STORY PIRATES PROGRAM

EVALUATION REPORT (2012-2013)

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INTRODUCTION

Story Pirates is an arts education and literacy organization originally started in New York now currently serving over 20 Title I schools in Los Angeles County through a partnership with the Geffen Playhouse. The program helps students who struggle with writing develop improved skills, confidence, and creativity in writing, as well as support students' academic motivation in school and achievement in English Language Arts.

In order to examine the impact of the program on students, teachers, parents and schools served, The Geffen Playhouse partnered with Vital Research to create and conduct a comprehensive process and outcome evaluation of five schools participating in Story Pirates' year-long Play/Write Residency Program.

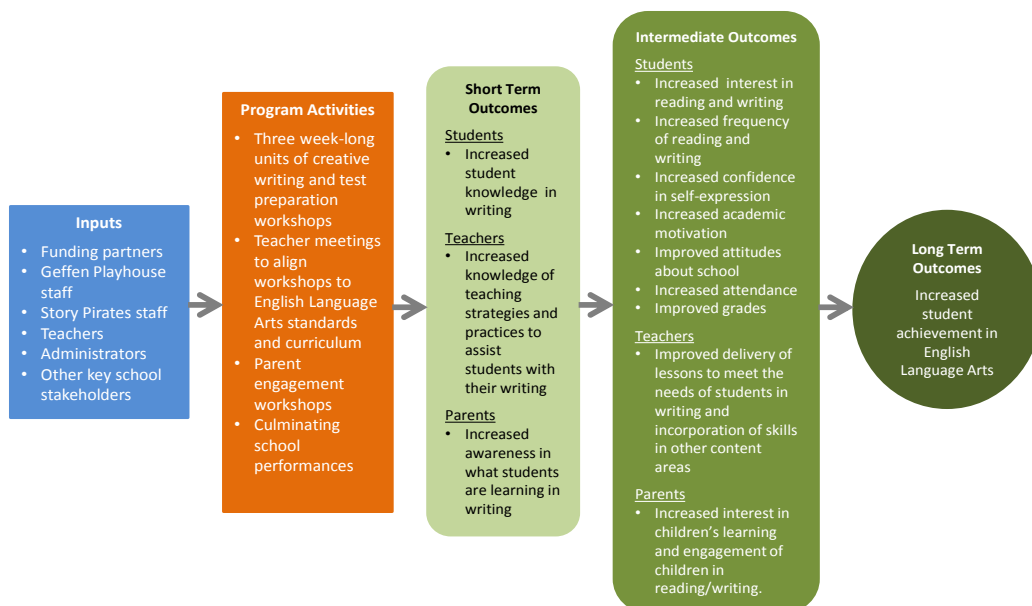The program consisted of the following activities:

- Three week-long units (5 days each) for 3rd grade and 5th grade students in 12 classrooms across five LAUSD schools (four schools with nine 3rd grade classes; one school with three 5th grade classes)
- Teacher pre-unit meetings and post-unit meetings with Story Pirates to discuss student and curriculum needs
- Family/parent engagement workshops
- Culminating school performances

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK AND QUESTIONS

THEORY OF ACTION

The following figure is a diagram of the theory underlying the Story Pirates program, including key program inputs, activities, as well as short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes:

FIGURE 1. STORY PIRATES THEORY OF ACTION

Inputs
- Funding partners
- Geffen Playhouse staff
- Story Pirates staff
- Teachers
- Administrators
- Other key school stakeholders

Program Activities
- Three week-long units of creative writing and test preparation workshops
- Teacher meetings to align workshops to English Language Arts standards and curriculum
- Parent engagement workshops
- Culminating school performances

Short Term Outcomes

Students
- Increased student knowledge in writing

Teachers
- Increased knowledge of teaching strategies and practices to assist students with their writing

Parents
- Increased awareness in what students are learning in writing

Intermediate Outcomes

Students
- Increased interest in reading and writing
- Increased frequency of reading and writing
- Increased confidence in self-expression
- Increased academic motivation
- Improved attitudes about school
- Increased attendance
- Improved grades

Teachers
- Improved delivery of lessons to meet the needs of students in writing and incorporation of skills in other content areas

Parents
- Increased interest in children's learning and engagement of children in reading/writing.

Long Term Outcomes

Increased student achievement in English Language Arts

QUESTIONS

The following questions guided the process and outcome evaluation for the 2012-13 academic year:

- How much knowledge and skill related to writing are gained by students who participate in the Story Pirates Program?
- How are students' attitudes about writing changed by participating in the program?
- How is student behavior related to writing (e.g., frequency of writing in and outside of school) influenced by participation in the program?
- How is students' confidence in self-expression and creativity influenced as a result of participation in the program?
- What is the impact of the program on student achievement in English Language Arts?
- What changes in student attitudes and behaviors about writing and school do teachers observe?
- To what extent are teachers' perceptions of their teaching strategies/instruction improved as a result of participation in the program?
- What elements of the Story Pirates program work well and what opportunities for improvement exist?
- What changes in student attitudes, and behaviors about writing and school do parents observe?
- Are parents more engaged in student learning after participation in the parent engagement workshops?

EVALUATION METHODS

DATA COLLECTION ACTIVITIES

Vital Research worked closely and collaboratively with Geffen and Story Pirates staff to develop the following instruments to determine how and to what extent the project's key goals were being achieved:

Student Pre and Post Surveys
The student survey assessed student attitudes, knowledge and behavior about writing. The pre survey was administered at the beginning of the school year prior to the start of the first Story Pirates' unit. The post survey was administered on or close to the last day of the program after school performances at each site.

Knowledge Assessments
Students were assessed on their knowledge about writing and test preparation. The knowledge assessment was administered four times during the school year: on the student pre survey prior to the start of the program, and immediately after each of the three Story Pirate units.

Observations

A trained researcher at Vital Research observed two days of Story Pirates instruction at two schools participating in the year-long program in February 2013 to gain a better understanding of the teaching strategies utilized by Story Pirates in the classroom, as well as levels of student engagement and participation. Additionally, parent workshops at two schools were observed (February, March 2013), as well as teacher meetings at one school before and after the completion of a unit (February, March 2013) to examine the process by which curriculum decisions were determined and the level of collaboration that occurred between Story Pirates and teachers.

Teacher Year-End Survey

The online survey included questions related to teachers' perceptions of the influence of the program on their students' attitudes, knowledge, and behavior about writing; influences of the program on student academic motivation and achievement; as well as the influence of the program on their own teaching. The teacher year-end survey was administered in June 2013.

Teacher Focus Group

Additionally, in June 2013, teachers were invited to participate in a focus group to learn more about the benefits of the program for their students and themselves, as well as how the program could be improved and areas of support needed in the coming year. The focus group was paired with a dinner and a complimentary show as an expression of thanks and gratitude by the Geffen Playhouse for school's participation and support of the program and evaluation throughout the year.

Parent Workshop Survey

Parent workshop surveys were collected at two school sites in February and March 2013.The survey assessed parents' satisfaction with the workshop, knowledge of what their children are learning in school related to writing, as well as how they would utilize the information learned in the workshop to practice writing at home with their child(ren).

Student Achievement Data

Originally, it was intended that student-level English Language Arts achievement data (CST scores) would be collected at each school site. However, due to difficulty with obtaining school district Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, this data was not obtained. However, once grade-level CST data for the 2012-13 school year is made publicly available through the California Department of Education (CDE) website in September 2013, additional analyses will be conducted to examine grade-level performance of schools participating in Story Pirates compared to their grade-level counterparts in other LAUSD schools with similar characteristics.

Table 1 includes the number of participants who completed surveys and assessments.

Table 1. SURVEY/ASSESSMENT RESPONSES

DATA SOURCES	# OF RESPONSES
Student Pre and Post Surveys	
3rd Grade • School 1 (N=38) Lorena Street Elementary • School 2 (N=85) 20th Street Elementary • School 3 (N=20) Rockdale Elementary • School 4 (N=42) Nora Sterry Elementary	185
5th Grade (School 5) Toluca Lake Elementary	74
Knowledge Assessments	
3rd Grade (Schools 1-4)	170
5th Grade (School 5)	74
Teacher Year-End Survey	10
Parent Workshop Survey	24

ANALYSIS

All quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences *(SPSS)*. All qualitative data were content analyzed in *Microsoft Access* or the qualitative software analysis program *Atlas.ti*.

PERCEIVED IMPACTS OF THE PROGRAM

STUDENT ATTITUDES ABOUT WRITING

3rd Grade

Nine 3rd grade classes across four LAUSD schools (Schools 1-4) participated in the year-long program. According to student survey results, 22% to 42% of students overall reported improvements in their attitudes about writing across 15 survey items from pre to post (See Table 2). An improvement was seen as moving up at least one rating on a 5-point scale (Rating Scale: *1=Almost Never, 2=A Little, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Almost Always*). It is important to note, however, that the majority of students remained unchanged in their attitudes about writing or in some cases even reported a decrease in their ratings from pre to post.

Nonetheless, 30% of students reported higher perceptions of themselves as being a good writer, and 42% were more confident in their ability to write a complete 5-paragraph essay. Additionally, Schools 2 and 4 showed a significant improvement from pre to post on student average ratings of their ability to write a 5-paragraph essay (p<.01).

Items with the greatest improvement (average percent improvement of 30% or higher) included the following:

- I can write a complete 5-paragraph essay.
- I think I could write better than I do.
- I like to write if I can choose what I write about.
- I do better at school if I can take notes on what the teacher says.
- I am good at writing a long story or long report.
- I am a good writer.

Table 2. average percent improvement in attitudes about writing- 3rd grade

ATTITUDES ITEMS ABOUT WRITING	AVERAGE PERCENT IMPROVEMENT				
	SCHOOL 1	SCHOOL 2	SCHOOL 3	SCHOOL 4	OVERALL
1. I can write a complete 5-paragraph essay.	40%	39%	25%	57%	42%
2. I think I could write better than I do.	34%	35%	47%	31%	35%
3. I like to write if I can choose what I write about.	37%	39%	5%	33%	33%
4. I do better at school if I can take notes on what the teacher says.	36%	38%	26%	21%	32%
5. I am good at writing a long story or	32%	31%	30%	29%	31%

Table 2. average percent improvement in attitudes about writing- 3rd grade

ATTITUDES ITEMS ABOUT WRITING	AVERAGE PERCENT IMPROVEMENT				
	SCHOOL 1	SCHOOL 2	SCHOOL 3	SCHOOL 4	OVERALL
long report.					
6. I am a good writer.	35%	31%	30%	24%	30%
7. I get good grades on what I write at school.	24%	31%	42%	24%	29%
8. If I have free time, I would rather write than read.	32%	33%	25%	21%	29%
9. You have to be a good writer to do well in school.	44%	30%	21%	17%	29%
10. I would rather write a story or write in my journal than fill out a worksheet.	18%	32%	42%	21%	28%
11. I like to show my parents what I write.	34%	21%	30%	29%	27%
12. I think writing is fun.	37%	23%	25%	26%	27%
13. When I have free time, I would rather write than watch TV.	27%	26%	25%	24%	26%
14. I would like to have more time in school to write.	26%	27%	20%	17%	24%
15. At school, I like to write reports for science or social studies.	32%	20%	17%	19%	22%

Parent reports of student interest in writing were more positive than student self-reports. Of the 3rd grade parents who attended a family workshop and completed a survey, 95% indicated they observed an increase in their child's interest in writing. Parents shared that their children were beginning to read aloud to them, use greater detail in their writing, write stories and songs at home for fun and to share with Story Pirates/teachers, and overall were more interested in reading and writing. Sample comments included:

- *My kids are beginning to read aloud to me. Very exciting.*
- *My son likes to read a lot and he likes to be very detailed on what he writes.*
- *More detail in her stories.*
- *My son will go on his computer to create a story on his own.*
- *My son is really proud of himself when he writes stories for you guys. He takes his time and really enjoys it.*
- *My child asked for a notebook to write stories in. She asks how to spell words.*
- *Random songs.*
- *Likes to tell many detailed stories at home.*
- *My son comes home and writes and records stories.*
- *Yes, my child makes up his own funny stories.*

- *Is writing better and is interested in reading.*
- *He has more interest in reading and learning a lot more.*
- *Yes, my child likes to read and write more.*
- *He looks forward to Story Pirates coming again.*
- *She talks at home about Story Pirates and what's learned.*

5th Grade

Three 5th grade classes at one LAUSD school (School 5) participated in the year-long program. Overall, students' average percent improvement across the 15 items related to writing attitudes ranged from 14% to 42% (See Table 3).

Over a third of students reported higher perceptions of themselves as being a good writer (38%), expressed a greater interest in writing reports for science or social studies (37%), and were more confident in their abilities to write a long story or report (36%). Significant increases in student average ratings ($p<.05$) were also seen for the following two items: *I am a good writer* and *I think I could write better than I do.*

Items with the highest average percent improvement (35% or higher) included the following:

- I think I could write better than I do.
- I am a good writer.
- At school, I like to write reports for science or social studies.
- I am good at writing a long story or long report.
- I like to write if I can choose what I write about.

Table 3. AVERAGE PERCENT IMPROVEMENT IN ATTITUDES ABOUT WRITING- 5TH GRADE

ATTITUDES ITEMS ABOUT WRITING	AVERAGE PERCENT IMPROVEMENT
	SCHOOL 5
1. I think I could write better than I do.	42%
2. I am a good writer.	38%
3. At school, I like to write reports for science or social studies.	37%
4. I am good at writing a long story or long report.	36%
5. I like to write if I can choose what I write about.	35%
6. When I have free time, I would rather write than watch TV.	34%
7. I like to show my parents what I write.	32%
8. I can write a complete 5-paragraph essay.	32%

Table 3. AVERAGE PERCENT IMPROVEMENT IN ATTITUDES ABOUT WRITING- 5ᵀᴴ GRADE

ATTITUDES ITEMS ABOUT WRITING	AVERAGE PERCENT IMPROVEMENT
	SCHOOL 5
9. I would rather write a story or write in my journal than fill out a worksheet.	31%
10. I get good grades on what I write at school.	30%
11. I think writing is fun.	30%
12. If I have free time, I would rather write than read.	28%
13. I do better at school if I can take notes on what the teacher says.	27%
14. I would like to have more time in school to write.	26%
15. You have to be a good writer to do well in school.	14%

In addition to student self-reports, teachers on the year-end survey were asked to indicate what percent of students showed significant improvement in their attitudes about writing. Fifty percent of teachers (n=5) indicated that **all** of their students (100%) showed significant improvements in their attitudes; 40% (n=4) indicated that the majority, 50-75% of students, showed significant improvements; and one teacher (10%) indicated that less than 25% of students demonstrated significant improvements in their attitudes about writing.

Specifically, teachers felt the program helped to improve student attitudes by increasing interest in writing, helping students to feel less inhibited, inspiring creativity and the use of imagination, and overall helping students feel more comfortable with writing and more confident in their writing abilities. Sample comments included:

> *Student interest in writing skyrocketed when the Story Pirates came to my classroom. Prior to that, they used to literally groan when I told them we were going to work on writing. Thanks in large part to SP, my students now have a positive attitude and more confidence in themselves.*

> *It helped my students see that writing and using your imagination can be fun. Inspire students to be excited about writing- lower students' fear of writing by emphasizing that "every idea is a good idea" and "it's okay to be weird."*

> *Some of my students that didn't like writing, actually began to enjoy it. They loved when Story Pirates came because they would get so inspired.*

> *All students became more excited about writing. In addition, students hated to be absent on a day when the Story Pirates were visiting. The Story Pirates encouraged a positive attitude amongst students. Higher achieving students…were inspired to improve their writing. Struggling students began to use writing as a means to express their thoughts and feelings for perhaps the*

first time in their lives. They began to write because they wanted to, not just because they had to do so.

One teacher commented about an individual student in his/her class: *[He] often told me, "I hate writing." He was slightly below grade level in writing and getting him to write was like pulling teeth. After the Story Pirates' first week with us, I was shocked when [he] told me, "I love writing now. I wanna write more." When I looked at his superhero story, he wrote more than he had ever written with a strongly creative plot line. Throughout the year, [he] worked hard on his writing, and by the year's end, he was slightly above grade level in writing. Without the Story Pirates, [his] improvement likely wouldn't have happened.*

STUDENT WRITING KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS

3rd and 5th Grade

Knowledge assessments were developed collaboratively with Story Pirates staff and were intended to measure student knowledge about writing and test preparation in relation to the Story Pirates curriculum units. From the pre to post assessment, students on average improved at all five schools. Notably, three of the five schools (two 3rd grade schools and the 5th grade school) significantly improved on their assessments moving up at least seven percentage points from pre to post (See Figure 2).

FIGURE 2. PERCENT CORRECT ON PRE AND POST KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENTS 3RD AND 5TH GRADE
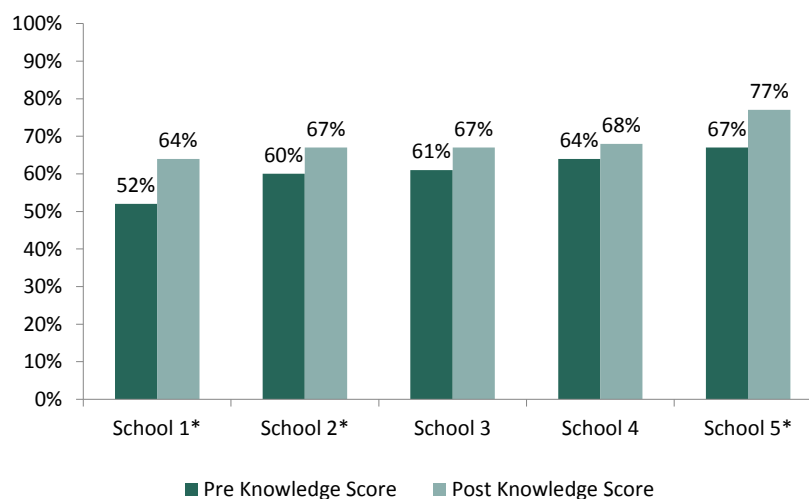
_____
*p<.01

On year-end surveys, teachers also highlighted as one of the greatest benefits of the program, the ability for Story Pirates to teach students specific writing skills/strategies, specifically in the

areas of revision, sentence composition, grammar, spelling, word choice, developing the beginning and end of stories, as well as helping students develop a personal voice.

Sample comments from teachers included:

> *The SP taught them A.D.D., which they use to enhance their drafts. - SP taught them C.O.P.S. which they can use to check their work before moving on to the final stage of publishing.*

> *Teaching students how to revise their work ("ADD" strategy) effectively.*

> *This program during those weeks was my language arts block where I felt all skills of reading, writing, grammar, and spelling were in the program that Story Pirates Brought to us.*

> *Teach students how to implement process to become more effective writers; Teaching three different domains of writing to students.*

> *Teaching students how to create effective beginnings and endings to their composition.*

> *Helping students improve their mechanics of writing including sentence fluency, word choice, grammar, and development of a unique, personal voice.*

STUDENT READING AND WRITING BEHAVIORS

3rd Grade

From pre to post surveys, 3rd grade students on average increased their frequency of reading and writing. Notably, students on average showed a significant increase in how often they wrote for fun at home from the beginning to the end of the program (pre to post survey) ($p<.01$) (See Figure 3). At the start of the program, students were writing for fun at home between once a week and a few times a week; by the end of the program, students on average were writing for fun at home a few times a week.

FIGURE 3. FREQUENCY OF READING AND WRITING FROM PRE TO POST- 3RD GRADE
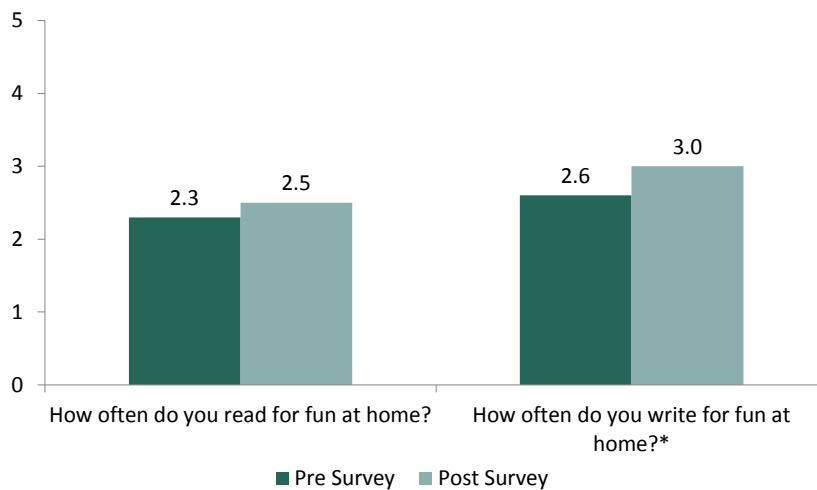
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*p<.01

Rating Scale: 1=Not at all, 2=Once a week, 3=A few times a week, 4=Almost every day, 5=Every day

The majority of parents of 3rd graders who attended a family workshop (90%) indicated that their child(ren) write more for fun at home since Story Pirates began. Specifically, they commented that their children like to create characters, make books, write stories, songs and poems, as well as enjoy telling their stories to other family members and acting them out. Sample comments included:

- *He loves to create characters.*
- *She makes stories of funky characters.*
- *He started making his own books and stories at home.*
- *She wants to write and make up stories.*
- *Random poems and songs.*
- *Telling stories to one another and writing stories to share with other family members.*
- *When he is bored he likes to write funny paragraphs to read to his sisters just to have fun.*
- *Writes stories to share with cousins and act them out.*

5th Grade

For the three 5th grade classes who participated in the program, there was a minimal decrease in the frequency of reading and writing for fun at home from pre to post (See Figure 4).

FIGURE 4. FREQUENCY OF READING AND WRITING FROM PRE TO POST- 5TH GRADE
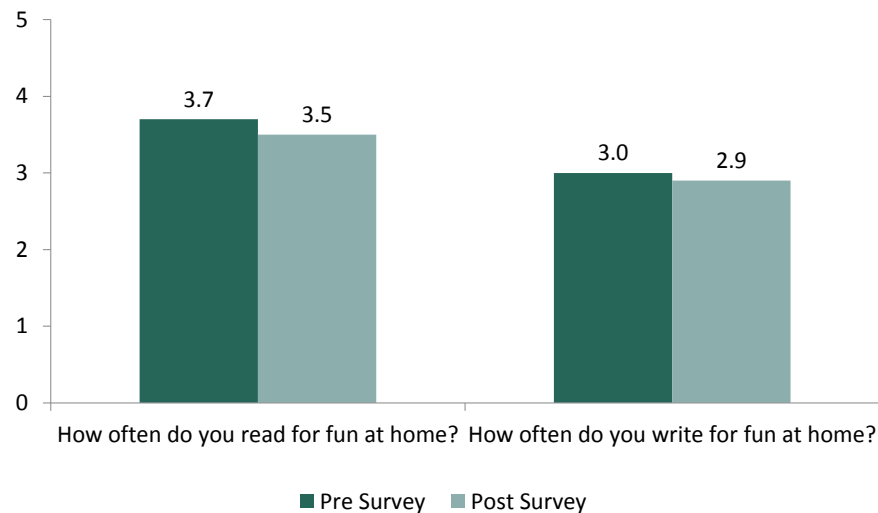
Rating Scale: 1=Not at all, 2=Once a week, 3=A few times a week, 4=Almost every day, 5=Every day

STUDENT ACADEMIC MOTIVATION

3rd Grade

Table 4 depicts the average percent improvement in student academic motivation from pre to post surveys. Across the nine 3rd grade classes at the four participating schools, average percent improvement on the seven items related to academic motivation ranged from 13% to 31%. An improvement was noted as moving up at least one rating on a 3-point scale for items 1-3 and 5-7 (Rating Scale: *1=Not True, 2=A Little True, 3=Very True*). An improvement for item 4 was seen as moving down at least one rating on the scale. Similarly to student attitudes about writing, the majority of students remained unchanged in their levels of academic motivation or even reported a decrease in their ratings from pre to post. As related to the goals of the program, student academic motivation could be more of a longer-term outcome, the effects of which may be seen later in a students' educational career and beyond the scope of the evaluation. Additionally, motivation is a complex construct that can be affected by any number of factors and may not solely be attributed to the Story Pirates' program.

Nonetheless, 27% of students reported that they more frequently would work on a problem until they understood it; 29% indicated getting bored more frequently when they don't have new things to do in school; and 31% of students reported that they more often look for new things to

do at school if they get bored. Additionally, a significant improvement in the average rating for the following item was found from pre to post for Schools 1 (p<.01), 2 (p<.01), and 3 (p<.05): *When I don't understand a problem, I give up right away.*

Table 4. AVERAGE PERCENT IMPROVEMENT IN STUDENT ACADEMIC MOTIVATION 3RD GRADE

STUDENT ACADEMIC MOTIVATION	AVERAGE PERCENT IMPROVEMENT				
	SCHOOL 1	SCHOOL 2	SCHOOL 3	SCHOOL 4	OVERALL
1. When I get bored at school, I look for new things to do.	28%	29%	45%	32%	31%
2. When I don't have new things to do in school, I get bored.	27%	33%	10%	32%	29%
3. I keep working on a problem until I understand it.	22%	35%	30%	12%	27%
4. When I don't understand a problem, I give up right away.	31%	23%	26%	22%	25%
5. When I know I have learned something new, I feel good about myself.	27%	17%	20%	13%	18%
6. I like to learn.	11%	17%	30%	15%	17%
7. I like learning new work in school.	19%	12%	15%	7%	13%

Of the 3rd grade parents who completed a survey at one of the family/parent engagement workshops, 95% indicated that since Story Pirates began, they've observed an increase in their child's interest in school overall. Parents shared that their children had increased excitement about going to school, wanted to be more involved, were more focused, and showed signs of improvement in all aspects of school. Sample comments included:

- *She is more excited about school and has lots to say about what goes on in class.*
- *Being able to create stories and ideas has drawn my child to want to be more involved at school.*
- *He is excited about going to school because he can write stories at home.*
- *Excited to work and is more focused.*
- *Is improving in all aspects.*

5th Grade

Average percent improvement in student academic motivation in the three fifth grade classes across the seven items ranged from 15% to 32% (See Table 5). The greatest improvement was found for the following items: *When I don't have new things to do in school, I get bored* (32%) and *When I know I have learned something new, I feel good about myself* (32%).

No significant improvements in average ratings were found from pre to post.

Table 5. AVERAGE PERCENT IMPROVEMENT IN STUDENT ACADEMIC MOTIVATION 5TH GRADE	
STUDENT ACADEMIC MOTIVATION	AVERAGE PERCENT IMPROVEMENT
	SCHOOL 5
1. When I don't have new things to do in school, I get bored.	32%
2. When I know I have learned something new, I feel good about myself.	32%
3. When I get bored at school, I look for new things to do.	31%
4. When I don't understand a problem, I give up right away.	25%
5. I like to learn.	22%
6. I keep working on a problem until I understand it.	19%
7. I like learning new work in school.	15%

IMPACT ON TEACHERS

On year-end surveys, teachers were asked whether or not the Story Pirates program had an impact on them as teachers. The majority (80%) felt the program had impacted them as teachers. One teacher simply stating that Story Pirates renewed his/her interest in the subject matter: *They reminded me that writing can be fun!* Other teachers shared how the Story Pirates introduced them to new strategies/techniques (e.g., related to the editing/revision process and the application of writing), as well as helped remind teachers to foster creativity in their students and make writing fun:

> *I have always struggled with the revision and editing aspects of the writing process, but now I have techniques that make it easy for my students to apply to their writing. No longer do my students say, "I'm done" after writing their rough drafts. They now understand that there are more phases that need to be incorporated before their final draft is completed.*

> *Keeps me focused on student interest and learning modalities. Keeps me motivated as well and engages me in the learning process. I forget for a minute that students struggle with reading and witness classroom transformation even if only for an hour.*

> *Although not really replicable as presented by Story Pirates, it enhanced my awareness that students are creative, if they are given the "writing task" in a fun, purposeful way.*

The Story Pirates inspire me to be a better teacher. They make me want to work harder to integrate writing throughout the curriculum. I find myself searching for new opportunities to make meaningful connections with students that will encourage them to write. In addition, I find myself more aware of how I interact with students in regard to their writing. In particular, I try harder to put forth a positive, enthusiastic attitude towards writing projects ... to make it fun for them rather than intimidating. As one student stated in her graduation speech, "Writing is fun once you learn to see it as a hobby" - words straight out of the Story Pirates' playbook!

PARENT SATISFACTION AND ENGAGEMENT

The evaluators observed one family/parent engagement workshop at two schools serving 3rd grade students (Schools 3 and 4) during the 2012-13 school year. The workshops primarily focused on writing activities that parents could do at home with their children, specifically on the use of dialogue vocabulary/words in stories. On surveys, 100% of parents indicated being satisfied with their workshop experience overall (87% were very satisfied), and all parents agreed they would recommend the workshop to other parents.

Parents commented that the best aspects of the workshop were seeing the participation, engagement and learning of their children, the instructors and their interactions with students, as well as the various workshop activities (creating characters, puppets, etc.). Sample comments included:

- *The best part was the great participation and interaction. The participation of the students.*
- *Asking children questions which they should have known the answers to, and hearing how much they have learned.*
- *Watching the students interact, learning and having fun!*
- *How they work so hard.*
- *That my children were very involved with the people that gave the workshop.*
- *The instructors.*
- *Love Connor and Jessica.*
- *The way Connor and Jessica get the kids attention. My son really enjoys the Story Pirates. He's a shy and quiet kid, but the Story Pirates really make him comfortable acting out.*
- *When they explained how to have humor to explain things to our children*
- *The interaction between the facilitators and the kids and family.*
- *When they all drew their own character.*
- *When the children had to create their own puppet.*
- *The best part of the workshop was painting the puppets with my child.*

Additionally, the majority of parents (96%) reported they learned activities they can do at home with their child related to writing and reported they would practice using dialogue vocabulary words at home with their child.

KEY CHALLENGES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT

According to teachers, some of the main challenges with the program were around pacing of the program and scheduling issues. Teachers commented:

- *Longer sessions, sometimes I felt that we were rushed, or as if time went by too quickly.*
- *I'd slow down the instruction a bit…even for my gifted class, the story pirates went a little fast. Also, i'd give explicit written (on the whiteboard) instructions about what they want to see in their writing (for example, for the superhero story, I'd have them write, "Paragraph 1--describe your character. Paragraph 2--normal day that gets interrupted by a problem. Paragraph 3--attempted solution. Paragraph 4--another attempted solution. Paragraph 5--solution."*
- *I would like the third unit finished a little bit earlier, so students might have one last visit with the Story Pirates and have their stories being returned to them. This might be a moot point, because our school year is not quite over and maybe they have scheduled a visit that I am not aware of.*

Additionally, one teacher felt like the program interrupted the pacing of the school's regular ELA curriculum and instead suggested that Story Pirates offer a voluntary **after-school program** for interested students:

> *I feel that this type of instruction is more valuable for an after-school program on a volunteer basis rather than a mandatory part of our instructional curriculum. Classroom teachers are expected to complete instruction of the standards according to a Pacing Plan. I feel that the regular program was disrupted and hence, we did not have time to complete the Treasures program successfully by the end of the school year.*

Another teacher indicated that at times it felt like the Story Pirates were teaching over their students' heads. A couple teachers thus suggested that Story Pirates be **more student-centered.**

Lastly, a few teachers suggested the following enhancements to the program: **expanding the year-round program to additional grades** and **integrating the Common Core standards into the curriculum:**

- *The only definitive suggestion I can give is to provide more grade levels with this program. You would not believe the "stink-eye" I got from my colleagues whenever SP was mentioned in our staff meetings. They were all envious…Any chance the program can expand to other grade levels in the future? I would love to tell my fellow teachers that they will be getting the SP experience as well.*
- *They may want to look at the new Common Core Standards to find ways to connect to these areas in the future. They've already began to do that at our school. In my opinion, the Story Pirates are a model of what's possible ... and best ... when public schools receive support from community organizations!*

OVERALL PROGRAM SATISFACTION

Students, teachers, and parents were highly satisfied with the Story Pirates program overall. The overwhelming majority of 3rd grade and 5th students on post surveys indicated they liked Story Pirates **a lot** (3rd: 96%; 5th: 96%), learned **a lot** about writing from Story Pirates (3rd: 82%, 5th: 88%), and would like to have Story Pirates in their class every day (3rd: 91%, 5th 90%).

According to both 3rd and 5th grade students, the most commonly noted best parts of the program included the funniness of the Story Pirates and being able to laugh, make jokes, be weird, and act silly:

- *They are funny and they teach us new things about writing.*
- *The Story Pirates are so, so, so, so, so, so, so, fun.*
- *The Story Pirates are really, really, really, really, really, really funny.*
- *That they like to have fun.*
- *They were really fun to work with.*
- *How hilarious and funny they are.*
- *They teach us new things and they're funny.*
- *They are fun to kids they are nice to all the kids.*
- *They are very fun to work with.*
- *They let us get weird.*
- *They are weird and funny.*
- *I miss them because they make me laugh.*
- *They act silly that they almost make me laugh every day.*
- *When they make us laugh because they're really funny.*
- *I like that Story Pirates make jokes.*

Additionally, both 3rd and 5th grade students genuinely enjoyed writing, practicing writing, and learning more about writing from the Story Pirates. Sample comments included:

- *The best thing I liked is writing stories.*
- *They helped me like writing.*
- *You get to write.*
- *Writing stories with them.*
- *I like when Story Pirates explain what to write in our essay by using actions and dialogue.*
- *That they always have ways to help us write.*
- *I like when they check my writing and act it out.*
- *How story pirates make writing stories fun and educational.*
- *We get to practice it.*
- *That they showed how to do a story.*
- *I liked how they taught me how to reuse more and the different types of writing.*
- *The best thing I learned was that if we argue positively we will win.*
- *What I like about Story Pirates is they tell us above writing and acting.*

- *I liked them helping me think how to write a comedy story.*
- *I liked how they used different phrases to explain what you should do in your story.*
- *I liked how Story Pirates care about us doing good on writing by telling us always to go over and over our work.*

Moreover, third graders also particularly enjoyed the warm-up activities, playing games and specifically mentioned liking: "game-face," incorporated across units and the "bonus-level," of the test preparation unit. Sample comments included:

- *Fun warm up games.*
- *The warm-up games we do in the beginning of class.*
- *When we did the games like Pizza Man, Game Face, and the robot one.*
- *I liked all the games we played.*
- *I like making game faces.*
- *That they taught me a game face.*
- *When they do their game faces they look funny and it makes me laugh.*
- *Do not freak out and go to your bonus level.*
- *When they told us to go to our bonus level.*
- *Getting a game controllor.*
- *Eliminate the answers.*
- *Going to our bones levels and get weird.*
- *I like going to your bonus level.*

Notably, 100% of 3rd grade parents on workshop surveys reported being satisfied with the program overall. Parents shared the following positive comments about the program:

- *We love Story Pirates.*
- *This program is excellent for the students and I hope Story Pirates will continue to work with our children at Rockdale Elem.*
- *Good influence and student interaction!*
- *It's very interesting and I believe it helps my child and other children.*
- *I think it gets the kids imagination going.*
- *Seems children have lots of fun and they get more ideas and [are] more creative.*
- *They make it fun for children to use their imagination, words, and writing. They don't even feel like they are learning.*
- *It's teaching my child to use more of her imagination and writing tool to bring characters more alive.*
- *My child feels more confident in telling stories.*

On year-end surveys, teachers were asked if they would like Story Pirates to return to their classroom in the coming academic year. The majority of teacher indicated "yes," (70%), with two indicating "no," and one teacher indicating that she would gladly welcome a return but was switching grade levels from 3rd to 2nd grade. Additionally, the majority of teachers (78%) would like the year-round program to continue with one teacher commenting: *Student learning*

increased significantly because of the year round format. More SP=More Student (and Teacher/Parent) Learning!

All in all, teachers expressed being extremely grateful for the opportunity to participate in the program and expressed their deepest thanks to the program and staff:

- *Amazing partnership that brings schools, community organizations, and parents together. Excellent example of shared responsibility for learning; provides a bridge for two communities to come together East L.A- West L.A broadening everyone's perspective of the world.*

- *In short, I would like to commend both Jessica and Connor for spearheading a fantastic writing experience for my students. They will never forget the Story Pirates, nor will I. I love this program, so please, please, please...come back to Rockdale Elementary.   Yours Truly, 3rd Grade Teacher*

- *Loved the story pirates. I thought Scout and Lucas did a phenomenal job with my students. Great experience!*

- *Great staff, they had good control of the kids, and worked well with special needs students.*

- *Thank you. Our students would have no way of getting this high quality program without your support. This year I saw students writing multiple paragraphs and filling their papers with higher number of words.*

- *I really don't know how to say thank you enough, but my students have sent Thank You cards and letters that probably tell the impact the program has had on them much better than I can express.*

- *A million thank you's!*

SUMMARY

Overall, it is evident that participants of the program- students, teachers, parents, and families alike- were overall very satisfied with their year-long Story Pirates experience. Noteworthy increases in student interest in writing, knowledge of writing and test preparation, and participation in writing activities was clearly observed. The "magic" of the Story Pirates and their ability to engage students and cultivate a passion for writing is undeniable. In moving forward with their mission to empower students through writing in collaboration with the Geffen Playhouse, the program may want to think about how to build capacity within schools through more in-depth training and professional development for teachers to expand its reach and affect a greater number of classrooms, students, teachers, and families within the school community.

One teacher captured the Story Pirates program best: *Story Pirates is a great program for children. I enjoyed watching them get the students involved by acting out characters and creating stories that will last the children for a life time.*

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