



Family Literacy Program Outcomes Report

FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM OUTCOMES REPORT 2019

WHY FAMILY LITERACY & OUR PARTNERSHIP MATTERS

The ability to read is a gateway skill to positive life outcomes, and development of that skill starts early. There is also overwhelming academic consensus that the preschool years (0-5 years) are a crucial period of pre-literacy development and that children of parents 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 underserved communities often lack access to opportunities that support their children's learning, which can put their children at higher risk for poor education and life outcomes.

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 2018-19 school year, Words Alive partnered with like-minded leadership and family engagement teams with the following partners to deliver the Words Alive Family Literacy Program at 24 locations:

- Diamond Education Excellence Partnership
- Fullerton School District
- Neighborhood House Association – Head Start
- Oceanside Unified School District

This program and partnership 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 partnership 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 awareness of sounds, books, words and print.
- **Approaches to Learning:** Children will demonstrate attention, persistence, engagement, curiosity and initiative.





How do we help families fall in love with reading?

“ THE MOST VALUABLE THING I LEARNED IS THAT READING IS IN EVERYTHING WE DO. ”

- WORDS ALIVE PARENT PARTICIPANT

1. Bring families together

356 families attended our Family Literacy Program during the 2018-19 school year, of which 56% completed to program!



438 adults & 591 children



2. Create access

Families took home 2,330 new children's books, growing the average size of their home library from 12 to 17 books, or by



3. Build Habits

Families clocked 2,108 hours of learning & reading time, with

66% more

reporting by program's end that they have a routine for looking at books together at home.



4. Practice what works

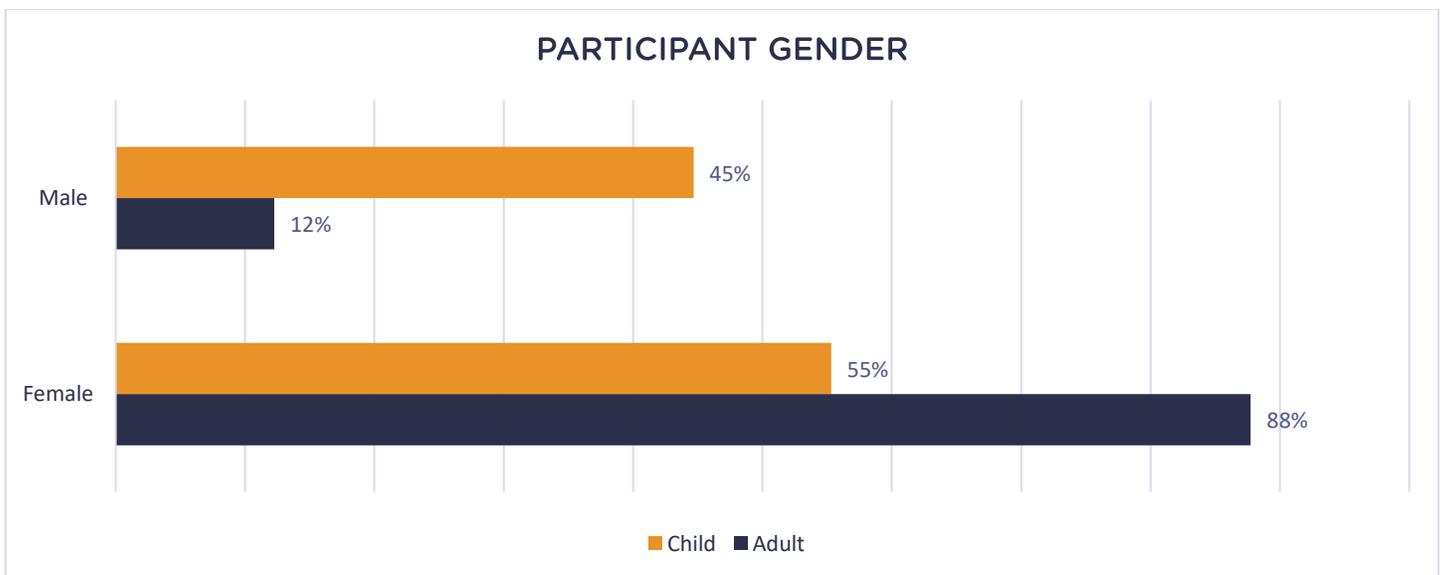
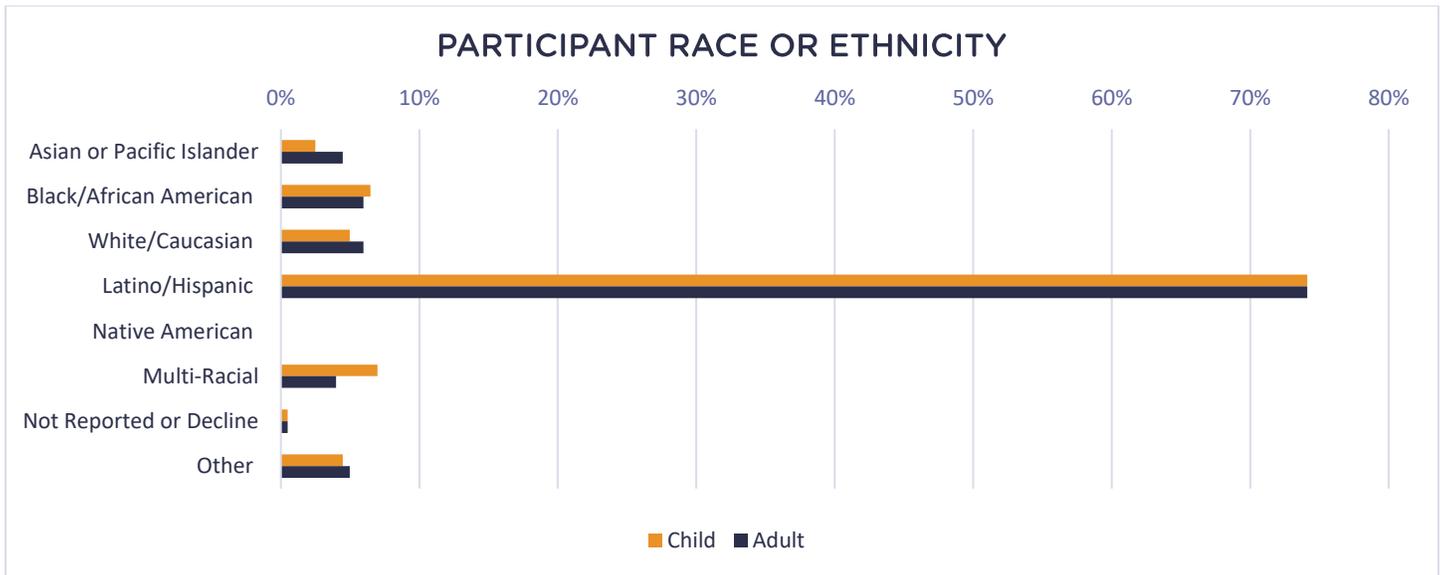
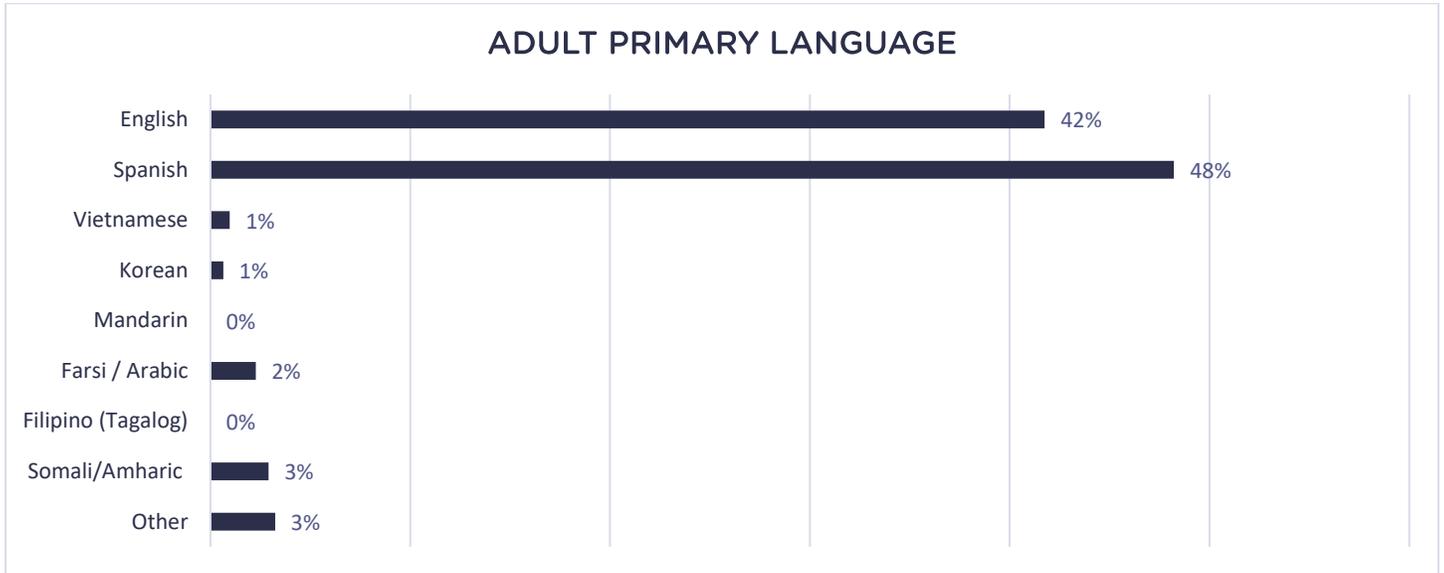
Families focused on learning strategies that support the power of play & children's innate sense of wonder.



Greatest areas of reported growth include:

- I know how my preschool age child learns
- I know how to create language-rich environments for my child
- I model curiosity for my child using power phrases
- I link items in the story to aspects of my child's life & experiences
- My child knows the role of the author & illustrator in a book

DEMOGRAPHICS OF FAMILIES SERVED



OUR PROGRAM METHOD & PROCESS CONDITIONS

Our research based, seven-week program provides 10.5 hours of parent education on topics of early literacy development for preschool age children. Each program session includes information and skill building exercises for parents, group story time and guided activities for parents and children.

Research shows that the most effective forms of family engagement are those that engage families in working directly with their children on learning activities at home.¹ Our program is designed to meet the *process conditions* needed to build the strong family engagement that leads to positive learning routines and improved achievement. 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.

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.

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 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 seventh 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 participated in a focus group and were asked to complete a retroactive evaluation survey during the last week of the program. This survey intends to measure parent confidence in reading to their child and understanding of how small children develop as readers, the importance is placed on literacy building activities and literacy behaviors before and after the program.

Survey responses from parents who participated in the program were 100% positive. Overwhelmingly, parents stated they were reading more with their children, that they learned more about early literacy development in young children and had learned valuable ways to incorporate language and reading in their daily lives.

SURVEY RESPONSES AT A GLANCE

All indicators on the parent retrospective evaluation showed gains. However, the following indicators make up the top five indicators where parents reported the *greatest gains* in their level of confidence or frequency of targeted behaviors:

- ***I know how my preschool-age child learns.*** (PARENT KNOWLEDGE)
- ***I know how to create language rich environment for my child.*** (PARENT KNOWLEDGE)
- ***I model curiosity for my child using power phrases.*** (LITERACY BUILDING ACTIVITIES)
- ***My child knows what role the author and illustrator have in a book.*** (CHILD KNOWLEDGE)
- ***I link items in the story to aspects of my child's life or experiences.*** (BOOK SHARING BEHAVIORS)

PARTNERS IN CREATIVITY

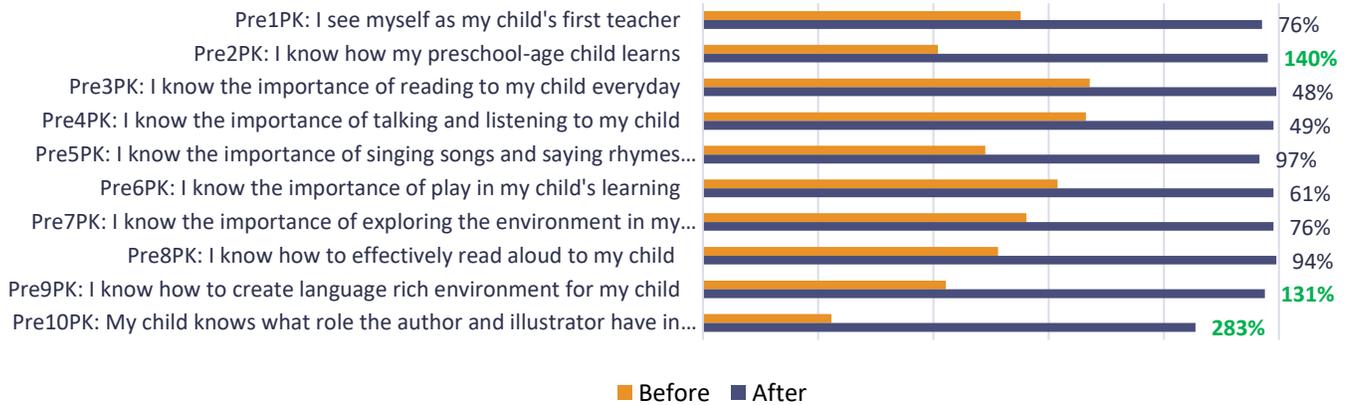
In Words Alive's third year as a *pARTner in Creativity* with the New Children's Museum, participating families were invited to a free day at the museum featuring a private series of art projects in Museum's education center. The day served as an extension of central programmatic themes – the power of play and making reading more playful!



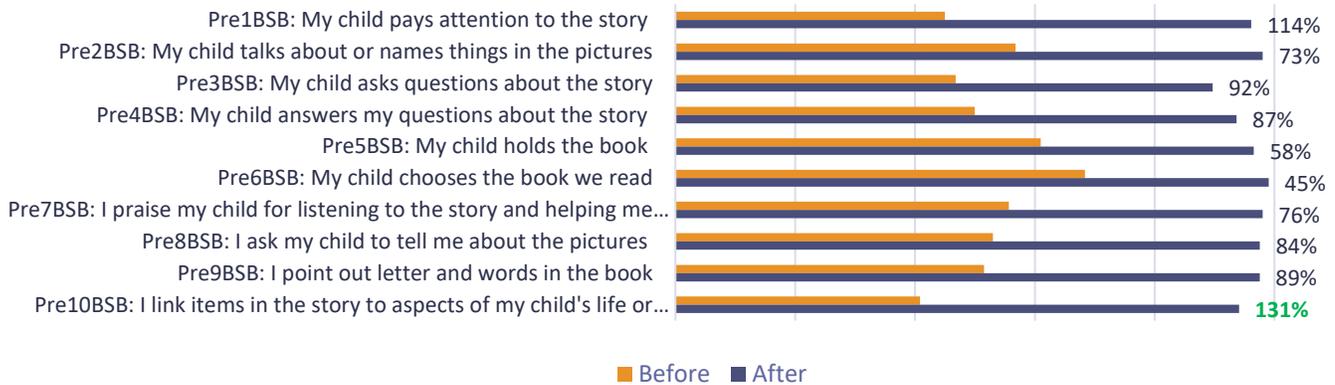
FULL RETROACTIVE PARENT EVALUATION

The figures below compare how many parents rated themselves at the highest end of the scale for key indicators before and after the program. The % increase on the far right reflects how many MORE parents rated themselves at the *highest end* of the scale for each indicator after completing the program. **Indicators highlighted in green make up the top quarter where parents reported the greatest gains in confidence or behavior frequency.** Note that n=203.

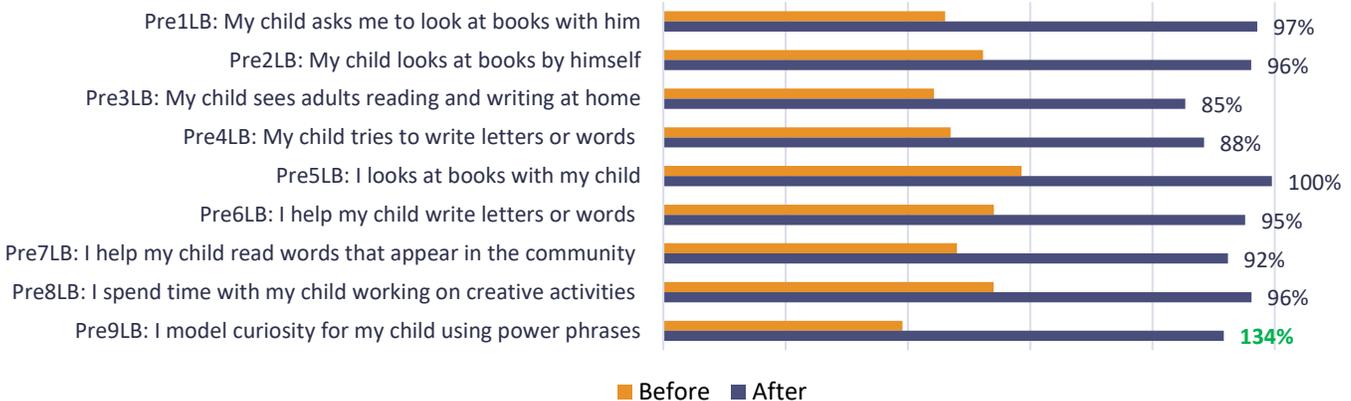
BEFORE AND AFTER COMPARISON OF PARENT RATING THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF EARLY LITERACY CONCEPTS AS HIGH OR VERY HIGH



BEFORE AND AFTER COMPARISON OF PARENTS RATING THE FREQUENCY OF BOOK-SHARING BEHAVIORS AS OFTEN OR VERY OFTEN



BEFORE AND AFTER COMPARISON OF PARENTS RATING THE FREQUENCY OF LITERACY BUILDING-BEHAVIORS AS OFTEN OR VERY OFTEN



FULL RETROACTIVE PARENT EVALUATION

Looking at the data from a different angle, below is a summary of the average response on a Likert Scale of 1-5 for each item on the retroactive parent evaluation, as self-reported by parents before and after the program. Note that n=203.

Parent Knowledge (scale of 1-5, where 1=low & 5=high)	Before	After	Change
I see myself as my child's first teacher	3.60	4.77	32%
I know how my preschool-age child learns	3.24	4.72	46%
I know the importance of reading to my child everyday	3.89	4.95	27%
I know the importance of talking and listening to my child	3.99	4.92	24%
I know the importance of signing songs and saying rhymes with my child	3.47	4.78	38%
I know the importance of play in my child's learning	3.76	4.88	30%
I know the importance of exploring the environment in my child's learning	3.62	4.89	35%
Know how to effectively read aloud to your child	3.55	4.85	37%
I know how to create language rich environment for my child	3.25	4.71	45%
My child knows what role the author and illustrator have in a book	2.55	4.32	70%

Literacy-Building Behaviors (scale of 1-5, where 1=low & 5=higher frequency)	Before	After	Change
My child asks me to look at books with him	3.40	4.95	45%
My child looks at books by himself	3.51	4.72	35%
My child sees adults reading and writing at home	3.33	4.37	31%
My child tries to write letters or words	3.33	4.48	34%
I look at books with my child	3.68	4.83	31%
I help my child write letters or words	3.53	4.65	32%
I help my child read words that appear in the community	3.37	4.60	37%
I spend time with my child working on creative activities	3.55	4.68	32%
I model curiosity for my child using power phrases	3.15	4.72	50%

Book-Sharing Behaviors (scale of 1-5, where 1=low & 5=higher frequency)	Before	After	Change
My child pays attention to the story	3.36	4.66	39%
My child talks about or names things in the pictures	3.64	4.78	31%
My child asks questions about the story	3.39	4.79	41%
My child answers my questions about the story	3.41	4.59	35%
My child holds the book	3.82	4.79	25%
My child chooses the book we read	4.02	4.87	21%
I praise my child for listening to the story and helping me read	3.68	4.84	32%
I ask my child to tell me about the pictures	3.60	4.77	32%
I point out letter and words in the book	3.49	4.78	37%
I link items in the story to aspects of my child's life or experiences	3.26	4.50	38%

PARENT COMMENTS AND FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES

After the program, parents reported positive changes in attitudes about reading at home and felt more empowered to help their children.

Parent comments about changes included:

We went from reading a page or two to now reading 2-3 books before bedtime.

Reading is now more of a bonding experience.

We have improved a lot - me as a father and he as a child. Reading allows us to both learn.

Now I am more attentive and read every day with my daughter.

My son likes to share his books with his older brother and sister. He even asks dad to read to him more.

My older daughter enjoys reading more with my younger daughter in an interactive way.

My child is more interested in the books and in reading and doing activities.

It has extended her language and she stays focused longer.

I let him take the lead when we read. He turns the pages and points, and I describe more than read.

I let him ask questions during the story and help him find his own answers.

I don't force my children to finish the book but encourage them to explore it.

I am more open minded to listen to what she is thinking and don't push my opinion.

Parents were also asked to identify the *most valuable thing* they learned through participating in the workshops. Their statements suggested a better understanding of the importance of reading with their children and their own roles in their children's literacy development.

About learning they said:

How important it is to be involved in their lives emotionally and educationally.



How important it is to talk about the book together.

How to understand my kids better and helped me realize that they are capable of doing things by themselves.

How to keep my kids engaged during story time.

Reading is important to my child's life.

That I need to make reading interesting, fun and enjoyable.

I don't have to read word for word, and we can discuss what the pictures are telling us.

The enrichment that comes from reading daily with my children.

The importance of reading and learning how to read.

I learned how to make reading fun for my kids and to let them make up their own stories.

Finally, we asked parents to identify one word to describe their experience participating with their child and other families in the program. Their responses suggested an empowering experience for families. Note that n=203.

Parent descriptions included:



REFLECTIONS AND ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

In our seventh year delivering the 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, and that given the tools, parents are ready to invest in their child's learning.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Moving forward, we also want to explore what this program can look like for preschool or kindergarten participants with older siblings. Parents often comment on how changes in reading habits with their preschool or kindergarten age children changes the tone with siblings as well. How can we engage those siblings directly? Future development of the program could include expanding the curriculum for infants, toddlers and upper elementary school age children, and specially, finding ways to encourage children who enjoy reading to share books with their siblings. Reading development is a family affair, and these too are critical years for children to connect reading with family and fun!

In the meantime, we look forward to learning from new families with each community partnership and building strong reading habits together – discovering the growth and magic that comes along with sharing stories.

¹ Cotton, K., Wikelund, K., Northwest Regional Education Laboratory, School Improvement Research Series. In Parent Involvement in Education.