2018 – 2019 Raising a Reader Year End Report

Raising a Reader (RAR) continues to be a sought after service. 305 families were served this year, which is down 151 families from 2017-2018. The sites we have continued to serve include:

- ABC Headstart Homebased, (30 families)
- Early Head Starts on Hart St (56 families), Joseph (32 families), and North St. (24 families)
- Ibero (34 families)
- Hillside-Peter Castle (31 families)
- Hillside-Southwest (32 families)
- School #57 (50 families)
- VOA (16 families)

As we have a waiting list and exceeded capacity, we discontinued services to sites that are not the best fits for RAR or the site we serve. In 2018, we ceased the following:

- A Mother’s Love Learn & Play home daycare, RCN
- School 53 (although we are planning to work with them in the 2019-2020 school year)
- We also attempted to work with a new site, the R-Centers. Due to difficulties working in the Recreation Center setting (for example, problems with book circulation because it’s a drop in program) this site was unsuccessful and discontinued.

Multiple RAR participating sites continue to report successes.

Sara Tubbs, the teacher working with RAR at Hillside-Southwest, shared,

We love the Raising a Reader program! The children always looked forward to story time with Ms. Nancy. I would put it on the message board, so they could ‘read’ the message once they arrive. We loved it too; I loved watching the children's faces as someone else read them a story (I'm usually the one reading;) ). The children took such pride in the red bags, they would run into the classroom once they were done with the bag and ask for a new one and put it in their cubby with pride.

We really value this program! We hope it continues at our center for years to come!

One of the VOA teachers reported about the RAR implementer, “I like how Katie engaged the kids with instruments and props, it connected literacy and music appropriately for their ages. The children each had a copy of the read aloud book and we added the words of the songs to our song book.” In addition, Kate Bonno, supervisor of Head Start North Street commented: “The children and teaching staff looked forward to the Raising a Reader visits. Many of the
parents reported that it led them to read with their children more often than in the past. We are looking forward to being a part of Raising a Reader in the 2019-20 school year, as well.”

Raising a Reader’s Impact in 2018-2019:

Based on surveys of 87 families that participated in the Raising a Reader, significant positive changes for families were reported in the following areas:

- Quality and frequency of home reading habits and routines
- Increase in child and adult engagement during book sharing
- Library visits/community engagement

The amount of families meeting at least 5 indicators of high quality book sharing habits after participation rose by 41% (from 27%-68%)! For example, there was a 100% increase in the amount of times per week children asked to look at books with their parents or other adults in the household. Compared to before RAR, after completing the program families reported:

- visiting the library more often
- having a home reading routine
- having more books in their homes
- spending more time looking at books with their children

In addition, there were reported improvements in the quality of parent-child reading behaviors, such as letting children turn pages or choosing what to read, talking about new words, asking questions, and using voices for different characters.

**BENCHMARK RESULTS OVERALL: Series 2 is BEFORE RAR, Series 1 is NOW after RAR**

![Bar chart showing benchmark results overall between Series 2 (BEFORE RAR) and Series 1 (NOW after RAR).](chart_url)
RAR and Site Year End Events

RAR implementers attended various sites’ year end events to pass out blue library bags and books to families. We attended year end events at Early Head Start at North Street, Ibero, Joseph, as well as School #57’s preschool and kindergarten graduations, and Hillside-Southwest’s preschool graduations. In addition, this summer the VOA site requested RAR continue providing storytimes during their summer program as well as bringing books to share with all of the classrooms. We are offering weekly visits during their summer program. A RAR Parent of the Year was chosen at the North Street end of year event for her commitment to and passion for reading with her children.

Challenges/Opportunities for growth:

According to one of the site implementers, Nancy Cholewa, during the school year there were over 20 book bag rotations of bags in the classrooms she visited on a bi-monthly basis. While some sites successfully rotated book bags regularly and implementers made weekly or bi-monthly site visits for storytimes, there were inconsistencies with other sites, sometimes due to difficulties with the site and other times due to difficulty with RAR staff. Changes in staffing led
to some of these inconsistencies. Staffing challenges were present at the RAR sites as well as within our team. All of the Head Start sites had shortages throughout the year and there were times when staffing changed week to week. There was no notification to us which made delivery of services and consistency of bag rotation difficult. On the RPL side, a new lead RAR staff person started in January but was not able to fulfill the position and left in March and branch staff were adjusting to the new mode of service. In addition, the Flower City AmeriCorps program did not have consistent members or provide the needed support for members so RPL exited the program in March, 2019. Lastly, the Rochester City School District did not execute the Memorandum of Agreement in time to serve a full year at School #57 or add new schools on our waiting list.

A new lead RAR staff person was hired in June 2019 and we are hopeful this will lead to more consistency in the program and services provided in the upcoming year. Even with the challenges of the past year, the 2019-2020 year is off to a positive start. All RAR implementers will now be RPL librarians or library assistants who will give the program more dependability and services that are delivered by professional staff who are trained in early literacy. We have already increased communications among the entire RAR team and are working together to build a consistent and workable schedule. In addition, we plan to increase the frequency and consistency of site visits this coming year, as well as to use social media to further parent engagement. We are also hoping to add new sites this year, including School #33, School #5, School #19, School #39, and School #53, and we are expanding our services to include all families at School #57. We are excited about the upcoming year of RAR and plan to continue to grow and impact our community.