

# FOSTERING READERS EVALUATION REPORT



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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*Fostering Readers* is supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services through the Library Services and Technology Act, administered by the State Library of Oregon.

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# INTRODUCTION

## *Program Background*

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 after-school providers need to plan, implement, and evaluate evidence-based literacy programs for K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade children. 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 after-school 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 and evaluate a pilot *Fostering Readers* project and to gather feedback from the field to improve the resources. The *Fostering Readers* implementation team, composed of the subject matter experts in addition to representatives from WCCLS and OregonASK, selected 10 pilot sites including six libraries and four after-school programs from four counties in rural, suburban, and urban Oregon communities. Sites were selected purposefully to represent the diversity of communities in the region. OregonASK and WCCLS contacted each site by email and telephone to invite them to participate. Each site selected one *Fostering Readers* program facilitator to participate in the pilot project. All 10 facilitators participated in a brief overview of the project by conference call, with emphasis on how to implement the evaluation tools. Four facilitators were randomly selected to participate in the 3-hour training on the research review and how to use the resources effectively.

The goals of the pilot project were to:

- Increase staff knowledge about how children learn to read;
- Increase staff confidence in their ability to support children learning to read;
- Sustain the implementation of *Fostering Readers*;
- Help children find books they like during the literacy activities;
- Ensure children have fun during the literacy activities;
- Make children want to come back and participate in another literacy activity;
- Ensure parents and caregivers are satisfied with the program; and
- Assess the impact of the 3-hour training.

## Program 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 children and their parents and caregivers.

The evaluation findings and recommendations included in this report are based on surveys from participating children and their parents and caregivers, library and after-school program facilitators, a focus group with facilitators, and independent observations of the lesson implementation. Information is drawn from the implementation of approximately 65 activities, serving more than 365 children and 90 parents.

This is the second of two reports submitted to WCCLS. The first report provided a brief summary of findings associated with program implementation. This report offers additional detail regarding the methods and analyses. The first section of the report reviews the methods of the evaluation, followed by findings, limitations, and recommendations based on those findings.



# METHODS

## *Evaluation Development and Design*

The program evaluator participated in most of the planning meetings during the first year of implementation to ensure alignment between program purpose, goals, and outcome measurements. Evaluation activities during year one included operationalizing activity goals and objectives so that they could be more easily measured, developing surveys that mapped onto program activities, and engaging the experts in conversations regarding what would be useful to learn from the evaluation in terms of revising and updating the materials. The logic model, included as Appendix 1, reflects the results of those conversations. Appendix 2 includes a crosswalk that maps the evaluation questions onto the data collection instruments and strategies. Table 1 lists the data collection components and the frequency with which they were administered.



**Table 1. Evaluation Components and Outcome Measurement**

Evaluation Component and Description	Administration
Program Satisfaction Survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent Version</li> <li>• Child Version</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every willing parent who attends any activity for a minimum of 30 minutes</li> <li>• Every willing child following every activity</li> </ul>
Participant Engagement Survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Third person observer</li> <li>• Facilitator reflection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When a third person observer is available</li> <li>• When a third person observer is unavailable</li> </ul>
Activity Success Survey	Completed by facilitator following each activity
Focus Group	Conducted with facilitators following the pilot implementation period
Facilitator Knowledge, Attitude and Confidence Survey	Administered before pilot project to all 10 facilitators, after the 3-hour training to the four randomly selected facilitators, and after pilot period to all 10 facilitators

## Sample Selection

All participating children, parents and caregivers, and facilitators were included in the sample for this study. The *Fostering Readers* team also wanted to evaluate the comparative advantage of training, so there was a small, randomized comparison between facilitators who participated in a 3-hour training on the approach and those who did not ( $n = 4$  in each condition). Those results are included descriptively in the next subsections; however, sample sizes and mean differences do not suggest generalizable conclusions.

### Evaluation Sample

Table 2 summarizes the sample sizes for the number of sessions, child participants, and parents and caregivers engaged in this pilot project.

**Table 2. Data Collection Overview**

Instrument	Number of participants responding to or participating in data collection
Child Satisfaction Survey	364 (540; 67% - estimated attendance based on facilitator's documentation; and corresponding estimated response rate)
Parent Satisfaction Survey	89 (113; 78% - estimated attendance based on facilitator's documentation; and corresponding estimated response rate)
Participant Engagement (facilitator reflection)	26
Participant Engagement (third party observation)	13
Activity Success Survey	67
Facilitator Knowledge, Attitude, and Confidence (Pre Training) Survey	10
Facilitator Knowledge, Attitude, and Confidence (Post Training) Survey	4
Facilitator Knowledge, Attitude, and Confidence (Post Pilot) Survey	9
Focus Group	5

## Analysis Methods

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Given the sample sizes and the exploratory design of this evaluation, the findings that follow are based on descriptive statistical (quantitative) and inductive thematic (qualitative) analyses. All quantitative data were entered into the IBM SPSS statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS). Quantitative data were entered, coded, and cleaned in SPSS prior to analysis. Focus group notes (the qualitative data) were coded by hand according to themes based on the focus group questions.

# FINDINGS

The following sections are organized according to the following topics:

- Facilitator knowledge and confidence (pre-implementation, post-training, and post-implementation)
- Participant engagement
- Activity assessments
- Parent/Child satisfaction

## *Facilitator Knowledge and Confidence*

The evaluation assessed facilitators' experiences through surveys of their knowledge and confidence, a focus group regarding those and related topics (reviewed in this section), and their satisfaction with the activities themselves (described in the *Activity Assessment* section, later in this report).

### **Survey Results**

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

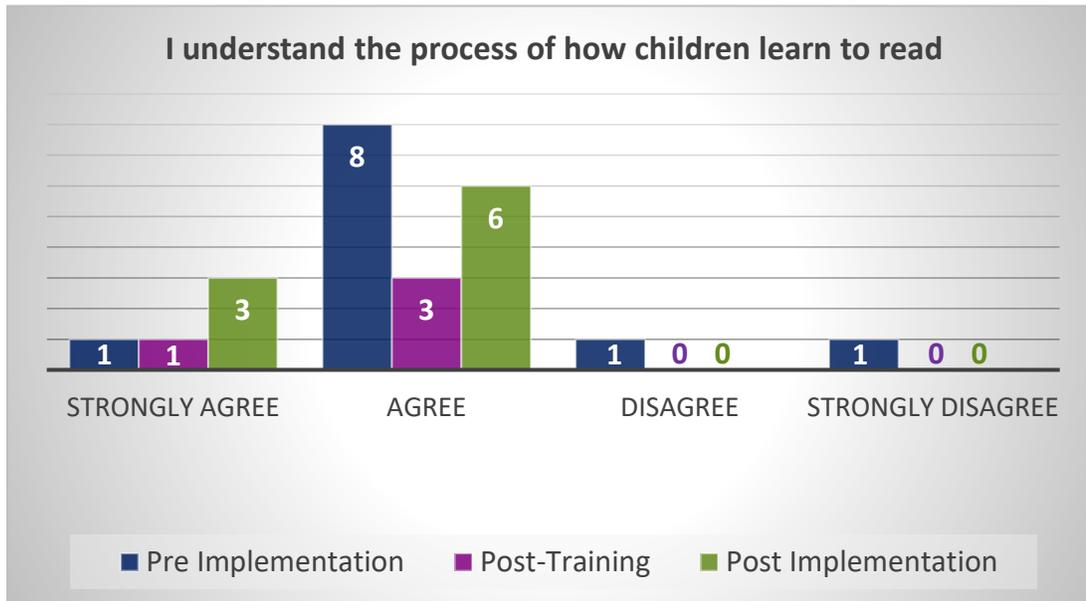
All facilitators were polled (regardless of training participation status) before implementation ( $n = 11$ ), after the training (only training participants) ( $n = 4$ ), and at the conclusion of the 4-month pilot program implementation period ( $n = 9$ ).

Figures 1-4 summarize facilitators' responses to four questions regarding:

1. Their understanding of K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade children's literacy development
2. Their confidence in supporting literacy development
3. Their knowledge about how children learn to read
4. Their knowledge about resources for developing their own evidence-based literacy activities

It is apparent that facilitators' 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. Trainees' self-assessments do not indicate substantial differences from before to after training.

Figure 1. Facilitators’ Self-Assessed Knowledge about Early Reading



Responses to all four questions followed the same pattern with almost no respondents disagreeing with affirmative statements about their knowledge and confidence at any point. Pilot program 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 definitive conclusions.

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*We had never seen children sit and read for 90 minutes or more during quiet time before.*

– After school provider focus group participant

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Figure 2. Facilitators' Self Confidence

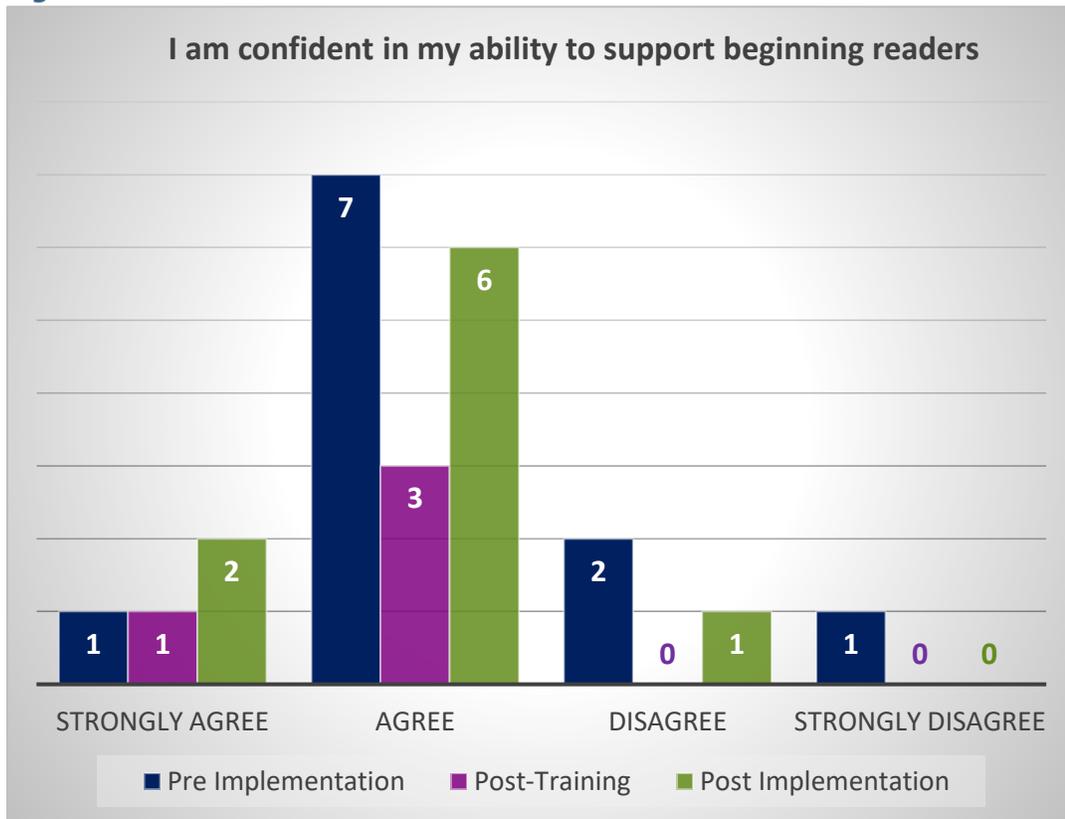


Figure 3. Facilitators' Self-Assessed Understanding about Creating Activities

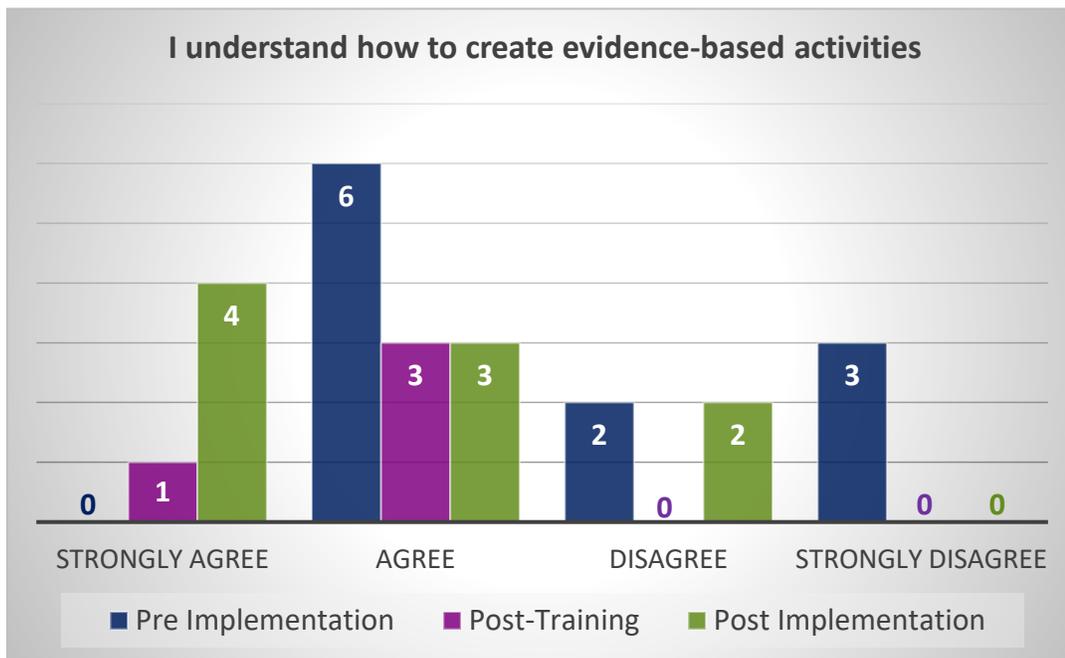
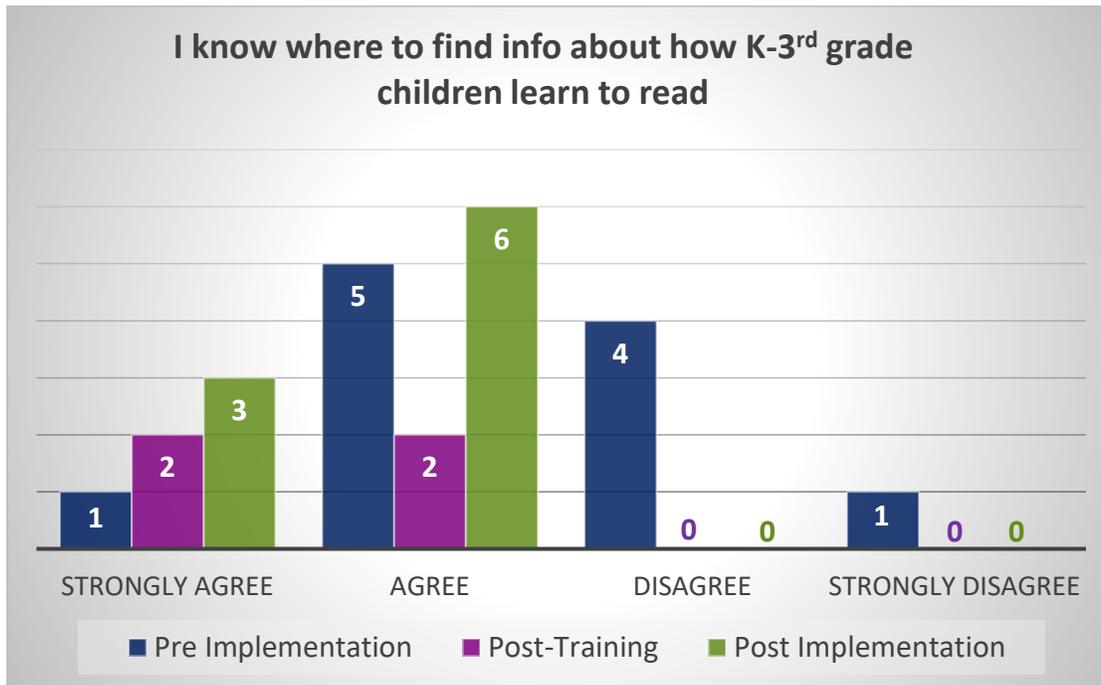


Figure 4. Facilitators' Self-Assessed Understanding about Finding Resources



Library-staff facilitators reported that on 83% of the occasions, Fostering Readers activities increased the number of programs available at their library. Facilitators in library settings also 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 after-school programs estimated that about 70% of the children 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 children's prior behavior.

### Focus Group Results

Representatives from five of the 10 pilot sites participated in one 45-minute focus group facilitated by the evaluator. They were generally positive about the program and particularly appreciative of the resources (books and activity curricula). The following themes emerged from this discussion:

- Mixed ages (either due to siblings attending or because the program serves children of different ages) presented a challenge to activity implementation, but pairing children throughout the program did help mitigate those challenges.
- The *Fostering Readers* materials were helpful, but overwhelming (at least initially).

- For most, there was too much structure associated with the curriculum. This seemed particularly true for those who were unaccustomed to implementing structured programs and found that the degree of structure implied in the materials was awkward.  

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*The hands-on activities definitely worked the best*  
– Librarian focus group participant

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- A majority of focus group participants left out the more passive activities from the majority of activities (including the “hook,” “discussion,” and “Think Pair Share”).
- 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 children and adults to address.
- There were substantial differences between the experiences of those implementing the activities in after-school program settings compared with those in libraries.
- Those in after-school settings were more inclined to use the activities as scripted and noticed greater follow-up engagement with books.  

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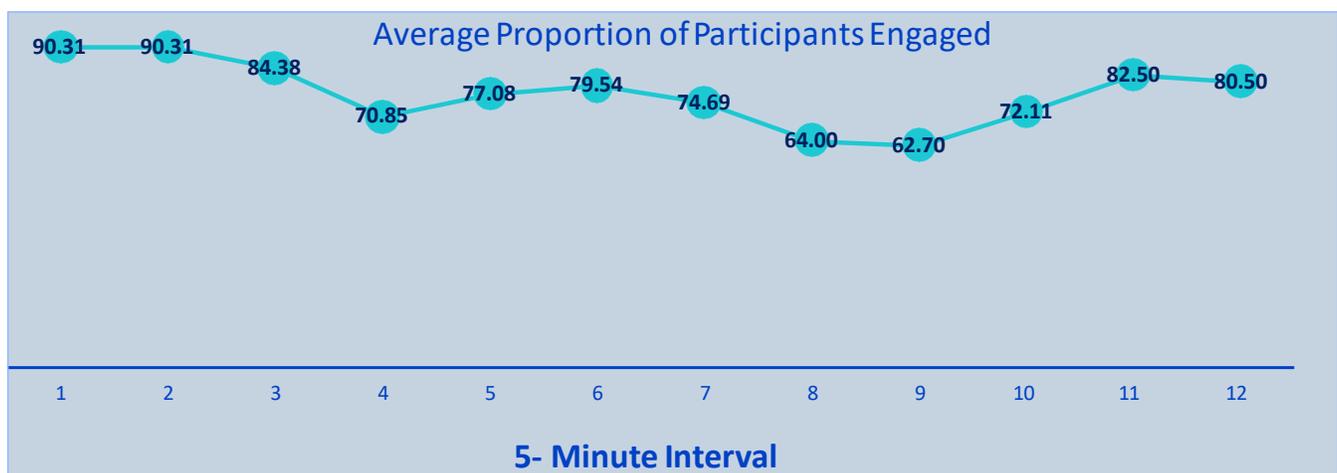
*The script was useful for substitutes and others unfamiliar with reading activities for young readers.*  
– Librarian focus group participant

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- Those in libraries struggled with Think Pair Share and other collaborative activities; the reason given for this was that the children were unfamiliar with each other.
- Libraries had more transience during the activity (both parents/caregivers and children came and went during the activity) and were more likely to eliminate components that were less active.
- One focus group participant noted that, for the first time in their experience, all of the participating children 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, and 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.

## Participant Engagement

As summarized in the *Methods* section, the evaluation collected observational information regarding child engagement using two strategies. First, the expert consultants made at least one observation at each of the pilot sites using a time interval observational guide whereby the third party (expert or other available adult) recorded point-in-time observational information every 5 minutes throughout the activity ( $n = 15$  third party observations). According to observers, most youth were engaged throughout the activities (Figure 5), with a range from 90% of youth engaged during the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> intervals to a low of 63% during the 9<sup>th</sup> interval (45 minutes into the activity).

Figure 5. Participant Engagement Based on Third Party Observer



In a second strategy, facilitators were asked to report about overall participant engagement based on their reflection following activity implementation and based on quartiles of children engaged (i.e., 0-25%, 26%-50%, 51%-75%, and 76%-100%). No facilitator rated participation in any activity ( $n = 26$ ) lower than 51%. Facilitators estimated that 76%-100% of children were fully engaged in 22 activities (85% of those rated) and that 51%-75% of children were fully engaged (15% of those rated) in the remaining four activities.

## Activity Assessments

Following each activity, facilitators reflected upon the success of the activity. Facilitators submitted activity cover sheets regarding 69 separate activity implementations. Activities lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, with an average duration of 55. The implementation frequency, by activity, is summarized

in Table 3. *Building Ideas with Books* was the most popular activity (16% of all activities) followed by *Holy Reading, Batman; It's Raining, It's Pouring*; and *Stories without Words* all at 15%.

**Table 3. Activity Implementation**

Activity	Number of times implemented (% of total)
Activity name not reported	4 (6%)
Text Tasting	4 (6%)
Let's Write with Ants	5 (7%)
A Recipe for Fun	7 (10%)
Let's Tell the Story	8 (12%)
Stories without Words	10 (15%)
It's Raining, It's Pouring	10 (15%)
Holy Reading, Batman	10 (15%)
Building Ideas with Books	11 (16%)

Of those activities, facilitators rated their satisfaction on a 5-point scale from 1 ("Loved it!") to 5 ("It was miserable!") for 61 of the activities (86%). Table 4 summarizes facilitators' rankings of those activities.

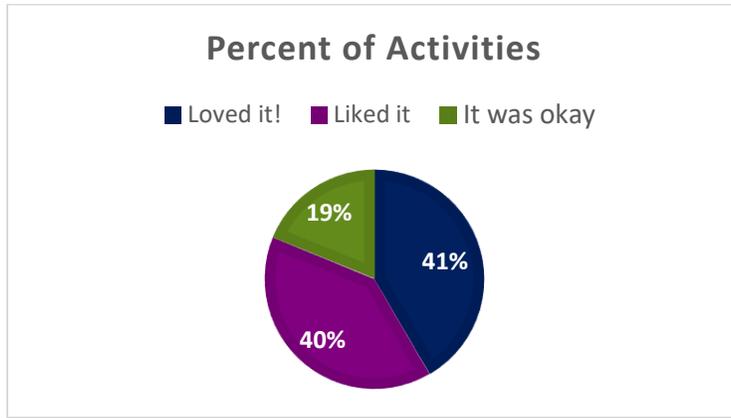
**Table 4. Satisfaction by Activity**

Activity	Liked or Loved it % of total (n)*
Text Tasting	50% (4)
Let's Write with Ants	50% (4)
Let's Tell the Story	66% (6)
A Recipe for Fun	57% (7)
Stories without Words	88% (9)
It's Raining its Pouring	100% (9)
Building Ideas with Books	72% (11)
Holy Reading, Batman	82% (11)

\*The n's in Tables 3 and 4 do not always match due to different response rates to individual items on the survey.

Figure 6 illustrates the breakdown of facilitators' overall ratings; small sample size and small differences preclude meaningful analysis of the differences between activities.

**Figure 6. Percent of Activities Rated According to Facilitator Satisfaction**



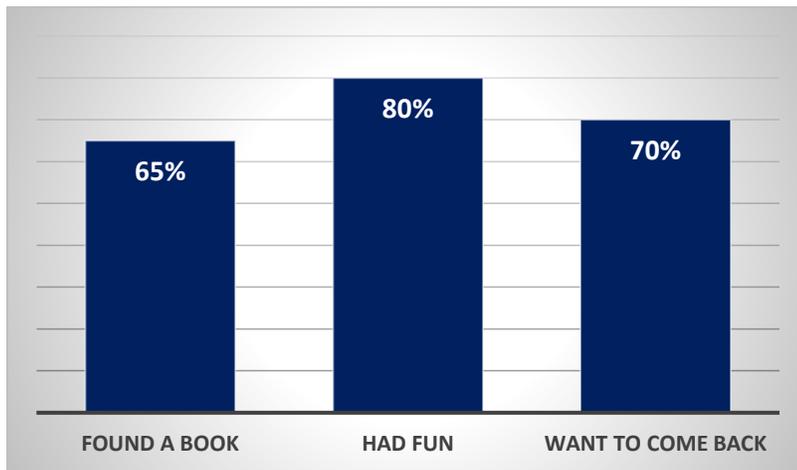
## *Child and Parent Satisfaction*

All parents/caregivers and children who participated in at least 30 minutes of an activity were invited to respond to a written survey of their satisfaction with the activity. Facilitators submitted satisfaction surveys from 89 of the 113 parents/caregivers and 356 of the 540 children who attended *Fostering Readers* activities. The following subsections summarize the findings from those surveys.

### **Child Satisfaction**

Over 65% ( $n = 365$ ) of the participating children 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 (Figure 7).

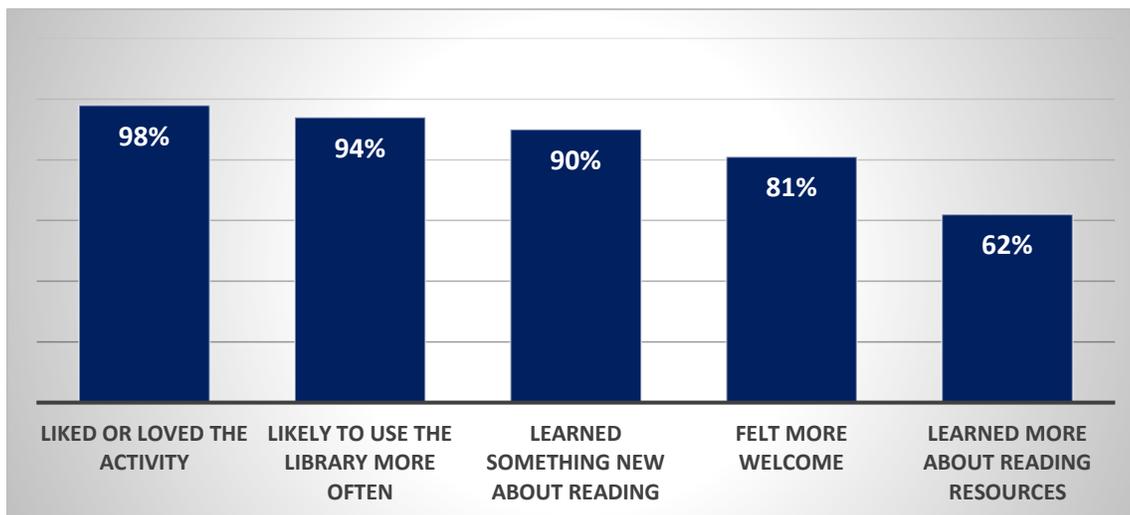
Figure 7. Percent of Child Participants Strongly Agreeing with Positive Statements about Their Participation



### Parent Satisfaction

Parents and caregivers ( $n = 89$ ) were even more enthusiastic than their children. Ninety-eight percent 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 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, and 62% definitely agreed that they learned more about library resources (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Percent of Parents Satisfied with *Fostering Readers*



# LIMITATIONS

The *Fostering Readers* project and evaluation were designed to pilot and evaluate the feasibility and potential benefits of evidence-based literacy activities for young readers in libraries and after-school programs. The design and sample sizes, as anticipated, limited the extent to which the findings described here can be generalized.

The *Fostering Readers* pilot project was implemented in communities purposefully selected to reflect the diverse communities in Washington County. However, these communities were not randomly selected and do not necessarily reflect the overall population or array of library and after-school providers. Furthermore, libraries and after-school providers were invited to participate, and those who declined to participate or who were not invited are not included in this study.

All of the evaluation components, except the third-party engagement observation, rely on self-report which introduces corresponding biases.



# SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following summary and recommendations are based on the qualitative and quantitative data collection activities and corresponding findings described above.

## *Summary*

Overall, children, parents and caregivers, and facilitators found that the activities:

- Were enjoyable;
- Increased children’s independent engagement with books;
- Increased children’s cooperative and facilitated engagement with books;
- Increased the knowledge and confidence of caregivers and facilitators;
- Improved parent/caregivers’ understanding of library resources and early reading;
- Brought in additional literacy resources for children in grades K-3 and their families;
- Increased the number of families borrowing books;
- Brought new families into the library;
- Increased the number of literacy activities that the library or after-school program offered; and
- Increased the use of the library.

Focus group participants who participated in the half-day training felt more confident in their ability to implement the activities as designed, and 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.

In addition, 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.



Most facilitators reported that they would not use the template or activities as they existed during the pilot, but they all reported that they would use components of the activities, particularly the hands-on and book engagement components. Therefore, it appears that many of the components will be sustained, in some form.

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 after-school programs, increase child engagement with enjoyable reading and writing activities, and to increase adults' understanding of and confidence in literacy development.

## Recommendations

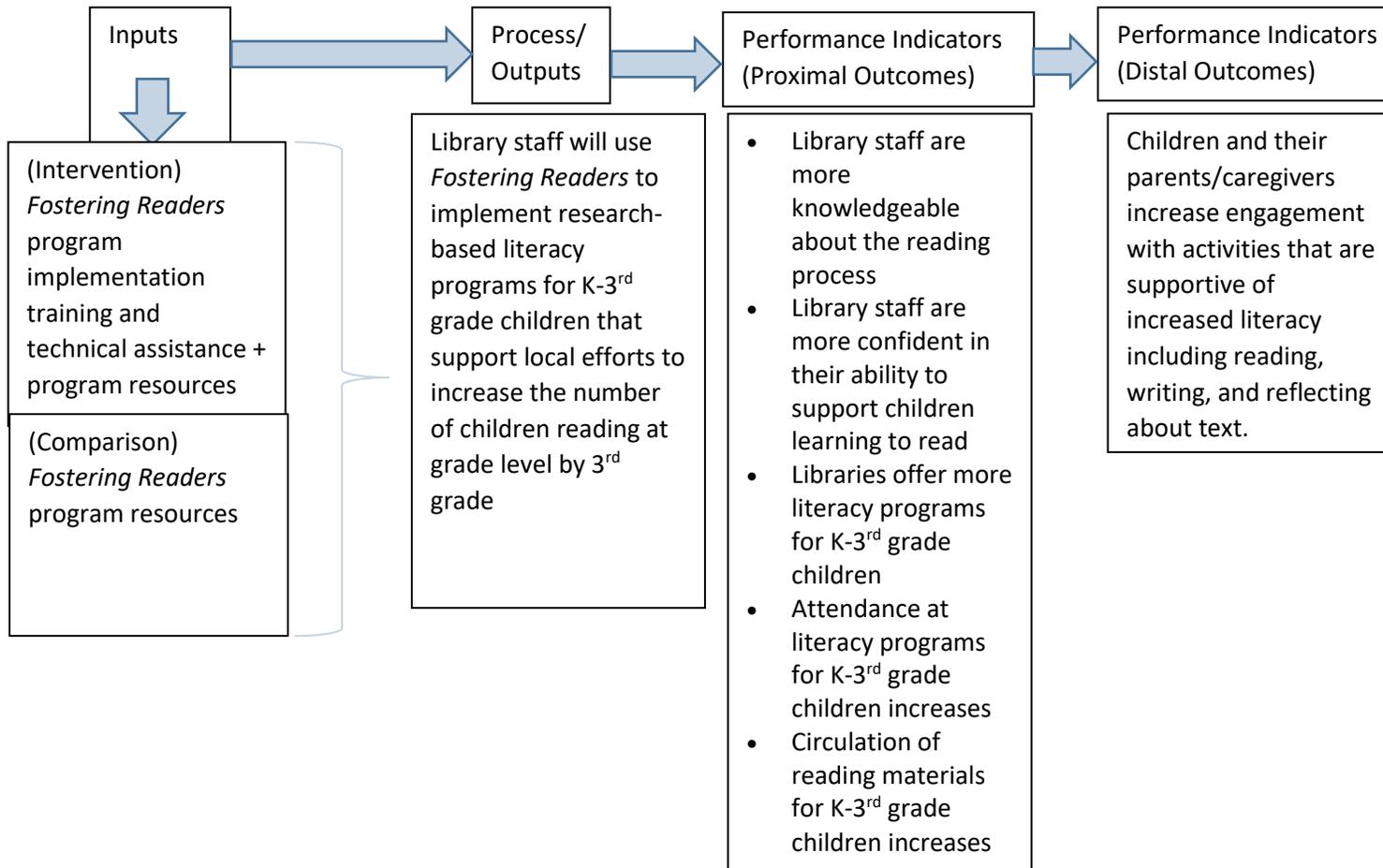
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Based on the evaluation findings, *Fostering Readers* program should consider:

- 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 children 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;
- 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-3<sup>rd</sup> grade children;
- Differentiating implementation strategies based on context and participants (e.g., mixed ages, libraries vs. after-school programs, etc.); and
- Implementing an evaluation that directly assesses outcomes of interest (e.g., skills gained, increased circulation, improved parental confidence/engagement, etc.) as well as implementation fidelity.

# APPENDICES

# 1. Logic Model



## 2. Key Performance Indicators and Data Source Crosswalk

Outputs and Key Performance Indicators	Data Source(s)	Method(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff implements <i>Fostering Readers</i> curriculum with fidelity</li> </ul>	Program facilitators	Direct observation, focus groups, surveys- including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training pre/post (for intervention group)</li> <li>Observation form (both groups)</li> <li>Focus group protocol</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff are more knowledgeable about the reading process</li> </ul>	Program facilitators	Knowledge, Confidence and Intent (KCI) survey: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre training, post training, and post pilot period (for intervention group)</li> <li>Pre/post pilot period (for comparison group)</li> </ul> Focus group protocol
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff are more confident in their ability to support children learning to read</li> </ul>	Program facilitators	Knowledge, Confidence and Intent (KCI) survey: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre training, post training, and post pilot period (for intervention [training participant] group)</li> <li>Pre/post pilot period (for comparison group)</li> </ul> Focus group protocol
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programs offer more literacy programs for K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade children</li> </ul>	Parents/caregivers, Program facilitators	Surveys: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activity success survey</li> </ul>

Outputs and Key Performance Indicators	Data Source(s)	Method(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attendance at literacy programs for K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade children increases</li> </ul>	Program facilitators	Surveys: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent satisfaction survey</li> <li>Child satisfaction survey</li> <li>Activity success survey</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Circulation of reading materials for K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade children increases</li> </ul>	Program facilitators, Parents/caregivers	Surveys: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent satisfaction survey</li> <li>Child satisfaction survey</li> <li>Activity success survey</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program participants and their parents/caregivers increase their engagement with printed text</li> </ul>	Parents/caregivers, program facilitators	Surveys: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct observation (facilitator reflection)</li> <li>Parent pre/post survey</li> </ul>