READ ALOUD PROGRAM IMPACT REPORT 2019

WHY READING & OUR PARTNERSHIP MATTERS
The ability to read is a gateway skill to positive life outcomes, and development of that skill begins early and continues throughout a student’s scholastic career.

OUR SHARED PURPOSE
At Words Alive, we believe that empowering experiences turn students into agents of change and advocates for their own education. We also believe that reading is the foundation of community and economic development, and that when everyone can read, whole communities thrive! During the 2018-2019 academic year, Words Alive partnered with like-minded leadership at the following 17 partner schools to deliver our Read Aloud Program in 92 classrooms, serving 2,092 students in preschool through third grade:

- Bandini Elementary
- Bay Point SPK
- Burbank Elementary
- Col. Solomon Child Development Center
- Edison Elementary
- Euclid Child Development Center
- Felicita Elementary
- Freese Elementary
- Golden Hill K-8 & State Preschool
- Herbert-Ibarra Elementary
- Perkins Elementary
- Porter Elementary & State Preschool
- The Monarch School
- Walker SPK & Child Development Center
- Washington Elementary
- Webster Elementary
- Wegeforth Child Development Center

The Read Aloud Program and this partnership supported strategic goals of both partners:

- To engage the whole community in working together to ensure that children and youth are poised for school success.
- To develop programs, competencies and linkages that support and promote student empowerment and self-sufficiency.
How do we help children fall in love with reading?

"Thank you for spending all your time with us! I will miss all those good books!"
- Marien, participant, Felicita Elementary

1. Bring people together
2,092 students and 91 volunteers in 92 classrooms across 17 partner schools participated in the Read Aloud Program during the 2018-19 school year!

2. Build Habits
Students and volunteers clocked 1,740 hours of reading time together over 28 weeks!

3. Create access
Students read stories that reflected their world & took home 4,505 new children's books - growing their home library by 2 books each!

4. Practice what works
Volunteers focused on read aloud strategies that support making connections and children's innate sense of wonder.

Greatest areas of reported impact include:
- Students' ability to demonstrate understanding of a story
- Student knowledge of literary terms (author, illustrator, fiction, non-fiction)
- Students' ability to connect a story to things they know about the world
OUTCOMES – WHAT CHANGED FOR STUDENTS

Reading aloud to young children has been recognized as an essential practice to developing emerging literacy skills. Reading research has also identified specific strategies that adults can use when reading aloud to enhance its impact.¹

Using this research base and tools developed by our third-party evaluative partners at the University of San Diego’s Caster Center for Non-Profit and Philanthropic Research, our Read Aloud Program focuses on three key impact goals. That students:

Develop an enduring commitment to reading.
Objective: Students internalize the value of reading as they explore new ideas and topics through in-depth, shared reading experiences and discussion with their peers and caring adults.

Become life-long learners
Objective: Students experience positive attitudinal shifts about learning and recognize their own ability to develop a sense of curiosity and active imagination, seek out information to solve problems, sharpen critical thinking skills and make circular connections between texts, self and their world.

Become advocates for themselves and their future.
Objective: Students build their vocabulary and abilities of self-expression, becoming empowered to invest in their futures by increasing self-confidence and clarity as readers, writers and speakers.

Our ultimate objective is that students believe in the power of reading and love what reading means in their lives. That is the tipping point between someone who can read and someone who calls themselves a reader. To get there, our program aims specifically to influence what students know, how they feel, and what they do about their own reading development and enjoyment.

WHAT TEACHERS SAID

Participating teachers were asked to complete a retroactive evaluation survey during the last week of the program. This survey intends to measure student skillsets, confidence and interest in reading, with importance placed on literacy building activities and literacy behaviors after the program.

TEACHER SURVEY RESPONSES

It is well documented in research on literacy development in children that skills, motivation or interest to read and confidence as a reader work in concert to propel student ability forward.

Overall, responses from teachers reported that the Read Aloud Program had a positive effect in these key areas. At a glance, teachers felt that read aloud...

- Impacted the development of students’ foundational literacy skills.
  - 100% of teachers reported that Read Aloud impacted the vocabulary development of their students
- Impacted students’ reading comprehension skills.
  - 100% of teachers reported that Read Aloud impacted students’ ability to connect the story to their learning in the classroom
- Increased students’ motivation and engagement in reading.
  - 100% of teachers reported that Read Aloud increased students’ interest in reading
  - 94% of teachers reported that Read Aloud sparked their students’ imagination and curiosity

Improving Reading Comprehension

According to teachers, Read Aloud played a role in supporting children’s foundational literacy skill development, a building block for reading comprehension. Figure 1 shows that nine out of ten teachers reported that Read Aloud had an impact on expanding student’s knowledge of basic book elements, literacy terms, vocabulary and fluency. Eight out of ten teachers said that Read Aloud had an impact on learning phonics.

![Figure 1: Read Aloud's impact on students' foundational literacy skill development (n=51) Teachers who reported 3-5 ratings on a 1=No impact to 5=Very large impact](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Moderate Impact</th>
<th>Large Impact</th>
<th>Very Large Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of basic book elements</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of literary terms</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary development</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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</tbody>
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Improving Reading Comprehension

Research suggests there are three levels of reading comprehension, each of which increases in complexity: 1) Literal = or being able to understand what is stated in a text, 2) Inferential = being able to make inferences about passages in the text in order to understand its central message, and 3) Evaluative = being able to use prior knowledge to connect the text to other text, a reader’s own lived experience, and the larger world. Teachers recognized Read Aloud’s role in students’ development of both basic (literal) and advanced (evaluative) reading comprehension skills.

Figures 2 and 3 show that approximately nine out of ten teachers reported that Read Aloud had an impact on developing indicators of student comprehension skills.

![Figure 2: Read Aloud's impact on basic reading comprehension (n=51) Teachers who reported 3-5 ratings on a 1=No impact to 5=Very large impact](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Moderate Impact</th>
<th>Large Impact</th>
<th>Very Large Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increasing attention span during read alouds</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrating understanding of a story</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking questions related to a story</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making observations about characters in a story</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retelling a story</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Teachers across all grade levels rated Read Aloud’s impact on student reading motivation favorably. Figures 4 and 5 show that roughly nine out of ten teachers felt that Read Aloud increased student’s interest and confidence in reading.

### Increasing Reading Motivation and Engagement

**Figure 3: Read Aloud’s impact on advanced comprehension skills**

(n=51) Teachers who reported 3-5 ratings on a scale of 1=No impact to 5=Very large impact

- Developing their own opinions about a story: 16% Moderate, 50% Large, 32% Very Large Impact
- Connecting the story to themselves: 12% Moderate, 41% Large, 45% Very Large Impact
- Connecting story to the world: 12% Moderate, 44% Large, 42% Very Large Impact
- Connecting story to their learning in the classroom: 18% Moderate, 45% Large, 37% Very Large Impact
- Making predictions about a story: 22% Moderate, 36% Large, 36% Very Large Impact
- Understanding the author’s message in the story: 30% Moderate, 38% Large, 28% Very Large Impact

**Figure 4: Read Aloud’s impact on increasing students’ interest in reading**

(n=51) Teachers who reported 3-5 rating on a scale of 1=No increase to 5=Very large increase

- Reading: 63% Moderate, 37% Large Increase
- Exploring books during Free Time: 56% Moderate, 42% Large Increase
- Asking to take books home: 73% Moderate, 23% Large Increase

**Figure 5: Read Aloud’s impact on increasing students’ confidence in reading**

(n=51) Teachers who reported 3-5 ratings on a scale of 1=No increase to 5=Very large increase

- Responding to what is being read aloud: 68% Moderate, 32% Large Increase
- Reading more frequently: 72% Moderate, 26% Large Increase
- Reading aloud: 73% Moderate, 22% Large Increase
The Impact of Reading Role Models

When asked what they would miss the most if their students no longer participated in Read Aloud, teachers’ responses illustrated the value that volunteers as reading role models provided and the overall impact of Read Aloud in building a positive culture of reading among students.

About what they and their students would miss most, teachers’ responses included:

THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERS

“I love the diversity of the readers, ethnicity, tone and demeanor, pacing, enthusiasm ... all those qualities lend a nice balance to having one teacher who reads to the students daily and provides them a nice variety of read aloud styles.”

“The volunteer readers. Our class enjoyed having Mr. Jim come to read to the class so much, they would ask what day it was so they could count down the days to when Mr. Jim came, and when we did the days of the week, they always associated Tuesdays as Mr. Jim days.”

“The engagement with a kind, caring individual who does this for the love of sharing literature with little ones.”

“The relationship with the readers and the way it enhances what we are doing in the classroom ourselves. It’s a great addition to our literacy activities.”

“Students love listening to stories. I read to them every day, but they need to hear them from different people. Most of our students do not read/get read to at home so the more they get at school the better.”

“The opportunity for students to hear another fluent reader, especially a male reader!”

“Having the experience of a man reading to them on a consistent basis and being able to interact with someone other than me in discussing what book they read.”

EXPOSURE TO DIVERSE LITERATURE

94% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the Read Aloud Program exposed their students to a diverse range of literature.

“We have gone beyond the stories and learned more about Ivan the gorilla and connected it to our STEAM units. We have loved the additional biographies that are shared that support our standards of reading biographies and the impact people have on the world.”

“I would miss the exciting book choice!”

“I would miss the different new books that I have not seen or heard.”

Words Alive is successfully building COMMUNITY when it is crumbling around us...whether it be differing values, political views, too much screen time, young kids having kids, pressures & isolation created by social media. Now, more than ever, the time commitment of community members to our young ones is priceless! Modeling being of service, and the love of reading, and compassion and love of "strangers" are strong life lessons EVERYONE needs!

Teacher, Webster Elementary
“My students look forward to the Words Alive reader every week. They are eagerly anticipating discovering what new books will be read. They are always interested and love participating in the discussions surrounding each story!”

“The excellent book choice for the grade level.”

“The wonderful literature they brought to our class and developing a bond with another adult.”

**POSITIVE CULTURE OF READING**

“I would miss seeing the enjoyment and curiosity that the program sparks in my students.”

“The building connection with community members that DEMONSTRATE (through actions) a strong love of reading.”

“The opportunity to see other reader(s) besides the teacher, love books and enjoy reading as much as I do.”

“The excitement they have when someone different comes to read to them and receiving a new book of their own.”

“My students would miss out on hearing that "different voice" that my kids need! They love having visitors give them different experiences and books and “teaching” styles! I would miss the joy on their faces when the guest reader walks in our room! A weekly enjoyable moment.”

I would miss having my students hear another voice reading to them besides my own. I feel that the more readers they are exposed to the more powerful reading becomes.

Teacher, Golden Hill K-8

Teachers were also asked to share one word or phrase that they felt described their experience with the Read Aloud program. As seen below, the feedback to this question was positive. Note that the size of the word represents how frequently the word was used. (N=51)
Finally, we asked teachers to identify one word to describe their students’ experience participating in the program. Their responses below suggested a positive experience for students. Note that the size of the word represents how frequently the word was used. (N=51)

In the year ahead we intend to strengthen the impact of the Read Aloud Program in two exciting ways:

1. By connecting volunteer reading role models to students in 4th through 6th grade, an age by which in the absence of support, children’s frequency of reading for fun and the number of children who say that they love reading begins to decline³.
2. By developing curriculum resources to harness the power of stories to strengthen children’s social-emotional growth.