



Read Aloud Program
Impact Report 2021-22

READ ALOUD PROGRAM IMPACT REPORT 2021-2022

WHY READING 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.

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!

READ ALOUD PROGRAM

Through our Read Aloud Program, we bring reading alive by inviting caring adults to share stories with children and inspiring those children to be curious, adventurous, and imaginative by exploring diverse and relevant books together. In this research-based program, trained Words Alive volunteers team up with elementary-age children for high-caliber read alouds that bring books alive. This program is tailored to meet children where they are – in classrooms, virtually, or at after-school sites. Regular program sessions, aligned with Common Core standards, provide English Language Arts enrichment over the course of the academic year and include engaging read alouds, participation in a project connecting art and reading, relationship building, and new books for children to keep.

During the 2021-22 academic year, Words Alive partnered with like-minded leadership at 22 Title I elementary schools, out-of-school time providers, and community-based organizations to deliver our Read Aloud Program, serving 2,535 students in preschool through third grade.

The Read Aloud Program supported the shared strategic goals of Words Alive and our partners to:

- Engage the whole community in working together to ensure that children and youth are poised for school success.
- Develop programs, competencies, and linkages that support and promote student empowerment and self-sufficiency.

PARTNERS

Thank you to the following community partners who courageously collaborated to connect learners and their families with experiences to read, think, and create:

Boys & Girls Club of San Marcos
Boys & Girls Club of Vista
Burbank Elementary
Carver Elementary
Edison Elementary
Emerson Elementary
Felicita Elementary
Freese Elementary
Guitars in the Classroom
Hamilton Elementary
Harriet Tubman Village Charter
High Tech Elementary Chula Vista
Ibarra Elementary
Perkins Elementary
Porter Elementary
ProKids - First Tee, San Diego
Rolando Park Elementary
SDUSD Virtual Academy
The Monarch School
Walker Elementary
Washington Elementary
Webster Elementary

How Do We Help Children Fall in Love With Reading?

THE WORDS ALIVE WAY

Bring People Together

A total of 2,535 children in Preschool through 3rd grade participated in the Read Aloud Program during the 2021-2022 school year, twice as many as the previous year.



Create Access

Children read stories that reflected their world and took home 16,072 books and learning kits to grow their home libraries, 181% more than the previous year!

Build Habits

Children and dedicated reading role model volunteers clocked 982 hours sharing stories together.



Practice What Works

Volunteers focused on read aloud strategies that make connections to our world and honor children's innate sense of wonder.

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.

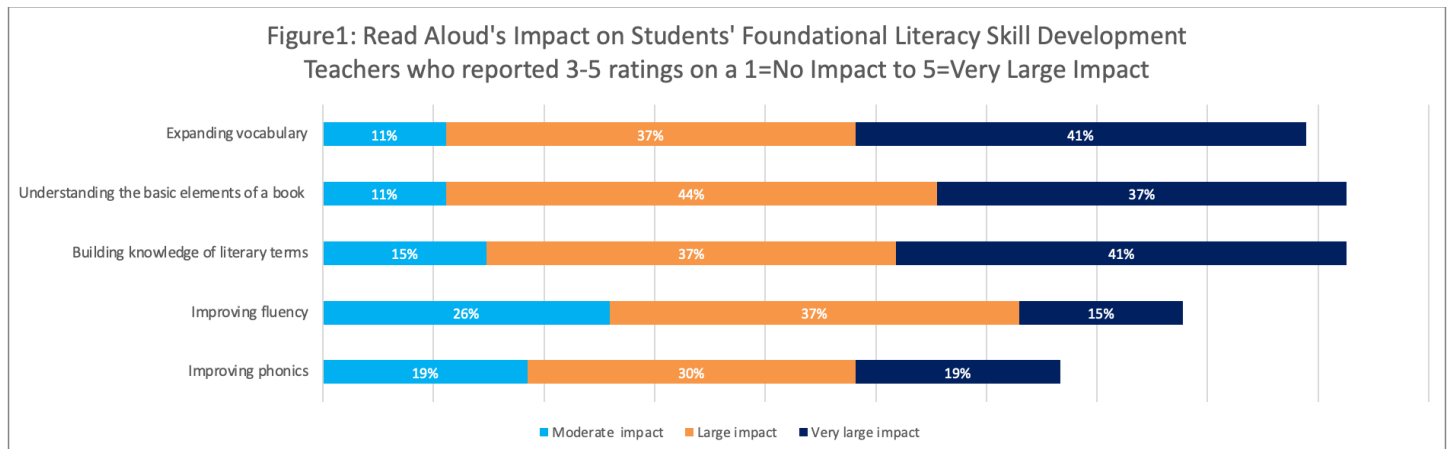
Overall, responses from teachers reported that the Read Aloud Program had a positive effect in these key areas. At a glance, teachers felt that the program...

- **Impacted the development of students' foundational literacy skills.**
 - 89% of teachers reported that Read Aloud impacted the vocabulary development of their students
- **Impacted students' reading comprehension skills.**
 - 96% of teachers reported that Read Aloud impacted students' ability to demonstrate understanding of a story
 - 93% of teachers reported that Read Aloud impacted students' ability to make observations about characters in the story
- **Increased students' motivation and engagement in reading.**
 - 96% of teachers reported that Read Aloud increased students' confidence in responding to read alouds
 - 100% of teachers reported that Read Aloud sparked their students' imagination and curiosity

¹ Lane, H., & Wright, T. (2007). Maximizing the effectiveness of reading aloud. *International Reading*.

Improving Foundational Skills

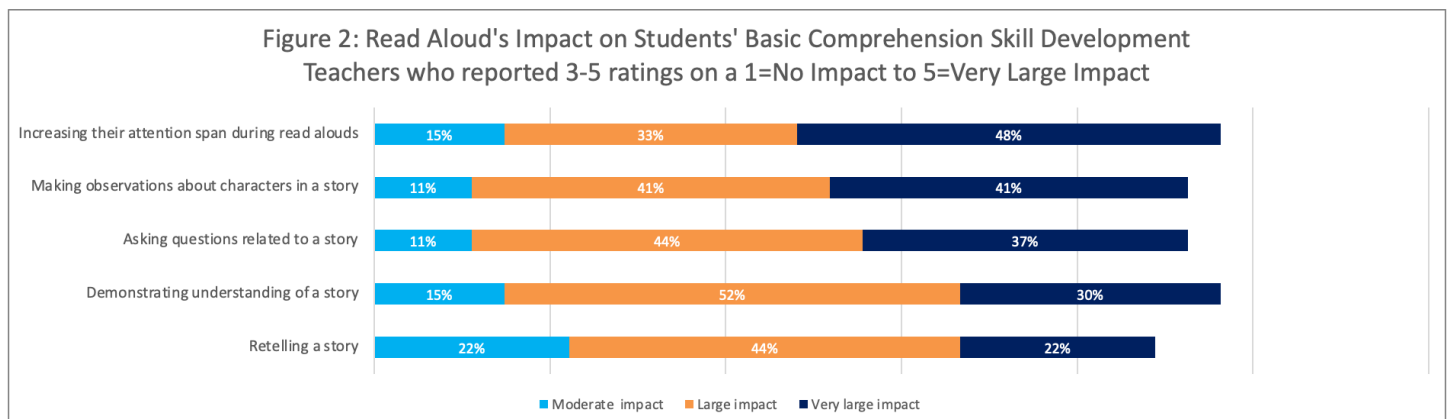
According to teachers, Read Aloud played a role in supporting children’s foundational literacy skill development, a building block for reading comprehension. Figure 1 below shows that nine out of ten teachers reported that Read Aloud had an impact on expanding student’s knowledge of literacy terms and understanding the basic elements of a book. Eight out of ten teachers said that Read Aloud had an impact on expanding learners’ vocabulary, while seven out of ten teachers said that Read Aloud had an impact on improving fluency. 68% of teachers felt the program positively influences readers’ understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds (phonics).



Improving Reading Comprehension

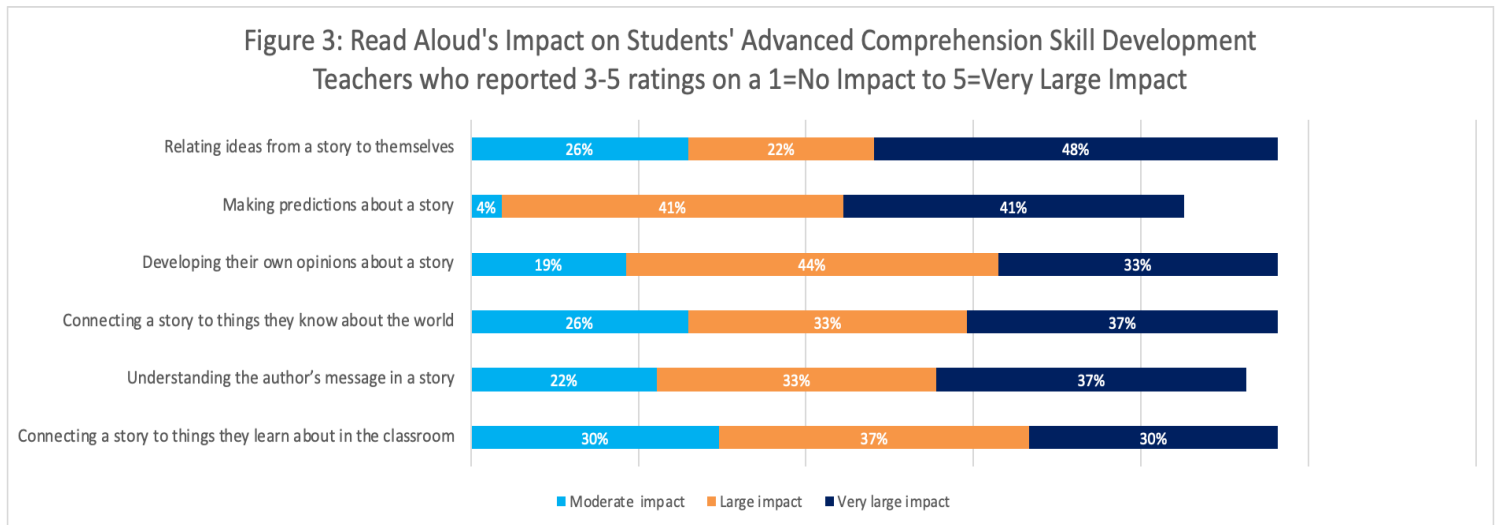
Research suggests there are three levels of reading comprehension, each of which increases in complexity: 1) Literal = being able to understand what is stated in a text, 2) Inferential = being able to make inferences about passages in the text in order to understand its central message, and 3) Evaluative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

Figure 2 shows that nine out of ten teachers reported that Read Aloud had an impact on developing four out of the five indicators of basic reading comprehension skills.



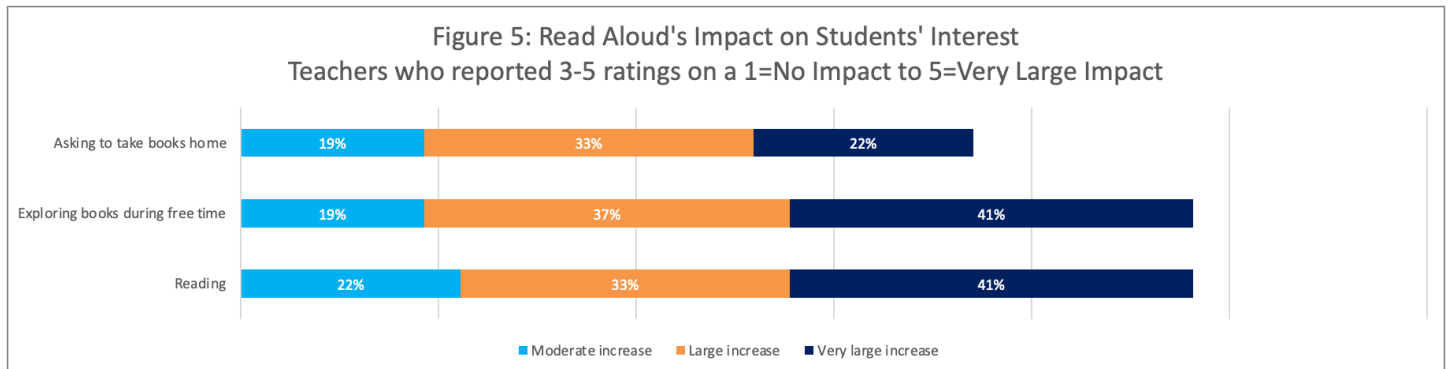
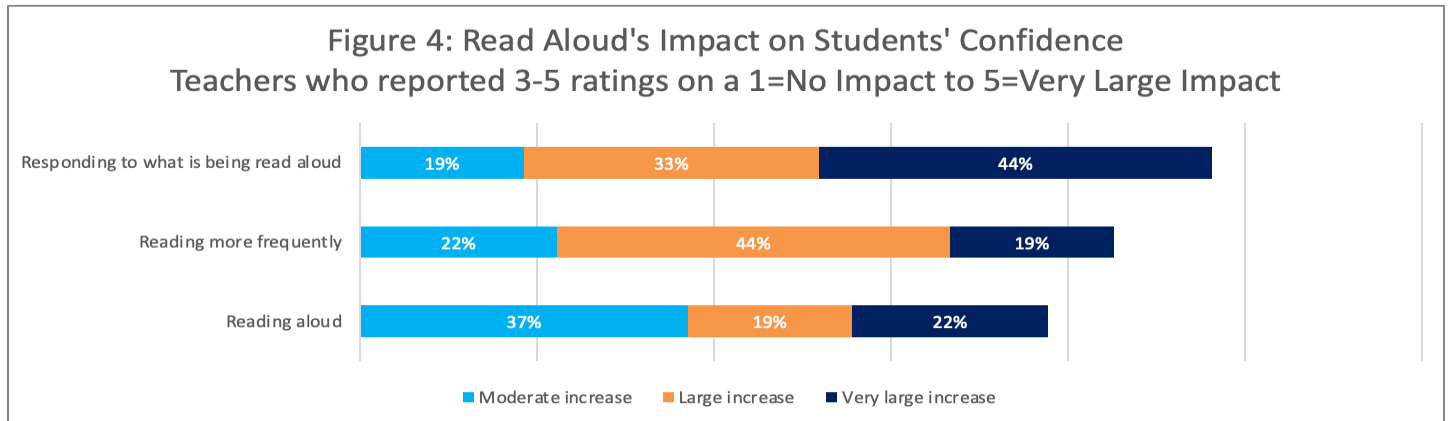
² Basaraba, D., Yovanoff, P., Alonzo, J. & Tindal, G. (2013). Examining the structure of reading comprehension: Do literal, inferential, and evaluative comprehension truly exist? *Reading and Writing*, 26(3), 349-379.

Figure 3 shows that nine out of ten teachers reported that Read Aloud had an impact on developing four out of five indicators of advanced reading comprehension skills.



Increasing Reading Motivation and Engagement

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



Author Visits

Meeting authors and illustrators behind the characters we love deepens the context of what we read and encourages learners to imagine themselves as thinkers, readers, and future creators of stories that shape our world. Those moments - especially when authors and illustrators reflect readers' identities and lived experiences - spark curiosity and can change the way learners view who and what belongs on the page.

When authors meet with learners in Words Alive programs, they discuss the value of representation in literature, share experiences from their own lives, reveal their initial failures and the persistence required in their journeys to get published, and encourage learners to make their own voices heard.

In a new exploration of our partnership with The New Children's Museum, we collaborated on a series of events connecting 725 learners in the Read Aloud Program with authors, illustrators, and art in spring 2022. In February, 350 learners from Bandini, Burbank, Ibarra, and Walker Elementary schools were each gifted a copy of *The Day You Begin*, read the story aloud with their dedicated volunteer, then created artwork inspired by the story and developed by museum teaching artists. Learners and their families were also invited to a weekend event at the museum to meet the famous illustrator, Rafael López, who illustrated *The Day You Begin*.

In April, Caldecott Medal and Newbery Medal winning author Matt de la Peña shared his life story in a virtual visit with 350 learners in classrooms from Edison, Ibarra, Porter, and Perkins Elementary. Each learner followed along in their own copy of *Milo Imagines the World*. The author answered questions about his childhood, where ideas for stories originate, and what it is like to make a living as an author. To celebrate learners' artifacts and expand on the experience of meeting a creative professional, their book-inspired artwork was later exhibited for the public. Each learner and their family were invited to visit the museum free of charge to see their artwork displayed alongside the museum's major installations.

In addition, first graders from The Monarch School joined the in-person event with de la Peña in the education center of The New Children's Museum, had their books autographed, and practiced their own story telling skills in a creative writing workshop lead by the author.

About the experience, one teacher commented:

"Milo Imagines the World was their absolute favorite book. The author reading us his book and having an art piece at the Children's Museum was an honor to be a part of." – L. Kepler, Edison Elementary



PICTURED: FIRST GRADE CLASS FROM THE MONARCH SCHOOL POSE WITH THEIR NEW BOOKS AND AUTHOR MATT DE LA PEÑA AT THE NEW CHILDREN'S MUSEUM



PICTURED: AUTHOR MATT DE LA PEÑA AND STUDENT DISCUSS DURING A CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP.

The Impact of Access

POSITIVE CULTURE OF READING

100% of teachers reported that the program exposed their students to a diverse range of stories, characters, and topics.

When asked how having a dedicated Words Alive reading role model helped cultivate their students' relationship with reading, teachers' responses illustrated the value of volunteers and the positive impact of Read Aloud in building a positive culture of reading among learners.

"I love having another adult who is passionate about reading read to the students and show that reading is important!" – L. Rodriguez, Emerson Elementary

"I love that my students get to see how reading is important by having someone not from education come to read and share their love of books." – G. Dominguez, Emerson Elementary

"I am so lucky to have been part of this program for over 5 years and I feel the program gets better every single year!" – R. Werner, Edison Elementary

"It was such a great program that brought books into the students' homes and gave them something fun to do with reading." – Sharon, Harriet Tubman Village Charter School

"Our Read Aloud Program guest reader Ms. Irna was absolutely phenomenal. She could hold the attention of my wiggly Kinder students the whole 30 minutes...and asked great questions and engaged them in lots of prediction-making and connecting to text strategies - she knew the perfect moments in the story to stop and ask a question or have the students practice a thinking skill. It was such a joy to have her in our class, our students wanted to make her good-bye cards and were on the verge of tears on her last day! We all loved her and the program!" – J. Blum, High Tech Elementary Chula Vista

"Our reader was an absolute rockstar. Our students adore her and bring her up all the time. We are so lucky to have gotten to work with her!" – R. Zauderer, iHigh Virtual Academy

THE VALUE OF BUILDING READING RICH ENVIRONMENTS

Gifted books to learners to keep is an important way that the Read Aloud Program helps build reading-rich environments in the lives of children and their families. This year, we applied a best practice from our Family Literacy Program to three programmatic giveaways by distributing learning kits with each book that contained curated ideas to explore themes of the story and materials for projects related to the title. When asked about the impact of gifting books paired with learning kits for children to keep, teachers' responses were 100% positive, highlighting the influence on student interest, connections to classroom content, and engagement with families at home.

About the impact of book giveaways with learning kits, teachers said:

"Kids loved it! They're so excited to share what they did with their families at home. There's a love of reading [now] and a desire to take it home. A lot of them do not have books at home, so they can't practice. The program has helped me provide kids with good, quality books. Now there's a lot of specified and dedicated time just to read for enjoyment." – C. Williams, Porter Elementary

"It was more impactful because students had to think about what was read and then apply it to the activity. They loved having books to add to their home libraries." – M. Lobo, Burbank Elementary

“Anytime there is a hands-on activity it makes the book more memorable. Students mentioned that they read the book at home.” – L. Rodriguez, Emerson Elementary

“Having a project to go along with a reading always has a great impact. Students have different learning modalities and with a project we are reaching the whole child. The music shaker was a success. A parent mentioned that she loved that we had brought music into literacy.” – G. Dominguez, Emerson Elementary

“It made the book a big deal to have the shaker and finger puppets go home and then to be talked about later. My families loved it. They enjoyed working on project. This is amazing to get such a nice book.” – L. Kepler, Edison Elementary

“The project kits definitely made the books more impactful. It gave families something to do together and connect to the books. They liked having the books to keep.” – M. Wasson, Carver Elementary

“It was impactful because students kept thinking about the story after our reader left the classroom. They were very appreciative and excited to do the activities with their children.” – P. Herrerias, Burbank Elementary

“They loved doing the crafts. It made reading more fun and alive.” – Sharon, Harriet Tubman Village Charter School

“The art activities with the book has a big impact on getting interested and enjoying the book. They developed a library at home with the books.” – J. Quintana, Ibarra Elementary

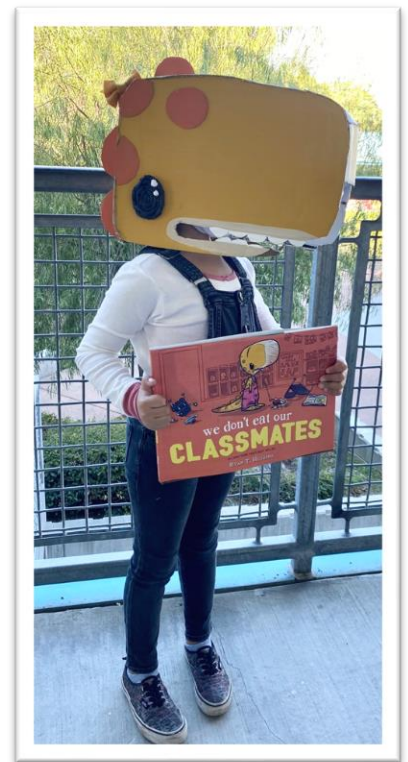
“Mindful stimulation and keepsake in learning!” – A. Ouellette, Washington Elementary

“The students were so curious about ‘bonus’ activities and couldn't wait to try it. The students were overjoyed to get to bring home their very own, brand new, HARDCOVER book (‘just like teacher's books’) home to their families. It was truly a wonderful and generous gift for them!” – J. Blum, High Tech Elementary Chula Vista

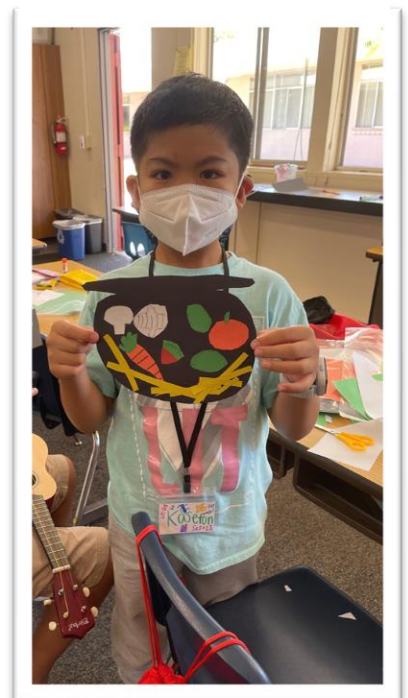
“Students enjoyed looking at the clouds and this gave some students art tools who had none previously. Families loved the books and were so appreciative! They were happy to add to their personal libraries. This is especially important at iHigh because students don't have access to a physical classroom library.” – R. Zauderer, iHigh Virtual Academy

“Children loved relating the activity with the experience. The parents were grateful for the books and activities and told me many times about their children talking about Mr. Jim, even when there wasn't a book giveaway.” – K. Taylor, Walker Elementary School

“Students love to create a piece of art related to the book they read. They are able to make connections between text and self.” – R. Robles, Burbank Elementary



PICTURED: STUDENT'S HOMEMADE COSTUME OF PENELOPE REX ON CHARACTER DAY, INSPIRED BY GIVEAWAY TITLE *WE DON'T EAT OUR CLASSMATES*.



PICTURED: STUDENT DISPLAYS HIS CREATION AFTER READING *STONE SOUP*.

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