



An initial survey of participating families

2024

Submitted by:

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College of Education and Human Development





Dear Reader,

Thank you for your interest in Imagination Library of Louisville! We are so excited to share the results of a recent survey distributed to our parents and caregivers. Imagination Library of Louisville (ILL) mails a free, high-quality, age-appropriate, monthly book to children from birth to age five in Louisville to help them develop a love of reading and get ready for kindergarten. We believe that by improving early education in our community, we can contribute to the lifelong success of Jefferson County kids. When out in the community, families often share with us their love for the program, the books we send, and the resources provided by Imagination Library. However, this survey was our first opportunity to hear directly from parents and caregivers in a more formal way about the impact of our program.

ILL is the local program partner of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. Dolly started Imagination Library in 1995 alongside her father who never learned to read. She saw how her father's lack of literacy held him back in life, and they launched her "little book program" in her home county, Sevier County, TN. Since then, thousands of local program partners, like us, have launched, and Imagination Library now sends more than 3 million books to children across five countries every single month.

Here locally, ILL began as a volunteer effort with the help of our founding partners, WAVE 3, the Junior League of Louisville, and the JCPS Education Foundation. We mailed our first books in January of 2017. Local program partners like us are responsible for covering the cost of books mailed in our community, so initially, the program was only available in three zip codes. These zip codes were chosen based on need and prioritized communities where we knew families might have more barriers to accessing books. We became our own 501(c)3 in 2020 and I was hired as the first paid staff person and Executive Director in 2022.

We have grown tremendously in the past two years and, thanks in large part to funding from the Kentucky State Legislature and Louisville Metro Government, we expanded to serve children countywide in 2023. The response was incredible, and we enrolled 11,069 new children in 2023 compared to 1,790 the year before. As we have expanded, we continue to prioritize eight equity zip codes, and we focus outreach efforts in these communities and measure our progress in these zip codes every month.

After mailing 55 books in our first month of 2017, we are now sending a free, high-quality, age-appropriate book to over 17,000 Louisville children every month. This means that countywide, more than **one out of every three** children under the age of five in Louisville is receiving a monthly book from us. It is our goal that every child under five in our community receives a quality, age-appropriate, monthly book from ILL and arrives at kindergarten ready to thrive with the common experience of Imagination Library, and we are well on our way.

After meeting Dr. Lee last summer, we began collaborating to build a parent survey that would measure the impact we were having. The questions were modeled after a previous survey distributed by the Literacy



Cooperative, Cleveland, Ohio's Imagination Library Program Partner, in 2022. This initial survey represents our first attempt to gather experiences from parents and caregivers, and we look forward to building on what we have learned. For the families who participated in this survey, our program has positively impacted reading behaviors in the home, enhanced the home literacy environment, and provided books that are enjoyed. The survey also sheds light on opportunities for growth including increased collaboration with our public library and promoting awareness of the reading strategies included in our books. As a small organization with only one staff member, our capacity to develop new programs is limited, but we hope this report contributes to the robust conversations about early learning and kindergarten readiness in our community, and we welcome new partners interested in building on what we are learning.

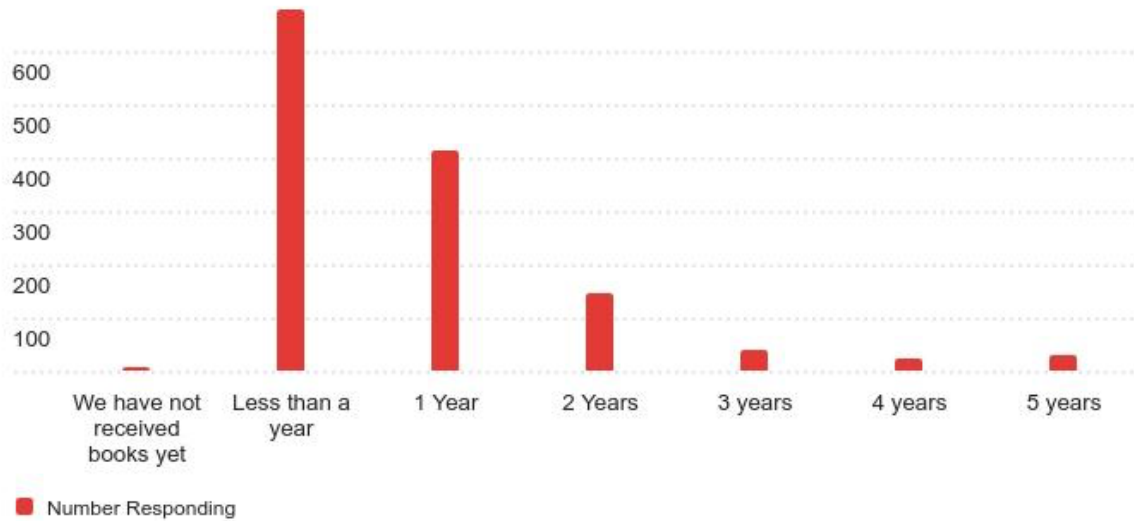
Lastly, this would not have been possible without the University of Louisville's Early Childhood Research Center (ECRC) and its Director, Dr. Jon Lee, who volunteered to take on this project. Dr. Lee's expertise and passion for early childhood literacy aligned perfectly with our mission and we cannot thank him enough for his work on this evaluation. We look forward to continued collaboration with Dr. Lee and the ECRC. Happy reading!

Maria Gurren
Executive Director
Imagination Library of Louisville
DRAFT Imagination Library Report



Q1 - How long has your family received books from Imagination Library?

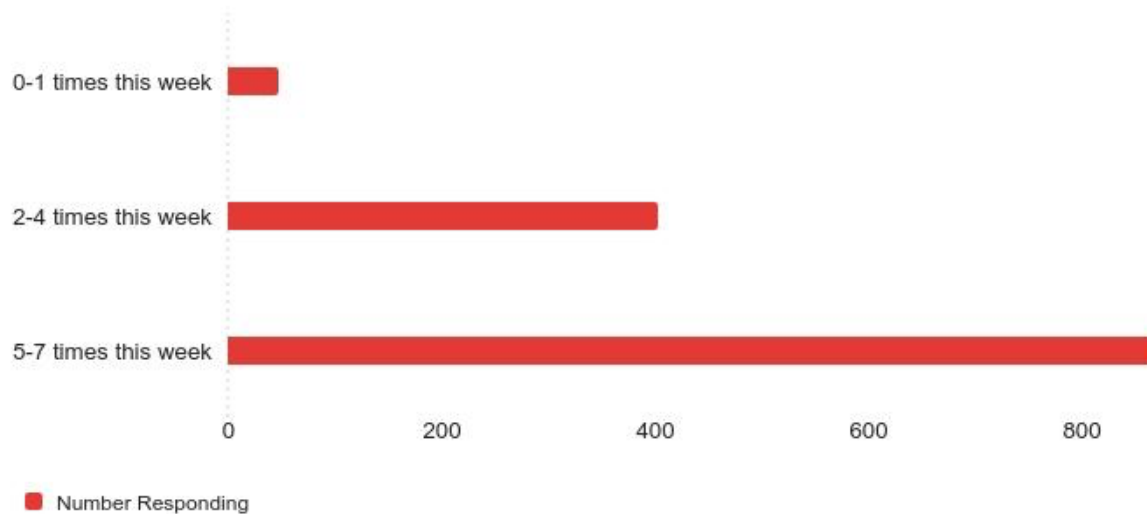
1331 Responses



Many respondents to our survey were new members of the Imagination Library. In fact, 51% had been members for less than a year, and 93% had been members for three years or less.

Q2 - How many times has your child been read to in the last seven days?

1319 Responses

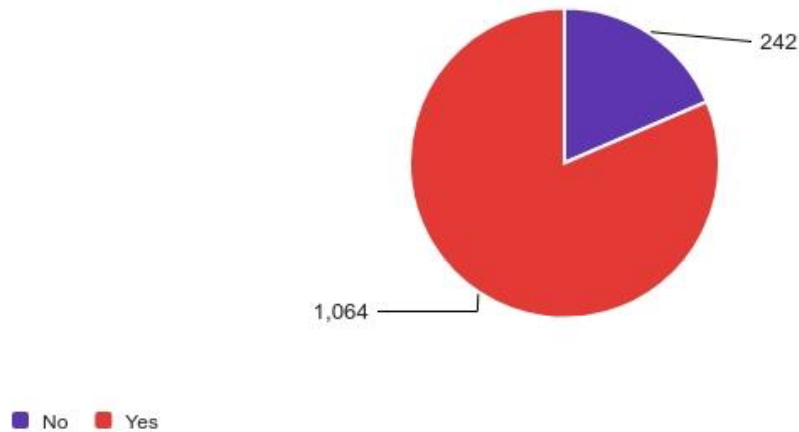


Overwhelmingly, respondents to this survey read to their children regularly. With 66% of respondents reading 5-7 times per week, and 97% reading at least twice weekly.



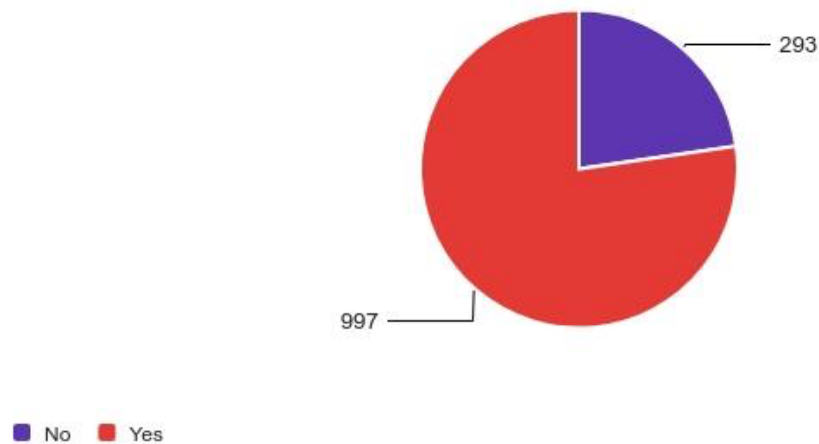
Q3 - Do you, or other family members, read to your child/children more often since you began receiving Imagination Library books?

1306 Responses



Q4 - Since you've been receiving Imagination Library books, are your child/children asking you to read to them more often?

1290 Responses

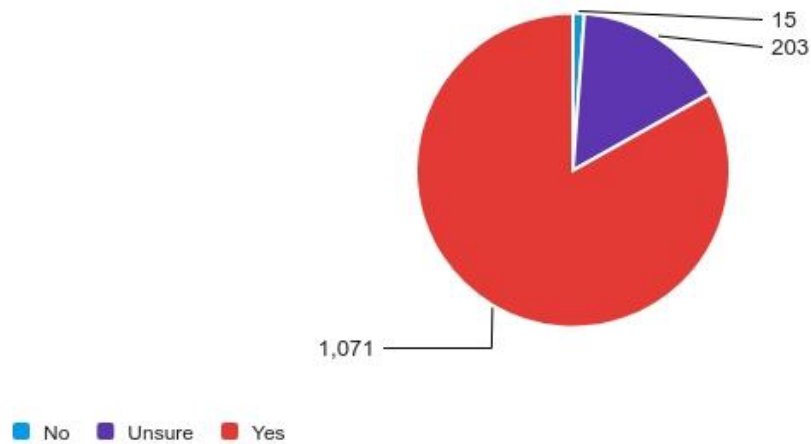


Access to books from the Imagination Library may spark increased reading habits in our respondents as 81% of respondents report reading more frequently since joining. 77% of respondents reported that their children asked them to read more frequently.



Q5 - Do you believe participation in Imagination Library is helping your child/children better prepare for Kindergarten?

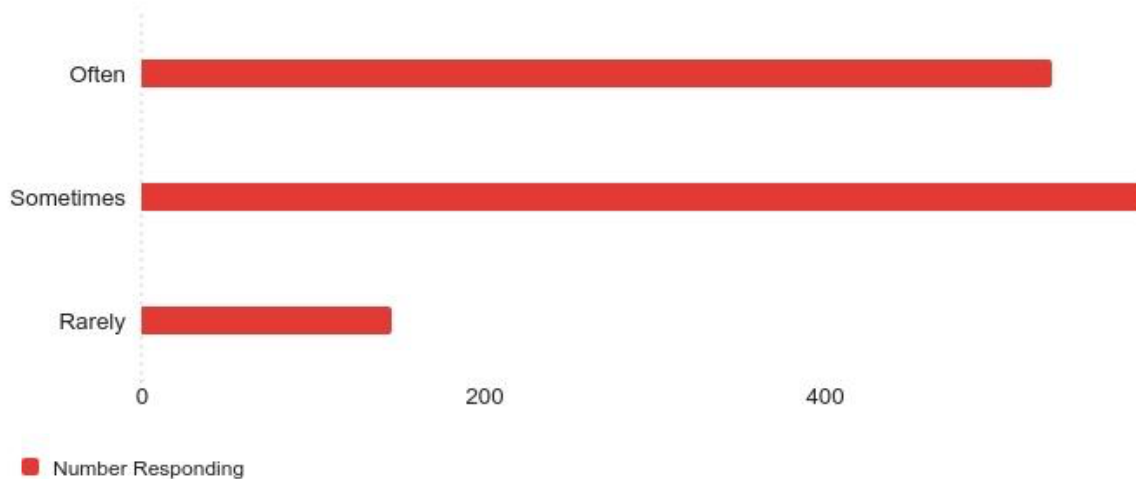
1289 Responses



Respondents to our survey perceive access to Imagination Library books are supporting their children's Kindergarten readiness.

Q6 - How often do you find your child/children using new words they have learned from books you have read?

1266 Responses

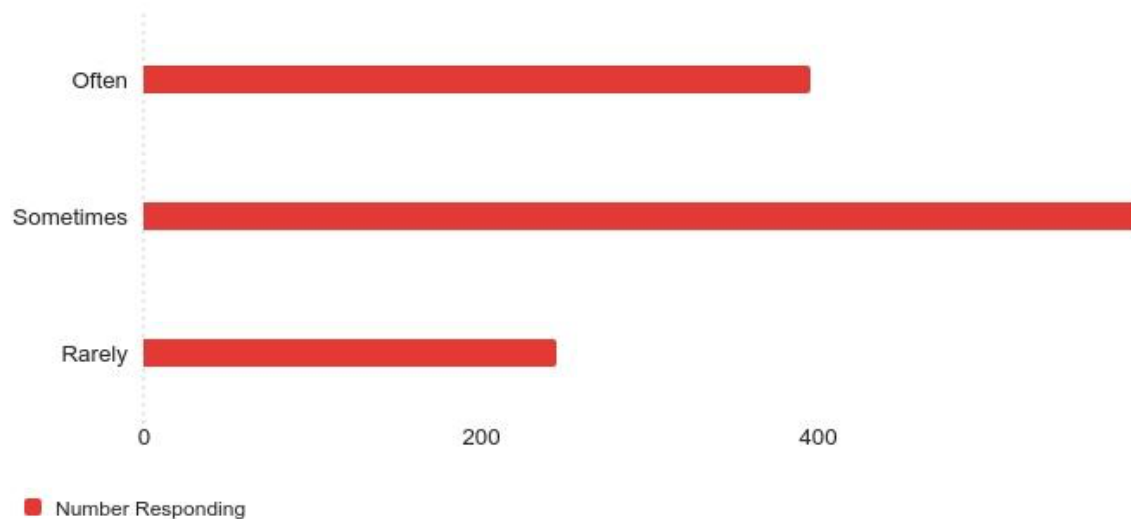




The perception of influence on children's Kindergarten readiness may stem from respondents realizing their children are using new words learned from reading Imagination Library books. As 88% of caregivers report that they sometimes (46%) or often (42%) notice their child/children using new words learned from reading these books.

Q7 - How often do you find your child/children talking about the "stories" from Imagination Library books you have read?

1233 Responses

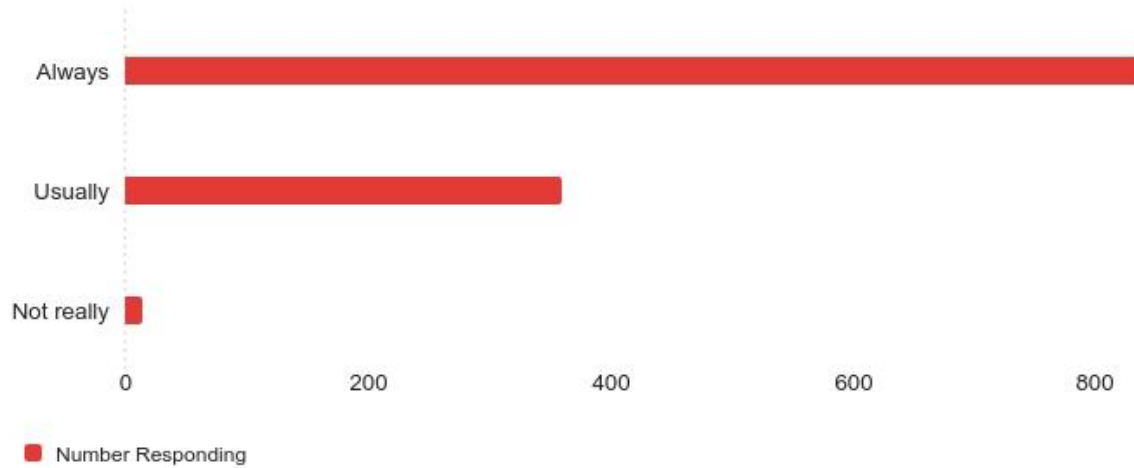


Encouraging results have also come from indications that children frequently talk about the stories they've read. With 48% of participants reporting that their children sometimes talk about Imagination Library book stories and 32% reporting their children talk about these stories often.



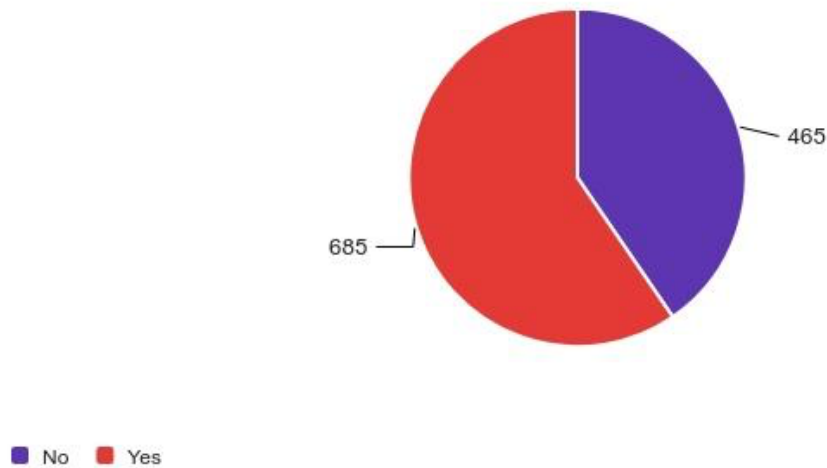
Q12 - Do you find that your child/children enjoy reading Imagination Library books?

1215 Responses



Q8 - Do older non-enrolled brothers or sisters also read and enjoy the books?

1150 Responses

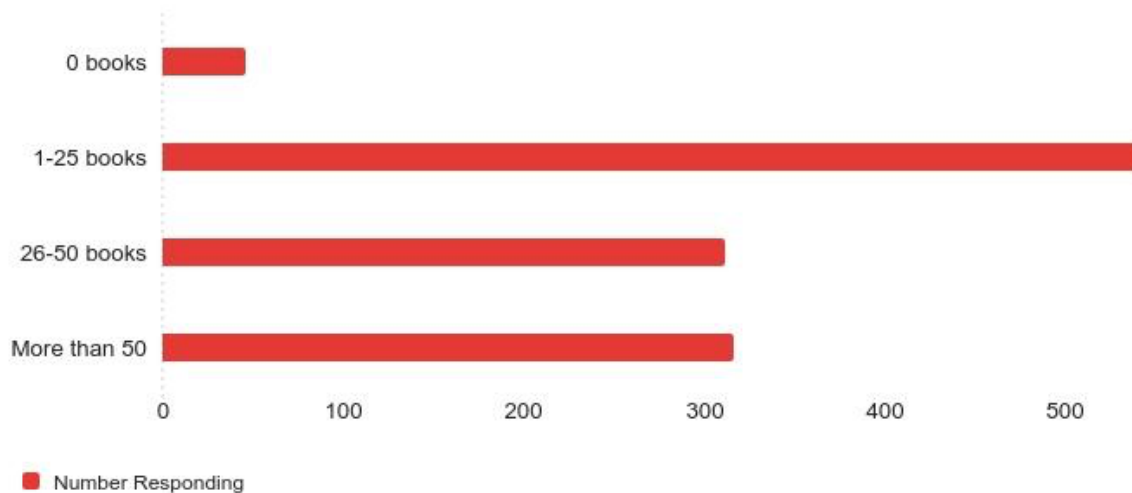


Overwhelmingly, Respondents to our survey indicate their children enjoy reading the books they receive (69 % responding “always” and 30 % responding “usually”). Although targeted for preschool-aged children, older siblings also read and enjoy the Imagination Library books.



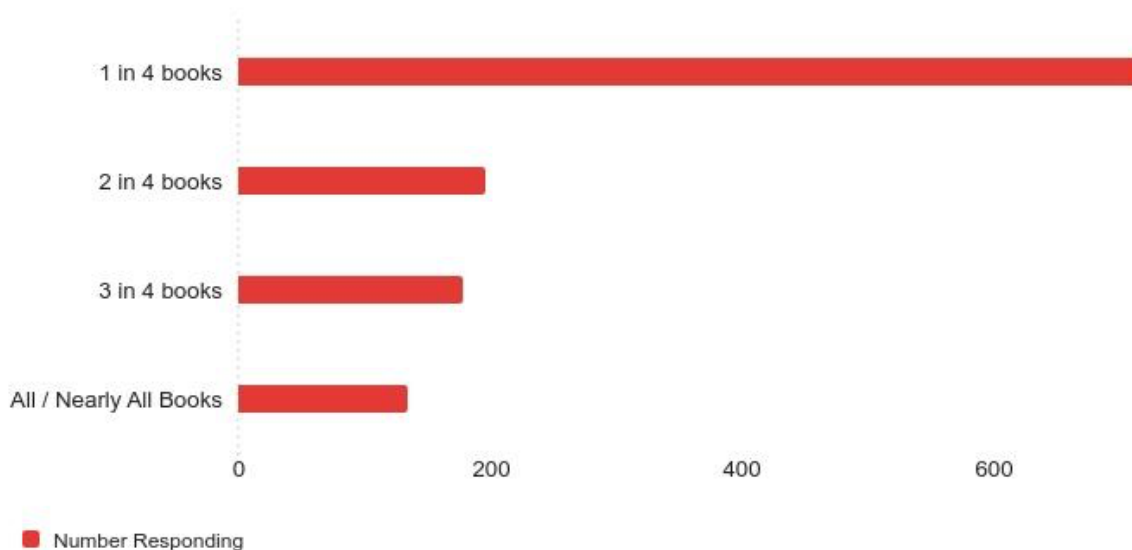
Q11 - How many children's books did your family have in the home before receiving Imagination Library books?

1217 Responses



Q9 - Out of all the books in your home, how many are Imagination Library books?

1226 Responses

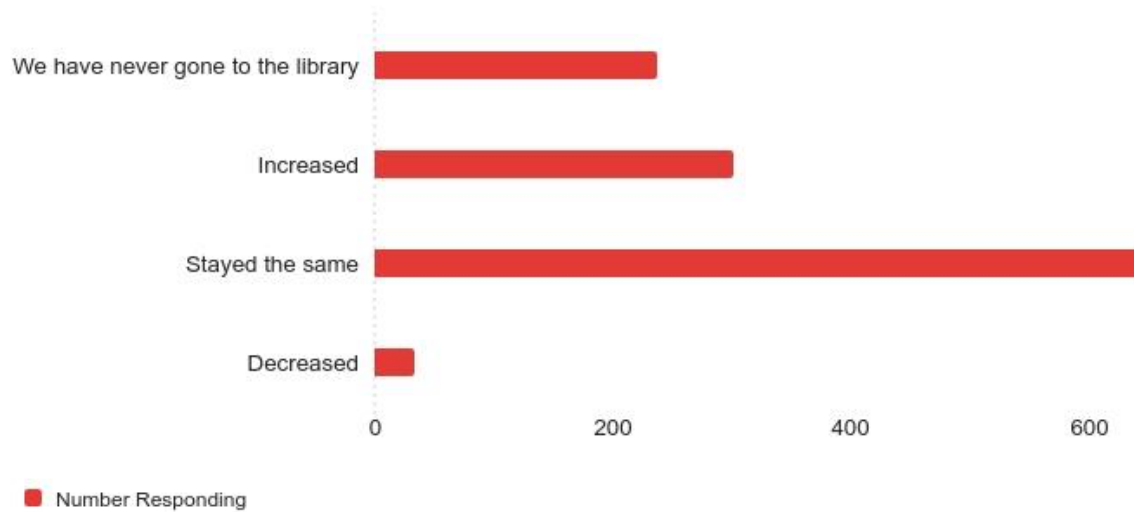


An important goal of the Imagination Library is to simply increase the number of books accessible to young children. The respondents to this survey indicate this goal is being met, as 58% report that one-quarter of their child's library is made up of Imagination Library books while the remaining 42% of respondents indicate that half to all their child's library consists of these books.



Q10 - Since participating in Imagination Library, our library use has...

1219 Responses

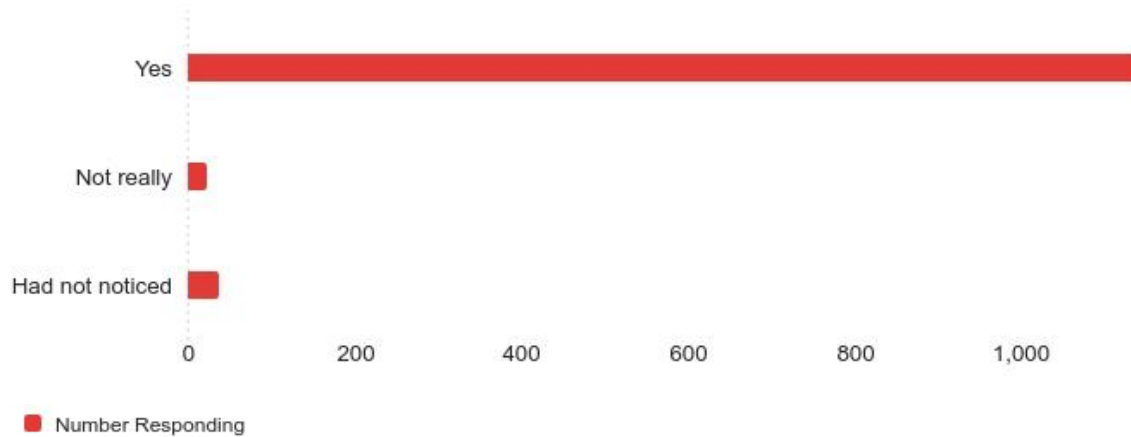


Few respondents report increased public library visitation because of the Imagination Library (25%). Surprisingly, 20% of our respondents report never having visited the public library. Although the low sample size is likely not representative of all participants in the program, this finding suggests a need for increased collaboration with our library system in hopes of increasing library use by our participants.



Q13 - Do you appreciate the uniqueness, variety, and diversity of the characters in the Imagination Library books?

1201 Responses

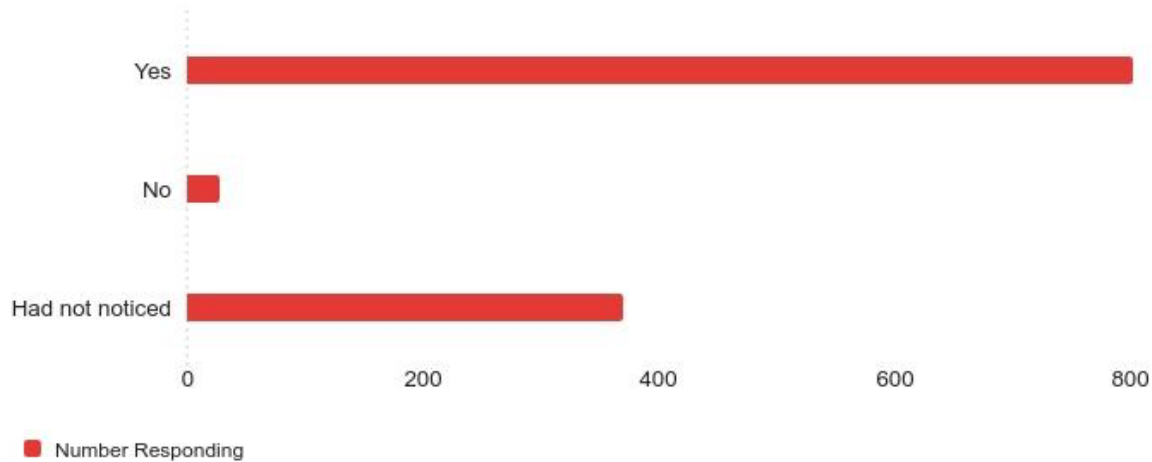


Respondents were asked about the uniqueness, variety, and diversity of the characters in the books they receive, and the results point to the high quality of the selection of books that are provided by the Imagination Library with 95% of respondents agreeing that they appreciate these factors in characters in the Imagination Library books.



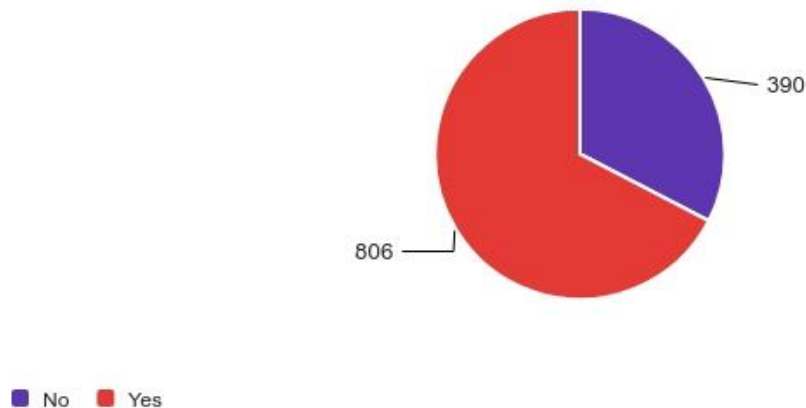
Q14 - Do you find the reading tips, found on the inside flap of the Imagination Library books, to be useful?

1201 Responses



Q15 - Do you share information, tips, and events with other parents?

1196 Responses

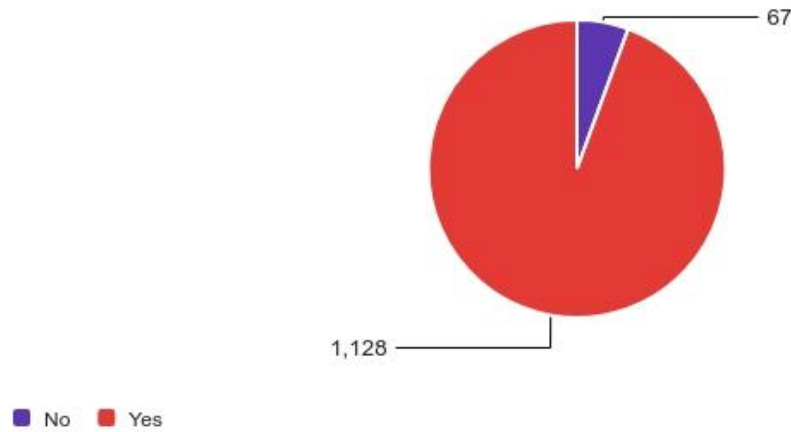


Indications from our question regarding the 'reading tips' that are a part of each book sent out by the Imagination Library suggest the need for heightened awareness of their presence on the inside flat of the books. Although 67% of respondents were aware of these tips, 31% were not. Possibly, the reading tips could be a central focus of our work with public libraries in Louisville. An intentional effort to increase awareness of fundamental reading strategies. Similar results were found in the question 'Do you share information, tips, and events with other parents?' (67% yes, 33% no).



Q16 - Do you refer other parents to the Imagination Library?

1195 Responses



Even so, parents responded that they find this program helpful and supportive, as indicated by 96% of parents reporting that they refer other parents to the program.



Q18 - In what zip code do you receive Imagination Library books?



Recently the Imagination Library has expanded its services. The expansion has allowed the distribution of books to a wider region of Louisville. Included in the ‘visual cloud’ above is a visual representation of the number of 2024 respondents from specific zip codes in the Louisville Metro area.