Families could also share with Words Alive their children’s completed project.

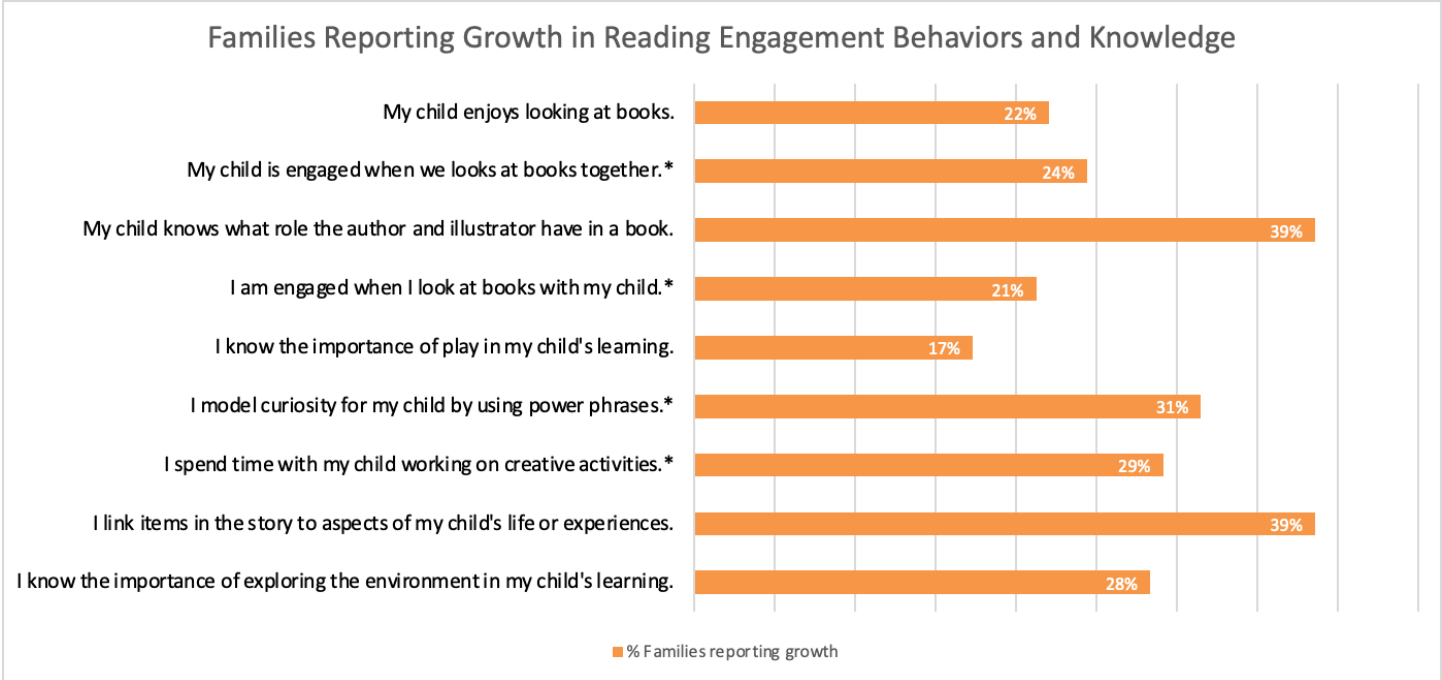
The figure below shows how families reported participating in the asynchronous elements of the program.



Along with their copy of the book and materials to complete creative projects, families received a printed page of curated ideas to explore each title on their own. These ideas were made available in **nine languages**. The figure below shows which activities families completed with *most or every book* they received.



Families were asked to reflect on how often they engaged in exploratory behaviors when looking at books together, how confident they were in their knowledge of literacy-building concepts, and their perceived level of engagement when reading together. The figure below shows how many families **reported growth** for key literacy building indicators after participating.



* Parent/Child engagement is described within the evaluation as pointing at or talking about the pictures, asking, and answering questions, etc.
 * Power phrases include “I wonder”, “I notice” and “Tell me more!”, etc.
 * Creative activities are described in the evaluation as singing, dancing, drawing, storytelling, etc.

Looking at the data from a different angle, below is a summary of the average response on a Likert Scale of 1-5 (with 5 being high) for each item on the **retroactive parent evaluation**, as self-reported by parents before and after the program.

| | Before | After | % Δ |
|--|--------|-------|-----|
| My child enjoys looking at books. | 4.59 | 4.90 | 7% |
| My child is engaged when we look at books together.* | 4.53 | 4.88 | 8% |
| My child knows what role the author and illustrator have in a book. | 3.83 | 4.48 | 17% |
| I am engaged when I look at books with my child.* | 4.61 | 4.84 | 5% |
| I know the importance of play in my child's learning. | 4.72 | 4.92 | 4% |
| I model curiosity for my child by using power phrases.* | 4.38 | 4.80 | 10% |
| I spend time with my child working on creative activities.* | 4.39 | 4.76 | 8% |
| I link items in the story to aspects of my child's life or experiences. | 4.22 | 4.73 | 12% |
| I know the importance of exploring the environment in my child's learning. | 4.56 | 4.91 | 8% |

* Parent/Child engagement is described within the evaluation as pointing at or talking about the pictures, asking, and answering questions, etc.

* Power phrases include “I wonder”, “I notice” and “Tell me more!”, etc.

* Creative activities are described in the evaluation as singing, dancing, drawing, storytelling, etc.

PARENT COMMENTS

Parents were also asked **how reading at home had changed** since participating in the program. Families shared that through participating in our program their children’s engagement with books at home has changed in significant ways.

Specific observations by families included children spending more time in books, talking in more depth about the pictures and content, asking questions, and making connections across texts. They also noticed their children recognizing more print in books and applying specific strategies such as visualization. These changes at home also extended to parents allowing their children more choice in book selection, as well as seeing reading time as a playful, fun, and creative experience.

Parent comments about changes included:

“Before, they only looked at the drawings and turned the pages, now they grab the book and sing, hug it, and point to each thing that happens.”

“I’ll never forget when they brought out their puppet theater from The Little Red Fort to the living room to put on a show for our entire family to see. They had dressed up and got into character, acting out the story. They did it all themselves and are making more connections every time they read a book.”

“We got to view reading from a different perspective, and since now I know how to ask questions that promote my child’s learning and techniques to make it fun, she doesn’t refuse to read. She enjoys it more!”

“Family members are noticing Yalemi’s love for reading. Her great grandmother was watching her one day and Yalemi took lots of books off the bookshelf and read them for a long time. The school librarian also called to tell me she was doing the same thing in the school library!”

“She gets more interested every time I tell her it’s time for us to read, she runs to get her books, I see more interest in her and she tells me what she sees.”



PICTURED: SIBLINGS RETELL *THE LITTLE RED FORT* USING A PUPPET THEATER THEY CREATED DURING THE PROGRAM SESSION.

Through the Let's Read program children develop their **identities as readers**. Children's identities as readers inform the stances they take towards their reading activities, reading lives, and participation both at school and home. For example, teachers share that students now show more interest in books, and they more confidently choose books to share and read with their friends in small groups. Families report participating in reading together differently. Before reading was something they would do "when they had a chance to."

"Now we take more time so that my daughter can express what she thinks about each book."

"Since Words Alive, we play more, explore more, and talk about the book."

"Now we connect activities to the story such as looking at the pictures, making predictions and then doing an activity."

"For me it's that he tells me more about what he sees and creates his own version of the figures, plus all his language and creation around what he sees."

"My child has always enjoyed books, but after participating in Let's Read we both have learned how we can use book and stories to make activities, games and play along with teaching myself how to use them to help my child understand real life situations and relate to characters."



PICTURED: A YOUNG READER EXPLORES MEASUREMENT OF HOUSEHOLD OBJECTS USING THE RULER FROM HER LEARNING KIT AFTER READING AN INFORMATIONAL BOOK COMPARING FACTS ABOUT ANIMALS.

Families also noticed that their children are **demonstrating independence, growing as readers**, as well as **taking initiative** with the care of their books and organization of their bookshelves.

"He takes initiative, and his overall creativity has increased. JT grabs books on his own and is recognizing more and more letters each time he reads. He has more confidence and wants to learn on his own. He is steadily learning to have a love for reading."

"I was surprised by how much Liam liked the program. When I picked him up from after-care, the whole way home he would say 'Hurry! I don't want to be late for reading class!'"

"Benjamin started going along with each story and was very excited about each book. It was surprising to see Benjamin recognize words from the Words Alive books in other books and other forms of print. For example, he pointed out the word 'penguin' in another book that he learned from Penguinaut."

"My child hands me books to read with him, whereas before I would have to suggest it."

"Before my child liked to look at books and ask what happened when he looked at the illustrations, he used to ask for explanations and now he just says what happens or he thinks while he looks at the pictures."



WHAT TEACHERS SAID

Educators often talk about “**lowering the affective filter**” for students, that is the emotional consideration given for students engaged in learning: making students feel safe to take risks when learning, valuing the contributions students share as they make sense of new material, and most importantly, recognizing that the learning process looks different for everyone. Through careful book selection, the use of play, lessons that incorporate all learning modalities, and creating spaces that let all children know they are welcome, safe, and loved, Let’s Read with Words Alive lowers children’s affective filters so that learning is enhanced at school and celebrated at home.

Teachers at participating schools – especially those who participate in our volunteer-led, classroom-based Read Aloud Program on elementary school campuses – were invaluable for their support in sharing information about the Let’s Read Family Literacy Program and encouraging families to participate.



When asked how the program supported their work as educators, teacher comments suggested the program helped create greater access for families and amplified educator recommendations that families read together at home.

About **increased access and engagement with families**, partner teachers said:

“I have always wanted to have some kind of family project to get the parents involved and excited with their child's learning. I believe that if parents and children worked on projects it would benefit the whole family and the children at different levels. As a whole there, would be shared time, problem solving, collaboration and memories created. At the student level they would see the importance an education is based on their family's involvement. There are always obstacles that interfere with this idea (economics, time restraints, etc.). As a teacher I would love to be able to assign family projects, but I wouldn't be able to provide the materials and I couldn't require families to go out and purchase items. By providing the materials the families were able to support their children in literacy which is the bases for all learning. I believe the whole family benefited from the experience.” – Griselda D., Emerson Elementary

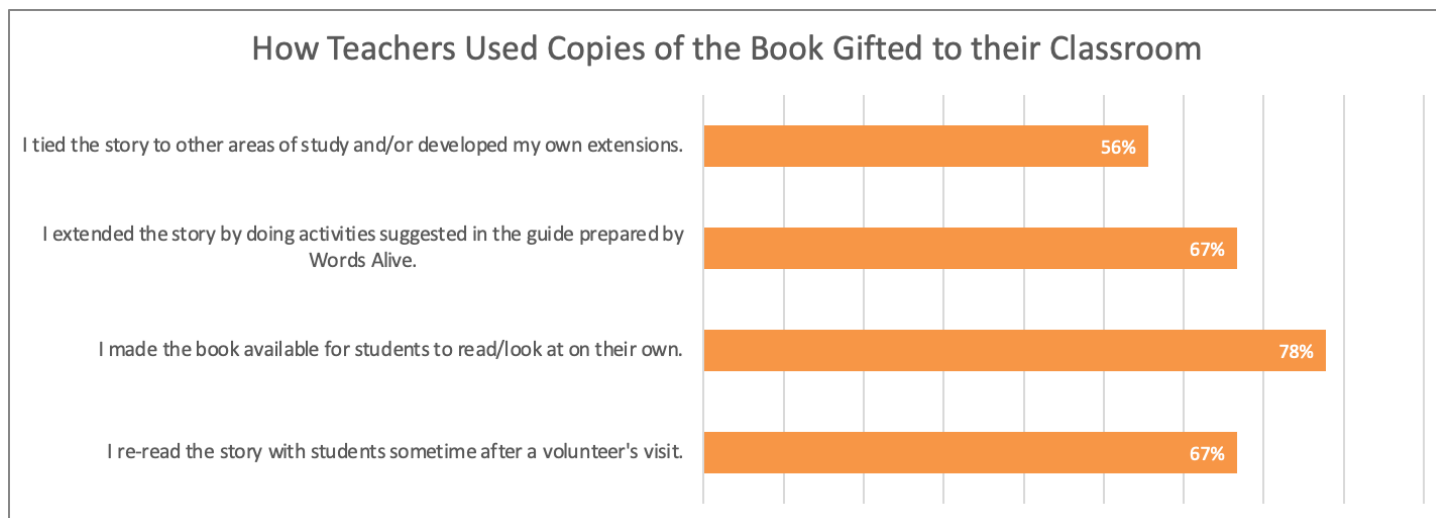
“I received a text from a parent whose son is autistic and shy and never wants to talk during class. His mom texted me because she was so excited that Maison wanted to unmute himself to talk to the group. With the help of his adult, he shared his craft and at the end said ‘thank you for listening.’ That’s been what we’ve been working on all year. I was in awe because he opened up to someone that he just met on the screen for a few weeks. That was incredible!” – Sierra W., Porter Elementary

“It supported the importance of reading outside the school, and gave children an opportunity to experience reading with a family member.” Lorena R., Emerson Elementary

“Students and parents were quite excited with all the books and art projects. It helped literature come to life and gave families the opportunity to enjoy a family book time together.” – C. Lloyd, Freese Elementary

“It was really sweet hearing about how my students were able to read and do the craft activities with their families. What a great bonding experience and positive association for them to have with reading!” - Teacher

To **bolster book access in classrooms** and to explore the effect that access had on engagement with students participating in Let's Read Family Literacy sessions at home, Words Alive gifted elementary school teachers with copies of the books used with families in the program. The figure below highlights how teachers reported using copies of books in their classrooms. Teacher comments suggested that having copies of the books bridged student learning in the classroom with students' home space.



About **access and connections to the classroom**, partner teachers said:

"I'm a new teacher and I didn't have books in my class. Words Alive has added tons of quality books to my library and introduced me to new titles. I liked having copies of the books accessible because students were able to re-read the story. Repetition is helpful. They got to read the story aloud, then read it at home, then saw it in class to read on their own." – Katie H., Porter Elementary

"Students came in excited after completing the projects. A few brought their projects in to share with other who were not participating. Our classroom theme is space, so Penguinaut! was a perfect addition to our classroom. The Very Impatient Caterpillar tied in with our Life Cycle unit and again the students were able to make a connection to the learning in the classroom. Giraffes Can't Dance is one of my favorite books. The students brought their handprints in to show me and suggested that maybe I should do that activity with the book instead of the one I have. The handprint was much 'cooler.'" – Griselda D., Emerson Elementary

"Many of my students brought the butterfly paper tubes to class to show me because we have been watching our milkweed plants grow and caterpillars eat the leaves. I also had parents send pictures of the giraffe growth mindset work, and parents thank me for 'pushing' them to sign up for the program. I heard about siblings joining in. Kids were excited to share with me that they knew the books from their zoom class." – Michelle W., Carver Elementary

"With this program, we teachers were able to provide an extension that was started at home rather than at school. It's a great idea. It's a great model." Yazmin H., Rolando Park Elementary

"Engaging and connecting that everything we do at school can also be done at home. [It showed that] parents are the teachers at home and students need to pay attention and learn at home also. The connection was very powerful." – Lilian K., Edison Elementary

REFLECTIONS AND ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

In our tenth year delivering the Let's Read with Words Alive Family Literacy Program, we continue to observe a deep resiliency among families and that supporting parent involvement in literacy development translates to stronger reading habits at home. We consistently find that given the tools, parents are ready to invest in their child's learning.

Words Alive was honored to receive the Advancing Social Justice and Equity Award for our work with families at the EDInnovate Showcase in June, hosted by the University of San Diego's Jacobs Institute for Innovation in Education.



ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

The virtual format of the Let's Read Family Literacy Program expanded access this year by including kindergarten through second grade learners and offering sessions on weekends for busy families and working parents. Through this format the number of families participating in Let's Read increased three-fold. Families who participated in virtual delivery of the program also grew their access to books, exploratory habits, and skillsets around reading. Words Alive continues to explore practices and processes that safely bring families together to learn in accessible places and modes, maximizes impact and reach, and protects dedicated learning time for caring adults of young children outside of the school day and space.

In the year ahead we intend to strengthen the impact of the Let's Read Family Literacy Program in exciting ways, by:

- Developing enriching content and engaging literacy opportunities for readers in UTK-2nd grade
- Deepening connections in transitional kindergarten and other early education spaces
- Developing opportunities for families to meet authors of the stories read in the program.

In the meantime, we look forward building strong reading habits together while discovering the growth and magic that comes along with sharing stories.

THANK YOU

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

William Gumpert Foundation

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

Century Club of San Diego

Dr. Seuss Foundation

Farmers Insurance

The Conrad Prebys Foundation

San Diego Foundation

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

Hologic

Qualcomm Incorporated

Rancho Santa Fe Foundation

S. Mark Taper Foundation

The Westreich Foundation

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

Bravo Foundation

Carleton Management Inc.

Christensen Family Foundation

Craft - DeMeules Family Fund

Toby Eisenberg

Lee Goldberg

Kimberly & Jeffrey Goldman

Kay & Bill Gurtin

Jordan Ressler Charitable Fund*

Cynthia & Aaron Shenkman

The Patricia & Christopher Weil Family Foundation

Walter J. & Betty C. Zable Foundation

Reading Patrons (\$5,0000 - \$9,999)

S. Bernstein Fund*

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Samuel H. French & Katherine Weaver French Fund

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PGA Tour Wives Association, Inc.

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Santa Monica Press

The Schoenith Foundation

Rick Seidenwurm

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