



**Peninsula Community  
Foundation**

**August 2001**

# **Evaluating the Impact of the Raising A Reader™ Book Bag Program**

**PCG**  
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GROUP

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# **Introduction**

# Raising A Reader™ Program Overview

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- **Background to the Raising A Reader™ Program**
  - Research has found that academic success is influenced by early childhood experiences: “Whether or not children succeed in school is in part related to events and experiences that occur prior to their entering kindergarten for the first time” (America’s Kindergartners, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Fall 1998). Moreover, “the single most important activity for building understanding and skills essential for reading success appears to be reading aloud to children” (Bus, Van Dzendoorn, and Pellegrini, 1995; Wells, 1985).
  - According to the International Reading Association and the National Association for Education of Young Children, adult caregivers should read daily to children. Stevenson and Fredman (1990) found that “there seemed to be a cut-off point whereby children who were read to less than four times a week achieved less well than those read to more regularly.”
  - In addition, children with more risk factors for poor reading skills (low-income, English as a second language, and parents with lower levels of education) are less likely to pass various reading proficiencies than are those with fewer risk factors.
- **Raising A Reader™ Program Description: Phase II**
  - Children in the program receive a colorful book bag filled with four critically-acclaimed, multi-cultural books that they borrow for one week. Each week they return the books to their child care setting and receive new ones.
  - In Phase II, several components were added to the program including “Read Aloud” strategies for child care providers and parents, two Spanish/bilingual books in each bag (option), and a “Getting to the Library” strategy.
  - The program aims to encourage families in an engaging, non-intimidating manner to establish a regular reading routine at home that excites parents and their pre-school aged children. It especially focuses upon busy parents, as well as those with poor reading skills.
  - To date, the Raising A Reader™ program has been implemented in numerous Northern California child care centers as a first step in creating a national movement. The program’s main focus is on children with risk factors, but it encompasses those with fewer or no risk factors as well.

# Evaluation Project Overview

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- **Goals of the Raising A Reader™ Program Evaluation Project**
  - To uncover the lap-reading behaviors of parents in Head Start classrooms before and after the introduction of the Raising A Reader™ program, with particular study of mono-lingual Spanish and Vietnamese populations.
  - To evaluate the impact of the Raising A Reader™ program on the children's kindergarten readiness relative to book knowledge and story comprehension.
- **Description of the Raising A Reader™ Program Evaluation Project**
  - In September 2000, prior to enrollment in the Raising A Reader™ program, 1,433 parents of children in Santa Clara County Head Start classrooms completed a questionnaire asking about their reading behaviors (pre-test questionnaires). This original sample consisted of 61 centers.
  - These questionnaires, completed prior to the start of the program, provided data against which to measure the influence of the program on these families. The data also showed the differences in the lap-reading behaviors of English, Spanish, and Vietnamese-speaking families prior to the intervention.
  - In July 2001, after all components of the program had been in effect at least eight months, 710 parents completed a similar questionnaire (post-test questionnaires).
  - Analyses of improvements in reading behaviors between the pre-test and the post-test included only those 467 respondents who completed the questionnaire both times. Students who switched classrooms but remained in the Raising A Reader™ program were included in the sample. The final sample consisted of 34 centers.
  - In this report, changes labeled “Significant Improvement” are significant at the 95% confidence level (.05 significance) and those labeled “Somewhat Significant Improvement” are significant at the 90% confidence level (.10 significance).
- **Description of the Child Kindergarten Readiness: Pre-Literacy Skills Evaluation**
  - In May 2001, evaluators tested Head Start children entering kindergarten in the Fall, comparing Santa Clara County children enrolled in Raising A Reader™ to children not enrolled in Raising A Reader™ in Sonoma County and nationally, using the Head Start Print Concepts/FACES test.

# Report Highlights: Summary of Improvements over Time

Reading Behavior	Group		
	Overall	Spanish-Speaking	Vietnamese-Speaking
Read or Share Stories with Child Each Week	★	★	★
Regular Routine for Reading with Child	★	★	★
Take Child to the Library: Frequently vs. Infrequently	★	★	★
Take Child to the Library: Not At All vs. At Least Once a Year	★	★	★
Use of Any Library Services	★	★	★
Checking Out Children's Materials	★		★
Browsing and Playing in the Children's Section	★	★	★
Listening to Story Time with the Library Staff	★	★	
Receiving Advice from Librarian About Children's Books	★	★	



★ = Significant improvement (at the 95% confidence level) in reading behaviors following intervention



★ = Somewhat significant improvement (at the 90% confidence level) in reading behaviors following intervention

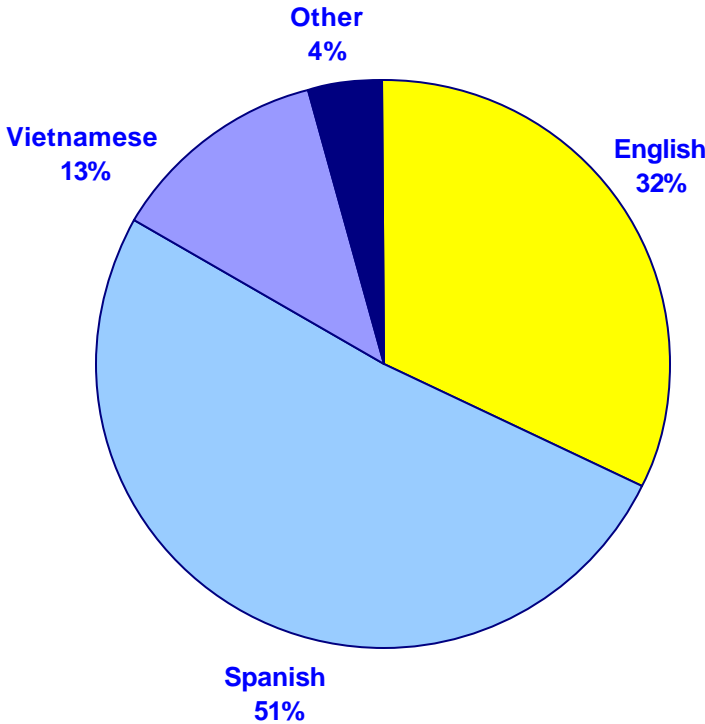
## **Respondent Profiles**

# Respondent Profile by Language

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## Primary Language Spoken at Home

(N\* = 461)



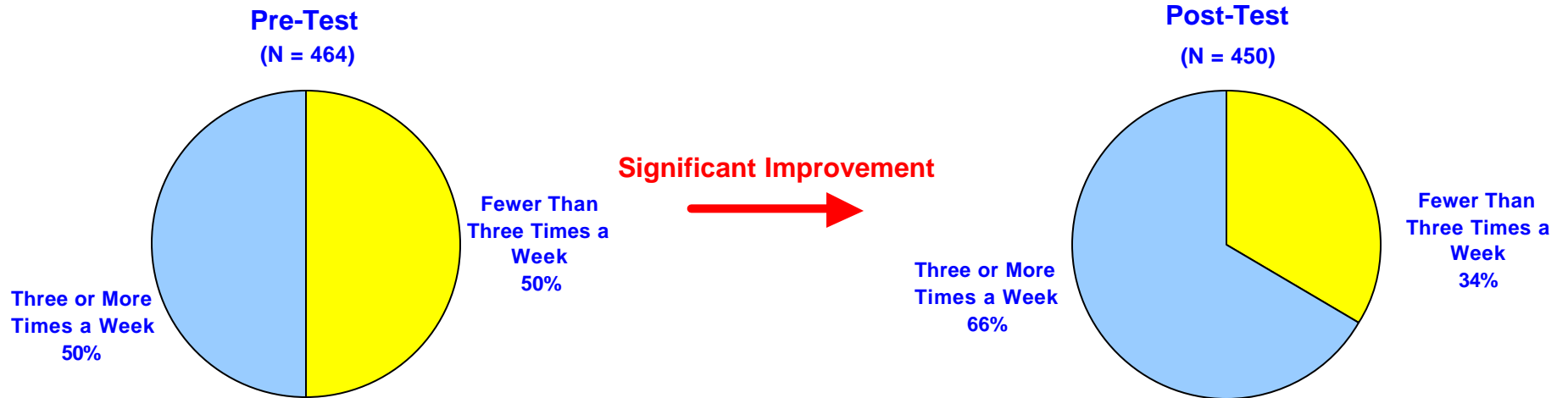
\*N = Number of Respondents



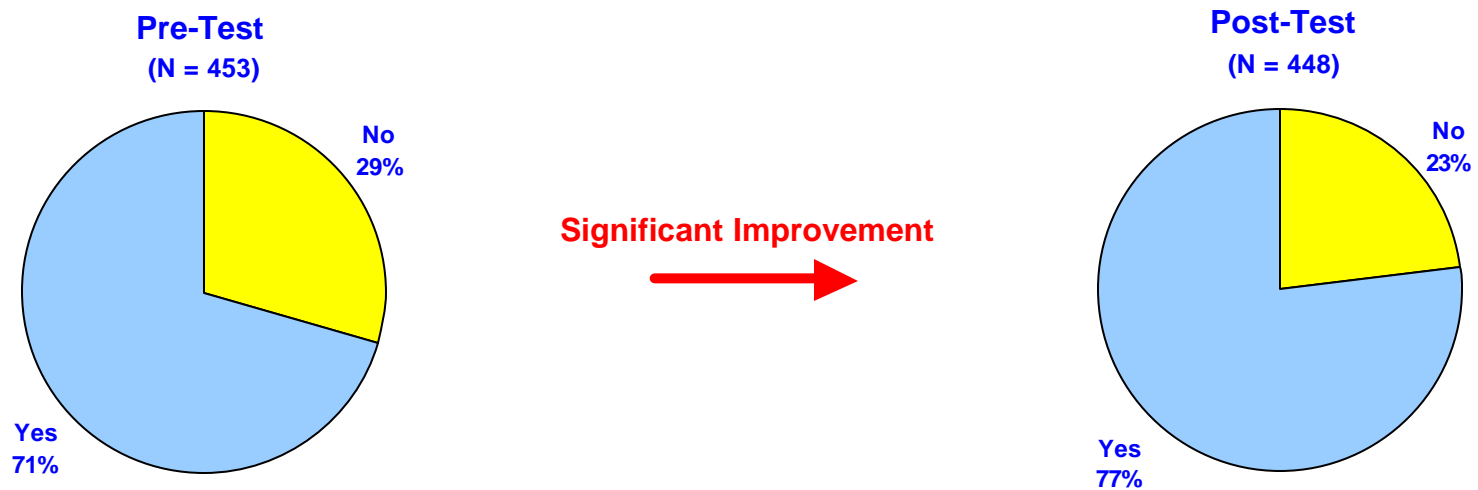
**Parent-Child  
Reading Behaviors:  
Overall**

# Reading with Child: Overall

## Read or Share Stories with Child

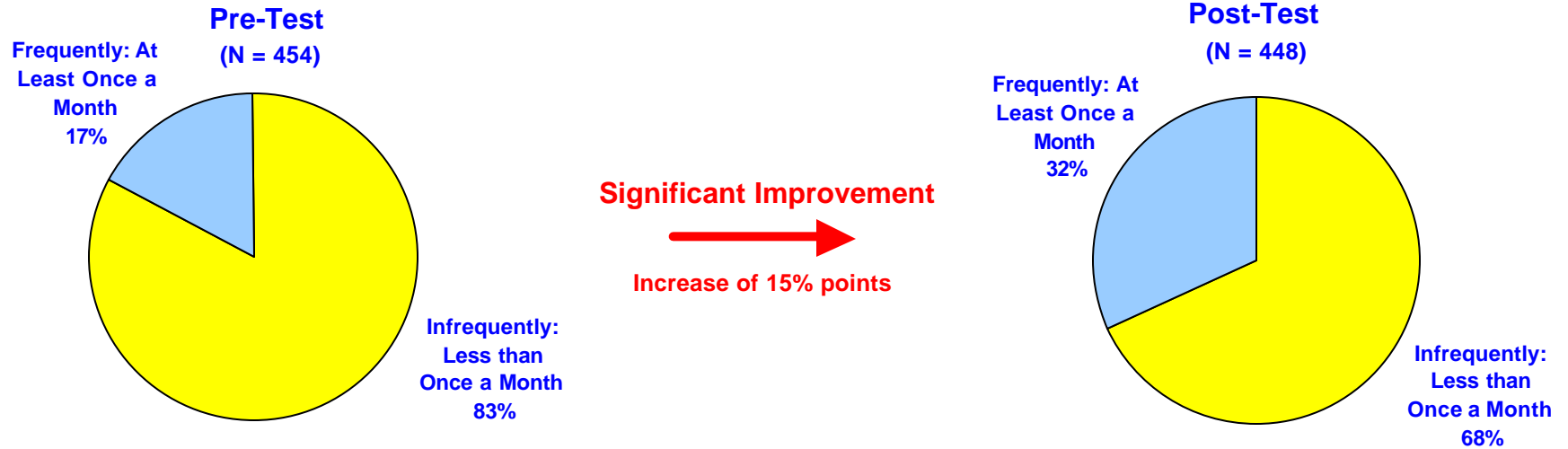


## Regular Routine for Reading with Child



# Taking Child to the Library: Overall

## Frequently versus Infrequently



## Not at All versus At Least Once a Year



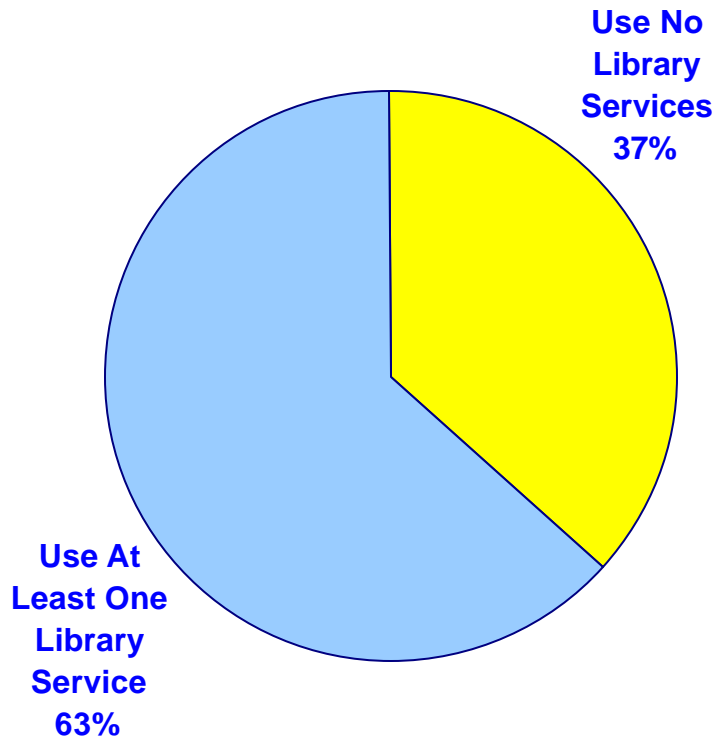
# Use of Library Services: Overall

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## Use Services at the Library

**Pre-Test**

(N = 467)



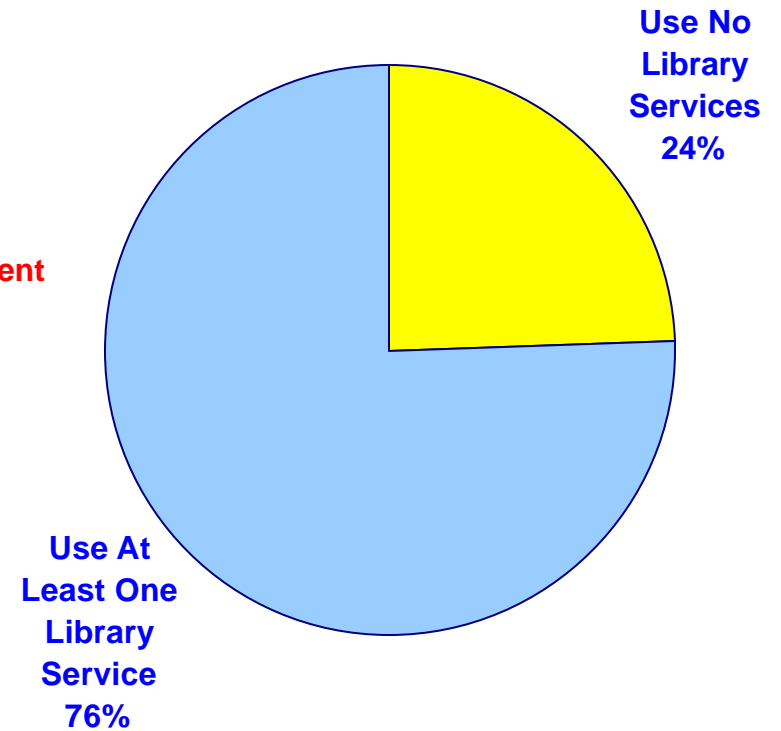
**Significant Improvement**



Increase of 13% points

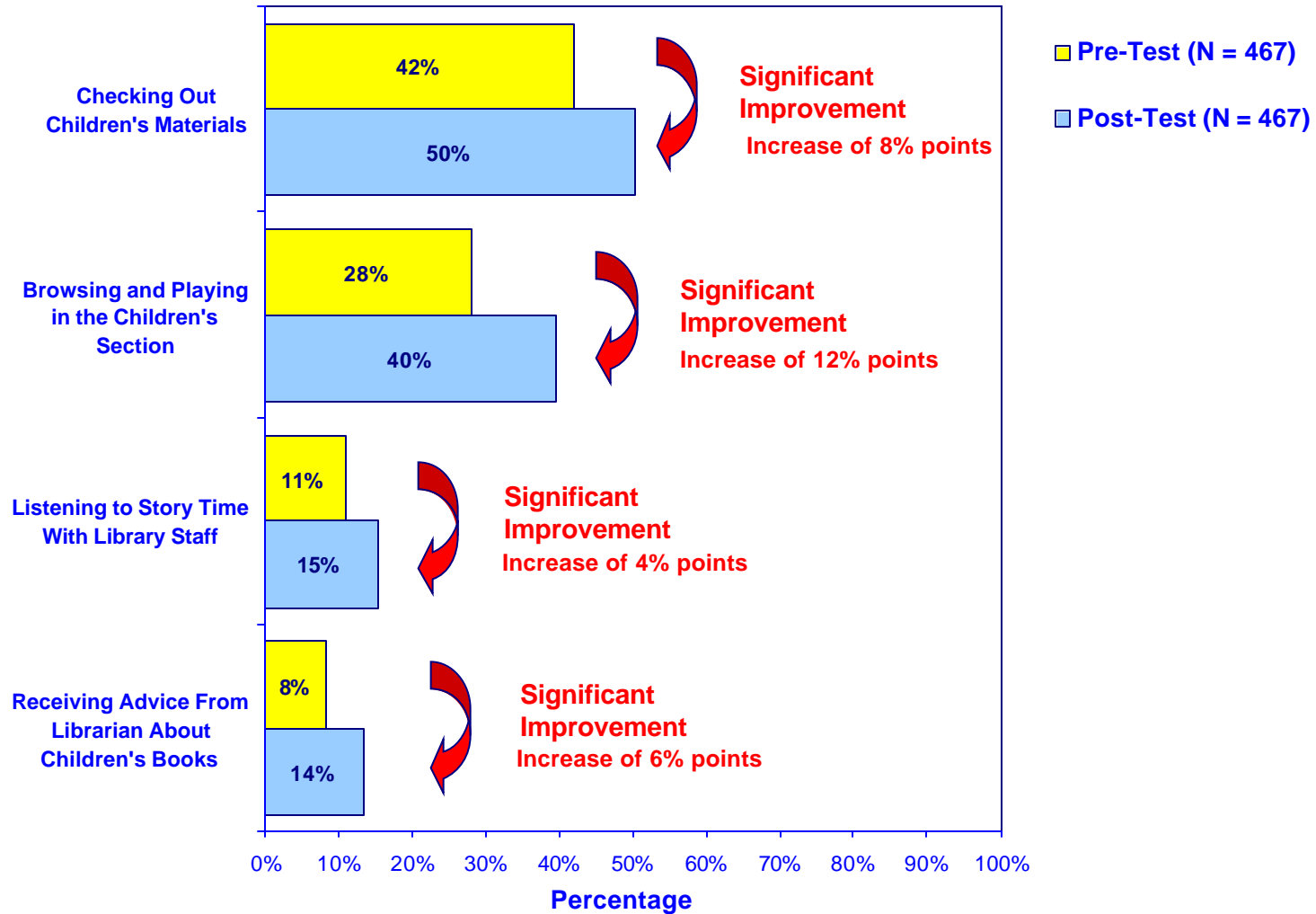
**Post-Test**

(N = 467)



# Use of Library Services: Overall

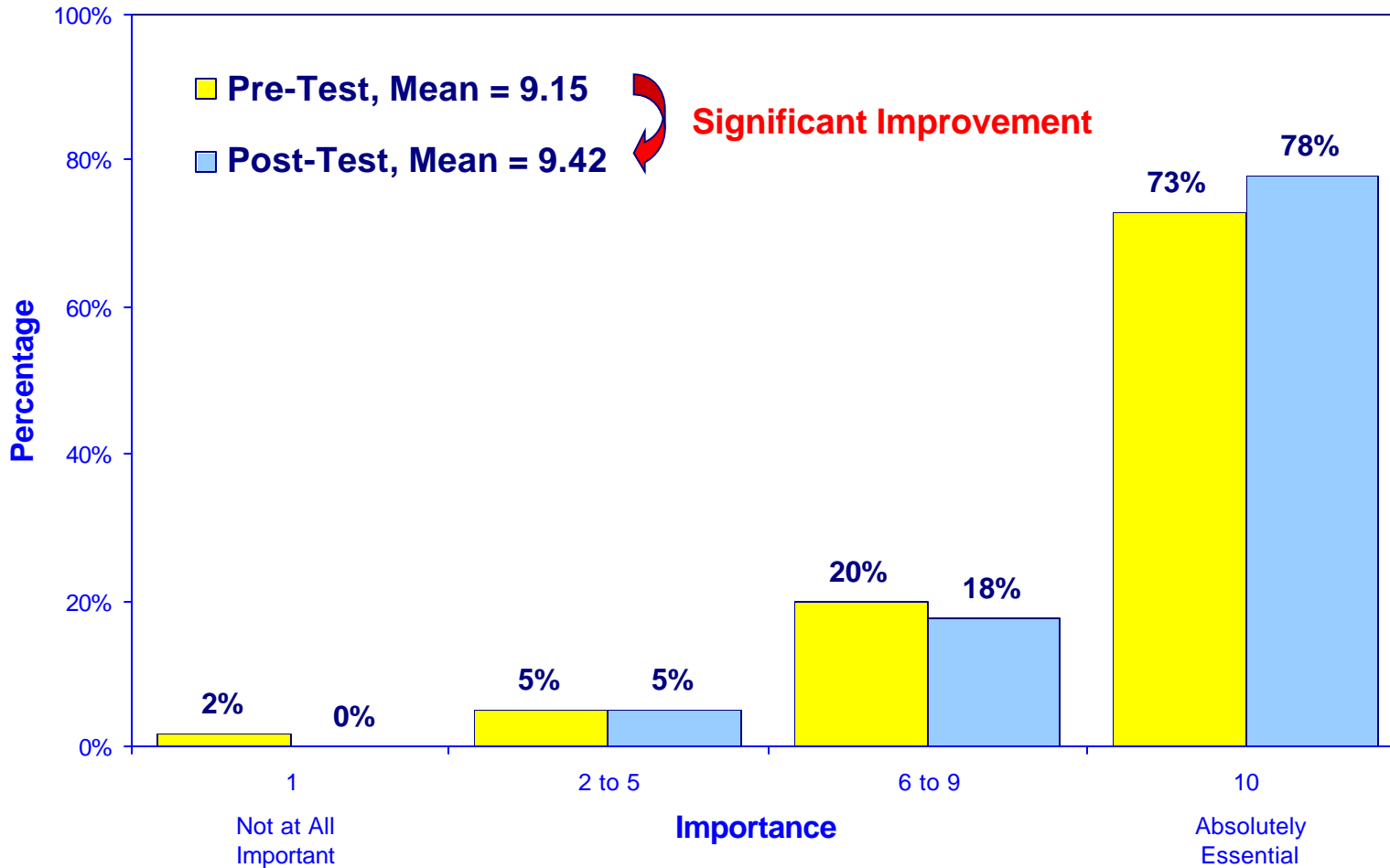
## Use the Following Services at the Library (check all that apply)



# Importance of Reading for Child's Development: Overall

Please rate the importance of reading and sharing books with your child for your child's development and future reading success:

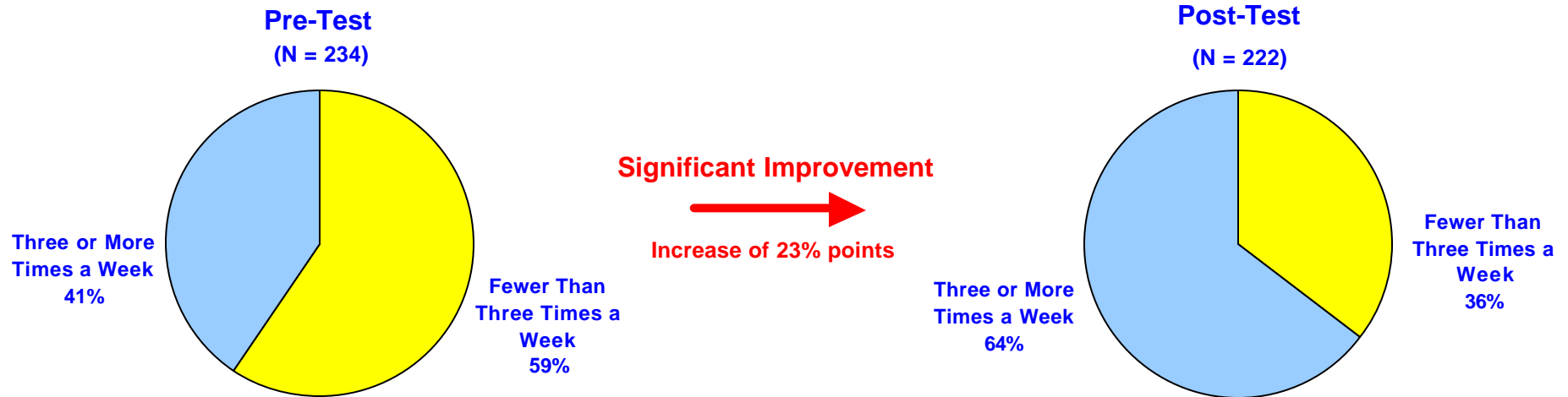
(N = 438)



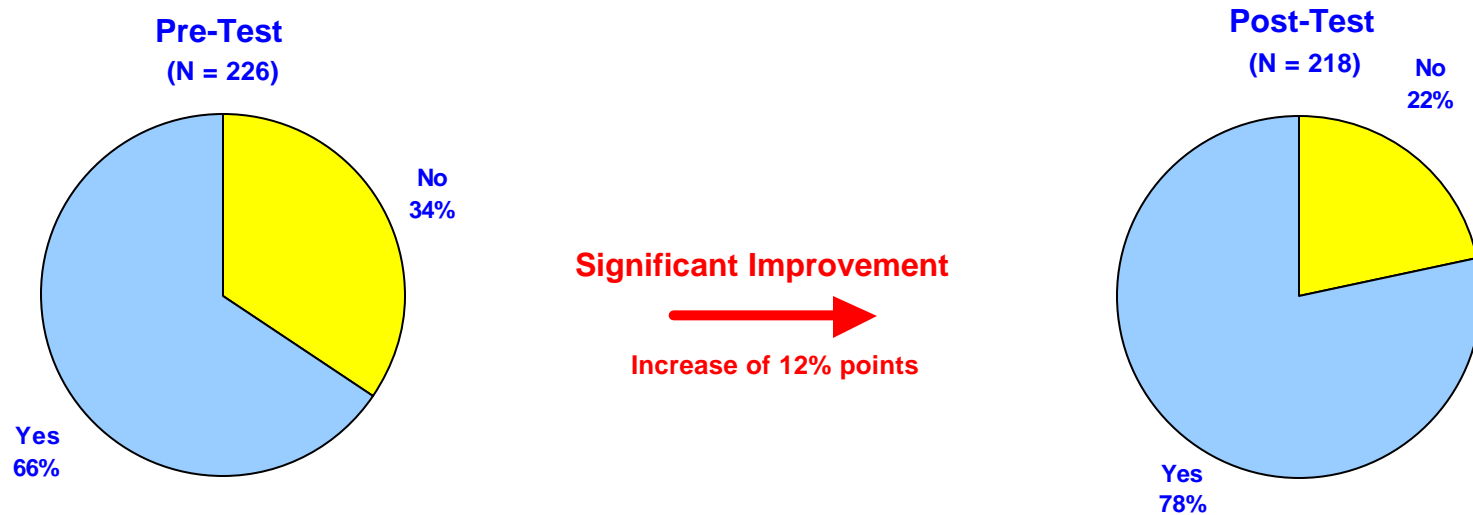
**Parent-Child  
Reading Behaviors:  
Spanish Speakers**

# Reading with Child: Spanish Speakers

## Read or Share Stories with Child



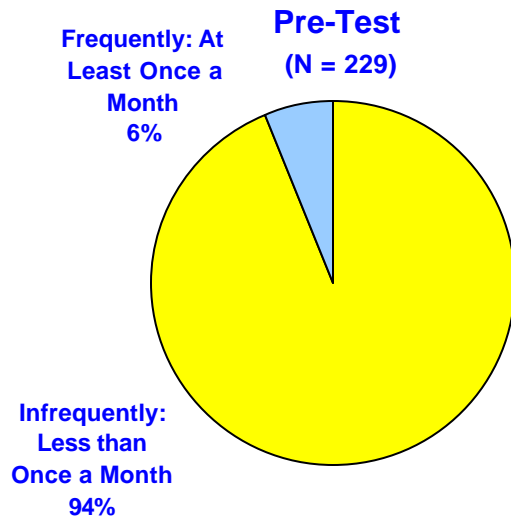
## Regular Routine for Reading with Child



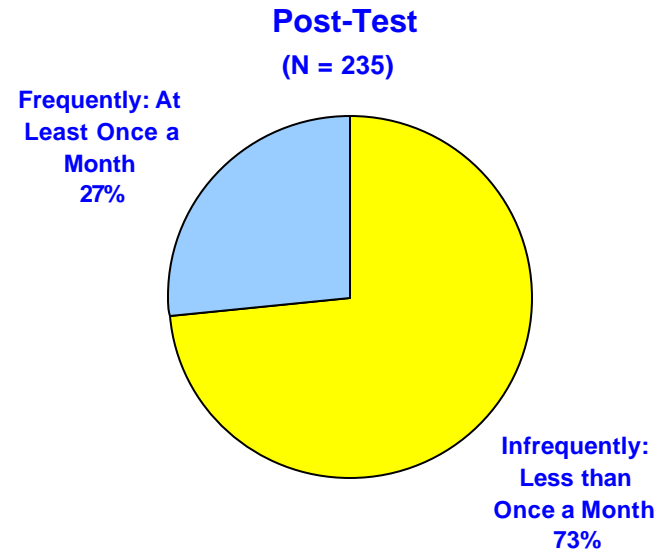


# Taking Child to the Library: Spanish Speakers

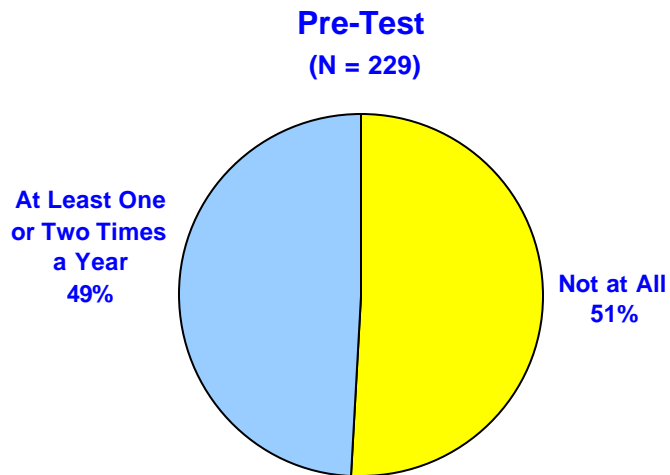
## Frequently versus Infrequently



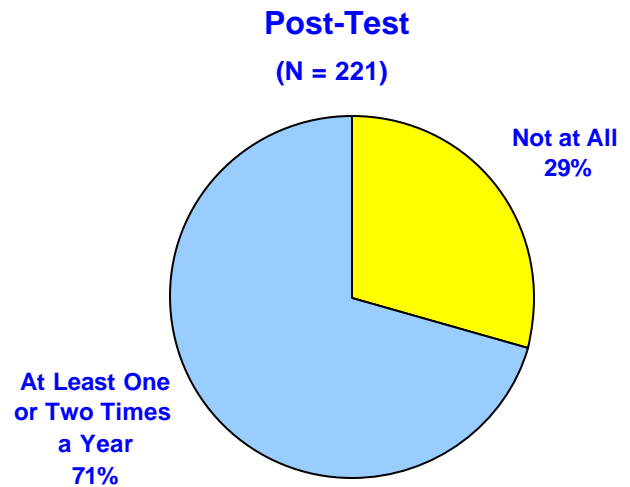
**Significant Improvement**  
→  
Increase of 21% points



## Not at All versus At Least Once a Year



**Significant Improvement**  
→  
Increase of 22% points

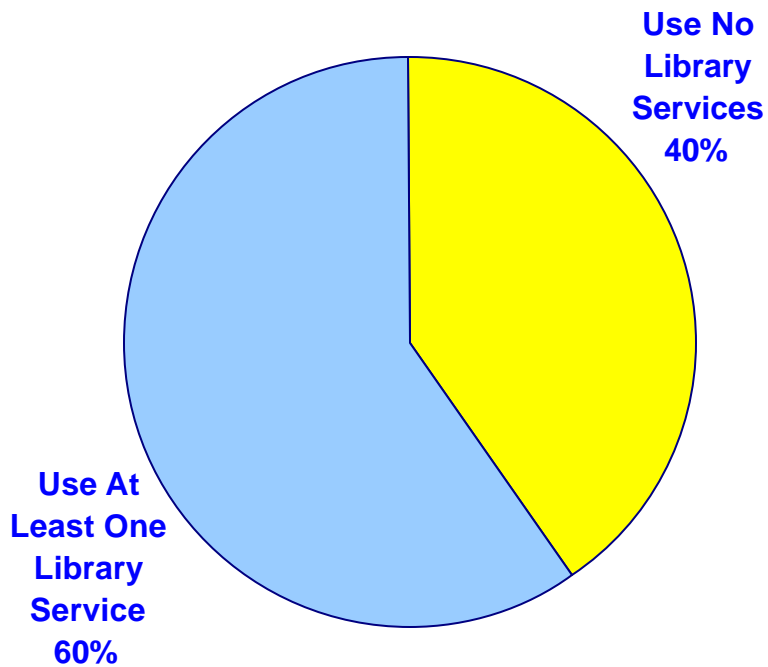


# Use of Library Services: Spanish Speakers

## Use Services at the Library

Pre-Test

(N = 235)



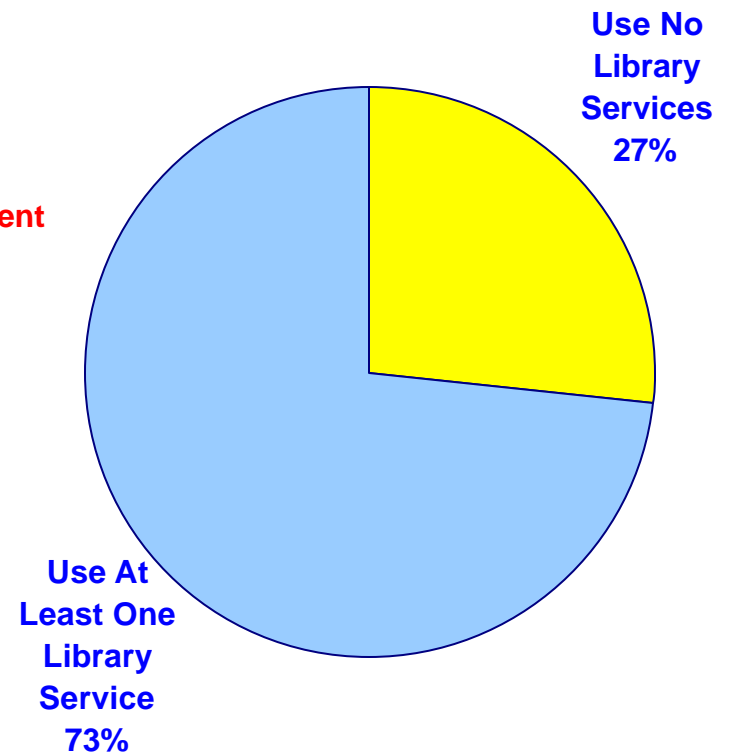
Significant Improvement



Increase of 13% points

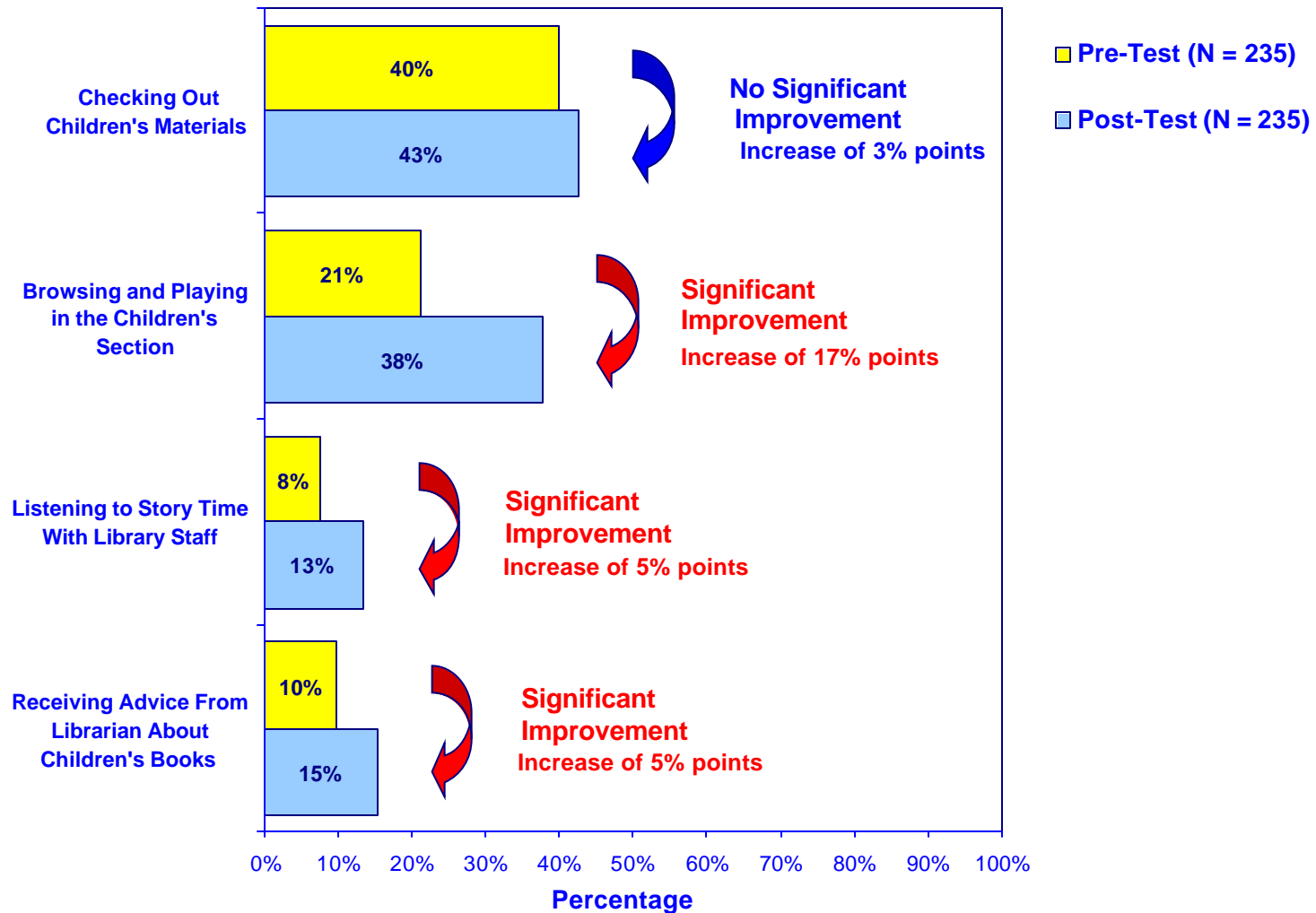
Post-Test

(N = 235)



# Use of Library Services: Spanish Speakers

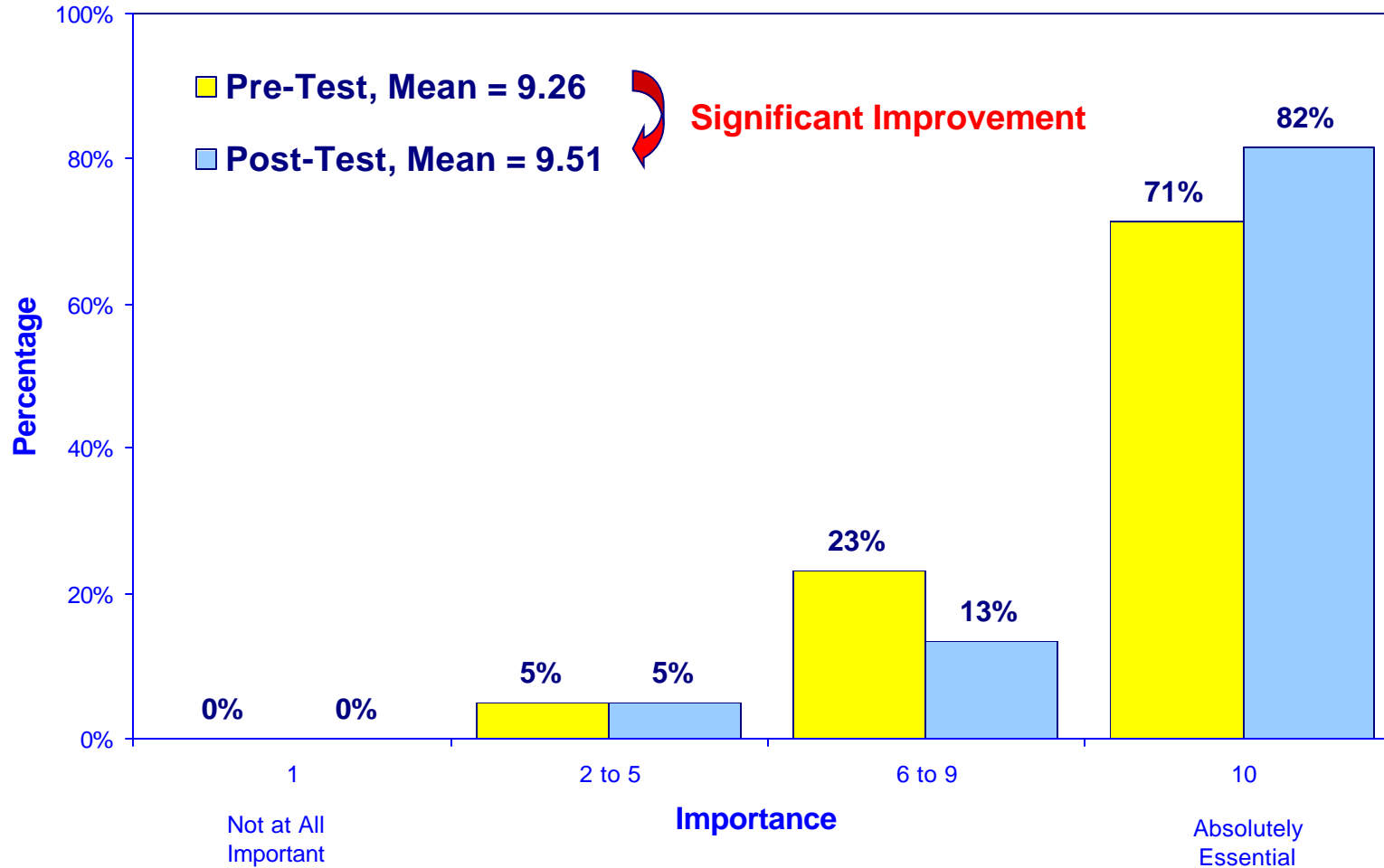
Use the Following Services at the Library  
(check all that apply)



# Importance of Reading for Child's Development: Spanish Speakers

Please rate the importance of reading and sharing books with your child for your child's development and future reading success:

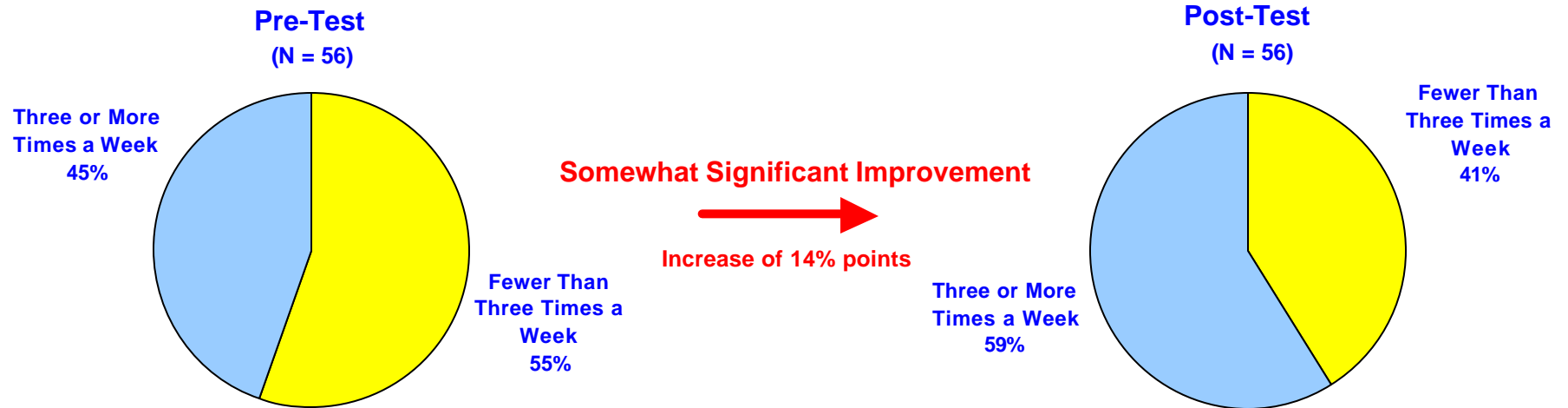
(N = 215)



**Parent-Child  
Reading Behaviors:  
Vietnamese Speakers**

# Reading with Child: Vietnamese Speakers

## Read or Share Stories with Child

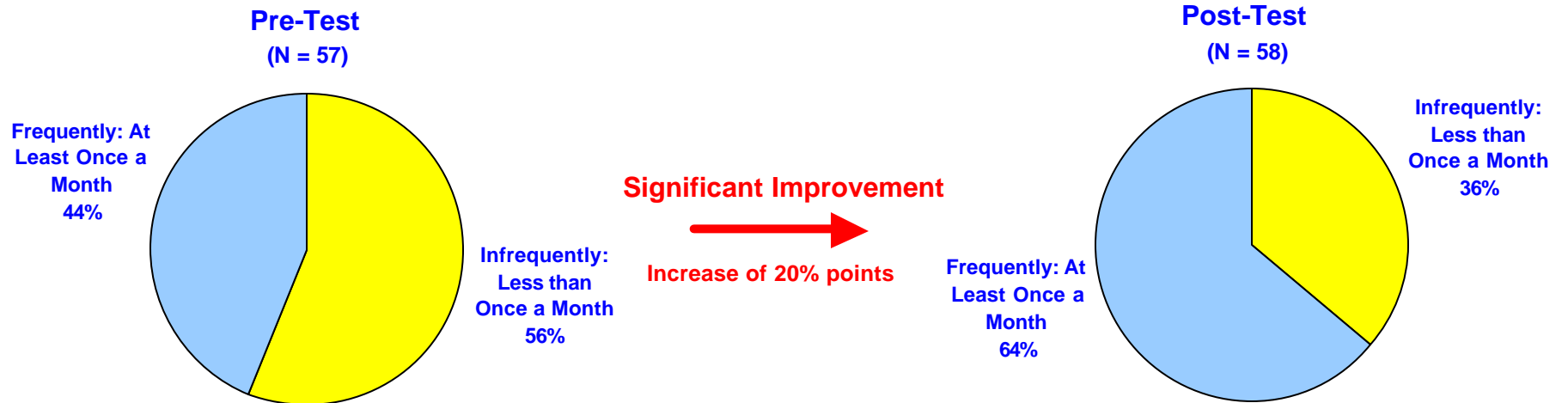


## Regular Routine for Reading with Child

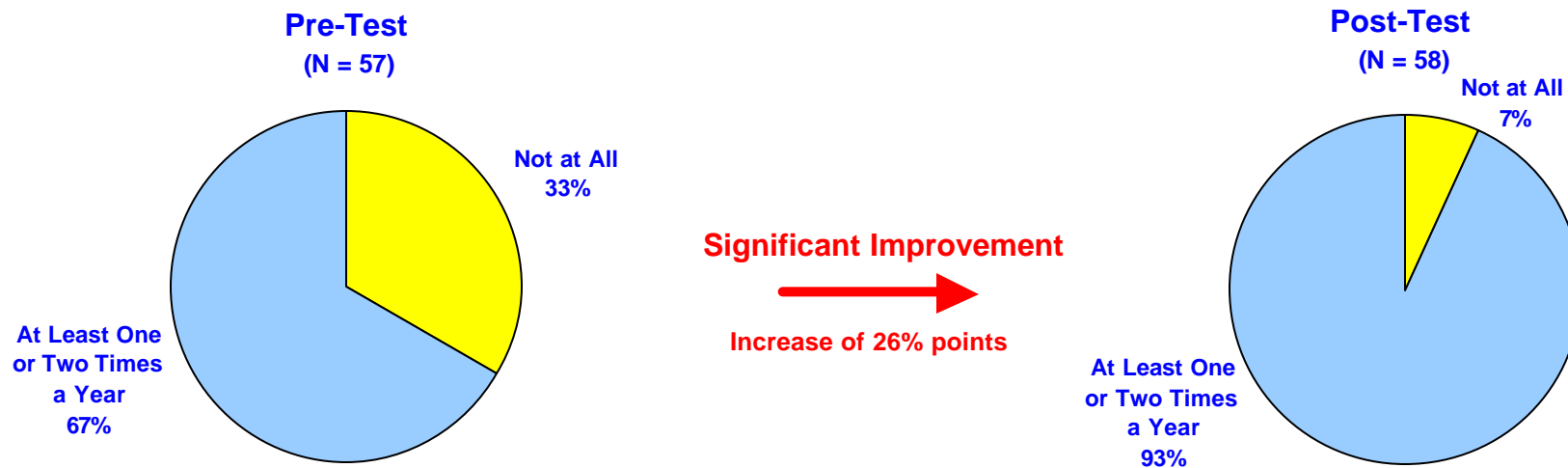


# Taking Child to the Library: Vietnamese Speakers

## Frequently versus Infrequently



## Not at All versus At Least Once a Year

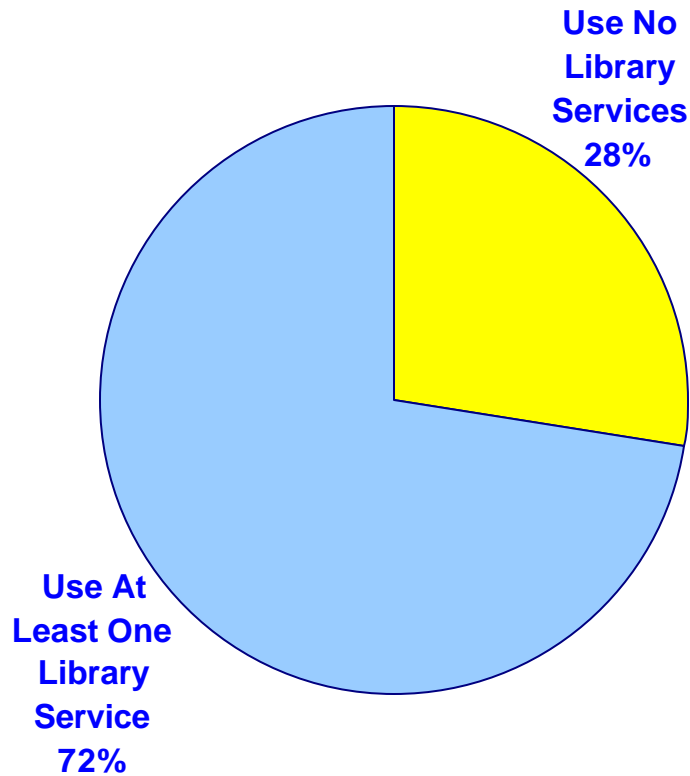


# Use of Library Services: Vietnamese Speakers

## Use Services at the Library

Pre-Test

(N = 58)



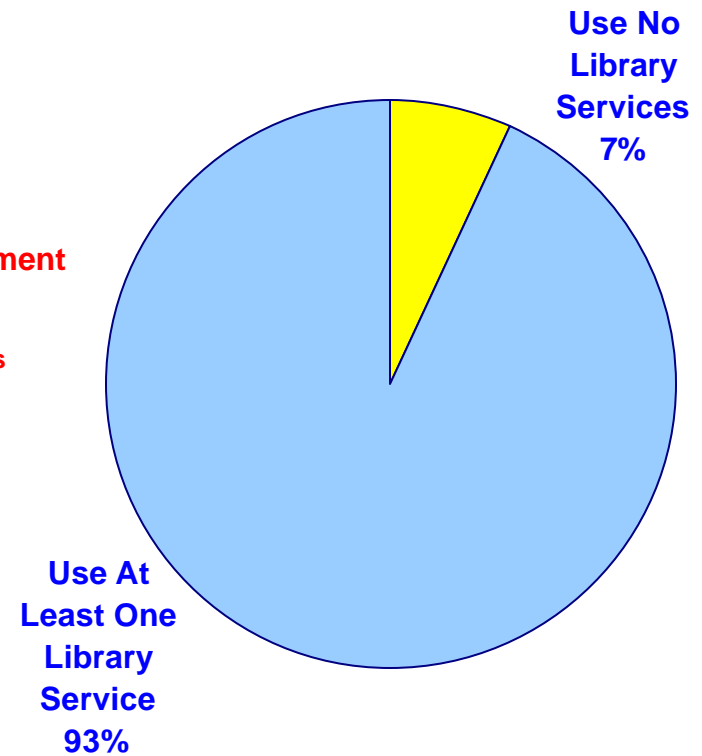
Significant Improvement



Increase of 21% points

Post-Test

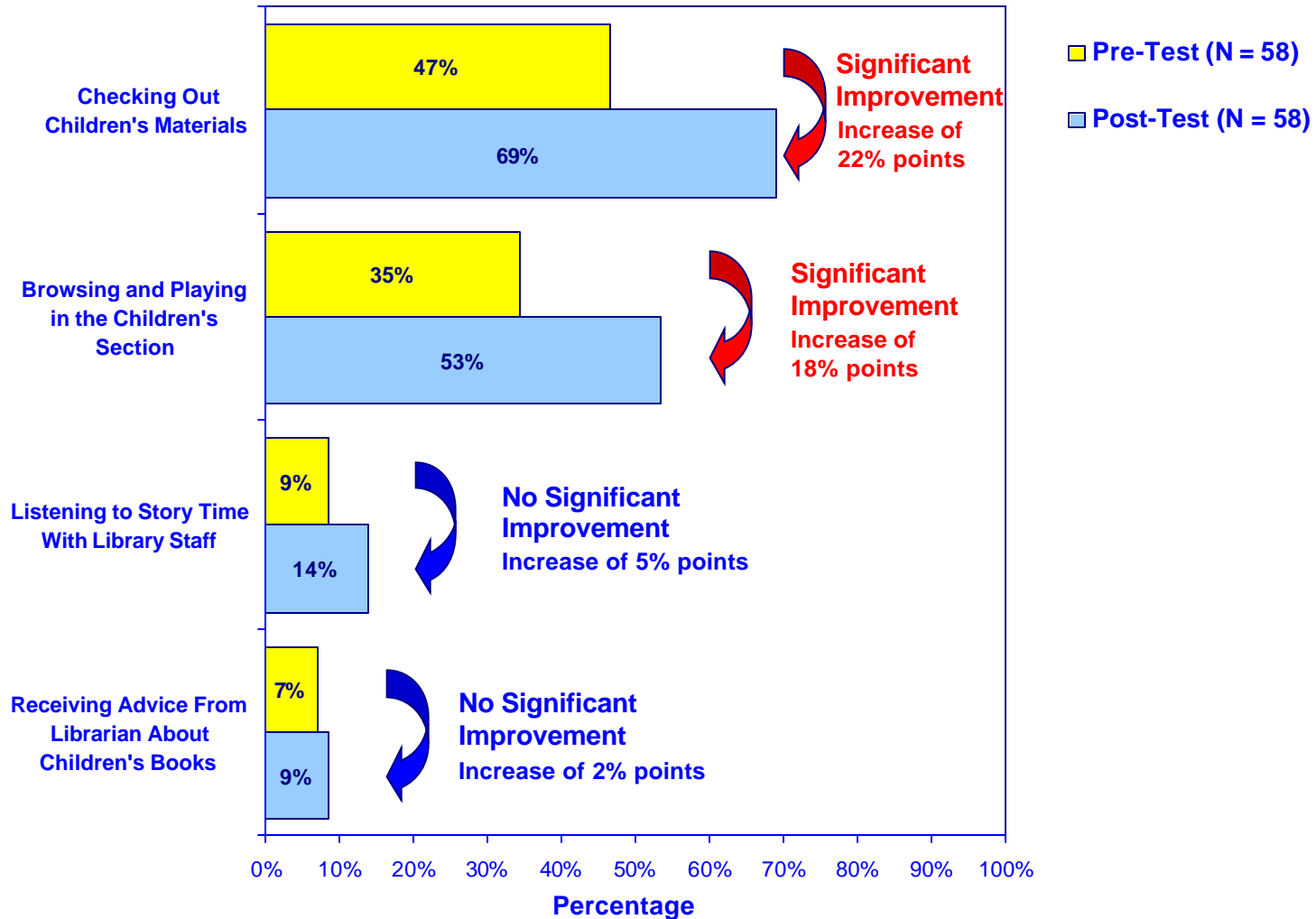
(N = 58)





# Use of Library Services: Vietnamese Speakers

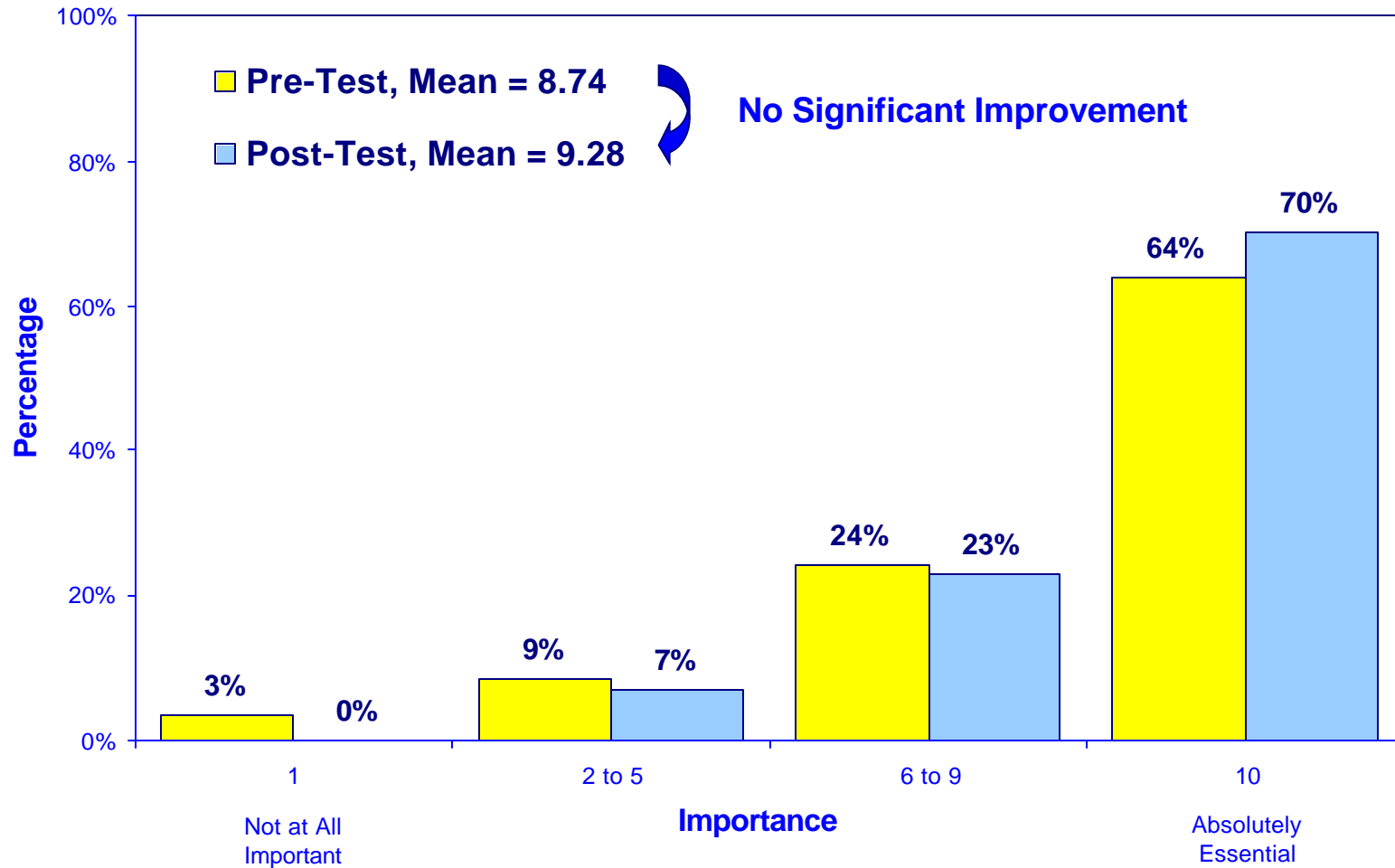
## Use the Following Services at the Library (check all that apply)



# Importance of Reading for Child's Development: Vietnamese Speakers

Please rate the importance of reading and sharing books with your child for your child's development and future reading success:

(N = 57)



**Child Kindergarten  
Readiness:  
Pre-Literacy Skills**

# Pre-Literacy Skills Evaluation Project Overview

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- **Goals of the Child Kindergarten Readiness: Pre-Literacy Skills Evaluation**

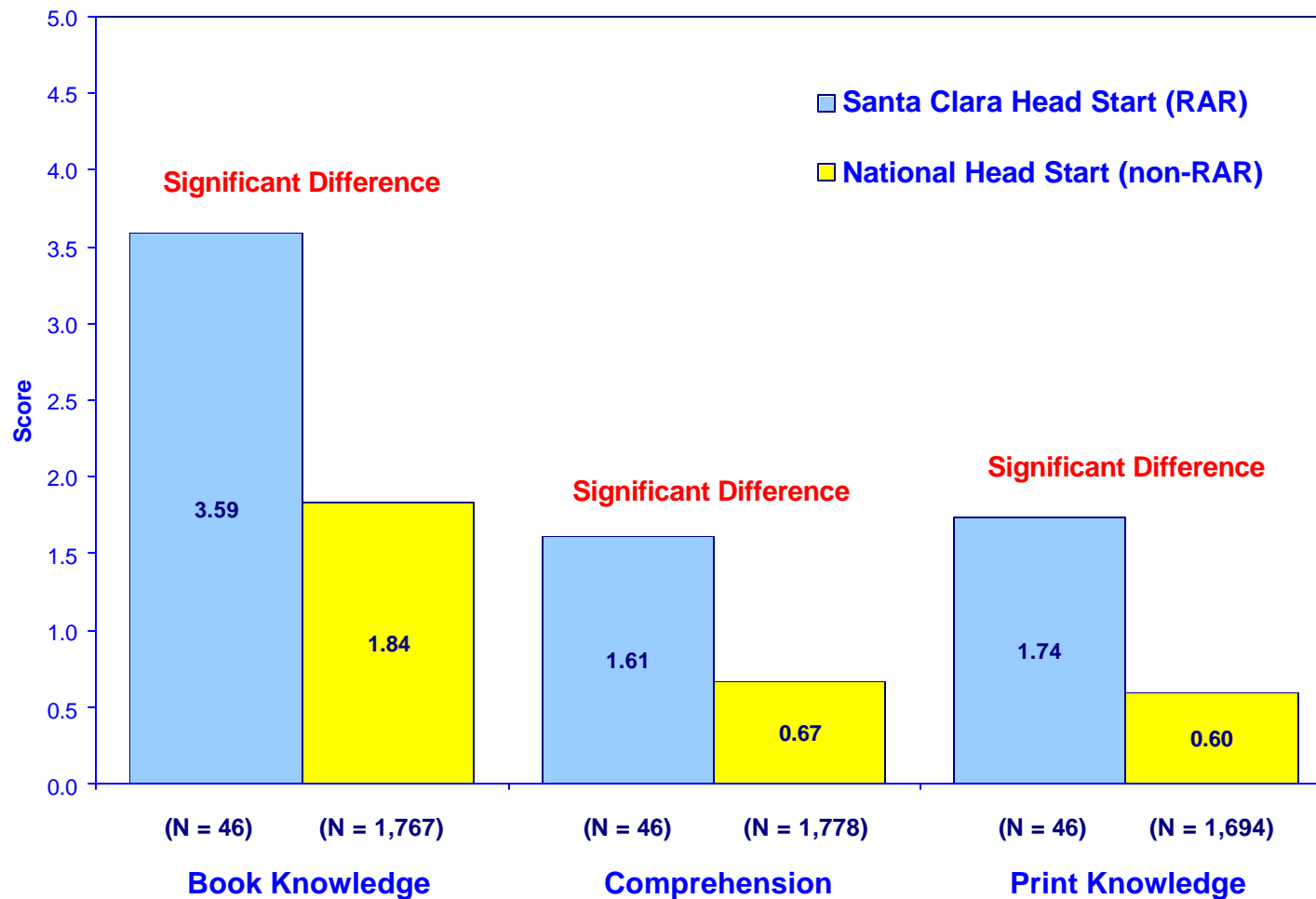
- To assess the pre-literacy skills of Santa Clara County Head Start students using the Print Concepts/FACES test . The Print Concepts/FACES test is designed by the Federal Government and administered in Head Start programs nationwide.
- To compare the pre-literacy skills of students enrolled in the Santa Clara Head Start Raising A Reader™ program with the national norms for Head Start students not enrolled in the program.
- To compare students enrolled in the Raising A Reader™ program in Santa Clara County Head Start centers with similar Sonoma County students who were not enrolled in the program.

- **Description of the Print Concepts Evaluation**

- In July 2001, 96 Head Start students from each county were tested using the Print Concepts/FACES test. Spanish and English-speaking students were tested and analyzed separately. Spanish-speaking students were tested in Spanish.
- National norms were compiled for Head Start students from the most current (1998) data using the same test protocol.
- The evaluator introduced a storybook used for the Print Concepts Test nationwide and tested each child individually. The evaluator asked questions pertaining to book knowledge, print knowledge, and comprehension of the story.
  - Book Knowledge questions assess whether the child knows where reading begins and ends and how to track the story from left-to-right and top-to-bottom on a page.
  - The Comprehension section assesses whether the child understands the “Read-a-Loud” story and demonstrates logic in analyzing story events.
  - Print Knowledge measures awareness of the layout and structure of the print, a skill not addressed by the Raising A Reader™ program.
- The three sections are scored using the sum of two questions for Book Knowledge, five questions for Comprehension and four questions for Print Knowledge.
  - Evaluators award one point for a correct answer and no points for an incorrect answer.
- In this section, comparisons labeled “Significant Difference” are significant at the 95% confidence level (.05 significance).

# Print Concepts National Comparison: English Speakers

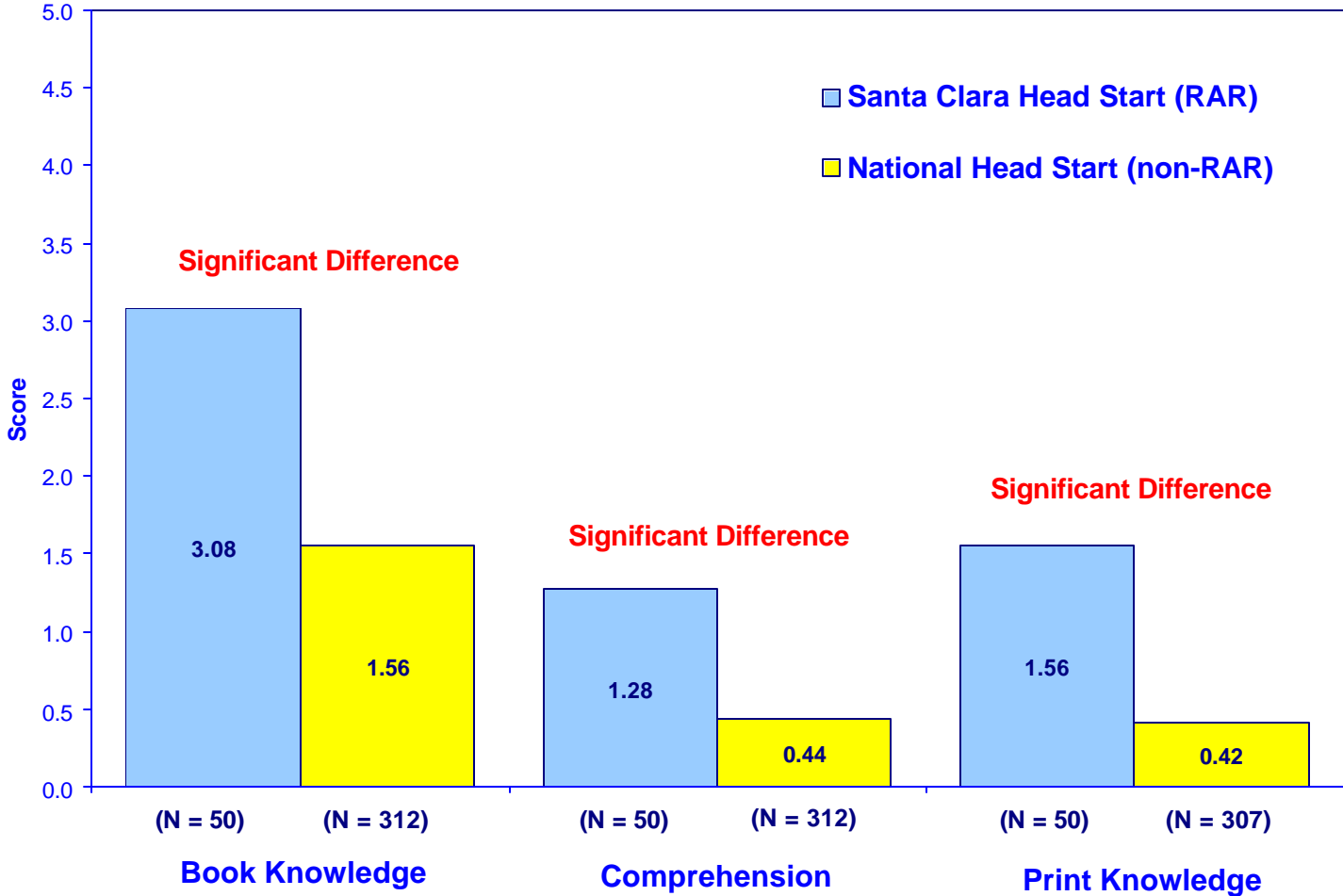
## Santa Clara Head Start (RAR) Versus National Head Start (non-RAR)



**Note:** The Raising A Reader™ program operates on the assumption that frequent parent lap-reading encourages family bonding and love of reading, with a natural outcome of increased Book Knowledge and Comprehension. Increased Print Knowledge may occur naturally or with additional provider/parent inputs, but is not a program emphasis.

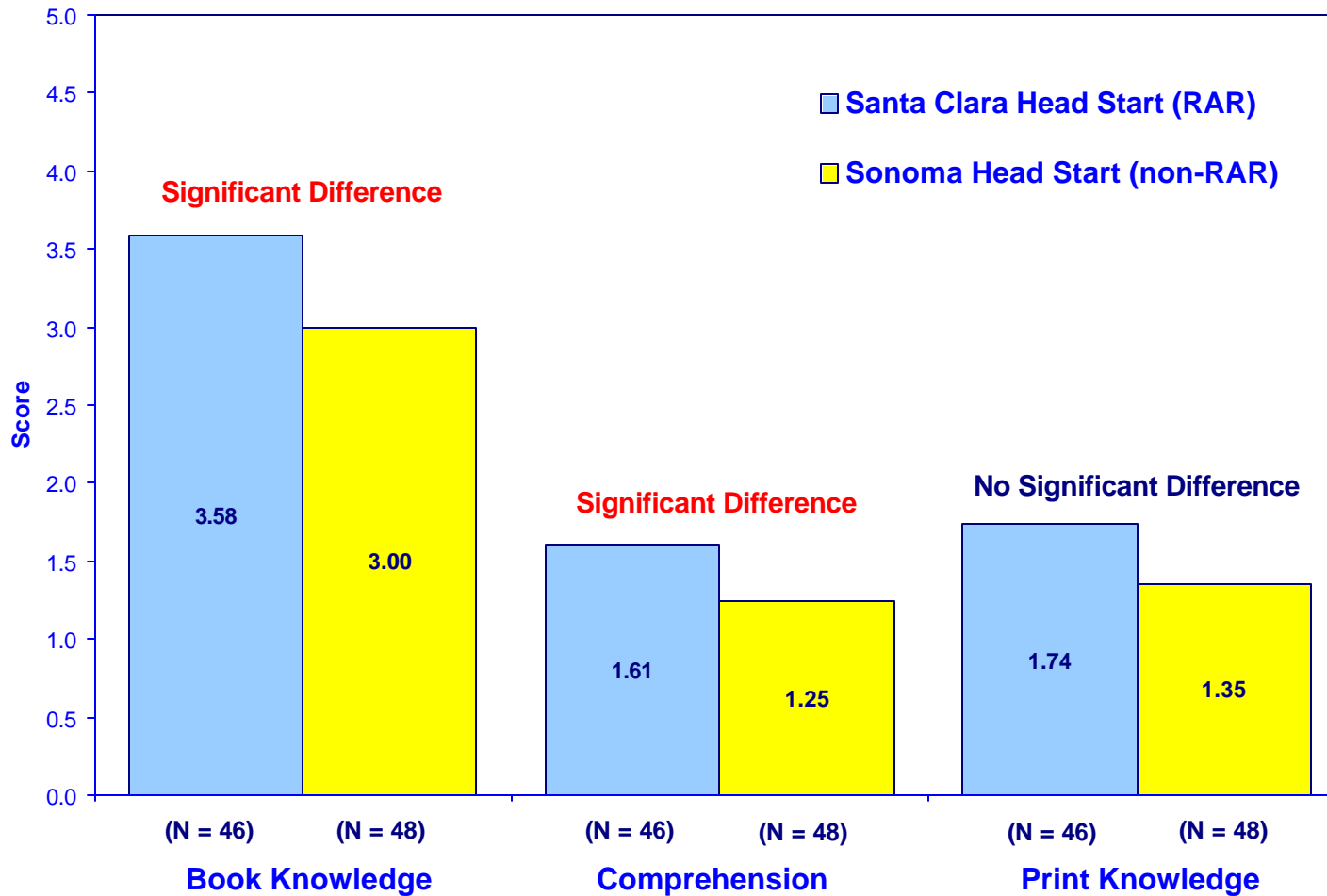
# Print Concepts National Comparison: Spanish Speakers

## Santa Clara Head Start (RAR) Versus National Head Start (non-RAR)



# Print Concepts Local Comparison: English Speakers

## Santa Clara Head Start (RAR) Versus Sonoma Head Start (non-RAR)



**Note:** The Print Concepts scores for Spanish speakers in Santa Clara County Head Start classrooms (RAR) did not differ significantly from those in Sonoma County classrooms (non-RAR).

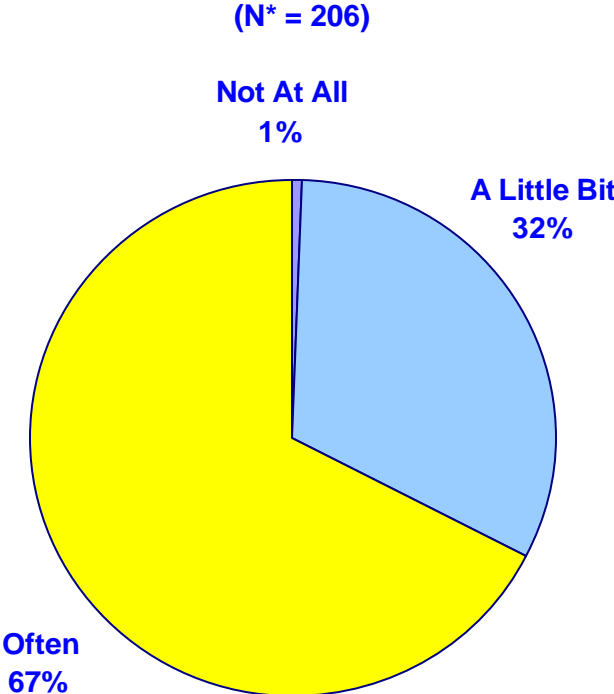
## **Parent Comments**



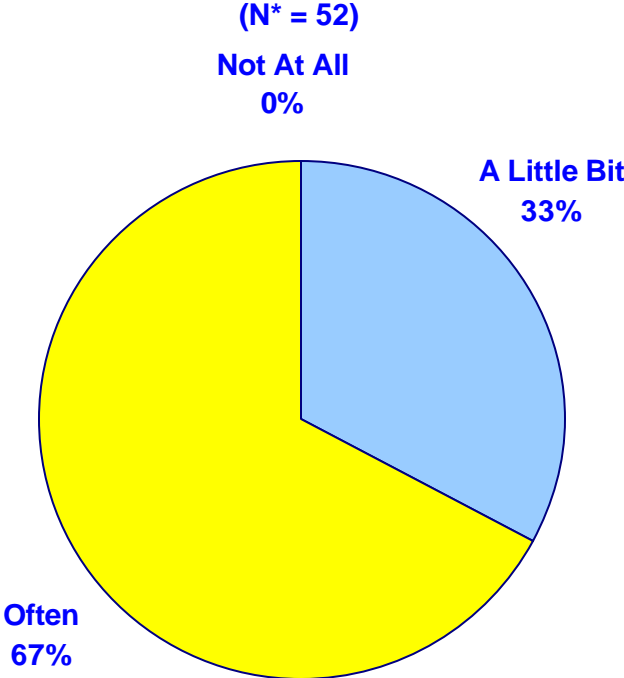
# Use of English-Language Books

Did you use the English-language books in your bag each week?

## Spanish Speakers



## Vietnamese Speakers



\*Excludes respondents who did not read or share books with their child.

# Positive Comments from Parents

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- “This program is very helpful in educating my children and improving their learning skills.”
- “I am content with this good habit that my daughter has acquired.”
- “Reading can bring so much to a person's life. It educates, promotes understanding, and gives imagination to everyone.”
- “We really enjoyed the books. Some were familiar and many were new. I hope this program continues.”
- “My children feel the responsibility to read, and better yet, they like to read.”
- “Thank you very much for helping to educate my son and for teaching him to learn.”
- “My son has wanted to go to the school since the program had started.”
- “It is a very good idea to have access to the books every week because it is difficult to go to the library during the week. Thank you for the help.”
- “Keep up the good work. The children are more prepared for kindergarten now.”
- “I am happy with the program and the variety of books.”
- “I loved the bilingual books.”
- “This support and other similar support in reading is essential to every family.”
- “Thank you for trying to include us in reading. I know it is very important for my daughter to become a good student. I try, with her father, to read with my daughter. Please continue with this program.”
- “You chose books that the children like and are good at teaching them. I can't wait until this program continues permanently.”
- “The books are helpful and they motivate my son and me to read more books. It is a great way to stimulate a father's involvement in the education of his children.”
- “I feel it is important to read with your children. It helps to build better communication and understanding with your kids. Thanks for everything.”
- “The program raises interest in the entire family. It grabs the interest of the child, and then the child demonstrates that interest to the family so that they too become involved and interested.”
- “I absolutely love the RAR program. I believe it should continue for future readers, especially in different languages. Even though we only know the English language, we have been encouraged to learn Spanish. Keep up the good work.”
- My daughter has learned to read and to listen to reading, and she can tell a story to the end.

# Suggestions for Improvement from Parents

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- Almost all of the comments written by parents were positive; however, there were some suggestions for improvement.
- The suggestions for improvement fell into three categories: difficulty with lost books, time constraints, and the language of the books selected. Below are some sample comments:
  - “Have parents pay for books that are not returned.”
  - “A lot of people didn't have enough time to finish the books so they had to borrow the books from the library.”
  - “The book bag is not given to the parent as often as it should be. The teacher should talk about the bag more often as well.”
  - “I would like more books in Spanish.”

## **Appendix A: Questionnaire**