

2020-2021 Assessment Results

All Schools



Letters, Sounds and Words

A Strong Start to reading™ program



Strong Start to reading™
"Making a difference in the life of a child"

A special message from Strong Start about the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on our *Letters, Sounds and Words™* program

This 2020-2021 Assessment Results All Schools document reflects the continuing challenges to program implementation this past academic year. This summary provides a brief explanation of these challenges.

In the fall of 2020, with schools reopening for the academic year, we were hoping to be able to begin implementation of the *Letters, Sounds and Words* program with increased safety measures in place. We were anticipating a greater number of children needing the program due to the varying experiences with distance learning since schools closed after March Break. Strong Start Volunteer Coaches were prepared to support these children in gaining the literacy skills that were impacted since the closing of the schools.

As the pandemic continued, schools were taking the necessary, stringent precautions to keep children and staff safe, Volunteer Coaches were understandably not allowed to enter the schools in any of our regions in the fall. A handful of schools were able to begin the program with internal staff who were trained and could safely support some children. Strong Start provided a Recommendations for Safe Use of Strong Start Materials document so that these coaches could maintain the necessary safety protocols and implement the program successfully.

When the province went into lockdown just after Christmas, and the number of cases of the virus continued to increase, it was determined that distance learning would be implemented until February 8, 2021 so children were once again not in the schools. We were optimistic that, as we got through the second wave of COVID-19, our program would be able to run in the spring.

A new challenge developed when children returned to school and the March Break for 2021 was deferred to April. A third state of emergency and stay-at-home order was declared and remote learning, for an indefinite period, was ordered by the Ministry of Education. This remote learning situation continued until the end of the school year. This meant that the *Letters, Sounds and Words* program could not be widely implemented and most of those children in the few schools that had initially begun the program, could not complete it.

Using historical data, and our current number of schools, we can confidently predict that that over 5,000 children will have been impacted by not having the advantage of the literacy support provided through Strong Start's *Letters, Sounds and Words* program due

to the pandemic in the 2020-2021 academic year. This projection only includes the children who were already struggling learning to read before the pandemic. This number will be higher as the true impact of the pandemic on children's development and learning is fully realized.

When our *Letters, Sounds and Words* program can once again be implemented in schools, we know that the program will be needed more than ever. We are hopeful that, with accelerated two-dose vaccination rates and increased safety measures in schools, our program will be able to be implemented in the fall of 2021.

In the meantime, we continue to provide Online Volunteer Coach Training so that more volunteers will be ready to work one-on-one with children to boost their literacy skills with effective, personalized learning, when safely able to do so.

In response to the continued impact of COVID-19, we have developed a series of [free, downloadable resources for parents](#). The games and activities promote literacy development and are fun and easy to do and use items commonly found in the home and outside. The resources also include translation capability to ensure access for non-English speaking families. Strong Start continues to add activities and enhancements to the Parent Resources to help lay the foundation for the love of reading for years to come.

Interpreting Assessment Results

1. An assessment is completed with each child before the program begins and when the program is finished.
2. There are 4 strands in the program: Letters, Sounds, Words and Building Words. Each child is expected to be in 2-3 strands.
3. The results are reported separately for three groups of children:
 - *Target*
Includes those who are expected to just need extra support for a short period of time in order to keep pace with their peers.
 - *Resource Support*
Includes those who professionals predict may need extra support from resources within the school for another year or two.
 - *English Language Learners (ESL/ELL)*
Includes those for whom English as a second language is a factor in their learning.

Within each of these groups, we have two levels of expectation when it comes to how much the child should gain in skills over the 10-week program (see Criteria for Evaluating Success below).

Our 10-week program is used twice in a school year. Usually different children participate in each 10-week program, but some children do repeat the program if it is to their advantage.

Criteria for Evaluating Success

In designing the program, standards need to be set that reflect attainable goals appropriate to the age and stage of development of the children. The following criteria were established for evaluating a child's achievement and the success of the program.

Percentage Towards Goal

If the child knows more than half of the letters, sounds or selected words before the program, then our goal is that he/she learns all of the letters, sounds and words by the end of the program. Therefore, the assessment results reflect the degree to which the child achieved this goal of knowing the entire set.

Example: If a child needed to learn 10 letters to complete the set of all letters and he/she learned 8 new ones in the program, then the child achieved 80% of the goal of knowing all of the letters.

Considerable gain	26% to 75% achievement towards the goal of 100%
Excellent gain	76% to 99% achievement towards the goal of 100%
Outstanding gain	100% - the child has learned all of the letters, sounds or words

Percentage Gain

If a child knows very few letters, sounds and words before the program, our expectation is that he/she will make a valuable gain in the number known by the end of the program. Therefore, if a child knew fewer than half of the letters, sounds or selected words before the program, then assessment results reflect the gain the child made in a percentage. e.g., If a child knew 5 letters before the program and 15 after the program, the child made a 200% gain in the number of letters known (even though not all the letters are known yet).

Considerable gain	51% to 150% gain
Excellent gain	151% to 300% gain
Outstanding gain	301% or more gain

Summary

Overall 100% of the children made considerable, excellent or outstanding gains.

Enrollment

71 children were enrolled in the Fall and Spring Rounds.

Grade	Children
K2	12
1	49
2	9
3	1
Total	71

COVID-19 Pandemic Program Interruption

Please note that this reporting period took place during the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Approximately 48 of the children (in this report) who started the program were unable to finish the program as a result of school closures due to the pandemic. Please refer to pages 2 and 3 of this document for an explanation of the impact on the pandemic on our program.

- The program is designed as a ten week program. Data for children who completed 8 or more weeks of the program is included.

Schools

14 schools are included in this summary with an average of 5.1 children per school.

Volunteer Hours

Approximately 43 volunteers worked 851 hours to implement this Round.

Groups of children served this session

Target

86% of the children are thought to be the type of child who just needs extra attention for a short period of time.

Resource Support

14% of the children are those who professionals predict may need extra support from resources within the school for another year or two only.

ESL/ELL

0% of the children are included in the "English as a second language factor" group.

Anecdotal Evidence

Many very positive outcomes occurred for children, families and the Volunteer Coaches involved in Strong Start. These successes go beyond the statistics and are captured in the testimonials of personal experiences and observations. Visit the Strong Start website to read a sampling of these wonderful stories. www.strongstart.ca

Note: In the Fall Round, the majority of children are in grade one. In the Spring Round, the majority of children are in senior kindergarten. For more details on the assessment data, see the charts on the following pages.

Target									
Percentage Towards Goal	# Children	Little-No Gain	Considerable Gain	Excellent Gain	Outstanding Gain				
Letters	6	0	0%	2	33%	4	67%	0	0%
Sounds	7	0	0%	2	29%	4	57%	1	14%
Words	6	0	0%	2	33%	1	17%	3	50%
Total Percentage Towards Goal	19	0	0%	6	32%	9	47%	4	21%
Percentage Gain	# Children	Little-No Gain	Considerable Gain	Excellent Gain	Outstanding Gain				
Letters	4	0	0%	3	75%	0	0%	1	25%
Sounds	3	0	0%	2	67%	0	0%	1	33%
Words	4	0	0%	0	0%	4	100%	0	0%
Total Percentage Gain	11	0	0%	5	45%	4	36%	2	18%
Totals for Target	30	0	0%	11	37%	13	43%	6	20%
Resource Support									
Percentage Towards Goal	# Children	Little-No Gain	Considerable Gain	Excellent Gain	Outstanding Gain				
Letters	2	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	100%
Sounds	2	0	0%	0	0%	2	100%	0	0%
Words	1	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%
Building Words	2	0	0%	1	50%	1	50%	0	0%
Total Percentage Towards Goal	7	0	0%	1	14%	3	43%	3	43%
Percentage Gain	# Children	Little-No Gain	Considerable Gain	Excellent Gain	Outstanding Gain				
Words	1	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%
Total Percentage Gain	1	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%
Totals for Resource Support	8	0	0%	1	13%	3	38%	4	50%
Totals for Everything	38	0	0%	12	32%	16	42%	10	26%

Definition of Achievement Levels

Percentage Towards Goal

Degree to which a child, who already knew more than half the letters, sounds or words before the program started, has reached the goal of learning all of them.

Little to No Gain	0 to 25% achievement towards the goal of 100%
Considerable Gain	26% to 75% achievement towards the goal of 100%
Excellent Gain	76% to 99% achievement towards the goal of 100%
Outstanding Gain	100% achievement

Percentage Gain

Degree to which a child, who knew very few letters, sounds or words before the program started, has made a gain in the number known by the end of the program

Little to No Gain	0 to 50%
Considerable Gain	51% to 150%
Excellent Gain	151% to 300%
Outstanding Gain	301% or more