



FIRST 5 SANTA CRUZ COUNTY



ANNUAL EVALUATION REPORT



July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024

October 2024

Acknowledgements

First 5 Santa Cruz County would like to thank Nicole Young, of Optimal Solutions Consulting, who managed Santa Cruz County's Triple P - Positive Parenting Program for over 15 years, as well as her invaluable collaboration in the evaluation of this program.

In addition, First 5 Santa Cruz County would like to thank the staff and participants of the funded partner agencies, whose commitment to data collection has facilitated the gathering of the robust data included in this report.



First 5 Santa Cruz County Staff

David G. Brody
Vicki Boriack
Michelle Dodge
Alicia Fernandez
Irene Freiberg
Yesenia Gomez-Carillo
Holly Maclure
Jeff Marquardt
Mariana Moran
Maribel Pedroza
Natalia Ramos
Christine Sieburg
Laura Sotelo
Piper Vogt
Alicia Zenteno

First 5 Santa Cruz County Commissioners

Dr. Faris Sabbah
Toni Campbell, Ph.D.
Jennifer Herrera
Bruce McPherson
Diane Muñoz
Kimberly Petersen
Johanna Schonfield
Dr. Raelene Walker

Optimal Solutions Consulting

Nicole M. Young

Raising A Reader

Program Description

Raising A Reader (RAR) fosters healthy brain development, supports parent-child bonding, and motivates families to read aloud with their children which helps develop the early literacy skills that are critical for school success. Raising A Reader (RAR) began operation in Watsonville during the last quarter of the 2005-06 fiscal year and has served nearly 32,300 children since then. The program provides a way for children and their parents or caregivers to participate in a weekly rotating book bag program through early care and education settings.

On a weekly basis, participating RAR classrooms and family child care homes provide children with bags that are filled with various award-winning books, which they borrow and bring home to their parents. RAR provides training and information to parents and caregivers on how to effectively share these books with their children at home, to help develop their children’s early literacy skills.

RAR also connects families with their local public library, and at the end of the program children are given a book bag of their own as a way to encourage families to continue the practice of borrowing and reading books together.

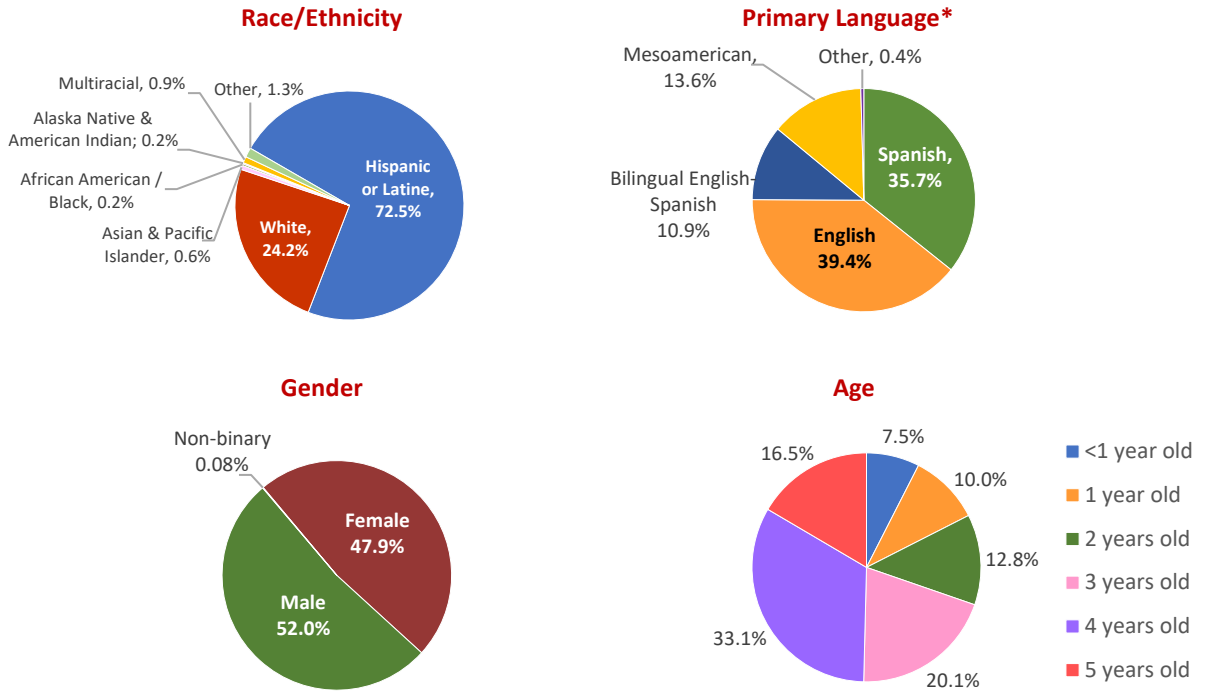
Population Served

| | New | Existing | 2023-24 Total |
|----------|-------|----------|---------------|
| Children | 1,350 | 1,208 | 2,558 |

Source: First 5 CCD database for July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

Note: “New” children are those who began participating in Raising A Reader for the first time during this fiscal year. “Existing” children are those who began participating in Raising A Reader before this fiscal year and continued their participation into this fiscal year. The population numbers include children reported by Raising A Reader, and also children who were enrolled in this program through Families Together.

Figure 55: Demographics of Children (ages 0-5) participating in Raising A Reader (2023-24)



Source: First 5 CCD database for July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

Notes:

- These demographics are for the children enrolled in classrooms providing Raising A Reader.
- Clients with missing or unknown data for a demographic are excluded from that demographic’s analysis.

* “Mesoamerican” languages include Mixtec, Oaxacan, and Zapoteco. “Other” languages include Bilingual-Other and other languages.
N: (Race/Ethnicity)=2,549; (Primary Language)=2,556; (Gender)= 2,556; (Age)=2,558.

Program Objective: Support existing sites offering Raising A Reader

RAR staff visit participating child care sites to monitor how well the program is operating, and to provide refresher books or trainings as needed. Indeed, as more and more sites in the county have implemented RAR over the years, the objectives of RAR have shifted from adding new sites to maintaining and supporting the existing ones.

The following results show the number of sites that have been supported during the past year. Some sites may be listed more than once if they required additional assistance throughout the year.

| Existing Sites | Number of Visits at Existing Sites ¹ | | 2023-24 Total |
|---|---|-----------------------------|---------------|
| | Family Child Care Home | Preschool/Child Care Center | |
| Between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024, sustain, monitor and support approximately 200 RAR sites with RAR since 2006. | 158 | 116 | 274 |

Source: Raising A Reader Biannual and Annual Progress Reports, 2023-24.

¹ Some sites may be visited more than once. Additionally, the actual number of classrooms participating in Raising A Reader is likely to be higher than the total number of sites, as one site may include more than one classroom.

In addition to supporting existing sites, RAR also enrolled 11 new sites in 2023-24.

| Number of New Sites Implemented since July 1, 2023 | | |
|--|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Family Child Care Home | Preschool/Child Care Center | 2023-24 Total |
| 0 | 11 | 11 |

Source: Raising A Reader Biannual and Annual Progress Reports, 2023-24.

One Provider’s Story

Soledad was one of the first providers to offer the Raising a Reader program to families, and has had great success over the years keeping the books from getting lost. At her first meetings with parents, she explains how to take care of the books and bags, and when the families need to return the bags. She taught a two-year-old to avoid stepping on books, and showed how to treat the books gently, saying it would “hurt the book to be stepped on.”

She asks children to take care of the books and to read to their parents. *“Ustedes les van a leer a sus papas. Se van muy contentos.”* [“You are going to read to your parents. They will be very happy.”]

Children are clearly enjoying their books and know how to use them. Soledad described one two-year-old looking at her books and “talking, talking, talking.”

- Raising A Reader, Biannual Progress Report

Outcome Objective: Parents will spend more time reading or sharing books with their child

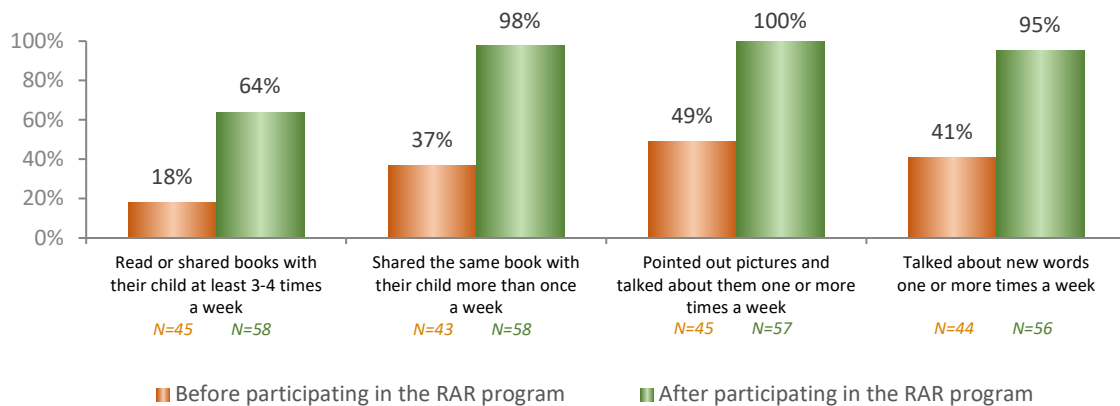
Two surveys were conducted to help to measure the impact of Raising A Reader in Santa Cruz County and the Pajaro Valley area of Monterey County.

Raising A Reader (Migrant) Parent Retrospective Survey

The first survey was the standard *Parent Retrospective Survey* that was developed by RAR consultants, that has been used in past years. In the fall of 2023, RAR staff administered the survey one by one to migrant parents, reading each question and recording their answers on paper.

Results show that more migrant parents are practicing key pre-literacy activities with their children after their participation in RAR, such as reading a book with their child, sharing the same book more than once, pointing out pictures and talking about them, and talking about new words.

Figure 56: Percentage of RAR migrant Parents who practiced these key pre-literacy activities with their child (2023-24)



Source: Raising A Reader, Annual Progress Report, *Parent Retrospective Survey* results, 2023-24.

Note: The sets of respondents at Before and After are not matched, as not every respondent answered at both time periods.

Raising A Reader National Survey

The second survey was also a retrospective parent survey, but was created by Raising A Reader National and was available on SurveyMonkey, an online survey tool. It was offered free of charge this year by certain affiliates as a “pilot” survey. In May 2024, the online survey was available to Santa Cruz County parents in several ways:

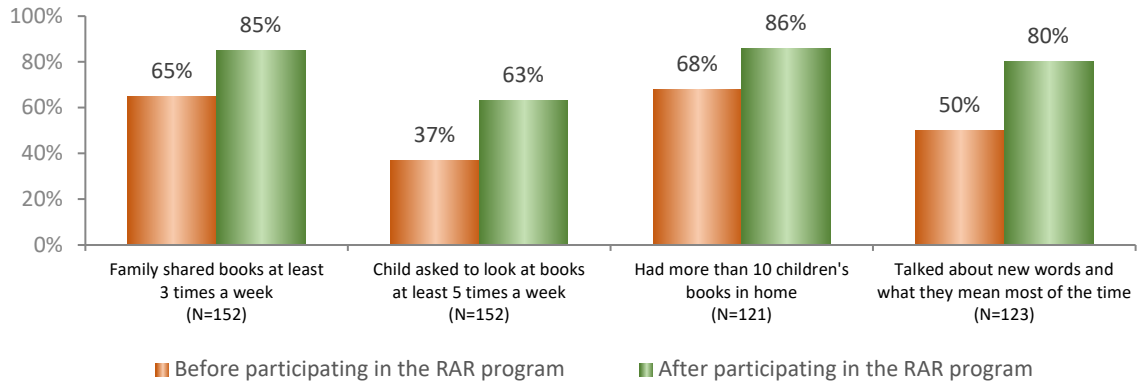
- Links to the SurveyMonkey survey were emailed to teachers to share with their parents.
- The survey was uploaded to *Learning Genie*.³⁷
- QR codes were distributed on paper, and through email.

County families who were participating in RAR completed the *Raising A Reader National Survey* on their phones or computers.

Results from the *RAR National Survey* showed that after participating in Raising A Reader, parents were more likely to share books with their children, their children asked to look at books more frequently, families had more children’s books in their homes, and parents talked about new words with their children.

³⁷ Learning Genie is an app for early childhood educators to create portfolios, assess children's development, and share learning media with families.

Figure 57: Percentage of RAR National Survey respondents who practiced these key pre literacy activities with their child (2023-24)



Source: Raising A Reader, Annual Progress Report, *RAR National Survey* results, 2023-24.

