



Evaluation Report

Summer 2023

Submitted To:

NewAlliance Foundation

Submitted By:

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“READY for the Grade” Summary Results Report

Evaluation Services, 2023

I. INTRODUCTION

The NewAlliance Foundation has completed its 11th year of funding for the “READY for the Grade” (RfG) summer reading program at multiple libraries. Summer 2023 included in-person instruction at seven sites (though not yet at pre-pandemic levels). During Summer 2023, Manchester brought back on-site programming, and all the other sites continued to build on their in-person programs, established (New Haven-Stetson, Willimantic) or re-established (Killingly, Hamden, New Haven-Wilson, Rockville) in 2022. There were many returning staff and some new additions at New Haven-Stetson, New Haven-Wilson, Rockville, Willimantic. The whole team in Manchester was new and represented a welcome return to the out-sourced teacher model. Despite some continuing recruitment challenges, (especially for New Haven-Stetson, and for Killingly’s Village at Killingly - VAK site which was suspended 2023), multiple students and their families were served. All sites reported increases in the numbers of children who left programming for family vacations which resulted in some interrupted or reduced attendance and also disrupted final assessment measures. All sites but Hamden and New Haven-Stetson also reported accepting some older students who had been participants before, or who had eligible younger siblings, and who were struggling to keep up at school due to Covid-related instructional interruptions.

There were also many important accomplishments for summer 2023. The goal of RfG is to provide students with consistent and comprehensive reading support and instruction during the summer to help participating students enter school in September ready to learn, solid in their retained reading skills, and with the same literacy advantages as peers who have been able to maintain their reading skills throughout the summer.¹ This year, participating libraries additionally sought to continue to help students make up for gaps created by the disrupted access to direct instruction during the Covid pandemic. Once again there were some site-specific constraints for RfG summer 2023, and participating libraries developed customized responses to meet overall RfG goals.

Since its initiation summer 2013, RfG has served 1,565 children (including some who participated in multiple years), and their families. An additional 135 children and their families fully participated during summer 2023 (an 18% increase compared to 2022). Despite the recruitment challenges described above, READY for the Grade continued to provide a solid model that can effectively be replicated in new communities, can be sustained after key staff changes, and can be (and was) modified as needed to fit local conditions, including for example suspending or re-establishing programming with housing partners. As in all prior years, comprehensive evaluation was conducted including site visits (and some site customization as needed). This report includes details of site-specific and summary strategies, results and longitudinal findings.

- **Hamden** returned for its third year at the Brundage branch library multi-purpose room. Their coordinator and all three highly-qualified teachers returned, and they again effectively incorporated two local SYEP teens to help work with the children. They selected a new book, *A Friend for Dragon* for their overall framework, and continued their double session strategy with children attending two of the three days the program was operating each week. They also continued to make important connections with local schools and neighborhoods to enhance family connections and they hosted a family orientation session before the summer program began. Their 6-week program again included

¹ Core elements of RfG include regular, structured individual and group instruction, family engagement opportunities, involvement of rising 1st – 3rd graders who have economic challenges and are reading below grade level.

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small group and individual tutoring for 19 students (an increase compared to 2022), with a final in-person family celebration. Children regularly received books and spent time in the library.

- **Killingly** had a very productive summer, despite suspending involvement of any Village at Killingly (VAK) participants. (The VAK community site was unable to arrange for any residents to participate.) At the library, two of the three new teachers from 2022 returned as did their long-term aide, and staff developed and delivered a very effective and integrated thematic program. As for Summer 2022, they conducted small group and individual tutoring for 7 weeks at the main library site. No family events were held, but teachers again developed craft-based projects for families to work on together. A total of 23 children participated, including many from the prior year. This was the same total number of participants as in 2022 (even though no students participated at the Village at Killingly – VAK subsite). Students regularly received books and other small prizes and reading incentives, and the site, during a session that included a volunteer project was visited by the CT Humane Society. (Reinstatement of VAK program is scheduled for 2024.)
- The **Manchester** site ran a fully-staffed, 8-week program in the Squire Village resource room. Four new, highly-qualified staff members were engaged and the Family Resource Coordinator for Squire Village was also regularly involved. A total of 11 children (plus a couple of older siblings) participated regularly and a few others visited a few times to investigate the program. Staff conducted small group reading and other literacy and arts-based activities and provided individualized assistance to participants as needed. A final celebration for the group was conducted for the last session. The site promoted the voluntary nature of involvement (children were free to come and go), and multiple children attended consistently. [Note that as Manchester was re-constituting its program for 2023, achievement data were not collected.]
- **New Haven** delivered the 2nd year of its new RfG program at the **Stetson Branch** (located in the new Dixwell Q-House Community Center). The site continued to experience some growing pains regarding recruitment, for the program overall and for parent activities in particular. Outreach was conducted to local schools by the Library, before summer began, and flyers advertising the program were posted in multiple locations, but sign-ups remained limited. (Flyers for parent activities were also posted at the library and online, but few families took advantage of the offerings.) The highly-effective lead instructor from 2022 returned to run the program, with strong support from library staff, and an additional paraprofessional with substantial experience also joined the program. The site was able to recruit and retain 9 participants who were appropriate for and able to fully engage in the program. The Stetson team conducted both individual tutoring and small group work and as stated previously, tried out some family social events. Like their Wilson-Branch counterparts, RfG-Stetson used the Reading A to Z program and other fiction and non-fiction books, and made multiple books and take-home practice activities available for participating children.
- **New Haven Wilson** built on its re-established program, for summer 2023. The program added one new staff member and recruited both new families and some former participants. All staff members are very strong educators who connected well with the children and families who were happy to continue accessing RfG support and the Wilson community space again. The team again conducted both group and individual tutoring, used AV/tech for reinforcements, continued to use live music options to their sight word learning and brought in collaborators (puppet shows, magician) to reinforce lessons. Family engagement was provided weekly on-site, and books were regularly distributed. A total of 17 children (an increase), including two from 2022, participated.
- The **Rockville** RfG program was operated at Skinner Road Elementary School for the third year, summer 2023. A total of 34 children (one more than in 2022, and many of whom were returning students) participated in group and individualized instruction. As Carri Clark, the seasoned educator who taught with Mrs. Kearney in 2022 was not able to join for 2023, Rockville added 3

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paraprofessionals including one who had worked with RfG in the past. The use of weekly themes continued at Rockville for 2023 as did the use of many non-fiction books, robust reading activities, use of the puppets, and daily edible craft projects. Multiple family events were also held, for the first time in the program’s history.

- **Willimantic**, in its sophomore summer continued to build on its program. A total of 22 children (an increase), including 8 from summer 2022 participated. All former very experienced instructors returned, and a new instructor (whose husband is a visiting teacher from Spain, working in the lead teacher’s district) was added to the team. The instructors delivered group, small group and individual instruction two evenings/week throughout the summer (7 weeks), promoted regular library use and fully used available space in the library, served meals, provided books to children and hosted multiple family learning events. Throughout the summer, the Willimantic Public Library partnered with the Denison Homestead to bring children environmentally-themed lessons available to all library users including the RfG students.

Summary of Key Findings

- During Summer 2023, Manchester brought back on-site programming, and all the other sites continued to build on their in-person programs established (New Haven-Stetson, Willimantic) or re-established (Killingly, Hamden, New Haven-Wilson, Rockville) in 2022. There were many returning staff and some new additions at New Haven-Stetson, New Haven-Wilson, Rockville, Willimantic. The whole team in Manchester was new and represented a welcome return to the out-sourced teacher model.
- Despite some continuing recruitment challenges, (especially for New Haven-Stetson, and for Killingly’s Village at Killingly - VAK site which was suspended 2023), a total of 135 students and their families were served. All sites reported increases in the numbers of children who left programming for family vacations which resulted in some interrupted or reduced attendance, and also disrupted final assessment measures. All sites but Hamden and New Haven-Stetson also reported accepting some older students who had been participants before, or who had eligible younger siblings, and who were struggling to keep up at school due to Covid-related instructional interruptions.
- Evaluation site visits were conducted to all sites summer 2023, including multiple visits for some locations. The evaluation again includes data collected through direct observation. There remain expected variations in implementation due to local issues, and program size remains somewhat lower than pre-pandemic numbers, but all the core elements of the program (regular, structured individual and group tutoring, family engagement opportunities, involvement of rising 1st – 3rd graders who have economic challenges and are reading below grade level) were being addressed.
- As in past years, and consistently across all sites, effective group instruction and dedicated one-on-one instruction as well as use of multiple, customized strategies to engage children in reading skill development were observed. As in all past years, and for summer 2023, including programming at the Manchester site, very effective teaching by all those working with children, and active engagement by participants were observed .
- Library coordinators from each of the sites (Marcy Goldman – Hamden, Allison Whiston – Killingly, Norma Nevers – Manchester, Luis Chavez-Brumell and Meghan Curry – New Haven Wilson Branch, Luis Chavez-Brumell and Diane Brown – New Haven Stetson, Jennifer Johnston – Rockville/Vernon, and Daniel Paquette and Frances McGrath until she went on leave for Willimantic) strongly supported the work of the RfG educators and facilitated the work of the evaluation. All the libraries anticipate participation summer 2024.

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- Other/external partnerships (for example with housing developments and enrichment partners) are coming back now too in this 2nd post-pandemic year, but challenges remain. Unfortunately, VAK did not participate at all with Killingly Library this year. Squire Village, however, was actively supportive of the program in Manchester. Many of the sites engaged outside groups to visit with or work with the children summer 2023.
- Though still less than in the pre-pandemic era, the number of individuals participating increased, and the desired population was being served (see chart for details). There was substantial diversity in terms of race/ethnicity and many children were reading below or well below grade level (almost all others were at grade level but parents wanted to ensure they would maintain that status).
- Many participants had consistent attendance, and parents who provided feedback, including those from the newly restored Manchester program provided very positive ratings and clarified that RfG was filling a critical need and would be beneficial for more students and year round. The use of incentives varied across the programs, but all provided some incentives including cash cards and snacks and little prizes and objects like backpacks and water bottles, in addition to books, to help promote good attendance.
- Multiple assessment strategies were used (including different assessment tests and sight word and other authentic reading measures). As in prior years, all those reporting data (Manchester did not for this first year back) reported that almost all participants maintained or in many cases enhanced/revitalized their reading skills. Parents/guardians continued to confirm positive reading outcomes including increased enjoyment, interest and confidence.



Willimantic participants take advantage of one of the many enticing reading spots in the library, summer 2023.



Hamden staff and participants actively listen to a story with extra sounds effects provided by the Novel Effect App, summer 2023.

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II. FINDINGS

As described in the Summary of Key Findings, despite some challenges, RfG programs were implemented and they produced positive results. This section of the report presents detailed findings for summer 2023, and where applicable limited longitudinal results as well.

Evaluation Summer 2023

The standard evaluation design was used again for 2023 with two additions: staff credential surveys were collected, and multiple visits were conducted to some sites to capture multiple programming types. As it had for each of the past ten years, program design and delivery, enrollment, attendance, and achievement were reviewed and parent input was also obtained. As for the past summers, most data for summer 2023 were collected electronically, and site visits were conducted to all sites as well for direct observation. Each site provided details on their summer practices through on-site and/or follow-up interviews and each submitted photographs and other documentation for independent review. All sites were fully responsive to evaluation requests which facilitated cross-site summaries.

A. Program Design, Operations and Outcomes Overview

The overall program design for summer 2023 was consistent with past cycles but still reflected some changes imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. As shown in Table 1, RfG was undertaken in seven communities during summer 2023, including Hamden, Killingly, Manchester, New Haven-Stetson and New Haven-Wilson, Rockville and Willimantic.² The RfG sites represent urban, suburban and rural communities and continued collaborations with public schools and other governmental and nonprofit partner organizations.

As shown in Table 1, the seven program models all adhered to the core elements of the RfG program to the degree possible, but of course there were slight differences between the communities and as compared to any of the four previous summers or before (see also Evaluation Reports 2019 through 2022). Despite continued smaller program sizes, a substantial amount of programming was offered across sites (3000+ hours) with variations as needed. Summer 2023 also saw some adjustments in target population recruitment (i.e., mostly incoming 1st – 3rd graders with some older and younger students included) and differing levels but increased family involvement. Opportunities for multiple session-based family involvement with RfG program staff were made available at both New Haven sites, though with different levels of success, and also at the Rockville and Willimantic sites. Hamden, Manchester, and

² Summer 2023 was the continuation of the new cohort that began in 2022; the 2013 – 2015 cohort included Killingly, New Haven and Rockville; the 2016 – 2018 cohort added Manchester, West Haven and Wallingford (which discontinued participation after summer 2018); the 2019 through 2022 summers each varied – Manchester suspended all programming for 2021 and was limited for 2022, and West Haven discontinued participation after 2021. The 2023 cohort included Hamden (in its third year) Killingly, New Haven (with two sites Wilson Branch and the new in 2022 Stetson Branch), Rockville, Manchester, and Willimantic (also new in 2022). Any cross-site summaries/trends should be compared carefully as the number of programs has changed and conditions since 2020 are unique.

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Killingly also had final family celebrations or used family take-home projects or both. All sites encouraged parents, guardians, siblings and other family members to continue helping students between sessions by playing educational games and engaging in reading practice. As always, staffing varied by site, and in comparison to past summers, including 2022, (see site-specific reports), but all sites, even the newly re-constituted Manchester site used personnel experienced with reading skill development and all but the Manchester site used personnel familiar with RfG. Multiple instructor-selected curricular materials were used and shared, different incentive strategies were undertaken effectively, and all sites provided books for children to read and keep. As stated previously:

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site was able to recruit and retain 9 participants who were appropriate for and able to fully engage in the program. The Stetson team conducted both individual tutoring and small group work and as stated previously, tried out some family social events. Like their Wilson-Branch counterparts, RfG-Stetson used the Reading A to Z program and other fiction and non-fiction books, and made multiple books and take-home practice activities available for participating children.

- **New Haven - Wilson Branch** built on its re-established program, for summer 2023. The program added one new staff member and recruited both new families and some former participants. All staff members are very strong educators who connected well with the children and families who were happy to continue accessing RfG support and the Wilson community space again. The team again conducted both group and individual tutoring, used AV/tech for reinforcements, continued to use live music options to their sight word learning and brought in collaborators (puppet shows, magician) to reinforce lessons. Family engagement was provided weekly on-site, and books were regularly distributed. A total of 17 children (an increase), including two from 2022, participated.
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- **Willimantic**, in its sophomore summer continued to build on its program. A total of 22 children (an increase), including 8 from summer 2022 participated. All former very experienced instructors returned, and a new instructor (whose husband is a visiting teacher from Spain, working in the lead teacher’s district) was added to the team. The instructors delivered group, small group and individual instruction two evenings/week throughout the summer (7 weeks), promoted regular library use and fully used available space in the library, served meals, provided books to children and hosted multiple family learning events. Throughout the summer, the Willimantic Public Library partnered with the Denison Homestead to bring children environmentally-themed lessons available to all library users including the RfG students.

As clarified by the Program Directors throughout summer, the site-specific strategies described above, resulted in good fits for local conditions.



New Haven – Wilson Branch students perform “I can’t spell Hippopotamus” to practice rhyming. Summer 2023.

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Table 1: REAdy for the Grade Implementation Summary, Summer 2023

Site	Direct Instruction	Book Distribution	Family Engagement	# Weeks	Incentives	# Students	# On-Site Staff	Parent Feedback	Achievement
Hamden	✓	✓	✓	6	✓	19	4 + 2 teen aides	Positive	Most/all
Killingly	✓	✓	✓	7	✓	23	2 + 1 aide + 1 teen + helpers	Positive	Most/all
Manchester	✓	✓	✓	8		11	4	Positive	NA
New Haven Stetson	✓	✓	✓	6	✓	9	3	Positive	Most/all
New Haven Wilson	✓	✓	✓	6	✓	17	5 + 1 helper	Positive	Most/all
Rockville	✓	✓	✓!	7	✓	34	1 + 3 paras, + 2 helpers	Positive	Most/all
Willimantic	✓	✓	✓	7	✓	22	2 + 4 instructional assistant+ 2 teens	Positive **	Most/all
TOTAL						135			

* Aides are adult staff, helpers are pre-teenage youth, mostly former participants.

** Willimantic parent assessment via multiple observations only, no surveys.

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Table 1 also shows important summary data about program and participant outcomes across all sites. Parents/guardians provided positive feedback about how the programs operated and what they and their children got out of it, and program staff reported achievement by participants.

- All sites obtained very positive feedback from parents/guardians (see site-specific reports for details, note that Willimantic did not administer surveys but multiple observations verified positive response). The parents confirmed that the work students did, helped them gain confidence in reading abilities, develop interest in reading for learning and enjoyment, and helped develop or maintain key skills including comprehension, phonics, and identifying sight words. Even though most communities also had other options for children in the summer (e.g., free summer school), parents pointed out that RfG focused on reading skills students would need to be successful in the new school year. Parents appreciated that continued focus and also the opportunity for small multi-week programs and access to the library.
- Different tests were used to determine achievement, but program directors at six of the seven sites administered initial and final assessments and all indicated that all or almost all of the students who participated maintained or improved (mostly improved) their reading skills. (Manchester’s new program was not able to administer tests summer 2023.)

Direct observations were conducted at all sites. Additionally, interviews were conducted with site Coordinators who were asked to describe how they worked with children, and in most cases, involved families. A summary of specific teaching and learning strategies that were observed or described during observations or interviews are shown below in Table 2. It can be seen in the table that many effective practices were used at each of the sites and coordinators/directors reported they used these strategies and others regularly. Specific examples are described in the site-specific reports that are available in Section F. Additionally, sites returned to extensive use of physical space for direct instruction in every community. Books and other instructional materials were made available to participating families at all sites.

Table 2: Use of Effective Practices, Summer 2023

	Hamden	Killingly	Manchester	NH-S	NH-W	Rockville	Willimantic
Building phonetic skills	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Children reading silently	HW	HW	HW	✓	HW	✓	✓
Children reading to instructor/group	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Choral/Guided reading*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Children discussing reading**	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Identifying vocabulary (sight words, new words, unusual words)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Making connections to previous lessons/personal experiences	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Writing, movement or craft activities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

* Done with small groups (2 – 3 students) only. HW = Homework

**This included making predictions, stating preferences, checking comprehension.

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B. Enrollment

Registration data were submitted for 135 enrolled students. This included 32 (24%) rising 1st graders, 36 (27%) rising 2nd graders and 43 (32%) rising 3rd graders. Participants also included a few students (n=3, 2%) who were rising kindergarten students, and a total of 20 who were rising 4th graders. The grade level compositions of the sites were different, with each responding to specific needs/requests of the populations that engaged them, but all sites mostly engaged the core RfG target group of rising 1st – 3rd graders.

Table 3a: Number of Registered Participants by site by Fall 2023 Grade Level

Site	K	1st	2 nd	3 rd	4th	TOTAL 2023	TOTAL 2022	TOTAL 2021	TOTAL 2019
Hamden	0	7	5	7	0	19	15	9	
Killingly	0	4	9	9	1	23	23	31	31
Manchester	0	3	3	2	3	11	5		8
NH – Stetson	1	2	1	5	0	9	8		
NH – Wilson	0	4	2	5	6	17	13	24	41
Rockville	1	9	8	10	5	34	33	14	46
West Haven							--	11	33
Willimantic	1	3	8	5	5	22	17		
TOTAL	3 (2%)	32 (24%)	36 (27%)	43 (32%)	20 (15%)	135	114	89	159

Note: West Haven is included here as their population contributed to comparative totals for 2019-2021. Totals for 2020 are available but not shown here due to the substantial differences in program operation for that year.

The demographic characteristics of the 135 summer 2023 students are shown in Table 3b (following). This total number of students remained lower than the number of students in pre-pandemic years, but greater than the numbers for the two pandemic summers (2020 and 2021) and 2022. The sites providing services changed summer 2023. As in the past, there were also some key differences in the composition of the cohort across sites. Specifically:

- A total of 58% of all students in 2023 were female and 42% were male.
- The racial/ethnic composition of the student group for whom there are data was fairly diverse: 9% of students were identified as Asian, 21% were identified as Black/African American, 25% of students were identified as Hispanic/Latinx, 30% were identified as White, and 15% were identified as bi- or multi-racial. Racial/ethnic diversity was more pronounced at some sites than others (see individual site summaries).
- The proportion of students who were identified as Hispanic/Latinx was lower than for 2022, and for all other years but 2021. The proportion of students identified as White has ranged from about 25% to 36%, in 2023 it was 30%. Changes in group composition are likely due to differences in site profiles, **but this should continue to be monitored** (all comparisons should be made very carefully). Recruitment and enrollment continued to be somewhat limited by local conditions for some sites (e.g., suspension of the VAK program in Killingly, program competition at New Haven – Stetson).
- The primary language used at home for a total of 79% of the summer 2023 students was English, but 10% spoke Spanish as their primary language and 12% spoke English and another language (such as Urdu, Gujarati, Pashto, Twi) at home. The variety of languages, and the fact that several

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students have parents who require translation to interact with the program continues to signal a need for attention to language-related staff skills and materials for future summers. Additionally, there is likely a need to address how to effectively recruit those families who do not speak English as the primary language at home as they may be in need of RfG programming, but not accessing the program. There is also a need to convert RfG evaluation documents into Spanish minimally.

Table 3b: Demographic Characteristics of Total Enrollment

	2023 N=135	2022 N=114	2021 N=89	2020 N=88	2019 N=159	2018 N=261	2017 N=225
Grade in Fall							
PK/Kindergarten*	2%	2%	4%	2%	3%	4%	3%
First Grade	24%	23%	36%	35%	26%	29%	38%
Second Grade	27%	35%	31%	25%	37%	40%	39%
Third Grade	32%	34%	28%	32%	31%	27%	20%
Fourth Grade*	15%	7%		6%			
Gender							
Female	58%	50%	58%	53%	56%	55%	55%
Male	42%	50%	42%	47%	44%	45%	45%
Race/Ethnicity**	N=132	N=108	N=77	N=87			
Asian	9%	7%	6%	7%	5%	7%	6%
Black/African American	21%	17%	21%	25%	17%	20%	23%
Hispanic/Latinx	25%	31%	19%	32%	42%	33%	32%
Native American	0	0	3%	0	1%	1%	1%
White	30%	35%	36%	25%	25%	28%	34%
Biracial	15%	9%	10%	9%	11%	11%	4%
Other	0	0	4%				
Primary Language at Home				N=62			
English	79%	84%	76%	68%	66%	73%	72%
Spanish	10%	9%	14%	21%	22%	19%	21%
Other	12%	7%	10%	11%	12%	8%	7%

* Siblings in PK and 4th grade were allowed to officially participate for summer 2020 and beyond

** Note all reported racial/ethnic data were recoded into single race/ethnicity categories to facilitate over-years comparisons, students in the “other” category 2021, identified themselves as *Arabic*.

Assessment of participants’ initial instructional reading levels were conducted as summer programming began at all the sites and participants at all but the New Haven - Wilson Branch also reported available entering reading levels. Outreach for summer 2023 continued to include connections with families that had participated in prior years, or among families that were known to have students reading below grade level (roughly 2/3 of participants were specifically identified as being below or well below grade level and key staff from all sites indicated most of those participating definitely needed the help). Additionally, some parents, concerned about their children falling behind due to lack of consistent instruction during the 2021-22 school year, enrolled their children. Directors/Coordinators and family members reported that all or almost all (about 86%) of the participants they worked with were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

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C. Attendance and Achievement

In addition to running engaging programs, the sites also promoted regular attendance. Each program tracked and reported attendance somewhat differently (see site specific results for details), but all indicated that many/most participants attended consistently and took advantage of available programming (despite in most cases, the availability of other summer learning options and increased interest in family vacations). All the sites also pushed participants to achieve, to maintain and in many cases to enhance key reading skills. Sites used different assessment strategies that focused on different skill development for summer 2023, but as shown in Table 4, it was clear that overall, participants did demonstrate desired results (see also site-specific results for additional details). **For the 98 cases where both a pre- and post-test were administered: 38% of the post tests showed improvement and an additional 59% showed no change (i.e., no loss of reading skills). All but three RfG participants (97%) for summer 2023 achieved the desired stability and expected readiness for the next school year.**

Table 4: Summer Reading Goal Results

Program	# Tests	Decreased Reading Score	Maintained Reading Score	Increased Reading Score
Hamden	11	0	3	8
Killingly	18	2	7	10
New Haven-Stetson	7	0	3	4
New Haven-Wilson	14	0	6	8
Rockville	33	0	28	6
Willimantic	14	1	12	1
TOTAL★	97	3%	59%	38%

★Children took different tests. This is a basic assessment of change across sites.

D. Parent/Guardian Feedback

A total of 36 parents/guardians answered a brief survey³ about the RfG summer program 2023 (this included 11 from Hamden, 11 from Killingly, 5 from Manchester, 3 from New Haven-Stetson, 2 from New Haven-Wilson, and 4 from Rockville). As shown in Table 5, all or almost all parent respondents verified that their children benefited from participating in RfG summer 2023. Additionally, all respondents rated the program leaders positively and all reported they planned to sign up again next summer. Their comments regarding the staff and the importance of the program were especially enlightening (see site specific results in Section F). It is especially important to note that the newer sites had feedback results that were similar to those obtained from the longer-running sites.

³ The parent survey was administered by RfG staff at the sites in hard copy form and then transferred to Survey Monkey for analysis for this report. Surveys were not administered at the Willimantic site, summer 2023.

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Table 5: Parent/Guardian Feedback READY for the Grade, 2022 and 2023

	2023 N=36
% who rated the program <i>good</i> (10%) or <i>excellent</i> (90%) on a scale ranging from poor to excellent	100%
% who rated the staff <i>good</i> (9%) or <i>excellent</i> (91%) on a scale ranging from poor to excellent	100%
% who reported the READY for the Grade Program was <i>important</i> (10%) or <i>very important</i> (90%)	97%
% who answered yes to the following	
As a result of participating my child/children read more over the summer	97%
As a result of participating, my child/children feel more confident reading	97%
As a result of participating my family was inspired to read more over the summer	97%
We will sign up again next summer if eligible	100%

E. Staff Descriptions

Diverse, highly-qualified staff are working with the children at all the sites. A total of 29 adults served as staff and 21 of them, representing all 7 sites, answered a brief survey about their backgrounds and credentials (please see also Table 1 for the breakdown of staff and assistants by site). Almost half of the responding staff (9) were new to RfG for Summer 2023, but the rest, including 3 who had been participating for more than 5 years, have worked with the program for 2 or more years. The responding staff included 17 women and 4 males (from the Hamden and both New Haven sites), ranging in age from 18-29 to 60-69. A total of 15 of the responding 21 staff members identified their racial/ethnic backgrounds as white, 1 identified as Asian, 4 identified as Black/African American, 1 as Caribbean, 2 identified as Latinx (as were 2 others who did not answer the survey), 4 of the staff members (including 2 who did not answer the survey) were native Spanish speakers. Most importantly they brought many qualifications to their work (see also the appendix for a full description): about half (12) were public school teachers, 2 were library staff, and there were several other related positions. They have worked with all grade levels, and in other supportive positions (e.g., Family Resource Coordinator) and 16 of the 21 have graduate-level educational credentials.



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F. Site Specific Results

All seven sites accomplished key outcomes for summer 2023 and provided important RfG benefits for participating families. The way they delivered services and what they accomplished specifically varied somewhat by site. Details for each site follow.

HAMDEN

Hamden implemented their 6-week in-person program at the Brundage Community Branch Library. A total of 19 children participated in group and individual instruction. Take home activities for children to complete with family members were sent home most weeks and the site also conducted a parent orientation night at the beginning of the program and one big family event at the end of the summer. Books (214 in total) and other incentives were distributed and students were given a take home packet to review during the weeks off from the program until school starts. The program was designed and overseen by Marcy Goldman, Head of Children’s Services of the Hamden Public Library, with Project Coordinator Raymond Brumleve and staffed by three local instructors all of whom had participated in both Summer 2021 and Summer 2022. The program remained manageably small and continued to offer multiple days so that small groups and independent work with an instructor could all be accomplished at the same time. The program met enrollment and attendance goals⁴ and was well received by both the children and their family members. Participants in Hamden, just like those from other RfG sites received the support they needed to maintain or in many cases build up their reading skills, they accessed instructionally appropriate books and spent quality time in the library, earned incentives, and were excited to come to the program to participate. Details follow.

Program Implementation

Individual and Small Group Instruction. The Hamden Library ran their READY for the Grade program Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 9:30 until 12:00 for a total of 6 weeks, and most students came once or twice per week. Teachers used worksheets (e.g., character traits recording sheets), large and individual white boards, and literacy-based games and activities throughout each session to provide both small group and individualized instruction. Each week the group would read a chapter from *Friend for Dragon* (a new book for 2023) focusing on reading, comprehension, vocabulary and fluency and there was a different activity that went along with the story. They also did other group reading activities where the instructors used *Novel Effect*, an App that makes stories interactive by using music and sound effects throughout the reading of the story. In addition, children also got opportunities to visit the library together with staff on a regular basis and they had take-home activities to extend their classroom learning. Observed instruction was excellent.

Parent Engagement. Hamden kicked off their summer program with a family orientation night (11 families participated) where parents also got to sign children up for the summer reading game and got a summer reading goody bag. Take home activities for children to complete with family members were sent home most weeks (e.g., students were given sunflower seeds to take home and grow, they did a make your own taco

⁴ Once again, Hamden RfG had to compete with summer school but did not have any Covid group-size restrictions. The program increased in size as compared to 2022 and included 4 students from the prior year.

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craft, and a puppet craft, they received dice and prompts to play a roll-a-story game at home); and students were also given a take-home packet to review during the weeks after the program ended until school starts. Hamden also held a final in-person family event to celebrate the end of the program. At the final event, a total of 48 people (14 families) came to thank teachers and enjoy pizza. They also played a summer bingo game and each family was rewarded with a \$25 Target gift card for program completion.

Incentives. On their first day, all participating children received small book bags and water bottles with the Ready for the Grade logo. These are left over from the first year Hamden held the program. Additionally, participants were able to take home a free book each day they attended (214 books were distributed) and \$15 gift cards for a local ice cream store were awarded to children with good attendance.



Families enjoy the Hamden RfG final event, summer 2023.



Pizza and Bingo at the Hamden RfG summer family event.

Enrollment

As shown in table 6a, a total of 19 students were enrolled for the Hamden REAdy for the Grade Summer program 2023. It can be seen in the table that the descriptive characteristics of those who participated were similar to participants from other sites, and there have been some shifts in participant characteristics over the years. These data will continue to be useful to monitor recruitment trends each summer.

- The program served rising 1st (37%) 2nd (26%) and 3rd graders (37%). A total of 10 were females (53%) and 9 (47%) were males.
- The student group was diverse in terms of race/ethnicity and representative of the local community; 2 participants were identified as Asian (including Indian/Asian), 1 of the participants was identified as Black/African American, 7 were identified as Hispanic/Latinx, 4 were identified as White/Caucasian, 2 were identified as biracial, and 2 were missing information about racial/ethnic identity.
- Most students (15) spoke English as their primary language at home, and the other students spoke Spanish, or English and another language including English/Spanish and English/Kannada at home.

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Table 6a: Enrollment Details, Hamden READY for the Grade

	2023 N=19	2022 N=15	2021 N=9
Grade in Fall			
PK/Kindergarten	0	0	0
First Grade	37%	40%	22%
Second Grade	26%	40%	22%
Third Grade	37%	20%	56%
Gender			
Female	53%	27%	44%
Male	47%	73%	56%
Race/Ethnicity (n=8)			
Asian	12%	8%	50%
Black/African American	12%	15%	13%
Hispanic/Latinx	41%	38%	13%
Native American	0	0	0
White	24%	23%	13%
Biracial	12%	15%	13%
Primary Language at Home			
English	79%	71%	44%
Spanish	11%		
English and 2 nd language*	11%	21%	0
Other (Gujarti)	0	7%	56%

* 1 student Kannada/English, 2 students Spanish/English for 2023; Spanish/English for 2022.

Attendance

As stated previously, Hamden conducted its program Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30 until 12:00 for a total of 6 weeks, and students had the option of one or two times each week. Review of attendance records for the Hamden READY for the Grade program summer 2023 showed that most participants (72%) attended at least once weekly and many (44%) attended a second day each week as well. In total, 275 hours of instruction were delivered (about 15.5 hours per student on average). Attendance, as shown, was somewhat less robust than in the prior summer (a trend noted for some other sites as well).

Table 6b: Student Attendance, Hamden RfG, Summer 2022, 2023

Student Attendance	2023	2022
Below expectations	28%	14%
At expectations (once per week)	28%	43%
Above expectations (more than once)	44%	43%

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Achievement

Achievement results were recorded for 11 of the 19 participants including pre- and post *easyCBM* assessments (see Table 6c). Each of the tested participants maintained (4 of 11) or improved their scores (7 of 11), and improvements in specific skills were documented for all participants. Like their peers in the other RfG sites, **these participants did not lose ground over the summer.** The program Coordinator and instructors noted that while some students had substantial skill development needs, all were working on key skills and most made important progress. During the observation it was clear again, as in Summer 2022, that the small group strategy with available 1:1 assistance made both theme-based group work and differentiated instruction possible. Children were called upon to demonstrate their reading fluency, comprehension and vocabulary skills throughout the lesson.

Table 6c: Assessment Results, Hamden RfG, Summer 2023

Grade	Starting Level Letter/Sight Word/Fluency	Ending Level Letter/Sight Word/Fluency	Assessment
1	35%	52%	Increased
1	50%	58%	Increased
1	95%	98%	Increased
2	92%	92%	Maintained
2	99%	99%	Maintained
2	89%	91%	Increased
2	72%	93%	Increased
2	93%	95%	Increased
3	93%	93%	Maintained
3	82%	90%	Increased
3	91%	94%	Increased



Students play a literacy-based game with Hamden site director, in the library, summer 2023.

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Parent/Guardian Feedback

A total of 11 parents/guardians answered a brief survey⁵ about the READY for the Grade summer program in Hamden, 2022. As shown in Table 6d, and the following comments, all or almost all parent respondents verified that their children benefited from participating in RfG summer 2022. Additionally, all respondents rated the program leaders *excellent* and all but one reported they planned to sign up again next summer (1 other parent respondent indicated they might sign up again). Their comments regarding the staff and the importance of the program were especially enlightening (see next page).

Table 6d: Parent/Guardian Feedback, Hamden, READY for the Grade

	2023 N=11	2022 N=9
# who rated the program <i>good</i> or <i>excellent</i> (9) on a scale ranging from poor to excellent	11	9
# who rated the staff <i>good</i> or <i>excellent</i> (9) on a scale ranging from poor to excellent	11	9
# who reported the READY for the Grade Program was <i>important</i> or <i>very important</i> (9)	11	9
# who answered yes to the following		
As a result of participating my child/children read more over the summer	11	9
As a result of participating, my child/children feel more confident reading	11	8
As a result of participating my family was inspired to read more over the summer	11	9

What did you like about the program?	What do you feel your child gained?
<p><i>They prepare for the next year of study, they review and encourage reading, and the children are not bored at home.</i></p> <p><i>The hours, how knowledgeable the staff are. All the materials they have for the children to have.</i></p> <p><i>They included fun activities into the program.</i></p> <p><i>Child's confidence increased.</i></p> <p><i>A time to engage the kids over the summer and keeping their minds involved in "school" in a fun entertaining environment. As well as affordability (grant based program).</i></p> <p><i>Reading comprehension & free books to continue reading.</i></p> <p><i>The different way to read also how the kids like to read.</i></p> <p><i>Everything. They were fantastic with the students, nurturing, caring, fantastic teachers.</i></p> <p><i>Small groups and free books</i></p>	<p><i>More curious to see books.</i></p> <p><i>Reading more at a faster pace.</i></p> <p><i>Enjoyed reading more.</i></p> <p><i>More reading strategies and building their confidence to know/believe that they know more than they think.</i></p> <p><i>They gained reading confidence.</i></p> <p><i>The importance of continued reading.</i></p> <p><i>They learn many skills, after every day came with different knowledge thanks to the program</i></p> <p><i>Got better at reading and writing, made friends, more confidence, really had fun and learned a lot.</i></p> <p><i>Better fluency, more confidence, consistent practice</i></p>

⁵ The parent survey was administered by RfG staff in hard copy form and then transferred to Survey Monkey for analysis.

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Conclusions and Issues for Further Consideration

The Hamden READY for the Grade program returned to the renovated downstairs area of the Brundage Community Branch Library for summer 2023. Once again, the RfG team used the space very effectively and were able to use in-person programming for all sessions and events. The Hamden site maintained all their staff members and continued to offer opportunities to SYEP teens, and they built on their outreach and recruitment strategies for participants increasing their enrollment and attracting students back for a second year. Hamden RfG continued use of an incentives plan similar to that used since 2021, and they again fully implemented a book-themed curriculum. They did not conduct any field trips or other enrichment activities, and they did streamline their parent engagement strategy (one orientation session, one culminating celebration and take-home activities in between), but student attendance and parent feedback remained very positive. The program could probably increase enrollment somewhat for future summers while still maintaining the small group strategy. The program added four students this summer and implementation and student outcome results were consistent and continued to mirror those achieved by the longer-established programs. Additional parent comments (see box at right) show that all efforts by the program were appreciated. The only suggestions for future changes were that programming be extended.

Like the other sites, Hamden engaged experienced staff who worked very effectively with students, conducted theme-based literacy activities and provided both home-based activities and meaningful opportunities for parent/family member involvement. Once again there was a continuous focus on reading skill development along with access to appropriate books, as well as group exposure to a shared reading experience. The results, in alignment with those recorded for other sites, illustrated by consistent attendance, positive teacher and standardized reading assessment data and especially positive feedback from parents, provided clear evidence of success. **Hamden continued to fully demonstrate the strength and flexibility of the READY for the Grade model and remains well-situated to continue building for future summers.**

Parent Comments about Staff and the Importance of the Program

Excellent staff and very knowledgeable.

Everyone was exceptionally friendly kind, and attentive to the children.

They were all amazing and attentive to my daughter and each of the other children in her group.

Great people made my child comfortable day 1.

To Ms. Jody, Ms. Lisa, Mr. Jake and Mr. Raymon,d we can't thank you enough. And to all the volunteers and assistants - thank you a million. What would we do without you?

All the teachers and tutors were helpful, knowledgeable, and welcoming.

Parent Summary Comments and Suggestions for the Future

Maybe it will be more time and with games to teach them words to write.

That they offer the program for older kids. My daughter will miss it next summer.

Extra days 3x a week would be more impactful

I would like the program in winter and fall - maybe four seasons.

Great program! Please continue next year, Thank you.

Please keep this program going. The children will always be able to stay on target.

It was awesome!

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KILLINGLY

Killingly had a very productive summer despite some early setbacks before the program started. The Village at Killing (VAK), the residential community where READY for the Grade has been conducted as a secondary site for multiple years was not able to host the program, and one of the new instructors from 2022, decided not to return for summer 2023. The other two educators, (also new in 2022), and their long-term colleague, together with Allison Whitson, Children’s Librarian of the Killingly Public Library designed and delivered an effective literacy-based program highlighting children’s creativity. The program included small group instruction and individual tutoring at the library with 23 students (the same number served as in 2022 with both the library site and VAK). The participants regularly received books and other small prizes and the site, during a session that included a volunteer project, was visited by the CT Humane Society. No family events were held, but throughout the summer the educators engaged family members and made sure children and their families used the library and had access to many take-home books. Though still somewhat smaller than in prior years, the program met overall enrollment and attendance goals,⁶ increased total programming time, and was once again well received by both the children and their family members. Just as in each of the summers since the initiative started, participants received the support they needed to maintain or build up their reading skills, they increased their confidence regarding reading, they accessed instructionally appropriate books, earned incentives, and were excited to come to the program to participate. Details follow.

Program Implementation

Group and Individual Instruction. The staff conducted whole group activities to initiate, and sometimes close sessions and each student also worked as part of a small group in the evening program in the library. A total of five students participated only in individual one-on-one, phonics-based tutoring. During the library program sessions each week, the children practiced their reading skills using levelled readers, completed written and other expressive activities that promoted comprehension and participated in other literacy-based activities such as games, crafts, sight word reviews, connected to the weekly themes (voice/music, artistry, poetry, caring/kindness, acting). They also selected books to take home for their personal libraries and extra reading practice. As they had since 2021, students were also sent home with mini-books to color and read, and take-home craft activities. They were also encouraged to select library books. The three teachers each had their own groups and tutoring assignments, but they planned together. Observed instruction was excellent.

Parent Engagement. RfG Killingly instructors provided guidance for parents/guardians as requested, to help them support their children’s reading skill development. Mostly this involved just touching base and checking in with parents during pick up and drop off to get updates and provide assistance. They also sent home craft projects.

Incentives. All children received a bookbag at the beginning of the summer that they decorated and used to transport their free weekly book selections (a total of 260 books were distributed) and any library books. Take-home craft activities, and other prizes related to the theme, which were obtained by spinning a prize-wheel at the end of each week, were also used as incentives/rewards to help keep children focused during their

⁶ Summer school was again broadly available in Killingly Summer 2023, and some families chose that instead or combined that with RfG.

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sessions (see image following). Students also collected beads each week to create a necklace (1 bead represented each day that they read), and each child who attended at least 8 out of the 13 days was given a \$50.00 gift card to Target. Most students who actively attended achieved this goal!

Enrollment

As shown in table 7a, the Killingly READY for the Grade program had as many participants summer 2023 as they had in summer 2022, despite the absence of the VAK site. It can be seen in the table that the descriptive characteristics of those who participated were both similar to and different from those who participated in prior years.

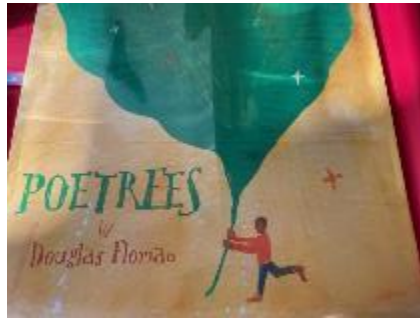
- The program served rising 1st (17%) 2nd (39%) and 3rd graders (39%), including 7 who were returning from summer 2022; unlike in past years when the group was more evenly split, a total of 65% of participants in summer 2023 were females, 35% were males.
- The student group was also somewhat different in terms of racial/ethnic diversity; 4% of the participants (1 student) identified as Asian, 4% of the participants were identified as Black/African American, 4% were identified as Hispanic/Latinx, 74% were identified as White/Caucasian and 13% were identified as biracial which included two students who were identified as White/Caucasian and Native American.
- All but one student spoke English as the primary language at home.

Table 7a: Enrollment Details, Killingly READY for the Grade

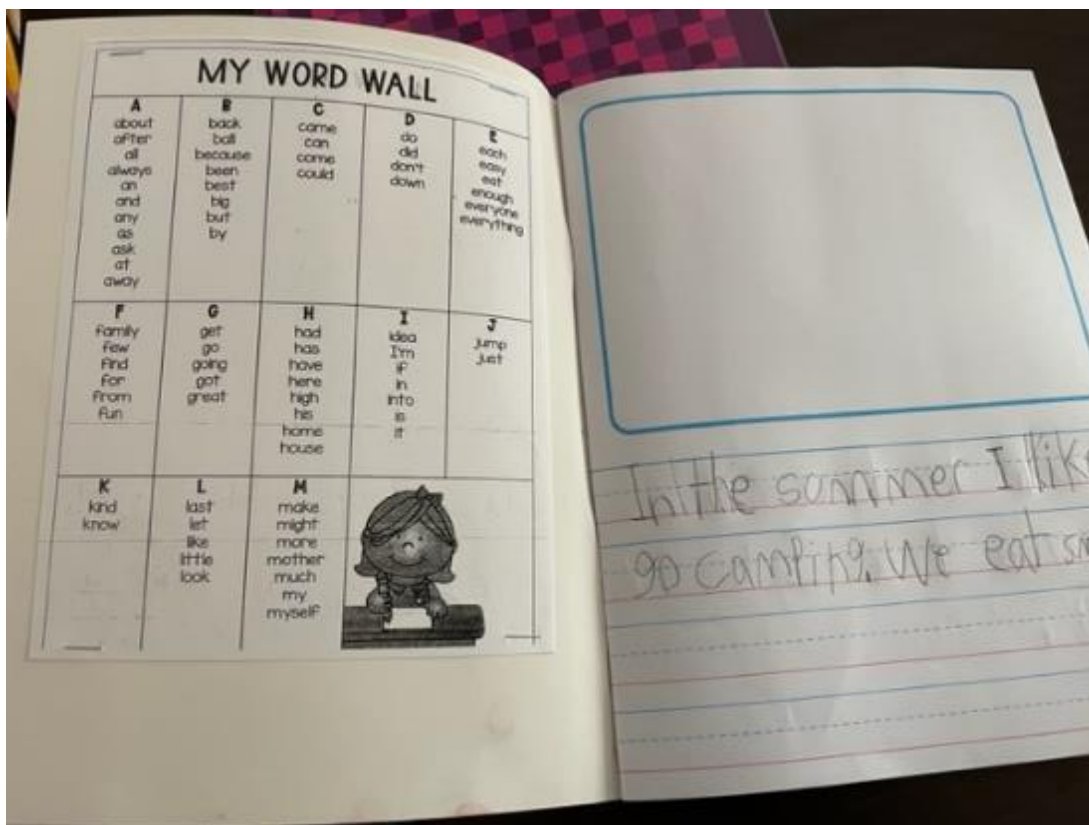
	2023 N=23	2022 N=23	2021 N=31	2020 N=25	2019 N=31
Grade in Fall					
PK/Kindergarten	0	0	0	0	0
First Grade	17%	17%	42%	20%	32%
Second Grade	39%	39%	35%	32%	35%
Third Grade	39%	43%	23%	40%	32%
Fourth Grade*	4%	0	0	8%	0
Gender					
Female	65%	52%	52%	56%	55%
Male	35%	48%	48%	44%	45%
Race/Ethnicity					
Asian	4%	0	0	0	0
Black/African American	4%	9%	3%	0	3%
Hispanic/Latinx	4%	4%	10%	13%	26%
Native American	0	0	6%	0	3%
White	74%	70%	61%	75%	61%
Biracial	13%	17%	19%	13%	6%
Primary Language at Home					
English	96%	96%	92%	92%	27%
English and Other Language**	4%	4%	4%	4%	39%
Other (see above)	0	0	4%	4%	33%

* Grade level enrollment requirements relaxed since 2020, ** Spanish 2019-2022, Gujarti 2023

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Students used art and poetry to help develop literacy skills, Killingly, 2023.



Writing and vocabulary development featured prominently too, Killingly, 2023.

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Attendance

Killingly conducted its 7-week group program for 18 students at the library on Mondays and Tuesdays in two-hour sessions from 4:30 – 6:30. Five additional participants were engaged in individual instruction earlier in the day. Review of attendance records for the Killingly program summer 2023 showed that most participants attended regularly.

- In total Killingly provided 364.0 hours of programming to the 23 students. This represents a substantial increase in total time available and participated in as compared to summer 2022.
- On average each student engaged in the group program participated for about 19 total hours (range was 2 – 28 hours). All but one of the five students engaged in tutoring came each week and received 4 or more total hours of individual instruction.
- As stated above all but four of the 18 group participants (78%), accessed the program for at least 8 of the 13 days (16 hours total each), and many of them attended much more (average time 23 hours).

As had been the case since summer 2021, all participants were encouraged to do daily practice work and to read regularly between sessions using the books and mini-books provided.

Achievement

A total of 18 students, including 4 of the 5 tutoring students participated in a reading assessment during initial and final RfG sessions. Of these, all but two participants maintained (33%) or increased their scores (56%). Like each of the other RfG sites, **these participants did not lose ground over the summer – most improved skills.** As shown in Table 7b, students continued to hold their own regarding reading levels. The program coordinator and teachers confirmed that the extended time, small groups and available individualized instruction had helped enhance reading confidence. Once again, participants were excited to come to the program. During the observation it was clear that the small groups, skilled instructors and effective use of levelled readers and integrated thematic activities made it easier to work on specific skills and helped participants stay focused. Staff worked together to bring different lessons for the students that reinforced key skills such as self-correction, recognizing different vowel sounds and sight words and demonstrating comprehension through writing and discussion, while also helping them to “find their voice” through music, art, poetry, caring and acting.

Table 7b: Achievement Data, Killingly READY for the Grade, 2023

Grade	Pre	Post	RESULT	Grade	Pre	Post	RESULT	Grade	Pre	Post	RESULT
1	2	4	Increased	2	9	11	Increased	3	20	32	Increased
1	16	32	Increased	2	26	40	Increased	3	28	38	Increased
1	14	13	Maintained	2	35	39	Increased	3	47	82	Increased
1	16	14	Maintained	2t	70	84	Increased	3	11	9	Maintained
				2t	28	26	Maintained	3	15	14	Maintained
								3	54	52	Maintained
				2	48	36	Decreased	3t	49	30	Decreased

Teachers elected to return to use of the Pioneer Valley Assessment as/of Summer 2021 .

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Parent/Guardian Feedback

A total of 11 parents/guardians answered a brief survey about the REAdy for the Grade (Remarkable Readers) summer program in Killingly, 2023. As shown in Table 7c, and the following comments, all or almost all parent respondents verified that their children benefited from participating in RfG summer 2023. Additionally, all respondents rated the program leaders positively and all reported they planned to sign up again next summer.

Table 7c: Parent/Guardian Feedback, Killingly, REAdy for the Grade, 2023

	2023 N=11	2022 N=13	2021 N=12
% who rated the program <i>good</i> (18%) or <i>excellent</i> (82%) on a scale ranging from poor to excellent	100%	100%	100%
% who rated the staff <i>good</i> (9%) or <i>excellent</i> (91%) on a scale ranging from poor to excellent	100%	100%	100%
% who reported the Remarkable Readers Program was <i>important</i> (9%) or <i>very important</i> (82%)	91%	100%	100%
% who answered yes to the following			
As a result of participating my child/children read more over the summer	91%	100%	92%
As a result of participating, my child/children feel more confident reading	91%	100%	92%
As a result of participating my family was inspired to read more over the summer	91%	92%	92%
We will sign up again next summer	100%	100%	100%

What did you like about the program?	What do you feel your child gained?
<p><i>The activities weren't just limited to literacy and were engaging.</i></p> <p><i>Staff is amazing and provided tools to help with next school year.</i></p> <p><i>I liked the most that my kids had fun with crafts and got to read.</i></p> <p><i>It was short sessions, only once a week which was great because my son wasn't 100% thrilled to do it, but knowing it wasn't too often was motivating for him.</i></p> <p><i>I liked that the teacher really connected with my daughter so she was able to grasp different techniques with reading.</i></p> <p><i>EVERYTHING!! The rewards were amazing and our daughter was so excited about them. Equally excited to show off the art she made. And my favorite of all; I've noticed GREAT improvement in her reading. Improvement and confidence :)</i></p> <p><i>I like that it helps with My kids reading and they get to do projects, they are excited to go every time.</i></p> <p><i>I liked how it was a 1 on 1 setting and my daughter was able to have comfort in learning how to read better.</i></p> <p><i>Made reading fun for my daughter.</i></p>	<p><i>Confidence and increased interest in reading</i></p> <p><i>Extra practice with staff.</i></p> <p><i>Socializing more during the summer months.</i></p> <p><i>More confidence and reading strategies.</i></p> <p><i>Daughter has learned to be more confident.</i></p> <p><i>Confidence!! New peers. And responsibility (having to remember to bring her bag every week).</i></p> <p><i>Helping with their learning.</i></p> <p><i>My daughter now knows how to read chapter books and wants to read more.</i></p> <p><i>More confidence in reading.</i></p> <p><i>Gained more confidence reading.</i></p> <p><i>Attentive, listening and confidence.</i></p>

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Conclusions and Issues for Further Consideration

The Killingly READY for the Grade program shifted the program again for summer 2023, once again extending available hours. They continued to use the library facility effectively and to make individualized instruction available for some students. Killingly RfG also regularly promoted and encouraged home-based reading practice and sent home craft-based activities for extended learning opportunities. Summer 2023 only included in-person instruction, and the library also welcomed a visit from an outside organization – the CT Humane Society. As stated previously, though one 2022 staff member did not return, the 2023 team worked very effectively with students and each other. Literacy-based activities and many complementary enrichment activities including those students could work on at home were all made possible, and there was a continuous focus on access to appropriate books. The results, illustrated by consistent attendance, positive teacher and standardized reading assessment data and especially positive and consistent feedback from parents provided clear evidence of success. **Killingly served a comparable number of students despite suspending work at the VAK site and losing one instructor, and once again extended participation time for students during Summer 2023. The program design was very well received as confirmed by parents. Renewed efforts to re-engage with VAK, to invite visiting organizations, to increase enrollment slightly and to continue parent/family support will enhance efforts for 2024. Parents can continue to benefit from the substantial expertise at the Killingly site and the RfG educators continue to be interested in working with them.**

Parent Comments about Staff and the Importance of the Program

Excellent overall. The staff were very helpful and resourceful.

Staff is always pleasant with me and patient and happy with my kids during the program. I have no complaints.

They are very welcoming and sweet.

Parent suggestions for changes to the program.

Eight out of the 11 parents answering said **nothing** when asked what they would change about the program.

Time frames were not as convenient as in past years.

It being longer through summer.

My twins go into 3rd grade next year and they will age out for next summer. So they are sad about it.



Group reading activities at the Killingly library, Summer 2023.



Eagerly waiting for a turn at the prize-wheel, Killingly, Summer 2023.

“READY for the Grade” Summary Results Report

Evaluation Services, 2023

MANCHESTER

The **Manchester** site ran a fully-staffed, 8-week program in the beautiful Squire Village resource room. Four new, highly-qualified staff members were engaged and the Family Resource Coordinator for Squire Village was also regularly involved. This was an important return to in-person programming after multiple years with no or limited programming available. A total of 11 children (plus a couple of older siblings) participated regularly and a few others visited a few times to investigate the program. Staff conducted very engaging small group reading and other literacy and arts-based activities and provided individualized assistance to participants as needed. A final celebration for the group was conducted for the last session. The site promoted the voluntary nature of involvement (children were free to come and go), and multiple children attended consistently. [Note that as Manchester was re-constituting its program for 2023, achievement data were not collected.]

Program Implementation



Instructor finding out what kids already know about the topic of the day. Manchester RfG, 2023.

Group and Individual Instruction. As stated above, Manchester engaged four instructors to work with Squire Village residents throughout the summer 2023. The instructors, who included both teachers and Family Resource Coordinators from a local school, including one person who grew up at Squire Village, actively engaged students in multiple reading, writing and craft-based activities to help students hone skills, gain knowledge, gain confidence, and have fun. Teachers alternated whole group activities (story reading and discussions) with hands-on applications (buddy-reading, puzzles, worksheets) and craft projects related to daily themes. During application time, teachers worked with one or two individuals and all materials included multiple age-appropriate options. The teachers listen to children read individually and to the group and reinforce literacy skill development as well as learning about specific content. Students also have opportunities to complete art projects to demonstrate their creativity and their understanding of lesson content.

Family and Site Level Engagement and Incentives. Manchester did not conduct any regular parent education activities, but parents were encouraged to drop in and visit while programming happened, and the instructors regularly sent completed work and small projects and books home with children. Many of the children attended programming with siblings, including older siblings who helped and encouraged engagement. The Squire Village Family Resource Coordinator visited the program regularly and helped to coordinate family involvement (the meals program takes place in the Squire Village Resource Room and children can easily go from breakfast to RfG). The physical space is ideally suited for the program as there are large tables for worksessions, a designated circle area with a rug for large group reading, plenty of space for the many supplies including books and snacks and prizes. Children selected two books and a prize to take home after each session, and families received gift cards for participation. (Note that parents confirmed that the incentives to participate were *very important*.)

“READY for the Grade” Summary Results Report

Evaluation Services, 2023

Enrollment

As shown in table 8a, the Manchester READY for the Grade program served 11 students with consistent attendance throughout summer 2023. This represented a return to pre-pandemic levels of participation summer 2023. It can be seen in the table that the descriptive characteristics of those who participated were similar to other sites (see also prior reports for longitudinal enrollment data but note that program design varied considerably over years, both 2020 and 2022 included resource kit distribution only, no in-person programming).

- The 2023 program served rising 1st (27%) 2nd (27%), 3rd graders (18%), and 4th graders (27%) including as stated above older siblings. A total of 45% of participants in summer 2023 were females, 55% were males. (There were also several children who visited and tried out participation once or twice, or who were siblings even older than 4th grade. Data about them is not reported here.)
- The student group represents the diversity at Squire Village; 9% of the participants (1 student) identified as Asian, 82% of the participants were identified as Black/African American, 9% were identified as Hispanic/Latinx.
- About two-thirds of the students spoke English as their primary language at home, but four of the students, from one family, spoke both English and Twi regularly at home.

Table 8a: Enrollment Details, Manchester RfG, 2023

	N=11
Grade in Fall	
PK/Kindergarten*	0
First Grade	27%
Second Grade	27%
Third Grade	18%
Fourth Grade*	27%
Gender	
Female	45%
Male	55%
Race/Ethnicity	
Asian	9%
Black/African American	82%
Hispanic/Latinx	9%
Native American	0
White	0
Biracial	0
Other	0
Primary Language at Home	
English	64%
Spanish	0
English and 2 nd Language*	36%



Students participating in individual reading activities, Manchester RfG summer 2023.

“READY for the Grade” Summary Results Report

Evaluation Services, 2023

Attendance

Manchester conducted its program throughout the summer for 8-weeks at Squire Village on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9:30-12:00 (the Squire Village lunch program followed). They operated the program on an open-attendance basis: children were free to come and go during the open hours and could elect to participate or not, on a daily basis. Though some parents chose to drop off and pick-up their children, the children can access the resource room on their own – walking or biking from their residences.

Review of attendance records for Manchester READY for the Grade program summer 2023 showed that while a few children only tested the waters, there was definitely a consistent group and they attended regularly.

- In total Manchester provided 295.0 hours of programming to the 11 students.
- On average each student participated for about 27 total hours (range was 5 – 57.5 hours).
- About two-thirds of the students participated more than half of the available hours, with many attending multiple days each week and multiple weeks throughout the summer.

All participants were encouraged to do daily practice work and to read regularly between sessions using the books and take-home activities provided.

Parent/Guardian Feedback

A total of 5 parents/guardians answered a brief survey about the READY for the Grade summer program in Manchester, 2023. As shown in Table 7c, and the following comments, all parent respondents verified that their children benefited from participating in RfG summer 2023. Additionally, all respondents rated the program leaders positively and all reported they planned to sign up again next summer.

Table 8b: Parent/Guardian Feedback, Manchester, READY for the Grade, 2023

	2023 N=5
% who rated the program <i>good</i> (0) or <i>excellent</i> (5) on a scale ranging from poor to excellent	5
% who rated the staff <i>good</i> (2) or <i>excellent</i> (3) on a scale ranging from poor to excellent	5
% who reported the READY for the Grade Program was <i>important</i> (1) or <i>very important</i> (4)	5
% who answered yes to the following	
As a result of participating my child/children read more over the summer	5
As a result of participating, my child/children feel more confident reading	5
As a result of participating my family was inspired to read more over the summer	5
We will sign up again next summer	5
What did you like about the program?	What do you feel your child gained?
<i>The staff and the activities. My child looked forward to this program.</i>	<i>His reading increased, sounding out words and is being able to identify objects.</i>
<i>The amount of help and attention.</i>	<i>He met new people.</i>
<i>Everything.</i>	<i>Trust.</i>
<i>They did more than reading.</i>	<i>Better reading skills.</i>

Parent Comments about Staff and the Importance of the Program

They were always so welcoming, so friendly and very informative.

Ms. Houst, Mrs. Tuoeey, Ms. Morey, Ms. Keser were all wonderful.

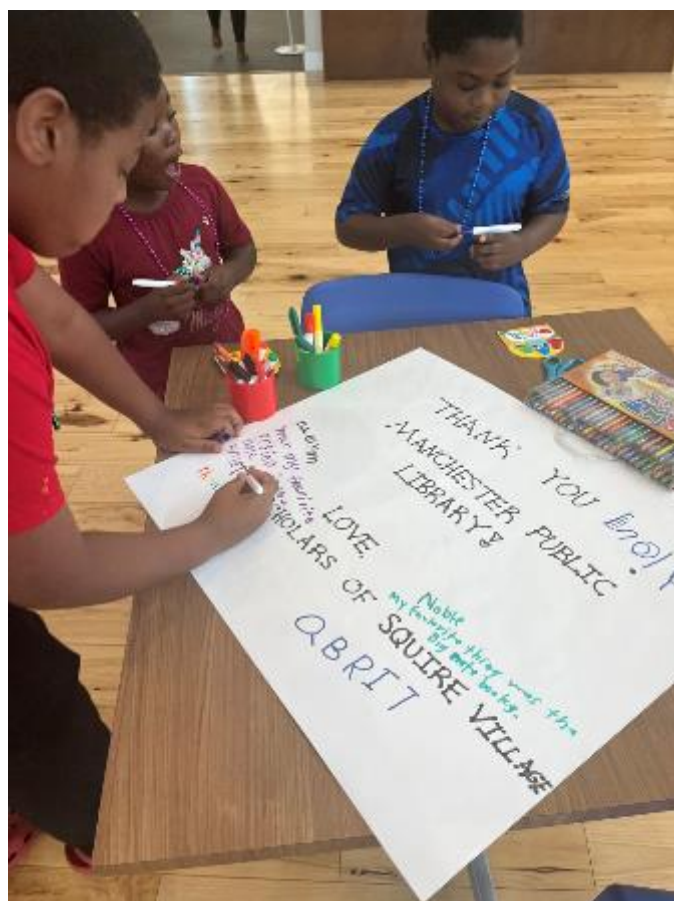
The staff showed that they were very interested in what the children brought to the table.

Parent suggestions for changes to the program.

Three out of the four parents answering said **nothing** when asked what they would change about the program. The fourth parent suggested they should make the program longer (until 3 or 4 PM).

Conclusions and Issues for Further Consideration

The Manchester REAdy for the Grade program reinstated their in-person program for summer 2023, creating an appealing design for the community and providing extended hours for participation. Many books were distributed to children who participated regularly, and to those who dropped in too. **In its re-inaugural year Manchester RfG did not test student achievement or offer structured assistance to parents/guardians, but they built a firm foundation for future programming which could easily include parent/family involvement and will include reading skill assessment.** As stated previously, all four staff members were new to RfG, but they worked very effectively with students at the site, and they connected well with the families and the Squire Village Resource Coordinator as well. The results, illustrated by consistent attendance, staff recognition of children’s progress, and especially positive feedback from parents provided clear evidence of success. **Manchester was able to revitalize its program, strengthen relationships with its site host, successfully integrate new staff and offer considerable participation time for students during Summer 2023. The program design was very well received as confirmed by participants and parents.**



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NEW HAVEN – STETSON BRANCH



During Summer 2022, with support from the Scripps Family Fund for Education and the Arts, New Haven initiated a new RfG program at the NHFPL Stetson Branch located in the new Dixwell Q-House Community Center. Summer 2023 was the sophomore year for this program and it continued to experience some growing pains especially regarding recruitment, for the program overall and for parent activities in particular. Outreach was conducted to local schools by the library, before summer began, and flyers advertising the program were posted in multiple locations, but sign-ups remained limited. (Flyers for parent activities were also posted at the library and online, but few families took advantage of the offerings.) The highly-effective lead instructor from 2022

(pictured above) returned to run the program, with strong support from library staff. An additional paraprofessional with substantial experience also joined the program. The site was able to recruit and retain 9 participants who were appropriate for and able to fully engage in the program. The Stetson team conducted both individual tutoring and small group work and as stated previously, tried out some family social events. Like their Wilson-Branch counterparts, RfG-Stetson used the Reading A to Z program and other fiction and non-fiction books and made multiple books and take-home practice activities available for participating children. The Stetson team, under the direction of Luis Chavez-Brumel, NHFPL Deputy Director and Branch Manager Diane Brown, continued to work toward initial enrollment and attendance goals.⁷ The children’s programming was well received by both the children and their family members. Participants at the New Haven – Stetson Branch, just like those from other RfG sites received the support they needed to maintain or build up their reading skills, they accessed instructionally appropriate books, earned incentives and spent quality time in the library. Participant response and parent feedback about the new program continued to mirror responses of counterparts in long-running RfG programs. Details follow.

Program Implementation

Individual and Small Group Instruction. RfG New Haven – Stetson Branch conducted individual instruction for all participants and some small group work as well. Like their Wilson-Branch counterparts, RfG-Stetson Branch used the *Reading A-Z* program and made multiple books and take-home practice activities available for children. RfG group instruction was available Mondays and Thursdays between 10:30 and 11:30, and fun family literacy celebrations were planned on Wednesdays from 6:00 – 8:00. Students could also sign up for individual tutoring sessions following the group sessions. The teacher used multiple resources including library books and the *Reading A-Z* program on tablets, as well as literacy-based games for example for practicing sight words, and journals for using art and writing to extend comprehension. She also regularly incorporated related worksheets with writing and art reinforcement of the reading assignments, and practiced vocabulary, rhyming

⁷ As a new program, RfG NH – Stetson Branch had planned to recruit up to 10 families for their first summers.

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words and sight word recognition too using flashcards. The program used both fiction and non-fiction resources and during individual tutoring sessions, students chose which genre they wanted. As for summer 2022, the instructor integrates mindfulness techniques to help students build confidence and interest for reading. This includes movement activities. Observed instruction for both a group session and individual tutoring was excellent. The complete program is still being developed, but efforts to strengthen all program components were actively pursued.



Students journaling after story time, New Haven-Stetson, summer 2023.

Parent Engagement and Incentives. As stated above NHFPL actively recruited for the RfG program before the conclusion of the 2022-23 school year. The program was designed to combine small reading groups with encouraging family involvement nights weekly (advertised as Fun Family Literacy Celebrations) and was hoped to both provide support for families and outreach for the program, but participation remained limited throughout the summer. Timing, newness/lack of awareness and competition by many other programs were suggested as reasons why the program remained under-enrolled. For those students/families who did participate there were snacks, and books, and gift cards for regular attendance.



Mindfulness stretches to get students ready for learning. New Haven-Stetson, summer 2023.

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Enrollment

A total of 9 students were enrolled for New Haven – Stetson Branch 2023 READY for the Grade Summer program. Full registration data was available for all students (and for 5 of the 8 who participated in 2022). This continues to help establish descriptive information that can be monitored as the program continues to move beyond its initiation phase. The background characteristics of those who participated were similar to participants from other sites and reflective of the local community. They also show that the program was able to identify targeted students.

- The program served rising Kindergarten – 3rd grade students, including many 3rd graders. About two-thirds of these initial participants were females, one-third were males.
- The race/ethnicity of all but one of the participating students was identified as Black/African American; one student identified as Latinx. All but one student identified the primary language spoken in their homes as English.

Table 9a: Enrollment Details, New Haven – Stetson READY for the Grade

	2023 N=9	2022* N=5
Grade in Fall		
PK/Kindergarten	1	2
First Grade	2	1
Second Grade	1	1
Third Grade	5	1
Fourth Grade	0	0
Gender		
Female	6	2
Male	3	3
Race/Ethnicity (n=8)		
Asian	0	
Black/African American	8	5
Hispanic/Latinx	1	
Native American	0	
White	0	
Biracial	0	
Primary Language at Home		
English	8	5
Spanish and English	1	
English and 2 nd Language	0	
Other (see above)	0	

* A total of 8 students were enrolled, but only 5 fully reported registration data.

“READY for the Grade” Summary Results Report

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Attendance

Attendance data were not submitted for Year 2, but review of achievement data suggests that most students participated throughout the summer (7 of 9 had both pre- and post-reading assessments). Complete submission of attendance data for Summer 2024 is planned.

Achievement

As shown in Table 9b, achievement results were recorded for 7 of the 9 participants using pre- and post Pioneer Valley assessments. Each of the tested participants maintained or improved their scores. Like their peers in the other, more established RfG sites, **these participants did not lose ground over the summer**. The RfG team also noted that students had become more excited about reading and were eager to participate and show off their new skills. During the observation it was clear that the instructor connected easily with the students she worked with and was able to skillfully engage them and get them involved in reading and discussing stories as well as mastering sight words.

Table 9: Assessment Results, New Haven - Stetson Branch RfG, Summer 2023

Grade	Test pre	Test post	RESULT
K	A	A	M
1	C	C	I
1	A	A	M
2	J	J	M
3	K	L	I
3	J	K	I
3	Z	Z	I

Parent/Guardian Feedback

New Haven – Stetson Branch RfG again collected 3 parent/guardian surveys about the READY for the Grade summer program, and both RfG and library staff continued to hear requests from parents for more programming options, especially those that happen afterschool during the regular school year and include options for younger and older children. All three of the parents/guardians who did answer a survey again verified that their children benefited from participating in RfG summer 2023. All 3 respondents rated the program as *excellent*, all reported that it was *very important* to have had the program summer 2023, all reported that as a result of participating in the program their participating child read more over the summer and all 3 reported their child felt more confident reading.

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Conclusions and Issues for Further Consideration

The New Haven – Stetson Branch READY for the Grade program continued to develop as part of the Stetson Branch library. The space is beautiful and very accommodating and provides a firm foundation for enhanced program growth. Very effective staff have been identified to teach in the program and there is strong support among library staff to grow the program. While program recruitment remained challenging, implementation and student outcome results definitely mirror those achieved by longer-established programs and show that additional program success is likely. Parent comments (collected via surveys and as reported by NHFPL leaders) confirmed that these efforts were appreciated and that there is continued interest to stabilize, and possibly modify/expand the program.

Like the other sites, New Haven-Stetson Branch engaged experienced staff who worked very effectively with students, conducted meaningful literacy activities, though struggling some with recruitment, continued to build on all the elements of a successful RfG program (group and individual instruction, literacy development activities, parent engagement for rising 1st – 3rd graders who need additional assistance). There was a continuous focus on reading skill development along with access to appropriate books, as well as efforts to establish group exposure to shared reading experiences. The results, in alignment with those recorded for other sites including positive teacher and standardized reading assessment data and positive feedback from parents, provided clear evidence of continued early success. **New Haven - Stetson Branch continued to demonstrate the strength and flexibility of the READY for the Grade model, while also encountering some local challenges and opportunities that are expected to be addressed for 2023-24.**

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NEW HAVEN – WILSON BRANCH

New Haven Wilson built on its re-established program, for summer 2023. The program added one new staff member and recruited both new families and some former participants. All staff members are very strong educators who connected well with the children and families who were happy to continue accessing RfG support and the Wilson community space again. The team again conducted both group and individual tutoring, used AV/tech for reinforcements, continued to use live music options to their sight word learning and brought in collaborators (puppet shows, magician) to reinforce lessons. Family engagement was brought back weekly on-site, and books were regularly distributed. A total of 17 children (an increase), including two from 2022, participated. The program met modified enrollment and attendance goals and was well received by both the children and their family members. All 17 participants received the support they needed to maintain or enhance their reading skills, they took full advantage of available programming, accessed instructionally appropriate books, earned incentives, and had fun. Details about the program follow.

Program Implementation

Group Instruction. Every Tuesday and Wednesday the New Haven-Wilson RfG program conducted group instruction sessions from 2:00 – 4:00 at the library. These community-based sessions brought the students together to read a picture book (with all oral presentation in English and Spanish), practice sight words (including via song accompanied by guitar), and engage in movement and arts-based literacy activities as children broke into smaller groups.

Individual Instruction. Each student was also assigned to and then worked 1:1 with one of the staff members in individual 1 hour instruction sessions each week. After an initial assessment of independent reading level, each session was tailored to the students’ reading level and specific areas of focus. All sessions were conducted at a time that worked for the family and tutor and all used *Reading A-Z* books <https://www.readinga-z.com/>. Each instructor worked with 3 – 4 students throughout the summer.

Family Nights. Family nights were fully reinstated summer 2023. These sessions were held weekly on Thursdays for two hours including a meal. The sessions included stories and literacy activities for the children and activities that families could do together. The staff reported that parents continued to be very supportive of each other and the teachers during the weekly sessions, and were very happy to be back attending family nights.

Partnerships. The New Haven-Wilson RfG program continued offering enrichment activities during group sessions and family nights. This included puppet shows about health and nutrition, and a magician who entertained the children and also reinforced the value and importance of reading.

Incentives. Students who attended family night, two groups and individual instruction received \$20 gift cards for each week, total for the summer = \$120.

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Enrollment

As shown in table 10a, the New Haven-Wilson READY for the Grade program served a diverse group of children summer 2023. It can also be seen in the table that the grade levels and descriptive characteristics of those who participated during summer 2023 were somewhat different than the groups that participated in prior summers. Total enrollment increased compared to summer 2022, but was still much lower than for previous summers. Many older students participated (and note that four additional students began participation but did not sustain their involvement and are not included in enrollment, attendance or achievement data).

- As shown, all of the 2023 students were rising first (24%), second (12%), third (29%) and 4th graders (35%); a total of 45% were females, 55% were males, 2 students had also participated in 2022.
- The students were diverse in terms of race/ethnicity (and very similar to the profile for 2022); 82% of participants were identified as Hispanic/Latinx, 18% were identified as Black/African-American, none were identified as “Other.” No students were identified as White/Caucasian or Asian.

Table 10a: Enrollment Details, New Haven READY for the Grade

	2023 N=17	2022 N=13	2021 N=24	2020 N=30	2019 N=41
Grade in Fall					
PK/Kindergarten*	0	0	0	0	2%
First Grade	24%	38%	33%	40%	22%
Second Grade	12%	23%	29%	33%	34%
Third Grade	29%	23%	38%	17%	41%
Fourth Grade*	35%	15%	0	10%	0
Gender					
Female	45%	58%	58%	60%	68%
Male	55%	42%	42%	40%	32%
Race/Ethnicity					
Asian	0	0	0	10%	4%
Black/African American	18%	17%	50%	40%	20%
Hispanic/Latinx	82%	83%	37%	47%	73%
Native American	0	0	0	0	0
White	0	0	0	3%	2%
Biracial	0	0	0	0	5%
Other	0		13%		
Primary Language at Home**					
English	--	--	63%	50%	49%
Spanish and English	--	--	29%	40%	44%
Other	--	--	8%	10%	8%

* Grade level enrollment requirements were relaxed somewhat for 2020.

** The primary language question was not asked summer 2022 or summer 2023.

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The RfG Wilson Branch site got a special visit from former program director Michaela Scelza who read together with current director Geoconda Berrios. The children with their animal buddies were deeply engaged.



Family Nights were especially busy at the New Haven - Wilson Branch RFG program throughout summer 2023.

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Attendance

New Haven RfG has always included multiple session types and optional individual sessions for participation each week. As shown in Table 10b, students took full advantage of this for Summer 2023.

- As many as 40 total hours per student were possible, and on average students attended 33 hours. Six of the 17 students with attendance data recorded had perfect attendance, and all but two attended half or more of the possible sessions. Attendance for all options was very consistent.
- The 17 students with full attendance data participated in a total of 565 hours of instruction/participation during summer 2023 including 174 hours through family nights; 306 through group instruction and 85 hours through individual instruction. On average, each student participated in about 10 hours of family night instruction, 18 hours of group instruction and 5 hours of individual instruction, 33 hours total.

Table 10b: Attendance Details, New Haven – Wilson, Ready for the Grade, Summer 2023 n=17

	Total Hrs. Available Per Student	Total Hours Available	Total Hours Attended	Mean Hours Attended per Student
Family Nights	12	204	174	10
Group Instruction	22	374	306	18
Individual Instruction	6	102	85	5
TOTAL	40	680	565	33

Achievement

As in the prior summers, all students participated in a reading assessment during the first individual instruction session where their independent and instructional⁸ reading levels were determined using the *Reading A-Z* program. Staff used these assessments to customize instruction strategies and where possible engaged parents/guardians and other family members to help reinforce specific skills. The books used during individual sessions were available to participating families and all children were encouraged to read silently and to others in-between sessions.

As shown in Table 10c, achievement results were recorded for 14 of the 17 participants. Each of the tested participants maintained or improved their scores. While several students were still reading below their appropriate grade level (hence their need for RfG), like their peers in other RfG sites, **no students lost ground over the six weeks of the program**. The RfG team and parents also noted that students had become more excited about reading and were eager to participate and show off their new skills. During the observation it was clear that the children were engaged in the many different literacy-based activities.

⁸ An independent reading level is the one where the reader knows most of the words and can comprehend the text without too much difficulty. A book at an instructional reading level is more challenging for the reader, but not too hard.

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Table 10c: Assessment Results, New Haven – Wilson Branch RfG, Summer 2022

Grade	Test pre	Test post	RESULT
1	A	A	Maintained
1	A	A	Maintained
2	D	E	Increased
2	B	B	Maintained
3	I	N	Increased
3	AA	A	Increased
3	D	D	Maintained
3	F	F	Maintained
3	F	F	Maintained
4	J	O	Increased
4	J	M	Increased
4	H	I	Increased
4	K	L	Increased
4	C	D	Increased

Parent/Guardian Feedback

Only two parents/guardian surveys⁹ were submitted for part of the 2023 evaluation report, but it was very clear from their comments and from their involvement in Family Nights that they were engaged with and pleased by the program and its benefits for their children. Both respondents rated the program as *excellent*, and both reported that it was *very important* to have had the program summer 2023, both reported that as a result of participating in the program their participating child read more over the summer and both reported their child felt more confident reading.



Participating together at RfG Family Night, New Haven Wilson Branch, 2023.

⁹ Note that the parent survey was administered by the New Haven RfG program. Some parents had more than one child participating. This version of the survey was modified from the version used at other sites.

Conclusions and Issues for Further Consideration

New Haven RfG was able to completely restore their in-person program for Summer 2023. All new staff from 2022 returned and an additional male staff member also joined the team. Longtime RfG educator Geoconda Berrios continued to provide important leadership for the team with support from Luis Chavez-Brumell, Deputy Director of NHFPL. As a group they elected to continue using the *Reading A-Z* program for individual instruction and to return to reading selected books for group and family night sessions. They regularly read books in English and Spanish and selected both fiction and non-fiction topics that interested the children and reflected community diversity. They continued to use the live-music opportunities to promote learning and engaged in multiple literacy-based projects related to the books they read. The team continued to build on their welcoming family appeal with the return of full family night sessions, including a wonderful end of the summer celebration. Attendance for most participants was very consistent and the students clearly accomplished important results. Staff reported they continued to help students who were either new to the school system, or the country, or especially lagging behind given persistent disruptions from Covid, develop increased confidence about reading along with their skills. The staff also reported that the children were very happy to be part of the program and that the whole group of families had built a sense of community while learning together. This is particularly evident in the many images of the participants. **Staff plan to return for summer 2024 and are hopeful that they will be able to engage even more families and once again deliver the full RfG program.**



Completed literacy-based projects for each of the 6 books they read summer 2023 adorn the library walls.

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ROCKVILLE

The **Rockville** RfG program was operated at Skinner Road Elementary School for the third year, summer 2023. A total of 34 children (one more than in 2022, and many of whom were returning students) participated in group and individualized instruction. As Carri Clark, the seasoned educator who taught with Mrs. Kearney in 2022 was not able to join for 2023, Rockville added 3 paraprofessionals including one who had worked with RfG in its first year (10 years ago). The use of weekly themes continued at Rockville for 2023 as did the use of many non-fiction books, robust reading activities, use of the puppets, and daily edible craft projects. Multiple family events were also held, for the first time in the program’s history. The program met enrollment and attendance goals and was well received by the children and their family members (and the school administrator). All participants received the support they needed to maintain or enhance their reading skills, they took full advantage of available programming, accessed instructionally appropriate books, earned incentives, and had fun. Details about the program follow.

Program Implementation

Small Group and Individualized Instruction. The program ran for 6 weeks, every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 8:30-11:30 (no lunches served, but snacks were provided). Just as in 2022, during the sessions each week, the children practiced their reading skills using pre-packaged levelled books, participated in themed literacy-based activities (e.g., listening to a book read by the instructor and discussing key information) and themed art enrichment activities (e.g., the theme for week the program was observed was the Ocean). Many non-fiction books were used, and robust reading activities and daily edible craft projects were once again undertaken. Children also had opportunities to work in small groups with Mrs. Kearney’s puppet collection (to work on settings, problems and solutions), and each day to work in very small groups or individually to practice reading skills silently and with an instructor using levelled books that they chose from pre-packaged offerings. Each week children selected books to take-home for their personal libraries and extra reading practice. The students had opportunities to receive individual instruction from Mrs. Kearney or one of the paras, and they got help with their craft projects from the student volunteer too.

Parent/Family Member Involvement and Incentives.

Parent/Family member events were conducted for the first time summer 2023 and they were well-attended. These events, organized by Jennifer Johnson the Rockville Public Library director such as the ice cream social in a local park and a puppet show at the library were designed to create community and provide additional enrichment for the participants and their families. The instructor also sent home books for parents/family members to read with children, and they were encouraged to read together nightly. Books and small prizes were used as daily incentives and all participating families got gift cards from Rockville Library at the end of the summer.

Enrollment

As shown in table 11a, the Rockville READY for the Grade program 2023 remained about the size as it had been in summer 2022 (one more student participated). It can also be seen in the table that the descriptive characteristics of those who participated have varied somewhat over the years. For 2023:

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- The program served rising 1st (27%) 2nd (24%) and 3rd graders (30%), 1 kindergarten student and 5 4th graders. These were all Skinner Road Elementary School students known to the instructor as in need of additional support and almost half of the participants returned from 2022. A total of 65% were females, 35% were males.
- The student group was diverse in terms of race/ethnicity and reflective of the local community; 2 (6%) of the participants were identified as Asian, 3 (9%) were identified as Black/African American, none were identified as Hispanic/Latinx, but many (39%) identified as bi-racial including some who were Latinx and White), 0 were identified as Native American, 15 (45%) were identified as White/Caucasian.
- All but three students spoke English as their primary language at home, 1 student spoke Twi/Fante and English at home and 2 students spoke Urdu and English.

Table 11a: Enrollment Details, Rockville READY for the Grade

	2023 N=34	2022 N=33	2021 N=14	2019 N=46
Grade in Fall				
PK/Kindergarten	3%	0	0	0
First Grade	27%	12%	43%	26%
Second Grade	24%	48%	36%	39%
Third Grade	30%	36%	21%	30%
Fourth Grade	15%	3%		
Gender				
Female	65%	61%	64%	50%
Male	35%	39%	36%	50%
Race/Ethnicity				
Asian	6%	9%	7%	2%
Black/African American	9%	15%	14%	20%
Hispanic/Latinx	0	27%	14%	16%
Native American	0	0	0	0
White	45%	39%	50%	36%
Biracial	39%	9%	14%	25%
Primary Language at Home				
English	91%	91%	79%	93%
Spanish	0	3%	14%	0
English and 2 nd Language*	3%			
Other (see above)	6%	6%	7%	7%

Note: full registration data were not collected summer 2020. Enrollment guidelines relaxed since 2020.

*1 student Twi/English

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For a final treat, Mrs. K. reads a chapter to the students from the Magic Treehouse – a deep sea adventure.



A very comfy reading spot – and someone to listen too.



Every show needs an audience.

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Attendance

As stated above, Rockville conducted its six-week program at the Skinner Road Elementary School for three days each week from 8:30 to 11:30 (a total of 54 possible hours per student). This equates to 9 hours each week covering much of the “out-of-school” summer time. Review of attendance records showed that most participants attended regularly.

- In total Rockville provided 1497 hours of programming to the students who attended in-person.
- On average each of the students participated for 44.0 total hours (range was 24 - 54 hours). This represents a substantial increase as compared to summer 2022, as the program did not have to miss one day to accommodate the July 4th holiday in 2023.
- All but one student attended more than half of the possible hours, attending multiple days each week for multiple weeks (25 students attended three-fourths or more of the possible hours including 6 who attended all but 1 session and 3 who had perfect attendance).

Achievement

All 27 (1st – 3rd grade) students with pre- and post-test data maintained (23 students) or increased (4 students) their scores. So did the 4th graders and the kindergarten student, and one more student whose grade level data was missing. Like each of the other RfG sites, **these participants did not lose ground over the summer.**

Table 11b: Assessment Results, Rockville READY for the Grade, 2023

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>	<u>RESULT</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>	<u>RESULT</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>	<u>RESULT</u>
1	B	C	INCREASED	2	H	H	MAINTAINED	3	K	K	MAINTAINED
1	B	B	MAINTAINED	2	K	K	MAINTAINED	3	L	L	MAINTAINED
1	E	E	MAINTAINED	2	G	G	MAINTAINED	3	L	L	MAINTAINED
1	C	C	MAINTAINED	2	G	G	MAINTAINED	3	L	L	MAINTAINED
1	L	L	MAINTAINED	2	K	K	MAINTAINED	3	M	M	MAINTAINED
1	C	C	MAINTAINED	2	D	D	MAINTAINED	3	O	O	MAINTAINED
1	B	B	MAINTAINED								
1	C	C	MAINTAINED					4	M	N	INCREASED
1	B	B	MAINTAINED	3	L	M	INCREASED	4	P	P	MAINTAINED
				3	B	B	MAINTAINED	4	O	O	MAINTAINED
2	G	I	INCREASED	3	G	G	MAINTAINED	4	N	N	MAINTAINED
2	I	J	INCREASED	3	K	K	MAINTAINED	4	O	O	MAINTAINED

Note: The RfG instructor from Rockville uses F & P tests from pre-program July to post-program October.

Parent/Guardian Feedback

In addition to informal sharing with Mrs. Kearney, a total of 4 parents/guardians answered a brief survey¹⁰ about the READY for the Grade summer program in Rockville, 2023. As shown in Table 11c, and the following comments, all parent respondents verified that their children benefited from participating in RfG summer

¹⁰ The parent survey was administered by RfG staff in hard copy form and then transferred by them to Survey Monkey for analysis for this report.

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2023. Additionally, all respondents rated the program leaders *excellent* and all reported they planned to sign up again next summer. Their comments regarding the staff and the importance of the program were especially enlightening.

Table 11c: Parent/Guardian Feedback, Rockville, READY for the Grade, 2022

	2022 N=4	2022 N=4
# who rated the program <i>good</i> or <i>excellent</i> (4) on a scale ranging from poor to excellent	4	4
# who rated the staff <i>good</i> or <i>excellent</i> (4) on a scale ranging from poor to excellent	4	4
# who reported the READY for the Grade Program was <i>important</i> (1) or <i>very important</i> (3)	4	4
# who answered yes to the following		
As a result of participating my child/children read more over the summer	4	4
As a result of participating, my child/children feel more confident reading	4	4
As a result of participating my family was inspired to read more over the summer	4	4
Will you sign up again next summer	4	4
What did you like about the program?		
<i>How excited she was to go every day and all the things she would tell us when she got home.</i>		
<i>They made it fun for her!</i>		
<i>Fun - engaging activities, more of a one-on-one experience</i>		
<i>I loved the activities that my daughter was doing. Very hands on, fun and it made her happy to try new things.</i>		
What did your child gain being part of the program?		
<i>Continued to work on her skills she was learning during the school year and prevented regression. In fact started 3rd grade at appropriate reading level!</i>		
<i>Confidence, grew her reading ability.</i>		
<i>She was able to maintain her friendship while engaging with new peers. She loved the daily activities and the treats made in class.</i>		
<i>Feeling confident with reading.</i>		

Conclusions and Issues for Further Consideration

Summer 2023 was another great summer for the Rockville RfG program. Comments made to Mrs. Kearney and reported through her further confirmed reports through the parent survey that the program met parents/family member and student needs. Everyone was excited about and grateful for the option to participate. The Rockville Public Library and Skinner Road Elementary school collaboration continued to work very well (the principal continues to want to expand it) and the program remained fully implemented and easily replicable for summer 2024.

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WILLIMANTIC

Willimantic, in its sophomore summer continued to build on its program. A total of 22 children (an increase of 5 students as compared to 2022), including 8 from summer 2022 participated. All former very experienced instructors returned, and a new instructor (whose husband is a visiting teacher from Spain, working in the lead teacher’s district) was added to the team. The instructors delivered group, small group and individual instruction two evenings/week throughout the summer (7 weeks), promoted regular library use and fully used available space in the library, served meals, provided books to children and hosted multiple family learning events. Throughout the summer, the Willimantic Public Library partnered with the Denison Homestead to bring children environmentally-themed lessons available to all library users including the RfG students. The program met enrollment and attendance goals.¹¹ As for summer 2022, Summer 2023 RfG was well received by both the children and their family members. Participants in Willimantic, just like those from other RfG sites received the support they needed to maintain or build up their reading skills, they increased their confidence regarding reading, they accessed instructionally appropriate books and made full use of the library space, they received healthy dinners and enrichment programming, and continued to be excited to come to the program to participate. Details follow.

Program Implementation

Individual and Small Group Instruction. The Willimantic Library ran their READY for the Grade program using the same program model as 2022, with additional parent/family activities added in. The program operated from 5:00 until 7:30, twice per week, for a total of 7 weeks, with a half hour break for dinner each evening. Teachers did large group instruction in a special all-purpose room at the start and end of each evening, and then broke the children into small groups for individual literacy-based activity centers that included games, phonics and sight words reviews, silent reading, one-on-one help and craft projects. Observed instruction was excellent. Each week the group was also visited by the Denison Homestead for special programming. Teachers worked with the whole group and then each managed one center, with the lead teacher floating and working with groups or individuals as needed. The staff also included two teenage volunteers who worked one-on-one with children. The centers were stationed around the library and the program maximized space while the library also remained open. When the Denison Homestead educator visited, RfG children joined with other youth to participate in the weekly special programming that brought their literacy themes to life.

Visiting instructor from Denison Homestead shows excited students preserved insect specimens before having them embark on a hands-on, seed-bomb making activity. Lots of dirt involved.

Willimantic, summer 2023

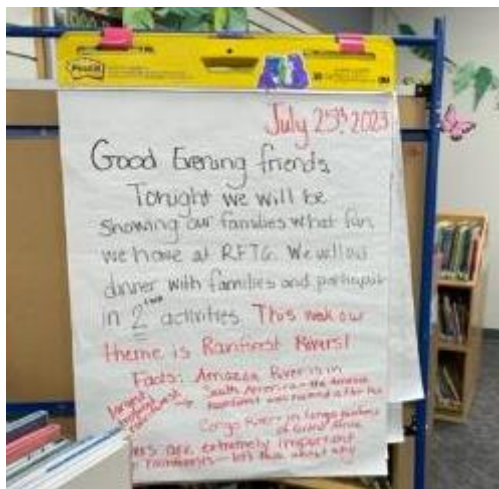


¹¹ Willimantic RfG intended to increase enrollment for 2023 and to maintain staff from 2022.

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Incentives. Participants were provided with healthy meals each session and treats before leaving. Additional incentive strategies were not used but may be considered for Summer 2024.



Parent Engagement. Willimantic conducted multiple parent engagement sessions summer 2023. They were very well attended and well received. RfG staff effectively demonstrated what children had been learning and gave parents/family members first hand experiences like those the students undertook. Everyone enjoyed the communal dinner and the chance for parents and children to play literacy-based games (including a very complex escape room) together. Unfortunately, due to a miscommunication regarding the parent survey, no data from Willimantic parent surveys were collected summer 2023. However, parents were observed regularly engaging with their children and the RfG and library staff, expressing interest in the program and support for their children.

Enrollment

As shown in table 12a, a total of 22 students were enrolled for the second year in the Willimantic READY for the Grade Summer program 2022 including 8 who returned from 2022. It can be seen in the table that the descriptive characteristics of those who participated were similar to participants from other sites and over the two years of the program. These data will continue to be monitored for future summers.

- The program served rising kindergarten (5%), 1st grade (14%), 2nd grade (36%), 3rd grade (23%) and 4th grade (23%) students. Just over half (59%) were females and 41% were males.
- The student group was diverse in terms of race/ethnicity and representative of the local community; 6 of the participants (27%) were identified as Asian, 2 (9%) of the participants were identified as Black/African American, 9 (41%) were identified as Hispanic/Latinx, 3 (14%) were identified as White/Caucasian and 2 (9%) were identified as bi-racial).
- A total of 13 students spoke English as their primary language at home, 4 spoke Spanish as their primary language at home and 4 spoke Pashto as the primary language at home.



There's a whole lot of reading going on. (Note the older girls pictured were former participants who convinced the director to let them join again so they would not fall behind in school.) Willimantic RfG, summer 2023.

Table 12a: Enrollment Details, Willimantic READY for the Grade

	2023 N=22	2022 N=17
Grade in Fall		
PK/Kindergarten	5%	18%
First Grade	14%	24%
Second Grade	36%	6%
Third Grade	23%	29%
Fourth Grade	23%	24%
Gender		
Female	59%	59%
Male	41%	41%
Race/Ethnicity (n=8)		
Asian	27%	24%
Black/African American	9%	6%
Hispanic/Latinx	41%	33%
Native American	0	0
White	14%	35%
Biracial	9%	0
Primary Language at Home		
English	62%	53%
Spanish	19%	0
English and 2 nd language*	0	24%
Other (see above)	19%	24%

Attendance

Willimantic conducted its 7-week program at the library on Tuesday and Thursday evenings 5:00 – 7:30 (two hours twice per week) including dinner. Review of attendance records for the Willimantic READY for the Grade program summer 2023 showed that most participants attended regularly.

- In total, Willimantic provided 400 hours of programming to the students, including 21 students who participated throughout the summer.
- On average, the 21 students who participated throughout the summer attended for 19 total hours (range was 8 – 30 hours). Two students attended 100% of the available sessions and most others (14 out of 21) attended more than half of the available time. Several students left for various reasons including family vacations, at the end of the summer and were not able to complete assessments.

As at other sites, all participants were encouraged to do daily practice work and to read regularly between sessions using books selected from the library or provided through the program.

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Achievement

Achievement results were recorded for 14 of the each of the 22 participants who were enrolled throughout the summer. Assessments of letter and sound recognition, word power, and passage reading were conducted according to students’ grade level and initial skills (several students were English Language Learners) (see Table 12b). All but one of the tested participants maintained (13 out of 14) or improved their scores (1 of 14). Like their peers in the other, more mature RfG sites, **these participants did not lose ground over the summer.**

Table12b: Assessment Results, Willimantic RfG, Summer 2023

Grade	Pre Assessment	Post Assessment	Result
1	30	35	Maintained
1	38	50	Increased
2	54	49	Maintained
2	14	18	Maintained
2	33	39	Maintained
2	49	49	Maintained
2	39	22	Maintained
2	42	39	Maintained
2	27	33	Maintained
3	30	31	Maintained
3	55	58	Maintained
4	79	67	Decreased
5	51	54	Maintained
6	36	38	Maintained

Conclusions and Issues for Further Consideration

The Willimantic READY for the Grade program had another successful year summer 2023 (though the children’s librarian left her position before the end of the RfG session, the teachers continued to implement the plan.) The RfG team continued to work with both large and small groups and occasionally provided individual instruction. They optimized a partnership with nearby Denison Homestead to bring additional programming to the students. The program increased enrollment but continues to have room to grow for future summers. All the teachers and other staff returned for a second summer, even adding a position; attendance was very good, though some children did leave before the summer ended. No serious implementation challenges were faced and student outcome results mirrored those achieved summer 2022 and by the longer-established programs.

Like the other sites, Willimantic engaged experienced staff who worked very effectively with students and each other. They continued to conduct theme-based literacy activities and encouraged students to know the library and to check out books. Staff interacted with parents/guardians during pick up/drop off and through planned family programming. There was a continuous focus on reading skill development along with access to enrichment activities and shared literacy development experiences. The results, like those recorded for other sites, were very positive. **Willimantic continued to demonstrate the strengths of the READY for the Grade model and should easily be able to continue and build from summer 2023 for future efforts.**

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III. CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

READY for the Grade was successfully conducted, in person, at seven sites summer 2023. This included the re-established, in-person program in Manchester. All the sites continued to face some enrollment challenges due to competing summer school and camp programs and some attendance challenges due to family vacations. Each of the seven sites successfully developed plans and engaged multiple families for multiple weeks. Program implementation varied as appropriate by site, but all sites were effectively able to deliver important supports to local families. At all seven sites, participants had positive achievement outcomes and parent/guardian feedback across the board was decidedly positive as well. In every case, parents/guardians reported directly or through RfG staff that RfG experiences were making an important contribution to sustaining and advancing student literacy skill development. The distribution of books and other literacy materials continued at each site throughout the summer. Once again, the sites brought high quality instruction to learners through deployment of highly skilled staff who connected well with each other, the children and their families. As stated throughout the report, the individual sites, were able to customize their programs to meet local needs while still implementing most or all of the key components of the RfG model: the sites, were able to discern what was needed, make and shift partnerships and maintain RfG presence and programming designed to once again help participating students enter school in September ready to learn.

The Program served 135 students during summer 2023. In total there have been 1,565 participants (duplicated count) across the eleven years RfG has been operational. Each year this has included: students with various racial/ethnic identities. Almost all of these students were receiving free or reduced-price lunch and most of those recruited were reading below grade level. Following continued instability during the 2021-22 school year and accumulated losses, all students remain potentially behind for each new school year. Each program focused on rising 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade students for summer 2023 but also included some older and younger students who were former participants or siblings of age-eligible participants. Total hours of programming varied by site and in accordance with specific strategies, but each of the programs provided opportunities to engage students for multiple hours weekly throughout multiple weeks during the summer: more than 3000 hours of programming were provided. All sites sustained participation over the summer, and they encouraged and supported the efforts of families and students to continue reading and using their skills at home and after the programs concluded. At all seven sites there was clear evidence that students maintained or enhanced reading skills. Despite some continuing challenges “READY for the Grade” continued to provide powerful opportunities to promote literacy skill development and academic preparation.

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Challenges and Next Steps

Summer 2023 included increasing or stable enrollment at all sites, the return of in-person programming in Manchester and re-establishment of all in-person program components. The sites all still continue to have room to grow, and future summers should see increased numbers of participants overall. All sites will need to continue monitoring and promoting regular attendance and building on current efforts to accommodate complicated family schedules (including vacations). All sites need to sustain the very successful strategies they have undertaken to effectively maintain or enhance students’ reading skills. All sites should continue to monitor and build on, as needed, their efforts to engage families and to bring back or continue interacting with outside partners/collaborators. All sites should ensure that their very talented staff members have what they need to continue delivering high quality programs. The following are additional site specific recommended future action steps.

- Hamden - continue attention to enhanced and targeted outreach to those families/students most in need of the services.
 - Killingly - determine next steps regarding VAK for summer 2024; continue attention to ensuring that families/students most in need of the services participate.
 - New Haven:Stetson Branch – continue working on partnership development and enhanced participant recruitment; respond to community interests for program extensions.
 - New Haven: Wilson Branch - continue to ensure that families/students most in need of the services participate.
 - Manchester – continue building on 2023 program strategies. Add back student assessment and consider family programming.
 - Rockville – continue building on the family engagement work conducted during summer 2023, continue to remain vigilant to ensuring that families/students most in need of the services participate.
 - Willimantic – continue building on existing plans including the use of partner organizations to provide programming. Update new library staff on RfG programming and re-engage all existing RfG staff. Continue to remain vigilant to ensuring that families/students most in need of the services participate (and this may include expansion through satellite locations for the future).
- It is the plan for summer 2024 to continue all cross-site evaluation strategies (on-site observations, collection of standardized enrollment, attendance and achievement data, staff surveys and parent surveys). The evaluation reporting timetable will continue to operate on the regular Board schedule (November reporting).