



FIRST 5 SANTA CRUZ COUNTY



ANNUAL EVALUATION REPORT



July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

October 2025

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 **33,833** 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, and instill a love of reading.

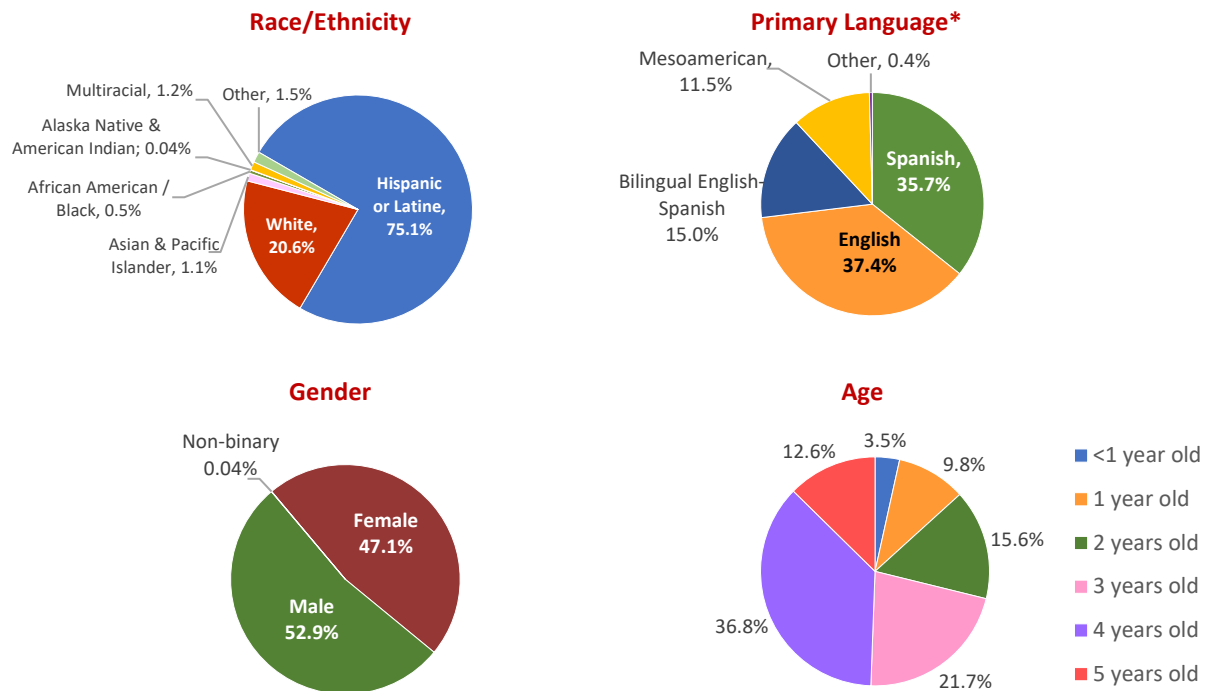
RAR also connects families with their local public library, and at the end of the program children are given a book bag of their own as a way to encourage families to continue the practice of borrowing and reading books together.

Population Served

	This Funding Cycle 2024-2025			Cumulative Total 2006-2025
	New	Existing	Total 2024-2025	
Children	1,535	1,298	2,833	33,833

Source: First 5 CCD database for July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025.

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 57: Demographics of Children (ages 0-5) participating in Raising A Reader (2024-25)

Source: First 5 CCD database for July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025.

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)=2,786; (Primary Language)=2,808; (Gender)= 2,820; (Age)=2,833.

Program Objective: Support existing sites offering Raising A Reader

RAR staff visit participating child care sites to monitor how well the RAR 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		2024-25 Total
	Family Child Care Home	Preschool/Child Care Center	
Between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025, sustain, monitor and support approximately 200 RAR sites with RAR since 2006.	164	117	281

Source: Raising A Reader Annual Progress Report, 2024-25.

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 38 new sites in 2024-25.

Number of New Sites Implemented since July 1, 2024		
Family Child Care Home	Preschool/Child Care Center	2024-25 Total
30	8	38

Source: Raising A Reader Annual Progress Report, 2024-25.

Parents' Stories

- "The book bag serves as a reminder to read to our children every day. It also gives us access to many different books. My son gets very excited every time he receives a bag."
- "I really like that the books have diversity. We learn about different cultures, traditions, family values, and much more. Since the books are short my children will actually sit down and listen to a story. We ask questions as we read and I like to make it fun when reading a story."
- "Bueno, pues a mi me ayudo a leerle los libros a mi hijo porque antes no lo hacia." [Well, it helped me read books to my son, because I didn't do it before.]

- Raising A Reader, Biannual Progress Report

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

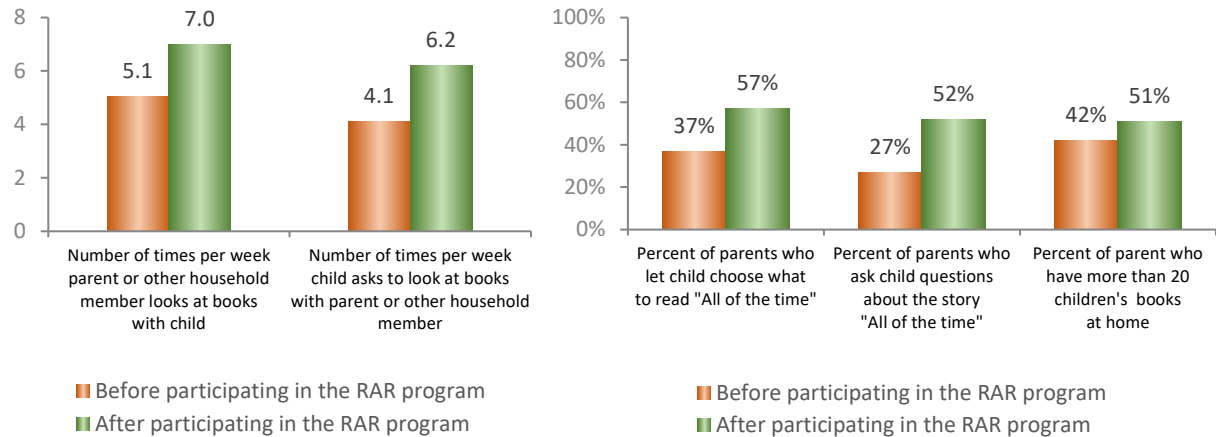
There were two different retrospective parent surveys used this year to measure the effectiveness of Raising A Reader in Santa Cruz County and the Pajaro Valley area of Monterey County: *Raising A Reader (Migrant) Parent Retrospective Survey*, and *Raising A Reader Refresher Provider/Teacher Survey*.

Raising A Reader (Migrant) Parent Retrospective Survey

The first survey was the standard *Raising A Reader Parent Retrospective Survey* provided by Raising A Reader National through Survey Monkey. It was administered in the fall of 2024 to migrant parents at the PVUSD Migrant Seasonal Head Start centers in Watsonville, and again in the spring of 2025 to families throughout the County. RAR staff interviewed migrant parents one at a time and recorded their answers directly into the survey link. For the families throughout the County, the link for this survey was emailed to all the centers and schools so they could forward it to families participating in RAR.

Findings from the *RAR Parent Retrospective Survey* highlight the positive impact of RAR on family reading behaviors and child growth in early literacy.

Figure 58: Key pre-literacy activities practiced by RAR parents with their child (2024-25)



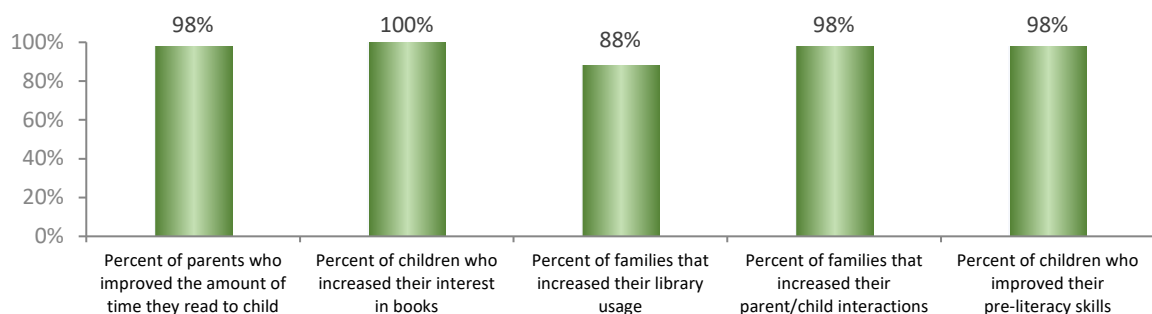
Source: Raising A Reader, Annual Progress Report, *RAR Parent Retrospective Survey* results, 2024-25.
N: (Looks at books)=195; (Child asks)=193; (Child chooses)=188; (Asks child questions)=190; (21+ books)=193.

Raising A Reader Refresher Provider/Teacher Survey

The second retrospective survey was the *Refresher Provider/Teacher Survey* created by consultant Shareen Bell, and was distributed to teachers and providers throughout Santa Cruz County in the spring of 2025. Teachers were asked to report about the RAR program itself (their enthusiasm, the program's effectiveness, etc.), and also to retrospectively report the amount of improvement they saw in parents' and children's pre-literacy behaviors and skills.

In the *Refresher Provider/Teacher Survey*, teachers reported that after participating in RAR, the vast majority of parents spent more time reading with their children, increased their library usage, and had more interactions with their children. Teachers related that nearly all children had an increased interest in books, and improved their pre-literacy skills.

Figure 59: Teachers' report of the impact of RAR on parents' and children's pre-literacy behaviors and skills (2024-25)



Source: Raising A Reader, Annual Progress Report, *Raising A Reader Refresher Provider/Teacher Survey*, 2024-25.
N=42.

