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& ASSOCIATES

# READY for the Grade Evaluation Report

November 2025

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# Executive summary

The REAdy for the Grade program has been running for 12 years and was created to prevent the summer slide by supporting students in grades K-3. In the summer of 2025, the program was available at eight sites across Connecticut. Three sites were in New Haven, including the Wilson, Stetson, and Fair Haven branches, as well as locations in Hamden, Killingly, Manchester, Rockville, and Willimantic. Each site had the flexibility to set its hours of operation, curriculum, program length, and staffing to meet the community's needs [see Appendix A for program details].

This evaluation had two main goals: to measure reading outcomes through pre- and post-assessments and to explore factors that might affect students' success during the summer. Data were gathered using a mixed-methods approach that included quantitative (parent surveys) and qualitative (focus groups and interviews) methods.

We analyzed the qualitative data by identifying common themes that emerged across sites. Interviews are grouped by audience, starting with students, then staff, and finally parents. Program leaders were also interviewed to gather specific program and site information and to discuss challenges and recommendations for the program. Quantitative data (test scores) were analyzed by site.

## Qualitative Interviews and focus groups

### Site leaders: Interview summary

All site leaders were interviewed and asked about their overall progress, what is working well, the challenges they face, the impact of their work, and any suggestions they had. Overall, responses were positive, indicating that the programs operate effectively and make a meaningful impact on both children and families. Common themes included student engagement and growth, program success, dedicated staff, integration of family and community involvement, and an educational environment that extends beyond the classroom. Leaders noted challenges with recruitment, attendance, communication, and marketing. Regarding impact, leaders shared that students are engaged, there is a sense of safety for students and families, kids form bonds with one another, learning is designed to be fun rather than forced, and rapport with parents is being built.

### Students: Focus group summary

A total of 95 students participated in focus groups at each site. The questions asked about overall satisfaction, their feelings about reading, and what else they felt they were learning in the program. Over 90% of the students we spoke with gave a thumbs-up when asked how the program was going. Of the 95 children we talked to, the majority (84%) expressed enjoyment of reading, while 16% said they did not enjoy it. About 90% of students reported reading at home. Among these students, 55% read with a parent or another adult, while 45% read independently. We asked students to share other things they were learning in the program. In half of the sites, students listed the themes or topics they were learning about, such as identifying

baby animals or groceries, sharks and other mammals, and science-related topics like learning about things that float and/or sink.

### **Program Staff: Interview and focus group summary**

We talked with 20 staff members across the eight sites. In our focus groups and interviews, we asked questions to help us identify factors that influence maintenance or improvement in reading levels. Nearly every staff member we spoke with said attendance was a key factor in improvement. Staff also noticed better reading scores among students who received support at home. Other factors mentioned included food, using music for word recognition, and community events.

### **Parents: Survey summary**

Parents and caregivers completed a one-page survey about their child's reading habits at home, their feelings about the program, and any feedback they had. We received 63 responses from the eight sites. Parents reported high satisfaction with the program (100%). Most parents (95%) reported reading with their child during the summer or observing their child reading. Parents also shared positive comments, such as, "Overall, we have had a very positive experience with the program. We truly appreciate the effort and care put into the program. Thank you," and "Please keep coming back for the program. Don't let anyone else take over."

### **Reading at home: conflicting responses**

In our student focus groups, 90% of students reported reading at home. Of these students, 55% reported reading with a parent or someone else, and 45% read alone. In the parent surveys, 95% of parents reported seeing their child reading over the summer. Another 95% said they read with their child during the summer. Discrepancies between the parent survey and student focus groups are not surprising and may be due to factors such as parent biases, differences in data collection methods, and interpretation.

### **Recommendations**

Leaders, students, and parents were invited to provide suggestions for improving the program. Several recommendations from students that were shared across sites included increasing activities and fun by hosting parties, talent shows, showing movies, and painting. Other suggestions included offering more snacks, adding decorations to the walls, and being kind to others. Students also proposed improvements to the program's curriculum and structure, such as longer group sessions and more stations, extending the program duration, and offering it daily. Some students believe the curriculum should include more reading, more practice, and additional writing and spelling activities

Parents' recommendations were overwhelmingly positive. Some comments included, "Overall, we have had a very positive experience with the program. We truly appreciate the effort and care put into the program. Thank you." *"Please keep coming back for the program. Don't let anyone else take over."* Many requested

longer days or additional days, like this parent, “*Si fueran mas tiempo, mas dias seria mucho mejor. Ya que por la buena forma de educar ellos tienen más interés.* [“If they were longer, more days would be much better. Because of the good way of teaching them, they have more interest.”]” Some parents offered critiques, including two who expressed a desire for more technical subjects like robotics and coding.

Two other parents requested more one-on-one time between program staff and students. One of them said, “*Our son said how fun the program was; he always wanted to go, but he would share, ‘we don’t read that much.’ Not sure how much reading is done each time, and we understand that it’s meant to be a fun event as well. We’re wondering if he needs more one-on-one reading time, since this is a comment he said a lot. It may be where he was at with his reading level. He may need more one-on-one tutoring.*”

Leaders recommended extending days and making programs year-round, along with adding programs for other age groups. Providing English/Spanish materials helps in communicating with parents, coordinating with the Police Activity League<sup>1</sup> (PAL) for homework assistance, and collaborating with external organizations to enhance other activities.

## Reading test scores

READy was created to prevent the summer slide and ensure that students in grades K-3 start their new grade reading at the same level as they finished the previous school year. Each of the eight sites used a pre- and post-standardized reading assessment, although the tests vary across sites. Since this is not a cross-site evaluation, we do not compare progress between sites; instead, we present each site separately.

Site	% improved/maintained reading levels
Fair Haven Library	100%
Wilson Library	100%
Stetson Library	100%
Rockville	100%
Willimantic	89%
Manchester	100%
Hamden Library	60% and 86%*
Killingly Library	88% and 96%*

\*These sites offered two assessments and therefore have two scores.

<sup>1</sup> The Police Activities League (PAL), also known as the Police Athletic League, promote the prevention of juvenile crime and violence by building relationships among kids, cops, and communities through positive engagement.

# Full Report

## Overview

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This evaluation had two main goals: to measure reading outcomes through pre- and post-assessments and to explore factors that might affect students’ success during the summer. Data were gathered using a mixed-methods approach that included quantitative (parent surveys) and qualitative (focus groups and interviews) methods.

We analyzed the qualitative data by identifying common themes that emerged across sites. Interviews are grouped by audience, starting with students, then staff, and finally parents. Program leaders were also interviewed to gather specific program and site information and to discuss challenges and recommendations for the program. Quantitative data (test scores) were analyzed by site.

## Evaluation results: Interviews and focus group

### Site leaders

All site leaders were interviewed and asked about what was working well, their challenges, the impact they saw from the program, and any recommendations they had. Table 1 summarizes some common responses received from leaders.

Table 1: Common themes from site leaders.

Theme	Description
Working well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student engagement and growth; Kids are happy, consistent, improving in reading, and building confidence.</li><li>• Programs running efficiently, with clear structure, curriculum, and logistics. Effective use of curriculum tools.</li><li>• One of the best years for the program; well-coordinated staff; families satisfied; students benefiting and making progress; graduates.</li></ul>
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recruitment and marketing challenges including flyers missing information, unclear advertising, stronger talking points and bilingual support needed, recruiting appropriate students.</li><li>• Intake forms were slow to process</li><li>• Lack of job application access for teachers;</li><li>• Plan to launch earlier.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families wanting longer or more frequent programming; may benefit from improved communication with families.</li> <li>• Students on vacation; kids in transition between families; programs offered only three times per week.</li> </ul>
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kids are engaged in reading, maintaining levels, reading independently, motivated to build home libraries, and gaining confidence.</li> <li>• Sense of safety for kids and families, especially immigrant families; staff consistency; positive focus on students; trusting relationships with parents.</li> <li>• Kids bond with peers; camaraderie among students and parents; the program feels like a community; family nights and celebrations.</li> <li>• Learning that doesn't feel forced; making experiences fun; supporting confidence without a focus on grades; engaging activities beyond reading.</li> <li>• Students are performing better at school, sustaining their summer reading - some children no longer require support. Providing books to support reading at home.</li> <li>• Building rapport and trust with parents; shifting parent mindset toward supportive learning.</li> </ul>
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited program hours; transportation barriers; attention span considerations; early vs. late summer sessions; longer days possible but concentration is an issue.</li> <li>• Programs for different age groups (0-5 pre-K, K-3, potential expansion to 4-6); early literacy emphasis; preparing kids for school.</li> <li>• Teaching parents/caregivers; family nights; English/Spanish materials to support families; liaison with PAL for homework help.</li> <li>• Suggestions to extend the program year-round, expand to other grades; and integrate with additional organizations or field trips.</li> <li>• Potential collaboration with organizations (e.g. Science Center); educational performers visiting consistently.</li> <li>• Use of information sheets in English and Spanish to explain programs to families, ensuring clarity for parents.</li> </ul>

### Program Staff

We spoke with 20 staff members across eight sites. In our focus groups and interviews, we asked questions to help us identify, from the staff's perspective, factors that contribute to maintaining or improving reading levels. The table below highlights common themes.

Table 2: Common themes from program staff

Theme	Description
Attendance	<p>Almost every staffer we spoke to said attendance was a significant factor in improvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Students who improved dramatically were those who were easily engaged, and they were there every day.”</li> <li>• “Those who maintain [scores] are those who don't come as often.”</li> </ul>

Reading support at home	<p>Staff members also observed improved reading scores among students who received support at home.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Parents are continuing the learning at home. Some of the kids went from 40% to 80%—a big difference. With this group, there are very dedicated parents.”</li> <li>• A staffer from a different program added, “kids who improve have a lot of parental and older sibling support. Those who maintain have a lot of family issues or have behavioral issues that have not been addressed at home.”</li> <li>• Attendance and support at home go hand in hand– “Most parents bring their children every week, which shows that parents think it’s important.”</li> </ul>
Other factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Food:</i> “The kids love the food and are fed dinner before instruction because it is hard to learn on an empty stomach.”</li> <li>• <i>Music:</i> One program reported the benefit of incorporating music, saying, “kids get to recognize the words through song.”</li> <li>• <i>Community events:</i> “Parents/families are encouraged to come to the community events. They can join the activities. Kids go to the library, get free lunch, and get a book.”</li> </ul>

## Students

A total of 95 students participated in focus groups<sup>2</sup> at each site. Focus group questions covered overall satisfaction, their feelings about reading, and what else they believed they were learning in the program. Table 1 summarizes some common responses received from students.

Table 3: Common themes from students

Theme	Description
Program satisfaction	<p>Over 90% of the students we spoke to gave a thumbs up when asked how the program was going. Some of their favorite things about the program included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Going to the library</li> <li>• Reading &amp; reading games for prizes</li> <li>• Being with their friends</li> <li>• Working with the teachers and program staff</li> <li>• Food/Snacks</li> <li>• Playing</li> </ul> <p>Some students mentioned that they are now reading at a higher level and learning comprehension. Reading chapter books was also mentioned, and one student said he is learning English (there were several non-English speakers enrolled at various sites).</p>
Enjoying reading	<p>Of the 95 children we spoke with, the majority of students (84%) gave a thumbs-up when asked if they enjoyed reading. When asked why, students reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading is fun</li> <li>• It means learning new stuff</li> <li>• Reading is powerful</li> <li>• Food/Snacks</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup>Conducting focus groups with young children has its challenges. To account for those who changed their minds or did not want to raise their hand again for a more accurate count, we estimate these numbers to be within a 5 pt. range in both directions.

Not enjoying reading	<p>16% of students stated they did not enjoy reading. When asked why, they say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reading is tiring</li> <li>● “Lots of words make my head hurt”</li> <li>● “English is not my first language”</li> </ul>
Reading at home	<p>90% of students reported reading at home. Of these students, 55% read with a parent or another adult, and 45% read on their own.</p>
More than just reading	<p>We asked students what else they were learning in the program. In half of the sites the students listed the themes or topics they were learning about, such as identifying baby animals or groceries, sharks and other mammals, and science related topics such as learning about things that float and/or sink. For those who provided additional learnings, themes across sites included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sharing/Kindness/helping others</li> <li>● Writing</li> <li>● Spelling</li> <li>● Being creative</li> <li>● Sight/unique words</li> </ul>
Program recommendations	<p>Students were not shy when asked how we can make this program better for them. Some of the answers ranged from going to a waterpark to bringing in dinosaurs, incorporating naptime, and having a microwave. However, there were themes across sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increase activities, fun, and have more parties. When asked for examples of fun activities, they mentioned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Watching movies</li> <li>○ Talent shows</li> <li>○ Painting</li> <li>○ Music</li> </ul> </li> <li>● More snacks such as cake and candy</li> <li>● Bringing in animals or allowing for pets to come to the program</li> <li>● Having decorations in the room (while most sites had decorated wall, some had bare or minimally decorated walls).</li> <li>● Being kind to new students, saying sorry.</li> </ul> <p>Some site leaders noted that some of the recommendations students provided were already being offered by the program. Our guess is that students were reiterating the things they enjoyed or wanted to see more of.</p>
Curriculum recommendations	<p>Students also made recommendations for improving the program curriculum or structure, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Having longer groups [time] and more stations</li> <li>● Making the program available every day or for a longer time</li> <li>● Some students believe the curriculum should include more reading, more practice, and more writing and spelling.</li> <li>● One site recommended hiring more teachers, increasing the number of students, and offering more prizes.</li> </ul>

## Parents

Parents and caregivers were given a one-page survey about their child’s reading habits at home, their opinions about the program, and any comments they had. We received 63 responses from the eight sites. The table below features some of the responses we collected

Table 4: Common themes from parents

Theme	Description
Program satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% of parents reported their children achieved their reading goals.</li> <li>• 92% rated the program a 5 out of 5.</li> <li>• 8% rated the program four out of five.</li> </ul>
Reading at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 95% of parents reported seeing their child read over the summer.</li> <li>• 95% of parents reported reading with their child over the summer.</li> </ul>
Program recommendations	<p>When asked for recommendations for the program, parents identified a few themes that were repeated across all eight locations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No recommendations, we love the program as is</li> <li>• Recommend longer hours, or an additional day or two</li> <li>• Have the program every year, with the same staff</li> </ul>
Comments	<p>Comments left by parents were overwhelmingly positive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Overall, we have had a very positive experience with the program. We truly appreciate the effort and care put into the program. Thank you."</li> <li>• "Please keep coming back for the program. Don't let anyone else take over."</li> <li>• Many asked for longer days, or additional days, like this parent, "Si fueran mas tiempo, mas días seria mucho mejor. Ya que por la buena forma de educar ellos tienen más interés. [“If they were longer, more days would be much better. Because of the good way of teaching them, they have more interest.”]</li> </ul>
Constructive criticism	<p>Some parents offered critiques.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two parents mentioned wanting more technical subjects, like robotics and coding.</li> <li>• Two other parents asked for more one-on-one time between program staff and students. One of them wrote, "Our son said how fun the program was, he always wanted to go, but he would make the comment 'we don't read that much' a lot to us. Not sure how much reading is done each time, and I understand making it a fun event as well, wondering if he needed more reading time one-on-one, since this was a comment he said a lot. It may be where he was at with his reading level. He may need more one-on-one tutoring."</li> </ul>

## Reading at home: conflicting responses

In our student focus groups, 90% of students reported reading at home. Of these students, 55% reported reading with a parent or someone else, and 45% read on their own.

In the parent surveys, 95% of parents report they saw their child reading over the summer. Another 95% said they read with their child over the summer.

Discrepancies between the parent survey and student focus groups are not necessarily unexpected and may be due to several factors.

### *Parent biases*

Parents might want to present themselves and their families in a favorable light. Reporting that they read with their children reflects positively on their parenting, which could lead to overreporting.

#### *Data collection limitations*

Parents completed a survey, while students were asked in person. Social dynamics may have influenced the focus groups — students might have underreported their reading to fit in with their peers.

Parents who responded to the survey could be more engaged or motivated to see their children succeed in the program than parents who chose not to answer, which may skew the results.

#### *Interpretation*

Parents and children may have different definitions of *reading*. For example, a parent may count any kind of reading—such as reading street signs or text messages - as ‘reading over the summer,’ while a child might only count reading a book.

## Reading test scores

Researchers have studied the summer slide problem since 1906. Its impact has been recognized for over a century, and ongoing research consistently shows that students lose learning during the summer months. The amount of knowledge lost can be equivalent to three months of school learning. For students already below reading level, this setback can be especially damaging.

READY for the Grade was developed to prevent the summer slide and make sure that students in grades K-3 start their new grade reading at the same level they finished the previous school year. Each of the eight sites used a pre- and post-standardized reading assessment, though the tests vary across sites. Since this is not a cross-site evaluation, we do not compare outcomes between sites; instead, we present each site separately.

### Fair Haven Library

The Fair Haven library offered READY for the Grade programming for the first time in 2025. The program ran from June 30 to August 9, 2025. It provided **individual reading instruction three times a week from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.**, with students able to drop in or schedule an appointment, as well as **group sessions twice a week from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m.** Family engagement activities were offered three times during the program. This site used the Fountas & Pinnell reading assessment, which assesses oral reading, comprehension, and fluency. A total of 8 students were assessed.



**Pre vs. Post Scores:**  
All 8 students improved or maintained reading levels.

## Wilson Library

New Haven Wilson Branch offered READY for the Grade programming from July 1 through August 7, 2025, three times a week from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm. An average of 10 students attended regularly, who received both group and individual planning. The student population served at this site had a number of non-English speakers. Their primary languages included Spanish, Dari, or Pashto. This site used the Fountas & Pinnell reading assessment, which assesses oral reading, comprehension, and fluency. A total of 10 students were assessed.



**Pre vs. Post Scores:**  
All 10 students improved or maintained reading levels.

## Stetson Library

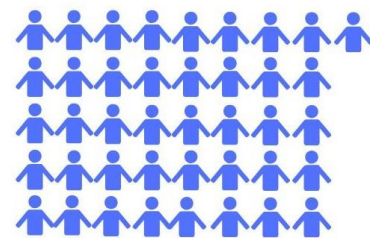
Stetson Library offered READY for the Grade programming from June 30 through August 9, 2025, three times a week. Twelve (12) students attended regularly, receiving both group and individual instruction, as well as computer-based educational and learning games on tablets. Students were provided breakfast and lunch during the program. Family nights were held and open to the community, drawing an attendance of over 60 people. This site used the Fountas & Pinnell reading assessment, which assesses oral reading, comprehension, and fluency. A total of 8 students were assessed.



**Pre vs. Post Scores:**  
All 8 students improved or maintained reading levels.

## Rockville: Skinner Road School Library

The READY for the Grade program was offered at the Skinner Road School Library and ran from June 30 through August 6, 2025. Programming was offered 3 times a week from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. Instruction included weekly themes that guided independent reading time, shared chapter-book reading, puppet use, and daily edible craft projects. Parent engagement activities were offered to encourage parents and students to obtain library cards. This site used the Fountas & Pinnell reading assessment, which assesses oral reading, comprehension, and fluency. A total of 41 students were assessed.



**Pre vs. Post Scores:**  
All 41 students either improved or maintained reading levels.

## Manchester: Squire Village

Manchester offered READy for the Grade programming from June 20 to August 15, 2025, 3 times a week from 9:30 am to 11:30 am at the Squire Village community room. **A total of 25 students participated, with an average of 11 consistent participants.** A STEM curriculum was offered on Thursdays. Participants were allowed to select books at the end of the day to build their home libraries and encourage reading at home. Some caregivers participated in the activities with their children. Students were given the Easy CBM reading assessment, tracking the number of words read in a passage. A total of 5 students were assessed.



**Pre vs. Post Scores:**  
All 5 students improved or maintained reading levels

## Willimantic Library

Williamantic Library offered READy for the Grade programming from July 1 through August 21, 2025, 2 times a week. Activities included four centers with different activities geared toward reading, learning, and fun. Before programming, students ate dinner in a family-style setting, allowing them to engage in conversation with fellow students and build community. This site used the DIBELS reading assessment, focusing on oral reading fluency for 2nd and 3rd graders and letter naming frequency for kindergartners. A total of 9 students were assessed. A total of 9 students were assessed.



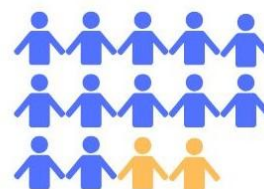
**Pre vs. Post Scores:**  
8 students improved or maintained reading levels;  
1 student decreased.

## Hamden Library

Hamden Library offered the READy for the Grade program from June 30 through August 17, 2025, 3 times a week, from 9:30 am to 12:00 pm. Students received group and individual instruction, as well as a variety of fun activities. Family engagement socials offered caregivers the opportunity to obtain a library card and learn about the library's services. Students regularly received books and other incentives to promote regular attendance. This site used the DIBELS reading assessment, which focused on sight words and oral fluency, resulting in two separate test scores. The figure on the left shows pre- and post-scores for the DIBELS assessment, and the figure on the right shows scores for sight word identification. A total of 15 students were assessed.



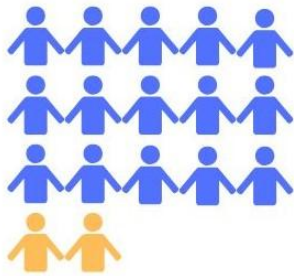
**Pre vs. Post DIBELS:**  
9 out of 15 students improved or maintained their scores; 6 students decreased.



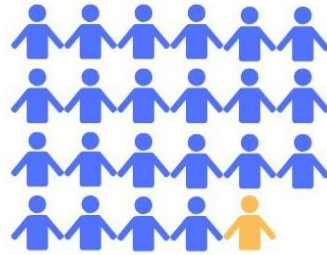
**Pre vs. Post Sight Words:** 12 out of 14 students improved or maintained their scores; 2 students decreased.

## Killingly Library

Killingly Library offered the REAdy for the Grade program from June 23 to August 5, 2025, twice a week. Weekly themes guided the writing, read-alouds, crafts, and interactive games. Every other week, there was a special performance based on the Level-Up Summer reading theme. Students chose a book (to keep) at the end of every session. Parents received weekly literacy tips. The program held a family game night and offered gift cards to participants who consistently attended. Students were given the Easy CBM reading assessment, which tracks the number of correct words read per minute in a passage and the number of sight words. Below are the results for each part of the Easy CBM. A total of 23 students were assessed.



**Pre vs. Post Passage:** 15 out of 17 students improved or maintained their scores; 2 students decreased.



**Pre vs. Post Easy CBM:** 22 out of 23 students improved or maintained their scores; 1 student decreased.

## Recommendations

Leaders, staff, students, and parents were given the opportunity to provide recommendations. Leaders, staff, and parents often cited expanding the program by either making it year-round or providing funding to hire additional teachers. Students recommended increasing fun activities, more snacks, decorated rooms, and bringing in animals. These recommendations demonstrated what is important to students and what they need to deepen their learning. Below are recommendations based on the evaluator's perspective and her observations of the sites.

- Extending this program's weekly frequency or number of hours may increase attendance. Parents who work and need childcare for their children may find it difficult to bring and pick up their child. The short number of hours and the 2-3 days a week schedule targets a select group of families, leaving out families whose children may need this program.
- Recruitment was an issue in some locations, but less so in others. Those who struggled recommended an earlier launch (one leader suggested March). A significant amount of planning is required for recruiting staff, obtaining materials, and marketing, among other tasks. Knowing that the program site is being funded and supporting leaders sooner could increase the number of students who participate.

- Some programs served more students than others. It is unclear if this is due to additional funding obtained from other sources, but almost all of the leaders and some staff recommended additional funding. For some, additional funding means they can hire more teachers; for others, it would expand their food budget. One consideration for the Foundation is to consider funding fewer sites, thereby increasing funding to the other sites. Another option is to invest more in this program, particularly given its favorable outcomes. A future evaluation could consider focusing on the factors that enable some programs to have more students than others.
- Additional funding could also mean having a designated person to conduct the reading tests. Staff mentioned that students are absent because of other summer activities or vacations, which creates an inconsistency in attendance. A designated person could focus on increasing the number of pre- and post-reading assessments across sites, which will provide more outcome data.
- Many of the staff members interviewed stated that parents who read with their children at home resulted in greater improvement. This is an area where focus could be enriched. Some sites mentioned that they provide tips for parents on engaging their children in reading; however, it is unclear how many students are receiving additional support at home (this is evident from the discrepancy between student and parent responses). An engagement strategy for parents focused on reading activities at home may yield greater outcomes and or more consistency in attendance.

## Conclusion

The READy for the Grade program demonstrated another successful year. The reading level outcomes and feedback from students, parents, and staff demonstrated learning and high satisfaction with the program. Leaders expressed gratitude for the funding and the flexibility to build a program that is responsive to the needs of the students they serve. Staff commitment to supporting students was strong and positive. Students enjoyed the program, and many of them want it to be longer in terms of hours and days. Parents who were surveyed all reported that the program met their goals for their child and expressed high satisfaction with the program.

This report referenced that research is consistent regarding the summer slide and that reading programs such as READy for the Grade help to mitigate its impact. The data show that of the 119 students assessed at the beginning and end of the program, 90% demonstrated improvement in reading levels. This represents those who had a pre- and post-reading assessment score; we suspect many more children improved.

Other successes included students learning kindness and sharing. The students' focus groups also cited writing and the ability to be creative as additional learning. As students

build their reading skills, they also learn about animals, food, and other topics that are incorporated into the reading exercises.

READy for the Grade continues to see great outcomes for programming. It is a program that fills an education gap and helps children as they transition into their next grade. It focuses on working with children who are already behind and gives them a chance to either catch up or not fall further behind. This report presents recommendations from all program participants and can serve as a roadmap for future planning.

## Appendix A: Program details

Site (avg # of students)	Program Duration	Hours of operation	Program structure	Food	Parent Engagement Activities
Hamden (17)	Jun 30 - Aug 17, 2025	9:30 - 12:00 3 days/week	Group & individual instruction, fun activities. Yoga. Received books & other incentives to promote attendance	Snack	✓
Wilson (10)	Jul 1 - Aug 7, 2025	1:00 - 5:00 3 days/week	Group & individual instruction, fun activities. Learning how to use the library.	Snack	✓
Fair Haven (8)	Jun 30 - Aug 17, 2025	1:00 - 5:00 3 days/week  4:00 - 5:00 2 days/week	Group and individual instruction, drop-in or by appointment for 1:1 support.	Snack	✓
Steston (12)	Jun 30 - Aug 9, 2025	10:00 - 2:00 2 days/week  4:00 - 5:00 1 day/week	Group and individual instruction, computer-based educational and learning games on tablets.	Breakfast and Lunch	✓
Rockville (35)	Jun 30 - Aug 6, 2025	8:30 - 11:30 3 days/week	Group and individualized instruction. Weekly themes guided reading activities, including shared chapter book reading, the use of puppets, and edible craft projects.	Snack	✓
Manchester (10)	Jun 20 - Aug 15, 2025	9:30 - 11:30 3 days/week	Various reading activities and STEM activities once a week.	Snack	✓
Killingly (14)	Jun 23 - Aug 5, 2025	4:30 - 6:30 2 days/week & 12:00 - 3:00 individual instruction	Weekly themes guided writing, read-alouds, crafts, and interactive games reflect the theme. Every other week, there was a special performance based on the Level-Up Summer reading theme; tutoring.	Snack	✓
Willimantic (17)	Jul 1 - Aug 21, 2025	5:00 - 7:30 2 days/week	Group and individual instruction and a variety of fun activities throughout the program.	Family Style Dinner	✓

## Appendix B: Site-specific outcomes

# 2025 REAdy Program Highlights

FAIRHAVEN READY FOR THE GRADE 2025 SUMMER PROGRAM OUTCOMES

## Overview

REAdy for the Grade's goal is to avoid the summer slide by providing reading programs and support during the summer. In the summer of 2025, REAdy for the Grade programming was offered for the first time at the Fair Haven Branch Library.

## Program Description

The Fair Haven library branch offered the REAdy for the Grade program for the first time in 2025. The program ran from June 30, 2025, to August 9, 2025, and provided individual reading instruction three times a week from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. Students could drop in or schedule an appointment for help with reading during those times.

Group sessions were held on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. Group tutoring sessions included: warm-up rhyming songs, a spelling song in which students learned many three-letter words with endings AT, AN, AG, AY, EN, and ET. Percussion instruments were added to the songs for enjoyment by both parents and students. A story was often read by a teacher, and a written/craft activity for both parents and students to do together based on the story read. Family engagement activities were offered three times during the program.

Below are summaries of the responses we received from staff, students, and parents, as well as test results from pre- and post-reading tests.

### Student feedback



- When asked how the program was going, all students responded with a “thumbs up.”
- When asked what they liked about the program, students said they liked books, words, and the puppet shows.
- All students reported they read at home with their parents.

- 100% of parents stated their reading goals for their children were achieved.
- All but one parent said they saw their child reading over the summer, and all but one parent said they read with their child.
- When asked to rate the program on a scale of one to five, all parents rated READY for the Grade a five.
- When asked for feedback, many parents asked for longer or more days.
- Parents also reported that they really liked working with program staff.

## Parent feedback



## Staff feedback



- Staff say consistency is key for student success. All students who attended consistently and worked the program saw increases of one to three levels in their reading.
- Students and families were given workbooks and homework, which aided learning.
- Staff also noted that parent engagement is an indicator of reading success. Many parents were either learning English or spoke English as a second language, and would attend sessions with their children to improve their own English skills. Many reading materials were bilingual.
- Music was incorporated into the curriculum with great success. Children were able to recognize words through song.

- This site used the Fountas & Pinnell reading assessment, which assesses oral reading, comprehension, and fluency.
- 8 students improved or maintained (blue) their reading levels.

## Reading scores: Pre vs. Post



# 2025 READy Program Highlights

WILSON READY FOR THE GRADE 2025 SUMMER PROGRAM OUTCOMES

## Overview

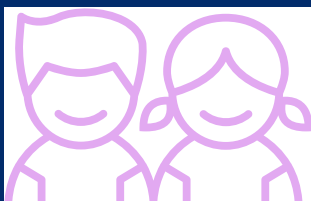
READy for the Grade's goal is to avoid the summer slide by providing reading programs and support during the summer. In 2025, the program was offered at New Haven Free Public Library's Wilson Branch. Instruction was a mix of individual tutoring, group work, and family nights. 100% of students who attended the Wilson Branch program maintained or improved their reading levels

## Program Description

New Haven Wilson Branch offered the READy for the Grade programming from July 1 through August 7, 2025, three times a week from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm. An average of 10 students attended regularly, who received both group and individual planning. Parents and students were engaged daily. Participants were able to participate in fun activities as part of the reading program and at the library. Program staff worked with children to help them feel comfortable in the library and using library resources, and assisted them and their parents in obtaining library cards. Outside groups, such as the Latino Health Program, also participated, hosting puppet shows. Students competed in reading challenges, games, and puzzles. Families are learning to love their library and love reading, too. The student population served at this site had a number of non-English speakers. Their primary languages included Spanish, Dari, or Pashto.

Below are summaries of the responses we received from staff, students, and parents, as well as test results from pre- and post-reading tests.

### Student feedback



- 100% of students expressed satisfaction with the program.
- All the students we spoke to said they enjoyed reading and the library. They also enjoyed drawing, playing for prizes, and spending time with teachers.
- 70% of students reported reading at home. They read by themselves or with parents or other caregivers.
- Besides reading, students said they learned about letters, spelling, sight words, and baby animals. Some students said the program helped them learn English.

- 100% of parents say their reading goals for their child or children were achieved.
- 100% of parents reported seeing their child reading over the summer, and that they read with their child.
- When asked how satisfied they were with the program, four parents rated it 5 out of 5, and three parents rated it 4 out of 5.
- Many parents stated the program helped their children with reading, writing, and understanding English.

## Parent feedback



## Staff feedback



- Many students who attended REAdy for the Grade at the Wilson branch spoke English as a second language, with varying levels of fluency. Staff say specific YouTube videos, websites, and TV shows help students become more confident in reading and understanding English.
- Working with other groups helped to engage children. The Latino Health Program from Hartford held a puppet show focusing on health for the students.
- Staff spoke about the quality of the program and how it is making progress, as well as being social and fun.
- Staff estimate that 90% of parents are reading with their children at home.

This site used the Fountas & Pinnell reading assessment, which assesses oral reading, comprehension, and fluency.

All 10 students improved or maintained their reading levels.

## Reading scores: Pre vs. Post



\* Conducting focus groups with young children has its challenges. To account for those who changed their minds or did not want to raise their hand again for a more accurate count we estimate these numbers to be within a 5 pt. range in both directions.

# 2025 READy Program Highlights

STETSON READY FOR THE GRADE 2025 SUMMER PROGRAM OUTCOMES

## Overview

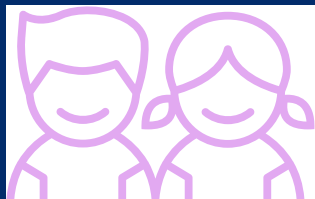
READy for the Grade's goal is to avoid the summer slide by providing reading programs and support during the summer. In New Haven, the program has been operating for twelve years. In 2025, the program was offered at the Stetson Branch/Dixwell Q-House Community Center with a new coordinator and new teachers.

## Program Description

Stetson Library offered READy for the Grade programming from June 30 through August 9, 2025, three times a week. Twelve (12) students attended regularly, receiving both group and individual instruction, as well as computer-based educational and learning games on tablets. Students were provided breakfast and lunch during the program. Family nights were held and open to the community, drawing an attendance of over 60 people. This site used the Fountas & Pinnell reading assessment, which assesses oral reading, comprehension, and fluency.

Below are summaries of the responses we received from staff, students, and parents, as well as test results from pre- and post-reading tests.

### Student feedback



- 100% of students expressed satisfaction with the program.
- All the students we spoke to said they enjoyed reading and the library.
- Students said the teachers and grown-ups in the program taught them a lot of things.
- 100% of students reported they read alone, and all but one said they also read with a parent or other caregiver.
- Students reported that they learned to read at a higher level. They also learned more about unique words, sight words, and reading comprehension.

- 100% of parents say their reading goals for their child were achieved.
- 100% of parents gave the program a 5 out of 5 rating.
- All but one parent reported they saw their child or children reading over the summer, and they read with their child.
- One parent shared their child “reads faster, more confidently and is using new techniques to figure out words she doesn't know.” Another said their child was “reading more and can explain what happens after.”

## Parent feedback



## Staff feedback



- Staff said individual programming and high-quality resources were key in student success. Staff created personalized posters with sight words and vocabulary. Schedules also helped students know what they should be working on.
- Parents who work with their children at home are the best indicators of student success in the program. Staff speak to parents every day about their children's progress.
- Staff also observed students improving their social skills, especially in consideration for each other. Students helped each other.

This site used the Fountas & Pinnell reading assessment, which assesses oral reading, comprehension, and fluency.

All 8 students, who received both a pre- and post-test improved or maintained reading levels.

## Reading scores: Pre vs. Post



\* Conducting focus groups with young children has its challenges. To account for those who changed their minds or did not want to raise their hand again for a more accurate count we estimate these numbers to be within a 5 pt. range in both directions.

# 2025 READY Program Highlights

ROCKVILLE READY FOR THE GRADE 2025 SUMMER PROGRAM OUTCOMES

## Overview

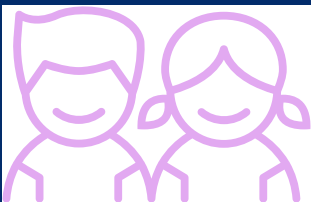
READY for the Grade's goal is to avoid the summer slide by providing reading programs and support during the summer. In Rockville, the program has been operating for thirteen years at Rockville Public Library. Site leaders say this year was a great success for Rockville. Children work in groups, individually, and one-on-one with program staff studying themes like dinosaurs, sharks, food crafts, and more. All children received a library card. Families were invited to an ice cream social at the end of the program.

## Program Description

The READY for the Grade program was offered at the Skinner Road School Library and ran from June 30 through August 6, 2025. Programming was offered 3 times a week from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. Instruction included weekly themes that guided independent reading time, shared chapter-book reading, puppet use, and daily edible craft projects. Parent engagement activities were offered to encourage parents and students to obtain library cards.

Below are summaries of the responses we received from staff, students, and parents, as well as test results from pre- and post-reading tests.

### Student feedback



- When asked how the program was going, 100% of the students we spoke to gave a “thumbs up.”
- 84% of students said they like reading because of the program.
- 80% of students said they read at home— half said they read by themselves, and half said they read with their parents or someone else.
- Students reported enjoying food crafts, working with program staff, and helping one another during the program. One student said they liked seeing the program leader smile.
- Besides reading skills, kids said they learned about problem-solving, kindness, social skills, and science facts.

- 100% of surveyed parents say their children have achieved their reading goals.
- 100% of parents said they saw their child reading over the summer, and 100% report reading with their children.
- When asked to rate the program from one to five, all but one parent gave a 5 rating.
- Feedback from parents was very positive. One parent wrote “Since joining the program, I have seen great improvement in my child's reading, more confidently at home and she is more physically active and energized which has been wonderful to see.”
- One parent did ask for more transparency, saying “If there could be a way for us to understand what she reads each day so that we could also help her further to next level.”

## Parent feedback



## Staff feedback

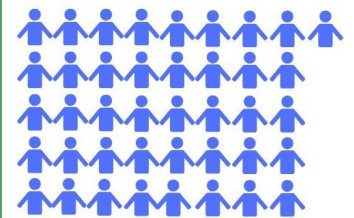


- Staff say that attendance is a significant factor contributing to students' success, as well as parent buy-in. Bus transportation to the program may have contributed to improved attendance.
- They also found that children with an internal drive tended to excel during the program. Students who valued improving themselves did very well.
- While some students exhibited behavioral problems, staff found that the nurturing environment helped them focus better. They noted excellent camaraderie within student groups this summer– kids were helping each other learn.

This site used the Fountas & Pinnell reading assessment, which assesses oral reading, comprehension, and fluency.

All 41 students maintained reading levels.

## Reading scores:



\* Conducting focus groups with young children has its challenges. To account for those who changed their minds or did not want to raise their hand again for a more accurate count we estimate these numbers to be within a 5 pt. range in both directions.

# 2025 READy Program Highlights

MANCHESTER READY FOR THE GRADE 2025 SUMMER PROGRAM OUTCOMES

## Overview

READy for the Grade's goal is to avoid the summer slide by providing reading programs and support during the summer. Since 2023, the Squire Village community center has hosted the program. In 2025, a total of 25 students participated, with an average of 11 consistent participants.

## Program Description

Manchester offered the READy for the Grade program from June 20 to August 15, 2025, 3 times a week from 9:30 am to 11:30 am. The program was held at the Squire Village community room, available specifically to its residents. A STEM curriculum was offered on Thursdays, where students engage in activities focused on STEM. Participants were allowed to select books at the end of the day to build their home library and encourage reading in their home. Caregivers were always welcome, and some caregivers participated in the activities with their children. Books and literacy aids were also given to parents.

Below are summaries of the responses we received from staff, students, and parents, as well as test results from pre- and post-reading tests.

### Student feedback



- 81% of the students we spoke to expressed overall satisfaction with the program.
- More than half the students reported they enjoyed reading and being creative.
- 56% of students said they read at home during the summer. Six of those students reported reading with a parent or someone else
- Besides reading, students said they also liked helping others and learning about what they could be when they grow up.

- One parent responded to the survey. The parent stated they believed their goals for their child were achieved.
- The parent stated they saw improvements in reading and learning how to build things. They were able to read with their child over the summer.
- When asked for feedback, the parent said they had none and the READy for the Grade program was “amazing.”

## Parent feedback



## Staff feedback



- Staff believe that reading at home is a significant factor contributing to students' improved reading scores. They also said a combination of individual reading time, one-on-one, and buddy reading was helpful.
- Some students had a hard time with executive function and behavior problems. To combat this, staff opened each day with circle time, where students could talk and assess their emotions. Students who struggled could take their time joining the circle, and all children eventually engaged.
- Staff were unsure how consistently students and parents were reading at home.
- Staff said they had an “amazing” year, reporting positive connections with students and caregivers. Children who were initially uninterested in the program and did not like books wanted to build their own library at home by the end of the program.

This site used the Easy CBM reading assessment, tracking the number of correct words read per minute in a passage.

All 5 students, who received both a pre- and post-test improved or maintained reading levels.

## Reading scores: Pre vs. Post Easy CBM



\* Conducting focus groups with young children has its challenges. To account for those who changed their minds or did not want to raise their hand again for a more accurate count we estimate these numbers to be within a 5 pt. range in both directions.

# 2025 READy Program Highlights

WILLIMANTIC READY FOR THE GRADE 2025 SUMMER PROGRAM OUTCOMES

## Overview

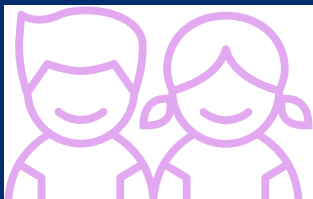
READy for the Grade's goal is to avoid the summer slide by providing reading programs and support during the summer. In Willimantic, the program has been operating out of the public library. After pausing programming in 2024 during library renovations, READy for the Grade resumed in 2025.

## Program Description

Willimantic Library offered READy for the Grade program from July 1 through August 21, 2025, two times a week. Sessions took place in the evening, and students were provided a family-style dinner, which added to a sense of community within the group. The program staff aimed at getting students and parents excited about the library, learning, and reading. Activities included four centers with different activities geared toward reading, learning, and fun.

Below are summaries of the responses we received from staff, students, and parents, as well as test results from pre- and post-reading tests.

### Student feedback



- When asked how the program was going, all but one student responded with a “thumbs up.”
- Students were split when asked if they enjoyed reading– half said they did, half said they did not.
- Two-thirds of the students reported reading at home.
- Students reported enjoying chapter books, reading, writing, and collaborating with their friends.
- Outside of reading, children said they learned about new foods like salad, science, animals, and tie dye.

- 100% of parents stated they believe their child met their reading goals during the program.
- 100% of parents reported they saw their children reading over the summer, and 100% of parents reported reading with their children.
- When asked to rate the program on a scale of one to five, 100% of parents gave a rating of 5.
- Feedback from parents was overwhelmingly positive. One parent said the program was an excellent resource for kids who need to improve their English skills, in addition to reading.

## Parent feedback



## Staff feedback



- Staff reported that some families faced challenges with regular attendance, which impacted program success.
- Staff also said that serving dinner before programming helped a lot – “it’s hard to learn on an empty stomach.”
- Students varied in age and reading ability. Staff created age-appropriate reading groups and worked with students individually.
- Staff reported an excellent turnout at the parent engagement event, and say parent involvement is a good indicator of success in reading.
- Information was received late by program staff; some feel they would have been better prepared with more advanced notice. They also wished for a behavior specialist to be added to the team.

This site used the DIBELS reading assessment focusing on oral reading fluency (ORF) for 2nd and 3rd graders and letter naming frequency (LNF) for kindergartners.

8 out of 9 students improved or maintained (blue) their reading levels’ 1 student decreased (orange) in reading level.

## Reading scores



\* Conducting focus groups with young children has its challenges. To account for those who changed their minds or did not want to raise their hand again for a more accurate count we estimate these numbers to be within a 5 pt. range in both directions.

# 2025 READy Program Highlights

HAMDEN READY FOR THE GRADE 2025 SUMMER PROGRAM OUTCOMES

## Overview

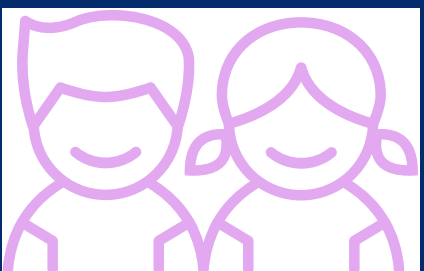
READy for the Grade's goal is to avoid the summer slide by providing reading programs and support during the summer. In Hamden, the program has been operating for four years at the Brundage Community Branch Library. A new coordinator designed and oversaw the program, which she staffed with three teachers and a teen volunteer. A total of 127 books were given away to participating children and their families.

## Program Description

Hamden Library offered the READy for the Grade program from June 30 through August 17, 2025, 3 times a week, from 9:30 am to 12:00 pm and an average of 17 students attended. Students received group and individual instruction, as well as a variety of fun activities, such as yoga. Family engagement socials offered caregivers the opportunity to obtain a library card and learn about the library's services. Several of the students also participated in the library summer reading challenge. A family bingo and pizza party was held during the last week of the program. Students read *Cornbread and Poppy* and *Cornbread and Poppy for the Win*, by Matthew Cordell. After reading the chapters in the book, students worked on different reading and comprehension activities by doing writing and art projects based on the story. Students who had mastered the reading were put in groups to work on other areas, while other students broke into groups to focus on sight word reading.

Below are summaries of the responses we received from staff, students, and parents, as well as test results from pre- and post-reading tests.

### Student feedback



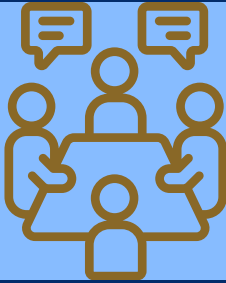
- Almost all students expressed satisfaction with the program, with only one “thumbs down” given.
- Half the students we spoke to said they enjoyed reading. The other half did not comment one way or the other.
- Aside from reading, students said they enjoyed arts and crafts, especially origami. They also said they learned about writing, sharing, and kindness.
- 70% of students reported reading over the summer. Most of them report reading with a parent or caregiver.

## Parent feedback

- 100% of parents reported their reading goals for their child or children were achieved.
- 100% of parents gave the program a 5 out of 5 rating.
- 100% of parents reported they read with their child over the summer.
- Some parents reported that their children have started to read everything—street signs, words on TV, and so on. Parents also stated their child's confidence in reading has increased.
- Two parents asked if an extra day could be added to programming.



## Staff feedback



- Students who continued learning at home with their parents had the most success in the program. Staff estimate that 90% of parents work with their children.
- Some students who needed extra help with specific skills received worksheets to take home.
- Staff said they made learning fun with Jenga and sight word games.
- Staff also report challenges working with students diagnosed with ADHD and other behavioral problems.

This site used the DIBELS reading assessment, which focused on oral fluency and sight words, resulting in two separate test scores. The figure on the left shows pre- and post-scores for the DIBELS assessment.

9 out of 15 students either improved or maintained (blue) their scores. 6 students decreased (orange).

## Reading scores: Pre vs. Post DIBELS



## Reading scores: Pre vs. Post sight words



The second assessment focused on sight words, where students had to identify the number of sight words they knew.

12 out of 14 students improved or maintained (blue) their scores; 2 students decreased (orange).

\* Conducting focus groups with young children has its challenges. To account for those who changed their minds or did not want to raise their hand again for a more accurate count we estimate these numbers to be within a 5 pt. range in both directions.

# 2025 READy Program Highlights

KILLINGLY READY FOR THE GRADE 2025 SUMMER PROGRAM OUTCOMES

## Overview

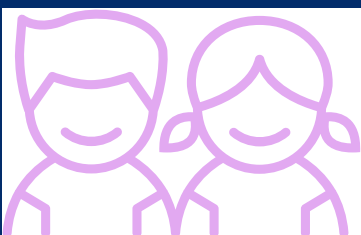
READy for the Grade's goal is to avoid the summer slide by providing reading programs and support during the summer. In Killingly, the program has been operating for 13 years at the main branch of the public library. In the summer of 2025, 14 students participated in the program, and 420 books were distributed to students.

## Program Description

Killingly Library offered the READy for the Grade program from June 23 to August 5, 2025, twice a week. Weekly themes guided the writing, read-alouds, crafts, and interactive games. The program focused heavily on phonics and sight words for those who needed it. Reading strategies and comprehension were also areas of focus. Every other week, there was a special performance based on the "Level-Up at your Library" Summer reading theme. Students participated in activities such as reading to a therapy dog, solving riddles, opening mystery bags, and enjoying an ice cream social. Students chose a book (to keep) at the end of every session. Students regularly received books, small prizes, and reading incentives. Weekly, individualized 1:1 afternoon tutoring sessions were offered for students who were unable to attend the evening group session. Some students attended twice a week, while the majority attended once a week. Parents also received weekly literacy tips to help their children's reading at home. The program held a family game night and offered gift cards to participants who consistently attended.

Below are summaries of the responses we received from staff, students, and parents, as well as test results from pre- and post-reading tests.

### Student feedback



- Students expressed overall satisfaction with the program.
- Half the students we spoke to said they enjoyed reading and liked to learn new information. Students also said they liked chapter books and books that are funny and sad.
- 7 out of 8 children reported reading at home during the summer. Six of those children report reading with a parent or someone else.
- Besides reading, students reported learning about themes, spelling, and writing.

- 100% of parents reported their reading goals for their child or children were achieved. 100% of parents gave the program a 5 out of 5 rating
- 92% of parents said they saw their child reading at home during the summer. Another 92% said they read with their child over the summer.
- When asked for feedback on the program, most parents said the program was great as-is. One parent did express worry that the program was “too fun” and that their child would benefit from more one-on-one time.

## Parent feedback



## Staff feedback

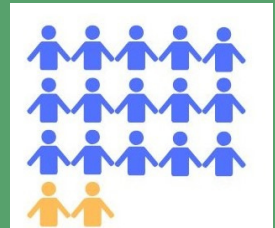


- Staff believe that attendance is a significant factor contributing to students' improved reading scores. They also find that students who are motivated and confident do well in the program.
- Dedicated caregivers who bring their children in every week and continue learning at home significantly contribute to improved reading scores. Staff verbally encourage parents to read with their children and give them handouts with reading strategies.
- Staff spoke positively about Allison, the site leader. They praise her organization and openness to suggestions. Allison provides resources, supplies, and support to instructors daily.

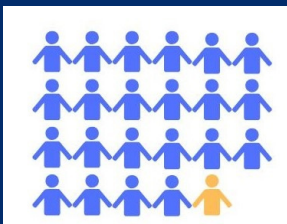
This site used the Easy CBM reading assessment, which tracks the number of correct words read per minute in a passage and the number of sight words.

15 out of 17 improved or maintained (blue) their scores. 2 students decreased (orange).

## Reading scores: Pre vs. Post Easy CBM



## Reading scores: Pre vs. Post sight words



The second assessment focused on sight words, where students had to identify the number of sight words they knew.

22 out of 23 students improved or maintained (blue) their scores; 1 student decreased (orange) in reading level.

\* Conducting focus groups with young children has its challenges. To account for those who changed their minds or did not want to raise their hand again for a more accurate count we estimate these numbers to be within a 5 pt. range in both directions.