Carson Scholars Fund
Evaluation Research Report
2016
FERA Final Evaluation Report
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INTRODUCTION

This report presents key findings from an evaluation of the Carson Scholars Fund’s two national initiatives. The Carson Scholars Fund is a non-profit organization founded in 1994 by retired Johns Hopkins pediatric neurosurgeon Dr. Benjamin Carson and his wife, Candy Carson. The two national initiatives are:

1) The **Ben Carson Reading Project** is designed to support a love of reading in schools located in predominantly low-income neighborhoods.

2) The **Carson Scholars Program** recognizes academic excellence in young students (4th—11th grade) with humanitarian qualities. Carson Scholars from urban, suburban and rural areas join together in regional celebrations annually. They are called upon to think of themselves as community leaders.

Formative Evaluation Research Associates (FERA), an independent evaluation group based in Ann Arbor, Michigan, conducted this study for the Carson Scholars Fund with support from a W. K. Kellogg Foundation grant.

This report has three main sections – 1) Reading Rooms; 2) Carson Scholar Schools; and 3) Current Carson Scholars. Each section details a) the national issue and/or context being addressed by the Carson Scholars Fund; b) the guiding questions and methods used to evaluate the Carson Scholars Fund interventions; and c) key findings. Brief concluding remarks are at the end of the report.

The Carson Scholars Fund’s mission is to:

“...impact the nation in a positive way by cultivating future leaders who are not only intellectually talented but also socially conscious.”
National Context

Reading proficiency or lack thereof by the end of third grade is a key indicator of future educational and economic success.

Key Facts

♦ Proficient third grade readers are four times more likely to graduate from high school

♦ Third grade students without basic reading skills are six times more likely not to graduate from high school

♦ 80% of children in low-income families score below proficient on reading tests in contrast to children from higher-income families (49% below proficient)

♦ In 2015, 65% of public school fourth graders were reading below the proficient level (82% African American, 79% Latinos, 78% American Indian, 62% multi-racial, 54% Non-Hispanic Whites)\(^1\)

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\(^1\) Annie E. Casey Foundation. Kids Count Databook (2016).
The combination of reading poorly and living in poverty puts children in “double jeopardy” of leaving high school without a diploma.² It is projected that by 2020 there will 6 million unemployed individuals who lack a high school diploma and a shortage of approximately 1.5 million college-educated individuals.³

“Addressing early grade reading matters – it is key to supporting educational equity and preparing students for the future. Efforts to support student reading cannot stop after third grade.”⁴

Reading rooms contribute to early grade reading but are also available for upper elementary, middle school, and in some cases high school students.

Ben Carson Reading Project
The Ben Carson Reading Project was developed in 2000 to support early grade literacy by promoting leisure reading as a key to unlocking a child’s full learning potential. Reading rooms, located in low income inner-city neighborhoods, are vibrant, separate spaces in a school packed full of popular and exciting books. Rooms are typically themed (e.g., rainforest, garden, travel) and are intended to support a culture of academic achievement in the school.

Key Facts
- More than 160 reading rooms nation-wide
- Reading rooms are located in 22 states and Washington, D.C.

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Figure 1 – What happens in a reading room? Students:

- Have a quiet place to read
- Find new, different books than in the library
- Choose what they read -- read for pleasure

While reading rooms do not offer a “reading program” designed to build specific reading skills, they do support the essential wrap around attitudes and behaviors that contribute to reading proficiency. Figure 1 highlights what occurs in a reading room. Reading rooms are based on the idea that a quiet place to read for pleasure with exciting reading materials that students can choose themselves, supports a love of reading and can open up the world of learning to them. Experiencing the connection between reading and learning can increase students’ motivation to succeed in school. As stated by one student: “Going to the Ben Carson Room is like going on a reading adventure. The books allow me to explore the world around me.”
Evaluation Questions and Methods

Two questions guided the evaluation research presented in this report:

1. In what ways do reading rooms contribute to positive reading outcomes for kindergarten – third grade students?
2. How do reading rooms address racial and economic disparities in proficient reading by the end of third grade?

Method: In July 2016, FERA conducted a reading room coordinator survey (64% response rate - 83/130).

Key Findings

“The more students read, the better they read. The better they read, the more they comprehend. The more they comprehend, the higher the achievement. Reading widely builds important world knowledge and ensures that students acquire additional vocabulary, both of which are critical for overall reading comprehension.” Research consistently concludes that vocabulary comes from reading, not study.5

Figure 2 – An Overview of Outcomes

In Ben Carson Reading Rooms, students experience:

Key Finding #1: Ben Carson Reading Rooms increase the time students spend engaged in leisure reading. How often students go to the reading room varies by school.

- 69% of students spend 15-30 minutes reading when they visit their reading room
- 24% of students spend 30-50 minutes

What we have learned through past evaluations is that students love to go to the reading rooms. They are a quiet, comfortable oasis in their otherwise busy, noisy days. Exciting books, the ability to read just to read and not to accomplish a particular task opens the possibility of developing a new love for reading. Students who love to read can learn more about the world around them. Reading rooms have a wide range of non-fiction and fiction books. New knowledge can increase students’ desire to learn more. Reading rooms encourage children to dream about their futures and to “Think Big”. Reading rooms support improved reading skills together with the reading instruction provided by classroom teachers and reading specialists. Both are needed, especially for struggling readers. One reading room coordinator observed, “Struggling readers who never picked-up a book for enjoyment now take a book out for recess.”

Key Finding #2: Reading room coordinators have observed that reading rooms support the development of positive attitudes towards reading, learning and academic success. On a five point scale where 5= A great deal and 1= Not at all, coordinators indicated that reading rooms:

- Support a love of reading – 4.13
- Develop positive attitudes towards reading – 4.08
- Foster curiosity about learning – 3.99
- Increase students’ desire to learn more – 3.80

Key Finding #3: Coordinators have observed that students’ positive attitudes toward reading through their visits to the reading room lead to an increased:

- Student confidence in their ability to read – 3.84
- Belief they can be successful students – 3.76
- Motivation to be high achieving students – 3.71
- Ability to “Think Big” – 3.70

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Note data presented are weighted averages of the responses along the five point scale.

THINK BIG is Dr. Carson’s philosophy that promotes outstanding academic achievement and dedication to helping others.
A TRUE STORY shared by one of the reading room coordinators....

“There is a fifth grader who is about to graduate from our school who benefited from the reading room. He was a struggling reader in the first grade. I provided small group instruction in reading for this student in the Carson Reading Room. He also used the 100 Book Challenge program during the first and second grade. He loved coming to the Carson Reading Room not only for small group instruction, but to enjoy independent reading. By the third grade, he no longer needed intervention. I worked with his class this year and it was amazing to see that he is now a confident reader who easily expresses his thoughts about reading. The boy who used to refuse to try letter sounds back in first grade was shining as a fifth-grade reader! He is one of many in our school who has benefited from the message, the opportunity, and the benefits of our Carson Reading Room.”

The same coordinator went on to say, “This is actually a story shared by many of our struggling readers. Our incredible volunteer team members have helped to open up the world of reading for these students by often making their time in the Reading Room more like a ‘lap-reading’ experience - something many of these children never had in their formative years.”

Key Finding #4: Reading room coordinators believe that all of the above contribute to reading skills achievement. This is supported by research that demonstrates the benefits of leisure reading and the important role attitude and motivation play in supporting students’ academic success.8 Research suggests that lighter reading can play an important role in helping readers move to more demanding texts.

More than half of reading room coordinators believe that these spaces contribute to students’ standardized reading test scores (59%) and non-standardized test scores (67%). Below are a few comments from reading room coordinators:

♦ “Providing an opportunity to read independently and develop the love of reading positively impacts our test scores by strengthening our students’ vocabulary skills as well as developing the desire to investigate topics further.”

♦ “Just being in the reading room gives students the idea that reading can be fun, but more importantly it helps them to understand that the entire staff sees reading as an important tool. The students Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) scores showed 100 - 300 points of growth from the beginning of the school year to the end of the school year. I believe that the Dr. Ben Carson Reading Room experience was a contributing factor.”

Key Finding #5: Reading rooms address racial and economic disparities in reading.

Reading rooms are primarily opened in schools situated in “literacy deserts” - 86% of reading rooms are in Title I schools. Disinvested communities are less likely to be literacy-rich environments for children who are learning to read. Families are more likely to find a liquor store or a church than a bookstore. Reading rooms address the gaps in reading by creating an oasis where kids can fall in love with books. When students read, the world of learning opens up.

8 Hayes and Ahrens (1988)
CREATING A COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE

“Being a Carson Scholar is something big for me. It was the first scholarship award I received, and it definitely, to this day, aids me in being confident that I can achieve great success in my life.”
- Current Carson Scholar

While reading rooms focus on schools in low income neighborhoods, the Carson Scholars Program is merit-based and is available to accredited schools within the United States. This section of the report focuses on the Carson Scholars Program. First, it presents national issues and context that can help the reader understand the importance of the program. Next, an overview of the Carson Scholars Program and its national reach are presented. Creating a college-going culture section highlights key findings at the school level and presents data from a survey of educators including principals, teachers, and school counselors. This is followed by key findings from a national survey of current Carson Scholars. Past evaluation research reports have presented alumni outcomes and are not included here.

National Issue: Creating a College-Going Culture

How do we as a country inspire and encourage young people starting in elementary school to succeed and to begin to serve in leadership capacities? The Carson Scholars Fund addresses this need by recognizing, valuing, inspiring, and motivating successful students across the country in rural, suburban, and urban areas alike.

Establishment of a strong college-going culture at school is one element needed to address disparities in college attendance. College readiness begins as early as elementary school and continues through high school when students learn about future possibilities and levels of education required for particular careers.
A college-going school culture communicates clear expectations that all students can “prepare for the opportunity to attend and be successful in post-secondary education.”

The Carson Scholars Program in schools addresses three out of nine interrelated elements academic researchers have identified that together help schools build and strengthen a college-going culture in schools:

1) clear expectations
2) college talk, and
3) family involvement

The other six elements are: Information and Resources; Comprehensive Counseling Model; Testing and Curriculum; Faculty Involvement; College Partnerships; and Articulation.

Key Facts
- High school graduates earn $30,000 per year
- Associate degree graduates earn $35,000 per year
- College graduates earn $49,900 per year
- Young adults, ages 18 to 24, who are enrolled in or have completed college, by race and ethnicity
  - 28% American Indian
  - 75% Asian and Pacific Islander
  - 39% Black or African American
  - 37% Hispanic or Latino
  - 52% Non-Hispanic White

Carson Scholars Program Overview

The Carson Scholars Program is designed to support youth leadership, academic success, and community service.

Any accredited K - 12 school in the country is eligible to participate in the Carson Scholars Program. With the support of generous local donors, some schools have resources to guarantee that a Carson Scholar is selected from their school. These schools

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9 [http://cep.berkeley.edu/college-going-culture-2](http://cep.berkeley.edu/college-going-culture-2)

10 [http://cep.berkeley.edu/college-going-culture-2](http://cep.berkeley.edu/college-going-culture-2)


9 – Carson Scholars Fund FERA Report 2016
select three students to apply for one guaranteed scholarship. Schools without specified funding select one student to compete in a general applicant pool.

**Key Facts**

- 2,600 schools across the country have or have had Carson Scholars.
- 7,387 Carson Scholarships have been awarded totaling over $7.3 million.
- The Carson Scholars Fund has an alumni network of over 4,400 students. (Alumni are defined as students old enough to have graduated high school)
- 2016 was the Carson Scholars Fund’s 20th anniversary - 626 new scholars awarded and 841 previous scholars recognized.

*The Carson Scholars Fund’s long-term goal is to have a Carson Scholar in every school in the country.*

**Carson Scholars**

Carson Scholars are selected based on academic merit starting as early as fourth grade through high school. They must be successful in their studies and engaged in service to their schools and/or communities. Scholars receive a $1,000 scholarship that grows in an interest-bearing account until they use it to attend a four-year accredited college/university of their choice. Students are also recognized at their schools and at regional banquets where they are invited to attend with their families and school principals and/or other educators. Attendees hear inspirational speakers. Scholars receive medals they wear visibly around their necks and receive recognition from their schools. Current scholars can earn annual recognition from the Carson Scholars Fund by maintaining high grades and continuing to engage in service. Students remain Carson Scholars for life.

**Evaluation Questions and Methods**

**Guiding questions:**

- What are the benefits of the Carson Scholars Program for participating schools?
- To what extent does the Carson Scholars Program contribute to a college-going culture in schools?
- In what ways and to what extent does being a Carson Scholar contribute to school achievement and participation in leadership-related activities?

**Methods:**

FERA conducted national surveys with:

- Carson Scholar School educators including school principals, guidance counselors, and teachers (10% response rate - 1,217/12,431)
- Current Carson Scholars (40% response rate - 860/2,170)

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13 Note: Some percentage totals presented in this report may add up to 101% due to rounding.
About Carson Scholar Schools

Principals reported that they have participated as Carson Scholars Fund schools for:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39% (101)</td>
<td>1-3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25% (63)</td>
<td>4-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25% (63)</td>
<td>7-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12% (30)</td>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Principals reported that their schools serve high school students (36%), middle school students (14%), Pre-K – 8 or K-8 students (11%) and elementary students (25%) or a different combination of grades (14%), in a total of 574 schools. Schools range in size from under 300 students (15%), 301-500 (21%), 501-1,000 (36%), 1,001 – 2,000 (22%), and over 2,000 7%. Size is important because one might expect a handful of scholars to have a greater impact on a smaller school than on a larger one. While this level of analysis is beyond the scope of this report it provides important context for the reader.

Principals reported that students in their school receive free and reduced school lunches: (N=570)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Lunch Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12% (66)</td>
<td>Less than 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19% (108)</td>
<td>10 – 24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22% (125)</td>
<td>25 – 49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17% (99)</td>
<td>50 – 74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23% (129)</td>
<td>75 – 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8% (43)</td>
<td>Not Sure/ Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“It is a great boost for these students. As the principal I have selected students who are overcoming pretty significant obstacles in their own lives, so it is very special for them to get this recognition.”
- Principal
The rest of this section presents key findings from a national survey of Carson Scholar School educators including principals (n=267, 45%), teachers (n=73, 12%) and school counselors (n=252, 43%).

**Key Findings**

“[Having a Carson Scholar] provides a high motivation and aspiration in creating a college-bound culture.” – Educator

“It confirms for students that hard work does pay off and encourages them to continue the great academic work in order to receive other scholarship opportunities.” – Educator

**Key Finding #1:** Being a Carson Scholar School supports schools’ efforts to create a college-going culture.

Overall, educator respondents (principals, teachers and counselors) believed that the Carson Scholars Program makes an important contribution to the creation of a college-going culture in their schools. (N= 625)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite Important</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Important</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Too Important</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not At All Important</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Below is a sample of comments from educators who found the program to be “very” or “quite” important in supporting a college-going culture in their schools.

- “Our school already has a strong college-going culture, but we are a mixture of families that can afford most of what they want and families that struggle mightily to give their children toe-holds to the future. This scholarship carries a lot of prestige and really helps students, especially in that struggling category, to believe in their own power to make a difference.”

- “We have a nominee every year. Regardless of whether the nominee is selected or not, we celebrate the nomination with the entire student body. This helps all students see the importance of academic achievements.”

- “We are a preparatory academy whose focus is to send our graduates to college. We are a Title I school with the majority of our students receiving free or reduced lunch. Any assistance for our students provides incentives for our students to succeed.”
“This is promoted heavily in our school and is one of the few scholarships for the underclassmen. It really helps to promote the importance of grades, extracurricular and college. We make a huge deal out of the Carson Scholars Fund and promote it heavily at school.”

Respondents who thought the program was less important in contributing to the college-going culture in their school explained that their schools already had a strong college-preparatory culture.

Principals indicated that their school’s participation in the Carson Scholars Fund has been a positive factor in the following school-related achievements: (N=134 principals)

- 70% Receipt of an honor or award for the school bestowed by professional and/or community group
- 65% Development of a partnership with an academic and/or community group

**Key Finding #2:** Teachers who have had Carson Scholars in their classrooms observed that being a scholar positively affects students’ attitudes and motivation towards college.

**Table 1 – Teachers Perceptions of Benefits for Students in their Classroom**

*Based on your experience with Carson Scholars in your classroom, to what extent does having a Carson Scholar in your classroom increase students.*

**(N=67 teachers)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A Great Deal</th>
<th>Quite A Bit</th>
<th>Some What</th>
<th>Not Too Much</th>
<th>Not At All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Motivation to succeed in school</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Expectation they will go to college</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Interest in becoming a leader</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Desire to maintain a high GPA</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Belief they can make a difference</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Volunteerism in the community</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample teacher comments that illustrate the positive affect of having a Carson Scholar are:

- “This scholarship also helps students that are service-minded to realize how important community is. They give freely of themselves to many areas but they also experience receiving from someone, like the Carsons who give freely to help others. This builds a very community-minded group of people.”

- “Our students who apply for the Carson award are go-getters who already have the desire to make a difference and achieve success. Getting the award only adds to their overall confidence and desire for success.”

**Key Finding #3:** School counselors have seen evidence that being a Carson Scholar supports students’ college-going efforts.

Being a Carson Scholar has had positive effect(s) on: (N=147 school counselors)

- 56% (82) Success in obtaining other merit-based scholarships
- 52% (76) Admission to college
- 38% (56) Acceptance in special school or community program
- 33% (49) Interest in taking AP classes
- 23% (34) Acceptance in a job or volunteer placement
“Being a Carson Scholar has significantly changed my life. The speakers from the banquet greatly inspired me to dream bigger and to set my mind on higher goals because anything is possible if you work hard for it. I am now more confident around others and I take charge more often. I’m extremely honored to be a part of such a fantastic group of scholars and other amazing people who will help me to reach my full potential in life.”

– Current Carson Scholar

About Current Carson Scholars

Current Carson Scholars responding to the survey have been recognized from 1-8 times since becoming a Carson Scholar (N = 857). When they first became a Carson Scholar they were in (N = 856):

- **45%** Elementary Grades 4 - 5
- **32%** Middle Grades 6 - 8
- **23%** High Grades 9 - 11

Students received recognition from their schools in multiple ways. Some scholars told us that their schools made an announcement (58%), put the news in a school newsletter/paper (28%), acknowledged them on a display board at the school (19%) or at a school-wide or grade specific assembly (18%), put the scholar’s name on the school website (18%), or recognized them in some other way (22%). Some (17%) were not aware of any form of school recognition. Every student had their name added to the school’s Carson Scholar Trophy.
Key Findings

“I am incredibly honored to be a part of this organization, and am motivated to continue doing service, and working my hardest in school. Most importantly, I am thankful to have been inspired; at the Carson banquet, I learned that it is important to follow your dreams and pursue your passions. The Carson Scholarship Program has reinvigorated my love for my community, and built the foundations for my future success.”
– Current Carson Scholar

Key Finding #1: 100% of survey respondents plan on attending college. Being a Carson Scholar supports their plan by encouraging them to think about college and what they want for their future, increasing their motivation and confidence, and strengthening their belief that they can make a difference.

Students responded that being a Carson Scholar helped them to: (N=788)

- 76% Think more about what I want for my future
- 75% Think more about college
- 73% Believe I can make a difference
- 71% Know that others believe I can be successful
- 69% Be motivated to succeed in school so I can go to college
- 64% Be more confident at school
- 59% Work harder at school so I can go to college
- 53% Believe I will go to college

Students described the many ways being a Carson Scholar has affected them. Below are sample comments:

♦ “To me, being a Carson Scholar means that I know that I have many people in my life who are there for me and care about me whenever I’m feeling discouraged. I also know that I have a head start on my journey to getting to college, which means all the world to me.” - Current Carson Scholar

♦ “Being a Carson Scholar means to me that I can achieve anything I set my mind to. I can work hard to become who I want. I also know that nothing is going to be easy. This only encourages me to work hard for my goals. The scholar community shows that academics should be highly praised in schools just as much as sports (something my school needs to realize). I couldn’t be more grateful for this achievement and honor. Thank you so much.” - Current Carson Scholar
**Key Finding #2:** Being a Carson Scholar increased students’ confidence, inspired and motivated them to succeed, and provided them with sense of being part of the broader community. One scholar explained, “It means that I have accomplished something, that I have worth in my achievements and that they mean something to somebody. I like to know that I make a difference and that there are other like-minded and motivated individuals that I can surround myself with. It means a sense of community and of commitment.”

How has being a Carson Scholar affected you? Respondents were asked to select all that applied. (N=785)

- 73% It has increased my self-confidence
- 70% It has inspired me to “Think Big” about what I can achieve
- 64% It has made me feel part of something greater than myself
- 58% It has increased my commitment to community service
- 34% When I get discouraged remembering I am a Carson Scholar helps motivate me

**Key Finding #3:** Becoming a Carson Scholar increases students’ perceptions of themselves as leaders (see Table 2).

**Table 2 – Carson Scholars’ Perceptions of Themselves as Leaders**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do/did you consider yourself a leader…(n=793)</th>
<th>Yes, Definitely</th>
<th>Yes, Somewhat</th>
<th>No, Not Really</th>
<th>No, Not At All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before you became a Carson Scholar (N=792)</td>
<td>34% (268)</td>
<td>50% (393)</td>
<td>15% (118)</td>
<td>2% (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now (N=770)</td>
<td>74% (569)</td>
<td>24% (182)</td>
<td>2% (18)</td>
<td>&lt;1% (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key Finding #4:** Carson Scholars demonstrated their view of themselves as leaders by engaging in community service, serving as role models, mentoring/tutoring other youth, and serving in leadership capacities in their schools, religious organizations, and communities.

A total of 628/860 respondents wrote comments detailing their greatest community service accomplishments. A few examples are:

- “Throughout this current summer, I have volunteered my time at the local hospital as well as a doctor’s office in my community. I expanded my knowledge in many areas of medicine. I also observed on a first hand basis the importance of all people holding medical positions. I helped inside the office and aided the doctors throughout many medical procedures. This experience has been life changing.”
“My greatest community service accomplishment is working at my local nursing home. I have volunteered at the nursing home for 4 consecutive years and I plan to keep volunteering there because I love every second of it. I have donated over 175 hours at this nursing home. Spending time with the residents at the nursing home is the best part about working there because you make the residents genuinely happy and improve their day. Providing the residents company is a small gesture but it goes a long way.”

“I think my greatest community service accomplishment is helping at my church and nanna’s house. I believe that it’s not necessarily about what you do, but the attitude you do it in, the audience you are reaching out to, and your dedication.”

Table 3 – Current Carson Scholars Serve as Role Models

Current Carson Scholars (N = 758/860) consider themselves role models for:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who?</th>
<th>% Responded Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other students</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brothers and sisters</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cousins/other relatives</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

They demonstrate being a role model by:

- 95% Helping other students
- 94% Behaving in a way that sets a good example
- 89% Participation in class discussions
- 79% Helping their teachers
- 75% Helping at school events/on school grounds
- 75% Leading group projects
- 64% Leading extracurricular activities

Students also:

- 49% Mentor or tutor other students
- 46% Serve as a leader in their community
- 33% Serve as a leader in their religious organization
CONCLUSION

“Being a Carson Scholar means to me that I have been recognized and brought into a group due to my personal achievements. I have been uplifted with confidence to create an environment which will help me succeed during my academic path. To be a Carson Scholar I have to be a leader, hold integrity, spread kindness, offer help to the peers around me, think more of the future than the now, and have the confidence and dedication to succeed in my education. I must also think more of my community resulting in community service which will help my town and the people making it possible.”
— Current Carson Scholar

This report presents the key findings from the 2016 evaluation for the Carson Scholars Fund two national initiatives the: 1) Ben Carson Reading Project, and 2) Carson Scholars Program. Both efforts further the Carson Scholars Fund’s mission to “…impact the nation in a positive way by cultivating future leaders who are not only intellectually talented but also socially conscious.” Formative Evaluation Research Associates (FERA) conducted surveys with 1) reading room coordinators, 2) educators (principals, teachers and school counselors), and 3) current Carson Scholars with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Reading rooms are located in low-income neighborhoods that are often “literacy deserts.” They create a positive literacy environment to encourage reading for pleasure and learning. Key findings are reading rooms: 1) increase time students spend reading; 2) support the development of positive attitudes towards reading learning and academic success; 3) increase confidence in their ability to read, motivation and belief they can be successful students. These are all important contributors to supporting reading proficiency, especially for early grade readers. Reading room locations address racial and economic disparities in reading proficiency.

The Carson Scholars Program contributes positively to the creation of a strong college-going culture in schools. It also celebrates student academic success, leadership and community service. Teachers with Carson Scholars in their classroom observed that being a scholar positively affects students’ attitudes and motivation towards college.
Current Carson Scholars described how being a scholar increased their motivation and confidence to succeed in school and strengthened their belief that they can make a difference.

These findings add to other evaluation research done with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation starting in 2009. Past reports presented key findings on the Carson Scholars Fund’s growth and extent of reach. They also assessed long-term impact of being a Carson Scholar alumni, reading room and Carson Scholar school case studies, and other efforts to better understand and assess short and long-term outcomes for schools with reading rooms and the students who participate, current Carson Scholars and the schools they attend, and Carson Scholar alumni. These reports are available from the Carson Scholars Fund. Overall, the Carson Scholars Fund initiatives are growing in their reach across the country, and are having positive impacts on students and on the schools they attend.

REPORT SUBMITTED BY:

FERA Formative Evaluation Research Associates

Karin E. Tice, Ph.D.
President

FERA has conducted evaluations for the Carson Scholars Fund since 2009. For access to this current and past reports visit http://carsonscholars.org/about/publications or contact the Carson Scholars Fund. Funding for the evaluation was provided by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

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