



Write Your Story (WYS)

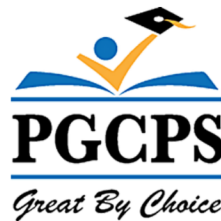
2022-2023 Evaluation Findings

July 2023



Thank You

Site Partners



Kids Villa Waring Station
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Executive Summary

Story Tapestries' Early Childhood Curricular Team seeks opportunities to impact children's learning trajectory by engaging young children (0-6 years old) in programs that build emergent literacy skills, supporting the critical skills development in the phase of learning to read so that children may ultimately successfully transition to reading to learn. **Write Your Story (WYS)** provides high-impact programs that build emergent literacy skills for economically impacted vulnerable youth, educators and caregivers in Montgomery, Prince George's, and Frederick Counties in Maryland. Within and outside of the classroom, WYS project staff engaged 146 early childhood educators and 922 children and their parents/families in the 2022-23 academic year.

To evaluate WYS activities for the 2022-23 academic year, Story Tapestries engaged Sharp Insight, LLC, an independent, third-party evaluator. Together, they developed and refined a mixed-methods evaluation approach used in years past. This executive summary provides key findings from the evaluation. For more detailed information, please see the full report.

Engagement in WYS Programming

- Most center and school staff reported taking part in the Artist in Residency program, while two-thirds reported taking part in a professional development workshop and Kick-Off performance. Half reported taking part in the family events.
- Staff reported that students most enjoyed the dance and movement, storytelling, and writing stories and music programming.

Impact on Students

- 86% of caregivers agreed or strongly agreed that students increased their ability to express themselves creatively because of Story Tapestries.
- 72% of caregivers agreed or strongly agreed that their students increased their ability to speak clearly and share their ideas and had increased access to resource to participate in art at home.
- Nine out of ten center/school staff agreed or strongly students have shown more interest in the arts because of Story Tapestries.
- Center/school staff reported a greater increase in verbal than written literacy skills, which is expected given the developmental age range of 2-6 where the younger children would be developing oral language rather than print skills, including students' increased ability to "say words distinctly and clearly," "retell parts of a lesson/story," "put words into a complete sentence," and "answer questions about a lesson/story clearly."
- Around three-quarters or more of center/school staff reported that the students increased their abilities at least "some" in four social and emotional learning skills because of Story Tapestries, and around two-thirds in four other social and emotional learning skills.
- Most center/school staff reported at least "some" increase in motor skills because of Story Tapestries, including 86% who reported some increase in gross motor skills and 74% in fine motor skills.

Impact on Center/Schools and Their Staff

- More than three-quarters of center staff strongly agreed or agreed that Story Tapestries provided resources connected to the arts (80%) and more access to professional development (76%).
- Almost all staff strongly agreed or agreed with statements that because of WYS, they personally have a greater appreciation for how the arts can be used to teach social and emotional skills, literacy skills, and motor skills.
- Nine out of ten center/school staff agreed they learned new teaching skills.
- Center/school staff also reported, as part of the professional development workshops, learning new teaching strategies, enjoying the interactive activities, and the art skills taught.

Impact on Caregivers

- Following the parent workshops, all caregivers agreed or strongly agreed they learned new information or skills, will use the skills learned in the next 1-3 months, and feel more confident they can use the skills learned.
- Following out-of-school events, 93% of caregivers reported they learned something new and wanted to attend another Story Tapestries event.

Satisfaction with Story Tapestries WYS Program and Workshops

- Almost all (96%) center/school staff reported they would recommend the WYS program to another center or school.
- Nine out of ten caregivers (86%) would recommend the Story Tapestries program to a friend, and all caregivers who took part in a parent workshop said they would recommend the workshop.

Program Recommendations by Staff and Caregivers

- When asked for recommendations to improve the overall program, staff mentioned aspects around scheduling, expanding the program, and improving age-appropriate lessons most often.
- Suggestions from staff regarding how to better meet the needs of students and families focused on increasing cultural relevance, improving scheduling, and focusing on age-appropriate lessons.
- Suggestions from caregivers that took part in the parent workshops also revolved around scheduling and ideas for how to structure the workshop, including involving children at some point.

Introduction

Story Tapestries' Early Childhood Curricular Team seeks out opportunities to impact children's learning trajectory by engaging young children (0-6 years old) in programs that build emergent literacy skills, supporting the critical skills development in the phase of learning to read so that children may ultimately successfully transition to reading to learn. **Write Your Story (WYS)** provides high-impact programs that build emergent literacy skills for economically vulnerable youth, educators and caregivers in Montgomery, Prince George's, and Frederick Counties. Within and outside of the classroom, WYS project staff engaged 146 early childhood educators and 922 children and their parents/families in the 2022-23 academic year. All sites participating with Story Tapestries received professional development workshops, embedded professional development residencies for the students and teachers, family events, parent workshops, and art and literacy kits that go home with students on a monthly basis.

Story Tapestries provides professional development for educators to create inclusive learning environments, family support through interactive events, monthly arts and literacy kits for the family and delivery of in- and out-of-school time programs to build social-emotional, cognitive, fine and gross motor, and oral language skills. The professional development workshops offered by Story Tapestries are approved by Maryland State Department of Education and count towards the Early Childhood Educators clock hours needed to become and remain a teacher in the state of MD.

Story Tapestries provides embedded professional development artist-in-Residencies which includes ten arts integrated sessions during the school day. Teaching artists provide innovative ways for students to access and understand academic material, breaking down barriers to learning and increasing students' confidence and achievement. Story Tapestries' teaching artists have experience with all types of Early childhood curriculums, as well as the Maryland Content Standards. Before the residency, the artist meets with the participating teachers and administrators to plan and custom design the residency ensuring the residency enhances the curriculum.

A residency begins with a kick off performance, engaging students in the art form and a professional development workshop for the teachers. Following the performance, the artist will work with teachers in the select classrooms to teach arts-integrated lessons. Using their art form, the teaching artist demonstrates strategies and skills that enhance achievement and understanding. The residencies not only provide skills for the students, but demonstrate the skills learned in the professional development workshop to the teachers. Story Tapestries follows the I do it, we do it, you do it model of professional development to ensure the teacher leaves with the ability to lead an arts integrated lesson on their own.

Family Nights include a professional performance, an interactive art-making experience for youth and family members to create together, and time for socializing with refreshments. Family nights share tools with parents and family members to support at-home activities such as journaling, sketching, and mindfulness activities, which are healthy outlets for managing emotions such as frustration or anger that can otherwise manifest in negative behavior. Guided activities also include creating and telling stories and using your voice, body, and visual supports to communicate a story. These activities support literacy and creative thinking skills.

Parent Workshops encourage and demonstrate how parents and caretakers can get involved in the learning process. To further support these families, Story Tapestries has generated lesson plans and activity sheets that guide and supplement what parents/caretakers are doing at home, as well as providing any supplies needed to complete these activities. One of the primary focuses of these workshops is to provide workforce development skill building and mental health and wellness benefits for the parents of young children and adults in the community who were economically impacted by the pandemic.

Students also received an art and literacy kit monthly. These kits included activities that students learned with the artist in the classroom and could expand upon at home. In addition, many of these kits had mindfulness activities.

To evaluate WYS activities for the 2022-23 academic year, Story Tapestries engaged Sharp Insight, LLC, an independent, third-party evaluator. Together, they developed and refined a mixed-methods evaluation approach used in years past.

The purpose of the program's outcome evaluation is to learn more about the impact of the WYS on students, centers/schools and their communities. More specifically, these objectives seek to better understand how WYS:

1. Impacts students overall and, specifically, their literacy, social and emotional learning (SEL), and motor skills;
2. Impacts centers and schools and, specifically, teachers' knowledge, appreciation, and comfort implementing arts integrated lessons; and
3. Impacts caregivers' knowledge and skills related to WYS strategies;

Additionally, the process evaluation objectives seek to understand:

4. Overall satisfaction with its programming; and
5. How WYS staff can improve the program's approach to achieve greater impact.

The following document first provides an overview of evaluation methods and then presents an integration of evaluation findings and key supporting quotes, organized by evaluation objective above.

Evaluation Methods

A mixed-methods evaluation approach was implemented for the 2022-23 academic year, including surveys with staff and caregivers, as well as focus groups with teachers. The evaluation tools included:

WYS staff exit survey is a survey given to center/school staff at the end of the academic year. The survey is comprised 17 questions, including impacts on students, impacts on center and staff, satisfaction with the program, and open-ended questions about what was most enjoyable about the program, and ideas for improvement.

Discussion group guide is used at the end of the academic year with center/school staff and includes key questions regarding program impact on staff, students, and ideas for improvement. Discussion groups were facilitated by WYS project staff, focused on center and school staff and teachers, and took up to 60 minutes each.

Professional development survey comprised 10 questions for those center/school staff taking part in professional development trainings and given at the end of the training. The survey examines impacts on staff, what was most enjoyable about the training, ideas for improvement, and satisfaction with the program.

Parent workshop survey comprised 10 questions for caregivers taking part in Story Tapestries workshops to study impacts of workshop participation, satisfaction with the workshop, general demographics, and open-ended questions about what was most enjoyable and ideas for improvement. A stipend was paid to attendees who participated and completed the survey to incentivize participation.

Out-of-School event survey had 9 questions for parents/caregivers taking part in Story Tapestries events to study impacts of event participation, satisfaction with the events, general demographics, and open-ended questions about what was most enjoyable and ideas for improvement. This survey was given at the end of the event.

Caregiver exit survey comprised 10 questions for parents/caregivers to study impacts of the school/center program on their children, satisfaction with the program, and open-ended questions about what was most enjoyable and ideas for improvement. The survey was available in both English and Spanish. This survey is given at the end of the academic year. Although participation in this survey was low in 2022-23, this report will report on caregiver responses on broad impacts on their children.

Evaluation Participation

In regard to the surveys and discussion groups implemented for the 2022-2023 academic year, 71 staff completed the WYS staff exit survey, with 90% of them reporting either being a teacher or teacher's assistant or aide, and 10% center or school administrative staff (e.g., principal or director). In addition, 18 discussion groups were held with 86 center staff and teachers. The professional development survey had 98 complete responses from center and school staff, with around 90% reporting being teachers or teacher's assistants.

Forty-six caregivers completed a survey after taking part in a Caregiver workshop, 175 did the same after taking part in an out-of-school event, and seven caregivers filled out the exit survey.

Evaluation Tool	Number of Respondents
WYS Staff exit survey	71
Staff discussion groups	86
Staff professional development survey	98
Parent workshop participant survey	46
Out-of-school event survey	175
Caregiver exit survey	7

Analysis and Reporting

Data from all the surveys were downloaded from SurveyMonkey into Excel or SPSS for analysis. The report also uses key take-aways and quotes provided by the teacher discussion group facilitators, which were analyzed using Excel. Statistical tests were also completed to determine whether satisfaction with the program differed among staff from center or schools in different counties or from private centers versus elementary schools.

Study limitations include that evaluators were unable to determine if any duplicate staff or student surveys were completed because no identifying information was obtained. Regarding the discussion groups, because these were led by program staff, respondents may have been less likely to raise negative comments.

This report integrates findings from staff exit and professional development surveys, and caregiver workshop, out-of-school event, and program exit surveys, as well as the discussion groups. Data summaries of all surveys in Excel have been provided to Story Tapestries project leadership separately, including descriptive statistics for closed-ended questions and raw open-ended data.

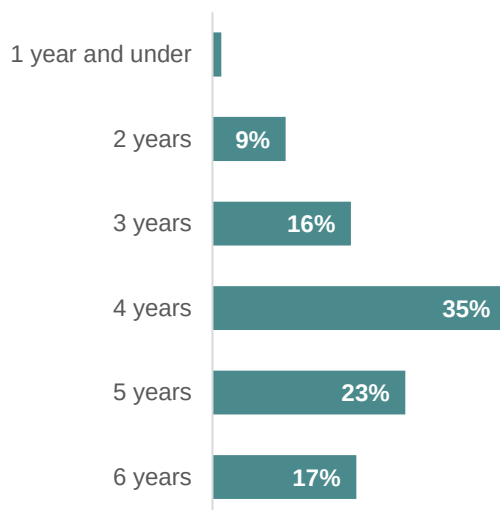
Program Engagement

Although not linked to a specific evaluation objective, a number of questions on the evaluation surveys gauged the engagement level of staff, students, and caregivers with Story Tapestries. Staff and caregivers were asked about whether or not they participated in specific program activities. Staff were asked what students enjoyed most about the program to examine engagement of children in the program.

Age of Students: Staff Exit Survey

On the center/school staff exit survey, respondents were asked to report on the total number of students they taught in 2022-23. Although not representative of all Story Tapestries WYS participants, because the exit survey only reaches a portion of staff, the survey revealed that most of the staff who responded to the survey taught students aged 4 or 5 years old, with few teaching students 2 years or younger.

Student Numbers by Age (n=1,266 total children)

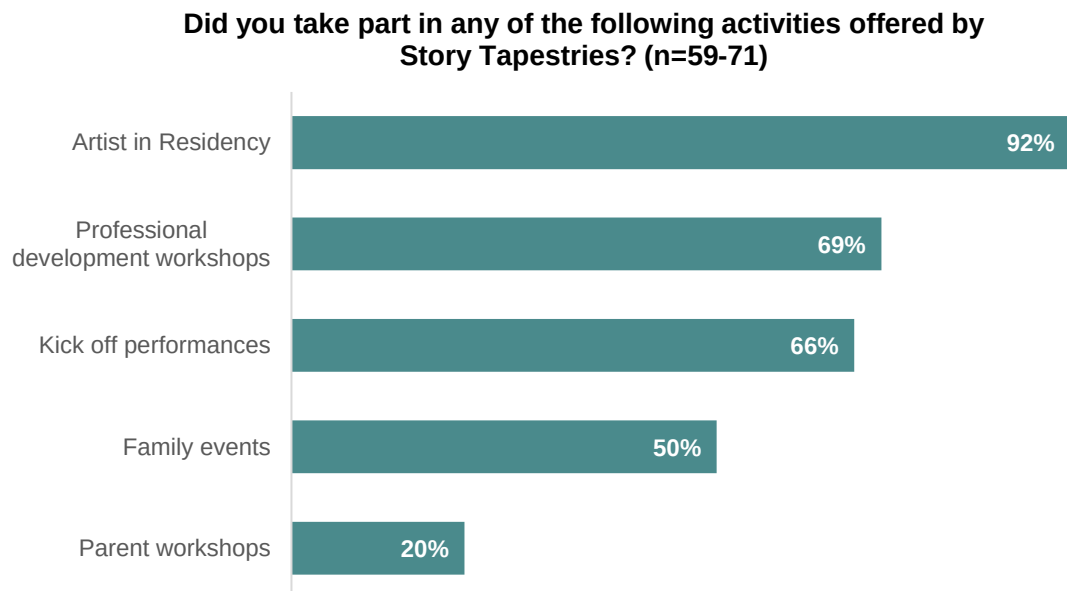


Level of Engagement: Center and School Staff

On their exit surveys, center/school staff reported participation in Story Tapestries' activities. Almost all (92%) reported taking part in the Artist in Residency program and around two-thirds took part in the professional development workshops (69%) and Kick off performance (66%). Half (50%) took part in family events while one in five (20%) took part in parent workshops.

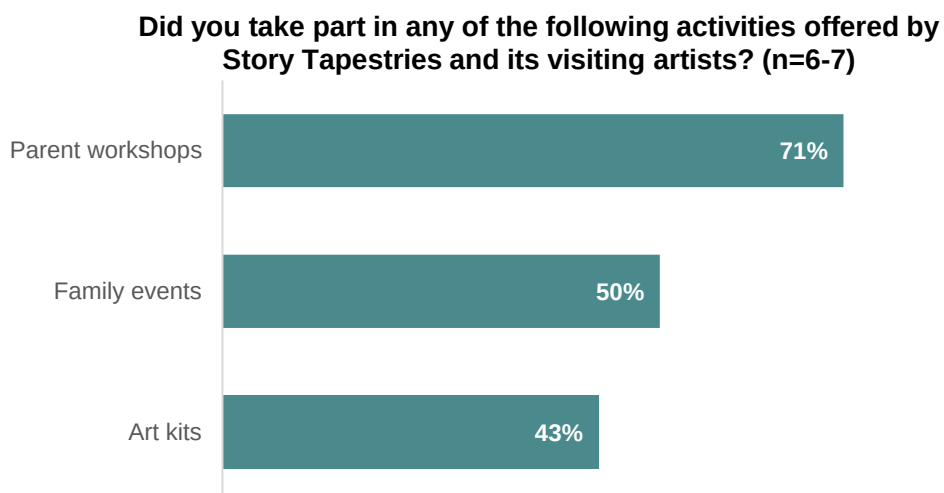
In addition, staff were asked how much they think they know about Story Tapestries. Over three-quarters (79%) reported they knew "a lot" or "some" about Story Tapestries.

Almost all center and school staff reported taking part in Story Tapestries' artist in residency (92%) and around two thirds reported taking part in the professional development workshops (69%) and the Kick off performances (66%).



Level of Engagement: Caregivers

On their exit surveys, caregivers were also asked about whether they took part in Story Tapestries activities. Most (71%) reported taking part in parent workshops and half (50%) in family events. Almost half (43%) reported using one of Story Tapestries' art kits.



Student Engagement: Staff Perspectives

Center and school staff were asked what students enjoyed most about the program in an open-ended question on their exit survey to examine student engagement. These answers were coded, themed, and summarized below with exemplary quotes. About a quarter of the staff (28%) reported

that students enjoyed most the dance and movement, storytelling and writing stories (23%), and music (22%).

Staff Perspectives on What Students Enjoyed Most about WYS	Percent of Respondents (n=60)
Dance / movement	28%
Storytelling / writing stories	23%
Music	22%
Guest artists / program leaders	12%
Drama / acting	7%
Family engagement	3%
Other	22%

Exemplary Quotes Regarding Student Engagement

*"My students loved to be able to **dance** across the room and express themselves in ways they don't normally do."*

*"My students learned about characters and settings in a new way. They enjoyed **participating in the stories** not just listening to the story."*

*"Learning and growing in areas of development through **music**."*

*"We also enjoyed the many different **musical instruments and movement** offered to our children."*

*"**The storyteller**, Sarah Brady, was vibrant & exciting to listen to. She brought the stories alive & engaged the students. I appreciated the folk tales stories since these are not in our curriculum. Really appreciated her time with us!"*

*"We had an opening/kick off assembly with **Reggie** and the students were so excited. I loved that all of the students in our class wrote-even some students who are reluctant writers."*

*They were fully engaged - brain & body on! They (we) enjoyed the lively acting out & **role play/chant of the stories**.*

"The families enjoyed being able to do the activities with their children."

*"I loved the **passion for poems** it grows for students."*

*"Students experienced **writing as a fun and accessible activity**. Everyone was able to be successful because of the scaffolds and supports. The environment was a **safe place**, and a writing community was built that supported every child."*

*"They loved the **deep breathing ball** and flapping around like butterflies."*

*"They enjoy more doing **new and different activities** that teach them new things and explore different materials."*



Findings by Objective

The following sections provide detailed findings by the 2022-23 Write Your Story evaluation objectives. As noted in the methods section, the program's outcome evaluation objectives seek to better understand how WYS:

1. Impacts students overall and, specifically, their literacy, social and emotional learning (SEL), and motor skills;
2. Impacts centers and schools and, specifically, teachers' knowledge, appreciation, and comfort implementing arts integrated lessons; and
3. Impacts caregivers' knowledge and skills related to WYS strategies;

Additionally, the process evaluation objectives seek to understand:

4. Overall satisfaction with its programming; and
5. How WYS staff can improve the program's approach to achieve greater impact.

Objective 1: Impacts on Students

Broad Impacts of WYS: Perspectives from Caregivers and Center/School Staff

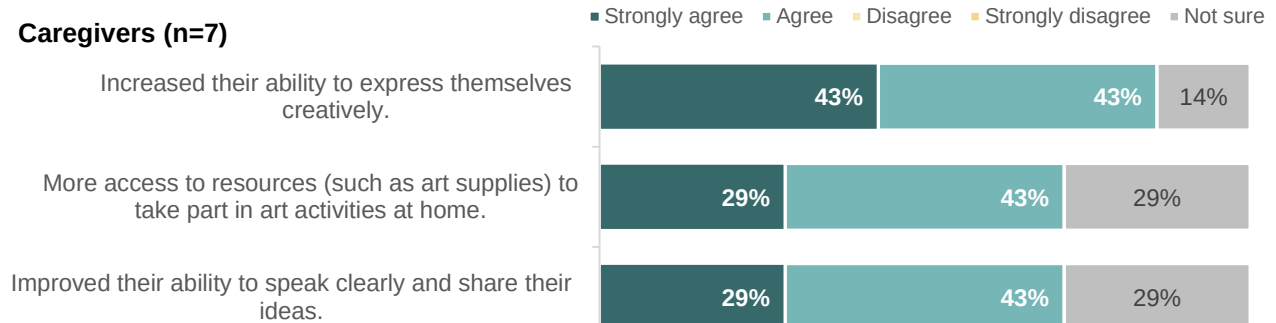
To explore overall student outcomes of the program, a question was asked of both caregivers and center/school staff on the survey, "Because of Story Tapestries, my student/child has..." with a list of two areas for center staff and three for caregivers. The vast majority of both center staff and caregivers agreed or strongly agreed with each of the statements about student outcomes.

Almost all caregivers (86%) agreed or strongly agreed that students increased their ability to express themselves creatively because of Story Tapestries, and most (72%) felt the same about their ability to speak clearly and share their ideas. Almost all (89%) center/school staff agreed or strongly agreed that students have shown more interest in the arts. Finally, both center/school staff (63%) and caregivers (72%) strongly agreed or agreed that Story Tapestries has increased access to resources to participate in art activities at home.

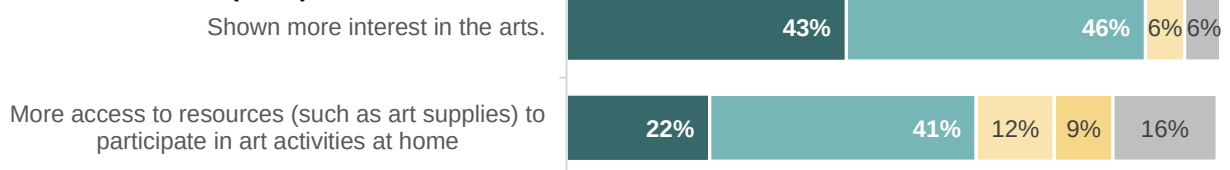
The majority of both center staff and caregivers agreed or strongly agreed with each of the statements about student outcomes.

“Because of Story Tapestries, my students/child have/has...”

Caregivers (n=7)



Center/School Staff (n=71)



Impacts on Student Literacy Skills: Perceptions from Center/School Staff

Center/school staff were asked about the impact of Story Tapestries WYS program on specific spoken, written, social and emotional, and motor skills. Of note is that not all skills asked about on the survey are developmentally appropriate for every age covered in the survey. As such, staff were asked to mark “not applicable” if their students do not yet have the skills because of their age/development stage.

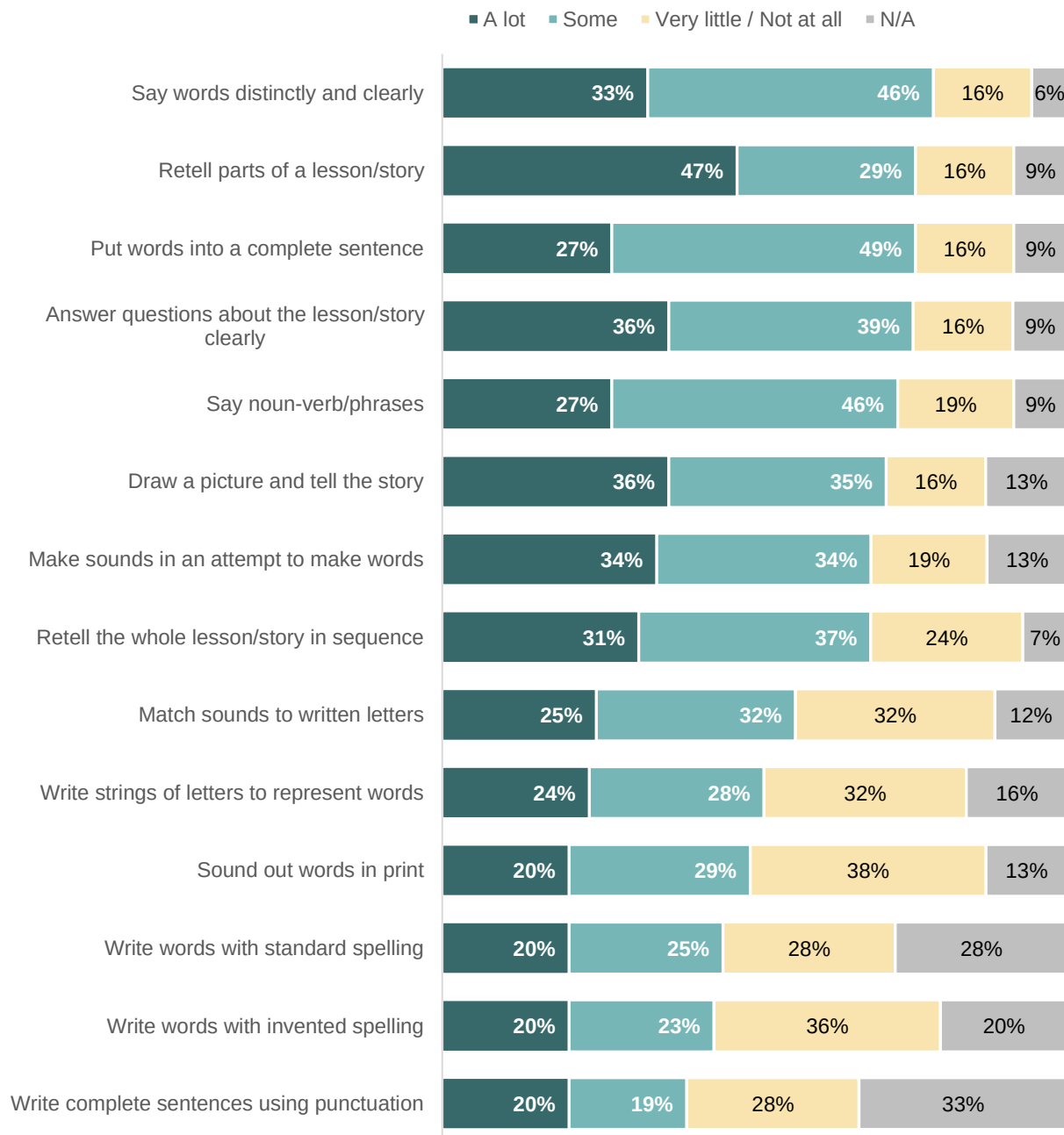
Center/school staff were first asked about a number of written and verbal skills. In the figure below, these are ranked by percent of respondents that felt they had increased “a lot” or “some” because of Story Tapestries’ WYS program. As with the previous academic year, those with the highest percent for “a lot” or “some” relate to the spoken language, including three-quarters or more reporting that the students increased their ability to “say words distinctly and clearly” (79%), “retell parts of a lesson/story” (76%), “put words into a complete sentence” (76%) and “answer questions about a lesson/story clearly” (75%),

Of note is the higher number of respondents who reported “not applicable” and “very little or not at all” among the impact on written language skills (the bottom four in the chart). The items listed below are generally organized sequentially by developmental steps, beginning with speaking /listening, leading to decoding and writing skills. Of note is that the items listed below are generally organized sequentially by developmental steps, beginning with speaking /listening, leading to decoding and writing skills. As such, there is an increasingly higher number of respondents who reported “not applicable” (gray) or “very little or not at all” (yellow) as the list of developmental steps progress. This anticipated pattern begins with speaking/listening and leads to decoding and writing skills.

Given that Story Tapestries works with young children at varying ages, not all skills will be appropriate for all students.

Those ranked by highest percent for “a lot” or “some” relate to impacts on the spoken language; items related to written language skills had a higher number of “not applicable” or “very little or not at all” responses.

“Because of Story Tapestries, my student(s) abilities in the following skills increased...” (n=69-70)

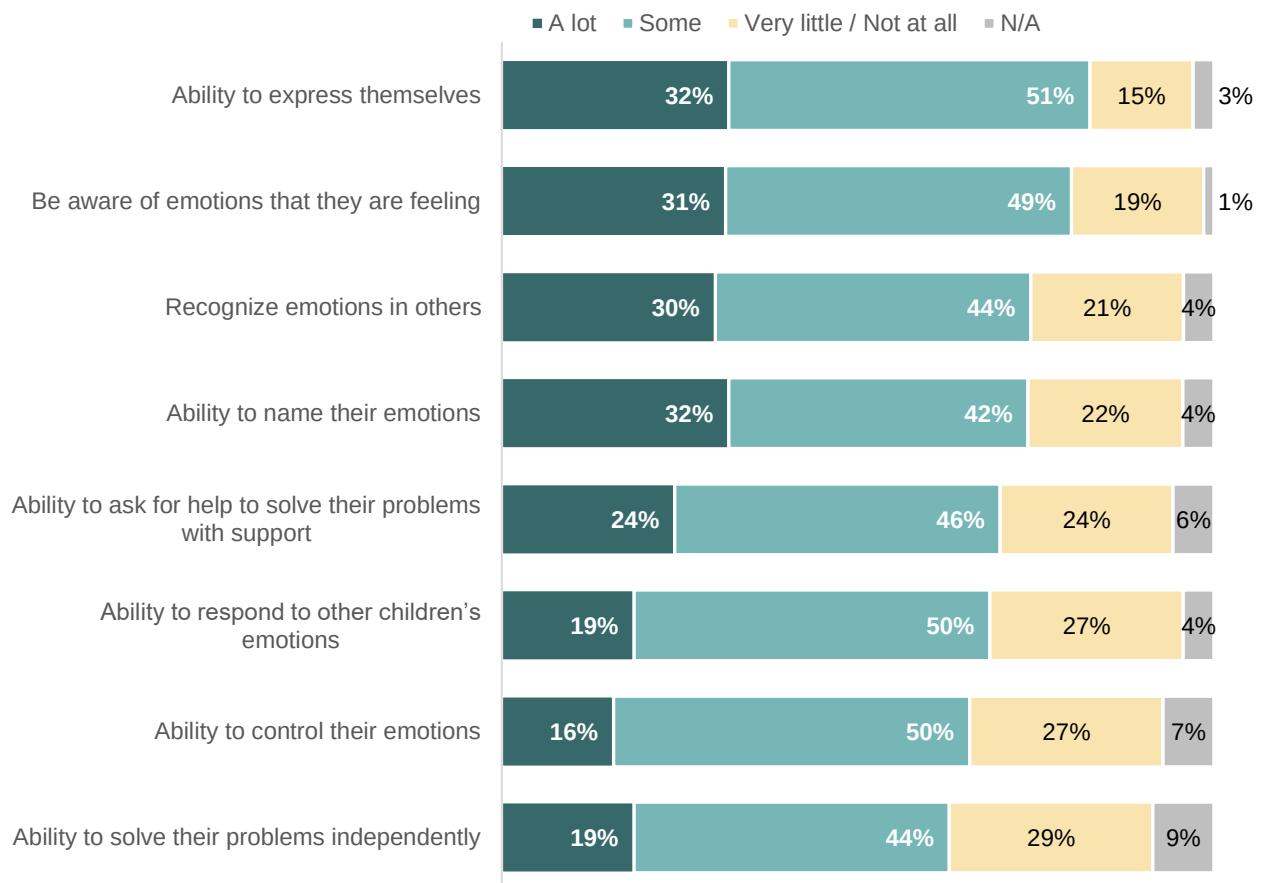


Impacts on Student Social and Emotional Learning Skills: Perceptions from Center/School Staff

Center/school staff were then asked about a number of social and emotional skills. In the figure below, these are ranked by percent of respondents that felt they had increased “a lot” or “some” because of Story Tapestries’ WYS program. Of note is that not all skills asked about on the survey are developmentally appropriate for every age covered in the survey. The skills covered below increase incrementally as the age of the child and their number of experiences increase. As such, staff were asked to mark “not applicable” if their students do not yet have the skills because of their age/development stage.

Approximately three-quarters or more reported that the students increased their “ability to express themselves” (83%), “be aware of emotions that they are feeling” (80%), “recognize emotions in others” (74%) and “ability to name their emotions” (74%). Notably, the items listed below are generally organized sequentially by social-emotional developmental steps. As such, there is an increasingly higher number of respondents who reported “not applicable” (gray) or “very little or not at all” (yellow) as the list continues. Staff may have perceived most of the social and emotional learning skills as somewhat achievable by their students regardless of age, and therefore fewer marked not applicable for these than for the written skills.

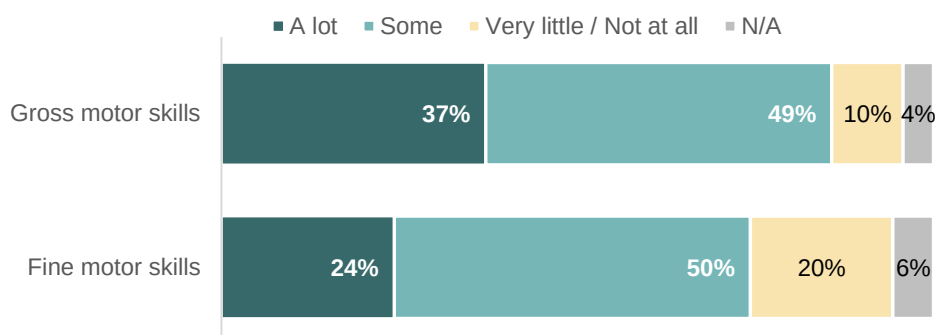
“Because of Story Tapestries, my student(s) abilities in the following social and emotional learning skills increased...” (n=69-70)



Impacts on Student Motor Skills: Perceptions from Center/School Staff

The final student impact question for center/school staff was around gross and fine motor skills. The responses from center/school staff suggest that WYS has a substantial impact on gross motor skills, with 86% of staff reporting they increased a lot or some. Almost three-quarters (74%) reported the same about fine motor skills.

“Because of Story Tapestries, my student(s) abilities in the following motor skills increased...” (n=70)



Staff Discussion Group Perspective: Story Tapestries Impact on Students

In the 18 discussion groups, staff/teachers were asked an open-ended question, “How has Story Tapestries made a difference to the center/school’s students?” Facilitators asked staff to especially consider the impact of the program on students’ verbal and written skills, social and emotional skills, and fine and gross motor skills.

Overall, the comments about Story Tapestries’ impact were positive in nature. Staff expressed that they saw an increase in students’ social-emotional learning, reading and comprehension, verbal and written skills, confidence, and creativity. Staff spoke positively about how the artists were able to connect and engage with the students, while also teaching the students important social skills. For instance, one staff member stated, “[the program artist] taught the children important social skills, such as raising their hands and waiting for their turn to speak which will benefit them in school.” Similarly, another teacher mentioned how well the WYS program leaders did with students with Individualized Learning Plans (IEPs), “[student] doesn’t like math as much as reading stories. [program leaders] really made it fun for them and I was impressed by how focused [the students] were. The story helped the students connect with the math to write the story.”

Exemplary Quotes Regarding Student Impacts from Staff Discussion Groups

*"I feel like the students were able to use rapping and spoken language to try to boost their **confidence**."*

*"Working with the artist they were able to increase their ability to develop more **language skills** including using new words which leads to increased vocabulary."*

*"It was effective for the Emerging Multi-Lingual Learners (ESOL Students) to use **movement** to understand vocabulary."*

*"The kids who received enrichment are more careful with the **vocabulary** they use in their writing. They are using more specific words."*

*"As teachers, we were pleasantly surprised at how much students **remembered** about the story and the different instruments related through the performances, even after returning from spring break."*

*"The residency activities helped students understand **motor skills** in reference to staying in their own area. This helped with a classroom setting vs. playground/at home and helped pinpoint motor skills."*

*"This has built their **listening comprehension**—their listening and being able to comprehend what has happened, knowledge of setting and character and problem and solution."*

*"Students learned how to be more **patient**. They learned how to use their imaginations and their memory."*

*"I love how you gave the kids the chance to **enjoy nature by going outside** and feeling the sun and wind. That's a wonderful way to connect with the world around us!"*



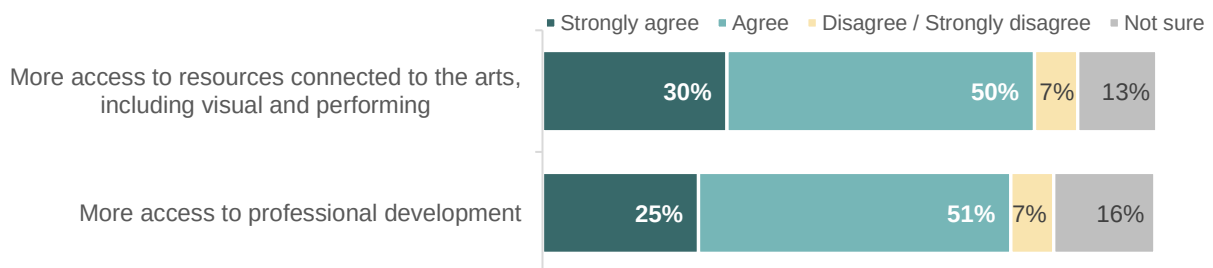
Objective 2: Impacts on Center/Schools and Their Staff

Impacts of WYS on Center/School Staff: Perspectives from Center/School Staff

Staff were asked about the impact of Story Tapestries WYS program on the center/school and its staff on their exit survey. More than three-quarters strongly agreed or agreed that Story Tapestries provided resources connected to the arts (80%) and more access to professional development (76%). Most staff strongly agreed or agreed with statements that because of WYS, they personally have a greater appreciation for how the arts can be used to teach social and emotional skills (96%), literacy skills (96%), motor skills (94%). Nine out of ten (93%) also reported learning new teaching skills.

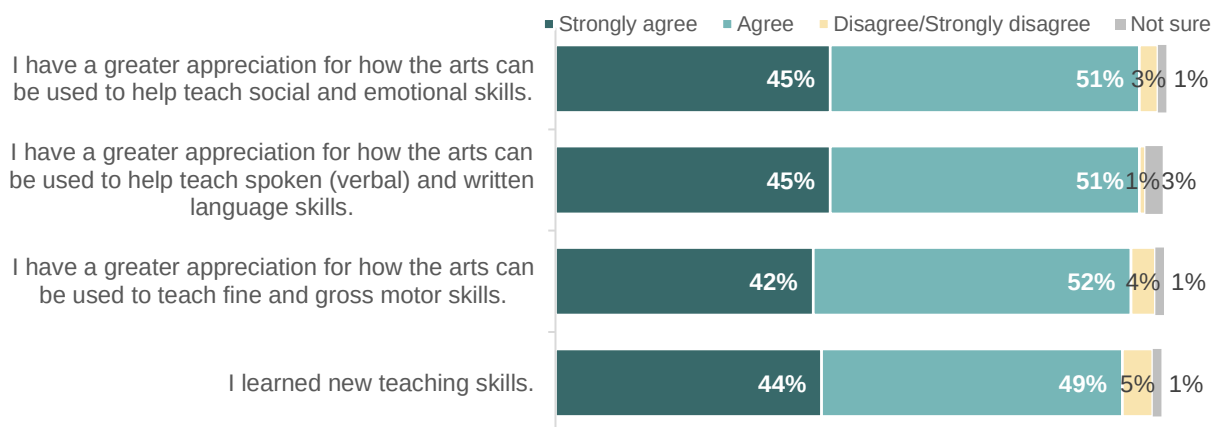
More than three-quarters of staff strongly agreed or agreed that Story Tapestries provided more access to and resources connected to the arts and professional development.

“Because of Story Tapestries, the center/school staff have...” (n=67-70)



The vast majority of staff agreed that Story Tapestries provided them with a greater appreciation for how arts can be used to teach various skills. Most (93%) also reported learning new teaching skills.

“Because of Story Tapestries...” (n=71)



Impacts on Center/School and Staff: Perspectives from Staff Discussion Groups

In the 18 discussion groups, staff/teachers were asked an open-ended question, “How has Story Tapestries made a difference to the center/school staff?” Facilitators asked staff to specifically discuss if and how staff/teachers plan to use what they learned from Story Tapestries in the classroom.

One strategy that several teachers reported as likely to be used in their classroom(s) in the future was movement. Teachers mentioned that the movement strategies not only allowed the students to be more creative, but helped students learn to read and write. Another strategy teachers mentioned was group story telling. Several teachers indicated that, prior to the program, they would read with students one-on-one, or that only the teacher would read while the students sat and listened. Teachers reported group storytelling as a positive strategy to increase community in the classroom. Lastly, one teacher mentioned that their confidence increased, with specific regard to being creative and using a “silly” voice to tell stories.

Exemplary Quotes Regarding Center/School Impacts

*“We were able to incorporate **more movement** in lessons.”*

*“I learned methods to turn story time into a **whole group experience** rather than simply me telling the story and the students listening.”*

*“Having a chance to **explore another version** of a story that exists and gives us some ideas of how we can do it more with other stories.”*

*“When I am storytelling with the kids, by myself, I can use silly voices and not feel embarrassed, but when other adults are in the room, I get embarrassed. However, you made me realize like it doesn't matter, the kids are going to be kids no matter what and **you can be silly and interactive** with them, no matter who is in the room. They love it either way.”*

“I am not as good at including the kinesthetic movements beforehand but now plan to.”

*“We do everything normally one on one. Now we are going to do a **group story** the way that we did in class.”*



Impacts on Staff: Staff Perspectives from the Professional Development Survey

Center and school staff were asked what they enjoyed most about the professional development workshop in an open-ended question after they took part in the training. These answers were coded, themed, and summarized below with exemplary quotes. More than a quarter of survey respondents reported that the most enjoyable aspect of the professional development workshops was learning new teaching strategies (28%). One in five reported the same about the interactive activities (22%) and art skills learned (18%).

Staff Perspectives on What They Enjoyed Most about WYS Professional Development Workshops	Percent of Respondents (n=90)
New teaching strategies	28%
Interactive activities	22%
Art skills	18%
Creativity / imagination	8%
Student engagement	6%
Other	16%

Exemplary Quotes Regarding Impacts of Professional Development Workshops



*"I love the **new techniques** that we can use in our classroom."*

*"Learning **new and exciting ways to get the children involved** in learning and using their imagination."*

*"The **interactive aspect** of the training that you can actually incorporate into your classroom."*

*"I enjoyed being able to **interact in different ways** with my coworkers and other people that work in my community."*

*"The interactive aspect of the training that you can actually **incorporate into your classroom**."*

*"Using the paint markers and using the **different types of materials**. Using your imagination."*

*"I enjoyed the many ideas of incorporating **mindfulness** in an age appropriate and creative way."*

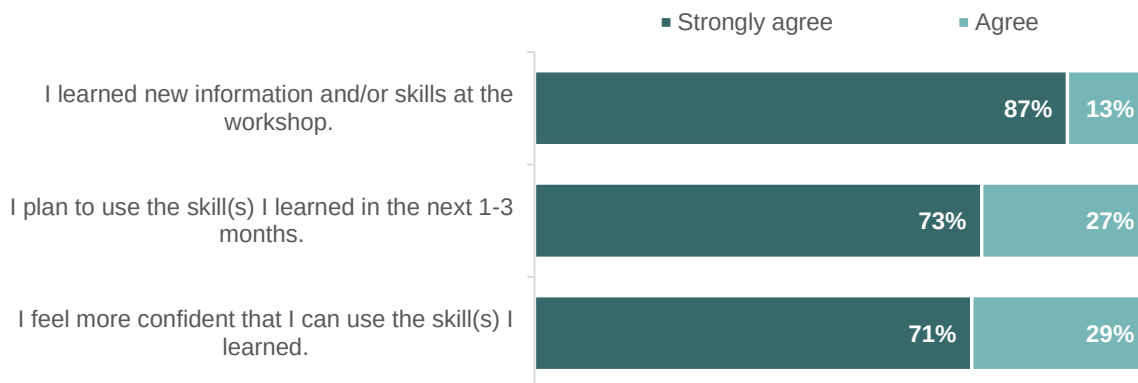
*"The different breathing exercises and the different ways to **incorporate art** in the classroom and getting the kids involved."*

Objective 3: Impacts on Caregivers

Impact of WYS Parent Workshops on Caregivers

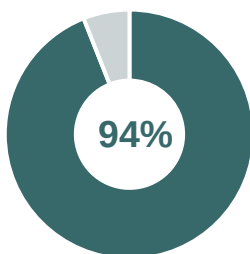
Caregivers took part in multiple parent workshops implemented by Story Tapestries. Workshops focused on one of two areas including: 1) stress management, mental health and wellness, or 2) public speaking and “telling your story.” The target audience was parents of children enrolled at the childcare center. Following the workshop, caregivers were asked about the impact on their skills. All caregivers either strongly agreed or agreed with each of the statements, including 87% strongly agreeing they learned new information or skills, 73% strongly agreeing they will use the skills learned in the next 1-3 months, and 71% strongly agreeing they feel more confident they can use the skills learned.

Statements regarding parent workshop outcomes. (n=44-45)

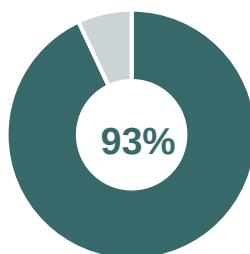


Impacts of Out-of-School Events on Caregivers/Families

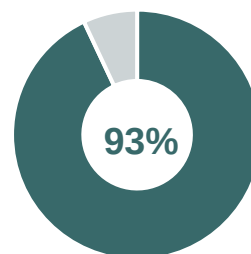
Caregivers and their children took part in a number of out-of-school events. Following the events, caregivers were asked about the impact on them and their children. As can be seen, almost all caregivers reported their children learned something new (94%), that they [the caregiver] learned something new (93%), and that they want to attend another Story Tapestries event (93%).



My child learned something new today. (n=175)



I learned something new today. (n=174)



I want to attend another Story Tapestries event. (n=175)

Caregiver Perspectives: Impact on Parent Workshops on Caregivers

Caregivers who attended the parent workshops were asked what they enjoyed most about them in an open-ended question on a workshop survey. These answers were coded, themed, and summarized below with exemplary quotes. Almost a quarter (22%) expressed general enjoyment for the workshop, with particular emphasis on the “*open and honest atmosphere of the workshop.*” Fifteen percent each mentioned enjoying the workshop leaders and presenters and learning new techniques, with the breathing exercises were specifically reported as very useful by 10%.

Caregiver Perspectives on What They Enjoyed Most about WYS Parent Workshops	Percent of Respondents (n=41)
General enjoyment	22%
Workshop leaders / presenters	15%
New skills and strategies	15%
Breathing exercises	10%
Information	7%

Exemplary Quotes Regarding Impacts of Parent Workshops

“The **format was comfortable** and I felt like everyone was able to speak freely.”

“Both Valerie and Kelly were **both great leaders** and I enjoyed listening from them.”

“I enjoyed the **enthusiasm of the storyteller** and the presenter. Storytelling is not a skill for me so it is fun and interesting to experience that skill as an adult learner.”

“I enjoyed learning more and finding **different strategies** to use.”

“Learning new ways to **advocate for myself.**”

“**New skills and techniques** to start teaching our kids.”

“**Breathing exercising** and exercises to practice with the children.”

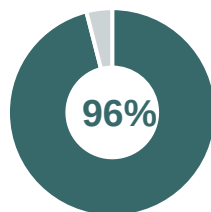
“**Ways to teach your kids** how [to] distract them from stress.



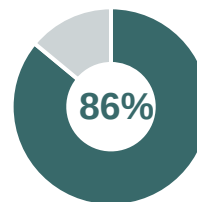
Objective 4: Satisfaction with Programs and Workshops

As a measure of program satisfaction, center staff and caregivers were asked if they would recommend the WYS program to a friend or another center/school. Almost all (96%) of staff said they would recommend the program and 86% of caregivers said the same. The staff survey responses were examined to see whether there were differences in satisfaction levels among centers/schools from different counties or those from private centers versus elementary schools. No statistical differences were found for private centers and elementary schools. However, a Kruskal-Wallis H (2) = 10.62, P = .005 test showed statistically **significant difference among sites in different counties**, with staff from sites in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties much more likely to strongly agree they would recommend the program than those from Frederick County.

Satisfaction with WYS Program Overall



Center/school staff would recommend the Story Tapestries program to another center/school. (n=69)



Caregivers would recommend the Story Tapestries program to a friend. (n=7)

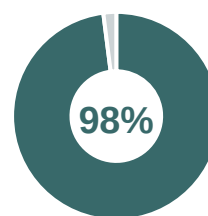
In addition, all caregivers who took part in a Story Tapestries parent workshop reported they would recommend the workshop to others, and the vast majority (98%) of staff who took part in professional development workshops report the same.

Caregiver Workshops



Caregivers would recommend the Story Tapestries workshop. (n=45)

Staff Professional Development Workshops



Staff would recommend the Story Tapestries program to another center or school. (n=98)

Objective 5: Recommendations from Staff and Caregivers

Staff and caregivers were asked to recommend improvements on all the different surveys and discussion groups facilitated. Recommendations are separated below by the various surveys and discussion groups.

Overall WYS Program Recommendations: Staff Exit Survey

When asked about how the WYS program could be improved in an open-ended question on the exit survey, 31 center and school staff provided feedback. These answers were coded, themed, and are provided in the table below with exemplary quotes. Almost a third mentioned aspects around scheduling (29%), with almost one in five suggesting aspects around age-appropriate lessons (19%) and more visits or expanding the program (16%).

Center/School Staff Recommendations for WYS Program	Percent of Respondents (n=31)
Scheduling, including more schedule flexibility and working with teachers to set schedule	29%
Age-appropriate lessons	19%
<i>More visuals</i>	6%
Expand program / more visits	16%
Lesson Planning for Curriculum Alignment	10%
Other	26%

Exemplary Quotes Regarding Recommended Improvements to WYS from Staff on Exit Survey

***"Time in between lessons** so students can complete some follow up activities and work."*

*"I think next year when we have **more time to plan together** and work out the kinks and confusion around scheduling things should be great!"*

*"Please **meet with the teachers** to see the availability of the day and time of the activities."*

*"The artist that come **need to understand our age group** and a little more knowledge what to expect from our children."*



*"Be aware of **age-appropriate activities** and expectations."*

*"**Adding more visuals** for new vocabulary."*

*"Expand the program throughout the **school year**."*

*"**Aligning the stories** to our curriculum."*

*"**Connecting the stories** with what is being taught in class."*

*"Add **more cultural dances** and more family involvement."*

*"One artist residency per marking period will be a great enriching program for students. **Bringing in diverse artists** will help the students see and learn from different professionals in the arts."*

*"**Give art supplies to the classes at the beginning** or before they are to do their own task for the performer to increase the ability of the teachers to do fun activities."*

Overall WYS Program Recommendations: Staff Discussion Group Perspective

Center/school staff made many recommendations to improve the program during the 18 discussion groups implemented. Most often mentioned was improving the scheduling, similar to that found in the exit survey. Staff reported that the length of individual sessions should depend on the grade level. For instance, one staff member reported that *"45 minutes is too long for Pre-K."* Similarly, staff reported that five sessions a week is a lot for certain grade levels, preferring one or two sessions per week.

In a similar vein, staff recommended that the artists should meet with them prior to the session to better plan the day's activities, to have a discussion about what works best in their specific classroom environment, and to connect the activities to the curriculum. Lastly, staff suggested improving the topics of the stories. One staff member reported that they would like to hear more in the stories about *"sharing, keeping hands to themselves, and good manners."* Another staff member suggested incorporating Spanish and other non-English words into the stories to increase cultural relevance and language familiarity with students. Doing so would encourage more participation from students.

Exemplary Quotes Regarding Recommended Improvements to WYS from Staff

*“Divide the classes into **shorter increments of time**. Will help with the burnout of the kids. 45 mins is too long for Pre-K.”*

“Go through the teachers to get more information on the children/ environment.”

*“Younger children respond and connect better with **visual art forms and props**.”*



*Should be **once a week for 5 weeks straight** instead of having 5 classes straight for one week*

*“Maybe finding more **curriculum connections** along the way for the stories, like what is currently the unit or topic in the classroom.”*

*“One thing I’ve thought about is maybe putting some **Spanish words into the stories**. This may encourage some more participation from students; some examples might be moon/luna, water/agua, etc. Even beans (used a lot in a warmup activity), using the word frijoles could help students make a deeper connection to the activity and the story and could help with cultural relevance. Also, even adding in some Spanish names—like making Jack, Juan—could help.”*

Recommendations to Better Meet the Needs of Students and/or Families: Perspectives from the Staff Exit Survey

On the staff exit survey, center and school staff were asked, “How can the stories, art materials, or performers/artists better meet the needs of your students and/or families (e.g., increased cultural relevance, different topic areas, different art supplies)?” These responses were coded, themed and exemplary quotes are provided in the table below. Many respondents (32%) mentioned aspects of increasing cultural relevance, improving scheduling (21%), and age-appropriate lessons (18%).

Staff Suggestions for Better Meeting Needs of Students and Families	Percent of Respondents (n=38)
Increase cultural relevance	32%
Improve scheduling	21%
<i>More visits / expand program</i>	11%
Age-appropriate lessons	18%
<i>Shorter lessons / sessions</i>	8%
Different art supplies	8%
Increase languages	5%
Increase diversity	5%
Other	18%

Exemplary Quotes Regarding Recommendations to Better Meet Student and Family Needs

*“Expressing the stories **representing different cultures.**”*

*“Prepare **more exciting materials** ahead of time.”*

*“I think more is better-we would love to **work with you all more!**”*

*“Many of the performances and art activities felt **too advanced for our students** since our program has primarily three to four year old’s. For example, the art activity with using very thin tape to make stars was too challenging and led to a lot of frustration when they couldn’t get it. Even conceptually many of the kids were confused on the instructions. Our children also are still learning how to sit and listen to a story without wiggling or shouting out when an adult asks a question. They need **gentle reminders** not to be scolded and singled out by the performers. I think the performers may just be used to working with older children and need to learn what reasonable expectations are for preschool aged kids.”*



*“**Shorter stories** for younger children.”*

*“I enjoyed seeing all the props to help our language learners participate. Maybe have **word cards** with pictures and have the Spanish words also?”*

*“I think using some **more Spanish words** as part of the storytelling experience would be relevant to the student population.”*

*“Providing **more directed activities to take home** or do during free time at the center.”*

“The stories, art materials, or performances can help the students and their families by maybe going to their place and doing some art projects with them like they did with the kids in the other rooms with different age groups.”

WYS Professional Development Workshop Recommendations: Professional Development Survey

Those who took part in the professional development workshop were asked how the program could be improved on an open-ended question on the professional development survey. Most (77%) of those who answered (n=75) this question noted there was nothing to improve about the training and were positive about the workshop. Some recommendations made by the remaining respondents included enhancing training topics with a specific eye toward age-appropriate lessons and activities, providing more trainings, and improving organization and communication, including providing an outline of subjects to be covered and *“Improving communication with the classroom staff, considering and accommodating needs and schedules.”*

WYS Parent Workshop Recommendations: Workshop Survey

Those who took part in the parent workshops were asked how the workshops could be improved on an open-ended question on the survey. Of those who answered this question (n=17), most (47%) mentioned that the scheduling could be improved, with many wanting more time or longer sessions, some wanting shorter sessions or sessions more often, or *“Since lot of parents are working in the week, maybe on Friday evening would work better.”* Other important feedback included providing the goals at the start of the workshop to remind everyone it’s about the children, allowing participants to introduce themselves (providing it as a way to record some of the stories), and try to involve children in the workshop at some point.

Conclusion

Story Tapestries’ Write Your Story (WYS) program aims to increase literacy, social and emotional, and motor skills for Maryland’s economically impacted vulnerable youth. WYS project staff engaged 146 early childhood educators and 922 children and their parents/families in the 2022-23 academic year. With support from an external evaluator, the WYS team implemented a mixed-methods evaluation approach to determine program success and areas of improvement.

Across multiple evaluation methods, staff and caregivers reported that WYS positively impacted their students/children, center/school, and themselves. Student impacts included increased creative expression, interest in the arts, and some social and emotional and/or motor skill development. Center/school and staff impacts included increased resources and professional development, appreciation for how the arts can be used in the classroom, and skill attainment related to teaching and art strategies. Caregivers reported learning new information and skills as well as gaining confidence that they can apply those skills with their children.

Satisfaction was high across center/school staff and caregivers, with about 9 out of 10 reporting they would recommend Story Tapestries. WYS staff may consider exploring variations in satisfaction rates to ensure consistent, positive program experiences across counties. Areas for future program improvement shared by staff focused on scheduling, program expansion, and increasing the age-appropriateness and cultural relevance across lessons. Caregiver recommendations revolved around the workshop scheduling and structure.

As Story Tapestries staff plan ahead for the 2023-24 Write Your Story program year, they will be building on a strong track record of positive program impacts on staff, caregivers, and students in Maryland.