

Read-Aloud Volunteer Program

Annual Review 2017-18





Read-Aloud Volunteer Program

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Read-Aloud Volunteer Program

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Comments from the Executive Director

Read-Aloud Volunteer Program is proud to have supported literacy in West Contra Costa County since 1995. Read-Aloud matches teacher nominated students with adult volunteers to read together, one-on-one, during class time but in a separate reading room. Students take home books every two weeks to build home libraries.

Over the 2017-18 school year, Read-Aloud served 207 regular students plus alternates in 49 K-2nd grade classrooms at 5 West Contra Costa Unified schools, with 102 adult volunteers. The volunteer worth of the Readers for the 2017-18 program year was \$111,700 and with an additional \$4,500 for the 2018 summer programming at Richmond's Camp Achieve; or 3,996 hours of volunteer work. With Read-Aloud programming and outreach events, Read-Aloud distributed 6,092 new and gently used books to children and families in the community.

Program year data highlights include: Over one-third of students improved from reading below grade level to reading at grade level, while 3.6% improved from below grade level to above. Teachers remarked that 39% of children in the program showed improved reading interest, and 39% showed improvement in their confidence. Ninety-four percent of students improved their social skills. Families appreciate the program; 99% said their child was excited/joyful about having new books and 95% noticed their child enjoying reading with, or to, a sibling or another child.

"[My daughter] enjoys bringing books from Read-Aloud and reading them at home. [She] talks about [Read-Aloud] and how much she enjoys reading." – a Read-Aloud parent

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Crystal Merrill".

Dr. Crystal Merrill
Executive Director



Read-Aloud Volunteer Program

Mission Statement:

The Read-Aloud Volunteer Program (Read-Aloud) is a relationship-based program that fosters in children the joy and love of learning through reading and story-telling.

Theory behind the Program:

Read-Aloud is based on leading scholarly research from the International Reading Association, the National Association for the Education of the Young Child, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, and Scholarly research:

<http://www.childrenofthecode.org>

Decades of research document that reading aloud to kindergartners through second-graders promotes development of early literacy skills and establishes a foundation for positive attitudes toward literacy (Van Kleeck, Stahl, & Bauer 2003; Trelease 2013).

Specifically, reading aloud builds oral language and vocabulary (e.g., Hargrave & Sénéchal 2000; Wasik & Bond 2001; Blewitt et al. 2009), listening comprehension—a precursor to reading comprehension (e.g., Brabham & Lynch-Brown 2002; Zucker et al. 2010)—content knowledge (Pappas & Varelas 2004; Hoffman, Collins, & Schickedanz 2015), concepts of print (Piasta et al. 2012), and alphabet knowledge and phonological awareness (Aram 2006; Brabham, Murray, & Bowden 2006). Equally important, reading aloud is one way we enculturate young children into literacy—helping them acquire the language, values, practices, and dispositions of the literate world (Heath 1983) ([Young Children / September 2015](#) / The Book Matters! Choosing Complex Narrative Texts to Support Literary Discussion).

Read-Aloud builds on this research, supporting the developing awareness of print, the transition to productive reading, and sustains children’s confidence and risk-taking when they read. Volunteers in the program provide one-on-one read-aloud time with the same child each week. This is a vital part of the program that ensures a child has an adult who knows them and can support their individual needs.

Research also indicates that children learn best in the context of a relationship, and outside of the family children need other adults. Urie Bronfenbrenner, developmental psychologist, said of young children “Every child needs at least one adult who is



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irrationally crazy about him or her.” The children know that their reader is there for them and that this caring adult supports their growing confidence in learning to read and becoming a life-long learner.

Evaluation History:

Read-Aloud has conducted both an external evaluation review and internal evaluations yearly supported by Nancy Olsen, evaluator of the program. David Graeven and his team at Trial Behavior Consulting designed a comprehensive Read-Aloud Volunteer Program evaluation in 2013. Their study reported that students who participated in the Read-Aloud program in 2012 showed gains and improvement of at least one skill level for all three of the reading areas assessed (makes predictions, questioning, and characters). [Teachers](#) were also asked to assess the effectiveness of the program.

In house, Nancy Olsen of the board, has for several years been evaluating Teacher, Reader and Family responses which are captured in the brief reports below:

2017-18 Evaluations Report:

Methodology:

Data from 2017-18 school year (the 4th year of reporting) was obtained from five elementary schools that participate in Read-Aloud. These schools are **Coronado, Dover, Downer, Montalvin Manor, and Washington** which are located in Richmond, Montalvin Manor and San Pablo. Evaluation information was gathered from volunteers, teachers, and families to determine the impact of the Read-Aloud experience on children and families. This helps the program establish a baseline from which we can compare results in future years. This information will be used to improve programming and support for participants of the program. Social skills and reading skills were measured at the beginning and end of the Read-Aloud Volunteer Program year. Comments were also solicited from all involved.

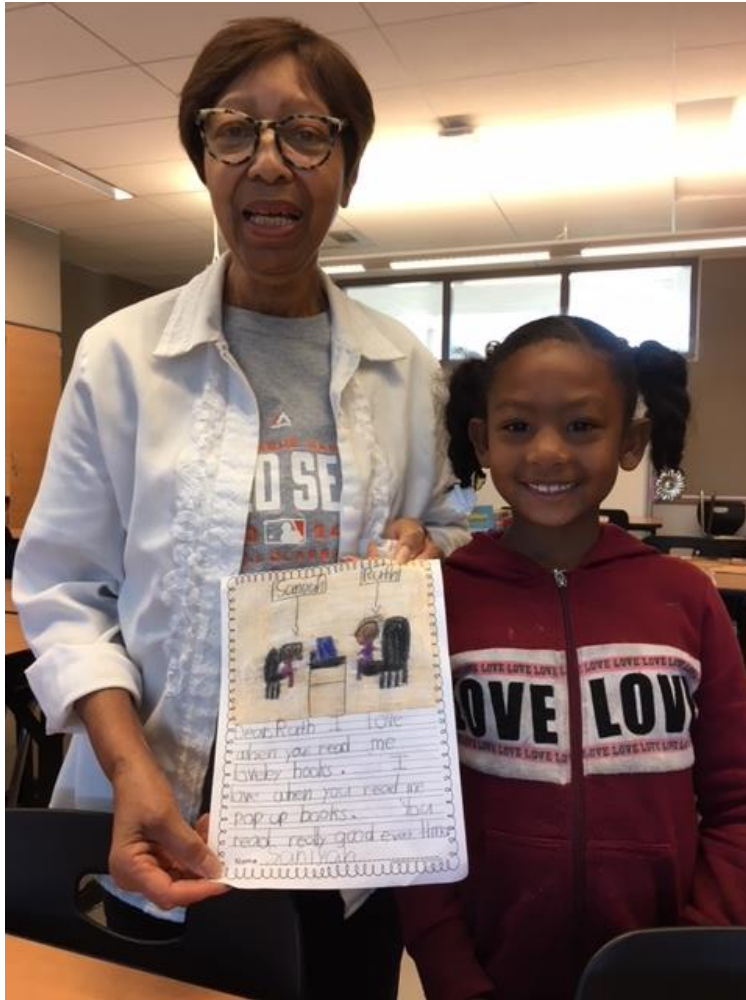
Books into the Community

During the 2017-18 school year, Read-Aloud provided a total of 6,092 new and used books to children and their families throughout the Richmond, Montalvin Manor and San Pablo communities. Specifically, Read-Aloud provided 4,066 new books to children



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and families from our schools and summer program to help build their home libraries, 1,890 new and softly worn books were provided to children and families at Read-Aloud local Outreach Events.



Most Read-Aloud Participants Improved their Social and Reading Skills:

Social Skills

Social skills include student participation, interest in reading, “Eye-on-the-page” skill level, being touched by a character, appreciation of books and or stories. To measure social skills, volunteer readers were asked to interview and rate each of their two or more **K-2 students** at the beginning and again at the end of the **24-week program**.



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Year-end ratings for each student indicated that 4 students (2%) started and ended with the highest possible rating and their high scores remained in effect until the close of the program. These students were recommended by their teachers for the one-on-one Read-Aloud experiences they lacked. Children were also included for other teacher concerns regarding the impact on academic success, such as extreme shyness, limited English language exposure, no books in the home and a lack of student confidence. These students' characteristics, teachers judged, were considered to be frequent reasons for children's failure to read.

The full social skills evaluation data is shown in the first section of Figure 1, Social Skills Improvement. Of the 195 Read-Aloud students with complete data, 184 (94.4%) showed improvement in their social skills ratings. Nine students (4.6%) showed no change, 2 students (1%) scored lower in the spring than in the fall. Each grade level is a different color, with green being program wide (all grades together). A max rating means that the student ended up at the highest ranking for all skills assessed; there was no room for improvement. There were 12 students with incomplete or missing data ratings.

One influence associated with some lower spring social skills ratings was on-going development--a child may focus his or her energy on increasing skills in one area, which can lead to regression in another area.

Reading Skills

Teacher's assessment of comprehension scores demonstrate that overall, children improved in making predictions, understanding key concepts and identifying and empathizing with characters. Of the students who were evaluated, 92% or 184 students showed improvement in reading comprehension. See Figure 1, Reading Comprehension section for a break down in grade level and degree of improvement.



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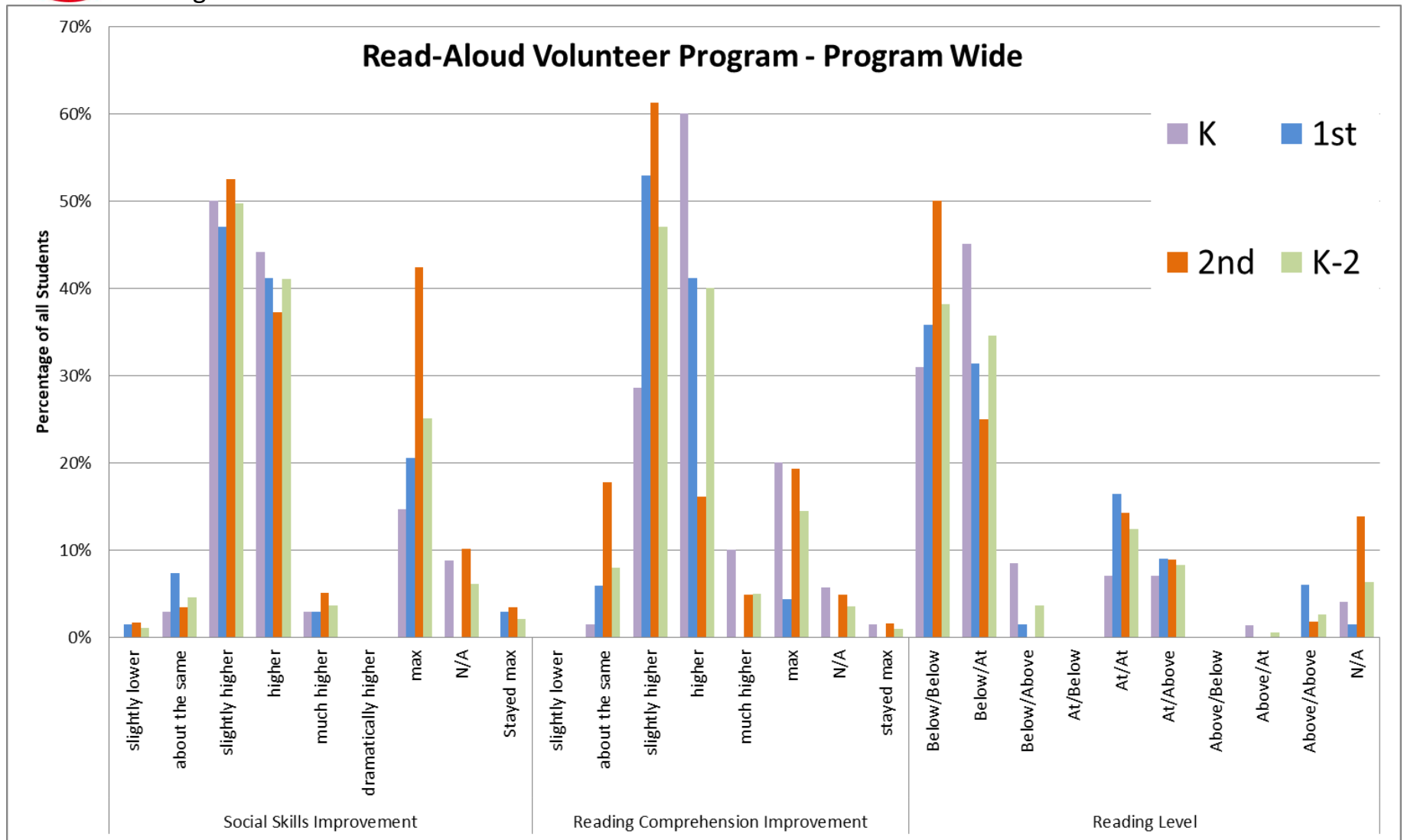


Figure 1. Percentage of Students at each stage



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Teachers reported that over one-third (67 students or 34.5%) of all students, including ELL, improved from reading below grade level to reading at grade level, 7 students (3.6%) went from below grade level reading to above, and 16 students (8.3%) increased from at grade level to above. See Figure 1, Reading Level. This chart didn't incorporate all indications that students improved their reading level; some teachers added descriptors to grade level demarcations (started very below or ended below + or ended between below and at, or by commenting on reading level improvement).

Teachers' Evaluations Noted Improvement in Attendance and Overall Participation

Teachers reported in their end-of-year evaluations that many of their Read-Aloud students had started volunteering to read aloud in class. Although students grow, learn, and improve their skills daily due to the efforts of their classroom teachers, it is important to acknowledge that Read-Aloud students needed extra support that was not possible for the class teacher, with more than 20 students, to provide.

Read-Aloud participation improved student attendance; teachers reported anecdotally a notable improvement in attendance for many previously, frequently absent students. They commented that children in the Read-Aloud Volunteer Program improved attendance from the fall to the spring.

In the teacher comments for individual students, 39.1% mention increased confidence, 39.1% remark on increased reading interest, 17.9% report increased classroom participation and 6.8% describe increased comprehension.

Teachers also reported their English Language Learner (ELL) Read-Aloud students were calmer in class, pronounced sounds better, and very rarely missed school on a Read-Aloud day.

The ELL Read-Aloud students gained confidence in the classroom, increased reading time and curiosity in books, improved English skills with the one-on-one adult attention, improved fluency in reading English, and improved comprehension.



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Teacher Quotes:

- I would love to have a Read-Aloud reader for every student in my class for every day of the week! They are able to do things one on one that there is no way I can do as a teacher with 24 students in my class. The Read-Aloud [Volunteer] Program works magic in the lives of my students!
- Students are always excited and eager about the unique one-on-one experience they have reading with an adult volunteer. They feel special and gain so much confidence from the personal interaction they have on a high-level, consistent basis.
- I feel this is a great way to get students exposed to more types of books that they may not have at home.
- Started far below [grade level]. [She] didn't talk and cried whenever she was around a new person. She didn't know her abc's and couldn't write her name. Now she knows all of her sight words, loves to go read with her reader and reads stories to the pre-schoolers who visit our class. There has been a massive improvement in her self-confidence, interest in reading and love of books.
- [He] liked to do more "boy things" and didn't like to sit still and listen to a story - or anything for that matter. He didn't know the letters of the alphabet - now he reads and loves it. He discovered that there were books about cars, snakes, bugs



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etc. that were more of interest to him, the 1-on-1 work with his reader gave him more self-confidence.

- [She] greatly enjoyed being able to read with your volunteer. Social interaction is important to her so being able to engage around reading has been especially enjoyable for her. Thanks for all your help! :).
- Would definitely recommend this program to other teachers. I saw an increase in students' confidence and ability to tackle literature. I look forward to continuing the use of Read-Aloud at Dover. Thank You.
- The Read-Aloud Program is a wonderful part of the regular school day. It allows students to listen to high-interest literature and make it part of their home routines by adding it to their personal library.
- Great Program! The Read-Aloud program nurtures a love for reading. My students couldn't wait to be picked up by their readers. Some would jump out of their seats the moment the reader came, while others would ask why they couldn't get a chance to go. The program allowed the students to bloom in confidence while improving their academic skills in reading and English acquisition. They' were more willing to take risks. They were more likely to read in front of the class and/or use more English. Best of all, they loved the collection of books. Some of the books coincided with authors we were studying. With pride, they would display their books to the class. One of the books was the Kevin Henkes series. I think this is a wonderful program that benefits students at many levels. Thank you!
- [He] has improved reading and has gained enough confidence to be a helper to others. :)
- Improved with ability to sound out words (even though not at grade level). Not an independent reader, but a reader when partnered. He was so shy, the program helped him feel better about his skills and helped with oral language development.
- [The child] increased his English vocabulary and looked forward to his Read-Aloud time. He loved creating a personal library at home with the books.



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- Thank you very much to all of the Read-Aloud volunteers. Our students benefit 100% from your support.
- At the beginning she did not complete homework, know her letters or go to preschool. (Now she is reading at grade level).
- I believe the reading program helped with her attendance and her behavior.
- The Read-Aloud program is a great asset to any school. My children's reading comprehension increased as well as their self-confidence. I feel that the program has helped foster a love of reading for my students, even if they're not independent readers yet.
- Even though [the student] continues to be very low in reading, she's become more comfortable with myself (teacher) and other, and feels confident enough to share the books she's received. She looks forward to Read-Aloud and enjoys her time there.
- [This student's] comprehension has improved and he's become more excited about reading in general, especially about sharing his many books he's received with his classmates.
- Read-Aloud is a great program for students who are having trouble learning to read. Also the one-on-one set-up is ideal for students who are shy or they're not confident.
- Read-Aloud is a wonderful opportunity to pair volunteer readers with individual students to give them special one-on-one reading, attention, and a love of literature.
- What a well-organized program! Amazing volunteers who really enjoy being with our students - no matter their level or challenges. An amazing opportunity to receive one-on-one time sharing the LOVE of BOOKS. Highly recommend.
- He was very shy when it comes to reading and now he likes to actively participate in class.
- He was not reading at all when the school year started and now his fluency is one of the best.
- [The student] has shown interest in reading. She does a lot of pretending reading which has helped her expressing herself clearly.



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- [The student] has encountered a number of family difficulties and crises. His focus at school has gone south, and even cries in class at times. The Read-Aloud program is his time away from family chaos.
- [The student] shows interest in reading. He really benefited from the program because he understands how books work, purpose, structure and is at great with predicting.



Volunteers Add Value in Many Ways:

Volunteers are at the heart of the program, and it benefits both the students and the adult volunteers. A recent Stanford report states: “When older adults contribute to the well-being of youth, it cultivates a sense of purpose and extends benefits both ways.” Read-Aloud relies on its large base of readers from the community who range the spectrum of cultures, backgrounds and experiences.

<http://longevity.stanford.edu/blog/2016/06/01/hidden-in-plain-sight-how-intergenerational-relationships-can-transform-our-future/>

Read-Aloud has 102 volunteers (including substitutes), some of whom read more than the minimum of one hour a week in the program. Some 60 percent of readers have been with the program for over 5 years. At the end-of-year celebrations, most report that they gain so much, watching children’s minds blossom as they grow and learn.



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Each volunteer works with the same two children over the program year. We have several readers who volunteer more than one hour a week and for each additional half-hour another child is supported. These volunteers add great value to the various schools that participate in the program. The volunteers provided pro bono services which is equivalent to \$111,700 (as 3,840 hours of volunteer work).

The summer programming in 2018 at Camp Achieve (City of Richmond's summer camps) provided an additional \$4,500 or 156 hours of volunteer work.



Family Surveys Describe Reading Impact in the Home

Family survey responses show that Read-Aloud increases reading excitement, influences family dynamics and helps younger siblings learn. Family responses were based on 139 returned pre-surveys and 107 post-surveys, with 49 families responding to both pre- and post surveys. The survey results are generally very positive and showed not only an impact on the Read-Aloud student, but also other children in their homes (see Figure 2). Ninety-seven % reported that the children talked about books brought home and that there was an improvement in the child's interest in books. Ninety-nine % said their child was excited/joyful about having new books and 95% noticed their child enjoying reading with, or to, a sibling or another child.

Changes in reading rituals were also noted by responding families. Although 45.7% of families reported no change in times read and 34.8% reported a decrease in family reading frequency (possible reason: child more comfortable reading alone), 20.6 % of families reported an increase in family reading time together (see Figure 2, next page).



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Reading Frequency in the Home each Week

- Down 3-4 x / week
- Down 1-2 x / week
- Stayed at 1-2 times weekly
- Stayed at 3-4 times weekly
- Stayed at 5-7 times weekly
- Up 1-2 x / week
- Decreased
- Stayed the Same
- Increased

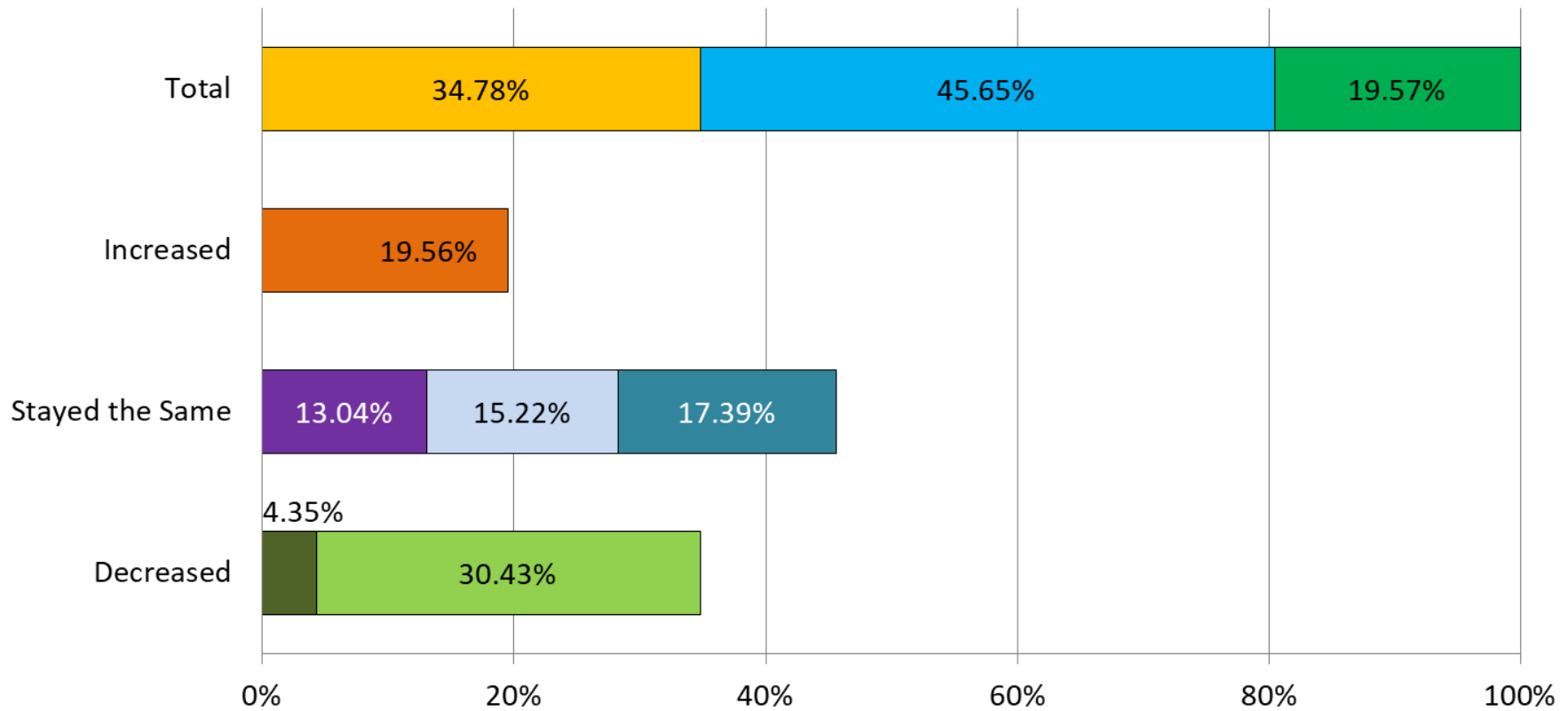


Figure 2. Family Reported Change in Reading Frequency



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Children's Learning Made Visible:

Having books in the home provided parents a window into how their children learn or improve their reading. For example, ELL students were described by parents as being much more interested in books and reading, taking books in the car and sharing them with siblings. Some students had never owned a book before Read-Aloud and no books were previously in the home. The Read-Aloud experience was reported to have positively influenced changes in family dynamics at home, with significantly more time spent together reading and discussing the Read-Aloud-provided books, and with more parental attention paid to the child's learning.



Parent/Guardian Quotes:

- In my point of view I love this program and my daughter shows that she is eager to learn to read more. This is a great learning experience for her at this age that will teach her so much. Thank you so much.
- My daughter has enjoyed all the stories so much. They have motivated her in a way that has helped her identify words that she now uses frequently. I believe this program is very good and facilitates their interest in literature. Thank you!



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- I love this program. I see that my daughter gets so excited with every book that is given to her. She has shown an increase of higher interest in reading.
- My son feels so excited every time he gets a new book. He immediately makes me read it to him. Thanks.
- Great program, it has pushed me to also read as well, not just with my son. Thank you.
- I really like the program because it is very good for the kids. As a parent, I would hate to ever see it go. I am grateful for the volunteers and their time.
- I am very happy I have allowed [my son] to participate in this program because he looks forward to reading. When he brings a new book home he is excited to share it with us. Before he was never interested in books but now he is. He tells me all the time that he looks forward to Read-Aloud.
- The reading program is perfect! My son is very encouraged by the reading and the books he receives. Our family is very grateful for this ... reading program, Thank you
- My son now reads to me. This is great!
- I am so grateful for the Read-Aloud program. [My daughter's] reading has dramatically improved. The dual language books are extremely helpful as we are a non-Spanish speaking family. Thank you for making a huge difference and setting our kids up for success.
- Really enjoyed having him be part of the program, he often talked about the books they read.
- Before I had to search for books for him and now he beats me to it.
- It is a very important program. I believe that once the child learns to be more engaged in reading, the parents will begin to acknowledge the importance of dedicating more time in reading with them as well. My daughter always came home very excited to tell me what the book was about and what books were read to her.
- [My daughter] enjoys bringing books from Read-Aloud and reading them at home. [She] talks about [Read-Aloud] and how much she enjoys reading.



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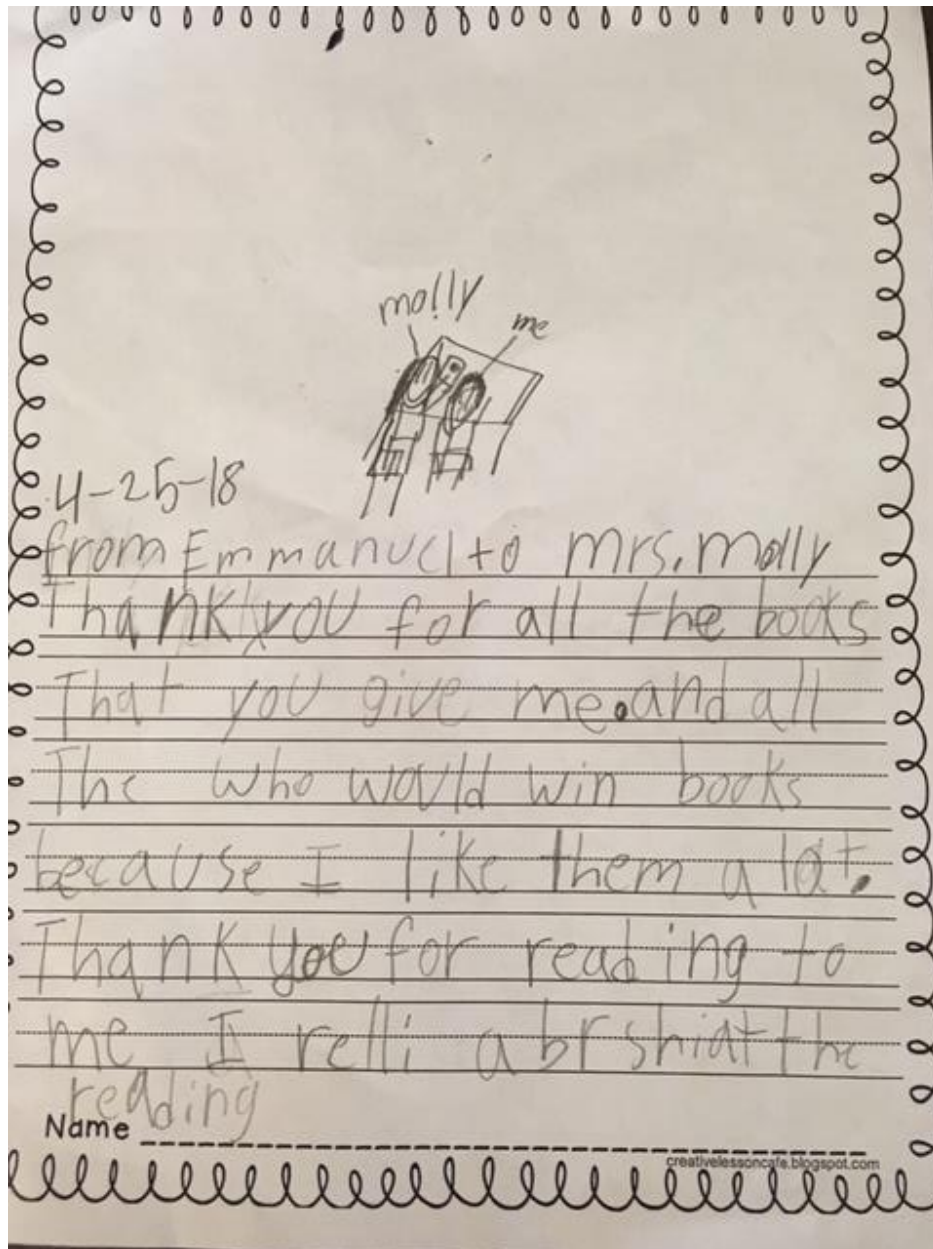
- I really like this program. It has helped [my son] learn and has shown progress. He loves attending Read-Aloud.
- My daughter prefers the books she was read in Read-Aloud to those at the library. Thank you.
- My daughter loves to read books and copy what she reads on drawings.
- [An] Excellent program that nourishes the child's development as well as increasing their interest and motivation in literature.
- The program has helped [my son] a lot with his reading. Thank you.
- Thank you very much for this program in our school. This has greatly benefited my children.
- Thank you so much for being such a positive motivation in our kids' lives.
- Thank you and I hope that you continue to come back for the following year.
- She loves the opportunity to learn and enjoys the Read-Aloud program and books she receives.
- For [my daughter], the books have been a very important part of her life. They have awoken her interest in reading. As a matter a fact, I have struggled with her in this subject. But now she shows excitement and happiness when she comes home with her book.





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How Read-Aloud works and the need for Read-Aloud





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Description of the Program:

Read-Aloud is a 24-week program for children ranging from kindergarten to second grade. The teachers choose the children who will benefit most from one-on-one reading time with a compassionate adult reader.

Children are chosen for multiple reasons, such as the need to hear English spoken, exposure to books, and for social and emotional needs that can be supported through one-on-one adult interactions:

Obviously, there are very important cognitive kinds of underpinnings to reading. And there's a significant amount of intellectual development and language development that's necessary to master reading. But your ability to learn to read is also very much influenced by your feelings and your social development... And what we learned is that the active ingredient in the environment that's having an influence on development is the quality of the relationships that children have with the important people in their lives. That's what it's all about. That's where the action is.

Jack P. Shonkoff, Professor of Child Health and Development and Director of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, Chair the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child Source: COTC Interview :

<http://www.childrenofthecode.org/interviews/shonkoff.htm>

Our volunteer readers are community based and cover the spectrum of cultures, ethnicities, backgrounds, and experiences. Their commitment and support to the schools and families provides a bridge to the community.

Volunteer readers report that this is a life-changing experience for them, and that they are more engaged in the schools and their communities. They say they stay because they gain so much from watching children blossom, grow and learn. But it is the children we read to, starting their life-long journey of learning, who are the focus of the program. And we want to get them off to a great start. The volunteer readers provide this opportunity for children to receive story-telling each week and special one-on-one time for the child with their own reader.



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How We Individualize a Child's Reading Material:

Each volunteer works with at least two children every week. The reader-volunteers' book logs detail notes of the children's interests and growth. This helps the coordinator at each school choose and tailor book selections for each child. It is important to understand where the child is developmentally and not just chronologically. Arbitrarily deciding what reading level a child should be at because of their age rather than experience only starts the process of failing to succeed in school. Children in the program are given the opportunity to explore and discover at their own pace. Discovery and understanding meaning making are important steps in a child's developmental and academic growth.

Many children have not heard rich, descriptive language or the kind of stories that they begin to listen to with their special reader. One of the interesting outcomes of the children building their own collection of books is that it changes dynamics in the home. As the child begins to read aloud, families become more interested and share reading with the child. Reading rituals or story telling becomes or increases as part of the experience of the child and family, and the child begins to see him or herself as a reader.





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Building Home Libraries:

Read-Aloud's commitment to providing two-books each month for the children is a powerful way to increase access to books and literacy activities in the home. Drs. Todd Risley and Betty Hart's work on Meaningful Differences in Everyday Experiences of Young American Children demonstrated the need to increase vocabulary in everyday conversations in the home. Books are one way to increase the "story-telling, remembering and what if's" of every day experiences between adults and children. These early experiences again impact the academic capacities of the children; the richer the contextual language is that a child receives the better their success in reading and school activities.

Read-Aloud's participating children select and take home two new books each month to add to their personal library. Depending on the level of development and growing interest, a child may hear as many as 90-100 books read aloud to them over a program year.

Each of our schools provides either library space or a special room for our program; giving the message that this is an important activity and a special time in which to hear stories read out loud.

A study from the University of Nevada, Reno by Evans et. al. show that having even as few as 20 books in the home has a significant impact on a child's ascent to a higher level of education:

<https://www.unr.edu/nevada-today/news/2010/books-in-the-home-as-important-as-parents-education-level>

Read-Aloud seeks to help local families build and enhance their home libraries to ensure as many children in our community gain a step ahead during their formative years of development and this study reinforces the Read-Aloud philosophy of getting beautiful, books into the homes of families to change family dynamics around reading.

What Read-Aloud has seen from evaluations and anecdotal stories from families is that having books go into the home on a regular basis promotes and or



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increases reading activities in the home. It has also increased conversations in the home with more effort being paid to telling stories. Families tell us that they can see their child learning to read and that the books coming home inspire families to look for books at other venues, such as a library or garage sale.



The Team Coordinators:

Read-Aloud provides a coordinator for each school site. This coordinator works closely with the teachers and school administration, oversees the day-to-day running of the program and supports the volunteer readers. It is the coordinator who selects books for each child using log notes and conversations from the reader as a guide. The coordinator also observes the child and reader interactions and can make judgement calls regarding materials for the child.

The Need for Programs such as Read-Aloud:

The students in West Contra Costa County are below average in their reading skills; only 30% of third graders meet or exceed English Language Arts standards, and in some schools in Richmond as few as 5% of children meet this (Richmond Community Foundation Literacy Coalition). Many of the schools are under-resourced and under-served with multiple turn-overs of teachers in the district. The challenges are huge.



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Annie E. Casey Foundation heads a Third Grade Reads National Project to support cities and districts working to improve reading for all children. Ralph Smith at the foundation reported in 2017 that: an alarming number of children—about 67 percent nationwide and more than 80 percent of those from low-income families—are not proficient readers by the end of third grade. This has significant and long-term consequences not only for each of those children but for their communities, and for our nation as a whole. If left unchecked, this problem will undermine efforts to end intergenerational poverty, close the achievement gap, and reduce high school dropout rates.

An important report highlighting what this means for young children in later academic life can also be found at this site:

<http://www.aecf.org/resources/reading-on-grade-level-in-third-grade-how-is-it-related-to-high-school-perf/>

Read-Aloud is Modeled after SMART:

Read-Aloud is modeled after a statewide program from Oregon, Start Making a Reader Today (SMART), which has been highly successful in its efforts to have the state's children reach benchmarks and succeed. SMART has also received a Library of Congress award for its literacy work in Oregon. SMART has had an independent study by the Eugene Research Institute that demonstrates that fifth graders who participated in SMART are 60 percent more likely to reach state reading benchmarks than are similar students who did not participate. The full study can be found here:

<https://www.getsmartoregon.org/what-we-do/program-outcomes/>

Outreach Successes:

Read-Aloud continues to spread the joy of reading to children and families. Because we are a grass-roots organization, tied closely to the surrounding communities, we have not had the financial support of organizations such as SMART on which we are modeled. Read-Aloud has sought to support other



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groups as they begin their own read aloud programs in the county, including Village Community Resource Center in Byron, CA.

Read-Aloud also provides ongoing outreach experiences for families in San Pablo, and surrounding areas. These outreach celebrations are either book giveaways with tips on how best to support children's reading or workshops where the aim is to provide books to the families, and guidelines on how best to support children's reading. At these workshops we also offer family activities, expansion of language games and other information to increase reading in the home.

Community Driven:

Read-Aloud is local, and engages both adults who provide read-aloud opportunities to children in the schools and the children and families who are part of the program. This organization is fueled by the passion of the staff, the board, district participants and local communities we serve.

Quick Inspirational Piece

"This program is elegantly simple but a potent tool for literacy", said Marilyn Nye, Education Professor and Read-Aloud Founder. Dr. Nye had visited the SMART program in Oregon, now statewide there, and had been so impressed she modeled her own program after it. Read-Aloud is now in five WCCUSD under-resourced elementary schools providing reading experiences to teacher-selected children; engaging in local outreach family celebration reading events; supporting a start-up reading program modeled after Read-Aloud, and part of an extensive network of literacy providers working together to increase reading opportunities in Contra Costa. Read-Aloud continues to thrive as a small non-profit working to help the community read.

At the heart of the program are volunteer readers who provide one-on-one time with their assigned children each week, ensuring that individualized reading takes place. The children's ideas, interests and developmental level are all considerations, as are the children's experiences with owning, seeing and reading books. Both children and adults benefit from these one-on-one interactions and both look forward to their weekly encounters. This is an intergenerational model that brings together older adults and elementary school children. It is



Read-Aloud Volunteer Program

intentionally planned to benefit both parties, and adults feel they have something to contribute and something to gain from these interactions.

The Read-Aloud team is diverse and has coordinators in each of the five schools we serve. The coordinators oversee the program, and support the teachers, readers and children. The board is active and engaged and brings many assets to the organization. An addendum to the mission statement should say the Read-Aloud team is “driven by passion”.

Teacher comments include: “Read-Aloud is a wonderful opportunity to pair volunteer readers with individual students to give them special one-on-one reading, attention, and a love of literature,” and “What a well-organized program! Amazing volunteers who really enjoy being with our students - no matter their level or challenges. An amazing opportunity to receive one-on-one time sharing the LOVE of BOOKS. Highly recommend.”

Every other week the children get to choose a gift book to take home. Families tell us they wait for the new books and can see their child learning to read. Read-Aloud helps families build and enhance their home libraries and this helps change family dynamics and increases reading activities. As one mother said “Since my daughter ... has been in the program, she has learned to read. She is interested in reading her books. She always has some books in the car, so when we go out she reads them...” Another parent commented: “We like the bilingual books, so they don’t forget our language in Spanish.”

Read-Aloud employs the best of what we know about how children learn, and an awareness that relationships matter in the context of children’s learning. A message from one of the children at the end of last year said: “Dear Ruth, I love when you read me lovely books. I love when you read me pop up books. You read really good every time,” the card had a drawing of the child and reader reading in the Read-Aloud room. She shared her card with her volunteer Reader and Coordinator with a large smile on her face.