



Write Your Story (WYS)

2024-2025 Evaluation Findings

July 2025

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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 across the state of MD and Northern VA with deep focuses in Montgomery, Frederick, and Anne Arundel County. Within and outside of the classroom, WYS project staff engaged 332 early childhood educators, 543 children and their parents/families, and 87 caregivers in the 2024-25 academic year.

To evaluate WYS activities for the 2024-25 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 18 early childhood sites across 40 distinct classrooms, WYS supported 332 early childhood educators and 543 children and their parents/families.
- Story Tapestries hosted 90 embedded residency programs, seven family events, two celebrations/art exhibits, and eight professional development workshops throughout the 2024-25 WYS program year.
- Almost all center and school staff (97%) reported taking part in the Artist in Residency program. Just under half reported taking part in professional development workshops (45%) and/or family events (42%).
- Familiarity of Story Tapestries was high among the center and school staff, with nearly all (91%) reporting that they knew "a lot" or "some" about Story Tapestries.
- WYS held family events that attracted 71 caregivers of participating students at 7 family events across multiple sites and including a full range of program types.
- Staff reported that students most enjoyed the storytelling and writing portion of the program, with other common responses including dance/movement and music.

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 school/center staff (90%) indicated that, because of Story Tapestries, their students have shown more interest in the arts.
- Both center/school staff (65%) 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 reported 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
- In discussion groups with staff, participants' responses complemented the survey data, highlighting an increase in students' social emotional learning (e.g. confidence, collaboration with peers), language skills, and overall engagement in

the classroom.

Impact on Center/Schools and Their Staff

- Most center staff (91%) strongly agreed or agreed that Story Tapestries provided resources connected to the arts and more than three-quarters agreed that Story Tapestries increased their access to professional development (76%).
- All staff (100%) 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 spoken language skills, fine and gross motor skills, and written language skills. Most staff reported the same for social and emotional skills (94%).
- All staff (100%) 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) and the ways that incorporating arts-based techniques has helped them bond with their students.
- When asked what they enjoyed most about professional development workshops, staff focused on learning new teaching strategies and the session's interactive activities.

Impact on Caregivers

- Of those who received an art learning kit (n=4), 100% reported that their child enjoyed using it, that their child learned new things using the kit, and would like to get more kits from Story Tapestries in the future.
- All respondents to the Caregiver Exit Survey provided responses to the open-ended question about what their child(ren) enjoyed most. The activities themselves (dancing, painting, stories, music) and the teachers were each mentioned more than once.

Satisfaction with Story Tapestries WYS Program and Workshops

- All (100%) center/school staff reported they would recommend the WYS program to another center or school.
- Almost all respondents (99%) 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.

Synthesized Program Recommendations

- The vast majority of responses to items requesting suggestions for program improvement were positive non-responses (e.g., "N/A" or "No suggestions at this time").
- Potential areas to explore for improvement may include:
 - Adjustments to the topic areas included in the curriculum (e.g., adding stories around math or other subjects)

- Increased clarity in expectations and session materials (e.g., sharing materials in advance, creating checklists)
- When feasible, tailoring the scheduling, timing, and duration of the program to better meet site-specific needs

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 across the state of MD and Northern VA with deep focuses in Montgomery, Frederick, and Anne Arundel County. Within and outside of the classroom, WYS project staff engaged 332 early childhood educators and 543 children and their parents/families in the 2024-25 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 2024-25 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

A mixed-methods evaluation approach was implemented for the 2024-25 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. 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 with 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.

Professional development survey is for those center/school staff taking part in professional development training 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 participate in WYS programming are included in this report. The 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 is 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 2024-25, this report includes caregiver responses on broad impacts on their children.

Evaluation Participation

In regard to the surveys and discussion groups implemented for the 2024-2025 academic year, 34 staff completed the WYS staff exit survey, with 85% of them reporting either being a teacher or teacher's assistant or aide, and 15% 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. Ten discussion groups were held with 54 center staff and teachers. An additional discussion group was conducted with 11 teaching artists. The professional development survey had 155 responses from center and school staff, with approximately 75% reporting being teachers, teacher's assistants, or aides. Twenty-eight people completed the program survey, 37% were caregivers/participants, 49% indicated that they were artists, and 14% were teachers/site partners. Lastly, five caregivers completed the caregiver exit survey.

Evaluation Tool	Number of Respondents
WYS staff exit survey	34
WYS staff mid-year survey	49
Staff discussion groups	54
Teaching artist discussion group	11
Staff professional development survey	155
Program survey	59
Caregiver exit, program, and OST surveys	5

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 staff 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.

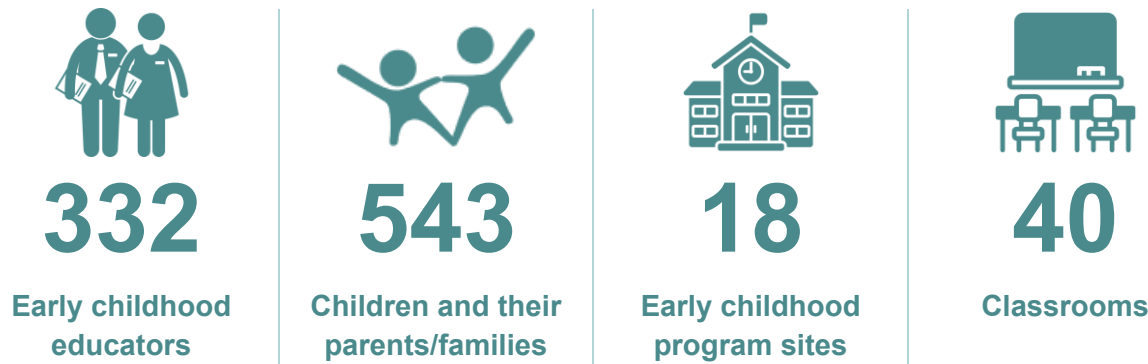
Study limitations include that evaluators were unable to determine if any duplicate staff or student surveys were completed because no identifying information was obtained. Regarding the discussion groups, because these were led by program staff, respondents may have been less likely to raise negative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

Program Engagement

Program Reach

During the 2024-25 program year, the Story Tapestries Write Your Story (WYS) program reached 332 early childhood educators and 543 children and their parents/families. The WYS program was held in 18 early childhood sites and 40 distinct classrooms.

WYS Program By the Numbers, 2024-25

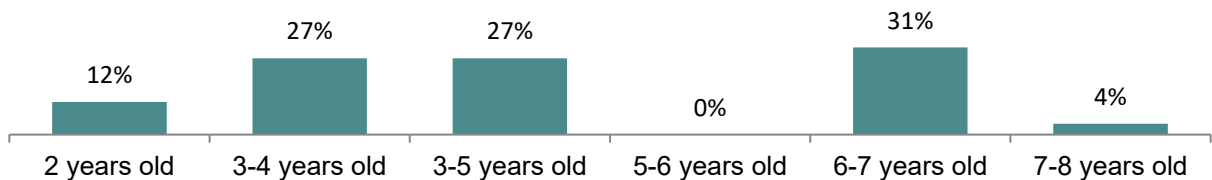


Story Tapestries reached these numbers through hosting 90 artist in residency programs, seven family events, two celebrations/art exhibits, and six professional development workshops throughout the 2024-25 program year.

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 2024-25. 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 (54%) who responded to the survey taught students between 3-5 years old.

Ages of Students Taught

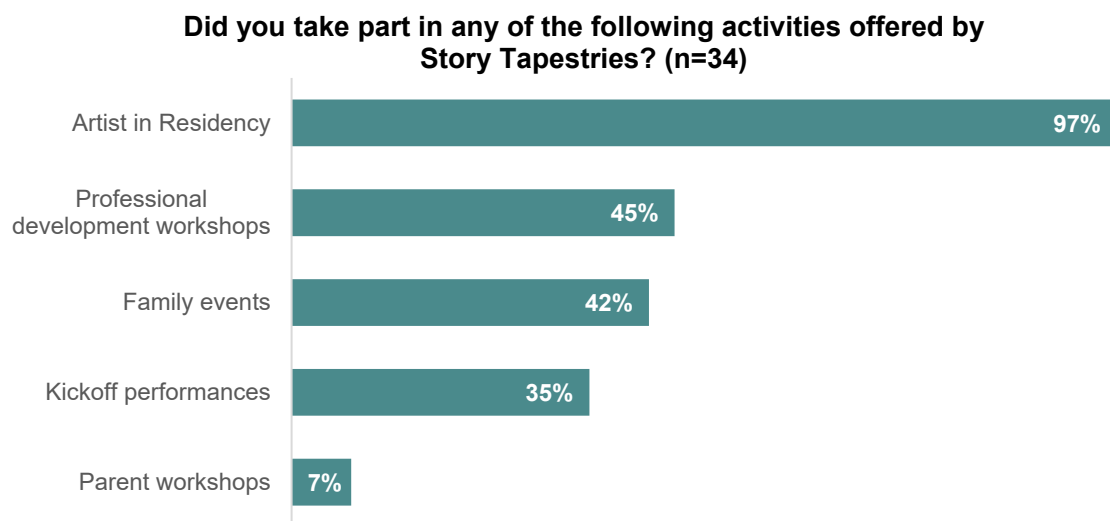


Level of Engagement: Center and School Staff

On their exit surveys, center/school staff reported participation in Story Tapestries' activities. Almost all (97%) reported taking part in the Artist in Residency program. Just under half took part in the professional development workshops (45%) and/or family events (42%). One-third (35%) attended kickoff performances and seven percent attended parent workshops.

In addition, staff were asked how much they know about Story Tapestries. Nearly all (91%) 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 (97%).



Level of Engagement: Caregivers

Throughout the program year, WYS held family events that attracted **71 caregivers** of participating students at **7 family events**. Based on the caregiver exit survey, caregivers reported attendance at family events held at a handful of distinct program sites as well as engagement with 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. Nearly half of the staff (44%) reported that students most enjoyed the storytelling and writing portion of the program. Other common responses included the dance/movement (28%) and music (20%).

Staff Perspectives on What Students Enjoyed Most about WYS	Percent of Respondents (n=25)
Storytelling/writing stories	44%
Dance/movement	28%
Music	20%
Imagination/creativity	16%
Other	16%
Guest artists/program leaders	12%
Visual arts/drawing	12%
Personal expression	8%
New experiences	8%
Materials for the activities	4%

Exemplary Quotes Regarding Student Engagement



*"I enjoyed the opportunity that it gave my students to **express themselves** in a new and creative way.*

*"Students enjoyed the **interactive and engaging manner** in which stories were read to them."*

*"We enjoyed expanding our **creative thinking** and using our imagination to create stories. As well as, learning different ways to **express emotions** and connect to the characters in a story."*

*"It helps students **strengthen their language skills** especially spoken words, they learned some different languages, improved their listening skills and communication skills."*

Findings by Objective

The following sections provide detailed findings by the 2024-25 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 topic areas for center staff and three for caregivers.

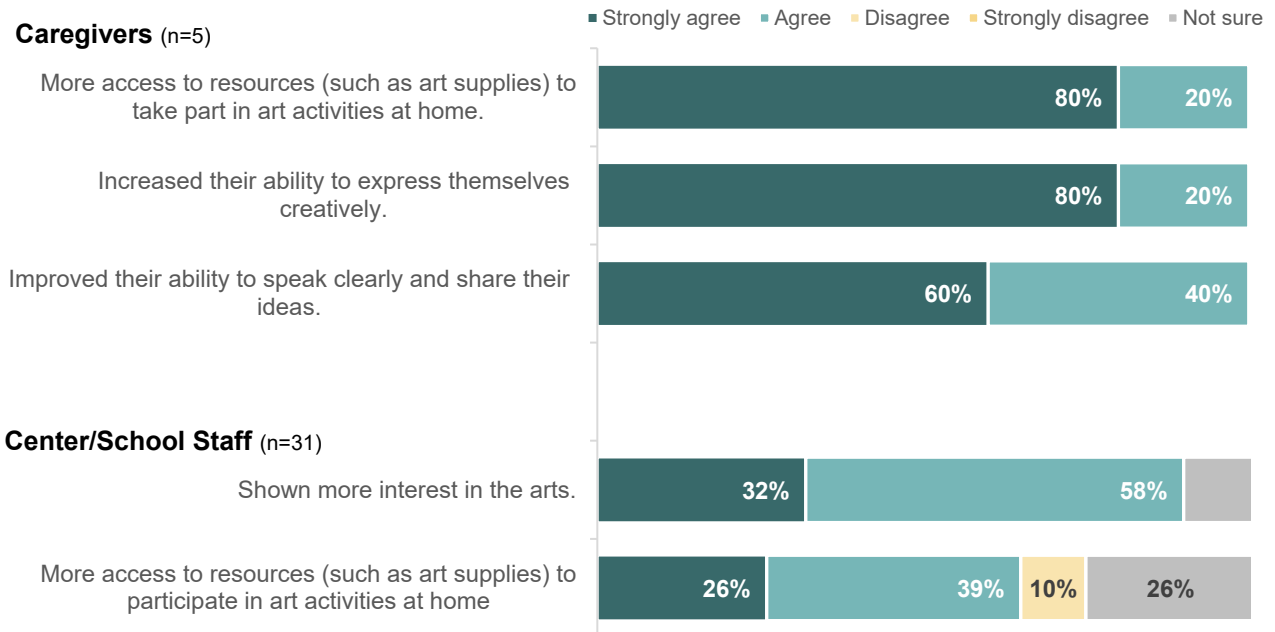
All caregivers (100%) agreed or strongly agreed that their children increased their ability to express themselves creatively because of Story Tapestries and that they increased their ability to speak clearly and share their ideas.

Most school/center staff (90%) indicated that, because of Story Tapestries, their students have shown more interest in the arts.

All caregivers (100%) and nearly two-thirds of the center/school staff (65%) 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, *“My kids enjoy finding things to take pictures and that really open their minds to use cellphone in a different way”*, *“The bilingual story telling I felt connected to the artist”* and *“Interactions between children and adults fun ways of having engagement.”*

Impacts on Student Skills: Perceptions from Center/School Staff

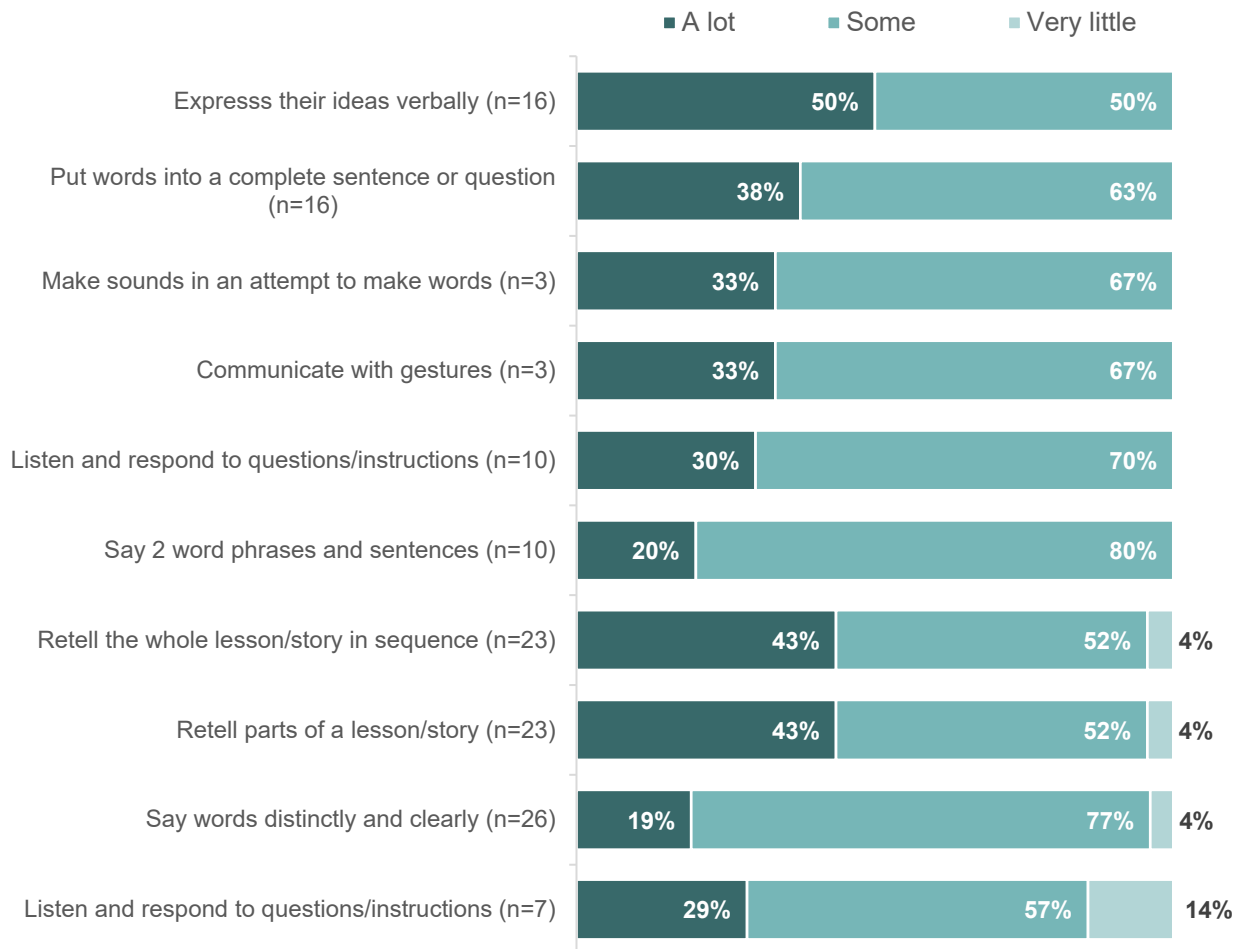
Center/school staff were asked about the impact of the Story Tapestries WYS program on specific spoken, written, social and emotional, and motor skills. Please note that due to the varied ages and stages of certain developmental skills, some items have a small number of responses. Additionally, those 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 were presented in the survey where developmentally appropriate. For these items, sample sizes vary from 3 to 26 responses.

For multiple spoken language skills listed, 100% of center/school staff reported “a lot” or “some” increase in their students’ ability. They were most likely to report that the ability to express ideas verbally increased “a lot.”

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

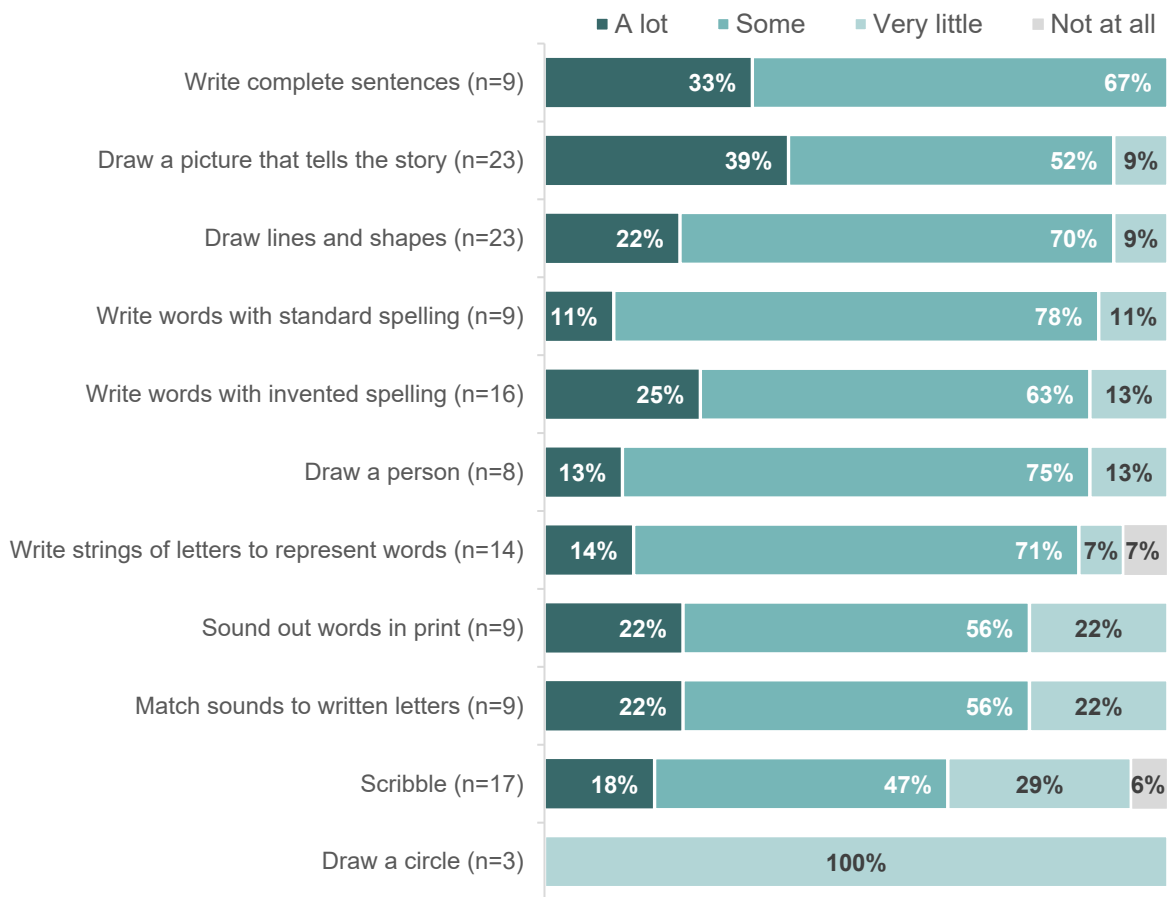


Written Language Skills

The following written language skills were presented in the survey where developmentally appropriate. For these items, sample sizes vary from 3 to 23 responses.

Of the written language skills listed, center/school staff were most likely to report “a lot” or “some” increase in their students’ ability to write complete sentences (100%).

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

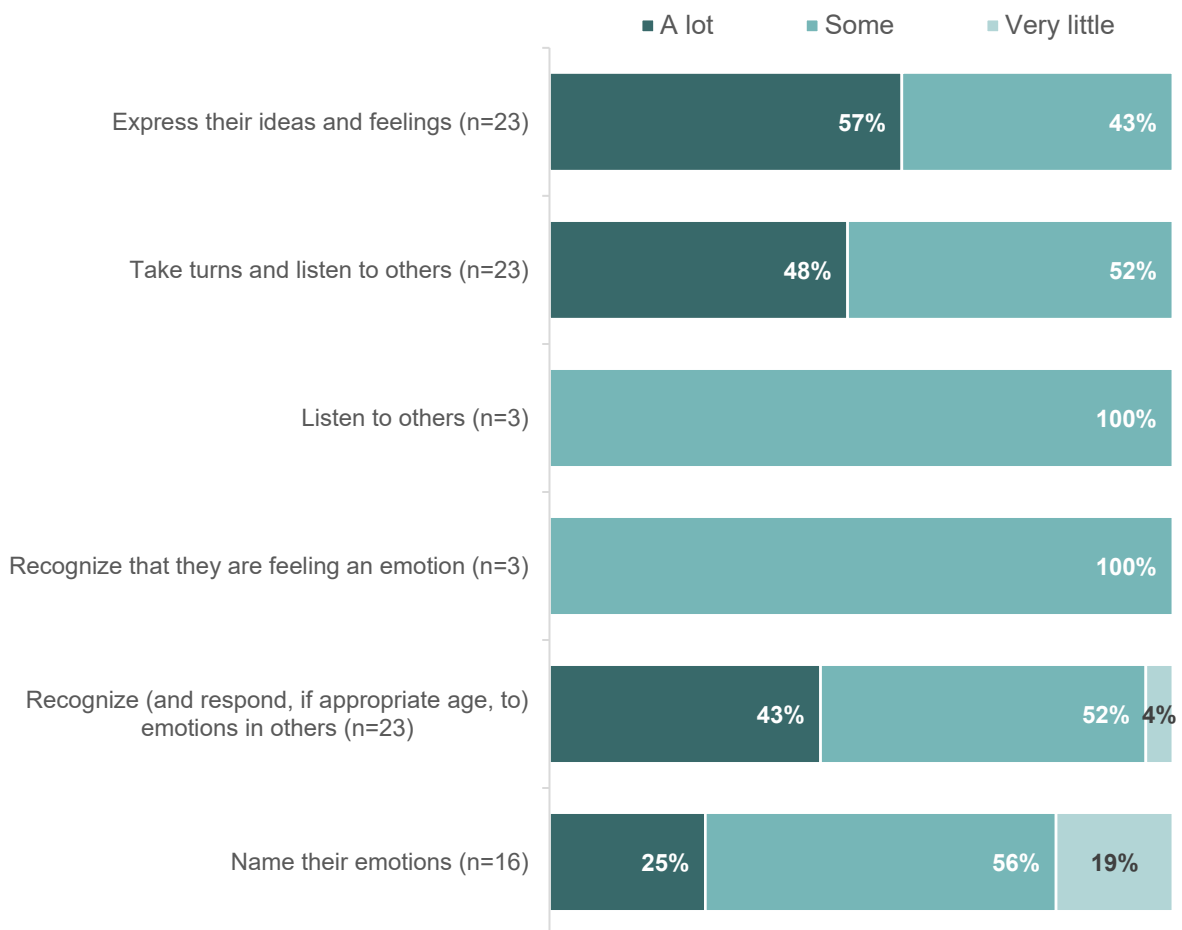


Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Skills

The following social and emotional learning (SEL) skills were presented in the survey where developmentally appropriate. For these items, sample sizes vary from 3 to 23 responses.

Of the social and emotional learning (SEL) skills listed, over three-quarters of center/school staff (81% - 100%) were likely to report an increase in each of the skills shown below.

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

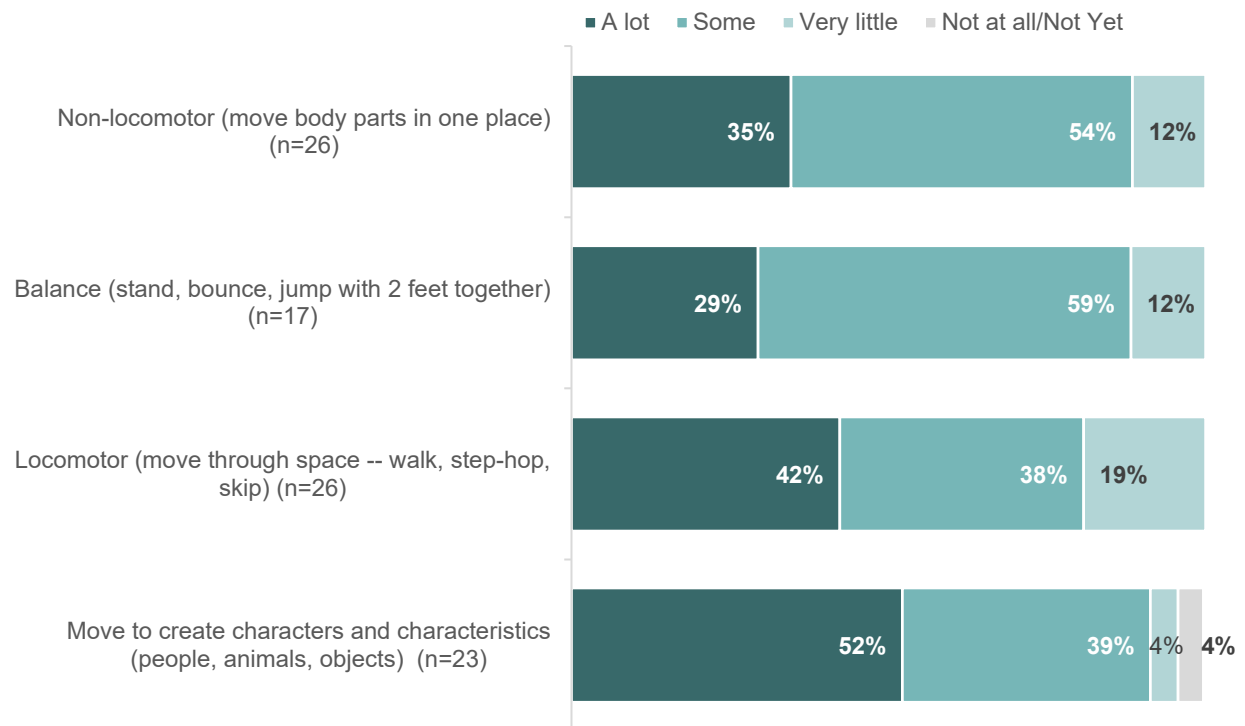


Gross Motor Skills

The following gross motor skills were presented in the survey where developmentally appropriate. For these items, sample sizes vary from 17 to 26 responses.

Across all of the gross motor skills listed, at least 90% of center/school staff reported “a lot” or “some” increase in their students’ abilities.

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

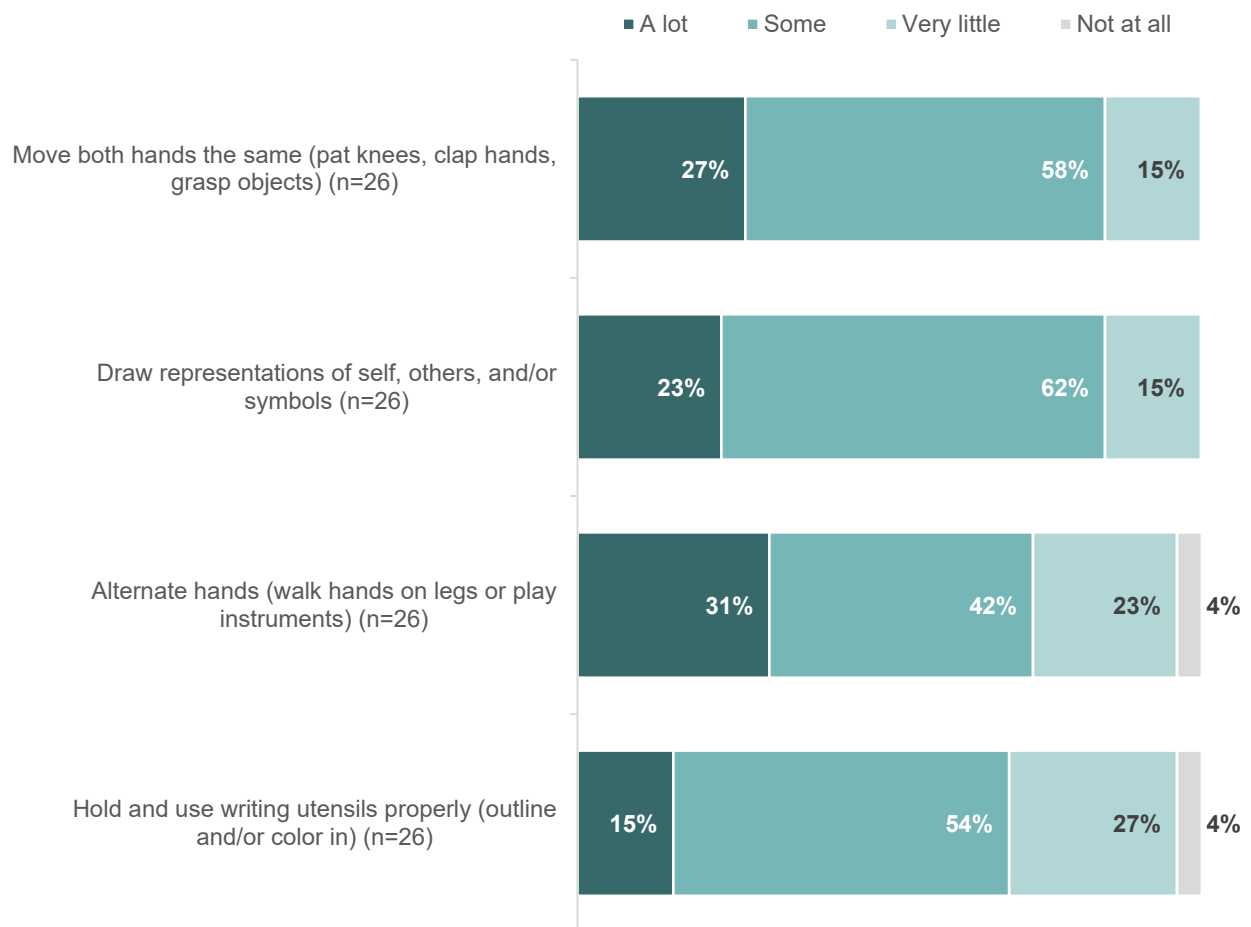


Fine Motor Skills

The following fine motor skills were presented in the survey where developmentally appropriate. For these items the sample size is 26 for all items.

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 (85%) and draw representations of self, others, and/or symbols (85%).

“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 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.

Teachers generally reported that they observed increased confidence in their students as a result of the program. Some teachers indicated that at the beginning of the school year, some of their students were shy and hesitant to engage in singing or dancing with their classmates. By the end of the school year, these students had increased their confidence and developed positive ways to express themselves. One teacher even reported observing increased collaboration and patience in her first grade class. Teachers also generally reported increased engagement, as the hands-on activities helped students stay focused in class. The movement and acting activities also helped students learn and use different vocabulary words and descriptive language.

Exemplary Quotes Regarding Student Impacts from Staff Discussion Groups



*“Yes, I would say, because of Story Tapestries, my students have become **more excited and enthusiastic** about sharing stories.”*

*“I would say my student grew. He was able to just step out of the box and out of what he could only see in front of him, and be able to really **get creative**, and able to put that on paper and **express it**.”*

*“The sessions with different people and their way of teaching really brought kids out of their shells. I see them **more confident** now which will help in Kindergarten next year.”*

*“The songs **develop language** and vocabulary for my 3-year-olds.”*

Teaching Artist Discussion Group Perspective: Story Tapestries Impact on Students

The teaching artists reported that a major impact the program made on students was language development. By connecting vocabulary to movement, students were better able to recognize the meaning of different vocabulary words and how to best apply them, therefore enhancing their social-emotional language. Increased fine and gross motor skills were also reported. During the program, the artists conducted activities that required balance and coordination, which improved the students' gross motor skills. Additionally, holding a paint brush, for example, enhanced the students' fine motor skills. Teaching artists also observed an increase in patience and focus among the students as a result of their increased engagement.

Exemplary Quotes Regarding Student Impacts from Teaching Artist Discussion Group



*“One of the biggest impacts is **language development**; all kinds of different vocabulary, and then connect the vocabulary to movement; **social-emotional vocabulary**, but also story structure and character development writing.”*

*“Fine motor and gross motor skill development, working on **balance and coordination**; practicing **mindfulness and patience** and taking turn.”*

*“Students gained important **listening skills**, overcoming deficits to focus.”*

*“Every single one of our experiences was designed around **fine motor strengthening** - painting with paint brushes, pincher grasp, picking up, gluing - fine motor strengthening exercises and activities.”*

Program Survey Teachers/Site Partners: Story Tapestries Impact on Students

In the Program Survey, teachers/site partners were asked an open-ended question, “What are some success stories from this program? These can be stories of the impact of the program on participants or positive feedback you received from participants.” Five responses were received and centered on skill development and student engagement, especially from students who do not typically speak.



*“High student interest/**engagement**, including some verbal production from students who do not usually verbalize.”*

*“Students’ **creative thinking and storytelling skills** were strengthened due to their participation in the creation of their class’s fairytale.”*

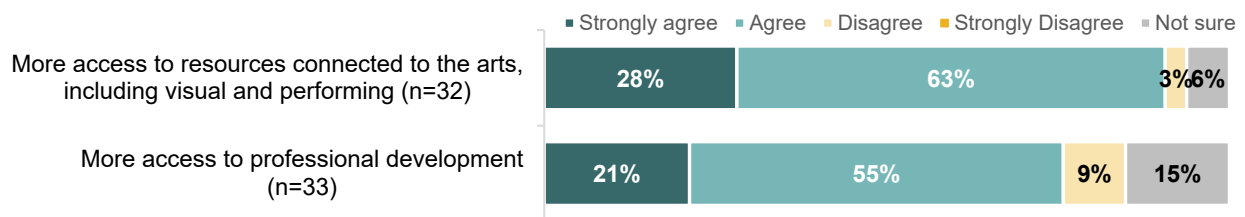
Objective 2: Impacts on Center/Schools and Their Staff

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 (89%) strongly agreed or agreed that Story Tapestries provided more resources connected to the arts and more than three-quarters (76%) strongly agreed or agreed that Story Tapestries increased their access to professional development. All 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 spoken language skills, fine and gross motor skills, and written language skills. Most staff reported the same for social and emotional skills (94%). All staff reported learning new teaching skills.

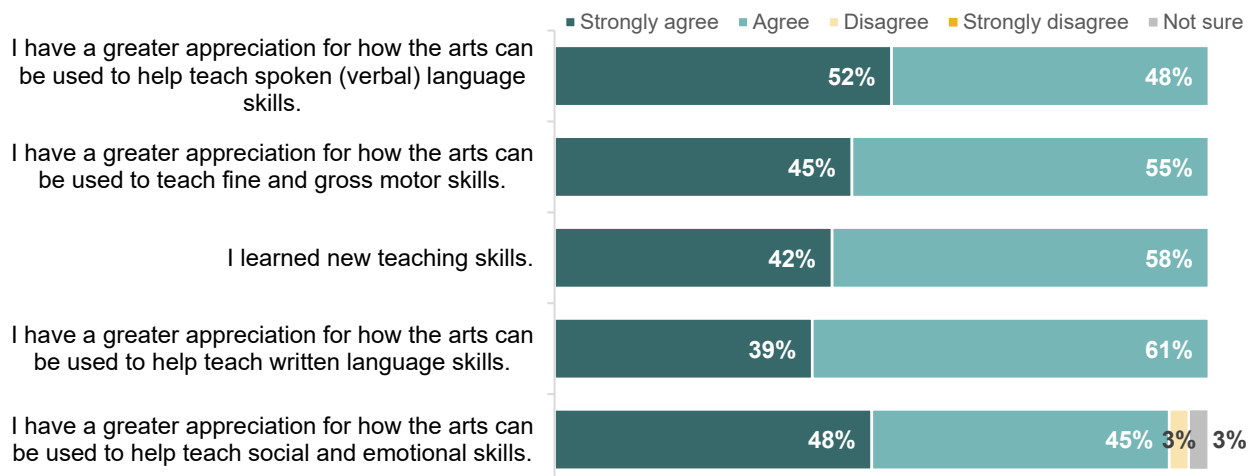
Most staff strongly agreed or agreed that Story Tapestries provided more access to and resources connected to the arts and professional development.

“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. All staff reported learning new teaching skills.

“Because of Story Tapestries...”



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

In the 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.

Overall, teachers expressed general satisfaction with the program and found the program staff helpful throughout the experience. Teachers reported that the program introduced them to new and creative ways to incorporate song, movement, and art into their teaching methods. For instance, some teachers reported that the program taught them new ways to transition students from one activity to another. Another teacher reported that movement activities, such as having students act out what they are going to say before saying it, was a helpful teaching method for keeping students engaged in the classroom. Some teachers reported that they enjoyed learning how to incorporate their own native language into their vocabulary and culture curriculum. Additionally, some teachers reported that the program helped them bond with their students through the telling and retelling of stories.

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



*“I feel **more motivation for creativity**, like using items we have on hand for art. This helped me to ask more questions to the children, to be more curious.”*

*“Now during circle time I make sure **music is always involved**.”*

*“It was nice to have an outside person come in and **bring something new**, and new catchy songs we can sing.”*

*“I would say at the beginning, it was quite intense, just because there was so much, there was so much happening already, before we started doing this experience, but towards the end of this experience, I did come to appreciate it, because it helped to give me as a professional, a **chance to let go and be less rigid and just to be creative** with my students. And I believe there was a bonding experience through that process.”*

Impacts on Center/School and Staff: Perspectives from Teaching Artist Discussion Group

Teaching artists reported enjoying working with students, expressing that while working with young children brings them joy, it also teaches them patience. Some teaching artists also reported enjoying seeing the growth of the students from year to year, as it allows them to see how their engagement with the students played a role in their personal growth. Other teaching artists, however, expressed concern about being unable to see the outcome of their influence on the students.

Exemplary Quotes Regarding Center/School Staff Impacts from Teaching Artist Discussion Group



*“Learning is a long game; **we may never see the complete influence or impact** of what we’re doing; layers of perseverance without instant gratification.”*

*“Working w/ babies and toddlers gives me **so much joy in my heart**; have so much fun and create new things on the spot.”*

*“So grateful to keep working w/ preschool age group; just being playful with little ones brings me **joy and healing**.”*

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 learning new teaching strategies (34%) with many mentioning elements of storytelling. Another third (31%) enjoyed the interactive activities, with many specifying that they enjoyed the use of breakout rooms and opportunities to practice with other attendees. Fifteen percent stated that they enjoyed everything about the workshop and about one-in-ten (12%) mentioned the way the session was facilitated or named the facilitator as the thing they enjoyed most.

Staff Perspectives on What They Enjoyed Most about WYS Professional Development Workshops	Percent of Respondents (n=141)
New teaching strategies	34%
Interactive activities	31%
Everything about the session	15%
Session facilitation	12%
Other	9%

Exemplary Quotes Regarding Highlights of Professional Development Workshops



*“I enjoyed the **storytelling** and approach each trainer took in relaying the information.”*

*“I loved the **kinesthetic learning** opportunities and modeling.”*

*“The **interactions** we had as whole. It was different and more child like to better understand how to be/act out like our children.”*

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 2024-25, as in previous years, engagement with this survey was low (n=5) and does not reflect the level of caregiver engagement in programming.

Caregiver Exit Survey

Of the five respondents to the Caregiver Exit Survey, four (80%) received an art kit, four (40%) reported participating in a family event, and one (20%) attended a parent workshop. Of those who received an art learning kit, 100% reported that their child enjoyed using it, that their child learned new things using the kit, and would like to get more kits from Story Tapestries in the future.

All respondents provided responses to the open-ended question about what their child(ren) enjoyed most. The activities themselves (dancing, painting, stories, music) and the teachers were each mentioned more than once.

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. All (100%) of the staff said they would recommend the program and all 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



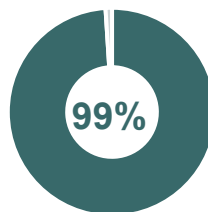
Center/school staff would recommend the Story Tapestries program to another center/school. (n=25)



Caregivers would recommend the Story Tapestries program to a friend. (n=26)

Lastly, almost all respondents (99%) 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=154)

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: 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, 12 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”). A quarter mentioned instructional or facilitation changes (25%) and another quarter mentioned wanting more time.

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



*“A template for teachers to follow and more **explicit directions** for teachers to make sure everyone is on the same page.”*

*“I suggest that the program provide teachers with a **checklist of benchmarks/milestones** that need to be completed before sessions. It would help keep everything together in my head!”*

*“Have **more programs** throughout the school year for our center. Maybe weekly or monthly.”*

Overall WYS Program Recommendations: Staff Discussion Group Perspective

While the teachers expressed general appreciation for the program and its artists, several suggestions for improvement were reported. First, some teachers noted the importance of session length, especially for the younger students. As such, two teachers requested shorter, but more frequent sessions. Some teachers also noted the importance of having a diverse program staff, and that the artists should represent and/or incorporate different cultural perspectives into their teaching. Some teachers suggested that the program should also engage the parents by sending the students home with resources such as the lyrics to the songs they are learning or conducting a parent workshop at the beginning of the program. Lastly, one teacher suggested providing an agenda before the beginning of each session, so that the teachers are aware and prepared for what the artist has planned for that day.

Exemplary Quotes Regarding Recommended Improvements to WYS from Staff



*“The session timing for the younger class was **too long** at first.”*

*“Maybe we can have **resource** to send them [parents] home with [like the lyrics].”*

*“We would like to see more artists who come from (represent) the cultures they speak of (culturally authentic), as well as **cultures the children experience at home** in their communities - for example, our kids love mariachi music.”*

*“Having an **agenda or checklist** for each visit would help us prepare and follow up better.”*

Overall WYS Program Recommendations: Teaching Artist Discussion Group Perspective

Teaching artists offered multiple recommendations for enhancing the program. They emphasized the importance of obtaining teacher buy-in and establishing clear expectations to boost engagement. To achieve this, they proposed conducting professional development sessions at the start of each school year, enabling teachers to gain deeper insight into teaching artists' instructional approaches and methodologies. Additionally, teaching artists recommended that Story Tapestries organize community-building professional development sessions where teaching artists can exchange best practices and learn from one another.

Exemplary Quotes Regarding Recommended Improvements from Teaching Artists



*“**Community building** within; sharing best practices; shows investment in the TAs; share songs, segways, verbal inflections.”*

*“**PDs for teachers prior to residency** defines and connects the intentionality of the program - teachers may have more energy and capacity at beginning of year.”*

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)?” Twenty-one 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”). Six respondents mentioned mixing up the topic areas with an eye towards cultural relevance and three discussed scheduling adjustments.

Exemplary Quotes Regarding Recommendations to Better Meet Student and Family Needs



*"I think the students would like to hear more **stories about math or other topics** instead of only literary/reading story topics."*

*"We should schedule either **earlier or later in the year** (not in winter) so that the lessons are not interrupted by snow days."*

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. Many (38%) of those who answered (n=47) this question noted there was nothing to improve about the training and were positive about the workshop. Some recommendations made by the remaining respondents were related to content ("Add more classroom management strategies") or programmatic/facilitation changes, with a handful of people requesting more breaks or other scheduling adjustments ("Maybe shorten some of the larger circle activities").

WYS Program Recommendations: WYS Program Survey (Mixed Audiences)

In the WYS Program Survey, there were 16 responses from participants related to program improvements. Almost all (75%) were positive non-responses; there was no clear theme between the remaining responses. Twenty-nine responses were collected from teaching artists who most commonly noted scheduling/timing suggestions, namely the need for more time/sessions. Of the five responses from site/center staff and administrators, two mentioned ways to adjust the content or focus of the session to better reflect the academic needs of their students.

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 (all were positive non-responses).

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 actively engaged early childhood educators, children, and their parents/families in the 2024-25 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 developmentally appropriate series 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 the majority of 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 their children have learned something new from Story Tapestries, particularly the Art Kits, this past year.

Satisfaction with Story Tapestries remains high across center/school staff and caregivers alike, with near unanimous agreement that 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 adjustments to the topic areas included in the curriculum; increased clarity in expectations and session materials; and when feasible, tailoring the scheduling, timing, and duration of the program to better meet site-specific needs.

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 youth.