



# Write Your Story (WYS)

## 2023-2024 Evaluation Findings

July 2024

# Special thanks to our funders



**Bernard Family  
Foundation**



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## Executive Summary

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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 as well as in the District of Columbia. Within and outside of the classroom, WYS project staff engaged 349 early childhood educators and 1,424 children and their parents/families in the 2023-24 academic year.

To evaluate WYS activities for the 2023-24 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*

- Through programming in 21 early childhood sites across 83 distinct classrooms, WYS supported 349 early childhood educators and 1,424 children and their parents/families.
- Story Tapestries hosted 419 artist in residency programs, 18 family events, and 14 professional development workshops throughout the 2023-24 WYS program year.
- Almost all center and school staff (92%) reported taking part in the Artist in Residency program. Just under half reported taking part in professional development workshops (46%) and/or family events (43%).
- Familiarity of Story Tapestries was high among the center and school staff, with three-quarters (75%) reporting that they knew "a lot" or "some" about Story Tapestries.
- WYS held family events that attracted 170 caregivers of participating students at 18 family events across multiple sites and including a full range of program types.
- Staff reported that students most enjoyed the visual and drawing portion of the program, with other common responses including music, dance/movement, and guest artists.

### *Impact on Students*

- All caregivers (100%) agreed or strongly agreed that their children increased their ability to express themselves creatively because of Story Tapestries.
- Most center/school staff (93%) agreed or strongly agreed that students have shown more interest in the arts.
- Both center/school staff (73%) and caregivers (100%) strongly agreed or agreed that Story Tapestries has increased access to resources to participate in art activities at home.
- Center/school staff were most likely to report increases in students' abilities across a range of skill areas, with 80% or more reporting increases related to:
  - *Spoken language skills*: students' ability to retell parts of a lesson/story (80%)

- *Written language skills:* students' ability to draw lines and shapes (80%) and draw a circle (80%)
- *Social and emotional learning skills:* students' ability to listen to others (84%), ask for help to solve their problems with support (80%), express their ideas and feelings (80%), recognize emotions in other (80%), and control their emotions (80%)
- *Gross motor skills:* at least 80% of center/school staff reported "a lot" or "some" increase across all gross motor skills assessed
- *Fine motor skills:* students' ability to move both hands the same (82%)
- In discussion groups with staff, participants' responses complemented the survey data, highlighting an increase in students' social emotional learning (e.g. broadening emotional vocabulary, collaboration with peers), motor skills (e.g., jumping and climbing), writing skills, creativity (e.g., use of imagination, thinking outside the box), and overall engagement.

### *Impact on Center/Schools and Their Staff*

- Most center staff (88%) strongly agreed or agreed that Story Tapestries provided resources connected to the arts and more than two-thirds agreed that Story Tapestries increased their access to professional development (69%).
- Most staff strongly agreed or agreed with statements that, because of Story Tapestries, they personally have a greater appreciation for how the arts can be used to teach social and emotional skills (94%), fine and gross motor skills (93%), spoken language skills (90%) and written language skills (83%).
- Nearly nine out of ten (87%) reported learning new teaching skills because of Story Tapestries.
- When asked how Story Tapestries has made a difference to their center/school staff, feedback centered on the inclusion of active, multisensory techniques (e.g., acting, drawing, music, storytelling), the use of different materials in the classroom, and letting the students lead more.
- When asked what they enjoyed most about professional development workshops, staff focused on their interactive activities and effective facilitation as well as new teaching strategies learned.

### *Impact on Caregivers*

- All Caregiver Exit Survey respondents (100%) agreed or strongly agreed that engaging with Story Tapestries has led to their child[ren]'s increased ability to speak clearly and share their ideas, express themselves creatively, and have provided more access to resources for art activities at home
- Most Program Survey and/or Out of School Time (OST) Event Survey caregiver respondents reported that they [the caregiver] learned something new (97%) and that they plan to use the skills they learned in the months ahead (91%). Additionally, caregivers reported that their children learned something new (88%) and that they want to attend another Story Tapestries event (88%).

### *Satisfaction with Story Tapestries WYS Program and Workshops*

- Almost all (95%) center/school staff reported they would recommend the WYS program to another center or school.
- Almost all respondents (98%) who completed the professional development evaluation survey would recommend the Story Tapestries program to another center/school.
- All caregiver survey respondents (100%) would recommend the Story Tapestries program to a friend.

### *Program Recommendations by Staff and Caregivers*

- When asked for recommendations to improve the overall program on the Center/School Staff Exit Survey, the most common answer to this question was a positive non-response (37%). Almost a quarter mentioned curriculum or programmatic changes (22%), 11% described ways to keep the students engaged, 7% expressed a desire for more time/visits, and 6% requested clearer expectations/instructions. The theme of more time/visits also resurfaced in a later question about better meeting the needs of students and/or families.
- Discussion group suggestions from staff related to program improvement reiterated a desire for clearer or repeated instructions as well as individual suggestions related to peer engagement, arts integration, a desire for two artists at once, and lessons shared further in advance.
- In the Professional Development survey, two-thirds of participants noted no suggestions for improvement. Of the responses shared, many included programmatic or curriculum changes, with a handful of people feeling like the breakout rooms were overused. Other themes included a desire for more time/sessions, scheduling suggestions, recommendations for additional or different materials, and shortening the session.
- WYS Program Survey feedback had just a few (n=7) improvements listed, ranging from knowing more about a particular program aspect in advance of the session to better prepare, reflections on personal professional growth, and split recommendations around more or less program time.
- In the caregiver exit survey and OST event survey for caregivers, very few participants provided a recommendation for improvement; of the three that did, one suggested a change to a specific performance time and two requested more sessions with Story Tapestries.

## Introduction

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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 as well as in the District of Columbia. Within and outside of the classroom, WYS project staff engaged 349 early childhood educators and 1,424 children and their parents/families in the 2023-24 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 learning kits that go home with students on a quarterly basis. Selected classrooms also received sensory art bins with reusable materials that stay in the classroom to support the ongoing use of arts integration strategies.

Story Tapestries provides programs, activities and resources intended 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 coaching artist-in-residencies which include 8-10 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. Then 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 and coach teachers to practice leading arts integrated lessons themselves. 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 with confidence.

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.

Caregiver Workshops encourage and demonstrate how parents and caregivers 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/caregivers 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 who were economically impacted by the pandemic.

Students also received an art and learning kit quarterly. 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. Selected classrooms also received sensory art bins with reusable materials to support classroom learning and continued teacher development.

To evaluate WYS activities for the 2023-24 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 Story Tapestries' 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 objectives above.



## Evaluation Methods

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A mixed-methods evaluation approach was implemented for the 2023-24 academic year, including surveys with staff and caregivers, as well as focus groups with teachers. The evaluation tools included:

**WYS center/school staff exit survey** is a survey given to center/school staff at the end of the academic year. The survey is comprised of 86 possible questions; however, respondents are not presented with every question. Rather, based on the age(s) of the students with which they engage, they are presented with a series of items about changes in age-specific literacy, social and emotional learning (SEL), and motor skills. All respondents are also presented items about 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.

**WYS center/school staff mid-year survey** is administered in the middle of the program year and assesses many of the same items as the exit survey described above, 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. Changes in age-specific skills for students are not assessed with this tool. Due to its interim nature, data from the mid-year survey are not part of this report.

**Discussion group guides** are used at the end of the academic year and include key questions regarding program impact on staff, students, and ideas for improvement. Discussion groups were facilitated by WYS project staff, focused on WYS staff.

**Professional development survey** comprised 11 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.

**Story Tapestries program survey** is a comprehensive tool used across multiple Story Tapestries programs and engages individuals in multiple roles (e.g., participants, artists, and teachers/site partners). Only responses from those who participating in WYS programming are included in this report. They survey assessed satisfaction with the program, impacts on participants and teachers, as well as open-ended questions about what was most enjoyable about the program, and ideas for improvement.

**Caregiver exit survey** comprised 11 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 2023-24, this report includes caregiver responses on broad impacts on their children. Findings from this tool are supplemented by responses to the OST Event Survey that were collected in June 2023 as these data were not included in last year's report.

### *Evaluation Participation*

In regard to the surveys and discussion groups implemented for the 2023-2024 academic year, 89 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, director, administrator, or manager). Forty-nine staff completed the mid-year survey, though due to its interim nature, data from the mid-year survey are not part of this report. Two discussion groups were held with 12 center staff and teachers. The professional development survey had 250 responses from center and school staff, with approximately 85% reporting being teachers, teacher’s assistants, or aides. Twenty-eight people completed the program survey, 64% were caregivers/participants, 25% indicated that they were artists, and 11% were teachers/site partners. Lastly, five caregivers completed the caregiver exit survey. To provide additional caregiver feedback, this report also includes responses to last year’s OST Event Survey that were collected in June 2023 (n=25), as these responses were not included in last year’s report.

<b>Evaluation Tool</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
<b>WYS staff exit survey</b>	89
<b>WYS staff mid-year survey</b>	49
<b>Staff discussion groups</b>	12
<b>Staff professional development survey</b>	250
<b>Program survey</b>	28
<b>Caregiver exit, program, and OST surveys</b>	48

### *Analysis and Reporting*

Data from all the surveys were downloaded from SurveyMonkey into Excel for analysis. The report also uses key takeaways and quotes provided by the teacher discussion group facilitators, which were analyzed using Excel. 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.

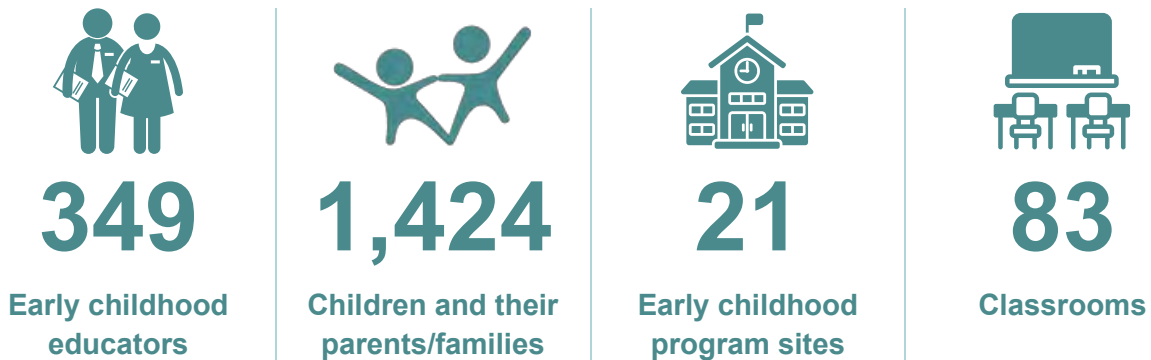
Study limitations include that evaluators were unable to determine if any duplicate staff or student surveys were completed because no identifying information was obtained. Regarding the discussion groups, because these were led by program staff, respondents may have been less likely to raise negative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

# Program Engagement

## Program Reach

During the 2023-24 program year, the Story Tapestries Write Your Story (WYS) program reached its highest number yet of teachers, students, and families. As shown below, this includes support of 349 early childhood educators and 1,424 children and their parents/families. The WYS program was held in 21 early childhood sites and 83 distinct classrooms.

### WYS Program By the Numbers, 2023-24

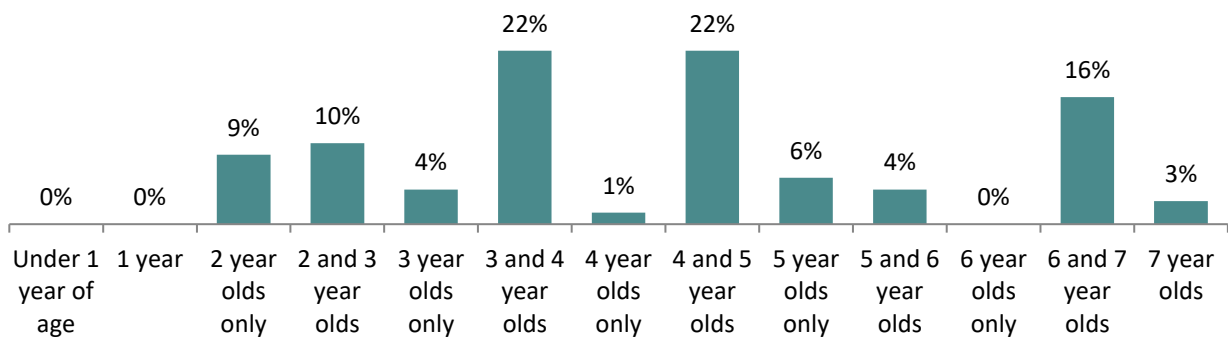


Story Tapestries reached these numbers through hosting 419 artist in residency programs, 18 family events, and 14 professional development workshops throughout the 2023-24 program year.

## Age of Students: Staff Exit Survey

On the center/school staff exit survey, respondents were asked to report on the ages of the students they taught in 2023-24. 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 (55%) who responded to the survey taught students between 3-5 years old, with none teaching students younger than two years old.

**Ages of Students Taught**



### Level of Engagement: Center and School Staff

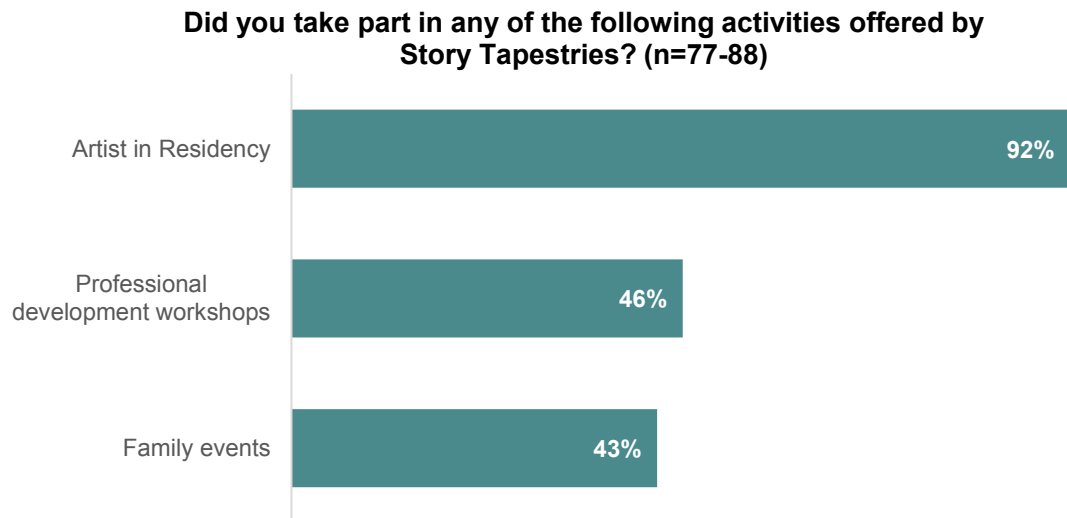
On their exit surveys, center/school staff reported participation in Story Tapestries' activities. Almost all (92%) reported taking part in the Artist in Residency program. Just under half took part in the professional development workshops (46%) and/or family events (43%).

In addition, staff were asked how much they know about Story Tapestries. Three-quarters (75%) reported they knew "a lot" or "some" about Story Tapestries.

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### Almost all center and school staff reported taking part in Story Tapestries' artist in residency (92%).

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### Level of Engagement: Caregivers

Throughout the program year, WYS held family events that attracted **170 caregivers** of participating students at **18 family events**. Across the caregiver exit, program, and OST event surveys, caregivers demonstrated their engagement in Story Tapestries activities. Caregivers reported attendance at events held at **multiple distinct program sites**, including schools (English speaking and Spanish immersion sites), childcare centers, a county infant and toddler program, and a YMCA. Additionally, caregivers reported attendance at **varied programs**, including performances, workshops, events, and artists in residency programs. The greatest number of responses was from 25 caregivers at the June 2023 **Out-of-School Time (OST) Event**.

### 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. Around a quarter of the staff (23%) reported that students most enjoyed the visual arts and drawing portion of the program. Other common responses included the music (18%), dance/movement (15%) and the guest artists themselves (15%).

Staff Perspectives on What Students Enjoyed Most about WYS	Percent of Respondents (n=57)
Visual arts/drawing	23%
Other	20%
Music	18%
Dance/movement	15%
Guest artists/program leaders	15%
Storytelling/writing stories	10%
Materials for the activities	10%
Imagination/creativity	8%
New experiences	7%
Everything	7%
Personal expression	3%

### Exemplary Quotes Regarding Student Engagement

*“We love **singing, dancing, painting, creating art.** Fine and motor skills.”*

*“Getting to act out different parts of the stories and **expressing emotions/feelings** through their actions and facial expressions.”*

*“Just simply having you guys come in and do activities with us is the most fun. It’s something new and different for everyone so **we very much look forward to each visit.**”*



*“**Our Artist Resident was amazing.** He came prepared to participate in the class, and our children loved his interventions.”*

*“Our kids enjoyed watching the dance, hearing the stories, and trying the dance themselves. **We are so happy to have them exposed to cultures and arts that may be different from what they’ve experienced before.** We think that children have learned new ways to interpret and enjoy dance through this program.”*

*“All the stories read during the visits by Story Tapestries were brought to life. The imagination of the kids were tapped into, I observed **their imagination were brought to life.**”*

*“Seeing what the children were capable of and **how creative they were able to be.**”*

## Findings by Objective

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The following sections provide detailed findings by the 2023-24 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

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### *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 topic areas for center staff and three for caregivers.

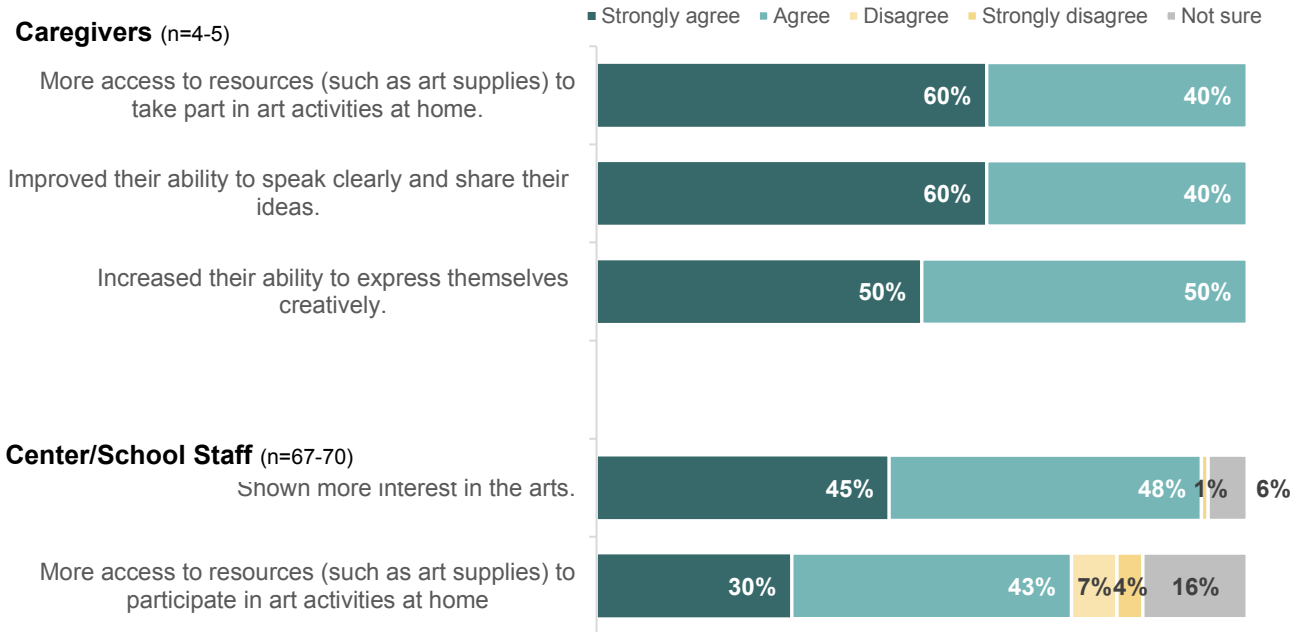
All caregivers (100%) agreed or strongly agreed that their children increased their ability to express themselves creatively because of Story Tapestries and that they increased their ability to speak clearly and share their ideas.

Most school/center staff (93%) indicated that, because of Story Tapestries, their students have shown more interest in the arts.

All caregivers (100%) and nearly three-quarters of the center/school staff (73%) agreed that, because of Story Tapestries, their children/students have more access to resources to take part 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...”**



On the Program Survey, Caregivers further shared ways in which Story Tapestries programming has impacted their child. These primarily centered around student engagement, with comments such as, “how engaged the kids were”, “how enthusiastically the artist interacted and engaged with students” and “seeing my kids light up in enjoyment!”

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

Center/school staff were asked about the impact of the Story Tapestries WYS program on specific spoken, written, social and emotional, and motor skills. In last year’s survey, not all included skills were developmentally appropriate for every age covered in the survey. As such, staff were asked to mark “not applicable” if their students did not yet have the skills because of their age and developmental stage. To remedy this, the 2023-24 survey was developed in consultation with a subject matter expert in child development such that respondents would first indicate the age(s) of the students they work with and be presented only with the skills applicable to those ages. However, due to a technical error, this process resulted in most respondents being presented only with the skills applicable to 2-year-olds. All available data from those who indicated that they are teachers, including responses from those who completed the survey once this error was corrected, are summarized below.

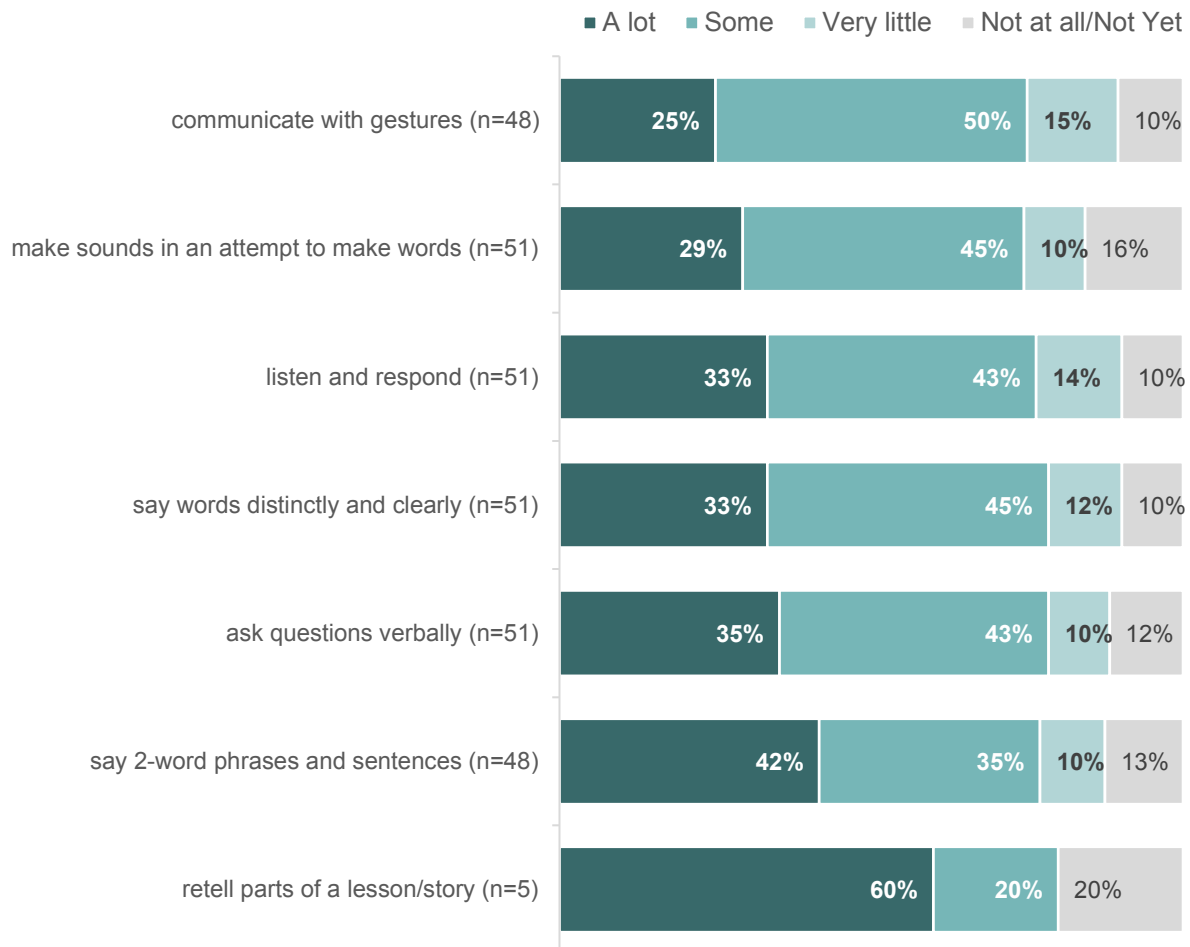
Please note that due to the technical error and the varied ages and stages of certain developmental skills, some items have a small number of responses. Additionally, those who teach older children likely indicated that their engagement with Story Tapestries did not impact student skills because these children have likely already mastered said skills.

## Spoken (Verbal) Language Skills

The following spoken (verbal) language skills are presented in developmental order; not all skills are developmentally appropriate to all age groups. For these items, sample sizes vary from 51 to 5 responses.

**Of the spoken language skills listed, center/school staff were most likely to report “a lot” or “some” increase in their students’ ability to say 2-word phrases and sentences (77%), ask questions verbally (78%), say words distinctly and clearly (78%), and retell parts of a lesson/story (80%).**

**“Because of Story Tapestries, my students’ abilities in the following spoken (verbal) language skills increased...”**





## Written Language Skills

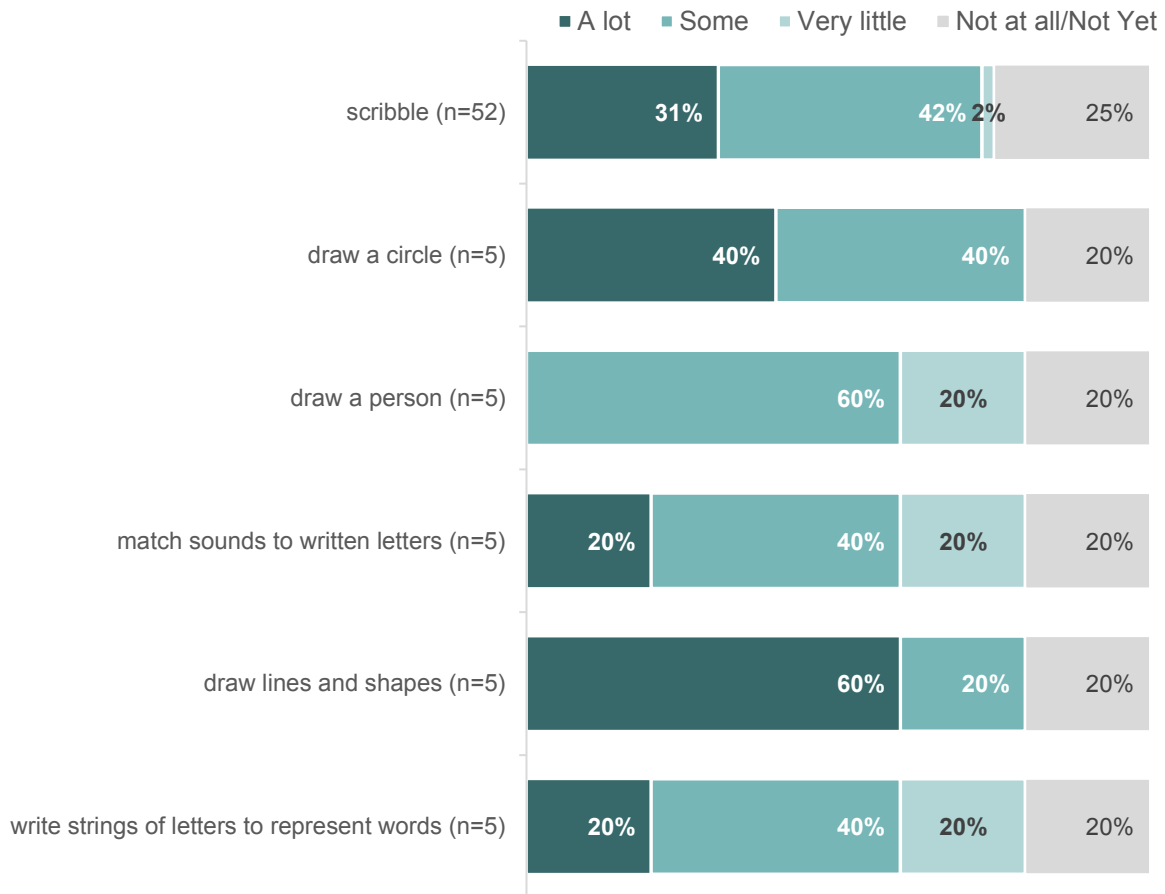
The following written language skills are presented in developmental order; not all skills are developmentally appropriate to all age groups. For these items, sample sizes vary from 52 to 5 responses.

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**Of the written language skills listed, center/school staff were most likely to report “a lot” or “some” increase in their students’ ability to draw lines and shapes (80%), draw a circle (80%), and scribble (73%).**

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### “Because of Story Tapestries, my students’ abilities in the following written language skills increased...”



## Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Skills

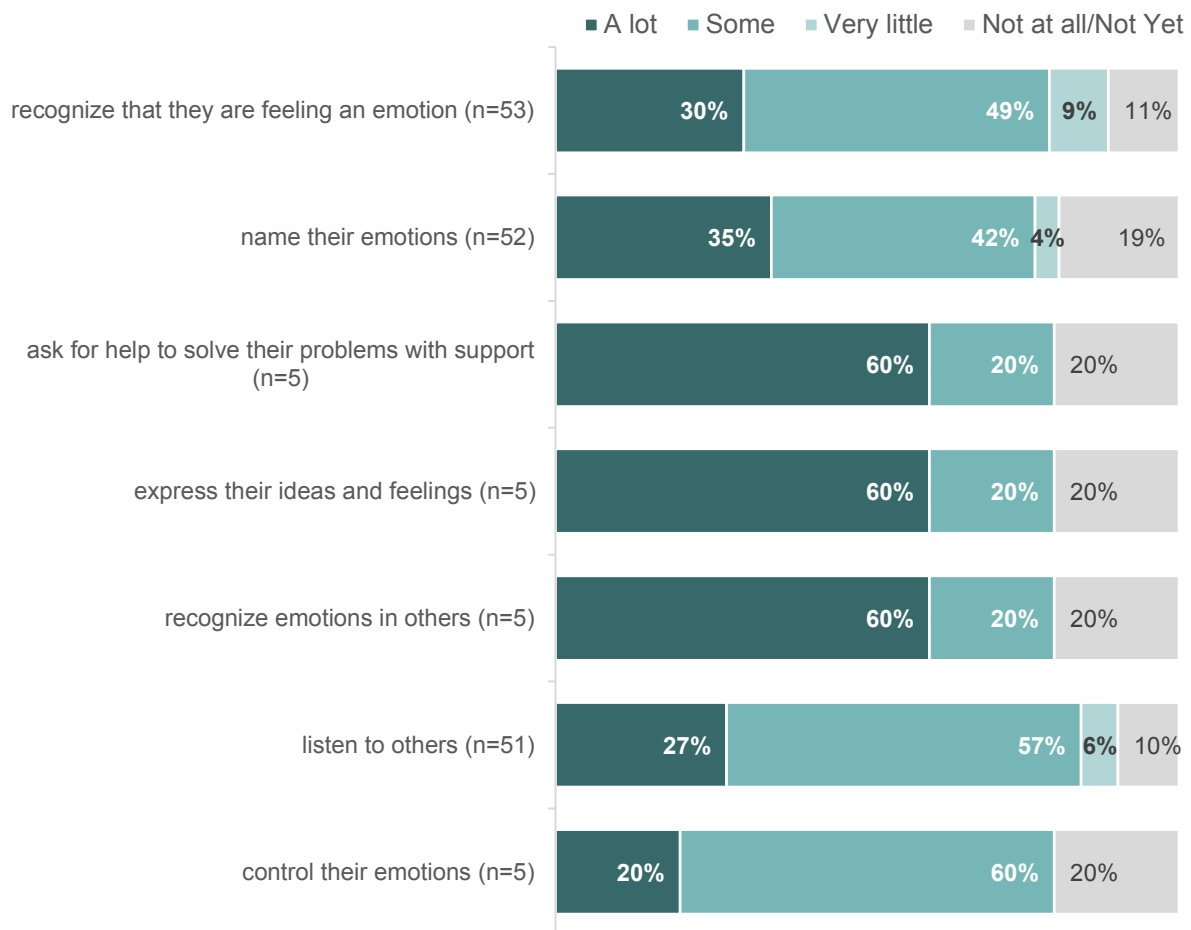
The following social and emotional learning (SEL) skills are presented in developmental order; not all skills are developmentally appropriate to all age groups. For these items, sample sizes vary from 53 to 5 responses.

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**Of the social and emotional learning (SEL) skills listed, over three-quarters of center/school staff (77% - 84%) were likely to report an increase in each of the skills shown below.**

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**“Because of Story Tapestries, my students' abilities in the following social and emotional learning skills increased...”**



## Gross Motor Skills

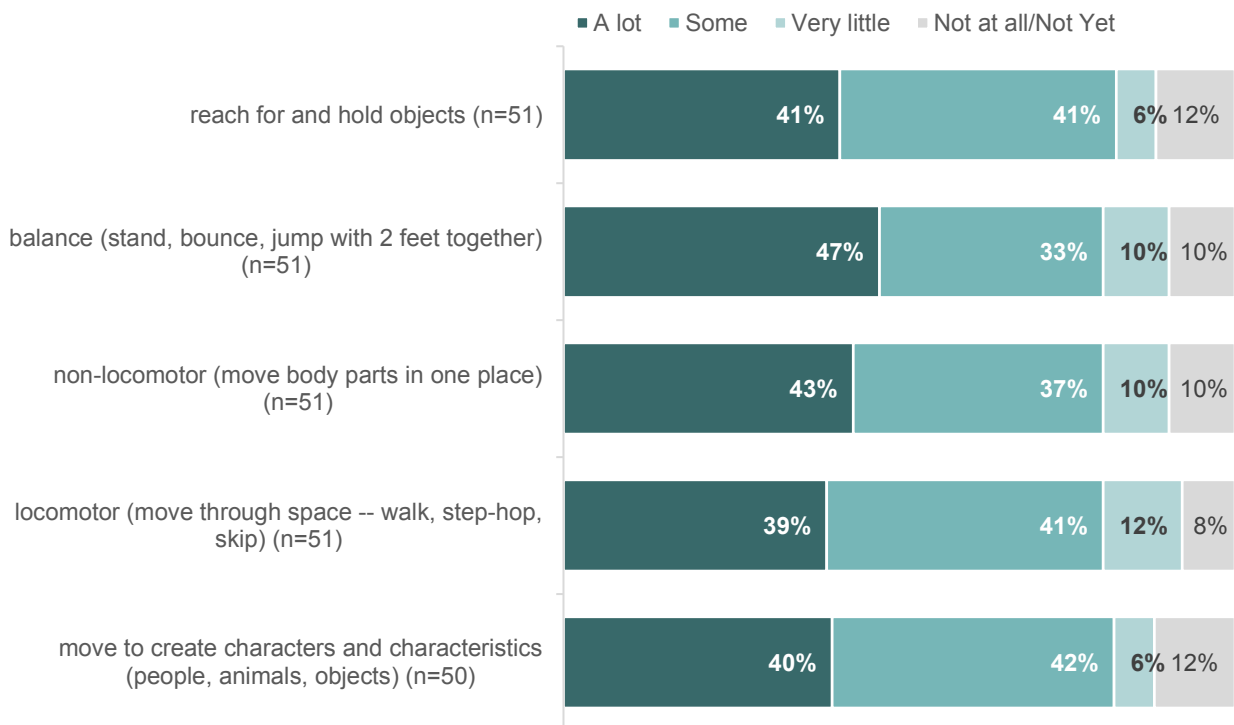
The following gross motor skills are presented in developmental order; not all skills are developmentally appropriate to all age groups. For these items, sample sizes vary from 51 to 50 responses.

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**Across all of the gross motor skills listed, at least 80% of center/school staff reported “a lot” or “some” increase in their students’ abilities.**

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### “Because of Story Tapestries, my students' abilities in the following gross motor skills increased...”



## Fine Motor Skills

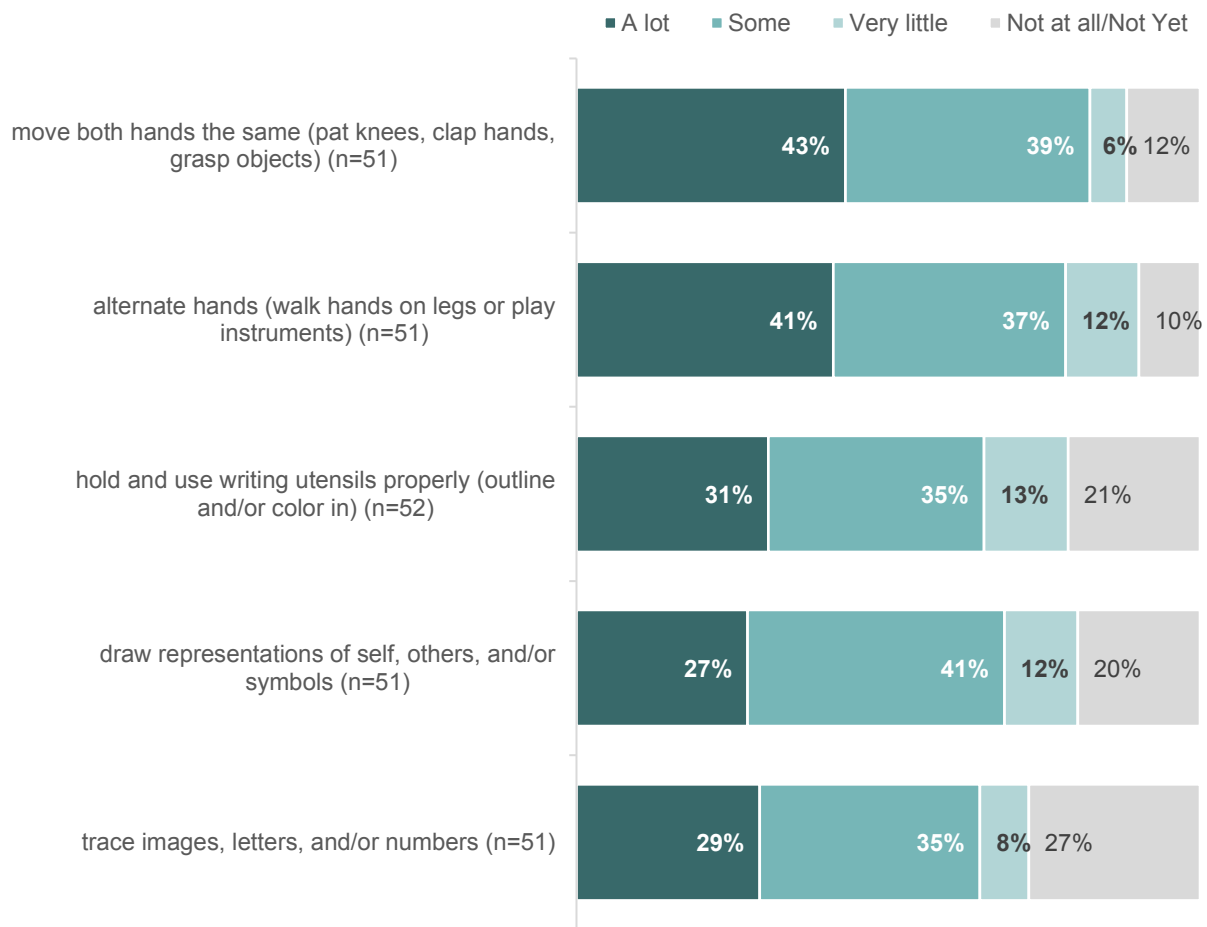
The following fine motor skills are presented in developmental order; not all skills are developmentally appropriate to all age groups. For these items, sample sizes vary from 52 to 51 responses.

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**Of the fine motor skills listed, center/school staff were most likely to report “a lot” or “some” increase in their students’ ability to move both hands the same (82%).**

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### “Because of Story Tapestries, my students’ abilities in the following fine motor skills increased...”



### Staff Discussion Group Perspective: Story Tapestries Impact on Students

In the two 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. Participants expressed that they saw an increase in students’ social-emotional learning (e.g. broadening emotional vocabulary, collaboration with peers), motor skills (e.g., jumping and climbing), writing skills, creativity (e.g., use of imagination, thinking outside the box), and overall engagement. For example, one staff noted,

*“[One student] normally did not stay engaged. He enjoyed the physical acts. He was definitely more engaged with the writing because he had the chance to act it out.”*

#### Exemplary Quotes Regarding Student Impacts from Discussion Groups

*“It’s helped my students with **collaboration and communication with their peers** and kind of being able to compromise with different ideas.”*

*“It has helped my students with **expressive language**, as well as broadening their vocabulary for like emotions and feelings.”*

*“[My students] increased their **vocabulary and their ability to write.**”*

*“In motor activities, they are very **happy to be able to move their body** when they are with music or playing instruments.”*

*“The students are very excited. They were happy for the classes. They were **able to control their emotions**, they were paying attention a lot to all the activities that were being done in the arts. They were working their **motor and fine skills** because they were working with their muscles, with their hand and their mouth.”*

*“There is a particular student who is normally very hyper. And when [the Story Tapestries Artist] came into our class and she had her apron and she had put some toys in or animals in her pockets, he really enjoyed taking it out and seeing what it was... it was honestly very sweet to see like the twinkle, the sparkle, whatever you want to call it, in his eyes... he’s actually **paying attention!** He’s not just, you know, jumping up and down, bouncing off walls. He’s **engaging**. So that was, that was my aha moment.”*

*“... It’s very, very difficult trying to keep them engaged. But when [Story Tapestries] was here... they really, really enjoy. **They participate.** They did not get bored. I see that dancing is a very special way for kids to learn. I think it **opens their mind** and their **brains get prepared** for what is coming next. So thank you... We have great experience with the Story Tapestries.”*



## Program Survey of Caregivers, Teachers/Site Partners, and Artists: Story Tapestries Impact on Students

In the Program Survey, caregivers, teachers/site partners, and artists were asked an open-ended question, “How has Story Tapestries made a difference to the center/school’s students?” Nine responses were received, including topics such as excitement / enthusiasm to engage in the arts, a positive impact on student mood, increased student confidence, increased self-control, and, with respect to literacy, both pride in reading and excitement in writing were shared.

*“All the students were excited to spend time on art; drawing and painting. There were a number of students who were not familiar with watercolors and there was enjoyment all around for the students to have the **freedom to express themselves** without too many restrictions. There were also a handful of students who came into the classroom having a rough day and to be encouraged and allowed to explore the materials **changed their moods in a positive way.**”*

*“Children showed **growing confidence** with the songs they learned, movement exercises, and the use of rhythmic instruments. I loved to see how eager they were to work with musical instruments, and to hear the next installment of our story, *Little Hawk and the Magic Quest*.”*

*“Students... **exercised increasing control and responsibility** with the clay flutes and by the third session demonstrated confidence and excitement in instrument protocol and playing.”*

*“The **joy and delight** on the faces of the children at every moment of listening and their complete participation in the physical activities were the best positive feedback for me. From the 2 year olds to the 4 year olds I did not have a moment where it felt like anyone was not engaged.”*

*“A couple of students who are learning English were **proud to read their poems** to the group. They felt successful and proud of their work.”*

*“A student that struggles with writing was **excited to write his story.**”*



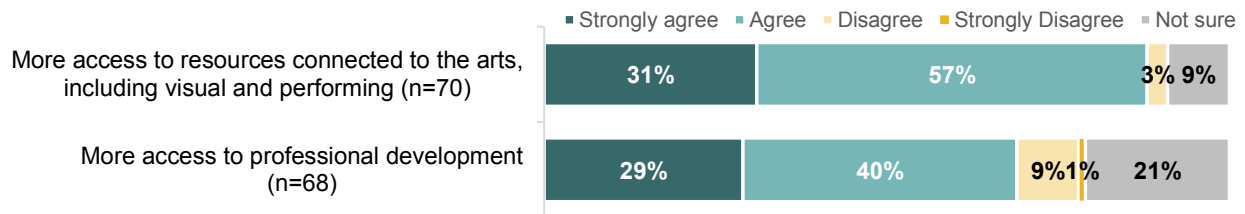
## Objective 2: Impacts on Center/Schools and Their Staff

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

Staff were asked about the impact of the Story Tapestries WYS program on the center/school and its staff on their exit survey. Most staff (88%) strongly agreed or agreed that Story Tapestries provided more resources connected to the arts and over two-thirds (69%) strongly agreed or agreed that Story Tapestries increased their access to professional development. Most staff strongly agreed or agreed with statements that, because of Story Tapestries, they personally have a greater appreciation for how the arts can be used to teach social and emotional skills (94%), fine and gross motor skills (93%), spoken language skills (90%) and written language skills (83%). Nearly nine out of ten (87%) also reported learning new teaching skills.

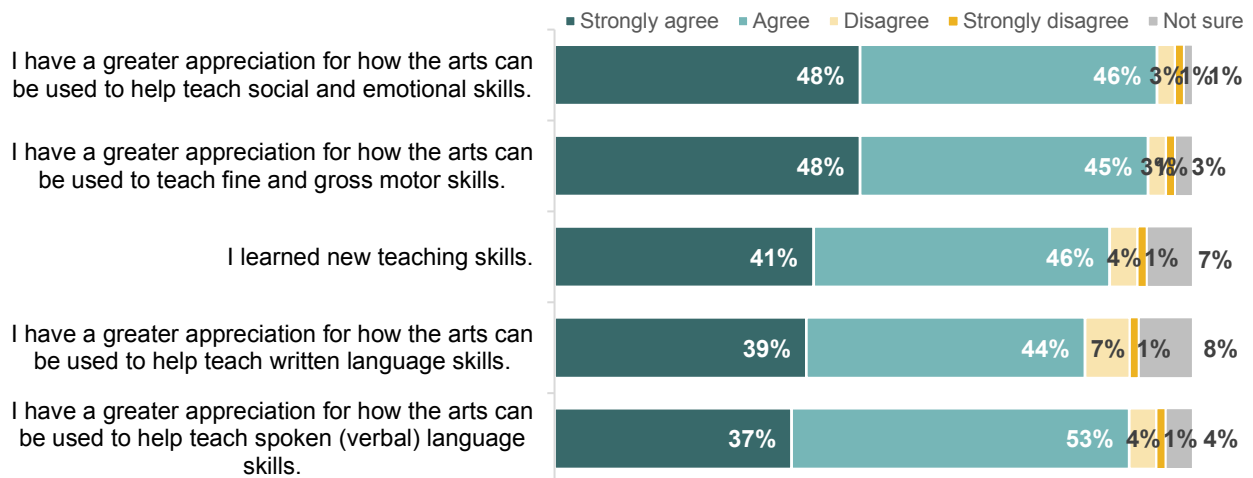
**Most staff strongly agreed or agreed that Story Tapestries provided more access to and resources connected to the arts and professional development.**

#### “Because of Story Tapestries, the center/school staff have...”



**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 (87%) also reported learning new teaching skills.**

#### “Because of Story Tapestries...”



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

In the two 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 the inclusion of active, multisensory techniques. Teachers mentioned that the use of acting out stories and incorporating drawing and/or music alongside storytelling increased student engagement. Another strategy teachers mentioned was student involvement and leadership in the development of stories. Lastly, there was a recognition that the use of the strategies teachers learned from their experience with Story Tapestries should be used throughout the school year and not just in the beginning.

#### **Exemplary Quotes Regarding Center/School Staff Impacts from Discussion Groups**



*“I think every year I kind of have to remind myself to kind of **let go of control** a little bit. I tend to lead the kids in kind of directions, but I know that they are capable of creating wonderful, creative stories. So it’s always a good reminder to kind of let **them lead more.**”*

*“We always start the beginning of the year, doing more acting out of stories, but it slows down, especially at this time of the year, so **making sure that we keep up with acting out stories**, which is really good comprehension support, especially for our language learners.”*

*“I like the way that sometimes the themes being delivered bring different activities on how we can update ourselves -- not only reading a book, but also using instruments so [students] can open up more. Then, we can learn more on **how to deliver a class with different materials.**”*

### *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 third of survey respondents reported that the most enjoyable aspect of the professional development workshops was the interactive activities (36%), with many specifying that they enjoyed the use of breakout rooms and opportunities to interact with other attendees. One-quarter (27%) reported enjoying new teaching strategies they can take back to their classrooms, with an emphasis on using different voices when reading stories. One-in-five (19%) mentioned the way the session was facilitated or named the facilitator as the thing they enjoyed most. Another 11% said they enjoyed everything about the session.



Staff Perspectives on What They Enjoyed Most about WYS Professional Development Workshops	Percent of Respondents (n=227)
Interactive activities	36%
New teaching strategies	27%
Session facilitation	19%
Everything about the session	11%
Other	12%

**Exemplary Quotes Regarding Highlights of Professional Development Workshops**



*“Coming up with **new ideas and ways to bring stories into the classroom to teach social emotional and content learning to children.**”*

*“I enjoyed how enthusiastic everyone was. **Everyone was truly engaged** with what was being said. I loved how the staff was able to help keep everyone informed with any questions asked. I enjoyed learning more about storytelling and **things I can better incorporate with my students.**”*

*“How **to change my voice tone** to make my story time more interesting”*

*“I enjoyed **the entire training.** It was wonderful.”*

*“Love the format of the class, very engaging and **great breakout groups.**”*

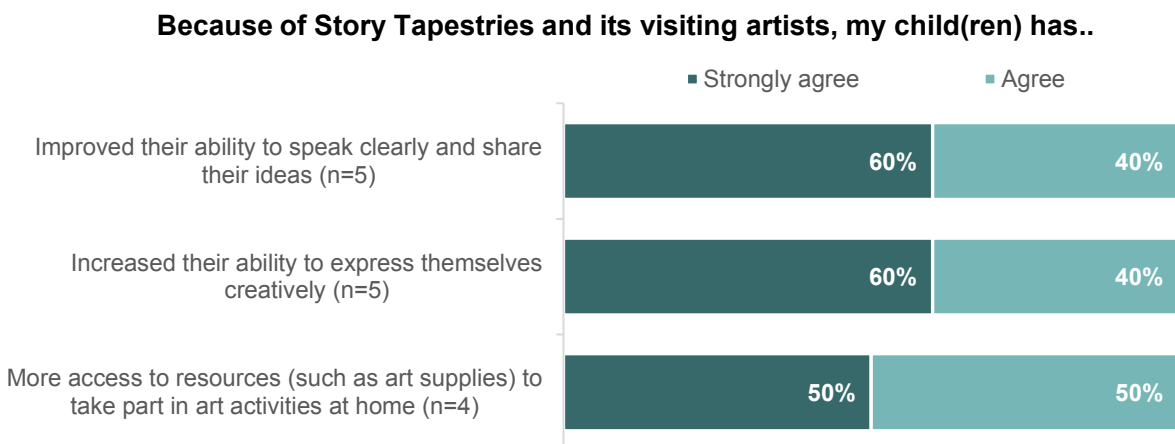
## Objective 3: Impacts on Caregivers

Three tools were used to gather caregiver feedback about Story Tapestries' activities. First, the Caregiver Exit Survey is given to caregivers at the end of the academic year. In 2023-24, as in previous years, engagement with this survey was low (n=5) and did not align with the level of caregiver engagement in programming. As such, this report also includes responses to caregiver participant responses in the Program Survey throughout the year (n=18) and the OST Event Survey that were collected in June 2023 (n=25), as these responses were not included in last year's report.

### Caregiver Exit Survey

Of the five respondents to the Caregiver Exit Survey, four (80%) received an art learning kit and three (40%) reported participating in a family event. Of those who received an art learning kit, 100% reported that their child enjoyed using it, 60% said their child learned new things using the kit, and 80% would like to get more kits from Story Tapestries in the future.

All respondents agreed or strongly agreed that engaging with Story Tapestries has led to their child[ren]'s increased ability to speak clearly and share their ideas, express themselves creatively, and have provided more access to resources for art activities at home.

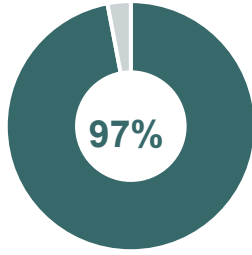


One respondent provided responses to the open-ended questions. Those responses have been excluded to protect their privacy.

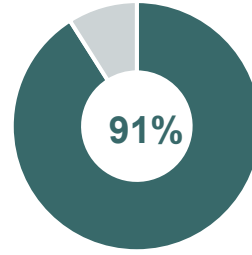
### Caregiver Responses to Program Survey and Out-of-School Event Survey

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. A total of 18 Program Surveys and 25 OST Event Surveys were completed by caregivers, with distinct items on distinct tools. As can be seen below, most participating caregivers reported that they [the caregiver] learned something new (97%) and that they plan to use the skills they learned in the months ahead (91%). Additionally, caregivers reported that their children learned something new (88%) and that they want to attend another Story Tapestries event (88%).

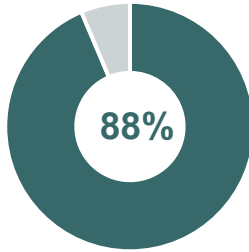
## Caregive Survey Responses



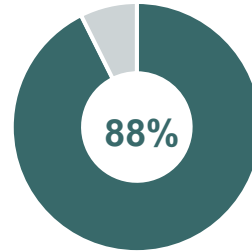
***I learned something new today.***  
(n=33)



***I plan to use the skill(s) I learned in the next 1-3 months.*** (n=11)



***My child learned something new today.***  
(n=17)



***I want to attend another Story Tapestries event.*** (n=16)

Caregivers who attended the parent workshops were asked what they/their child[ren] enjoyed most about them in an open-ended question on a workshop survey. Across the twenty open-ended responses, most focused on general, positive sentiment about the program. Six responses focused on focused on sound, music, and/or instruments, four mentioned the dancing component of a program, and other unique ideas included:

*“Being able to be involved with my children”*

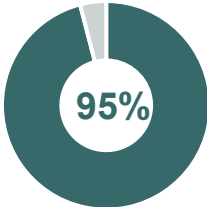
*“Being encouraged to explore creativity”*

*“The sounds. I also enjoyed the presenter’s voice and tone. Her presentation was soothing as well as informative.”*

# 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 (95%) of the staff said they would recommend the program and all four respondents (100%) who answered the question on the Program and Caregiver Exit Surveys said they would recommend the Story Tapestries program to a friend.

## Satisfaction with WYS Program Overall



**Center/school staff would recommend the Story Tapestries program to another center/school. (n=67)**

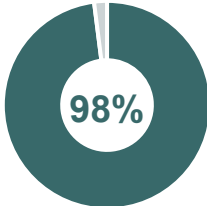


**Caregivers would recommend the Story Tapestries program to a friend. (n=20)**

In addition, all caregivers who completed the Program and OST Event Surveys reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with each of four aspects of the event: the topic/theme (100%), the performers (100%), the length of the event (100%), and the event venue/place (98%).

Lastly, almost all respondents (98%) who completed the professional development evaluation survey agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the Story Tapestries program to another center/school.

## Staff Professional Development Workshops



**Staff would recommend the Story Tapestries program to another center or school. (n=243)**

## Objective 5: Recommendations from Staff and Caregivers

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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: Center/School Staff Exit Survey*

When asked about how the WYS program could be improved in an open-ended question on the center/school staff exit survey, 54 center and school staff provided responses. These answers were coded, themed, and are provided in the table below with exemplary quotes. The most common answer to this question was positive non-response (e.g., “N/A” or “No suggestions at this time”). Almost a quarter mentioned curriculum or programmatic changes (22%), 11% described ways to keep the students engaged, 7% expressed a desire for more time/visits, and 6% requested clearer expectations/instructions.

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



*“Give directions to students prior to passing out materials (students will start immediately when they get materials with or without directions), having the students participate in the story rather than just reading to them, remember the age of students and **how long they can sit for.**”*

*“Give the teachers an understanding of what will happen. Give **more items/resources for the teachers to prep the students** for what will happen. Keep the focus on one or two activities.”*

*“Our program started late and so **looking forward to scheduling more in advance** and spreading visits through the school year.”*

*“Provide artists with **child development training** and ask them to be punctual.”*

*“More patience with **children with special needs/children who just aren't into the performances**”*

### *Overall WYS Program Recommendations: Staff Discussion Group Perspective*

Center/school staff made a few recommendations to improve the program during the two discussion groups implemented. Similar to the center/school staff exit survey, there was a desire for clearer or repeated instructions. Additionally, there were programmatic recommendations, including incorporating more opportunities for students to engage with each other, giving the students things to do with their hands, and increased integration of art, music, writing, and movement. Lastly, one discussion group participant suggested that there be two teaching artists instead of one and that lesson plans be shared further in advance.

## Exemplary Quotes Regarding Recommended Improvements to WYS from Staff



*“Including more opportunities with them to **turn and talk with each other.**”*

*“This activity can improve if we are sent a person that can **relate the books with instruments, with puppets, or the colors** because it calls the children’s attention.”*

*“Usually there was one teacher but it would be valuable to have **two teaching artists at the same time.** It would be great to work more with the staff to ensure that they **get the lesson plans farther in advance** so that they can support more effectively when there can be only one teaching artist.”*

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

On the Center/School 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)?” Fifty responses were collected for this question. These responses were coded, themed and exemplary quotes are provided in the table below. The most common answer to this question was positive non-response (e.g., “N/A” or “No suggestions at this time”). Many responses were similar to the question above about improvements, including 10% of respondents stating that they desire more time/visits and responses related to program content and planning. Other themes included family participation, noting the ways that Story Tapestries’ programming contributes to increased cultural awareness for students, and general statements about providing different materials or covering different topic areas.

## Exemplary Quotes Regarding Recommendations to Better Meet Student and Family Needs



*“The introduction of **culturally relevant texts** helped students make connections to the texts.”*

*“Offering a **variety of materials and different experiences** that motivate children to participate and learn.”*

*“More **classroom visits and more family engagements.** Resource family packets can be sent home for families to work through together.”*

*“Keep the kits on coming! I have had some **parents really appreciate the kits** because the parents feel overwhelmed just trying to have those materials available at home when they may need to balance other family costs. Plus it keeps the kids occupied in a positive way that allows them to continue their learning.”*

### *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 (66%) of those who answered (n=192) 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 programmatic or curriculum changes, with a handful of people feeling like the breakout rooms were overused. Other themes included a desire for more time/sessions, scheduling suggestions, recommendations for additional or different materials, and shortening the session.

### *WYS Program Recommendations: WYS Program Survey (Mixed Audiences)*

In the WYS Program Survey for caregivers/participants, teachers/site partners, and artists, there were two open-ended responses focused on program improvement, yielding a total of seven responses from program staff. Two of these focused on wanting to have known more in advance of the session to best support their experience (e.g., advanced knowledge of non-English speakers in the class, clarity around a delayed performance and residency). Two other comments included a professional reflection on things they may do differently in the future (e.g., deeper exploration of color theory, increased connections between poetry and content in other disciplines such as science or social studies). One respondent suggested more time if they could afford it, while another suggested less time. A final respondent noted nothing to adjust.

### *WYS Caregiver Recommendations: Caregiver Exit Survey & OST Event Survey*

None of the five caregivers who completed the caregiver exit survey provided any recommendations for improving Story Tapestries' programming. Of the 25 people who completed the OST Event Survey in June 2023, seven answered the question "What suggestions do you and/or your child have to improve the Story Tapestries event?" Four of these were positive non-responses, one suggested that adjusting the time of the performance might increase viewership/engagement, and two requested more sessions with Story Tapestries.

## Conclusion

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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 actively engaged early childhood educators, children, and their parents/families in the 2023-24 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, schools/centers, and themselves. Student impacts included increased creative expression, interest in the arts, and access to resources to participate in arts activities at home. Center/school staff were likely to report increases in students' abilities across a range of skill areas, including: spoken language skills, written language skills, social and emotional learning skills, gross motor skills, and fine motor skills.

The evaluation also demonstrated ways in which Story Tapestries impacted Centers/Schools and their staff. For instance, most staff acknowledged Story Tapestries' increased resources connected to the arts and access to professional development. Staff reported an increased appreciation for how the arts can be used to teach a wide range of skills, and nearly nine out of ten staff reported learning new teaching skills themselves because of Story Tapestries.

Caregivers shared their perspectives on Story Tapestries, including recognition that engaging with Story Tapestries has increased their children's self-expression and creative expression and has provided more access to resources for art activities at home. Most caregivers also reported that both they and their children have learned something new from Story Tapestries this past year.

Satisfaction with Story Tapestries remains high across center/school staff and caregivers alike, with more than 9 out of 10 reporting they would recommend Story Tapestries. Despite this high satisfaction rate, the WYS evaluation continued to explore opportunities for program improvement. The vast majority of responses received were positive non-responses (e.g., "N/A" or "No suggestions at this time") and few commonalities across tools were identified; however, potential areas to explore for improvement may include specific curriculum or programmatic changes, increased clarity in provider instructions to student, and exploring preferred amounts of time with each group, when feasible.

As the Story Tapestries staff plans for the future, they will be building on a strong track record of positive program impacts on staff, caregivers, and students in Maryland.