



Read On Avondale

Evaluation Report

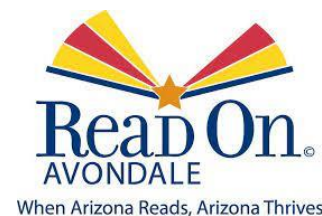
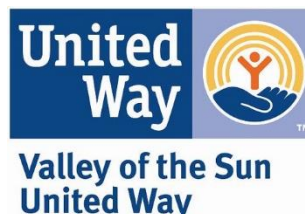
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INTRODUCTION



READ ON ARIZONA

The objective of the present report was to explore Read On's impact in the Avondale community. Read On Arizona is a statewide, public/private partnership of agencies, philanthropic organizations, and community stakeholders committed to creating an effective continuum of services to improve language and literacy outcomes for Arizona's children from birth through age eight. Through their mission, Read On Arizona is committed to helping create an early literacy system that delivers the right program at the right time for every child. There are four overarching goals of a Read On community.

1. To engage local, county, regional, and statewide leaders and the communities they represent to make early literacy a priority.
2. To improve data integration and system linkages by both building on comprehensive baseline data and analysis, and also by collaborating around shared data and accountability systems.
3. To create a Read On Network by bringing together innovations partnerships and developing pilot strategies that build a network of communities focused on developing a literacy system (i.e., language-rich and engaging programs, ongoing screenings and assessments, professional development, and family supports).
4. To create a continuum of effective practices tool that is informed by both existing resources, and also experts in task force around strategic areas of focus (e.g., English Language Learners, curriculum and instruction, family engagement, professional development, etc.).

INTRODUCTION



READ ON AVONDALE

Avondale became an official Read On community in 2015. Read On Avondale was born out of a collaboration between the Valley of the Sun United Way (VSUW), the City of Avondale, Avondale Elementary School District, and community partners under Read On Arizona. Through their partnerships and collaborations, Read On Avondale's community stakeholders and partners have implemented a variety of activities and programs to ensure families have access to the necessary tools to prepare their children for school (e.g., books, literacy programs, resources, peer socialization, familiarity with books, and productive parenting skills).

Read On Avondale was recognized as an acceleration zone by Read On Arizona. As part of this recognition, Read On Avondale collaboratively created theories for acceleration. We explore two of these theories in the present pilot evaluation. The theory of readiness for acceleration conceptualizes that readiness is the ability to grow from one point to another across a set of readiness indicators that represent the whole child (e.g., health, literacy, well being). This theory is in contrast to the conceptualization of readiness as a specific score or threshold. The second theory is that Read On Avondale's affiliation with multiple and diverse activities and programming seeks to operate as a collective impact model that fosters Readiness for Acceleration. As part of this collective impact model, Read On Avondale Stakeholders theorize that families participating in two or more Read On Avondale affiliated programs or services will demonstrate greater readiness compared to families who have participated in one or fewer. For this evaluation project, we focus on the activities and programming for families and children before kindergarten entry. We narrow in on three specific programs: Play & Learn, Make Way for Books, and Unite for Literacy.

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PLAY & LEARN	Play & Learn is a 12 week program at the agency, Candelen. Play & Learn serves parents and family members who care for young children. Through their holistic approach, Play & Learn seeks to support families' physical and mental health and community support, as well as their literacy skills. Play & Learn is driven by the ideology that children are born researchers who have the potential to develop the ability to focus, plan, and juggle multiple tasks. To facilitate such skills, Play & Learn hosts a series of sessions that include planned, interactive activities for parents and their children. Sessions focus on areas such as child development, language and literacy, daily schedule planning, nutrition, positive guidance, brain development, environment arrangement, and yoga. For more information about this program, please visit https://candelen.org/play-learn/.
MAKE WAY FOR BOOKS	Make Way for Books Story School, is a 10 week, virtual series for parents and their children to learn together and gain critical skills for literacy readiness. The goal of story school is to meet families' need for ongoing, bilingual (English and Spanish), and culturally-responsive early literacy learning opportunities for young children (ages 3-5). Using books and stories as a primary tool of engagement, this program seeks to foster children's emergent literacy and language skills while empowering parents with the knowledge, confidence, and skills to create these powerful learning experiences with their young children and integrate them into their routines at home. Further, Story School distributes 20 high quality, reflective, culturally representative books to each family to help them build their own library. For more information about this program, please visit https://makewayforbooks.org.
UNITE FOR LITERACY	Unite for Literacy is a non-traditional publishing company that seeks to support public and private partners to change the literacy landscape of their communities. Their goal is to build home libraries and support families to develop a daily habit of reading, both of which are key factors in growing lifelong readers. To accomplish this goal, Unite for Literacy offers a research-based collection of original, print and digital picture books aimed to support emerging readers. Book packages are distributed systematically in English and Spanish to provide the best opportunity for sustained family engagement that supports school readiness. For more information about this program, please visit https://www.uniteforliteracy.com.

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PROGRAM INTERCONNECTIONS

These three programs in the Read On Avondale Network have distinct foci and impacts on families. However, interconnections exist among the programs to attempt to broaden the supports available to children and families in Avondale and to normalize early literacy preparation (e.g., reading out loud). As families enrolled in either Play & Learn or Make Way for Books reach the end of their sessions, they are automatically enrolled in the Unite for Literacy book subscription. This continuum of connected and aligned early literacy programs facilitates the ability for parents and children to continue to practice literacy skills learned in the programs.



Further, before the outbreak of COVID-19, connections were being established to unite Play & Learn and Make Way for Books. The programs planned to strengthen outreach strategies between the Play & Learn and Make Way for Books. This partnership sought to create a continuum of programming where families finishing Play & Learn would be encouraged to transition directly into Make Way for Books, and vice versa. Though the COVID-19 pandemic paused the developing connection between Play & Learn and Make Way for books, strengthening the connection between these two programs remains a priority for the future.

Importantly, Read On Avondale's network of support extends beyond the interconnections of these three programs. Children and families who participate in the Read On Avondale network can be introduced to any of the following events, services, and programming:

Read On Avondale Network of Support

Community events and services

Family Story Time Avondale Library
Developmental & Sensory Screenings
Kid Fest
Arts in the Park
Arizona Science Center Saturdays
Faith Base Socializations
School Readiness Kits
Book Subscriptions from Unite for Literacy

Parenting programs

Raising a Reader
EAT, PLAY, GROW
Kith and Kin
Make Way for Books
Parenting Workshops Arizona's Children Association
1-2-3 Magic
Active Parenting First Five Years
Raising a Reader
Play & Learn

Community Resources

Resource Centers (e.g., AZ Complete Health Resource Center, Prendergast Family Resource Center)
Local Libraries (e.g., Avondale Library, Civic Center Library)
Local Food Banks(e.g., Agua Fria Food and Clothing Bank, St. Mary's Foodbank)
Immigration Services (e.g., Aliento, Arizona Immigrant and Refugee Services)
Financial Assistance (e.g., TANF, WIC, SNAP)
Schools or Universities (e.g., Pre-schools, summer school, universities)
Medical Centers or Clinics (e.g., Adelante Health, community clinics)
Religious or Cultural Centers(e.g., Place of worship, Catholic Charities, Jewish Family Services)

INTRODUCTION



COLLECTIVE IMPACT FRAMEWORK: AVONDALE COMMUNITY

The dominant framework guiding the work of Read On Avondale is rooted in principles of collective impact (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Over the past decade, collective impact community models have gained momentum as a discipline, cross-sector approach to solving social and environmental challenges on a large, community-level scale (Hanleybrown, Splansky Juster, & Kania, 2014). The five (5) conditions of collective impact are listed in the call-out table on this page.

Read On Avondale's vast network of supports and use of the collective impact framework centers the Avondale community. By facilitating cohesion around local programming, local businesses, and civilian engagement, Read On Avondale seeks to facilitate an entire community that values and promotes early literacy at every opportunity. Motivated by the idea that no family-facing organization or entity should work in isolation, collective community impact requires the participation of literacy-oriented programs and services, and also entities outside of the realm of education. For example, Pediatricians and family health centers, family resource centers, health insurance companies, family financial assistance programming must also be engaged in targeting and contributing to the development early literacy skills.

The Five Conditions of Collective Impact

1 Common Agenda

All participants share a vision for change that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving the problem through agreed-upon action.

2 Shared Measurement

All participating organizations agree on the ways success will be measured and reported, with a short list of common indicators identified and used for learning and improvement.

3 Mutually Reinforcing Activities

A diverse set of stakeholders, typically across sectors, coordinate a set of differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.

4 Continuous Communication

All players engage in frequent and structured open communication to build trust, assure mutual objectives and create common motivation.

5 Backbone Support

An independent, funded staff dedicated to the initiative provides ongoing support by guiding the initiative's vision and strategy, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurement practices, building public will, advancing policy, and mobilizing resources.

EVALUATION RATIONALE

The overarching goal in conducting this small, pilot evaluation is to inform the goals and initiatives of Read On Avondale. Two aims motivated the present evaluation. The first aim seeks to explore the theory Readiness for Acceleration by defining a holistic definition of readiness and examining if the culture of readiness in the Avondale community aligns with this foundational ideology of Readiness for Acceleration. To address aim one, we conduct an initial search of the literature for readiness indicators. Using these indicators as a guide, we examine the culture of readiness in Avondale by identifying similarities and differences in how Avondale community members define and contribute to school readiness. The second aim seeks to explore the Read On Avondale's collective community model. To address aim two, we explore the impacts of participating in two or more Read On Affiliated services.



Methods Of Data Collection



For the current evaluation, data were collected through focus groups and online surveys. Both the creation of focus group questions and online survey questions were informed by a literature review of school readiness indicators that were expansive in scope (Bierman et al., 2008; Buttram et al., 2004; Doucet & Tudge, 2007; Duncan et al., 2006; High et al., 2008; Janus & Duky, 2007; Manfra, 2019; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000; Shivers et al., 2006; Snow, 2016; Zaslow, 2000). Based on our reading of the literature, we identified 11 indicators to create a holistic definition of school readiness (see Table 1). Indicators one through three focus on skills traditionally perceived as important for children's kindergarten entry (e.g., letter recognition and counting). Indicators four through seven extend the construct of school readiness to include on children's own skills to also include their behaviors, thoughts, and physical and emotional well-being (Child Trends, 2000). In addition to a focus on the skills and competencies of the child, we identified parental and community readiness indicators (Child Trends, 2000). Indicators eight through 11 highlight skills and competencies for parents and indicator 11 highlights the importance of community for school readiness.

In addition, the current evaluation draws from multiple perspectives. We include Read On stakeholders who are members of Read On Avondale, Read On families who were currently participating in Read On Programming, Community Leaders who did not have an established relationship with Read On Avondale, and, finally, Avondale parents/guardians with children entering kindergarten.

Indicators of School Readiness

Domain		Description
Pre-mathematics knowledge and skill	1	Children's knowledge and skills of numbers, counting, classification, seriation, spatial relations, and time.
Pre-reading knowledge and skills	2	Children's knowledge and skills of print awareness, story sense, writing and drawing, alphabetic knowledge, color knowledge, and phonological awareness (rhyming, blending sounds together to make new words, segmenting into words or syllables).
Basic oral language skills	3	Children's abilities of listening, speaking, oral comprehension, communicating needs and wants and mastery of a basic vocabulary.
Inhibition and attention skills	4	Children's abilities of academic attention, task persistence, goal directed behavior, control aggression, comply with rules, respect adult authority, cooperate with others, and follow rules.
Socioemotional and interpersonal skills	5	Children's ability to relate to adults and peers, deal with feelings at the age-appropriate level, respond empathically to other's feelings, play and work with other children, help and share, initiate relationships.
Physical well-being and motor development.	6	Children's abilities of holding a pencil, running on the playground, motor coordination, adequate energy levels for classroom activities, independence in looking after own needs, and daily living skills.
Positivity and enthusiasm for learning.	7	Children's enthusiasm, eagerness, curiosity, temperament, and values about the world and learning.
Families as teachers	8	Parent's/guardian's skills to provide cognitive stimulation (e.g., reading, storytelling, learning materials, opportunities to learn), their understanding of the importance of literacy, and their ability to set high expectations for themselves and their children.
Families as nurturers	9	Parent's/guardian's positive parenting practices (e.g., sensitivity to children's feelings, ability to facilitate positive interactions with the child, encouragement of emotional well-being).
Parents/guardians as intermediaries and advocates	10	Parent's/guardian's engagement and involvement as the child's participates in community programs (e.g., attending programs together, communicating with program personnel, cooperative goal setting).
Community connection and resources	11	How much programs and organizations seek to connect families to other community-led programs, services, and resources.

METHODS

ONLINE STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

An online survey was sent to all Read On Avondale stakeholders. The online survey asked stakeholders for their own perceptions of school readiness indicators and to what extent their Read On Avondale program addressed the 11 key readiness indicators. In addition, the survey asked for nominations of leaders in the Avondale community. We received responses from 28 stakeholders. Respondents were from libraries, community programming (e.g., Kith and Kin Project, Play & Learn, etc.), schools, community services, resource centers, and were general members of Read On Avondale.

FAMILY FOCUS GROUPS

We conducted focus group with families who were participating in two Read On services: a parenting program (i.e., Play & Learn or Make Way for Books) and a book subscription service (Unite for Literacy). The focus group prompted the participants to reflect on their experiences utilizing these services and the interconnections between them. In addition, parents offered their perceptions about their child's readiness for entry into kindergarten. In total, we had 10 participants and all identified as mothers (i.e., biological, step, adoptive, foster). All families were receiving the Unite for Literacy book subscription and participating in either Play & Learn (N=5) or Make Way for Books (N=5).

COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUPS

In addition, we conducted focus groups with community members who were identified as leaders by Read On Avondale team members in either the online team member survey or meetings with Indigo cultural Center. We contacted six community leaders, however, only three participated in the focus group. The focus group prompted the community leaders to share their perceptions of school readiness, how their organization contributes to school readiness, and how the Avondale community contributes to school readiness.

METHODS

ONLINE KINDERGARTEN SURVEY

Finally, an online survey was sent to families entering kindergarten in Avondale. The online survey asked parents and guardians about their demographics, to respond to questions about their own perception of the importance of the 11 key readiness skills and to rate their own child's mastery of the 11 indicators. In addition, the survey asked parents and guardians about their participation in community services to facilitate the ability to explore statistical differences in readiness for families who participated in 2+ community services versus families who did not. The full survey can be viewed in the appendix.

We received 26 responses, however, only 14 were complete responses. All participants identified as mothers (i.e., biological, step, adoptive, foster). Mothers reported their children's sex as male (N=11) or female (N=7). No other gender identities were reported. Mothers also reported children's racial identity as African American (N=2), Hispanic or Latino/a (N=12), Multiracial (N=2) and White (N=1). Three children were enrolled in either center-based (N=2) or family child care (N=1).

RESULTS

Aim 1: Examining the Culture of 'Readiness for Acceleration' in Avondale

SHARED DEFINITION OF READINESS

To understand the culture of readiness in Avondale, we explored if Read On Avondale Stakeholders, Read On Avondale Families, and Community Leaders had a shared definition of what it meant to be ready for kindergarten. We asked for their perception of readiness indicators and coded responses for themes using the 11 domains we identified in the literature. Read On Avondale Stakeholders perspectives were gathered via an open-ended question in an online survey, Read On Avondale Parents perspectives were gathered in focus groups and Community Leader perspectives were gathered in a focus group.

Readiness Definition Components by Participation Type

	Domain	ROA Stakeholders	ROA Parents	Community Leaders
1	Pre-mathematics knowledge and skills	X	X	
2	Pre-reading knowledge and skills	X	X	
3	Basic oral language skills	X	X	
4	Inhibition and attention skills	X	X	X
5	Socioemotional and interpersonal skills	X	X	X
6	Physical well-being and motor development.	X	X	X
7	Positivity and enthusiasm for learning.	X	X	
8	Families as teachers	X	X	X
9	Families as nurturers	X	X	X
10	Families as intermediaries and advocates	X	X	X
11	Community connection and resources	X		X

RESULTS



Read On Avondale Stakeholders. Stakeholder responses to an open-ended online survey question were quite diverse when examined by the unique Read On Avondale stakeholder member type (e.g., libraries, resources centers, etc.), though commonalities existed among the respondents (see the appendix for the responses by organization/program). For example, respondents from the library emphasized “social/soft skills”, “the ability to sit quietly and listen to direction”, and letter recognition and language skills”. Whereas folks from community health and advocacy services responded with “letter recognition”, the ability to identify their own name”, “access to affordable healthcare and access to healthy nutritious foods”, and the connection between school and home. Together, the Read On Avondale Stakeholders emphasized a holistic perspective of readiness by mentioning each of the 11 indicators. Importantly, Read On Avondale Stakeholders mentioned multiple aspects of each indicator, as opposed to providing the general skill, demonstrating a thorough understanding of the nuances associated with readiness in each indicator component.

Read On Avondale Parents. Parent responses were obtained via focus groups. Parents participating in Read On Avondale affiliated programs also offered a holistic perspective of readiness. In contrast to the traditional literature on school readiness (Kagan, Moore, & Bradekamp, 1995), parents who participated in our survey endorsed definitions of readiness that went beyond numeracy and literacy skills. Though parents still noted the importance of their child knowing the alphabet, colors, and number sequence, they also discussed the importance of skills like sharing, cooperating, and being patient. Further, parents’ perceptions of children’s readiness included skills they themselves had to develop (e.g., setting routines at home, facilitating daily living tasks for the children) and skills the schools need to possess (a connection to the child before entry, calling on the child to participate, and understanding the unique motivations of the child). Interestingly, parents did not mention skills in category 12: ‘community connection and resources’.

RESULTS

Community Leaders. Community leader responses were obtained via a focus group. Community leaders were included in this evaluation to offer broader context for how the Avondale community, outside of the Read On Avondale network, views and contributes to readiness. Community leaders were from a family resource center, early childhood mental health consultation, and immigration advocacy and offered a unique perspective. Participants in the community leaders focus group de-emphasized the traditional notion that children need literacy and numeracy skills. Instead, participants in the community focus group emphasized socioemotional skills and regulation. For example, one participant wrote in the survey, “They need to have the skills so that they are comfortable raising their hand, asking for help, making friends, and being happy in school”. Another participant explained, “They need to know how to tell a peer or teachers their feelings” and went on to note the ability to express feeling sick, feeling excited, feeling sad as important to be ready for school.

In conjunction with the emphasis on children’s social and regulatory skills, community leaders also noted the importance of parental skills and behaviors they perceived as important for children’s readiness. Themes of families as teachers and as intermediaries/advocates was present in each of the participants reflections. One participant summarized this idea by responding in the survey that, “parents are their child’s first teacher, but they are also their child’s first advocate.” The group expanded that parents as teachers looks like modeling positive socioemotional and regulatory skills in the home and in family and friend relationships. Further, teaching the importance of routines was offered as an important component of readiness. In addition, the group offered specific behaviors for parental intermediacy and advocacy and emphasized that these behaviors take place as the child transitions into the classroom: a) talk about what the child looks like at extremes (i.e., tired, excited, overwhelmed), b) talk about what helps the child thrive in the classroom, c) create a relationship between the parent and the teacher, d) get involved in any way possible to model the importance of school. One participant noted that a positive parental connection to the school can act as an added level of security for the child when/if the child faces parental absence (e.g., deportation, incarceration, job loss).

Finally, community leaders noted a 12th component of readiness, distinct from the list generated in the literature: Understanding Diversity and Differences. This indicator is defined as the ability for children and families to identify, discuss, and accept diversities (e.g., racial, cultural, physical differences). One participant explained, “...classroom entrances can be the first time [children] experience different cultures and different foods. Having age appropriate conversations about diversity is important”. A final table of readiness components that includes this 12th indicator can be viewed in the appendix.

RESULTS

READINESS SUPPORTS IN AVONDALE

In addition, we sought to understand the culture of readiness in Avondale by exploring the types of readiness supports available to children in the Avondale Community. We asked each of the three entities (i.e., Read On Avondale stakeholders, parents, and community leaders) to report the ways, if any, they (or their organizations) supported children's preparation to enter kindergarten.

Read On Avondale stakeholders. In an online survey, Read On Avondale stakeholders rated the degree to which their program or organization prepared children for each of the 11 readiness indicators. Participants in Read On Avondale reported that they most contributed to children's readiness by bolstering positivity and enthusiasm for learning ($M=4.22$ out of 5). In addition, participants reported contributing to children's early literacy skill development ($M=4.10$), followed by lifting up parents' role as teachers ($M=4.09$) and fostering families' connection to community and resources ($M=4.08$). However, when the results were disaggregated by Read On Avondale member type, the unique contributions of each program and organization are clearer.

- **Libraries** reported they contributed equally to children's pre-reading, oral language and inhibition and attention skills. They also contributed to families teaching skills.
- **Parenting and family support programs** reported they most contributed to developing positivity and enthusiasm to learning.
- **Elementary schools** reported they contributed most to fostering families as intermediaries and advocates and creating a connection to community and resources.
- **Community services and family resource centers** reported contributing most by strengthening families' connection to resources and community services.

RESULTS

Report of Contribution to Each Readiness Indicator by Read On Avondale Member Type

[1 = Not at all; 5 = A lot; a higher score indicates a stronger linkage to playing a role in promoting that particular school readiness skill.]

	1. Pre-Math	2. Pre-Literacy	3. Oral Language	4. Inhibition	5. Socio-emotional	6. Motor	7. Enthusiasm	8. Families as Teacher	9. Families as Nurture	10. Family Advocacy	11. Community Resources
Libraries	2	3.5	3.5	3	3.5	2.5	3	3.5	2.5	1.5	2.5
Programs	2.57	4.14	4.43	4	4.57	3	5	4.57	4	4.33	4
Schools	3	3.25	3.5	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.5	3.25	3	3.75	3.75
Community services (health, housing, advocacy)	3	4.33	4.5	4.67	4.67	4.33	4.75	4.67	4.33	3.33	5
Family Resource Centers	1.67	5	3.67	3.33	3.33	3.33	4.67	4.33	3.67	2.67	5
Overall Average	2.67	4.11	4.03	3.78	3.99	3.44	4.22	4.09	3.58	3.26	4.08

RESULTS

Read On Avondale families. In focus groups, families participating in Read On Avondale affiliated programs reported how they contributed to their own child's readiness. They mentioned engaging in and facilitating skill building with their children. For example, playing mathematic games (e.g., bingo, magnets, puzzles), going on outdoor adventures, building motor skills by writing in notebooks, and creating home libraries with accessible books. In addition, they emphasized engaging with community resources to ensure their child's readiness to enter kindergarten. Parents mentioned trips to the library, Pendergast Family Resource Center and the science center. They also discussed enrolling in in-person and online programming (First Things First, Lutheran Social Services, Play & Learn, AZ Kith and Kin Project).

Community leaders. In focus groups, community leaders came from a family resource center, early childhood mental health consultation, and immigration advocacy. Each noted the unique ways in which they contribute to readiness in Avondale. The participant from the resource center mentioned hosting classes for adult-child dyads and pre-natal parenting. These classes teach about child development and parenting skills that contribute to positive development. Further, they provide referrals to other resources across Maricopa county (e.g., WIC, clinics, etc.).

The participant who works for Smart Support, early childhood mental health consultation, provides mental health consultation to early care and education programs – including early education teachers, homebased child care providers, and child care administrators. Early childhood mental health consultation is an evidence-based mental health prevention service that enhances the capacity of those who provide direct care for young children and their families. It is an adult-focused intervention and assists child care directors, center-based teachers, and home-based child care providers in understanding the social and emotional development of children; identifying and addressing the mental health needs of children and their parents; assisting with environmental changes; and identifying appropriate referral resources; and increasing the capacity to link families to needed mental health services.

Finally, the participant who works in immigration advocacy works with families (i.e., parents, children, and youth) who are undocumented to provide resources and supports to help families navigate structural and societal processes. In addition, they provide education to children and allies about the history of migration, detention and deportation. Finally, they create community healing through art to humanize immigration and the undocumented experience. Through this work, they not only prepare all children to understand differences and diversity upon entering school, but they also provide the supports families need to facilitate safe and fostering environments for children before kindergarten.

RESULTS

Aim 2: Group Comparisons: Testing the Acceleration Theory of Participating in 2 or More ROA Programs

FAMILIES' PERCEPTION OF READINESS SUPPORT IN AVONDALE

We conducted a focus group to explore Read On Avondale parental perceptions of program interconnections. Parents who participated in the focus groups had engaged with at least two Read On Avondale services (i.e., a parenting program and a Unite for Literacy subscription) which facilitated the opportunity to explore the families perceptions of the benefits of layering Read On Avondale programming.

Interestingly, when prompted to reflect on engaging with the two services, many parents expressed confusion and difficulty distinguishing between the two programs. Many perceived the two services as being a function of the parenting program (i.e., Play & Learn or Kith and Kin). This theme held as parent's were prompted to consider additional community resources and programming they participated in.

Focus group facilitators took time to explain the differences between the parenting programs versus the book subscription. After an understanding had been reached, parents did indeed recognize the complimentary nature of receiving the two services. Parents noted the beneficial layering for their children's reading development. One parent explained that the parenting programs excited children for reading through acting out the stories as they read, this excitement connects with Unite for Literacy as the children want to engage with the books they receive at home. In addition, another parent reflected on how special the book packages make their child feel and that it increases their participation in class.

Parents also noted the beneficial layering for themselves. One parent explained that the two services have strengthened her goal of daily reading. She noted that because the book subscription sends small books, she can take them on outings and read to her child outside of the home. Another parent explained that the books highlighted the parenting program because they help her to identify the stories that engage her child and what her child most likes to learn about. Finally, one parent noted that having the books delivered to their home strengthened the connection of school to family life.

RESULTS

FAMILIES' ENGAGEMENT WITH READ ON AVONDALE'S PROGRAMS

An online survey was sent to families entering kindergarten. This survey asked parents to select the Read On Avondale affiliated services or programs they had participated in. Families' participations in Read On Avondale service type is reported in Table X.

Read On Avondale Participation by Service or Event

Program	Participations
Family Story Time: Avondale Library	3
Kid Fest	2
Arizona Science Center Saturdays	1
Faith Base Socializations	2
Book Subscriptions from Unite for Literacy	1
Arizona PBS KIDS Day	1
Raising a Reader	1
EAT, PLAY, GROW	2
Parenting Workshops Arizona's Children Association	1
Active Parenting First Five Years	1
Art in the Park	0
Readiness Kit	0
The Arizona Kith and Kin Project	0
1, 2, 3 Magic	0
Play & Learn	0

We created a sum score for each participant to represent their total engagement with Read On Avondale services. We then conducted t-tests to examine if readiness differences existed for families who had participated in at least two Read On Avondale services (N = 3) versus families who had participated in less than two (N= 11). We evaluated differences for each of the 11 readiness components, which were captured by 18 measures that can be seen in the callout table on this page. Results revealed significant differences in three areas: 1) parent-child engagement in numeracy activities, 2) reading frequency, 3) child numeracy and literacy skills. In other words, parents who participated in two or more Read On Avondale affiliated programs were significantly more likely to have higher ratings in the aforementioned three areas of school readiness (noted on the table below by an Asterix).

RESULTS

Kindergarten Survey Areas of Measurement

Parent-child literacy activity engagement	Mean score of 8 items assessing parental engagement in literacy activities in the past seven days [1 = Never or rarely (0 days), 5 = Every day (7 days)]. Adapted from Lukie et al, 2014.
Parent-child math activity engagement*	Mean score of 12 items assessing parental engagement in math activities in the past seven days [1 = Never or rarely (0 days), 5 = Every day (7 days)]. Adapted from Lukie et al, 2014
Parent reading efficacy	Mean score of four items assessing parent's rate of agreements with statements of reading confidence [1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree]. The parent literacy beliefs (PLB) inventory, MAMI Project (2009).
Parent reading enjoyment	Mean score of four items assessing parent's rate of agreements with statements of reading enjoyment [1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree]. The parent literacy beliefs (PLB) inventory, MAMI Project (2009).
Family average reading frequency	Single item, "How often do you read with your child?" [1 = Hardly ever, 4 = Almost daily]. Ten Family Reading. Survey, Bracken & Fischel (2008).
Age family began reading to child	Single item, "At what age did you first begin to read to your child?" [1 = Before 6 months, 5 = After age 2]. Ten Family Reading.
Number of books in the house	Single item, "How many books are available for your child to use?" [1 = 0 – 2 books, 5 = More than 40 books]. Ten Family Reading. Survey, Bracken & Fischel (2008).
Time spent reading Yesterday*	Single item, "How many minutes per day did you read to your child yesterday?" [1 = 0 minutes, 4 = More than 20 minutes]. Ten Family Reading. Survey, Bracken & Fischel (2008).
Parent comfort advocating at the school	Mean score of 7 items assessing parent's comfort engaging in advocacy activities as school [1 = Very uncomfortable, 5 = Very comfortable]. Created by the Indigo Research Team.

RESULTS

Parental Readiness concern	Single item, "How concerned are you about whether your child will be ready to start kindergarten?" [1 = Not concerned at all, 4 = Very Concerned].
Child literacy skill*	Mean score of 9 items assessing the child's skill in literacy tasks [1 = No skill, 5 = Very high skill]. Created by the Indigo Research Team.
Child math skill*	Mean score of 9 items assessing the child's skill in literacy tasks [1 = No skill, 5 = Very high skill]. Created by the Indigo Research Team.
Child counting ability *	Single item, "how high can your child count?" [1 = Not at all, 6 = Up to 100 or more]. National Household Education Survey (1993).
Child prosociality rating	Mean score of 5 items assessing how true statements of prosociality are for the child [0 = Not True, 2 = Certainly True]. Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire., Goodman (2001).
Child hyperactivity rating	Mean score of 5 items assessing how true statements of hyperactivity are for the child [0 = Not True, 2 = Certainly True]. Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire., Goodman (2001).
Family having a regular clinic	Single item, "Is there a particular clinic, health center, doctor's office, or other place that you or another family member usually take your child if they are sick?" [0=No, 1=Yes]. National Household Education Survey (1993).
Child medical checkup frequency	Single item, "About how long has it been since your child last saw a medical doctor or other health professional for a checkup, shot, or other routine care?" [1 = Less than 1 year, 3 = 2 Years or more]. National Household Education Survey (1993).
Child food availability	Single item, "During the last month, has your child ever not eaten for half a day or more because food was not available?" [0=No, 1=Yes]. National Household Education Survey (1993).

Note. * indicates a statistically significant finding between the two groups.

RESULTS

Finding 1: Parent-child engagement in numeracy activities.

Families who participated in at least two Read On Avondale affiliated services had significantly higher parent-child math engagement when compared to families who participated in 1 or fewer Read On Avondale affiliated services. That is, families who participated in two or more Read On Avondale affiliated services reported higher engagement in the following activities with their child:

Parent-Child Math Engagement Activities

[Adapted from Lukie et al., 2013]

-
- | | |
|---|--|
| ▪ Learning simple sums | ▪ Recognizing printed numbers |
| ▪ Encouraging math in head | ▪ Asking about quantities |
| ▪ Talking about clocks and calendars | ▪ Playing board games or cards |
| ▪ Weighing, measuring, and comparing quantities | ▪ Encouraging collecting |
| ▪ Playing counting, adding, subtracting games | ▪ Reciting numbers in order |
| | ▪ Singing counting songs |
| | ▪ Sorting and classifying by color, shape and size |

Finding 2: Reading Frequency.

Families who participated in two or more Read On Avondale affiliated services also had significantly higher reports of minutes spent reading the day prior. That is, families who participated in two or more Read On Avondale reported reading, on average, 11 to 20 minutes the day prior (mean = 3.00) whereas their counter-parts reported reading 2.451 to 10 minutes the day. prior (mean = 2.45).

RESULTS

Finding 3: Child Numeracy and Literacy Skills

Families who participated in two or more Read On Avondale affiliated services also had significantly higher reports of child numeracy and literacy skills. That is, families who participated in two or more Read On Avondale affiliated services reported their child could count to up to 50, on average (mean = 5.33), whereas their counterpart reported their child could count to 10, on average (mean = 3.45). In addition, families who participated in two or more Read On Avondale affiliated services reported their child had higher literacy and numeracy skills which were defined by the following:

Formal Literacy Skills

[Created based on an extensive literature review by the Indigo Research Team]

Numeracy

- Identifying names of written numbers
- Counting objects
- Sorting things by color, size or shape
- Counting up (1,2,3,4...)
- Counting down (10,9,8,7...)
- Writing numbers
- Building with blocks and doing puzzles
- Noticing and making patterns
- Understanding time and dates

Literacy

- Identifying the colors red, yellow, blue, and green by name
- Retelling the events in a story in a connected order
- Singing/reciting the letters of the alphabet
- Rhyming and blending sound together
- Writing their name
- Drawing (not scribbling)
- Identifying letters/words while reading
- Creating rhymes

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Key Findings and Takeaways

The present pilot evaluation sought to explore the application two guiding frameworks utilized by Read On Avondale: Readiness for Acceleration and the Collective Impact model. The major research questions explored by this evaluation include:

How do parents, Read On Avondale stakeholders, and other community leaders define and articulate readiness for school?

Where is there common understanding among the 3 perspectives?

Where are there differences among the 3 groups?

What are the implications for ongoing ROA efforts?

Did families who participated in 2 or more ROA-affiliated programs report a higher level of engagement in readiness activities with their children?

EXPLORING A COMMON VISION OF SCHOOL READINESS

First, we explored hypotheses related to Read On Avondales' theory of Readiness for Acceleration, or the conceptualization of readiness as the ability to grow from one point to another across a number of holistic readiness indicators. To explore this theory, we identified a holistic set of readiness indicators. Informed by the literature and Avondale community leaders, we outline 12 indicators:

1. Pre-mathematics knowledge and skills
2. Pre-reading knowledge and skills
3. Basic oral language skills
4. Inhibition and attention skills
5. Socioemotional and interpersonal skills
6. Physical well-being and motor development.
7. Positivity and enthusiasm for learning.
8. Families as teachers
9. Families as nurturers
10. Families as intermediaries and advocates
11. Community connection and resources
12. Understanding diversity and differences

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Using these indicators to guide our coding, we found that the readiness definitions of Read On Avondale stakeholders (i.e., regular members of the Read On Avondale group), parents participating in Read On Avondale affiliated programming, and community leaders (i.e., individuals present in the Avondale community who are not affiliated with Read On Avondale, but support children and families) were quite similar and extended beyond the traditional focus on pre-mathematics and pre-literacy skills. We found all three entities shared an emphasis on 6 of the 12 indicators (indicators 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10). However, distinctions existed as Read On Avondale stakeholders demonstrated a slightly more comprehensive view of school readiness by incorporating the components of physical health and resource access (indicators 6 and 11). Further community leaders de-emphasized traditional readiness skills (indicators 1, 2, and 3) and noted the need for the 12th readiness indicator of understanding differences and diversity. Though definitional differences were small, identified gaps offer an area of focus for the Read On Avondale group. Encouraging all members of the community, including parents and leaders to incorporate all 12 indicators into their readiness definition is important will contribute to their mission of advancing a collective focus on holistic readiness. Further, given only the community leaders emphasized understanding diversity and differences as important, the Read On Avondale group might consider taking more time to discuss the importance of this indicator for readiness.

In addition to exploring definition differences, we also explored the ways in which these three entities contribute to readiness. While Read On Avondale stakeholders provide supports to both parents and children, parents reported providing more child-centered supports and community leaders reported provided family-level supports. Read On Avondale stakeholders reported that they most contributed to children's readiness by bolstering positivity and enthusiasm for learning, fostering children's early literacy skill development, and by lifting up parents' role as teachers and fostering families' connection to community and resources. Parents reported a focus on fostering children's outcomes and skills at home (e.g., educational games, activities, and materials) and in the community (e.g., attending programming and visiting libraries). Finally, community leaders detailed their unique contributions that included: hosting parenting courses, educating and skill building with educators, and contributing to the safety and stability of children who are undocumented. When viewed in aggregate, these unique contributions yield a community in which supports exist for each of the 11 readiness indicators noted in the literature.

GROUP COMPARISONS: PARTICIPATING IN 2 OR MORE ROA PROGRAMS

The second research question explored whether families who participated in two or more Read On Avondale early literacy programs reported a higher level of engagement in children's early learning experiences.

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In a focus group of parents participating in two ROA-affiliated services (e.g., a parenting program and book subscription service), parents hinted that children and families did not perceive a large amount of early literacy support in Avondale, despite the network of support available. Some parents expressed they felt their community lacked supports for school readiness and wished they could engage with more services. In addition, parents had a hard time identifying and distinguishing between the Read On Avondale affiliated programs. However, once the focus group facilitator explained that the two programs being discussed were also ROA-affiliated programs, parents identified several positive interconnections between parenting programs (i.e., Play & Learn and Make Way for Books) and the book subscription (i.e., Unite for Literacy) that they felt contribute to their child's school readiness. A notable highlighted finding from the focus group was that parents indicated the book subscription program (i.e., Unite for Literacy) facilitated their ability to practice skills and competencies learned in the parenting classes affiliated with ROA (i.e., Play & Learn and Make Way for Books).

Another important finding that has strong implications for ROA's theory of Readiness for Acceleration comes from online survey data collected from incoming kindergarten families throughout Avondale. We found statistically significant outcomes that support Read On Avondale's Readiness for Acceleration hypothesis. That is, families engaging in two or more Read On Avondale affiliated services were significantly more likely to report greater school readiness for their young children. Specifically, families who participated in two or more Read On Avondale affiliated services demonstrated higher parent-child engagement in 1) numeracy activities, 2) reading frequency, and 3) specific child numeracy and literacy skills.

As we integrate this emerging evidence from focus groups and the kindergarten survey, the data provide a rich narrative of support for Read On Avondale's hypotheses regarding Readiness for Acceleration. That is, participation in two or more ROA-affiliated services is significantly associated with family readiness engagement practices at home. It seems that Read On Avondale programming may be particularly important in encouraging and supporting parental engagement in readiness activities and for children's pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills. Focus group data from parents suggest that the cumulative effect of two or more programs may be due to the fact that participating in subsequent programming reinforces skills and practices learned in the initial program. Indeed, research discusses the importance of participating in multiple intervention programs with varying dosage as important for effectiveness (Gross, et al., 2015; Maher, et al., 2011).

Future evaluation research for Read On Avondale should explore this finding to understand the cumulative impacts of participating in multiple programs and how those impacts may vary based on the types of programs families participate in. That is, we recommend that the group more deeply explore similarities and differences in the cumulative impact of participating in, for example, two parenting programs versus two community events, versus participating in both a parenting program and community event. An additional area ripe for deeper exploration is the inclusion of other family background variables into our

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

analysis. For example, Are families whose children spent significant time in high quality early education settings (including family, friend and neighbor (FFN) child care settings) more likely to engage in more ROA-affiliated programming. Further, we recommend examining whether a family's ethnic and cultural background is associated with different patterns of engagement in ROA-affiliated early literacy programming. Such understanding could contribute to Read On Avondale's contribution to closing racialized readiness gaps, and to more fully supporting equitable early childhood outcomes in the broader Avondale community.



Possible Limitations

There are several limitations in the present pilot evaluation. First, the sample sizes throughout this evaluation are small. The focus groups and online surveys do not represent enough of the Avondale population to generalize beyond the scope of this study. We encourage these findings to be a jumping point for Read On Avondale's future investigations into the impact and effectiveness of their programming. Second, given we saw low identification of program/service name and the Read On Avondale affiliation, families who participated in the kindergarten survey may have not selected service they in fact utilized. In future evaluations of Read On Avondale, it may be useful to track family's participation in programming or to administer the survey in person or via phone to help explain the affiliated services and programming. Finally, we conducted this evaluation during the COVID-19 pandemic. This not only impacted the way in which families likely engaged with Read On Avondale affiliated services, but it likely altered the way in which parents and community leaders responded to questions about their perceptions, supports, etc.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Implications for Policy and Practice



SHARED DEFINITIONS, MARKERS AND VISION FOR READINESS

A major goal for this evaluation was to explore whether there was a shared definition of readiness. Our findings, which were based on data collected from multiple perspectives point to several implications for how to extend these findings and deepen the collective work not only in Avondale but across the state of Arizona. One broader implication for the shared definition of readiness involves more communication with state administrators (including First Things First) about the community-held markers for readiness. Do these community held notions of readiness that we discovered in this evaluation align with broader state or regional initiatives sponsored by the Arizona Department of Education, Read On Arizona, AZ Head Start grantees, and/or First Things First?

Another implication that centers cultural capital, community, and family voice is in the form of an invitation to the ROA group to deepen and broaden their understanding of readiness in ways that utilize an asset-based approach to highlight the unique ways community and families support readiness for kindergarten entry. This approach could be informed by current diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives in early childhood education, and should seek to authentically include family voice. The quest to authentically involve families in this work calls for an openness to elevating the perspectives and lived experiences of families and other community members, and to honor multiple ways of knowing.

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READ ON AVONDALE PROGRAMMING

ROA brand recognition. First, given that parents who participated in our survey and focus group had difficulty identifying Read On Avondale-affiliated programming and services, we recommend the ROA group think of ways to brand Read On Avondale affiliated programs and services. Though the lack of branding was likely intended to shift focus from the collective group to the operating programs, the lack of branding may lead to the perception that the Avondale community is lacking services that contribute to readiness. One recommendation is to explore using the Read On Avondale logo more frequently to ensure visibility in the community as well as name recognition. Further, we suggest that Read On Avondale consider distributing more materials (e.g., flyers, social media posts, pdfs, etc.) that outline their affiliated services and programming to be distributed to parents, their affiliated programs, and to broader community facing organizations that are outside of the Read On Avondale network.

Participation in ROA programming. The ROA group should continue to address barriers to participation which are often rooted in limited cultural capital that often arises from historical and current marginalization and oppression. For example, what can we learn from other programs such as the Arizona Kith and Kin Project about how to connect with and engage 'hard to reach' families? Read On Avondale and community leaders note that some programs are having trouble with outreach and recruitment.

READ ON AVONDALE'S PROCESSES

Although we found that there was a general shared definition of school readiness, qualitative data findings indicate that there is some level disconnect seems to exist among Read On Avondale affiliated programs, community leaders, and parents. There was limited evidence that these participants and stakeholders feel like they are operating in unison and leveraging each other's programming. As opposed to gears that help each other turn, the findings imply that the programs are all contributing to children's development and family support separately. Typically, Collective Impact frameworks call for an intentional aligning of services and strategies. The ideal Collective Impact initiative constantly works towards cohesion around interventions, and the organizations come to work together towards a common vision. When we specifically contextualize the current evaluation findings to the five (5) dimensions of collective impact, we recommend specifically exploring room for growth in the areas of 'Shared Measurement' and 'Mutually Reinforcing Activities.'

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APPENDICES

Read On Avondale Stakeholder Definition of Readiness by Member Type

Libraries	Programs	General Member
▪ Social/soft skills ▪ Ability to sit quietly, listen to direction, etc. ▪ Letter recognition ▪ Language skills ▪ Social skills	▪ Reading comprehension ▪ Concentration (following 2 step directions, persistence) ▪ Shared enjoyment of reading, learning, and schooling (parent and child) ▪ Identifying & self-regulating emotions ▪ Engaging in play with others ▪ Engaging in conversation (back and forth) ▪ cognitive ability and maturity, ▪ family environment, a positive support system. ▪ A personal library of books ▪ Access to regular medical and dental care	▪ Access to resources and supplies ▪ Community capacity building ▪ Social and emotional skills ▪ Language development ▪ Parent Engagement, ▪ Positive Parent-Child Relationship, ▪ Family Literacy routine time at home, ▪ Have Books at home ▪ Knowing the letters of the alphabet, ▪ being able to count to 20 ▪ self regulation of behaviors
Schools	Community services (health, housing, advocacy)	Resource Centers
▪ Cognitive and social/emotional regulatory ▪ oral language and phonemic awareness ▪ motor skills (hold pencil, use scissors); ▪ count to 10, ▪ know how to hold book (turn pages, find first page); ▪ identify most letters/say alphabet; speak in complete sentences and can be understood/express self	▪ letter recognition. ▪ identify with their own name. ▪ Access to affordable healthcare and access to healthy nutritious foods ▪ Access to affordable healthcare and access to healthy nutritious foods ▪ Connection between school and family for attendance ▪ Parent role in home to school relationship building	▪ Achievement of developmental milestones within age range and mastery of age appropriate developmental skills. ▪ Social Emotional - Can separate from parent without upset, Gets along with others, demonstrates age appropriate ▪ self-regulation skills

Indicators of School Readiness

Domain	Description
Pre-mathematics knowledge and skills	Children's knowledge and skills of numbers, counting, classification, seriation, spatial relations, and time.
Pre-reading knowledge and skills	Children's knowledge and skills of print awareness, story sense, writing and drawing, alphabetic knowledge, color knowledge, and phonological awareness (rhyming, blending sounds together to make new words, segmenting into words or syllables).
Basic oral language skills	Children's abilities of listening, speaking, oral comprehension, communicating needs and wants and mastery of a basic vocabulary.
Inhibition and attention skills	Children's abilities of academic attention, task persistence, goal directed behavior, control aggression, comply with rules, respect adult authority, cooperate with others, and follow rules.
Socioemotional and interpersonal skills	Children's ability to relate to adults and peers, deal with feelings at the age-appropriate level, respond empathically to other's feelings, play and work with other children, help and share, initiate relationships.
Physical well-being and motor development.	Children's abilities of holding a pencil, running on the playground, motor coordination, adequate energy levels for classroom activities, independence in looking after own needs, and daily living skills.
Positivity and enthusiasm for learning.	Children's enthusiasm, eagerness, curiosity, temperament, and values about the world and learning.
Families as teachers	Parent's/guardian's skills to provide cognitive stimulation (e.g., reading, storytelling, learning materials, opportunities to learn), their understanding of the importance of literacy, and their ability to set high expectations for themselves and their children.
Families as nurturers	Parent's/guardian's positive parenting practices (e.g., sensitivity to children's feelings, ability to facilitate positive interactions with the child, encouragement of emotional well-being).
Parents/guardians as intermediaries and advocates	Parent's/guardian's engagement and involvement as the child's participates in community programs (e.g., attending programs together, communicating with program personnel, cooperative goal setting).
Community connection and resources	How much programs and organizations seek to connect families to other community-led programs, services, and resources.
Understanding of diversity and differences	Children and parent's/guardian's ability to identify, discuss, and accept diversities (e.g., racial, cultural, physical)

APPENDICES

Results from Independent Samples T-Test

Read On 2 + services N=3 versus N=11						Read On 1 + services N=8 versus N=6					
	Sig.	t	df	Sig.	Mean Diff		Sig.	t	df	Sig.	Mean Diff
Parent-Child Math Engagement	0.95	1.96	12	0.07	0.66	Parent-Child Math Engagement					
Child Numeracy Skill	0.09	3.46	10	0.01	0.91	Child Numeracy Skill					
Child Literacy Skill	0.01	4.04	11.98	0.002	1.31	Child Literacy Skill					
Child's Counting Skill	0.95	2.55	12	0.03	1.88	Child's Counting Skill					
Parental Readiness Concern						Parental Readiness Concern	0.83	-1.97	12	0.07	-0.83
Reading Frequency	0.01	1.79	10	0.10	0.36	Reading Frequency					

APPENDICES

Kindergarten Survey

The kindergarten survey was designed using validated measures when possible. The Indigo Cultural Center Research Team adapted and created questions if a sufficient measure was not available in the literature. A pdf version of the Kindergarten Survey can be viewed at this link, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-R-lzr4zFPbYGtTCTc8Hty6RS7RdSSe3/view?usp=sharing>.