

Reading Partnership for Parents Program

Evaluation Summary Report

2018-2021



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2018, the Reading Partnership began a three-year evaluation of the Reading Partnership for Black Parents (RPBP), a program based on their existing Reading Partnership for Parents (RPP) program. Targeted to families in the Kingston Galloway-Orton Park (KGO) community in the city of Toronto, these programs are 6 to 12-week play-based programs that promote social and emotional wellbeing through literacy activities involving both parents and their children. The program also supports the development of community among parents involved in the program.

The RPBP differs from RPP as it incorporates recognition of and responsiveness to the unique realities of Blackness and anti-Black racism. The RPBP program includes all-Black participants and facilitators, Black-centric reading materials, and cultural identity and celebration. With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, The Reading Partnership adapted to move to virtual program delivery.

This report represents a summary of the evaluation of the in-person RPBP and the RPP online program offerings and is based on five evaluation reports produced since 2018. The report is divided into seven sections:

- An introduction,
- An overview of the Reading Partnership for Black Parents program,
- An overview of the evaluation methodology,
- Quantitative highlights from each year of the evaluation,
- Key themes from the evaluation findings and their implications
- Program legacy and lessons learned throughout the evaluation, and
- Next steps for the RPBP and RPP programs.

The Reading Partnership for Black Parents Program

The Reading Partnership for Black Parents (RPBP) is a literacy program that promotes social-emotional wellbeing for Black families. Specifically, the program aims to serve Black parents with children ages 4 to 6 attending school in the Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park (KGO) region of the GTA. The objectives of the program are to equip parents with the knowledge, confidence and tools to teach their children to read, within a culturally-responsive environment that accounts for, and celebrates, Blackness in all of its diversity.

For parents, the program is expected to contribute to the development of knowledge, skills, confidence, and capacity in supporting their children's learning in literacy and beyond. Parents are also expected to gain a better awareness of community resources and develop a greater sense of community.

For children, the program is expected to result in improved attitudes and greater initiative related to reading, as well as enhanced reading skills. For both parents and children, the program is also intended to lead to greater connection

to their cultural identities, improved knowledge of Black cultures, and an increased understanding of culturally-reflective learning.

With the evolution of the program and the transition to virtual programming due to Covid-19, small adaptations have occurred to the components of the program. Overall, however, sessions of the RPBP program contained the following:

- o Shared mealtime (in-person only),
- o Nia Circle, a space to highlight Black leaders throughout history (in-person only),
- o Group check-in to review the previous week's work,
- o Separate instructional time for parents and children,
- o Interactive time between parents and children,
- o A facilitator-led story time; and
- o Mini lessons, where strategies are practiced at home throughout the week.

Outreach through schools and community organizations in the KGO community, as well as the development and expansion of their 'Train the Trainer' program, allowed The Reading Partnership to deliver the RPBP or RPP online program to 12 cohorts from the Fall of 2018 through to the Winter of 2021, reaching approximately 130 families.

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation of the RPBP and RPP online programs included both a process and outcome evaluation. The process evaluation, which allows for a description of the program as it is being implemented and examines the satisfaction with the program, aimed to answer the following questions:

- o Who are the participants being reached by the program?
- o Are the components of the program being implemented as intended?
- o What are the stakeholders' experiences of the program?
- o What adaptations can be implemented to improve the program?

The outcome evaluation, which examines the changes and benefits experienced as a result of program involvement, aimed to answer the following questions:

- o Do parents experience improved knowledge and confidence related to supporting their children's reading?
- o Do children experience improved knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to reading?
- o Do participants experience a greater sense of community?

The evaluation utilized multiple methods including program documentation, surveys, child assessment, individual interviews, and focus group interviews. Overall, 89 parents were involved in some aspect of the evaluations.

Quantitative Highlights

This section highlights some of the key quantitative survey findings from each of the years in which the evaluation was conducted. For each year, highlights from the quantitative data are presented for participant characteristics, key findings related to the process evaluation, and key findings related to the outcome evaluation.

Nearly all of the 89 evaluation participants across the three years identified as female and were typically between the ages of 30 – 49 years of age. While a majority of participants identified as Black, African, or Caribbean, there was diversity among the racial composition of parents. Diversity was also evident among participants' citizenship status and household family structure. While diversity was also evident for annual household income, many participants did identify incomes indicating low-income status.

In terms of findings related to program satisfaction, the consistent findings across the three years of the evaluation were that parents were extremely satisfied with the facilitators and components of the program and reported feeling comfortable, welcomed, and respected in the group. Parents also reported that their children enjoyed the program and that they themselves would recommend the program to others.

With respect to outcomes, the quantitative findings consistently demonstrated that parents reported improved knowledge and confidence in their skills and abilities as well as those of their children. Almost every parent who completed the post-survey reported having increased confidence in supporting their children's reading and being able to extend their learnings from the program to help with other homework as well. Parents also indicated they would continue to use the tools, resources, and techniques that they learned in the program. An overwhelming majority of parents also reported their children had more positive attitudes towards reading, took more initiative at independent reading, and had greater confidence as a result of the program.

While a greater focus on this was seen in the earlier in-person program offerings, there is some evidence that the program contributed to improvements in racial identity among participants, although these findings are not as strong and conclusive as the other process and outcome findings.

Summary of Evaluation Findings

Process Evaluation

Participant Reach, Characteristics, and Goals for Participation: 130 families were engaged in the RPBP and RPP online programs over the course of the three years, plus an additional 50 children were served through child-minding services during in-person program offerings; the three-year evaluation engaged 89 parents, many who stated joining the program to gain confidence, tools, and techniques for supporting their children with reading.

Participant Satisfaction: Parents reported extremely high levels of satisfaction with the programs and their components, including the program atmosphere, program facilitators, materials and resources, and the content, structure, and the administration of the program.

Outcome Evaluation

Parent Knowledge and its Application: Parents reported that they gained knowledge from their participation in the program that helped them to support their children's reading and other learning and noted they intended to continue to use this knowledge going forward.

Parent Confidence: Almost every parent reported greater confidence in teaching their children to read and also reported feeling more confident as a parent and teacher.

Parent Sense of Community and Culture: The program also contributed to the development of a supportive community among parents, although this sense of community was stronger in later online cohorts; the cultural focus for Black families was identified as an important feature of the program and a stronger connection to Black identity was noted among many.

Child Outcomes: Parents reported improvements in their children's confidence levels, attitudes towards reading, and initiative, also noting improvements in reading abilities, which was supported through reading assessments demonstrating improvements on various dimension of reading abilities.

Key Learnings

Overall, the implementation of the RPBP and RPP online programs and the three-year evaluation suggest a number of key learnings for the program and beyond. Some of these key learnings are:

- The programs were effective and much appreciated.
- While the Covid-19 pandemic provided many challenges, creative outreach allowed the RPBP and RPP online programs to reach 130 families over the three-year project.
- There is a need for both in-person and virtual programming.
- Maintaining the programs as free programs is necessary for the target population.
- Continuing to offer the RPBP program, with Black facilitators for Black families, is important.
- Parents would like to see the programs expanded for continued development and continued benefits.

Next Steps

The Reading Partnership has given careful consideration and extensive planning into moving their programs forward to build on what they have learned over the previous three years and to continue to meet the needs of their target population. Some of these next steps include:

- A return to in-person programming, while continuing to offer online programming.
- Greater digitization of the program content to further improve the virtual experience.
- Prioritizing outreach to Black families and ensuring relevant, accessible, and engaging cultural content.
- Expanding the 'Train the Trainer' component, which will in turn expand the program's reach.

01 // INTRODUCTION

The Reading Partnership envisions a world in which “every child...receives the early support they need....so they can reach their full potential and succeed in school, work & life”.

The Reading Partnership is a charitable organization with a mission “to create and deliver literacy-focused programs and resources that empower children in the early years, and their families, to be successful at all stages of life”. It aims to primarily serve residents of the Kingston Galloway/Orton Park (KGO) community of Toronto, Ontario.

In 2018, the Reading Partnership embarked on a three-year evaluation of their program: Reading Partnership for Black Parents (RPBP), a program based on the organization’s an existing program – the Reading Partnership for Parents (RPP). The evaluation was in collaboration with the Youth Research and Evaluation Exchange (YouthREX).

This report is a summary of the main evaluation findings and learnings from this three-year evaluation.

From the Reading Partnership for Parents to the Reading Partnership for Black Parents Program

The *Reading Partnership for Parents (RPP)* is a 6-12-week play-based program that promotes social-emotional wellbeing and literacy skills through playful co-learning activities with parents and children. Parents leave the sessions with knowledge, tools, and confidence – thus equipping them with the intellectual, relational, and material resources to fulfill their role as literacy teacher to their children.



While oriented around the promotion of literacy, the program simultaneously functions as a community space for parents who are, predominantly, marginalized through systems of race, class, and immigration. While learning literacy skills, participants are also accessing a forum facilitative of peer relationships that provide mutual social, emotional, and practical support and learning through shared, as well as divergent, experiences and perspectives.

In 2018, the *Reading Partnerships for Black Parents (RPBP)* was launched as a specialized edition of RPP. In collaboration with Black parents and community partners, the offering maintains the rigor and academic focus of RPP, but additionally incorporates recognition of, and responsiveness to, the unique realities of Blackness and anti-Black racism. Grounded in the diverse cultures of Black families, RPBP’s special features include Black-only participation, all-Black facilitators, Black-centric reading material, and cultural consumption and celebration.

Pivoting to Online Programming

Faced with the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, The Reading Partnership had to pivot the delivery of its programming from in-person to online. With this move, RPBP was adapted to maximize delivery in the virtual environment and, resultingly, conformed more closely to its generalized counterpart (i.e., RPP).

Therefore, this report is more accurately a summary of the evaluations from the earlier in-person RPBP programs and of the online RPP programs, including but not limited to the RPBP variety. Where possible, the present report will highlight findings related specifically to the RPBP, as well as those related to the online RPP program.

Organization of the Report

The data for this report are based on five evaluation reports that have been produced by the Reading partnership collaboratively with YouthREX and other independent evaluators since 2018 (please see list of these reports in Table 2).

- The first section introduces this report, the second section provides a detailed description of the RPBP program while the third section provides an overview of the evaluation methodology of the three-year evaluation.
- The fourth section of the report provides highlights from the quantitative findings from each year of the evaluation (2018 to 2021).
- The fifth section discusses the key themes from an integrative summary of the evaluation findings and the implications of these findings for RPP while the sixth section discussed the legacy of the program with a focus on the key lessons learned throughout the evaluation. This section also offers recommendations for future program offerings and future evaluations.
- The last section, the seventh section of the report concludes with suggestions for next steps for the RPP program.

02 // READING PARTNERSHIP FOR BLACK PARENTS PROGRAM

Overview

The Reading Partnership for Black Parents (RPBP) is a literacy program that promotes social-emotional wellbeing for Black families. Specifically, the program aims to serve Black parents with children ages 4-6 attending school in the Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park (KGO) region of the GTA.

The objectives of the program are to equip parents with the knowledge, confidence and tools to teach their children to read, within a culturally-responsive environment that accounts for, and celebrates, Blackness in all of its diversity.

Established in 2018 as a specialized version of RPP and developed in collaboration with Black community partners and parents, the program builds upon the strengths of children and parents (more broadly caregivers), facilitates learning through play, provides much needed support to parents who face barriers, and centres and promotes pride in Blackness.

Parents establish peer-relationships, share their diverse experiences and perspectives, learn from each other as they become more actively engaged in their children's learning; and develop/strengthen culturally relevant skills and knowledge to enhance their own and their children's wellbeing.

Why is a Literacy Program Important for Black Youth?

Canadian statistics confirm a positive relationship between literacy skill level and household income (Frontier College, 2017). This explains, in part, the intergenerational nature of poverty - since a child from a low-income household has reduced access to literacy skills in the early years, which then predicts a path of reduced earning potential over the lifetime.

As such, enhancing literacy can play a critical role in interrupting the cycle of poverty.

The Reading Partnership for Black Parents (RPBP) intervenes in this context, to facilitate enhanced literacy for families who are subject to poverty and other relevant forms of marginalization.

While low income undermines literacy access, so too does anti-Black racism, with evidence suggesting that Black and racialized youth are negatively impacted at three key sites of literacy within the school system - 1) a curriculum that implicitly diminishes the intelligences, moralities, and accomplishments of non-White people; 2) standardized literacy testing, which tethers 'literacy' standards to norms of Whiteness; and 3) the conflation of 'classroom behaviour' and 'educational competence', which disadvantages Black youth who are frequently constructed as 'problems' within the classroom (YouthREX, 2021).

RPBP functions to compensate for these deficiencies, ones that disproportionately bear upon Black and poor youth, in order to interrupt the perpetuation of marginalization. RPBP programming is supported by academic literature on extracurricular literacy programming for Black, racialized and low-income youth - which finds that a strengths-based approach, cultural relevancy, and the engagement of parents/guardians are best practices (YouthREX, 2021).

By creating a forum for entire families to come together - in a space that celebrates Blackness and centres Black safety, relevance, and community-building - RPBP supports the strengthening of literacy skills within an environment that is also responsive to, and compensatory for, the realities of anti-Black racism.

Why Kingston Galloway/Orton Park?

Since it was founded in 2011, The Reading Partnership has developed and offered numerous resources and programs to residents of the Kingston Galloway/Orton Park (KGO), a geography inclusive of four City of Toronto 'Neighbourhood Improvement Areas' (NIAs): Morningside; Woburn; Scarborough Village;

and West Hill. The 'NIA' designation refers to the disproportionate levels of poverty and other negative outcomes to which residents of the region are subject - attributable not to individual but rather societal deficiencies.

According to KGO's 2016 City of Toronto neighbourhood profile, over 70% of individuals within KGO identify as visible minorities. In a context of systemic racism, a confluence of interrelated factors, such as employment discrimination, intergenerational poverty, 'English as a second language' status, credentialism, and challenges associated with immigration, erect barriers to the wellbeing of non-White and immigrant communities in Canada. It is, therefore, unsurprising that over 10% of KGO residents are experiencing unemployment, and close to 40% of children 17 years of age and under are living in households that are at or below the poverty level. In fact, KGO has one of the highest concentrations of low-income housing residents in the GTA (Price, 2018). As such, the 'NIA' status functions as a call to action for governments and other actors, to restore to these regions the opportunity and access to well-being that they have been systematically denied.

Why Literacy Programming?

"Literacy is both a human right as well as an autonomous set of communicative skills that all people are capable of acquiring in order to understand their place within specific social and cultural contexts and to improve the overall well-being of themselves and their communities" (Price, 2018, p. 25).

Low literacy rates have been a long-standing concern for the KGO community. This, too, is a result of marginalizing factors, since Canadian statistics confirm a positive relationship between literacy skill level and household income (Frontier College, 2017). This explains, in part, the intergenerational nature of poverty - since a child from a low-income household has reduced access to literacy skills in the early years, which then predicts a path of reduced earning potential over the lifetime.

Furthermore, as compared to the rest of the GTA, KGO has one of the highest concentrations of

newcomer populations who have ESL (English as a second language) literacy needs (Price, 2018). While living in a multi-linguistic household proffers many benefits upon youth, it also further disadvantages them with respect to English literacy - since, as compared to their counterparts in other neighbourhoods, their parents are less likely to possess the anglo-fluency that would allow them to provide household support with writing and reading in English.

EQAO results, provincial standardized testing of all students in the province of Ontario, demonstrate that there are literacy gaps for students who attend schools in the KGO community⁴. For elementary students, the percentage of students who met or exceeded the provincial standard ranged from a low of 40% (in both Grades 3 and 6) to a high of 93% (in Grade 3) or 83% (in Grade 6). That means, in both Grades 3 and 6, in some schools as many as 60% of students were not meeting the provincial standard for reading.

The results from the 2018 Grade 9 Ontario Secondary Student Literacy Test (OSSLT) are cause for even greater concern, with approximately 80% of students who are enrolled in applied courses in a KGO secondary school not meeting the provincial literacy standard. Even for students enrolled in the academic course, there are still 32% of students who are not meeting the provincial standard for literacy.

Following from the above, as well as other factors related to marginalization by race, income, and immigration status, just over a quarter of individuals in the KGO community have secondary school as their highest level of education, with an additional 15% having no certificate or degree.

Literacy programming reflective of the great social, economic, and cultural diversity and richness of the KGO community is needed (Price, 2018). While this region is disproportionately exposed to systemic factors that undermine individual and collective potential, The Reading Partnership aims to compensate for this denial of opportunity, to provide

⁴This data was provided by The Reading Partnership based on 2018 EQAO school-based results.

the resources and supports that will facilitate the actualization of every youth's potential – in literacy and beyond.

Intended Outcomes

A logic model that outlines the program components and outcomes was developed at the beginning of the three-year evaluation (see Appendix A). Specifically, it was intended that the program would contribute to the following:

- Increased knowledge and confidence of parents in supporting their children's learning;
- Increased access to literary resources in the community;
- Improved understanding among parents of their impact on their child's learnings;
- Increased capacity of parents in supporting their children's learning beyond reading;
- Increased reading skills in children;
- Improved attitudes and initiative related to reading;
- Improved connection to cultural identity, knowledge of Black cultures, and understanding of culturally-reflective learning; and
- Increased sense of community.

Session Details

In-person cohorts typically unfolded over 12 weeks in 3-hour weekly sessions. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the movement of the program to the virtual realm, cohorts were comprised of 75-minute sessions over 6 weeks.

While somewhat varied over the course of the three years, session components included the following:

- Shared mealtime (in-person only);
- Nia Circle, a space to highlight Black leaders throughout history (in-person only);

- Group check-in to review the previous week's work;
- Separate instructional time for parents and children;
- Interactive time between parents and children;
- A facilitator-led story time; and
- Mini lessons, where strategies are practiced at home throughout the week.

Each of the program components contained various Africentric cultural elements. However, some of these specificities were re-worked in response to the movement of the program online. For example, while RPBP in its online version maintained Black-only participation, all-Black facilitators, and Black-centric reading material, the Nia Circle was eliminated due to the reduction in sessional time.

Outreach

Connecting with Black parents about the RPBP program has been an ongoing challenge for TRP.

In the first evaluation of the RPBP program (2018), staff discussed some of the challenges of school-based outreach. At the time, TRP had designed their first promotional flyer bearing the program's name: Reading Partnership for Black Parents.

The decision to use the term 'Black' had been widely discussed among TRP and school-based committee members (made up of Superintendents, principals, teachers, reading coaches, and community support workers from participating schools) prior to their engagement in schools. Specifically, some school-based committee members worried about the potential backlash from non-Black parents who wanted to participate in the program and would view the selection criteria as exclusionary - a concern noted particularly with respect to those non-Black parents raising Black or mixed-race children.

There were also concerns about Black families feeling targeted in a negative way. Recognizing the history of deficit-based politics and narratives within schools and non-profit work that have targeted Black and other racialized communities, TRP understood the

importance of communicating the program through genuine and thoughtful channels.

TRP subsequently implemented the following strategies:

1. Teachers referred the program to parents with children that they believed could benefit from, and qualify for, the program; teachers typically sent an application form home in the child's backpack.

Issues that arose, included:

- o Some (non-Black) teachers were uncomfortable with suggesting a program for 'Black families' to Black families, because they did not want to appear racist or were unsure about how parents would respond;
- o Some (non-Black) teachers had challenges identifying Black children in their classroom. For example, one teacher hesitated in giving an application to an Ethiopian parent, due to uncertainty about whether this person qualified as 'Black'; and also struggled to know whether a Sri Lankan child could be identified as Black.

Conversely, some (non-Black) teachers had no challenges promoting the program and identified its benefits in supporting their work in the classroom. As one teacher remarked, it was "making my job easier." Similarly, Black teachers expressed no discomfort with promoting the program to Black families, although some did express discomfort around discussing the program with their peers.

2. TRP directly engaged parents by canvassing kindergarten and Grade 1 areas after school.

TRP staff and volunteers spoke directly to parents and initiated on-the-spot registration. Face-to-face discussion proved to be a more fruitful strategy, because parents preferred to have a dialogue about the program before deciding upon registration. Over time, in-person canvassing became the predominant outreach method for communicating the RPPB program to Black families in the KGO area. This strategy was adopted by some teachers who initiated conversations with families about the program.

Other teachers, however, were reluctant to canvas beyond sending a flyer or application home.

Program Expansion: 'Train the Trainer'

In order to expand the reach of the program, TRP developed a 'Train the Trainer' program - which equips other organizations with the knowledge and tools to deliver the Reading Partnership for Parents and the Reading Partnership for Black Parents programs independently.

TRP launched this training program in the Spring of 2019 with the Boys and Girls Club of East Scarborough, which ran two RPP in-person programs in 2019. It has since expanded to include training in the delivery of virtual programming.

Covid-19 Lockdown: Challenges & Adaptations

Outreach

In response to Covid-19 lockdowns in early 2020, TRP transitioned its programming online. During this turbulent time, all Spring 2020 in-person RPPB programs were deferred. Participants registered in those cohorts were put on a waitlist, and given first priority in the next two online Summer and Fall RPP cohorts, mitigating the need for outreach at that time.

When TRP needed to resume outreach, schools were under pressure to reorganize in the wake of Covid-19 regulations and health risks, and were unable to continue their previous commitments to the program.

Instead of collaboration with schools, TRP turned to community organizations to support not only in outreach, but also delivery. After the movement of the program online, the 'Train the Trainer' program - which had been initiated in 2019 in the context of in-person programming, and educated organizations on the independent execution of RPP/RPPB programming - was re-formulated for the virtual context. Working with the Boys & Girls Club of East Scarborough's (BGCES) EarlyOn Child & Family Centres ("EO Centre"), as well as the EO Centre at Scarborough's Centre for Healthy Communities

(SCHC), the virtual ‘Train the Trainer’ program empowered community staff to deliver the online program independently.

BGCES and SCHC have proved valuable partners in expanding the Reading Partnership for Parents programming during a particularly challenging time for outreach and engagement. The non-Black composition of their staff, however, precluded their facilitation of the RPBP program. Thus, while the BGCES and SCHC cohorts were of the general-entry RPP variety, Black families were given priority in outreach and registration. Black educators from the community were hired and empowered through the ‘Train the Trainer’ program to deliver the RPBP virtually.

Because of the restrictions on in-person outreach, TRP expanded its outreach efforts to virtual networks, engaging Black parents through Facebook communities with largely Black-identifying peoples. While this strategy proved more useful in connecting with Black parents, these connections were not focused in the KGO area, the organization’s primary catchment area. As it turned out, reaching Black families from the KGO area for RPBP is far more challenging without community anchors like schools that bring everyone together. Subsequently, online RPBP/ RPP cohorts have not had as strong of a KGO presence as in-person cohorts.

Sessions

Covid-19 led to the program’s transition into the virtual realm. Given the particular challenges of remote learning - including distractions in the home environment, online-communication fatigue, inability to provide supplementary benefits, such as food - cohorts were reduced to 75-minute sessions over 6 weeks.

The ‘Nia Circle’ component of RPBP - which highlights Black leaders throughout history, as a mechanism for promoting recognition of, and pride in, Black achievement - was therefore cut out of the session to save time.

Participation

Table 1 outlines the number of families served via RPP/RPBP for all of the cohorts included within the evaluation. The table specifies the number of Black families served.

The total number of participants may be larger than the number of families as families could have included more than one of their children (i.e., more than one child enrolled and/or used the child-minding service).

Partners

The Reading Partnership has benefited from the support of organizational partners. The commitment of these partners testifies to TRP’s positive impact in its areas of operation, and the recognition of this by organizations that are similarly invested in supporting the wellbeing of Black families.

Outreach Support

Toronto District School Board
Toronto Public Library
East Scarborough Storefront

Program Hosts (via ‘Train the Trainer’)

Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities
Boys and Girls Club of East Scarborough
Independent Educators

Technological Support

Centennial College - Wearable, Interactive and Mobile Technology Access Centre in Health

Funders

Ministry of Children Community and Social Services
United Way Greater Toronto
Covid-19 Ontario Black Community Emergency Fund
Pinball Clemons Foundation

Evaluation Support

The Youth Research and Evaluation Exchange (YouthREX)
Tanika McLeod (Independent Consultant)

Table 1. Families Served Through RPP/RPBP (2018-2021)

Program Year	Mode of Delivery	Cohorts	Programs Covered	# Families Served	# Black Families Served
2018	In-person	Fall - St. Margaret's	RPBP	10	10
2019	In-person	Spring - St. Margaret's Spring - St. Margaret's Spring - Willow Park JPS Fall - St. Margaret's Fall - Willow Park JPS Fall - West End Expansion	RPBP	56	56
2020	Online	Summer - Virtual Fall - Virtual	Combined RPP and RPBP	28	19
2021	Online	Winter - SCHC Virtual Winter - BGCES Virtual Winter - RPBP Virtual	RPP and RPBP	22	13

03 // EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

- Child assessments
- Individual & Focus group interviews

Ethical Considerations

YouthREX's evaluation protocol for youth programs has been reviewed and cleared by the York University's Human Research Participants Review Committee. While YouthREX was not involved in all three-years of the evaluation, the evaluations that were conducted by other independent evaluators continued to adhere to the evaluation manual produced by YouthREX to guide RPBP and RPP's evaluation process. The ethical values in this manual included standards and regulations for informed consent, no implied coercion for participation, anonymity, and confidentiality.

The evaluation methodology of the RPBP and RPP online programs included a process and outcome evaluation.

Process Evaluation: A process evaluation allows for a careful description of a program's actual implementation and whether services are delivered in accordance with program design. The process evaluation of the RPBP and RPP online programs focused on answering the questions of who the program was reaching, how participants were receiving the program components, and the satisfaction with the program from a variety of stakeholders.

Table 2 outlines the overarching process evaluation questions and the corresponding sources of data.

Outcome Evaluation: An outcome evaluation measures the extent to which a program does what it is intended to do and determines whether a program is meeting its objectives. The outcome evaluation of the RPBP and RPP programs examined the changes and benefits that participants experienced as a result of their involvement in the program.

Table 3 lists the overarching outcomes evaluation questions and sources of data.

Data Sources for Current Evaluation Report: This evaluation report is an integrative summary of five evaluation reports that were completed over three years (2018 – 2021) described in Table 4. These contributory evaluations utilized multiple methods to make room for multiple perspectives including the following:

- A review of RRP program documentation
- Surveys



Table 2. Process Evaluation Questions and Sources of Data

Process Evaluation Questions	Evaluation Source*
<p>Who are the participants being reached by the program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the program reaching its target population? What are the participants' characteristics? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent Surveys/Intake Forms Parent Surveys/Intake Forms Parent Focus Groups Child Assessments
<p>Are the program components being implemented as intended?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program Documentation (i.e., Leader Logs)
<p>What are the stakeholders' experiences of the program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents Children (as perceived by parents) Program Staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent Post-Survey Parent Focus Groups Parent Post-Survey Parent Focus Groups Staff Interviews
<p>What adaptations can be implemented to improve the program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What challenges have been identified? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent Post-Survey Parent Focus Groups Staff Interviews

*Not all sources of data were used every year. See the individual reports for more information.

Table 3. Outcome Evaluation Questions and Sources of Data

Outcome Evaluation Questions	Evaluation Source*
What benefits have participants experienced after their involvement with the program?	
Do parents experience improved knowledge and confidence related to their children’s reading?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Post-Survey • Parent Focus Groups • Staff Interviews
Do children experience improved knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to reading?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Post-Survey • Parent Focus Groups • Child Assessments • Staff Interviews • Staff Assessments of Children
Do participants experience a greater sense of community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Post-Survey • Parent Focus Groups

*Not all sources of data were used every year. See the individual reports for more information.

Table 4. Overview of the Evaluation Reports

Program Year	Mode of Delivery	Programs Covered	Number of Parents Included in Evaluation
2018	In-person	RPBP	9
2019	In-person	RPBP	16
2020b	Online	Combined RPP and RPBP	14
2020a	Online	Combined RPP and RPBP	14
2021	Online	RPP and RPBP	36

04 // HIGHLIGHTS OF EVALUATION FINDINGS

This section highlights some of the key quantitative survey findings from each of the years in which the evaluation was conducted. The findings in this section are based upon the annual evaluation reports; in some instances, raw data was examined for clarification or specificity. As the results presented here are highlights, they do not represent all of the evaluation data collected. For further information, please see each of the annual evaluation reports.

For each year, highlights from the quantitative data are presented for participant characteristics, key findings related to the process evaluation, and key findings related to the outcome evaluation.

We tried to present consistent data across each year. However, as the program evolved, so too did the evaluation resulting in changes to the data collection tools used throughout the years.

Therefore, not all data presented here will be found in every year.

2018 Quantitative Evaluation Highlights: RPBP

Process Evaluation Highlights

Participant Characteristics: One cohort was involved in the evaluation during the introduction of the RPBP program in 2018, with nine parents participating in the post-program survey.

Gender & Age: All participants who completed this survey identified as female, with the majority reporting being between 30 – 39 years of age ($n = 8, 88.9\%$).

Race: All participants who responded to the question about racial background ($n = 7$) identified themselves as Black, African, or Caribbean. Participants' ethnic

identity was varied with participants reporting their ethnicities as Jamaican, Barbadian, Congolese, Sudanese, Guyanese, Ethiopian, and Spanish.

Canadian Citizenship Status: Over half of the participants were Canadian citizens ($n = 6, 66.7\%$) by birth or naturalization and, among those who were not born in Canada, most had lived in Canada for over 10 years ($n = 6, 75\%$).

Household Income: Of participants who reported their household income ($n = 8$), all participants reported an annual income of no more than \$41,000, with a range of three to five people being supported by this income.

Household Family Structure: Half of the parents ($n = 4, 50\%$) reported being single parent families.

Table 5. 2018 Evaluation Participant Snapshot

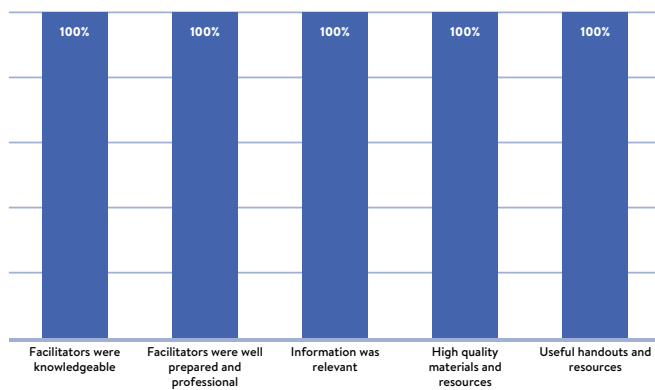
All identified as female	
All identified as Black or African	
90% were between 30-49 years of age	
2/3 were Canadian citizens by birth or naturalization	
3/4 had lived in Canada more than 10 years	
All reported household incomes of less than \$41 000	
50% were single-parent families	

Client Satisfaction Evaluation Highlights: The findings related to the process evaluation revealed a very high level of satisfaction with the RPBP program.

- o As shown in Figure 1, participants were extremely satisfied with the staff and components of the program, including the facilitators, information, materials, and other resources. In fact, all participants rated these components positively.

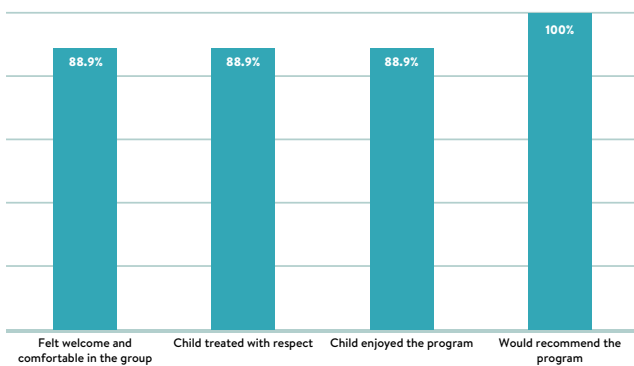
With respect to the length of the program overall, participants were almost equally divided between feeling the program length was just right ($n = 4, 44.4\%$) and feeling the program length was too short ($n = 5, 55.6\%$).

Figure 1. Percentage of Parents who Agreed or Strongly Agreed with Statements Related to Program Components (2018)



- As shown in Figure 2, the atmosphere of the group was also rated extremely high, with participants reporting feeling comfortable, welcomed, and respected within the group.
- Parents also reported their children enjoyed the program and that they themselves, would recommend the program to others.

Figure 2. Percentage of Parents who Agreed or Strongly Agreed with Statements Related to Program Atmosphere and Personal Satisfaction (2018)

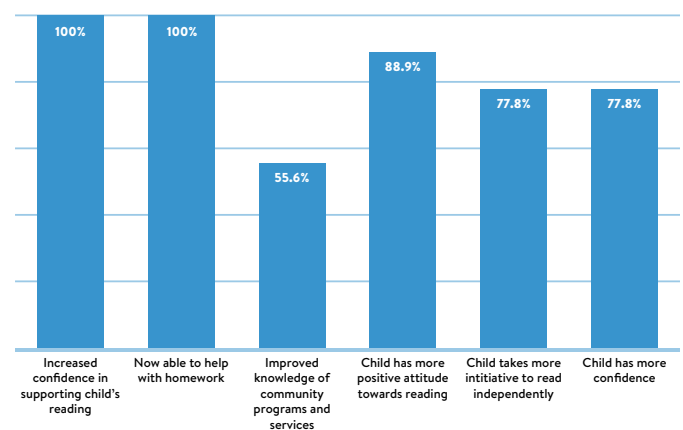


Outcome Evaluation Highlights

The 2018 evaluation of the RBPB program revealed that parents and children benefited from their involvement in the program, particularly in terms of their confidence levels.

- As can be seen in Figure 3, parents reported increased confidence in their own skills and abilities as well as those of their children.
- Parents also reported their own knowledge had improved and positive changes in their children’s attitudes towards reading.

Figure 3. Percentage of Parents who Agreed or Strongly Agreed with Statements Related to Program Outcomes (2018)



As can be seen in Figure 3, approximately half of the parents reported improved knowledge of community programs and services.

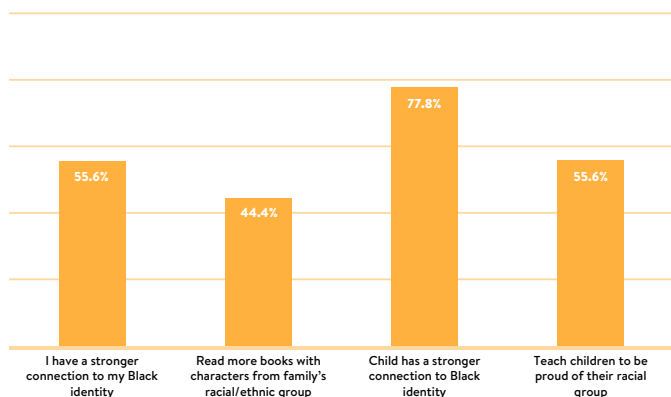
- This does not necessarily imply that parents did not gain this knowledge because the program did not provide it.
- An alternative explanation is that parents already had this knowledge, thereby resulting in no improvement. After all, the majority of parents in this cohort who were involved in the program did report living in Canada for more than 10 years.

Given the program’s target population of Black families, improvements in one’s racial identity is an important outcome for the RBPB program. The findings related to this outcome are somewhat mixed.

- As shown in Figure 4, approximately half of the respondents reported having a stronger connection to one’s Black identity and reading more books that contain characters representative of their family’s racial and ethnic group.
- While the majority of parents did report that they felt their children had a stronger connection to their own Black identity, only half of the parents reported teaching their children to be proud of their racial group as a result of their involvement in the program.
- As with knowledge of community programs and services, this does not necessarily imply that these things did not happen. If

parents already felt a strong connection to their Black identity and already taught their children to be proud of their Black identity prior to joining the program, then ratings about whether their involvement in the program led to improvements in these areas would not be reported.

Figure 4. Percentage of Parents who Agreed or Strongly Agreed with Statements Related to Racial Identity (2018)



their racial background as Filipino. Again, participants' ethnic identity was varied and included Jamaican, Sudanese, Guyanese, Filipino, and Canadian.

Canadian Citizenship Status: Citizenship status was approximately split equally, with 38.5% ($n = 5$) of participants reported not being Canadian citizens, 26.7% reporting being Canadian citizens by naturalization, and 26.7% being born in Canada.

Length of Time in Canada: Participants in this evaluation cohort reported living in Canada for a shorter period of time than participants in the 2018 evaluation cohort. An equal number of participants reported living in Canada for five years or less ($n = 6$, 42.9%) and for 11 years or longer ($n = 6$, 42.9%); the remaining participants who responded to this question reported living in Canada between six and ten years ($n = 2$, 14.3%).

Household Income: Almost half of the participants reported household incomes of less than \$21,000 ($n = 5$, 41.7%), while another 20% reported incomes between \$21,000 - \$41,000. The remaining four participants (33.3%) reported annual household income of more than \$41,000. The number of people that this income supports ranged from 2 to 9 people.

Household Family Structure: Seven parents (46.7%) reported living in single-parent households, with one parent stating this was due to her husband still living outside of Canada.

2019 Quantitative Evaluation Highlights: RPBP

Process Evaluation Highlights

Participant Characteristics: Two cohorts, comprised of 16 parents, completed post-surveys during the 2019 RPBP 12 week in-person program.

Gender: Most of the respondents of the survey were female ($n = 13$, 86.7%), although two participants identified themselves as male ($n = 2$, 13.3%).

Age: There was greater variation in age categories in the 2019 evaluation cohorts than that in the 2018 cohort. Three participants (20%) identified themselves between the ages of 20 – 29 years, eight participants (53.3%) were between 30 – 39 years, and two participants (13.3%) were between 40 – 49 years. One participant identified being under 20 years of age (6.7%) and one participant reported being over 50 years of age (6.7%).

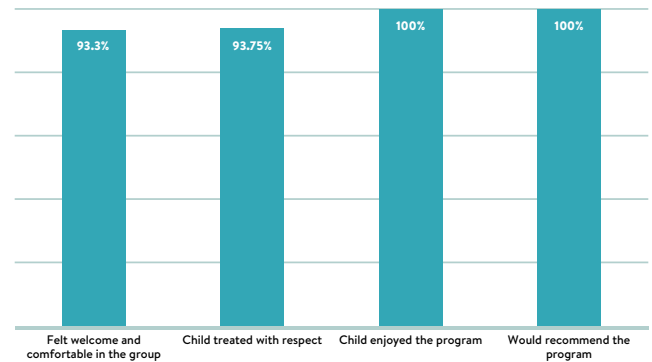
Race: Nearly all participants identified themselves as Black or African ($n = 12$, 75%), with another three participants stating they were Ethiopian or from Horn of Africa (18.75%); one participant (6.3%) identified

Table 6. 2019 Evaluation Participant Snapshot

9/10 identified as female	
3/4 identified as Black or African	
2/3 were between 30-49 years of age	
3/5 were Canadian citizens by birth or naturalization	
3/4 had lived in Canada more than 10 years	
50% reported household incomes of less than \$31 000	
50% were single-parent families	

- Only one participant (6.3%) reported feeling the program was too long.
- Parents from the 2019 evaluation cohort also reported feeling very welcome and comfortable in the group and that their children were treated with respect in the program.
- All parents who responded to the survey reported that their children enjoyed the program and they themselves would recommend the program to others (see Figure 6).

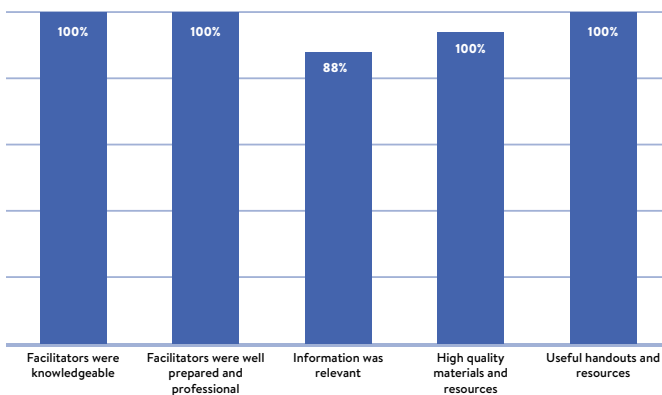
Figure 6. Percentage of Parents who Agreed or Strongly Agreed with Statements Related to Program Atmosphere and Personal Satisfaction (2019)



Client Satisfaction Evaluation Highlights: As with the 2018 evaluation, participants reported extremely high levels of satisfaction with the program staff, components, and environment.

- As shown in Figure 5, participants rated the facilitators as very knowledgeable, well prepared, and professional, and reported the program information, resources, and materials as relevant, useful, and high quality.

Figure 5. Percentage of Parents who Agreed or Strongly Agreed with Statements Related to Program Components (2019)



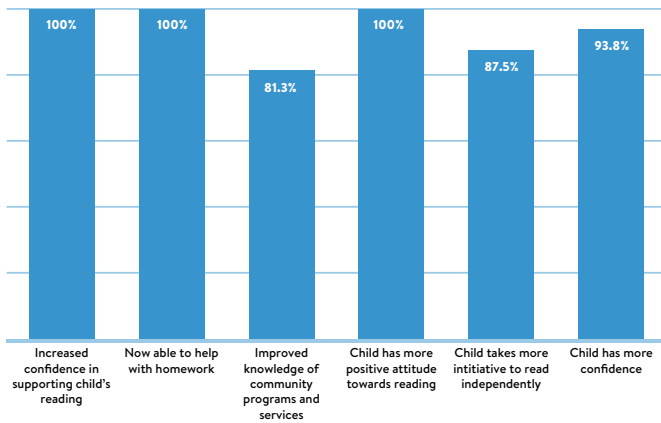
- With these 12-week cohorts, a majority of participants felt the program length was just right ($n = 11$, 68.8%), with a quarter of participants feeling the program was still too short ($n = 4$).

Outcome Evaluation Highlights

The 2019 evaluation of the RPBP program also revealed that parents and children benefited from their involvement in the program.

- As can be seen in Figure 7, all parents reported that, as a result of their involvement in the program, they had greater confidence in their abilities to support their children with reading and with their children’s homework.
- Parents reported that their children had more positive attitudes towards reading, took more initiative to read independently, and had more confidence after participating in the program.
- Parents also reported improvements to their knowledge of community programs and services.

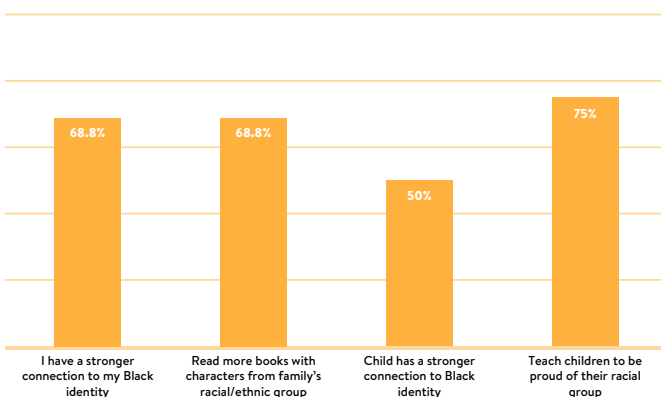
Figure 7. Percentage of Parents who Agreed or Strongly Agreed with Statements Related to Program Outcomes (2019)



In terms of outcomes related to racial identity, a majority of parents reported feeling a stronger connection to their Black identity and to reading more books that contain characters representative of their racial and ethnic group as a result of participating in the RBPB program (see Figure 8).

- o Half of the parents felt their children had a stronger connection to their Black identity and a majority reported that the program has led them to teach their children to be proud of their racial group.
- o Although some parents did not report an increase in these areas related to their program involvement, this does not necessarily imply it is because the program did not contribute to this; perhaps these parents who did not report improvements already strongly identified positively with their racial group.

Figure 8. Percentage of Parents who Agreed or Strongly Agreed with Statements Related to Racial Identity (2019)



2020 Quantitative Evaluation Highlights: RPP Online

Process Evaluation

Participant Characteristics: Two cohorts, comprised of 24 parents, were involved in the evaluation during 2020 when the program moved to online due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Gender: As with previous years, the vast majority of those who participated in the evaluation were female ($n = 23, 95.8\%$)

Age: The majority were between the ages of 30 – 39 years ($n = 15, 62.5\%$) and 40 – 49 years ($n = 9, 37.5\%$).

Race: Despite these cohorts being open to others who did not identify as Black, 75% of participants involved in the evaluation ($n = 18$) did identify themselves as Black Caribbean, North American, or African. Again, this was a very diverse group of participants, and included Hong Kong, India, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Haiti, Jamaica, Nigeria, and Canada among their countries of birth.




Canadian Citizenship Status: The majority of participants were Canadian citizens by naturalization ($n = 11, 34.7\%$) or by birth ($n = 8, 34.7\%$) and reported having lived in Canada for more than 5 years ($n = 13, 81.3\%$).

Household Income: Approximately half of the participants reported annual household incomes of less than \$51,000, with 28.5% of these reporting incomes of less than \$31,000 ($n = 6$), which represents the low-income cut-off for a two-person household in 2020. Participants reported that their annual household income supported between 1 and 7 persons.

Household Family Structure: One-third of the parents in these cohorts ($n = 8, 33.3\%$) reported being single-parent households.

Table 7. 2020 Evaluation Participant Snapshot

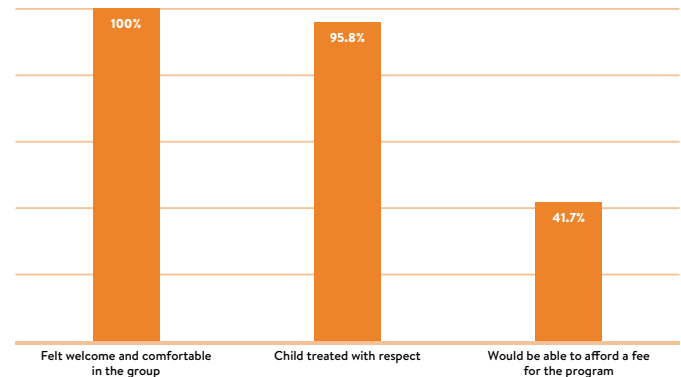
95% identified as female	
3/4 identified as Black or African	
3/5 were between 30-39 years of age	
4/5 were Canadian citizens by birth or naturalization	
1/2 had lived in Canada more than 10 years	
2/5 reported household incomes of less than \$31 000	
1/3 were single-parent families	

Client Satisfaction Evaluation Highlights: In the 2020 evaluation year, fewer process evaluation questions were asked on the post-survey. However, the limited data that exist revealed participants were very satisfied with the program environment.

- o All parents reported feeling welcome and comfortable in the group and nearly all reported their child was treated with respect in the group (see Figure 9).
- o While the majority of parents reported the program length to be just right ($n = 18, 75\%$), five parents felt the program length was too short (20.8%). While over half of the participants felt the session length was just right ($n = 14, 58.3\%$), ten parents did feel the session length was too long (41.7%).

- o Participants were also asked if there was a fee to participate in the program whether they would be able to afford it. A quarter of parent respondents ($n = 6, 25\%$) reported they would be unable to pay a fee associated with participating in the program, while another eight parents (33.3%) provided a neutral response.

Figure 9. Percentage of Parents who Agreed or Strongly Agreed to Process Evaluation Questions (2020)

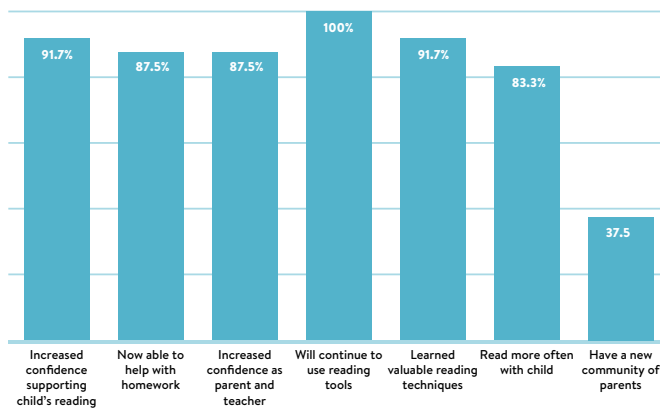


Outcome Evaluation Highlights

Despite the significant change that occurred for the 2020 and 2021 cohorts, namely participating in the program online, the post-survey findings provide strong evidence that parents experienced benefits that they attributed to their participation in the program and perceived their children did as well.

- o Figure 10 shows that parents reported increases in their own confidence to better support their children, reported gaining valuable tools and resources that they will continue to use, and reported reading more frequently with their children.
- o During these first offerings of the online program, approximately one-third of the participants reported the program contributed to creating a new community of parents that they felt they could rely on.

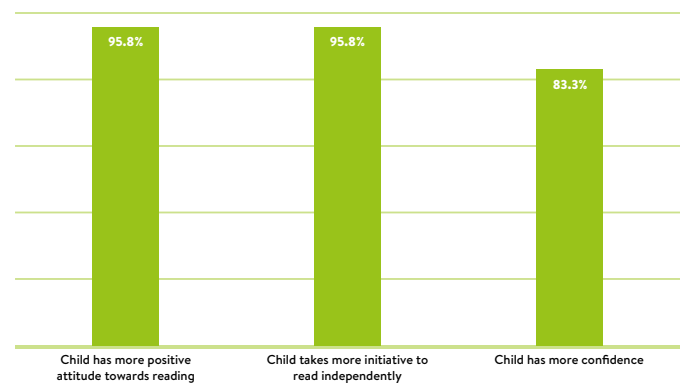
Figure 10. Percentage of Parents who Agreed or Strongly Agreed with Statements Related to Parent Components (2020)



As in the previous evaluations, parents also reported that their children benefitted from participating in the RPP online program as well, noting their children had more positive attitudes related to reading, took more initiative to read independently, and had greater levels of confidence (see Figure 11).



Figure 11. Percentage of Parents who Agreed or Strongly Agreed to Statements Related to Child Outcomes (2020)



2021 Quantitative Evaluation Highlights: RPP & RPBP Online

Process Evaluation Highlights

Participant Characteristics: The 2021 evaluation was comprised of 27 participants from three cohorts, all of which continued to be offered virtually. Two of the cohorts were offered the RPP program and the third cohort was a RPBP offering.

Gender: Across the three cohorts, all participants of the evaluation identified as female

Age: They were between 30 – 39 years of age ($n = 17$, 65.4%) and 40 – 49 years of age ($n = 9$, 34.6%).




Race: Ten participants identified themselves as Black Caribbean or African on the post-surveys (37%); South Asian was the largest category that participants reported identifying with in these cohorts ($n = 12$, 44.4%). Again, participants reported great diversity in terms of their countries of birth, and included Jamaica, Trinidad/Tobago, India, Sri Lanka, Australia, East Africa, West Africa, and Canada.

Canadian Citizenship Status: The majority of evaluation participants were Canadian citizens by naturalization ($n = 14$, 58.3%) or birth ($n = 3$, 12.5%). The remaining participants reported they were not Canadian citizens ($n = 7$, 29.2%), with the majority reporting living in Canada for six years or longer ($n = 18$, 78.3%).

Household Income: The majority of participants reported annual household incomes of under \$31,000 ($n = 17, 63\%$), with an additional 18.5% ($n = 5$) reporting incomes between \$31,000 - \$51,000. Participants reported that this annual household income supported between 1 and 15 people.

Household Family Structure: Approximately one-third of the participants reported being single-parent families.

Table 8. 2021 Evaluation Participant Snapshot

All identified as female	
About 1/3 identified as Black or African	
2/3 were between 30-39 years of age	
70% were Canadian citizens by birth or naturalization	
Almost 80% had lived in Canada more than 10 years	
3/5 reported household incomes of less than \$31 000	
1/3 were single-parent families	

Client Satisfaction Evaluation Highlights: As in the previous years of the evaluation, participants involved in the 2021 online program offerings reported extremely high levels of satisfaction with the program staff and program environment (see Figure 12).

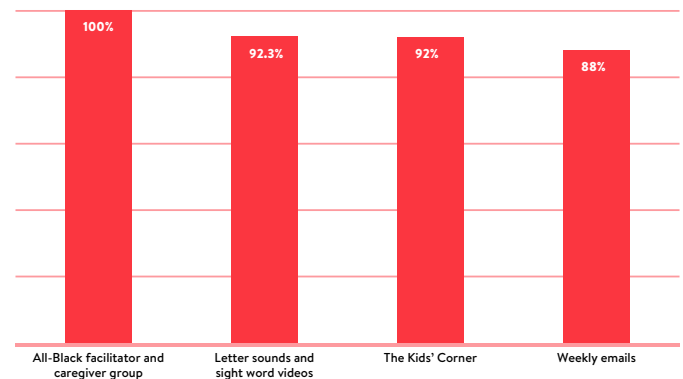
Figure 12. Percentage of Parents who Agreed or Strongly Agreed to Statements Related to Program Staff and Environment (2021)



In addition to these findings, parents reported various components of the program as very useful. Of particular note here is the all-Black facilitator and caregiver group, the letter sounds and sight words videos, the kids' corner, and the weekly emails sent prior to the beginning of their sessions (see Figure 13).

- o A small majority of participants involved in the evaluation reported that this six-week program was too short ($n = 15, 55.6\%$), while approximately one-third felt the program length was just right ($n = 10, 37\%$).
- o A majority of parents reported that the 75-minute session length was just right ($n = 16, 59.3\%$), with approximately equal number of participants reporting that the session length was too short ($n = 6, 22.2\%$) or too long ($n = 5, 18.5\%$).
- o Almost half of the participants ($n = 12, 44.4\%$) reported they would be unable to pay if there was a fee to participate in the program, while another 25.9% reported they would only be able to afford to pay \$50 or less for the program.

Figure 13. Program Components with Highest 'Very Useful' Ratings (2021)



Outcome Evaluation Highlights

The 2021 cohorts of parents reported receiving many benefits as a result of their involvement in the RPP and RPBP online programs, and again, improved confidence in their abilities to support their children was among these.

- o Figure 14 indicates improved knowledge in terms of techniques and tools to use in supporting their children with reading and beyond was also reported by parents.
- o Nearly all parents reported changes in their behaviour in terms of reading more frequently with their children due to their participation in the program.
- o What is perhaps most notable in the 2021 evaluation is the rise in the number of parents who reported their involvement in the program contributed to them having a new community of parents to rely on, suggesting this was something the program made a concerted effort to improve after the 2020 evaluation.

As in previous years of the evaluation, parents noted that children also received great benefits from the program (see Figure 15).

- o Parents reported noticing improvements in their children’s attitude towards reading, seeing them take more initiative to read independently, and improvements in their children’s confidence.

Figure 15. Percentage of Parents who Agreed or Strongly Agreed to Statements Related to Child Outcomes (2021)

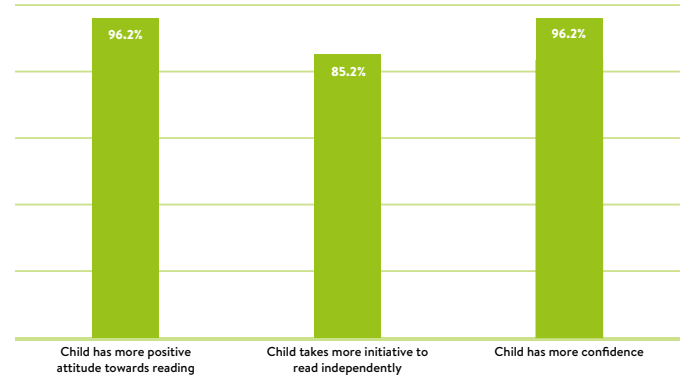
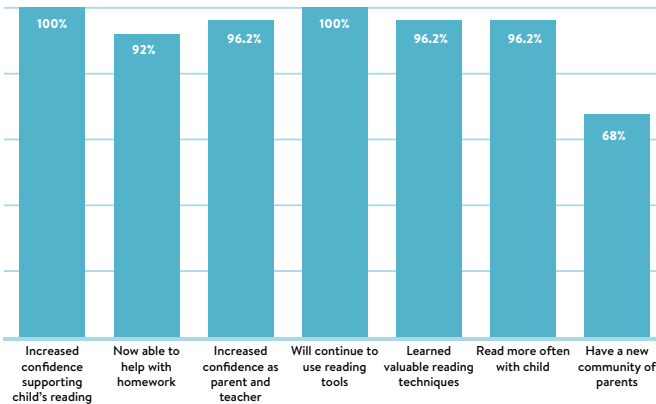


Figure 14. Percentage of Parents who Agreed or Strongly Agreed with Statements Related to Parent Components (2021)



05 // SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This section provides a summary and interpretation of the key findings found in each of the annual evaluation reports. This includes the quantitative and qualitative data taken together, collapsed across years when possible. This summary presented here has also been informed by discussions with program staff.

PROCESS EVALUATION

Participant Reach, Characteristics, and Goals for Participation

Over the three years, The Reading Partnership engaged 130 families through Reading Partnership for Black Parents and Reading Partnership for Parents programs:

- 66 families through in-person RPBP via four cohorts of 6 weeks, and two cohorts of 12 weeks
- 64 families through virtual RPBP/RPP via five cohorts of 6 weeks each.
- The overall number of individuals served is higher than the total number of families, given that some families had more than one child enrolled.
- TRP served approximately 50 children through child-minding services during in-person programs; those availing of this service received arts-based literacy programming, although these services were not tracked or evaluated and thus these children were not included among 'program participants'.
- Although the RPP online program was open to all regardless of ethnic/racial background, more than half of families (54.7%) served through the general-entry RPP did in fact identify as Black.

- Of the total 130 families served, 78% (101) were of Black self-identification. This statistic, however, does not fully capture the extent of Black participation given that some families comprised non-Black parents and Black children-and, as such, the total individual Black participants is greater than the number of Black families.

Of these 130 families, approximately 68% (n = 89) parents were involved in the evaluation, nearly all of whom identified as female.

- There was great diversity in terms of their cultural background among those who identified as Black, with participants from North America, Caribbean countries, and African countries. There was also diversity among participants related to participants' countries of birth, citizenship status, and the length of time they reported having lived in Canada.

We are all Black here, but the Black from Trinidad or Jamaica or the United States or from Canada and from Africa-even Africa there [are] so many (different cultures) there. Some of us speak in Swahili, some in French, some in English or local African language; different culture. What was the good thing...that this gathering so rich-we share a lot of things. When you are giving people things, you feel like you are sharing the experience, everything, [that] they didn;t get the chance to know before. (2019 Parent)

The primary motivation parents gave for why they enrolled themselves and their children in the program was a desire to develop their own confidence in helping their children learn to read, as well as learning new techniques and tools for doing so.

Parents identified lack of time, strategies, and patience as the biggest factors in preventing them from spending more time reading with their children prior to becoming involved in the program.

Participant Satisfaction

This program was nothing short of being excellent, and I hope it continues, so other families can take advantage. (2020 Summer Parent)

Findings from the evaluations across the years and across data sources indicate a very high level of overall parent satisfaction, with every parent noting they would recommend this program to others.

The majority of parents felt welcomed and comfortable in the group and further reported that their children enjoyed the program and were treated with respect. Parents also overwhelmingly agreed that the program facilitators were knowledgeable, professional, and well-prepared.

The only 12-week program offerings included in the evaluation were the 2019 cohorts, in which most participants reported the length of the program was just right.

The remaining cohorts included in the evaluation were 6-week programs, in which many parents felt the length of the program was too short. An assessment of the length of the sessions (i.e., the amount of time participants met each week) was introduced to the evaluation when the program moved online. While most felt the length of the sessions were just right, more parents involved in the 2020 program offerings (when compared to those who participated in the program in 2021) reported the session length to be too long.

The facilitators, they were really engaging with the kids, they were patient with them...I think that is what really makes the course is not just giving us the material... (2020 Fall Parent)

[The children] are always looking forward to the next class. Actually, they're not too happy that it's over. (2020 Fall Parent)

Parents found the materials and resources provided to them during the program to be invaluable and of immediate use.

Clear instructions, reminder emails and texts, videos to review lessons with their children throughout the week, and the various other materials and resources provided by the program were all noted as very helpful and contributed to the participants' satisfaction with the program.

Overall, the content, structure, and administration of the program was extremely well-received.

...I felt like it was very organized. It kind of gave us like the lesson plan ahead of time, what we're preparing for. And it gave us like activities that we can reinforce throughout the week. So it was very, very well organized. And I really liked that it had a structure in place that you can follow too, and it's very easy to follow too. So for me, I really enjoyed that. It was very organized, structured, and also easy to follow. (2021 Parent)

When the RPBP program was offered in-person (i.e., in 2018 and 2019), The Reading Partnership provided participants with nutritious, prepared meals during each session. Not only was this greatly appreciated, but this was also a component of the program that participants deemed necessary for their participation. Parents noted that, had they been required to prepare a meal for their family, in addition to commuting from work, picking children up from school, and then attending the program, they would not have been able to participate. With the move online during the Covid-19 pandemic, this component was removed for obvious logistical and health and safety reasons but will resume when the program continues in-person program offerings.

OUTCOME EVALUATION

Parent Outcomes

Knowledge and its Application

Parents indicated that the program provided them with the knowledge to support their children's learning and reading efforts outside of the program. Nearly all parents agreed that they had learned valuable reading techniques and activities to use with their children.

Parents reported learning how to navigate the different ways that children may learn and how to approach situations when their child is struggling to learn a certain concept. Parents noted this improved knowledge enabled them to better support their children. Across all years, parents also mentioned they planned to continue using the reading tools and activities they received or learned by participating in the program at home with their children. The majority of parents across the three years of the evaluation reported being able to transfer the skills and knowledge gained from programs to better help their children with homework. In more recent evaluations when this question was added to the post-survey (i.e., 2020 and 2021), almost all parents reported reading with their children more frequently than they did before they participated in the RPP program.

And also, we learned! What I liked was the fact that when the kids were learning in a different room, we were also learning; we weren't just sitting there and waiting buying time. ...So, that I found was really good, that they incorporated the parents in the program just so the kids AND the parents would learn [together]. I really liked that. (2019 Parent)

Parent confidence was a consistent part of every evaluation, and across years, nearly every parent who participated in the evaluation reported that they felt more confident about teaching their children to read as a result of participating in the program. Furthermore, respondents also noted feeling more confident as a parent and teacher for their child after participating in the RPP program.

And it [the program] did increase my confidence... we are all educated, but... I don't have the teacher's skills. There's a particular way you have to teach the small children. I kind can't expect them to know everything in one day. So the technology and the way they were teaching and going about it was really, really nice. So I got confidence, I can teach my child.... And I did see my little one read, which I didn't know he could. (2020 Fall Parent)

Sense of Community and Culture

The program contributed to the development of a supportive community among parents though this feeling of a sense of community during the online RPP program varied from year to year.

In initial online cohorts, only a minority of parents agreed that they had developed a new community of parents to rely on. However, in the later online cohorts (i.e., 2021), a majority of parents indicated that the program helped create a new community of supportive parents, noting that the program provided a community for them, a safe place to connect with other parents and share challenges, and it was a comfort to know they were not alone in struggling to support their children's reading.

This suggests the program had made improvements that led to the increase of a sense of community among parents.

You know, all these parents that we joined together... we shared a lot of knowledge and experience that is basically some of the positive things too. They discussed really good issues, even problems you don't experience, like the age of your kids at home or some of them have twins. So, all those experiences, we share it! Some of them come up with real problems about [which] they are calling each other; they are doing this while we help them to [read and focus]. All the participants share; it works for them too. (2019 Parent)

Most parents in the program identified the cultural focus on Black families as being amongst the most important features of the program. Parents in the RPBP program also expressed the importance of having all-Black program facilitators and there being Black people in the books they read to their children. Although this focus was minimized within the evaluation when the program moved online, a connection to one's cultural identity was a goal for the RPBP program.

I thought it was really good that these books had little Black people in it... I have to go out of my way to get those kind of books. So, I was very happy that I was seeing familiar faces in the books. ...I have not seen a book like that ever. (2020 Summer Parent)

Evaluation findings show that the program contributed to the development of a stronger connection to Black identity among some parents, who also reported teaching their children to be proud of their racial and ethnic group after participating in the program.

Similar results were found with respect to children's connection to their Black identity, some noting improvements in this area while others did not report improvements. This does not necessarily imply that these things did not happen for parents that did not report this. It could be there was a ceiling effect with parents who didn't report improvements already having a strong connection to their Black identity and already teaching their children to be proud of their Black identity prior to joining the program. If this were the case, ratings about whether their involvement in the program led to improvements in these areas would not be reported.

Child Outcomes

I have seen, first-hand, kids who didn't know how to read, didn't know the letters and the sounds, and by the end of the program they were reading, they were comprehending, they were sound blending. I have actually seen that happen. (2019 Program Staff)

The evaluation data across the three years of programming suggest that children improved their level of confidence, had more positive attitudes, and took more initiative related to reading.

Parents mentioned that seeing improvements in their children's reading abilities and improvements in their level of confidence when reading were some of the most valuable benefits gained through RPP program participation.

For the in-person RPBP program on the post-survey (2018 and 2019), some parents felt that their children

had a stronger connection to their Black identity after participating in the program.

My child improved his knowledge of sounds and will be more able to learn new words through sounding them out as well as sight words that were provided. (2020 Summer Parent)

Now her teacher is telling me that she is in this high level of what kindergarteners are supposed to be. And I was like, no not my little one. So, I was reading with her the other day and I was blown away by how she read this book without me reading it to her first. I was floored, I was stunned, and she had this smile saying: mamma I can read. (2019 Parent)

Beyond the perceptions of the parents, for certain cohorts, program staff conducted reading assessments with the children participating in the program prior to the start of the program and again at the end of the program.

Although inconsistent reporting across the reports makes it difficult to compare the data across evaluations, the majority of children in the program who were assessed saw promising improvements at the end of the program on various dimensions of reading abilities (e.g., letter recognition, sound recognition, sight words, reading new texts, and comprehension) when compared to the assessments conducted prior to the start of the program.

06 // KEY LEARNINGS: THE LEGACY OF RPBP AND ONLINE RPP PROGRAMS

I'd say for me, it's everything as well. The knowledge, the breakdown, the engagement with my son on learning, the chart that we now have, and the resources, the letters with the pictures, like all of that is like extremely valuable. I can't thank you guys enough for allowing me to participate and now having those tools. And the knowledge is just, like will forever be with us. (2021 Parent)

Effective and Appreciated

The evaluation findings show that the in-person RPBP and the online RPP programs are effective and well-received programs. Parents reported becoming more knowledgeable and confident in their own ability to support their children's learning and indicated their intentions to continue to use the teachings and resources gained as a result of their participation in the program.

Parents also noticed important knowledge and confidence improvements in their children. Not only did parents perceive their children's reading skills to have improved, a finding that was supported by the child assessment data, but parents also reported improvements in their children's confidence levels when reading, more positive attitudes towards reading, and taking more initiative to read.

The evaluation findings are extremely strong and conclusive in terms of the level of participant satisfaction with the programs evaluated. While not without a few minor challenges, parents on the whole were extremely satisfied with the program and were grateful to have been a part of it. Participants praised the group facilitation and facilitators, the program environment, the structure and content of the program, as well as the resources provided. Parents also noted their children enjoyed being a part of the program.

These overwhelmingly positive reviews of the program, however, have to be considered within the context of under-resourced schools, and other factors that undermine the level of support received from the school environment. For example, in a survey administered to parents prior to the beginning of 2021 virtual RPP/RPBP cohorts, only half (51.3%) of parents felt their child's teacher kept them adequately informed about their child's progress; and only approximately a quarter (24.3%) believed they received support from their child's school to help them read at home, and that their child was receiving adequate literacy support in school (27%).

As such, RPP services are perhaps compensating for a gap within the school system, which may contribute to the perceived necessity of, and satisfaction with, the program.

The evidence is a bit less clear when it comes to outcomes related to a sense of community and connection to one's cultural identity. Although this area deserves further investigation, there is some evidence that participants' connection to their Black identity had improved for those in the in-person RPBP program and that participants experienced an improved sense of community within the online program.

Perhaps the program could further support the development of a community among its participants by creating and sharing, with consent, contact information to facilitate communication and relationship development outside of the weekly sessions.

Program Reach

At the start of the RPBP program in 2018, the aim was to serve 114 families across the three years of the evaluation, delivering the program to four cohorts each year beginning in 2019. According to registration data provided by The Reading Partnership, 130 families were served over these three years. Of these totals, the present three-year evaluation reported 89 parents who participated in this evaluation. Understandably, the pandemic in 2020 and 2021

interrupted an outreach strategy that was heavily reliant upon in-person methods. While Facebook groups compensated for some of the loss, they did not help with the recruitment of Black families specifically located in the KGO region.

Furthermore, while ‘Train the Trainer’ made possible the administration of the program by external organizations, these external organizations were not equipped to facilitate the RPBP program, due to the demographic composition of their staff. While Black families were prioritized in the general-entry RPP programs, they were nonetheless in fewer numbers.

As described in the section: “Next Steps for RPP and RPBP,” TRP has strategies for addressing these challenges - including the expansion of its online programming and its Train the Trainer program; the movement to a Learning Content Management System that will, among other improvements, also allows the program to be more immediately responsive to parental feedback. These moves will make the RPP/RPBP more broadly accessible, and make its administration more efficient. This, in turn, should expand the program’s reach and success in recruitment.

As pandemic-related restrictions relax, and there is a resumption of in-person forums, TRP should experience a natural resolution to some of its challenges with remote outreach. This is particularly true with respect to schools, which have proved to be an invaluable space for distributing information and exchanging knowledge about RPP/RPBP.

However, while the onset of the global pandemic undoubtedly impacted outreach and registration, and the slightly lowered enrollment numbers, this does not fully explain greater-than-proportional reduction in Black participation. With the move to virtual programming, the program was no longer exclusively for Black families and, as a result, throughout the 2020 and 2021 virtual cohorts, Black families comprised just over half (54.7%) of total program-enrolled families.

Therefore, it appears that the RPP and RPBP programs should increase its efforts of offering a

greater number of program cohorts as well as make an increased effort to reach families who identify as Black.

An ongoing challenge for the program is how to resolve the concerns among some members of its development committee that a program isolating Black families for literacy intervention could unintentionally reproduce racial narratives about excess ‘need’ and educational incompetence. In addition, there is concern that non-Black families who wished to participate in the program would feel excluded (despite the fact that there is a general-entry version of The Reading Partnership for Parents).

TRP has been working to appropriately frame RPBP so as to mitigate these possible negative side-effects - namely, by presenting and promoting RPBP as a dedicated space for Black families that accounts for and responds to racism, rather than perpetuates it. Specifically, TRP should ensure that RPBP is presented as an exclusively Black space with Africentric content because anti-Black racism within the school system and at large limits positive representations of Black people and Blackness, underserves Black children in education, and exposes Black people to intergenerational poverty and other negative outcomes.

Put otherwise, RPBP exists not because of deficit among Black families but, rather, because of a deficit in society - one that disproportionately denies wellbeing to those marginalized by race, class, gender, and other variables.

Additionally, RPP/RPBP could benefit from actively positioning itself as an enrichment program - overcoming the implication that literacy intervention exists only in response to a deficit. Indeed, private tutoring and after-school academic programs, generally availed of by middle/upper-class youth, does not generally stigmatize its beneficiaries. Similarly, RPP/RPBP need not suggest ‘failure’ on the part of participating children and parents but, rather, can simply represent the pursuit of improvement - a noble and worthwhile goal regardless of one’s current academic performance.

In-Person vs. Online

While not without its challenges, many of the parents who were involved in the virtual programming offerings indicated that participating online was far more convenient for them than in-person programming. This convenience goes beyond the fears and concerns about the Covid-19 pandemic, although this did factor into participants' comments. This convenience was related to the time-savings and personal energy-savings with not having to commute and transport children to a program. Parents also indicated that, for the most part, children were familiar with online education, thereby making it an easy transition for them.

...it was good that it was online, not only because of COVID-19, but also because I work and I'm a single mom. (2020 Summer Parent)[in the last cohort] ...I couldn't really make it physically because when my daughter comes back from school, she's so tired with that school that even if I have to drive that five-minute drive, she's going to sleep, I'm going to wake her up... [it's] is a disaster. (2020 Fall Parent)

...I would say the benefit of having it as a virtual session was just the logistics for us. Like, if I had to commute from work, pick them up for school early enough, make sure he had dinner and then take them to a centre. Like I saved all that time, right? So, for us, the logistics of you know, having dinner, me being home and stuff, it was just easier. (2021 Parent)

Many parents, however, did feel that children may have experienced even greater benefits from the program had it occurred in person, despite the extensive benefits they perceived their children gained from the online programming. The main challenge expressed by parents involved in the online cohorts was related to maintaining their children's focus and attention.

This seemed to be a more prevalent concern in the earlier virtual offerings of the program. Children became more familiar and routinized to online learning, as all school-aged children would have been involved in online schooling by the time the third

offerings occurred in Winter 2021.

However, this also reflects the program's efforts to respond to the challenges of remote learning identified via parental feedback during the earliest iterations of virtual programming. Specifically, TRP restructured the delivery of the various elements of the program so that all parts involving the children (i.e., Kids Corner, playtime, and story time) were completed first, thus shortening the length of time for which children needed to be engaged.

Additionally, the program introduced measures to maximize virtual engagement of young learners - by generating more kid-friendly digital video content (i.e., letter sound, and sight word videos); providing more play-based activities in the Lit-Kit (a collection of resources and tools that parents can use at home); and creating a guide for parents to facilitate their and their child's engagement in the context of virtual programming.

Similarly, the community and socialization aspects of virtual programming showed improvements, as TRP made efforts to incorporate learnings from the earlier iterations into its operations. Specifically, TRP introduced a 'Sharing is Caring' component to the sessions, which presented parents with three questions each week (one about the program, one about their child, one about themselves) to facilitate mutual exchange and support.

For the virtual breakout rooms, the program matched families based on their respective children's literacy levels and maintained the same pairings throughout the program duration. This gave both parents and children the opportunity to make connections and build stronger bonds - in fact, a couple of comments from the Winter 2021 cohort pertained to parents' appreciation for their child being able to see their "buddies" in these breakout rooms. Nonetheless, the desire for more connection was still expressed among several parents even after these changes were introduced, which perhaps reflects an inherent feature of virtual programming that can be compensated for but not entirely overcome.

Maintaining a FREE Program

A vast number of parents said that if the program were to charge a fee, they would not be able to afford it. TRP's primary demographic is residents of Kingston Galloway/Orton Park - where marginalization by race, class, immigrant status and other factors are responsible for intergenerational poverty. The region's designation as a 'Neighbourhood Improvement Area' attests to these intersecting oppressions, and short-hands the importance of offering the RPBP and RPP programs at no cost to participants, as charging a fee would likely make the program inaccessible to many individuals from the target population, excluding those for whom the program was designed.

Importance of Offering the RPBP Program

Parents in the RPBP in-person and online program highlighted the importance of keeping the focus of the program on Black families and having facilitators who identify as Black. The participants expressed the usefulness of, and appreciation for, having a group that was comprised of all-Black participants and facilitators, and communicated that this was an important element of the program. Comments from the parents also suggested that the all-Black group composition contributed to the creation of a safe and inclusive environment that was free from judgements.

What made me feel comfortable actually was my daughter actually getting to see people that looked like her, right. Because sometimes they participate in these groups and sometimes they're just the only one or the only one in the classroom. So for me, it was actually a great opportunity for her to be, you know, just be amongst people that look like her. (RPBP 2021 Focus Group Participant)

Parents expressed that it was important for their children to see facilitators - those in a leadership role - who looked like them, and they were appreciative of the representation of Blackness in the books provided by the program. RPBP exists within the context of anti-Black racism in the educational system - a phenomenon that undermines students' access to positive representations of Black people; erases the historical and ongoing contributions of Black individuals, societies, and philosophies within school curriculum; and often targets Black students

for disproportionate punishment, pathologization, and reduced expectations within the classroom. Parents appreciate the Black cultural elements in the program, because they are compensating for a systemic dearth of them in their children's school experience, and they have a positive impact on their (Black) children's sense of self, motivation, and other factors that impact upon learning.

The evaluation findings also suggest that the shared experience of being Black contributed to a sense of community and safety among the parents and children of the RPBP program - also important in the context of an anti-Black racism that denies many Black people full belonging in social/communal spaces. This is consistent with the literature that suggests literacy programs are enhanced when the content is culturally relevant and reflects the participants' lived experiences (YouthREX, 2021). Thus, the findings from the evaluation suggest the need to continue to offer programming specifically for Black parents.

If there was only one thing you could keep the same about the [RPBP] program, what would it be?

Keep it Black.

(2019 Parent)



Group Composition and Program Expansion

Many suggestions for program improvement across the evaluations were related to expanding the program in some way, including different offerings based on the ages and skills of the children. As is completely normal and expected, children are entering the program at different ages and skill levels. Based on this, some parents felt the program could be improved by offering beginner programs for those just starting to learn to read as well as advanced programs for those who have already completed the program as it currently is.

Although this suggestion of offering different groups based on skill level does warrant some consideration, it would also pose additional challenges and administrative work for the program and organization. For example, children would need to be pre-tested before being assigned a group. Furthermore, in order to assign children into the appropriate program offering, numerous cohorts would need to be delivered at once, thereby increasing demands on the staffing (and possibly location and space) resources needed. This is particularly true should The Reading Partnership continue to offer both RPP and RPBP programs.

It should be noted that there was no evidence, particularly with respect to the feedback received from parents, that there were children who did not benefit from participating in the program. Given this, perhaps a more realistic alternative to assigning children to groups based on skill level would be to offer the current program as Level 1 and develop a Level 2 course to be delivered after completion of the first level.

Similarly, parents in the 6-week program expressed that they would like to see the program itself run for a longer period of time. However, offering a second level would address this need for a longer program duration. The program logic model would suggest that a longer program duration would increase the likelihood that participants would experience greater attainment of outcomes.

Alternatively, it may be that the logic model requires some revisions, particularly in terms of the expected outcomes and anticipated timelines to reach certain

outcomes, given that it currently specifies short-term outcomes could be expected after 6 – 12 months. The present evaluation does provide support that outcomes, for both parent and children, were achieved prior to this timeframe. Extending the program, through the addition of sessions or through offering a second level, would likely improve the attainment of outcomes for both parents and children.

The Challenge of Time

Time remained a challenge that prevented parents from reading more often with their children outside of the program, despite many parents indicating that they were reading with their children more frequently after participating in the program than they were before they had started the program. Time was also a challenge mentioned with respect to participating in the program in terms of the actual offering of the program.

In earlier evaluations, the start time of 3:30 was a challenge that made it difficult for parents to attend. The most recent program offering began later in the day, at approximately 5:00, but still posed a challenge for parents. Although the program start time was altered to address the challenge of the earlier time, finding a convenient time for all parents will be difficult. Perhaps weekend programming deserves consideration. Asking past participants what the most convenient time for a 75-minute program could also help to determine a program start time for a majority. It will, however, be difficult to meet the demanding schedules for all families.

As described below in ‘Next Steps for RPP and RPBP’, The Reading Partnership’s development of ‘R-POD’ will surely help to address this persistent challenge of time, as it will allow parents and children to engage virtually in the program on their own time.

Evaluation

Just as there are recommendations that arise from the three-year evaluation related to the programming content and structure, so too are there recommendations related to the evaluation methodology. Overall, parents completed pre-surveys, post-surveys, and focus groups while children completed assessments at the beginning and end of the program. Staff interviews and surveys were also



conducted at some points throughout the three-year evaluation. In examining these data collection tools, and in particular the tools delivered to parents in the program, it would seem that some modifications are warranted.

Especially in a 6-week program, completing a pre-survey, a post-survey, and participating in a focus groups seems rather onerous for parents, particularly given the length of the surveys. Questions included on these should be re-examined for relevancy and importance, with reference to the guiding process and evaluation questions. This is particularly relevant to the pre-survey - which, for example, included a number of items related to the child's teacher and schooling experience. These questions are to assist programming staff in understanding the primary learning environment that parents and children navigate, thus allowing them to better respond to their needs. However, they nonetheless contribute to the length of the pre-survey, and may not provide sufficiently useful data to justify doing so.

Additionally, very few questions on the pre-survey were similar enough in content to those on the post-survey, and thus do not provide the data to make the pre-to-post comparisons that allow for a determination of improvement over time. For future evaluations, The Reading Partnership could consider using only a post-survey in which questions are worded in a manner that indicates participants' perceptions of improvement over time (e.g., "As a result of participating in this program..." or "Since I began this program...").

Another consideration for the evaluation methodology is to increase the children's role in the evaluation. Beyond the child assessments, the evaluation relies on the parents' perceptions of the children's experiences of the program. Perhaps during the post-assessments of children, facilitators could add on a couple of enjoyment-related questions to gain the children's input about how they experienced the program. Although it might not be ideal to have facilitators (i.e., those who were delivering the program to the children themselves) ask the children if they were satisfied with the program, children would already be familiar and comfortable with the facilitators.

As noted earlier, 6-weeks, or even 12-weeks, may not be a long enough time to evaluate the full benefits resulting from the program. For this reason, The Reading Partnership may want to consider follow-up surveys or interviews with the parents. This would be extremely helpful in determining the continued use of resources and changes made within the home environment related to reading practices. It would, however, be less useful in determining continued improvement in children's literacy skills as it would be difficult to separate the effect of the program from the effect of school learning. If the focus of the follow-up is on parent's knowledge, application, and attitudes, as well as on parents' perceptions of their children's attitudes, it could prove very valuable in an evaluation of the program.

07 // NEXT STEPS FOR RPP AND RPBP

Resuming In-Person Programming

As pandemic-related restrictions relax, and in-person gatherings become possible again, RPBP will be offered in a hybrid model - a combination of 12- and 6-week cohorts, with 75-minute sessions for those taking place online, and 3-hour sessions for those in person. Additionally, TRP is considering the introduction of a 'HyFlex' option: sessions offered simultaneously in-person and remotely, which will allow participants registered in the same cohort to be present in either physical or virtual form, depending upon preference. Offering the program both virtually and in-person was deemed important to improve accessibility, as well as meet greater demand in communities across the GTA. As described in further detail below, the introduction of a Learning Content Management System (LCMS) to automate the entire program process, from registration to evaluation, will enhance the efficiency of the in-person programming beyond its pre-pandemic level. It will also allow for greater standardization and seamlessness between virtual and in-person offerings.

Fortifying Virtual Programming

The virtual iteration of RPP/RPBP did include challenges not present in its in-person counterpart. However, many parents confirmed that the virtual aspect of the program enhanced its convenience, making it more accessible to them. Thus, even as pandemic-related restrictions on in-person gatherings resolve, RPBP/RPP will continue to offer virtual programming, and is in fact instituting measures to improve upon its quality and reach.

Specifically, TRP is currently working with WIMTACH (the Wearable, Interactive and Mobile Technology Access Centre in Health) at Centennial College to digitize more of the games and create more video content. WIMTACH is also supporting the development of R-POD (Reading Program on Demand) - an asynchronous version of the program

that will allow families to engage with the program on their own time via a web application.

Additionally, TRP is working to translate the full 12-week program into an online setting - as the current online iteration is only half the duration of the in-person version - as well as making additional updates to program curriculum and delivery based on feedback from pilot programs.

TRP is also transferring the program to a Learning Content Management System (LCMS) to automate the entire process (from participant registration to evaluation). This will both alleviate personnel time thus facilitating program scalability, and make the experience more user-friendly for program participants. The LCMS will also enrich the communal function of the virtual program, as it allows for a learning community that connects participants from different programs, beyond the life of their particular cohort. Finally, TRP is working to train additional facilitators to deliver the program, to expand the reach of the program beyond the organizational capacity of The Reading Partnership.

Engaging Black Families & Blackness

The transferal of the program online resulted in reduced participation of Black families. This was, in part, because in-person outreach was put on hiatus and thus the program relied on online outreach methods that made it more difficult to focus on the program's primary catchment area (i.e., the KGO neighbourhood). Furthermore, TRP empowered external organizations to facilitate the program independently, and these organizations were not able to engage Black families to the same extent that TRP was.

TRP is taking measures to facilitate greater Black participation - both in terms of outreach (explained in a following section), which will be made easier with the relief of pandemic restrictions and in terms of content and community facilitation.

In terms of content, RPBP is replacing its Nia Circle component - a segment in each RPBP session to highlight Black leaders throughout history, that

was eliminated from the online programming due to reductions in sessional time - with a culturally-focused storytelling element that will feature content from, and reflective of, life in Africa, the Caribbean, and the global African diaspora. More generally, TRP is prioritizing the ongoing development of culturally-relevant content that allows Black participants to feel better connected to it, and which also exposes all participants to a broader diversity of content.

Furthermore, the Learning Content Management System will increase efficiency, facilitating revisions to curriculum that are responsive to feedback. LCMS will further make possible a virtual community among program participants - former and current, across cohorts - which is another important element towards providing for the needs of Black families, given the importance of community development and safe space towards overall experience in the program.

Expanding ‘Train the Trainer’

Since 2019, TRP has had success with ‘Train the Trainer’ - a program that readies individuals at other organizations independently. During 2019, staff at BGCES were able to deliver two cohorts, each of 12 weeks duration, of in-person RPP. With the onset of the pandemic, and the move to the virtual realm, ‘Train the Trainer’ was reformulated to educate partners on the delivery of the online version. This resulted in the virtual cohorts of concern in this report.

‘Train the Trainer’ has been beneficial for TRP, its partners, and the broader community alike - as it extends the reach of the program; increases the number of program beneficiaries; allows RPP to be administered beyond the capacity of TRP; and supplies community organizations with pre-developed high-quality literacy education content to integrate into their offerings.

As such, an important pillar of TRP’s future strategy includes continuing and expanding ‘Train the Trainer’ - to prepare external facilitators to administer the 12-week virtual course (since, with respect to the virtual offerings, trainees have only been educated in the 6-week program), as well as continue training facilitators in executing the in-person program.

TRP’s transferal to an LCMS, as described above, will lend efficiency and ease to this pursuit, since it allows TRP to centralize, standardize, and mechanize ‘Train the Trainer,’ and will thus expand the number of individuals who can receive training. Ultimately, this will allow TRP to reach and serve more families.

Expanding Outreach

TRP continues to negotiate the challenges of outreach for RPBP. With the resolution of the pandemic, some of these issues should correct for themselves. For example, TRP found that it was unable to replicate the effectiveness of in-person outreach exclusively through online methods during lockdown. TRP is expecting to find greater success in its outreach to Black KGO families, then, with the resumption of in-person community anchors, like schools, that bring everyone together and that were often on hiatus due to the pandemic.

Additionally, the expansion of ‘Train the Trainer’ (described above) should function positively in terms of outreach - since, by empowering external organizations to administer RPP/RPBP themselves, TRP will be reaching all of the individuals tapped into the hosting organization. As such, ‘Train the Trainer’ is also an important factor in outreach and expansion.

As noted above, virtual programming during the pandemic had its challenges but was also celebrated among parents for making the program more convenient and hence accessible. By fleshing out the virtual program - so that it is 12 weeks, of equal length to its in-person counterpart - and introducing R-POD, an asynchronous version of the program allowing parents and children to engage virtually via a webapp on their own time, TRP is making its virtual offerings more robust. This, in turn, functions to make the program more accessible and relevant, particularly to those families who are especially time-stretched as a result of marginalization by class, race, and other variables. As such, expanding virtual programming is another important factor in outreach.

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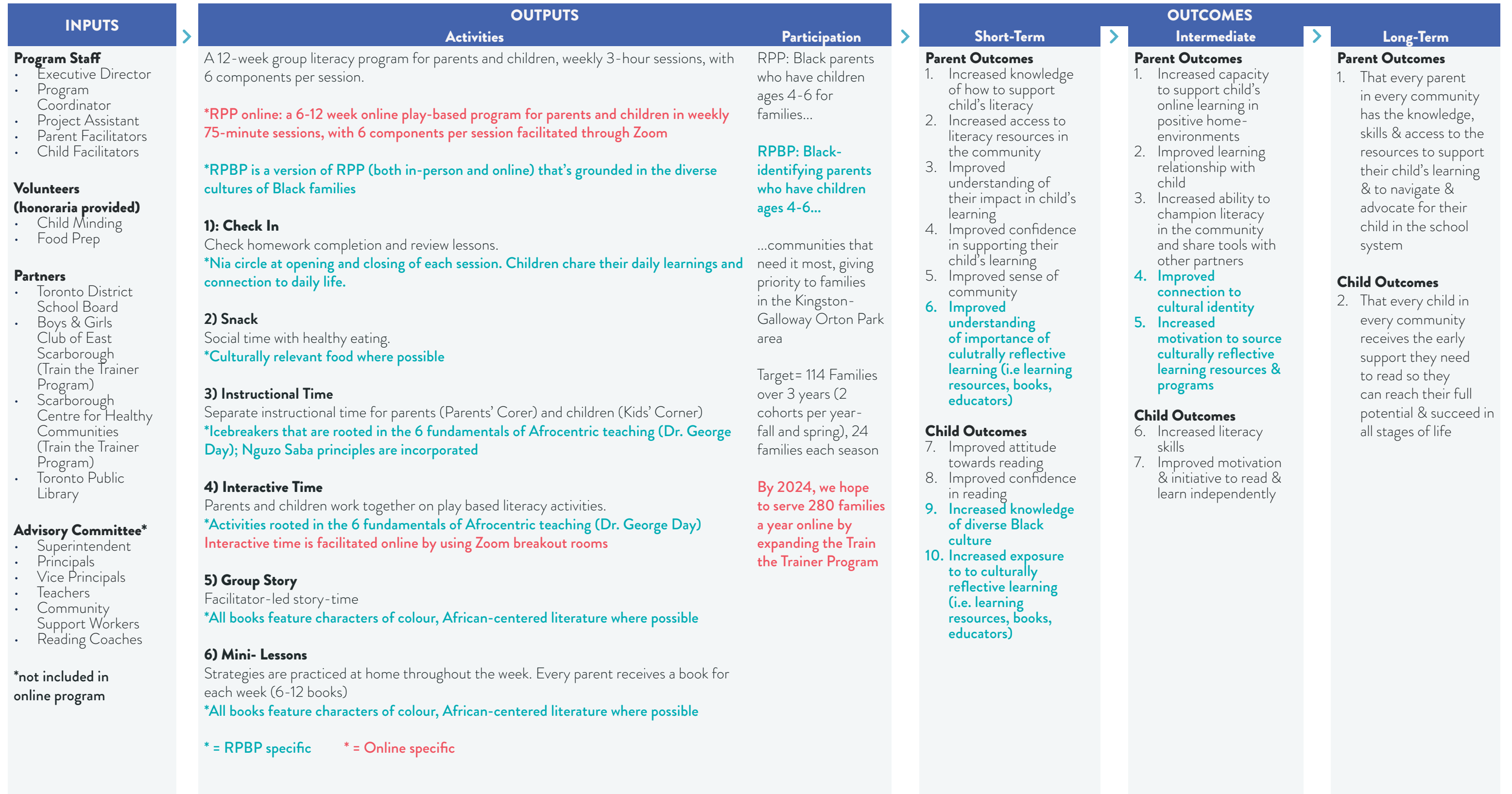
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SECTION 09 // APPENDIX A: PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL

PROGRAM: Reading Partnership for Parents (RPP) + Reading Partnership for Black Parents (RPBP) + Reading Partnership for Parents (RPP) Online

PRIORITIES: To empower parents to share and lead teaching their children to read while working collaboratively with families and community partners to promote and improve literacy in communities that need it most.



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