



## **RAISING A READER PROGRAM EVALUATION**

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August 2017

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

Raising A Reader is an early literacy program provided to low-income families that is designed to educate parents about the importance of early literacy skills. Southwest Human Development provides free early literacy training to families through workshops delivered in schools, community centers, and low income apartment communities. Parents or guardians attend eight weekly early literacy workshops. After each workshop, they take home a bag of age-appropriate books to share with their children. Each week, the bag is exchanged for a new set of books. Parents or guardians who complete the program receive five high-quality children's books to keep. Participating parents or guardians were surveyed at the beginning and at the end of the program.

In 2016-2017, the Raising A Reader program reached over 500 families in 59 sites; on average, 9 parents or guardians participated at each site. The trainings were offered for two hours per week over eight weeks, totaling sixteen hours of early literacy intervention. Given the brief time frame of the intervention, the comparison between the participants' responses on the pre- and post-program surveys suggest that the program was highly successful.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The comparison between the participants' responses on the pre-and post-program surveys suggests that the Raising a Reader program had a positive influence on the participants' household reading routines. Overall, participants reported that the time spent and the literacy practices they engaged in during their reading routines with their children increased.

Specific findings include:

- The majority of the adult participants in the program were mothers (85%).
- Before participating in Raising a Reader, a majority (67%) of parents or guardians reported that they were "very confident" reading or sharing books with their children. After participating in the program, almost all parents or guardians (92%) reported that they were very confident reading or sharing books with their children. At the program's conclusion, only a small number of parents (1%) reported that they were "not at all confident" reading or sharing books with their children.
- Most of the parents or guardians reported that they engaged in literacy activities with their children prior to participating in the program. Seventy-nine percent or more of the participants reported that they told a story to their children, played music or sang songs to their children, talked about letters, numbers or words, or read a book with their child during the past week. After participating in Raising a Reader, 96% or more of the parents or guardians reported engaging in these activities with their children.
- While a substantial majority of the parents or guardians reported reading to their children prior to participating in Raising a Reader, fewer reported engaging with their child while reading. At the program's conclusion, a larger number of parents or guardians reported that they asked their children questions about the story, their child asked questions about the story, or that their children "read" to them or told them a story about the pictures while reading. This suggests that participating in Raising a Reader may have improved the quality of parents or guardians' interactions with their children while reading.
- Parents and guardians perceived that their children enjoyed reading more after participating in Raising a Reader than they did before the program. This may be a result of children's increased opportunities to read with parents and guardians by the end of the program (see below). None of the parents or guardians reported that their children did not enjoy reading after the program, compared to 3% prior to participation. Eighty-seven percent of the parents or guardians reported that their children "definitely enjoyed" reading after participating in the Raising a Reader, compared to 61% before the program.
- While most of the parents or guardians (77%) reported that their children asked to be read to or brought them books to share prior to participating in the program, fewer than half (47%) of families had a reading routine with their children. At the

program's completion, 85% of parents or guardians indicated that they had a reading routine with their children.

- After participating in the program, household members' time spent reading with their children increased. Seventy-two percent of parents or guardians reported that they or someone in their households read to their children three or more times in a week, compared to 50% prior to participation. Of these, 40% read to their children daily compared to 27% prior to participating in Raising a Reader.
- Fewer than half of the participating parents or guardians reported having a library card before the program (45%). After the program, 71% of the participants had library cards. The percentage of parents or guardians who took their children to the library also increased substantially from 44% before the program to 66% after the program. The number of parents or guardians who took their children to the library at least once a month also increased.

## PARTICIPANTS' BACKGROUNDS

Adult participants' relationship to the children:

<i>Relationship</i>	<i>%<sup>1</sup></i>
Mother	85%
Father	5%
Grandparent	6%
Other	3%
No response	1%

N=515

Age of participating children:

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Less than 1 year	16%
Ages 1-2	35%
Ages 3-4	32%
Ages 5-6	1%
No response	15%

N=515

### ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES BEFORE AND AFTER PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

1. How confident are you reading and sharing books with your child?

	<i>Before program</i>	<i>After program</i>
Not at all confident	5%	1%
Somewhat confident	28%	7%
Very confident	67%	92%

N=470

The parents or guardians participating in Raising a Reader are likely participating in the program because they understand the importance of early reading. This may be why two-thirds of the parents who responded to the pre-program survey reported that they were "very confident" reading or sharing books with their children at the beginning of the program. Most of the parents (92%) reported that they were very confident reading and sharing books with their children at the conclusion of the program. There was also a substantial decrease in the number of parents reporting that they were "not at all confident" reading or sharing books with their children. Only four parents reported that they were "not at all confident" compared to 23 before the program began. Likewise, of the 130 parents that reported they were "somewhat confident" reading books with their children at the beginning of the program, 110 or 85% reported that they were "very

<sup>1</sup> Percentages here and in other tables may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

confident” after the program. This question had the second highest non-response rate. Nine percent of the parents or guardians surveyed did not respond to this question.

2. In the past week have you and or a family member:

a. Told a story to your child?

	<i>Before program</i>	<i>After program</i>
Yes	81%	96%
No	19%	4%

N=503

b. Played music or sang songs with your child?

	<i>Before program</i>	<i>After program</i>
Yes	84%	96%
No	16%	4%

N=508

c. Talked about letters, words or numbers with your child?

	<i>Before program</i>	<i>After program</i>
Yes	84%	97%
No	16%	3%

N=504

d. Shared a book with your child?

	<i>Before program</i>	<i>After program</i>
Yes	79%	97%
No	21%	3%

N=499

Most of the parents or guardians (79% or more) engaged in literacy activities with their children prior to participating in Raising a Reader. At the program’s conclusion, almost all parents or guardians (96% or more) were engaging in literacy activities with their children.

3. The last time I shared a book with my child:

a. I asked my child questions about the story

	<i>Before program</i>	<i>After program</i>
Yes	62%	87%
No	38%	13%

N=499

b. My child turned the pages of the book

	<i>Before program</i>	<i>After program</i>
Yes	77%	92%
No	23%	8%

N=508

c. My child asked questions about the book.

	<i>Before program</i>	<i>After program</i>
Yes	59%	82%
No	41%	18%

N=500

d. My child “read” to me or told me a story about the pictures.

	<i>Before program</i>	<i>After program</i>
Yes	54%	77%
No	46%	22%

N=495

While most of the parents or guardians reported engaging in literacy activities with their children prior at the beginning of the program, participating in Raising a Reader seems to have improved the quality of their interactions with their children during reading. For example, 62% of parents or guardians asked their children questions about the stories they were reading before the program, compared to 87% after the program, a 40% increase (Question 3a). Likewise, participants reported that before participating in the program, 59% of their children asked questions about the last book they shared, compared to 82% after the program was completed (Question 3c), a 39% increase.

4. Does your child enjoy sharing books or reading?

	<i>Before Program</i>	<i>After Program</i>
Does not enjoy	3%	0%
Somewhat enjoys	36%	14%
Definitely enjoys	61%	87%

N=489

Parents and guardians reported that their children’s enjoyment in reading or sharing books increased after participating in the program. At the end of the program, most children (87%) “definitely enjoy” reading or sharing books, compared to 61% before the program, a 60% increase.

5. Does your child ask to be read to or bring you books to share?

	<i>Before program</i>	<i>After program</i>
Yes	77%	92%
No	23%	8%

N=492

6. Do you have a reading routine with your child?

	<i>Before program</i>	<i>After program</i>
Yes	47%	85%
No	53%	15%

N=466

A majority of the parents or guardians who responded reported that their children asked to be read to, both before (77%) and after (92%) the program. However, prior to participating in Raising a Reader, fewer than half reported having a reading routine with their children. After participating in the program, 85% of the parents or guardians reported that they had a reading routine with their children, an increase of 81%. This question had the highest non-response rate; 10 percent of parents or guardians did not respond to this question.

6a through 6c. If you have a reading routine with your child, when do you share books?

	<i>Before program</i>	<i>After program</i>
Bedtime	95% (N=192)	97% (N=319)
Bath	56% (N= 98)	73% (N=133)
Naptime	68% (N=109)	78% (N=155)

Most of the parents or guardians who had reading routines with their children reported sharing books with their child at bedtime before and after the program. Some participants reported having reading routines at multiple times (e.g., bedtime and bath).



7. How many times did you or someone else in your household read to your child last week?

	<i>Before Program</i>	<i>After Program</i>
None	16%	3%
1-2	34%	25%
3-5	23%	32%
Daily	27%	40%

N=487

Sixteen percent of the parents reported that they did not read to their children in the week prior to the pre-program survey. After the program was completed, there was a substantial decrease in the percentage of parents that reported that they did not read to their children. Specifically, at the beginning of the program 79 parents or guardians (16%) reported they did not read to their children in the prior week, compared to 15 (3%) after the program's completion. In addition, there was a 48% increase in the percentage of parents who reported reading to their children daily.

8. Do you have a library card?

	<i>Before program</i>	<i>After program</i>
Yes	45%	71%
No	55%	29%

N=485

9. Do you take your child to the library?

	<i>Before program</i>	<i>After program</i>
Yes	44%	66%
No	57%	34%

N=480

9a. If you take your child to the library, how often do you go to the library in a month?

	<i>Before Program (N=202)</i>	<i>After Program (N=309)</i>
Once	34%	35%
Two or three days	29%	30%
At least once a week	37%	36%

Forty-five percent of the participating parents or guardians reported having a library card at the beginning of the program. At the end of the program, 71% of the parents or guardians had library cards, a 43% increase. The percentage of parents or guardians who took their children to the library also increased from 44% before the program to 66% after

the program, a 50% increase. Two hundred two or 41% of the participating parents or guardians reported taking their children to the library two times or more in the past month after participating in Raising a Reader compared to 134 (26%) before the program.

## ANALYTICAL NOTES

The pre-program and post-program surveys were administered to a total of 519 parents or guardians. Four participants skipped more than five questions on either the pre- or the post-program survey and were dropped from the analysis. In the analysis of each individual survey questions, only the participants that answered both the pre- and post-program survey were included in the analysis, which resulted in slightly different numbers of participants included in the analysis for each question. The number of respondents, or Ns, are noted underneath each table.

The McNemar and the McNemar-Bowker tests were used to test the significance of the differences between the pre-program responses and the post-program responses (Adedokun & Burgess, 2012) because the data is paired. In other words, respondents' answers on the post-program survey are not independent from their responses on the pre-program survey, so the statistical test must take this feature of the data into account. The McNemar test is used when survey items are dichotomous (e.g., yes/no questions) and the McNemar-Bowker Test is used for survey items with multiple categories (e.g., Question 1).

With the exceptions of Question 4, which could not be tested because of an empty cell (none of the parents reported that their children do not enjoy reading in the post-program survey), and Questions 6a through 6c and 9a, which were follow-up questions with varying response rates, all of the differences in participants' responses between the pre-program survey and the post-program survey were statistically significant.

Adedokun, O. A. & Burgess, W. D. (2012). Analysis of paired dichotomous data: A gentle introduction to the McNemar Test in SPSS. *Journal of multidisciplinary evaluation*, 8(17), 125-131.