Summer Reading Achievement Pilot
Summary Report

The Issue

Over the summer months, children are vulnerable to losing reading and literacy skills. Literacy skills are at an even greater risk for decline over the summer months for vulnerable children living in low-income.

While summer camps and programming often focus on recreation and physical activity, it is also can be an opportunity for children to maintain or strengthen their reading skills. Out of school summer programming can help to mitigate the reading gap often experienced by children living in low-income households.

Pilot Description

To address the summer reading gap for vulnerable children, the Child and Youth Initiative, in partnership with the Ottawa Public Library and the Coalition of Community Houses, came together to develop the Summer Reading Achievement pilot. This pilot focused on providing staff with tools and skills to integrate literacy activities into summer programming.

A total of 23 staff from eleven community houses within Ottawa were trained in integrating reading skill activities and programs into daily summer camp programming. Evaluations were completed at the beginning and end of summer with the staff to determine effectiveness of the training.

Children who attended the summer programming were also asked to complete surveys to determine if attitudes toward reading had improved as a result of the workshop. Results demonstrated that nearly half (49%) of children were more interested in reading, following the program. This provides support for future literacy training workshops.

PILOT RESULTS

Child Surveys

Each child who attended programming was asked to complete two surveys over the course of the summer. The surveys were picture-based and self-administered. There were a total of 139 children who participated in completing the surveys. However, due to attrition and unclear answers, 67 children were retained in the final analysis.

The results seem to demonstrate that attitude toward reading improved over the summer months. Highlights of the findings include:

- o At the beginning of the pilot, the majority of children self-reported a positive attitude and *high* or *very high* interest in reading. At the end of the pilot, the large majority of children self-reported maintained or improved attitudes and interests in reading.

Attitudes for reading - after pilot

27%

52%

- Maintained
- Increased
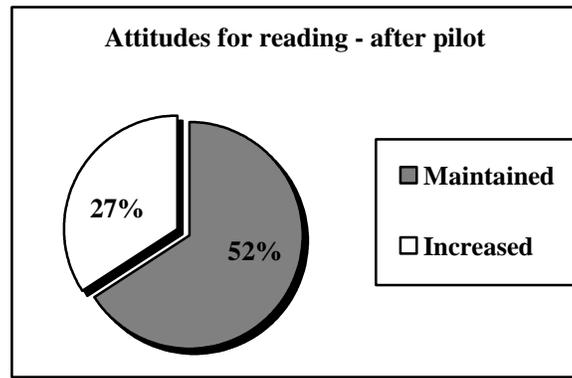
Limitations to Children's Surveys

There were a number of challenges with data collection. The level of attrition was quite high for summer participants as many children attended camp infrequently and were absent during the second phase of the survey process. The picture base survey also required additional staff training in its administration.

In addition, the type of camp that was run in community houses where not completely comparable. Each camp varied the time and method in which they integrated literacy into programming. These inconsistencies are confounding variables. For these reasons, the results should be regarded with caution. In this setting, there are too many variables to control for making the data unreliable. It is recommended that further work should focus on staff evaluations and experiences.

Workshop Staff Evaluations

Staff who completed the workshop training were asked to complete an evaluation on the Summer Reading Achievement workshop immediately after the training session as well as at the end of the summer.

A total of 20 staff completed the evaluation. Findings include:
- o 19 staff either *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the information was useful and easy to understand, and that the activities were informative.
- o 19 staff either *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the length of the workshop was appropriate, and would return for future learning opportunities.

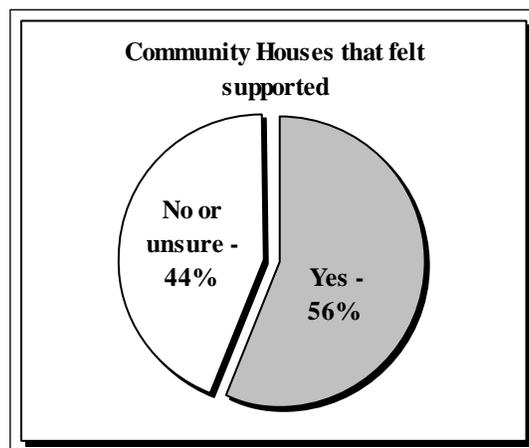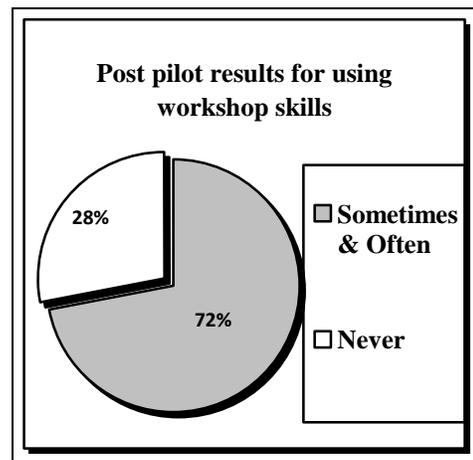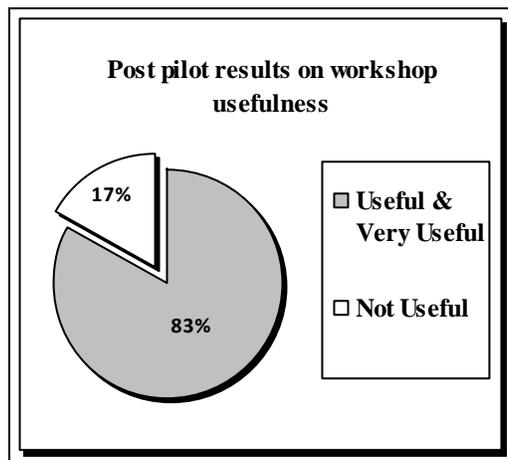The highlights of the main findings from the training workshop include:
- Staff liked learning new activities, working in groups and receiving a take home worksheet.
- Staff indicated that they would have liked more examples of games, interactive activities, and reading materials. Also, they would have liked take away worksheets to use at later dates.

- Staff would like the training to address challenges that may occur when implementing reading into an existing program.

Follow Up Workshop Staff Evaluations

In total, 18 community house staff completed the post-workshop survey. The following information was provided:
- 15 staff either found the training *useful* or *very useful*
- 15 staff were able to use their training either *often* or *sometimes*
- 10 staff did indicate *yes* that their community house had received support from the Ottawa Public Library

Post pilot results on workshop usefulness

17%

83%

☐ Useful & Very Useful

☐ Not Useful

Post pilot results for using workshop skills

28%

72%

☐ Sometimes & Often

☐ Never

Community Houses that felt supported

No or unsure - 44%

Yes - 56%

The main highlights from the post pilot survey include:
- Staff liked learning a) specific activities for programming and b) how to read a book in a more engaging manner to kids.
- The post pilot results indicated similar results as the previous survey such as staff would like to receive more resources and tools to take away for later reference. Also, staff would like training to address challenges that may arise throughout summer programming.

- Suggestions for next year's training include inviting community organizations to the workshop to discuss how they implemented reading into programming. Staff would appreciate more support over the summer months through librarian visits, book deliveries, and communication with other community organizations.

Recommendations for Action

Moving forward with the project, a number of recommendations have been detailed. These recommendations are based on staff evaluations and observations from both the *Initiative* and the Ottawa Public Library.

Staff development
- <u>Training for frontline staff and management</u>
  Training front line staff and management will be beneficial in numerous ways. First, it will help raise awareness on the importance of reading. Second, it will help, senior and new, staff to collaborate on how to implement reading into existing programs. Third, it will increase the number of children with access to books and encouragment to read over summer months.
.

Networking and Sharing
- <u>Sharing promising practices</u>
  The workshop is one venue where promising practices can be shared between the trainers and community staff. The inclusion of frontline staff in facilitating the training workshop will help with the implementation of practical approaches.

  Sharing promising practices should continue throughout the summer months among community organizations. An online discussion board is one way for staff to view and post reading activities that were successful for other community organizations.

Program Development and Guidelines
- <u>Standardize program guidelines</u>
  Develop quality guidelines for summer programs that support building, enhancing and maintaining literacy standards around the program. It is recommended that a subcommittee is formed to take on the task of developing quality standards around the Summer Reading Achievement project.