

Always Reading: 2019-20 Evaluation Results Brief



Kristi Yamaguchi's Always Dream Foundation developed the Always Reading Program to help foster a love of reading in children. The program partners with schools serving predominantly low-income families to provide Kindergarten students with a digital library of high-quality books and to engage parents as active participants in their child's learning. Anchored in research and best practice, the program is designed to encourage parents and children to read together, build regular reading routines, and create home environments that support early literacy.

Always Dream Foundation is committed to being a data-driven learning organization. The Foundation is in the initial stages of an ongoing evaluation journey and has engaged Learning for Action to develop [a Theory of Change](#), and to help embed learning and evidence-building into the program design and implementation. This year, the program built the data infrastructure to learn about the effectiveness of the program model and the outcomes for children and their families. This brief summarizes the program's learnings and highlights suggestions for the Foundation's continued evaluation journey.

How Always Reading Works



Families receive a tablet with a library of books, curated in alignment with the Always Reading curriculum



Families receive weekly text messages with read-aloud strategies and participate in educational trainings



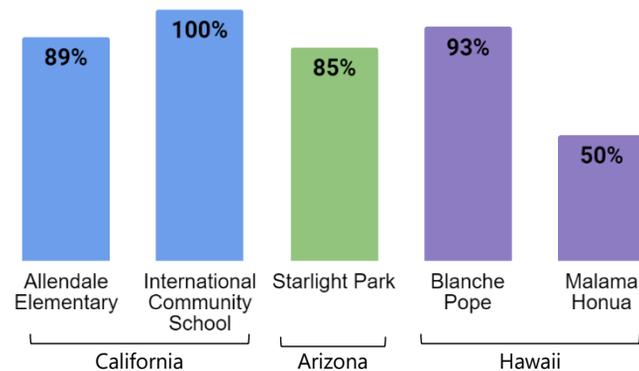
Families have access to a Book Coach who monitors tablet usage and offers ongoing support for at-home reading



Who Always Reading Serves

Always Reading serves Kindergarteners and their families in high-need schools, where a majority of students receive free or reduced-priced lunch. In 2019-20, Always Reading partnered with fourteen Kindergarten classrooms in five schools in California, Arizona, and Hawaii to serve 263 students. Always Reading provides books, text messages, and trainings in Spanish to reach the third of parents/caregivers for whom Spanish is their primary language.

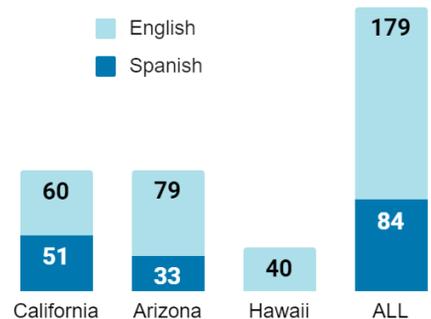
On average, participating schools serve 83% students receiving free or reduced-priced lunch



263 Families participated in Always Reading in 2019-20

90% Of Kindergarten students at participating schools enrolled in Always Reading

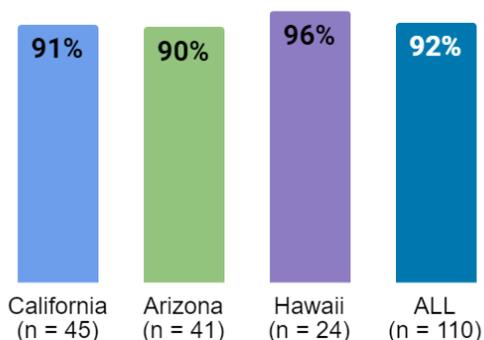
32% (84 of 263) of participating parents/caregivers speak **Spanish as a primary language**



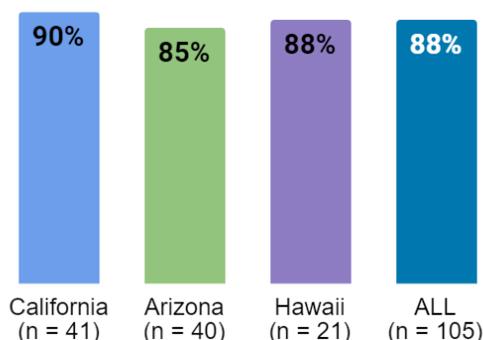
Parents Increase Their Knowledge of the Power of Family Reading

The Always Reading program starts by providing parents with a toolkit and training designed to teach them about the power of family reading, the impact of early literacy routines on children's language development, and the critical role parents play in establishing those routines for their child. Evaluation results below show that, for nine out of ten parents, Always Reading has built their knowledge of the relationship between family reading and language development. Additionally, 88% of parents/caregivers feel more empowered in their ability to help their child develop a love of reading after participating in the program.

92% of parents/caregivers report the program helped them understand that **family reading helps their child develop their language**



88% of parents/caregivers report that they are **better able to help their child develop a love of reading**



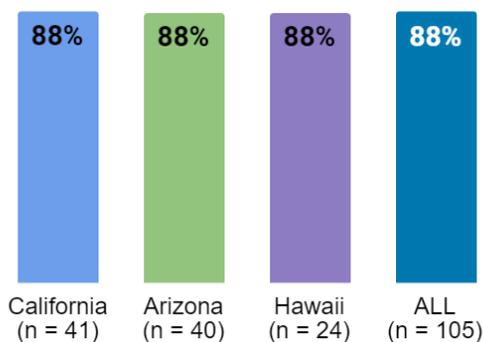
Parents Find it Easier to Engage With Their Child in Reading Time

The Always Reading program aims to reduce barriers that often prevent families from engaging in family reading time: lack of access to age-appropriate reading materials at home and not knowing how to meaningfully engage children in early literacy routines. Equipped with the Always Reading extensive digital library and curated collection, parents also receive weekly read-aloud strategies designed to make at-home reading enjoyable and accessible, as well as deepen children's engagement in reading. Upon completing the program:

- 94% of parents/caregivers report that it is easier to **find books their child enjoys**
- 91% of parents/caregivers report that it is easier to **make read aloud time interesting** for their child
- 85% of parents/caregivers report that it is easier to **find time to read with their child**

Ultimately, Always Reading wants to make it easier for families to engage in reading time together. As results show below, 88% parents/caregivers report that the program has built their capacity to do so.

88% of parents/caregivers report that **they are better able to engage in reading time with their child** after participating in the program



“Since being a part of the program, I encourage my child to answer questions after reading.

- Always Reading Parent

“We actually discuss the book instead of just read them through.

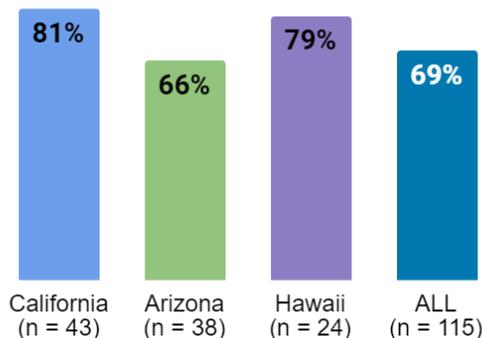
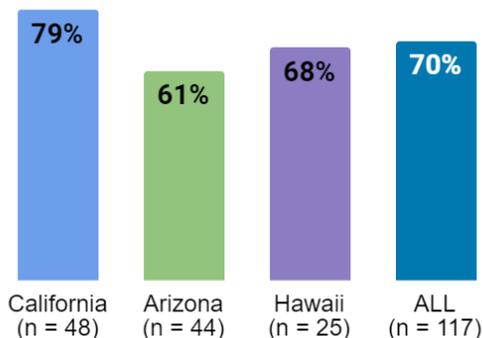
- Always Reading Parent

Families Spend More Time Reading Aloud

Guided by research and best practice, Always Reading encourages families to read at least 15 minutes a day, three times a week. By the end of the program, **85% of families report reading for at least 15 minutes every time they read with their child**. Evaluation results below further show that, since participating in Always Reading, parents/caregivers are spending more time reading aloud with their child and reading for longer periods of time.

70% of parents/caregivers report **they spend more time reading aloud with their child** after participating in the program

69% of parents/caregivers report that **they read with their child for longer periods of time** after participating in the program



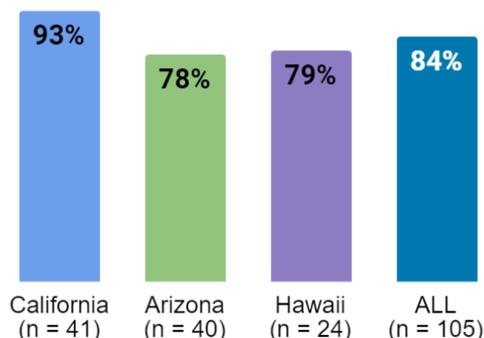
Based on data collected through the tablets, a student used the tablet of **36 minutes a week** (the median number of minutes) and read an **average of 205 books** over the course of the program. Families are likely reading even more, as this only accounts for reading on the tablet and does not include time spent reading physical books.

Children Show Greater Interest in Reading

Always Reading ultimately aims to cultivate children's love of reading. Evaluation data from parents/caregivers show promising results, as **82% report that their child asks to be read to more often** and, as shown below, 84% share that their child now shows greater interest in reading books.

While Always Reading encourages family reading time, children are also able to use the program's read-aloud function to engage with books independently when a parent or other family member is not available to read with them.

84% of parents/caregivers report that their **child shows greater interest in reading books**



We sit together and he reads two or three books to me. Then I go back and read the books to him.

- Always Reading Parent

My boys love reading together now.

- Always Reading Parent

In Their Own Words...

Parents' Praise for Always Reading

Before I didn't read to my son. I didn't purchase or have paper books. Having the tablet helped [us] access books easier. Receiving paper books in the mail also helped. My son has his own little library now that he can share with friends and family.



The ease and the access to books that [we] wouldn't have otherwise had access to since we weren't able to go to the library much.



The variety of available books is amazing! The "library" of books that were chosen made it much easier to narrow down what to read and having them be age/level appropriate is so important for beginning readers.

My child loves the "read aloud" book options as a pre- and now beginning reader because she can be independent and still listen even when an adult is not available to read to her.

We have more reading times throughout the day.

We read more! Whether it's a real book or online.



Evaluation Overview & Recommendations

Always Dream Foundation (ADF) commissioned Learning for Action to conduct an evaluation of the Always Reading program's first year of implementation in California, Arizona, and Hawaii. The evaluation incorporates: (1) survey data from 45% of participating families (118 of 263), administered digitally due to school closures from Covid-19; (2) year-end tablet usage data, and (3) program administrative data. In the program's first year, ADF focused evaluation efforts on developing a performance management system to capture and analyze program and outcomes data. In the next phase of evaluation and learning, ADF has an opportunity to:

- Capture daily reading data from the tablet to more acutely measure reading routines and to understand how reading behavior changes over time
- Explore the conditions under which the program works optimally
- Continue to reflect on program data to inform strategies for improving the program for all families.



Of families report that Always Reading has been **helpful while sheltering in place**