

2006 Assessment of the Effectiveness of the Redwood City Public Library's Traveling Storytime Program

The Traveling Storytime is a volunteer outreach program that promotes school readiness and the love of books, libraries and learning through weekly read-aloud visits to children from birth to five who are in daycare centers and preschools in Redwood City and unincorporated Fair Oaks. Each week more than 50 trained volunteers bring theme-based storytimes in English, Spanish, or a combination of both languages, to over 400 children.

Assessment Goals: to determine if the goals of the program were being met, particularly the impact of the program on school readiness.

Assessment Module: The instrument was constructed to closely resemble a portion of the 2002 School Readiness Assessment Project in San Mateo County. That study looked at children during their first month of kindergarten and assessed their proficiency in key readiness skills using a four-point scale. A 2005 study, also conducted by Applied Survey Research, looked at the readiness of kindergartners in both San Mateo and Santa Clara counties and discovered that kindergarten teachers also place a high priority on childrens' self-regulation skills (the ability to sit quietly, to listen, and to be ready to learn) as well as their academic skills. The assessment model developed for the Traveling Storytime project focused on two components of the Communication and Language section, "Engages with Books", and "Has Expressive Language" and the self-regulation capabilities of the children as indicated by their ability to display appropriate listening behavior, stay focused, and react appropriately during the storytime.

The Traveling Storytime assessment focused on children that were planning to enter kindergarten in the fall of 2006, and had been read to by a Traveling Storytime volunteer for at least six months. Nine out of a possible twelve qualifying sites invited us to assess their children and a total of 77 children completed the assessment process.

The two individuals conducting the assessment either observed or conducted a storytime. At the conclusion of the storytime, the children were informed that every child that was planning to go to kindergarten was going to have the opportunity to talk with the two visitors from the library.

Each assessment session began with the child being given a bag containing two books and asked what they thought was in the bag. After making a guess, the child was then asked to pick something out of the bag and look at it with the assessor. By asking each child to remove the book from the bag, it was possible to record if the child knew how to hold the book correctly and if he/she knew where to begin reading. Giving the child the opportunity to share the book also revealed if the child could demonstrate left/right directionality and interact with a book in a positive, sequential manner. The child's responses to these criteria were recorded and scored (one point for each appropriate action). During this process, examples of the child's expressive language were also recorded and scored on a four-point scale.

2006 Assessment of the Effectiveness of the Redwood City Public Library's Traveling Storytime Program

No personal information on the child or the sites were recorded, only the date, sex of the child, whether the site was a preschool or home daycare, and if the child was an English learner (as determined by the provider).

Results

2002 San Mateo County Study

Kindergarteners proficient in expressive language **42%**

2006 Traveling Storytime Assessment

Preschoolers proficient in expressive language **97%**

2002 San Mateo County Study

Kindergartners proficient in engaging with books **40%**

2006 Traveling Storytime Assessment

Preschoolers proficient in engaging with books **92%**

2005 San Mateo County Study

Kindergartners meeting or exceeding teachers' expectations in social regulation (ability to sit quietly, to listen, and to be ready to learn) **68%**

2006 Traveling Storytime Assessment

Preschoolers engaged (sitting quietly, listening, and ready to learn) during 30 minute storytime **91%**

There appeared to be no statistical significance as to whether the children assessed by the Traveling Storytime program were male or female, or were in a preschool or homecare setting. There was not a large enough number of English learners assessed to create a subgroup, so the statistics gathered from the assessment were reported as a whole.

Conclusion

Even after taking into consideration differences in the assessment processes of the three studies, the results of Traveling Storytime's assessment are overwhelmingly positive. Being read to for half an hour per week, over a six month period, has had a statistically significant effect on the communication and language skills of the children served by a Traveling Storytime volunteer.

Although there is no way to quantify a child's love of books, the enthusiastic reception the children gave at the arrival of their volunteer reader, the joy on the childrens' faces, and their

2006 Assessment of the Effectiveness of the Redwood City Public Library's Traveling Storytime Program

positive responses as they listened to their volunteer reading demonstrated to the assessors that the Traveling Storytime is promoting a love of books and learning as well as school readiness.

Many childcare sites, and the children they serve, are on the waiting list for a volunteer. It is the recommendation of the assessment team that the Traveling Storytime program concentrate on the recruiting and training of more volunteers to spread the love of books, libraries and learning to the children of Redwood City.