



Fostering Readers Pilot Program Evaluation Findings April 2019



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*SUMMARY AND
RECOMMENDATIONS*





BACKGROUND

Background

Fostering Readers Program

In 2017, Washington County Cooperative Library Services (WCCLS), in collaboration with OregonASK, secured a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grant from the State Library of Oregon to contract with four subject matter experts and an evaluator to conduct research and develop digital resources that library staff and afterschool providers need to plan, implement, and evaluate evidence-based literacy programs for K-3rd grade students. The resulting digital resources are called Fostering Readers and include a thorough research review, eight detailed evidence-based activity plans, a template for creating additional evidence-based activity plans, handouts, surveys, and a training for library staff and afterschool providers about the research review and how to use the resources effectively.

In 2018, WCCLS and OregonASK secured a second year of LSTA funding from the State Library to implement a pilot project to evaluate Fostering Readers and get feedback from the field to improve the resources. Ten pilot sites, six libraries and four afterschool programs, were selected from four counties in rural, suburban, and urban Oregon communities.

Each site selected one Fostering Readers program facilitator to participate in the pilot project. All ten facilitators participated in a brief overview of the project, with emphasis on how to implement the evaluation tools. Five facilitators were randomly selected to participate in the three-hour training on the research review and how to use the resources effectively.



Background



Program Goals

- Staff are more knowledgeable about how children learn to read
- Staff are more confident in their ability to support children learning to read
- Staff intend to continue using *Fostering Readers*
- Students find books they like during the literacy activities
- Students have fun during the literacy activities
- Students want to come back and participate in another literacy activity
- Parents and caregivers are satisfied with the program
- Determine the impact of the three-hour training on the above goals

Evaluation

The evaluation included quantitative and qualitative components to assess the extent to which the Fostering Readers activities were implemented according to design, the attitudes and confidence of the activity facilitators, as well as the satisfaction of students and their parents and caregivers.

The evaluation findings and recommendations included in this report are based on surveys from participating parents and students, library and afterschool program facilitators, a focus group with facilitators, and independent observations of the implementation of programs. All of this information is based on the implementation of approximately 65 activities, serving more than 365 students and 90 parents (455 total estimated participants).

A photograph of three children in a forest setting, focused on examining the ground. The child in the center is using a magnifying glass. A large teal graphic of the number '2' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

2 FINDINGS

Findings



Pilot Program Training

Program managers wanted to know if Fostering Readers activities would be better implemented if the facilitators were trained in their implementation and literacy in general. Half of the facilitators were randomly selected to participate in the half-day in-person training with an Oregon Registry Master Trainer.

All facilitators were polled (regardless of training participation status) before implementation, after the training (only training participants), and at the conclusion of the four month pilot program implementation period.

The following chart summarizes facilitators' responses to four questions regarding:

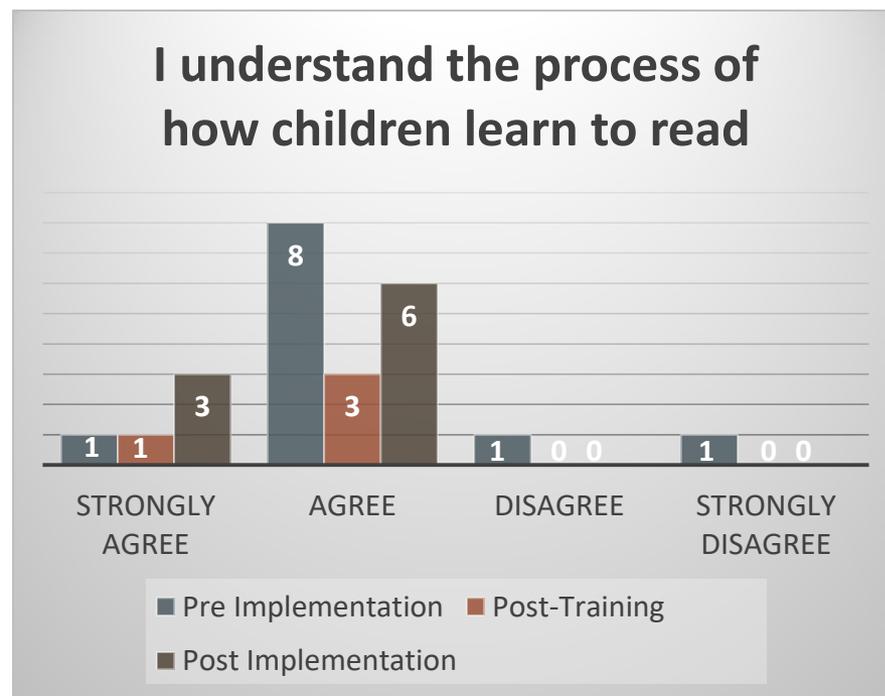
1. Their understanding of K-3rd grade students' literacy development
2. Their confidence in supporting literacy development
3. Their knowledge about how students learn to read
4. Their confidence in developing their own evidence-based literacy activities

Findings



Facilitators' Knowledge and Confidence

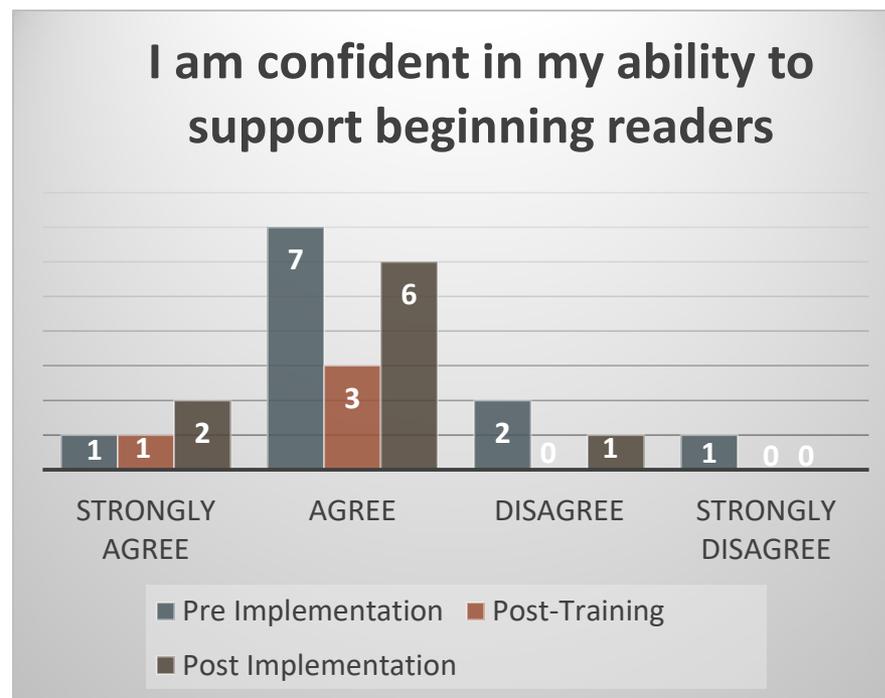
Based on on-line survey responses from 10 facilitators before implementation, 4 facilitators after training, and 9 facilitators following implementation, it is apparent that their self-assessed understanding did not change appreciably; except for two respondents who switched from “disagree” or “strongly disagree” to “agree” or “strongly agree” from pre-implementation to post-implementation.



Findings

Facilitators' Knowledge and Confidence (Continued)

Responses to all 4 questions followed the same pattern with almost no respondents disagreeing with affirmative statements about their knowledge, understanding and confidence at any point. Participation was associated with some improvement—especially in self-assessed understanding of creating evidence-based activities. Although sample sizes are too small to draw any conclusion, this pattern did not appear to be strongly influenced by the training.

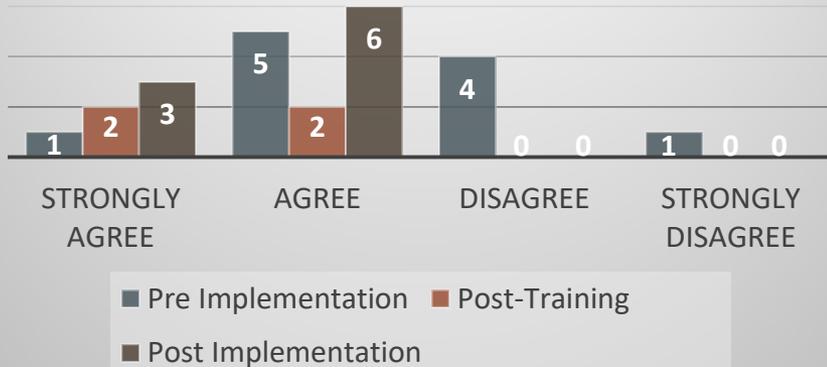




Findings

Facilitators' Knowledge and Confidence (Continued)

I know where to find info about how K-3rd grade students learn to read



I understand how to created evidence-based activities



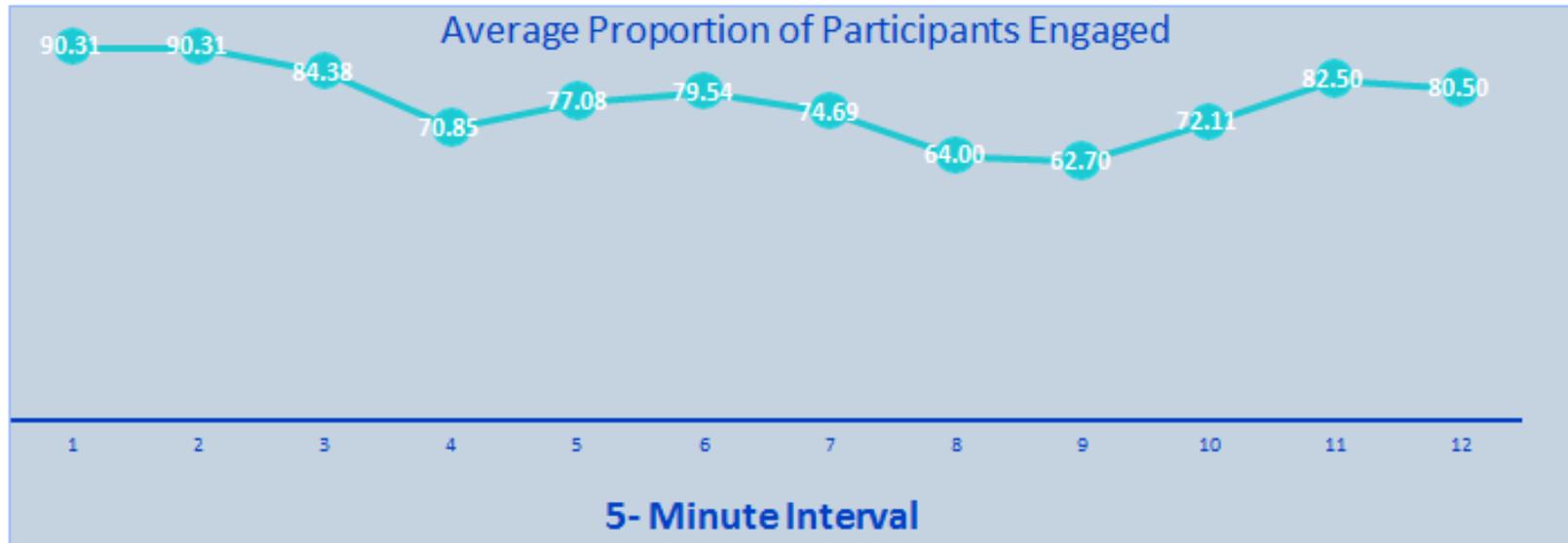
Findings



Participant Engagement Observation

According to third person observers, most youth are engaged throughout the activities.

Each interval represents a five-minute observation period, with a range from 90% of youth engaged during the 1st and 2nd intervals to a low of 63% during the 9th interval (45 minutes into the activity).

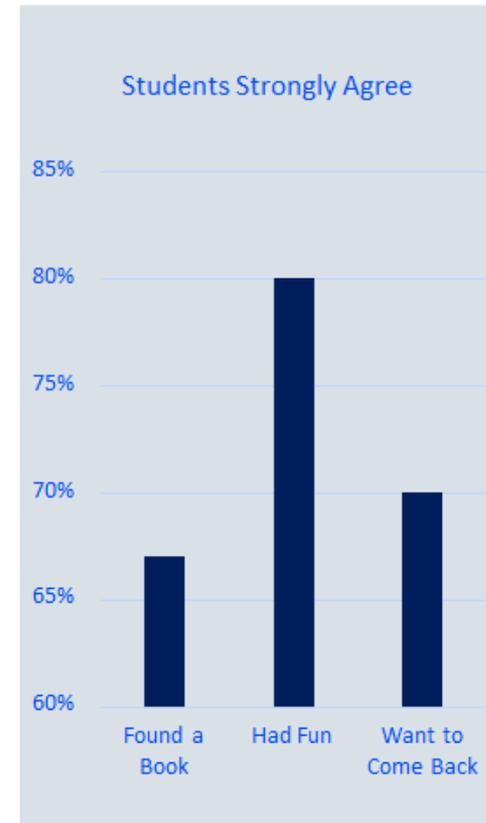


Findings



Pilot Program Implementation

- Programs engaged approximately 455 total participants* with an average group size of 12
- The activities lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, with an average duration of 55 minutes
- Over 65% (n=365) of the participating students found a book that they would like to take home, 80% indicated they had fun during the literacy activity, and 70% want to come back for another activity**



* Estimated based on the number of satisfaction surveys received by participating students and parents; likely an undercount

** Afterschool participants found this question confusing because they have to go to their afterschool program; no real choice

Findings



Pilot Program Parent Satisfaction

100%

Of parents and caregivers who had not been to a reading activity before Fostering Readers, said they would come back to the library for another reading activity

- 98% of parents and caregivers* responded that they “Liked” or “Loved” the activity
- 94% indicated that they are likely to use the library more often after the activity
- 90% indicated that they had learned something new about their child’s reading
- 81% felt more welcome at the library following their child’s participation in the program
- 62% definitely agreed that they learned more about library resources

* Parent feedback was significantly under represented, particularly among afterschool programs as they are not typically present during afterschool programming (N = 89)



Findings



Facilitators' Assessment

- Activity facilitators indicated that they “loved” or “liked” implementing the activities 77% of the time (N = 59 FR events)
- Facilitators reported that 83% of the activities increased the number of programs available at their library (that did not supplant other library programming)
- Facilitators in library settings reported that on 82% of the occasions when they offered Fostering Readers programs, they noticed families borrowed books and on about half (44%) of the occasions, the facilitators saw that the program brought in families new to the library
- Facilitators in afterschool programs estimated that about 70% of the students chose books for their quiet time following the activity, and just over half of the students engaged with those books for at least 5 minutes. This is substantially more than what the facilitators expected based on students’ prior behavior.

Findings



Facilitators' Assessment (Continued)

Facilitators from five of the ten pilot sites participated in a focus group; they indicated:

- Mixed ages (either due to siblings attending or because the program serves students of different ages) presented a challenge to activity implementation, but pairing students throughout the program did help mitigate those challenges.
- The Fostering Readers materials were helpful, but overwhelming (at least initially).
- There was too much structure associated with the curriculum, and those who were unaccustomed to implementing structured programs found the degree of structure implied in the materials was awkward.
- A majority of focus group participants left out the passive activities from the majority of activities (including the “hook,” “discussion,” and “Think Pair Share.”)

Findings



Facilitators' Assessment (Continued)

- None of the focus group participants used the handouts because they were, as one participant stated, “too long and detailed.”
- The evaluation was burdensome and, in some cases, included items that were difficult for students and adults to address.
- There were substantial differences between the experiences of those implementing the activities in afterschool program settings compared with those in libraries
 - Those in afterschool settings were more inclined to use the activities as scripted and noticed more follow-up engagement with books
 - Those in libraries struggled with Think Pair Share and other collaborative activities because the students were unfamiliar with each other
 - Libraries had more transience during the activity (both parents and caregivers and students came and went during the activity) and were more likely to eliminate components that were less active

Findings



Facilitators' Assessment (Continued)

- One focus group participant noted that, for the first time in their experience, all of the participating students engaged with books following the activity for up to 2 hours.
- Focus group participants who participated in the half-day training felt more confident in their ability to implement the activities as designed, but also felt more empowered to modify the activities to suit their style and implementation context.
- All focus group participants agreed that the hands-on activities were “the best,” and most anticipated continued use of them.
- Some focus group participants indicated that the script was helpful as a starting place and useful when they had to ask someone else to lead the activity.

An overhead view of a teacher with blonde hair, wearing a light blue shirt, sitting on a red cushion and reading an open book to a group of six children. The children are sitting on the floor in a circle around the teacher. The setting is a library with white bookshelves filled with books. A large, stylized teal graphic is overlaid on the left side of the image. The text 'SUMMARY and RECOMMENDATIONS' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font across the bottom half of the image.

SUMMARY and RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY and RECOMMENDATIONS



Pilot Program Summary

Overall, students, parents and caregivers, and facilitators found that the activities were:

- Enjoyable;
- Increased students' independent engagement with books;
- Increased students' cooperative and facilitated engagement with books;
- Increased the knowledge and confidence of caregivers and facilitators;
- Brought in additional literacy resources for students in grades K-3 and their families;
- Increased the number of literacy activities that the library or afterschool program offered; and
- Increased the use of the library

Facilitators found the activities, as structured and scripted, and the evaluation to be burdensome to implement. Nearly all facilitators reported making significant modifications to the activities, especially by eliminating passive activities. While programs submitted information about more than 365 student participants, some of the evaluation forms were incomplete or not submitted.

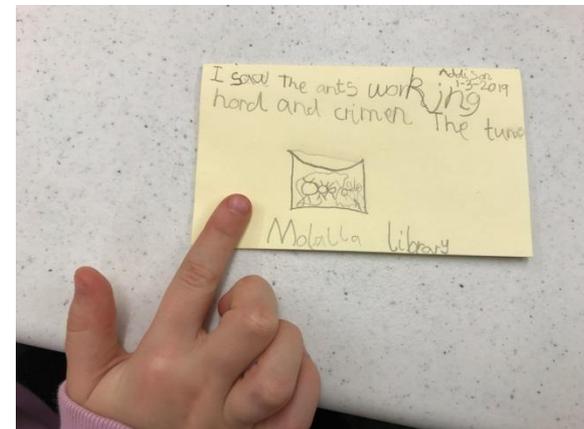
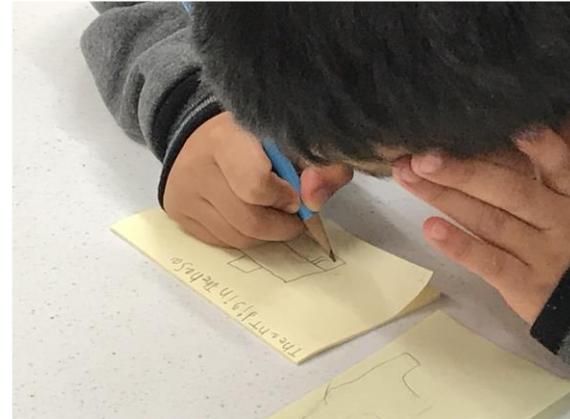
SUMMARY and RECOMMENDATIONS



Pilot Program Summary (Continued)

Most facilitators reported that they would not use the template or published activities as they exist, but they all reported that they would use components of the activities, particularly the hands-on and book engagement components.

By most measures, Fostering Readers was effective in meeting its goals to increase access to research-based literacy programs, embed literacy development in library and afterschool programs, increase student engagement with enjoyable reading and writing activities, and to increase adults' understanding of and confidence in literacy development.



SUMMARY and RECOMMENDATIONS



Recommendations for Fostering Readers

Based on the evaluation findings, Fostering Readers program managers should consider:

- Elaborating on the extent and ways in which activities may be modified without undermining the integrity of key, research-based elements;
- Creating resources for facilitators, parents and caregivers, and students that are shorter and easier to implement;
- Streamlining the evaluation by eliminating activity-specific questions, separating the parent survey by language (e.g., Spanish vs. English), and eliminating the open-ended question on the student survey;



SUMMARY and RECOMMENDATIONS



Recommendations for Fostering Readers (Continued)

- Providing research-based activities, both passive and active, without, or independent of the ancillary materials;
- Providing videos or other demonstrations of the implementation of the activities (not necessarily in-person training);
- Increasing the number of activities available and creating a community-based system for standardizing and sharing research-based activities for K-3rd grade students; and,
- Differentiating implementation strategies based on context and participants (e.g., mixed ages, libraries vs. afterschool programs, etc.)





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