



ARE PARENTS LIT?

A survey of parents active engagement
in their child's literacy journey

May - June 2023



MKE 4 Kids

A City of Milwaukee Office Early Childhood Initiative Project

Developed & Executed In Partnership With:



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GROUNDING:

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT EARLY EDUCATION

The current state of childhood education for children aged 0 to 3 years old in Milwaukee, Wisconsin demands our attention. Limited access to quality early childhood education programs and persistent achievement gaps are pressing challenges. However, we believe that the solution lies in recognizing and empowering parents as the primary educators of their children during these crucial years. By actively involving parents and providing them with support and resources, we can establish a strong foundation for lifelong learning and bridge the educational gaps. Together, we can emphasize the essential role of parents as first teachers and work towards a brighter future for our youngest learners.

Acknowledging that parents require support to effectively assume their role as first teachers, our survey aimed to gain insights directly from parents regarding the specific types of support they require. By better understanding parents' needs, we can work towards providing targeted and meaningful assistance, ensuring that every parent has the resources and guidance necessary to nurture their child's early development and education.



GOALS & AIMS

What We Were Hoping To Learn



Understand how often parents are currently reading to their child

Before moving parents to read to their child, we need to know how often they are engaging in practices that support their child's literacy.



Identify what impacts parents' engagement with their child

Our goal is to determine if there are factors prohibiting parents from reading that can be prevented or reduced in the future.



Determine what parents need most to support their child's literacy

Hearing first hand from parents allows us to gather resources and develop initiatives aimed at partnering with parents.

"We read to the children nightly at bedtime. So we're keeping up this routine every day, even on days where it feels challenging, feeling like we're running out of time... we're trying to stick with their bedtime routine ."

- Survey Participant



RESULTS & THEMES

Demographics & Quantitative Data

The following outlines the quantitative data gathered from the parents.

75

Total Number of Participants



100% of parents surveyed have at least one child age 3 or under in their home

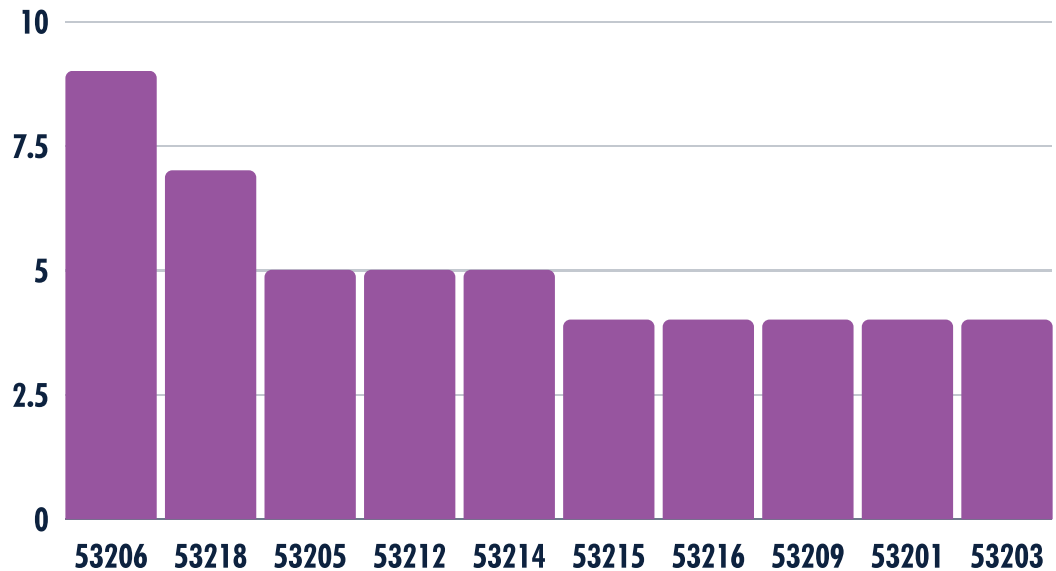


76% of women completed the survey

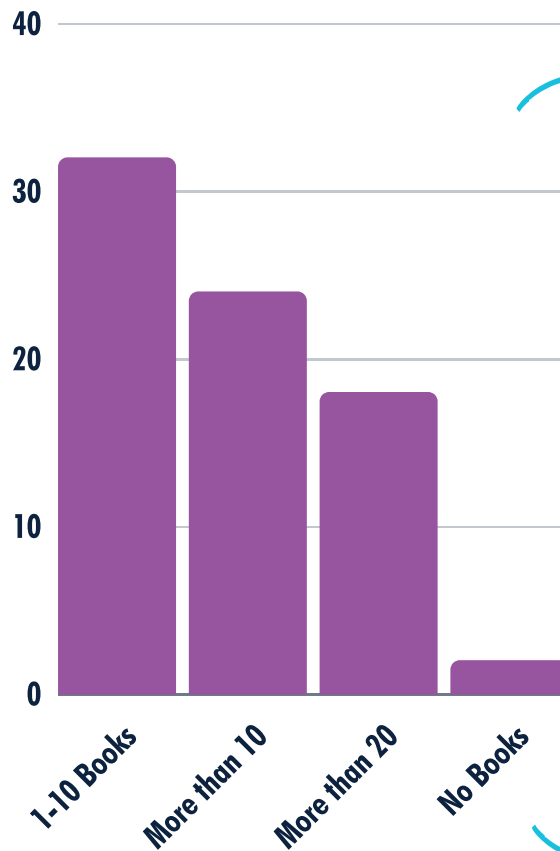


24% of men completed the survey

■ Most Engaged Zip Codes



How many children books are in your home?



43%
of total parents identified having 1-10 books have in their homes

53206
The highest number of parents with books at home (from 1-20) live in this zip code.

42%
Total parents identified having more than 10 books in their home

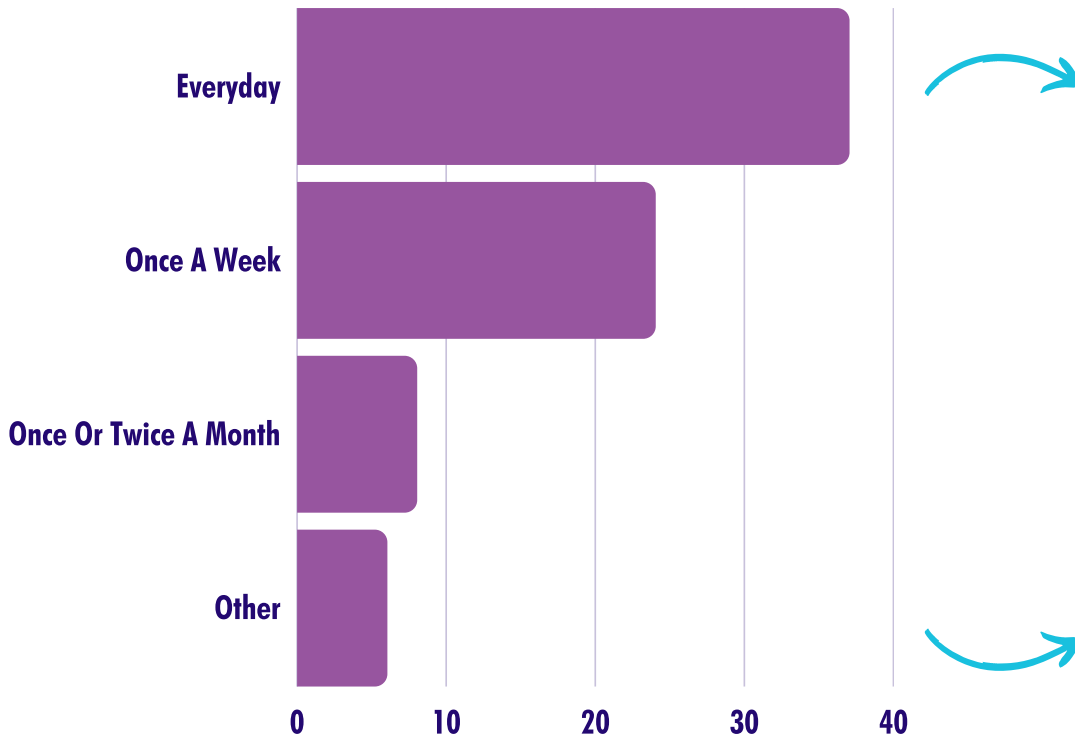
RESULTS & THEMES



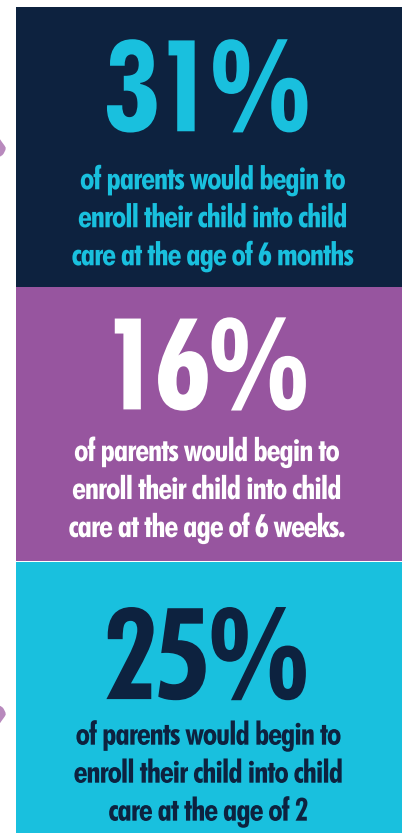
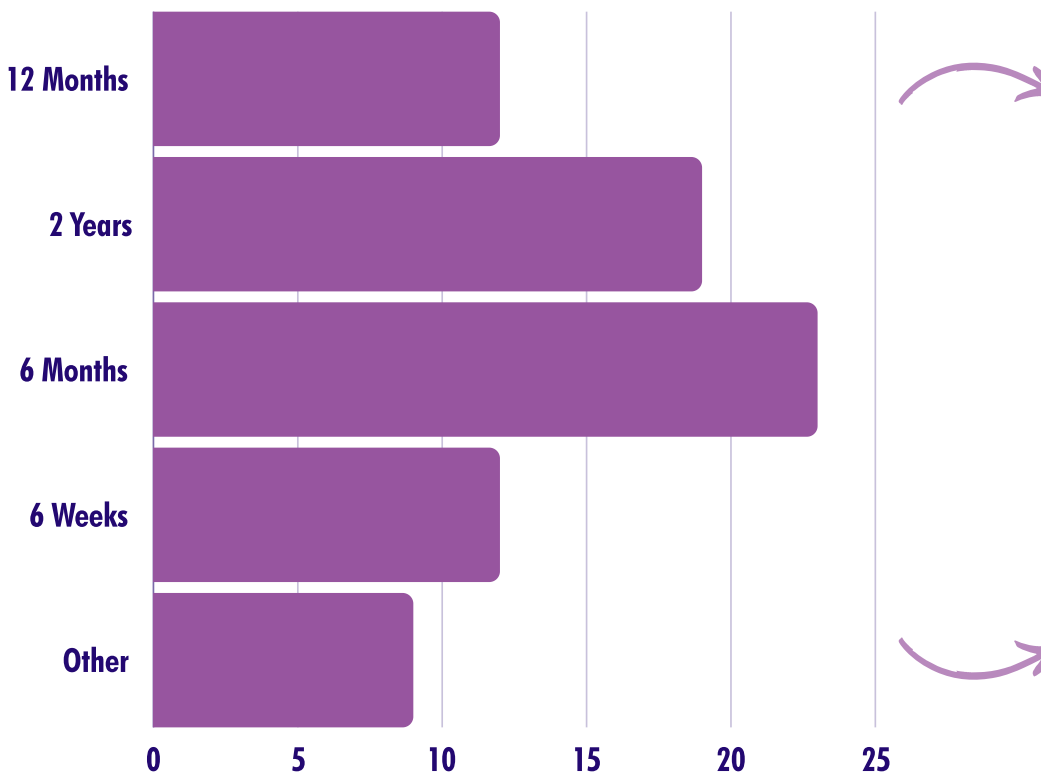
Demographics & Quantitative Data

The following outlines the quantitative data gathered from the parents.

How often do you read to your child?



How early would you enroll your baby in a quality child care program?



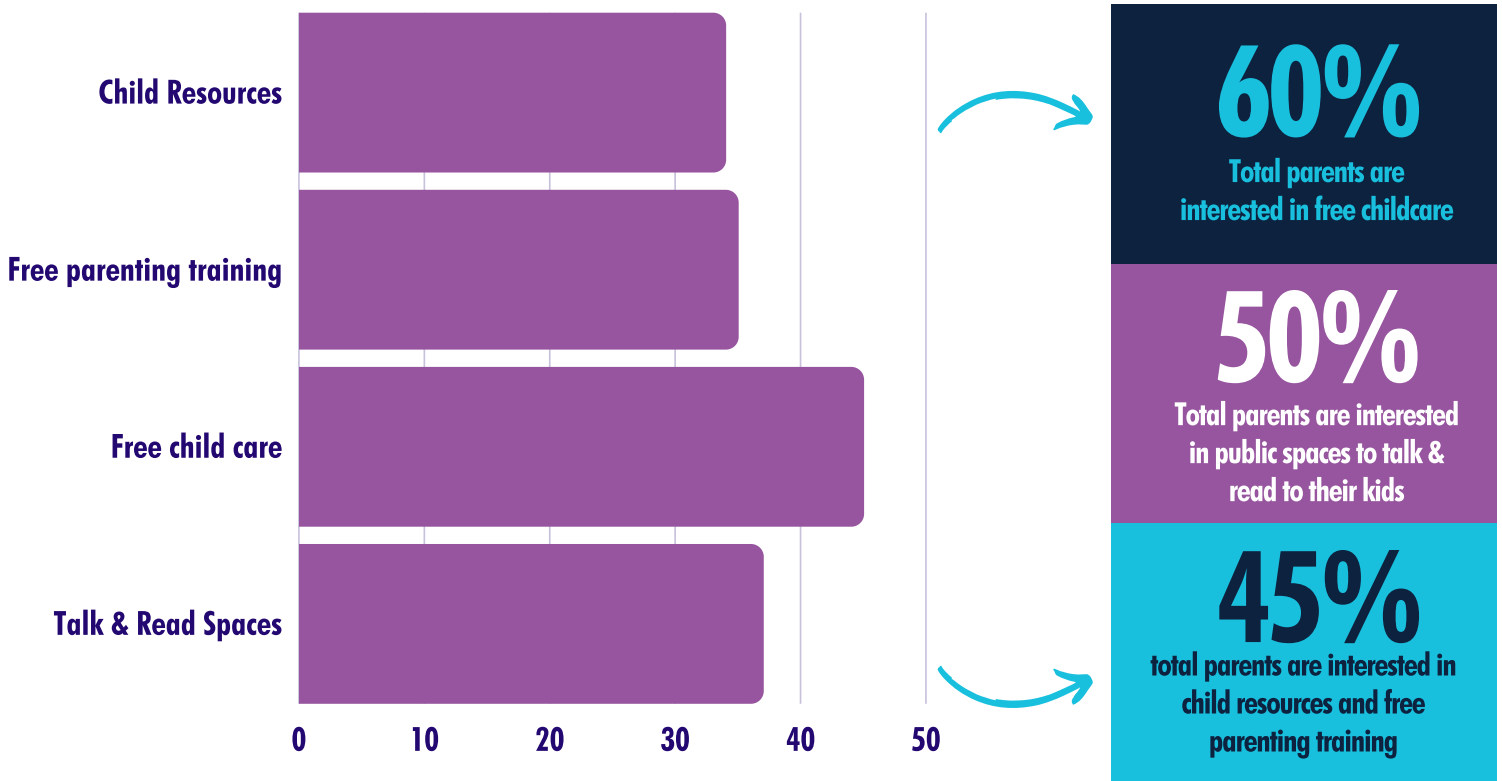
RESULTS & THEMES



Demographics & Quantitative Data

The following outlines the quantitative data gathered from the parents.

Which of these services would you be interested in receiving from the City of Milwaukee?



"The only reason I would read to my child not as often as I would like is because we have six kids in a household of eight. So sometimes it can be a little rough for me."

- Survey Participant

TOPIC 1:

Barriers to Consistently Reading At Home

We sought to understand what might slow or prevent a parent from reading to their child everyday, and below is an overview of the most elevated areas.

TIME CONSTRAINTS AND BUSY SCHEDULES



Over 50% parents expressed challenges in finding time to read to their child due to their hectic schedules and multiple responsibilities.

WORK-RELATED DUTIES/LONG HOURS



The demands of work, including long shifts and busy work schedules, were identified as obstacles to reading regularly with their child.

LACK OF PRIORITIZATION OR FORGETTING TO READ



30% parents admitted to not making reading a priority or occasionally forgetting to incorporate it into their daily routines.

FATIGUE AND EXHAUSTION



36% parents mentioned feeling tired and drained, particularly after work or managing other household tasks, which impacts their ability to engage in reading activities.

BALANCING MULTIPLE CHILDREN



Juggling the needs of multiple children or other caregiving duties made it challenging for some parents to consistently engage in reading with their child(ren).

EVENING ROUTINES AND BEDTIME CHALLENGES



25 parents noted that evening routines and time constraints often make it difficult to incorporate reading before bedtime.

TOPIC 2:

Parents' experience reading as a child

To better assess each parent's comfort with reading, we wanted to understand their own comfort with reading as a child. Here is what we learned.

AN OVERALL SMOOTH READING EXPERIENCE



62% of the parents shared that they had encouraging or positive reading experiences as a child with limited struggle to read.

PRESENCE OF LEARNING DISABILITIES



Although most of the parents expressed comfort with reading, 20% parents discussed facing specific challenges while reading, such as dyslexia or difficulty pronouncing certain words.

COMPREHENSION AND RETENTION DIFFICULTIES



10% of parents mentioned struggling with comprehension and remembering details while reading.

LACK OF SUPPORT OR LIMITED RESOURCES



Less than 10% of parents mentioned not having access to sufficient support or resources for reading, whether due to limited help at home or lack of transportation to libraries

SPEECH-RELATED CHALLENGES



15% of parents mentioned difficulties with stuttering or struggling to pronounce certain words while reading. They shared that with time and practice, they were able to improve their fluency.

SELF-PERCEIVED READING WEAKNESSES



Less than 10% of the parents emphasized their insecurities with reading and self-perception that they were poor readers, leading them to have negative perceptions of reading in general.

TOPIC 3:

Support with reading to their child

We aimed to understand if parents experienced barriers to access resources or support with reading to their child.

RELIANCE ON SELF



74% of parents mentioned not receiving any specific support or resources to assist them in reading to their child. They relied on their own efforts or the support of their immediate family members.

RELIANCE ON COMMUNITY



45% of parents mentioned utilizing resources available in their local community, such as libraries, library programs, reading groups, or events that promote reading. They found these resources helpful in accessing a variety of books and engaging in reading-related activities.

DESIRE FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



44% parents expressed openness to receiving more resources or support to assist them in reading to their child. They recognized the importance of additional tools and strategies to enhance their child's reading experience.

FRIENDS & FAMILY SUPPORT



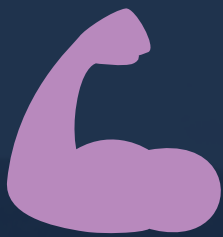
Less than 20% of parents mentioned receiving support and resources from family members or friends who recognized the importance of reading. They appreciated the assistance and encouragement they received in fostering their child's reading habits.

TOPIC 4:

Equipping their 0-3 year old for school

We asked parents to express how prepared they are to get their child ready for school. The following themes were identified based on their responses.

PARENTS ARE CONFIDENT



80% of parents emphasized the importance of having access to good books for their children and expressed that the City can support this by expanding library hours, offering more book-related events and programs, and ensuring that libraries are well-stocked with diverse and age-appropriate reading materials.

CONCERNS ABOUT ENVIRONMENT



Less than 10% of parents revealed concerns about helping their child emotionally and physically adjust to a new space. Some parents have also identified concerns around their child's behavior being negatively impacted.

PARENTS HAVE EXPERIENCE



Over 50% of the parents indicated a confidence in equipping their 0-3 year old for school because they have older children that they have equipped.



TOPIC 5:

How the City of Milwaukee Helps

We asked parents how the City of Milwaukee can support them in providing the best care and education for their children. Here is what parents had to say.

PROVIDE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY BOOKS AND READING MATERIALS



82% of parents emphasized the importance of having access to good books for their children and expressed that the City can support this by expanding library hours, offering more book-related events and programs, and ensuring that libraries are well-stocked with diverse and age-appropriate reading materials.

IMPROVE THE AVAILABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY OF CHILDCARE



92% of parents mentioned the need for more affordable childcare options and subsidies, as well as better resources and programs in childcare facilities. The city can work towards expanding access to high-quality and affordable childcare services, and ensure that childcare providers are qualified and provide a nurturing and educational environment.

INCREASE OUTREACH AND AWARENESS



67% of parents mentioned the need for better promotion and advertising of available resources and programs. The city can actively promote existing resources, host community events, and collaborate with community organizations to raise awareness among parents about the support and services available to them.

SUPPORT EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



74% of Parents highlighted the importance of early childhood education and the need for more resources and programs for children aged zero to three. The city can invest in early childhood education initiatives, offer training and support for early care providers, and provide free or low-cost early learning opportunities for children from low-income families.

KEY LEARNINGS

What's Going On With Parents



The following is an overview of the environment and circumstances families are facing that may support or inhibit their ability to improve their child's literacy. It is important to note that although parents identified having a child ages 0-3, some of their responses & identified needs were also related to older children in the same household. As a result, our key learnings are reflective of the whole household.

1. Parents understand the value of reading

The survey very clearly revealed that parents **are aware** of the importance & benefits of reading to a child under 3. Parents directly linked reading to a child's development and preparation for school.

2. Most parents enjoyed reading as a child

Our results show not only did most of the parents have comfort reading as a child, but they enjoyed it and have a positive association with reading. Even parents with identified challenges with reading as a child, ultimately came to enjoy the process.

3. Parents don't have enough books at home

While parents were able to identify understanding the importance of reading to their children at home, 74% of respondents identified only having between 0-19 children's books in their home.

4. Parents are too busy and/or too tired

Parents still aren't reading as often to their child as they would like. Between complex home situations, such as managing multiple children, unsteady bed routines, difficult work schedules and general fatigue & stress, parents are finding it hard to make time to read to their child.

5. Children's literacy is connected to childcare

Most parents believe childcare providers are **primarily** responsible for their 0-3 year old's literacy and education. Additionally, parents have identified that accessibility to affordable, quality childcare providers are a top priority & resource to supporting their child's learning.

6. Parents are seeking and need help

Parents are either currently utilizing resources, such as libraries, to support their child's learning or are highly interested in learning more about available resources. Additionally, parents are actively seeking support as they are feeling burnt out independently.

RECOMMENDATIONS

How We Show Up For Parents

We asked parents to tell us what they need, and we listened! Now it's time to implement strategies to support parents. Below are opportunities we've identified based on parents' current needs.



Advocate for affordable, quality & accessible childcare

MKE4Kids will partner with community-based initiatives to increase subsidy opportunities for childcare providers and families and serve as a resource connector for providers seeking to offer services.



Empower parents as their child's first teacher

MKE4Kids will partner with learning experts, parents and childcare providers to develop a learning framework that can be introduced and implemented through targeted parent training programs specifically for parents of children ages of 0-3.



Develop a robust network of parent resources & connections

MKE4Kids will continue to build and actively promote a diverse directory of early education and family support resources aimed to help sustain families of children ages 1-8.



Meet parents where they are and creatively role model

MKE4Kids will continue to create public, accessible spaces for parents to actively encourage and facilitate literacy-based practices with their children without severe disruption to their current life schedules & circumstances.





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View the full report & hear parent responses at MKE4Kids.com

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