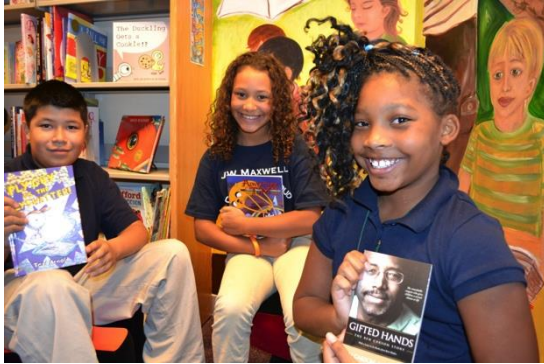


## Carson Scholars Fund Initiatives Key Findings from a National-Level Evaluation



**November 2014**

**Submitted by:**  
Karin E. Tice, Ph.D.  
President

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**FERA**

1427 Warrington Cr.  
Ann Arbor, MI 48103  
Ph. 734-994-9060  
[www.feraonline.com](http://www.feraonline.com)

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This report presents key findings from an evaluation of the Ben Carson Reading Project and the Carson Scholars Program. Formative Evaluation Research Associates (FERA), an independent evaluation group, conducted this research in 2014 with the support of a W.K. Kellogg Foundation grant.<sup>1</sup> Both of the Carson Scholars Fund initiatives foster a culture that supports academic excellence in schools. One leading purpose for this report is to highlight key findings and points to ponder that can be used to support the expansion and impact of: 1) Reading Rooms across the country so that youth have opportunities to learn to love reading for pleasure and learning; and 2) Carson Scholars in schools nationwide so that our next generation of leaders are educated, compassionate, and give of their time, talent, and treasure.

The remaining report sections include: 1) the evaluation design, 2) an overview of Ben Carson Reading Room neighborhoods and schools, and the extent of Reading Room use and perceived value as reported by Reading Room Coordinators survey respondents; 3) an overview of the impact of Carson Scholar Program on schools with current Carson Scholars as reported by school principal survey respondents; 4) Carson Scholar alumni survey respondents' reporting on their current educational, work, philanthropic, and leadership activities; and 5) conclusions. In each section, data is presented first. Any key findings and points to ponder are highlighted at the end of each section.

### **Evaluation Purposes and Methods**

This report presents data from three confidential surveys conducted in 2014 with 1) current Reading Room Coordinators (60% responded: 74/123); 2) principals from schools Pre-K through high school that have (or have had) Carson Scholars (34% responded: 555/1,646); and 3) Carson Scholar alumni who are all high school graduates (48% responded 1,128/2,349).

Percentages reported in this report were calculated based on the total number of individuals responding to a particular survey. Where percentages add up to more than 100% survey respondents could select more than one response to a particular question. Missing data were not included in the calculations. All data presented in this document are reported by the individuals responding to one of the three surveys unless otherwise noted. The reader must keep

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<sup>1</sup> The W.K. Kellogg Foundation grant of \$260,000, distributed over a ten-year period, includes \$150,000 for external evaluation. The total budget to support this year's evaluation is \$37,000. We are grateful for the Foundations support for this work.

in mind that the data does not represent 100% of the schools or alumni. A further clarification is that once recognized as such, students remain Carson Scholars forever.

## **BEN CARSON READING PROJECT**

The Ben Carson Reading Project was developed to support early grade literacy by promoting leisure reading as a key to unlocking a child's full learning potential. In 2000 the program was launched primarily in schools located in low-income, inner-city neighborhoods. By 2014 that number had grown to a total of 118 Reading Rooms in 16 different states across the



nation. (Note: These numbers represent 100% of Reading Rooms)

Reading rooms are vibrant, inviting, child-friendly spaces where students can curl up on a rug, a couch, or a bean bag chair with a stuffed animal or a friend to read a book. Reading Rooms are typically themed (e.g., a rainforest, a community garden) and are intended to support a culture of academic achievement in the school. They offer students a wide range of fiction and non-

fiction high-interest books that are often not available in school classrooms or libraries.

**Why are Reading Rooms important?** If children learn to love to read and become proficient in reading by third grade the world of learning opens up for them. Students who are successful and engaged are more likely to remain in school. Research shows that “students who don’t read proficiently by third grade are four times more likely to leave school without a diploma than proficient readers. For the worst readers, those [who] couldn’t master even the basic skills by third grade, the rate is nearly six times greater.... What’s more, the study shows that poverty has a powerful influence on graduation rates. *The combined effect of reading poorly and living in poverty puts these children in double jeopardy [of not graduating from high school].*”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Hernandez, Donald. Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation. Annie E. Casey Foundation Report April 2011.

## **Neighborhoods and Schools**

**Reading Room school neighborhoods.** Reading Rooms are primarily located in inner city/urban neighborhoods (66%). The remainder are located in suburban (29%) or rural areas (5%), which can also include households living in poverty or with low incomes. Low-income neighborhoods often have a landscape that does not support literacy that this author describes as an “arid literacy desert.”

Students living in these areas often start school with fewer literacy-related skills than their peers living in neighborhoods with more economic resources/wealth.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Characteristics of an Arid Literacy Desert:***

- ◆ Signage is lacking or is in disrepair or may be covered with graffiti so that young children lack opportunities for early and contextual word recognition
- ◆ Libraries may not exist, or families may not be able to access public libraries (e.g., lack of public transportation)
- ◆ Bookstores are not usually located in low-income neighborhoods and those outside the neighborhood may not be accessible
- ◆ Homes may not have books and other print media especially if parents are not literate themselves or speak English as a second language
- ◆ Children’s books in languages other than English are difficult to find in many neighborhood/city

FERA asked Reading Room Coordinators about some of the literacy supports in their school neighborhoods (see Table 1). Less than a quarter of the neighbors have a bookstore where families can purchase high quality children’s literature. Most have pharmacies and/or supermarkets where children’s books and magazines can be purchased. The selection of reading materials in these venues tends to be minimal and is often low quality.

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<sup>3</sup> Interview in 2013 with Susan B. Neuman -- Professor in Educational Studies at the University of Michigan specializing in early literacy development. Previously, she has served as the U.S. Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education.

**Table 1**  
**Literacy supports in Reading Room schools' neighborhoods**

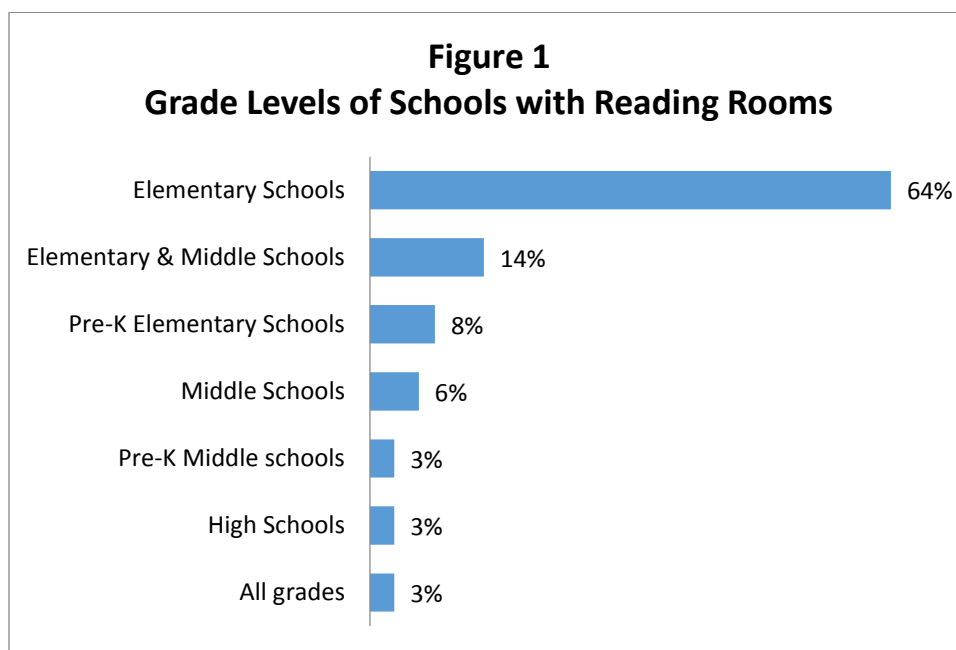
Reading Room School Neighborhoods have:	Percent Coordinators
An open <i>public library</i>	87%
A pharmacy or supermarket that sells children's <i>books</i>	71%
A pharmacy or supermarket that sells children's <i>magazines</i>	67%
A bookmobile	31%
A major bookstore (e.g., a national chain like Barnes and Nobles)	23%
A local bookstore	23%

**Key finding:** *Ben Carson Reading Rooms provide students with access to book and other reading materials. They are most often located in neighborhoods that can be characterized as “arid literacy deserts” where access to books and other literacy supports are low.*

**Point to Ponder:** *This finding reinforces the Carson Scholars Fund’s goal to reach as many schools located in **low-income neighborhoods** across the country as possible.*

**Reading Room schools:** Reading Room Coordinators (n=37/55) reported that 75% to 100% of the students in their school qualify for free and reduced school lunch. Another 12 Coordinators said that between 40 and 74% of students qualify while only 6 reported that below 40% of the students in their school qualified for free and reduced lunch.

The coordinators identified what grade level use the Reading Room (see Figure 1).





**Point to Ponder:** *Reading by third grade is critically important to student success. This research supports the importance of the Carson Scholars Fund’s emphasis on opening Reading Rooms in elementary schools where they can be used by pre-K to third graders.*

Schools with Reading Rooms vary in size. These schools serve less than 300 students (14%), 300 to 499 students (21%), 500 to 999 students (34%), 1,000 to 2,999 students (16%), and 3,000 students or more (34%).

About half of Reading Rooms are located in a separate room (53%) while others are part of the library or media center (38%). Those remaining share a space with another area in the school or are located in the library (1%). Nearly all Reading Room schools (94%) have a “functioning” library, meaning one that is both open and being used by students.

### **Reading Room Use**

The Reading Room is often the only place and space in a student’s day or even week when they can chose and read whatever book catches their attention for pure pleasure (i.e., are not required to write a book report or complete some other assignment). Almost half (49%) of Reading Room schools have only a part time librarian and 10% have no librarian at all. Lack of a library or of a full-time librarian likely has implications for students’ access to books. Reading Rooms provide high interest books for students to read.



Reading Rooms vary in the grades that come to the space, the number of hours they are open and the amount of time students spend in the room. Coordinators reported that the numbers of hours their Reading Rooms are open in a week are as follows in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
**Number of Hours Reading Rooms are Open**

<b>Hours/week</b>	<b>% of Schools</b>
Under 5	10%
5+ to 10	20%
10+ to 15	9%
15+ to 20	11%
20+ to 25	11%
25+ to 30	18%
30+ to 40	21%

Reading Room Coordinators reported their greatest challenges are related to 1) staffing the Reading Room (61%) and 2) engaging parents as volunteers (50%). Because most Reading Rooms are located in a room separate from classrooms, an adult must be present to supervise the children when they are open. Another challenge for Reading Room use is that teachers must use time out of the school day/class period to bring their students to the room (49%).

Students come to the Reading Room at different times and ways. The 74 Coordinators reported that students in their schools will come to the space in the following ways:

- ◆ During class time (n=43)
- ◆ During lunch or recess periods (n=35)
- ◆ During library periods (n=29)
- ◆ Individual students earn the privilege through reading (n=29)
- ◆ Individual students earn the privilege other ways (n=31)

Coordinators mentioned other ways that students can access the Reading Room, including students taking books from the Reading Room to classrooms; small groups coming with a mentor or tutor; students coming with their reading buddies (5<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders together); students requesting access; participation in after-school reading programs; and students using the space when open to specific grades at the end of each school day.

Coordinators estimated the average length of time that students in their schools stay during a typical Reading Room visit (see Table 3).



**Table 3**  
**Length of Time Students Stay in Reading Room**

<b>Estimated average length of time students stay in Reading Room</b>	<b>Percent of Schools</b>
10-15 minutes	13%
15-20 minutes	36%
20-30 minutes	33%
30-50 minutes	17%
50+ minutes	1%

Of the 74 Reading Room Coordinators survey respondents:

- ◆ 68 allowed students to read whatever book(s) they chose
- ◆ 40 encouraged students to pick books **at their reading level**
- ◆ 20 encouraged students to read books that are **above their reading level**
- ◆ 18 recognized students for their participation in the Reading Room
- ◆ 7 used reading levels in the Reading Room for book selection purposes
- ◆ 4 tracked students’ reading levels in the Reading Room
- ◆ **2 discouraged** students from reading above their reading level

One example of how students were recognized for their time reading is through items such as pencils, stickers, and other incentives to read. Another example is a school that awards students who read during their lunch recess with accumulated minutes on their personalized punch card. At the end of every month, students who have read a preset number of minutes are allowed to choose an incentive to celebrate their reading commitment.

**Key finding:** *In Reading Rooms, most students are allowed to read whatever book they choose. Books do not have to be in alignment with their current reading level. Only about a quarter (20 out of 74) of Reading Rooms encourage students to read books above their reading level.*

**Point to Ponder:** *Research done in a low-income school found that students were discouraged from reading above their reading level. The opposite was found to be true for students from a school located in a wealthy neighborhood.<sup>4</sup> Reading above grade level increased their vocabulary and enhanced their reading skills. This highlights the importance of Carson Scholars Fund staff continuing to share research that can inform Reading Room Coordinators’ work.*

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<sup>4</sup> Susan Neuman Ibid

**Additional Key finding:** Reading Rooms vary in the number of hours they are open, from less than 5 hours to over 30 hours per week.

**Points to Ponder.** The longer that Reading Rooms are open and students are spending in this space reading, the more chance the young people have to experience the benefits of reading for pleasure and learning. This reinforces the importance of the role that national Carson Scholar staff play in sharing effective practices such as strategies other Reading Rooms can use to increase the use of their space and the amount of time students visit the space.

### **Value of Reading Rooms**

Coordinators rated the extent to which they agreed that the Reading Room in their school: (they responded to a 4 point scale where 4= strongly agree and 1= strongly disagree)

- ◆ Provides a quiet place to read (3.8)
- ◆ Encourages a love of reading (3.7)
- ◆ Inspires students to achieve (3.6)
- ◆ Contributes to improved reading skills (3.5)
- ◆ Contributes to a culture of high expectations and learning (3.5)
- ◆ Motivates students to want to learn (3.5)

Coordinators also thought that the Reading Room in their school:

- ◆ Compliments other reading programs (3.5)
- ◆ Has books not available in the library (3.4)
- ◆ Brings new books into the school that the library cannot afford to purchase (3.3)
- ◆ Serves as a valuable resource for teachers (3.3)

**Key finding:** Coordinators strongly agree that the Reading Room in their school encourages a love of reading and contributes to improved reading skills. They also believe the Reading Room provides valuable supports for the school and compliments other reading programs.

Coordinators would be interested in learning more about: 1) effective practices for engaging parents/guardians/grandparents in supporting students' reading (4.5); 2) effective practices for supporting student literacy (4.4); 3) current research focused on reading by third grade (4.1); and 4) how to engage older students as reading buddies for younger students (4.1).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Coordinators were asked to rate how interested they are in learning more on a 5 point scale where 5=Very interested and 1=Not at all interested.

Overall, Reading Rooms are a valuable resource that supports student literacy in low-income neighborhoods. Reading Rooms provide high quality children's books in neighborhoods and schools where access and resources are low. Reading Rooms contribute to improved reading skills by developing students' love of reading and time spent reading.

## **CARSON SCHOLARS PROGRAM**



The Carson Scholars Program creates a pipeline of diverse young leaders who value giving back to their communities. The Program is **merit-based** and recognizes and rewards academic excellence in young students (4th–11th grade) who also have strong humanitarian

qualities. What makes the Carson Scholars Fund different from other scholarships and leadership programs is that recipients are elementary, middle school, and high school students instead of college-aged students, the typical scholarship recipients. Any accredited K-12 school in the country is eligible to have a Carson Scholar. Indeed, the Carson Scholars Fund has a long-term goal of having a Carson Scholar in every school in the country.

Carson Scholars from low-income urban neighborhoods and those from suburban and rural areas are celebrated together and are all called upon to think of themselves as community leaders. **In 1996 there were 25 Carson Scholars. By 2014:** (Note: the following data is for all Carson Scholars.)

- ◆ There are **over** 6,200 Carson Scholars that have been recognized throughout all 50 states and Washington, D.C.
- ◆ \$6.2 million in scholarships have been awarded
- ◆ Carson Scholars have (or had) attended 450 colleges and universities
- ◆ More than \$3.6 million have been paid out to colleges and universities on behalf of our scholars

Any accredited elementary, middle or high school in the U.S.A. can nominate a student in 4th through 11th grade to be a Carson Scholar. Nominees then participate in a competitive selection process that requires them to complete an application and write an essay.

While the Carson Scholars Initiative is not primarily a scholarship program, scholars do receive a \$1,000 scholarship to be applied toward their college education. This money is invested and earns interest, which students also receive when they are ready to use the monies for college. Funding for these awards can be provided from the national-level Carson Scholars Fund, local fundraising and endowments, or some combination of those.

### **Overview of Carson Scholar Schools**

Student populations in Scholar Schools range widely, from less than 300 to over 3,000. The percentage of students in each school who qualify for free and reduced school lunch ranges from less than one quarter (25% of schools) to over three quarters (75%). Table 4 presents other descriptive information about the schools whose principals responded to the survey.

**Table 4**  
**Locations and Grade Levels of Carson Scholar Schools**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Grade Levels Served</b>
Suburban (45%)	Elementary (31%)
Inner City (35%)	Middle School (17%)
Rural (20%)	Pre-K -8 or K-8 (16%)
	High School (27%)
	Other (9%, e.g., Pre-K -12, 6-12)

### **Recognition of Scholars**

The Carson Scholars Fund hopes that significant recognition of Scholars and their leadership activities will contribute to the college-going culture in schools in their schools, and in their community. To this purpose, many recognition activities take place. First-time Scholars attend an annual regional banquet, receive a medal and have their names added to a trophy displayed in their school. As mentioned earlier, they also receive the \$1,000 scholarship to be applied toward their college education. Scholars are also recognized at their school. Schools have found different ways to recognize Carson Scholars; e.g., at an assembly or announced to the

entire school. Schools are encouraged to find many ways recognize the scholars very publicly at school and identify them as leaders within their classrooms.<sup>6</sup>

The findings from the principal's survey indicate that the extent to which recognition and leadership activities occur varies widely. Fully 64% of responding principals said that they recognize Carson Scholars at a one-time event. One quarter holds a series of events, and 11% engages in a range of activities such as on-going press releases in local newspapers, announcements on their social media and websites, and sponsored dinners. Schools also celebrate Carson Scholars in the following ways: (N= 555)

<u>65%</u>	School wide announcement over the PA system
<u>65%</u>	Trophy prominently displayed (324 schools)
<u>26%</u>	School wide assembly
<u>9%</u>	Classroom activity
<u>8%</u>	Showing the video about Ben Carson's Life
<u>8%</u>	Having students read one of Ben Carson's books
<u>7%</u>	School wide activity
<u>5%</u>	Student speech

One third (31%) of the principals mentioned other very specific ways to recognize their Carson Scholars, including taking students to see the Ben Carson Play, highlighting the award in their newsletter or Facebook page, submitting a press release to the local newspaper, hosting a dinner or a classroom party with family and community members, and conducting grade-level discussions with 5<sup>th</sup> graders.

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<sup>6</sup> Until 2010, Scholars could be awarded additional Carson scholarships in subsequent years. Now they can only receive one scholarship although they can be recognized multiple times if they continue to achieve academically. These Scholars receive a recognition pin to attach to their medal, a certificate, a nameplate to add to their school's trophy, and an invitation to an awards banquet.

## **Impact on Schools**

Carson Scholars are selected on the basis of merit and with the vision of supporting this country's future leaders, whether they attend schools located in wealthy or low-income neighborhoods. Banquets bring together young people and their families across socio-economic



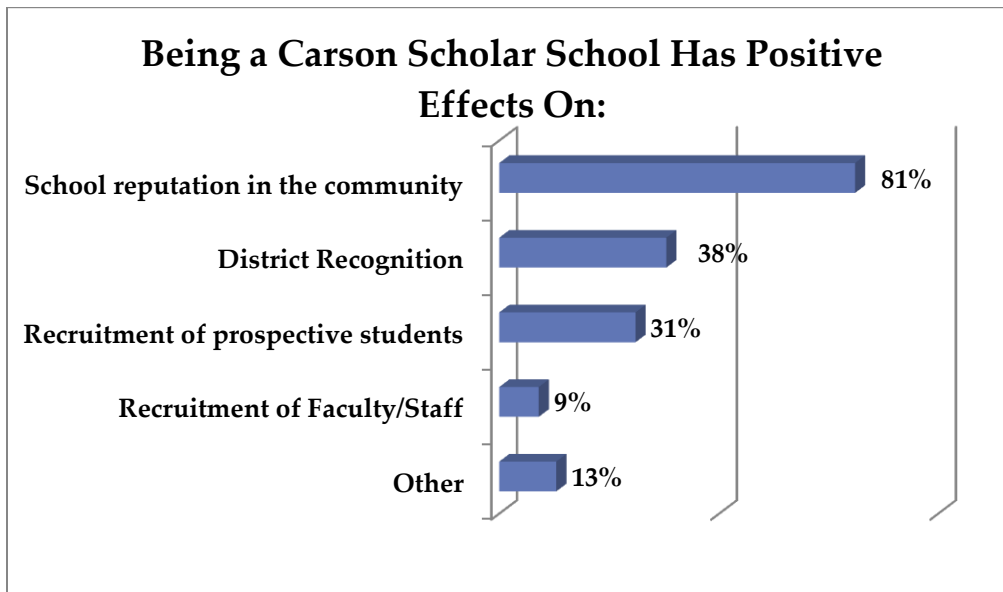
lines to celebrate and recognize student academic accomplishments and service to the community. This is an important context for understanding Carson Scholars' impact on their schools.

**Impact on school reputation and recruitment.** Principals responding to the survey identified multiple ways that having a Carson Scholar in the

school has a positive impact on their schools. Almost all the principals (91%) noted that one positive outcome of being a Carson Scholar School is that it enhances their school's reputation (see Figure 2).

Having a reputation for academic excellence is important especially when schools compete for students. Fully 40% of school principals reported that students in the neighborhood where their school is located have a choice about where they attend school. Over a third of the principals noted that being a Carson School enhances district recognition, and almost a third indicated that it has a positive effect on student recruitment. Nine percent said it helps with faculty and staff recruitment.

**Figure 2**



**Impact on college-going culture.** The Carson Scholars Fund hopes to contribute to the college-going culture in schools. The Schools vary widely in terms of their students’ visions and expectations about going to college. The two extremes are highlighted by the following quotes offered by different principals:

- ◆ *“This is a Title I school with students coming from low-socio-economic backgrounds. A program which rewards student accomplishment at the middle school level supports the college-bound message brought forth on a daily basis at school.”*
- ◆ *“Through being recognized, the Carson Scholar will instill hope and optimism for students who may not had the vision to develop college readiness.”*
- ◆ *“We are a college prep school. 100% of our students attend college.”*
- ◆ *“The Carson Scholars Fund adds to our culture that has an established current college-going culture. Many of our students come from homes where the level of parent expectations are focused on college.”*

Principals were asked an open-ended question about how having a Carson Scholar contributes to the college-going culture in their school. Their responses can be grouped into the following themes. The Carson Scholars Program:

- ◆ Raises awareness about and interest in going to college (n=75)



- ◆ Instills a vision and hope for attending college (n=50)
- ◆ Provides resources to pay for college (n=49)
- ◆ Promotes academic success (n=48)
- ◆ Increases Scholars' motivation and confidence (n=31)
- ◆ Provides an opportunity to celebrate student achievement (n=23)
- ◆ Aligns with the mission of school – to prepare students for college (n=21)
- ◆ Promotes community engagement (n=10)
- ◆ Has limited impact beyond the individual scholar (n=9)
- ◆ Promotes leadership (n= 4)

One principal commented that [having a Carson Scholar in our school] “helps other students to strive toward being recognized for their efforts at the school because now we have role models for achieving recognition for doing great work at school. It also gives the recipients a chance to become stronger leaders while they focus on their dreams and goals.”

**Key finding:** *Being a Carson Scholar school has a positive impact on a school's reputation in the community and district and can help with the recruitment of students when parents can select which school their youth attends.*

**Point to Ponder:** *This finding supports the Carson Scholars Fund's goal of having a Carson Scholar in every school across the country. With increased capacity and resources, the Carson Scholars Fund could offer schools additional materials to enhance the impact of being a Carson Scholar School.*

### **Ways to Strengthen Impact**

In an effort to learn how the program might help increase the positive impact of Carson Scholars on schools, principals were asked to rate on a 5 point scale, where 5= very useful and 1= not at all useful, particular ideas for doing that. Principals indicated that they would value learning about or having:

- ◆ Effective practices for nurturing youth leadership (4.2 mean)
- ◆ Ideas for celebrating the values represented by the Carson Scholarship (4.1)
- ◆ Effective practices for community engagement best practices (4.1)
- ◆ A set of Ben Carson resources to use in their school for the school (e.g., video, book(s), photograph) (4.1)

Principals offered additional suggestions, which have already been shared with the Carson Scholars Fund staff.

**CARSON SCHOLAR ALUMNI**

Carson Scholars become alumni when they graduate from high school. However, they continue to be known as a Carson Scholar throughout their lifetimes. Descriptive information about the Carson Scholar alumni survey respondents is presented in Table 5.

**Table 5  
About Carson Scholar Alumni Survey Respondents**

<b>AGE</b>	<b>GENDER</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ 18-21 (78%)</li> <li>◆ 22-26 (17%)</li> <li>◆ 27+ (&lt;5%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Female (64%)</li> <li>◆ Male (46%)</li> </ul>
<b>RACE</b>	<b>PRIMARY ACTIVITY</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ White (54%)</li> <li>◆ Black (28%)</li> <li>◆ Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islanders (8%)</li> <li>◆ Latino/a/Hispanic American (4%)</li> <li>◆ Bi-racial (4%)</li> <li>◆ Other (3%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ School (83%; nearly all undergraduate)</li> <li>◆ Working (13%)</li> <li>◆ Unemployed (1%)</li> <li>◆ Other activities (3% such as serving in the military/navy, artist in residence, missionary, gap year)</li> </ul>

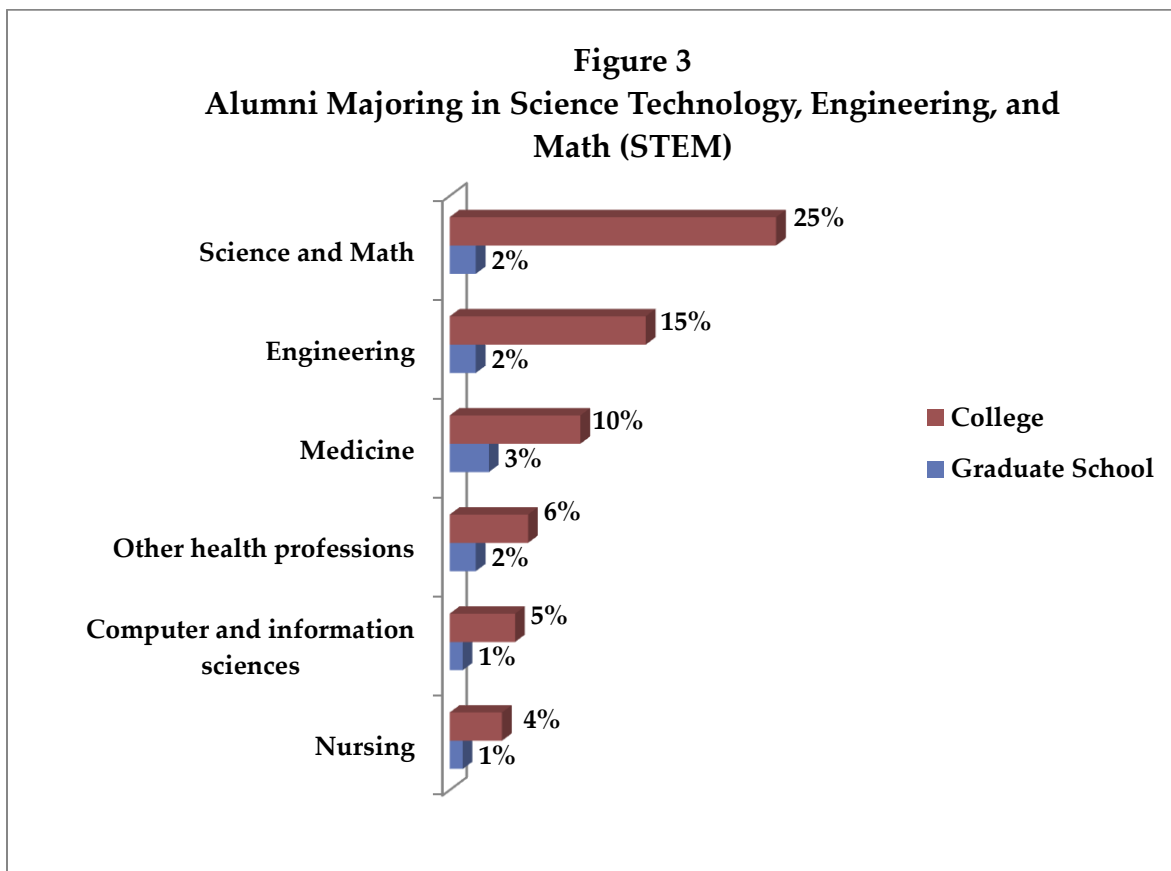
Survey respondents reported that they first became recognized as Carson Scholars in elementary school – 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grade (28%), in middle school – grades 6-8 (32%) or in high school – grades 10-12 (36%). Some did not remember when they became a Carson Scholar (4%).

**Point to ponder.** *Unlike high school students, K-8 students have few, if any, opportunities similar to becoming a Carson Scholar, and middle school years are when students often begin to disengage in school. This reinforces the value of the Carson Scholars Program recognition of younger students.*

**Higher Education Areas of Study**

“When retired world-renowned Johns Hopkins Pediatric Neurosurgeon, Benjamin S. Carson, M.D. and his wife, Candy, read a research study about education in the United States, they were alarmed by the findings. The study showed that our nation’s students ranked #21 out of 22 countries, next to the bottom of the list in science and math.” (Carson Scholars Fund)

While **Carson Scholars** are not selected for their interests or abilities in science and math, fully **65 percent** of alumni survey respondents are, or were, majoring in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)-related fields at the undergraduate level (see Figure 3).<sup>7</sup> In sharp contrast, a recent report by the US Department of Education found that “based on the major fields reported by beginning postsecondary students, about **28 percent** of 2003–04 beginning bachelor’s degree students chose a STEM major at some point during their enrollment between 2003 and 2009.”<sup>8</sup> At the graduate level 11% of Carson Scholar alumni are studying STEM subjects (see Figure 3).



Alumni who are not majoring in STEM subjects are pursuing a range of other interests (see Table 6).

<sup>7</sup> Alumni were able to check more than one response if they were double majoring in more than one STEM area.

<sup>8</sup> Stem Attrition: College Students’ Paths Into and Out of STEM Fields (p. 11). US Department of Education - National Center for Education Statistics (2013).

**Table 6  
Alumni Non-STEM Areas of Study**

<b>Carson Scholar Alumni Majors</b>	<b>College</b>	<b>Graduate School</b>
Liberal Arts and sciences, general studies, humanities	22%	12 (13)
Business	12%	8
Communication and journalism	7%	7
Arts: Visual and Performing	7%	5
Education	5%	9
Public administration, political science	<b>5%</b>	5
Undecided	5%	5
Finance and accounting	4 %	2
Law (Law/Criminal Justice)	2%	13

**Awards and Recognition**

In addition to their distinction as Carson Scholars, alumni continue to be recognized for their academic, service, and leadership achievements. Fully one third (34%) of all alumni respondents has received leadership or service-based awards or recognition. Table 7 is a list of the types of honors, with examples of specific honors alumni report having received.

**Table 7  
Additional Types of Honors Received by Carson Scholars**

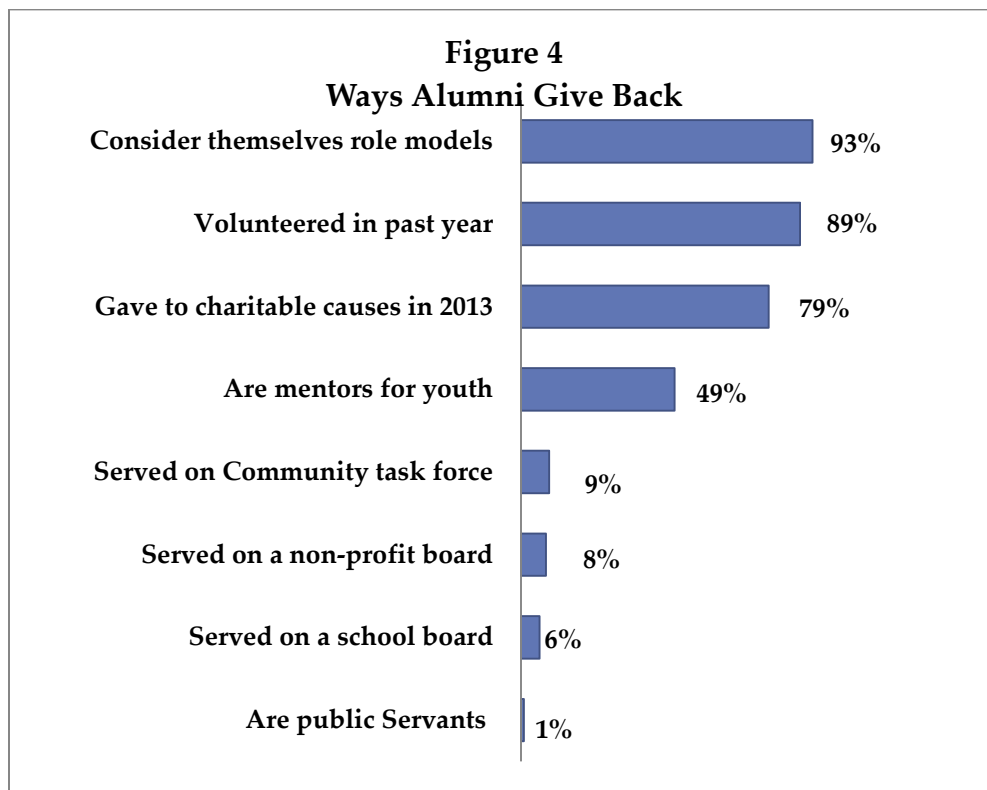
<b>Percentage of all alumni receiving this type of honor</b>	<b>Type of Honor</b>	<b>Examples of Specific Honors Received</b>
79%	Academic award/recognition	National Honor Society, AP Scholar
62%	Recognition/Award	High School, PTA/PTSO, school board, honor roll
37%	College or University award	Dean’s Scholarship, Board of Trustees Scholarship. Baltimore Scholars
37%	Student/Athlete award/recognition	
27%	National Award or Recognition	National Merit Scholar: commended, semi-finalist, finalist; Fulbright scholarship; National AP Scholar; National Achievement Scholarship; National Merit Scholar
19%	Honor Society Award	Tau Beta Pi; Pi Tau Sigma; Phi Delta Kappa; Omnicron Delta Kappa; Phi Beta Kappa
17%	Statewide award or recognition	Distinguished Scholar; Lilly Endowment Scholar
16%	Recognition or award in Science and/or Math	Rensselaer Medal; Albert Einstein Medal
5%	Specialty award/recognition	West Point Outstanding Top Cadet, Rhodes Scholar; Gates Millennium Scholarship
2%	Fellowship	White House; Marshall; Robert Wood Johnson

In addition to their Carson Scholarship, alumni received the following to support their studies in college: (Note respondents could select more than one response)

- 71% Merit-based scholarships (other than the Carson Scholarship)
- 33% A Pell grant
- 35% Need-based scholarship(s)
- 40% A federal subsidized loan
- 9% Other.

**Alumni Give Back**

Alumni report giving back in many different ways, as shown in Figure 4.



**Serve As Leaders**

Carson alumni serve as leaders in their schools, workplaces, and communities. **During the past twelve months alumni have served in leadership roles in their:<sup>9</sup>**

- 57% School (e.g., held an office in student government, PTA, club, fraternity/sorority)
- 43% Community
- 36% Job
- 2% Religious organization
- 3% Other places

**Volunteer**

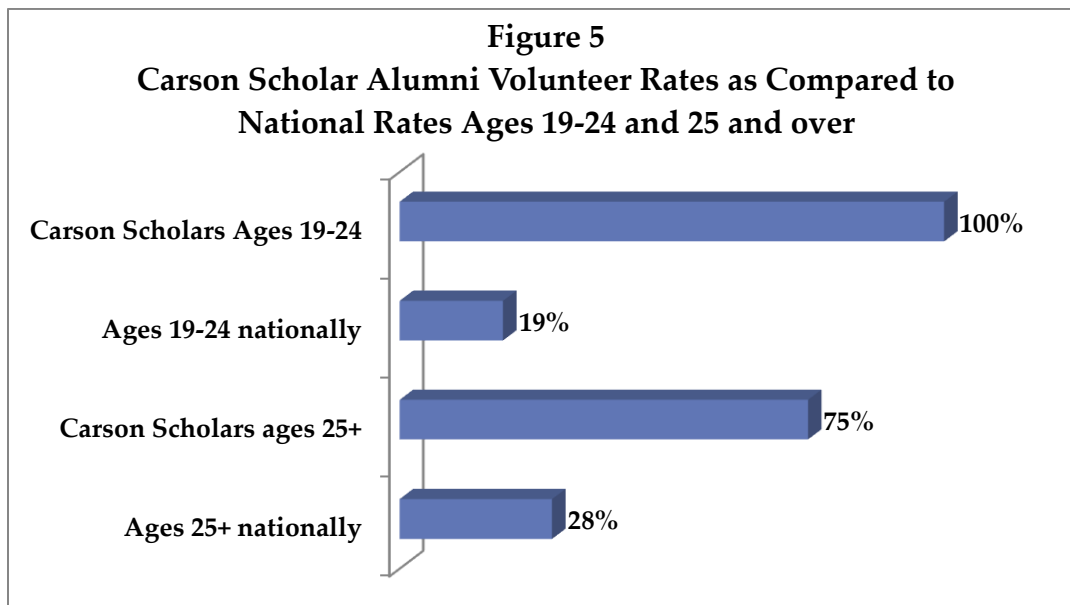
Fully 100% of the alumni respondents ages 19 to 24 reports that they serve as volunteers. Seventy-five percent of those ages 25+ volunteer. Volunteers reported that over the past month 43% volunteered up to ten hours of their time. Higher numbers of volunteer hours in the past

<sup>9</sup> Respondents could select more than one. The percentages add up to more than 100% because they are calculated based on the total N of 1,128 respondents.



month were also reported: 11-20 hours (10%); 21-30 hours (5%); 31-50 hours (3%), 51-100 hours (2%) and > 100 hours (2%).

FERA compared the percentage of Carson Scholar alumni volunteering to national level statistics for similar age cohorts (see Figure 5).<sup>10</sup>



**Key finding:** Five times more Carson Scholar alumni ages 19-24 volunteer than do their peers nationally (100% as compared to 19%).

### Give Financial Resources

Although most (83%) of the alumni are still in school and presumably have little, if any, disposable income, 79% of them personally gave money to charitable causes in 2013.

<sup>10</sup> National Volunteering Rate by Age Group [www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org). As the actual national rate of youth “volunteering” is controversial, because definitions of the term vary and each survey produces different levels this finding should be interpreted with caution.



Respondents identified the range dollars they gave to charity. Most amounts were small - from \$1-\$50 (43% of alumni). The next highest range was from \$51 to \$100 (16%) followed by \$101 to \$200 (9%), and \$201-\$500 (5%). Five percent of alumni gave over \$500.

### **Support Other Carson Scholars**

Carson Scholar alumni are interested in continuing to be engaged in a range of ways in support of younger Carson Scholars. Nearly half (44%) offered to serve as a mentor to current Carson Scholars who are going to (or thinking of going to) their college. Other ways they want to offer support include having their own story/accomplishments spotlighted by the Fund to inspire younger scholars (41%), volunteering at Carson Fund events (28%), creating a Carson Scholar Chapter (5%), and becoming a donor to the Fund (5%).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The Carson Scholars Fund hopes to increase the impact of both the Ben Carson Reading Project and the Carson Scholars Program. This report has addressed the connection between how these efforts are implemented at the local level and their impact on schools and students. The report has offered “points to ponder” about how the Carson Scholars Fund can enhance how well schools implement the two initiatives in ways that would increase positive impacts on students.

**The Ben Carson Reading Project.** The number of Ben Carson Reading Rooms is rapidly expanding across the country. Twenty four new Reading Rooms opened in 2014 bringing the total number of rooms to 118 located in 16 states. Reading Room schools are mostly located in low-income neighborhoods that this report has characterized as “arid literacy deserts.”

Overall, Reading Rooms are a valuable resource that supports student literacy in low-income neighborhoods. Reading Rooms provide high quality children’s books in neighborhoods and schools where access and resources are low. Issues for the Carson Scholars Fund and the donors who support this work to consider include: 1) be intentional about opening new Reading Rooms in the neighborhoods with the highest rates of poverty across the country; 2) share information widely about how various Reading Rooms are able to keep open and staffed for longer periods of time and/or are able to have students visit for greater lengths of time. Reading Room Coordinators are interested in learning more about effective practices for supporting student literacy including the engagement of parents and other adults.

## **The Carson Scholar Program.**

*“[Being a Carson Scholar] helps students understand the importance of developing good character, community service and excellent academics at an early age. They see that colleges want to see these attributes as a lifetime experience, not just for an application.” (school principal)*

**Carson Scholar Schools.** Being a Carson Scholar school has positively enhanced schools reputation and their ability to recruit students. This is especially true for the 40% of Schools where parents have a choice as to which school their student attends. Carson Scholar school principals responding to the survey identified a range of ways that having a Carson Scholar contributes to a college-going culture in their school. In schools where many students and their families do not consider the idea of college after high school, Carson Scholars are important role models for other students. In schools where all of the students attend college having a Carson Scholar in the school builds on the expectation that students already hold. Schools vary widely in how, and the extent to which, they recognize Carson Scholars. This likely has implications for the extent of impact of a Scholar on a school. The report suggests “points to ponder” for the Carson Scholars Fund and its donors regarding strengthening the “dose” and impact of the Carson Scholars Program on schools.

**Carson Scholar Alumni.** Most of the alumni survey respondents are still studying (83%). Fully 65% of alumni are, or were, majoring in STEM subjects (science, math, technology and engineering). They continue to be recognized for their academic, service and leadership accomplishments. Alumni are generous with their time, talent and treasure. They serve in a wide range of leadership roles and give of their time and financial resources. Five times more Carson Scholar alumni ages 19-24 volunteer than do their peers nationally (100% as compared to 19%). Alumni are also interested in supporting younger scholars and would value opportunities to stay connected to the Carson Scholars Fund. It could be advantageous for the Carson Scholars Fund and its partners to tap the alumni more extensively for support of the program on many levels.

This report has highlighted key findings and points to ponder that the Carson Scholars Fund and its partners can use to support the expansion and impact of: 1) Reading Rooms across the country so that youth attending schools in low-income neighborhoods have opportunities to learn to love reading for pleasure and learning; and 2) Carson Scholars in schools nationwide so

that future generations of leaders are educated, compassionate, and give of their time, talent, and treasure.