

# Ben Carson Reading Rooms



## Evaluation Report

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## INTRODUCTION

The Carson Scholars Fund is a national organization with two key initiatives. Ben Carson Reading Rooms, the focus of this report, are designed to support a love of reading in schools located in low-income neighborhoods. The Carson Scholars Initiative recognizes academic excellence in young students (4<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> grade) who also have humanitarian qualities. As stated on the Carson Scholars Fund’s website ([www.carsonscholars.org](http://www.carsonscholars.org)): *“The Carson Scholars Fund, Inc. was founded in 1994 to address the education crisis in the United States. When 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.”*

*“In his autobiography Gifted Hands, Dr. Carson wrote about how his life was changed once he embraced reading. So as the Carson Scholars Fund grew, the Carsons established a second program – The Ben Carson Reading Project. This initiative, which started in 2000, provides funding and support to schools to build and maintain Ben Carson Reading Rooms – warm, inviting rooms where kids can escape into the world of books. Each room is colorfully decorated and promotes Dr. Carson’s ‘Think Big’ philosophy.”<sup>1</sup>*

Formative Evaluation Research Associates (FERA), an independent evaluation group based in Ann Arbor, Michigan, was selected through a national “Request For Proposals” (RFP) process to conduct a multi-year evaluation of the Fund. Funding for the evaluation was provided by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. This report presents findings from an evaluation of the Carson Scholar Fund’s national Reading Room initiative. A different report presents the findings from an evaluation study focused on the effects on alumni of being a Carson Scholar.

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<sup>1</sup> THINK BIG is Dr. Ben Carson’s philosophy that promotes outstanding academic achievement and dedication to helping others. Children, students, and adults have all found that when they THINK BIG, they are on their way to achieving their goals.” <http://carsonscholars.org/dr-ben-carson/think-big> **T** is for Talent/time: Recognize them as gifts, **H** Hope for good things and be honest, **I** Insight from people and good books, **N** Be nice to all people, **K** Knowledge: Recognize it as the key to living, **B** Books: Read them actively, **I** In-depth learning skills: Develop them, **G** Dr. Carson’s “G” is for God. Everyone has their own beliefs. When you THINK BIG, what does the “G” stand for in your life?

The remaining sections of this report include: 1) a theory of change - including a brief review of relevant literature; 2) evaluation design overview (including the evaluation purposes, questions, and methods) 3) an overview of the Ben Carson Reading Rooms and the extent of their implementation across the country; 4) outcomes for students; 5) outcomes for schools; 6) feedback from survey respondents, which the Carson Scholar's Fund can use to strengthen their work; and 7) conclusions.

## **THEORY OF CHANGE**

*"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."*<sup>2</sup>

One of the major goals of creating Reading Rooms in schools is to encourage children to participate in reading for pleasure, or leisure reading. The practice of leisure reading has many benefits for both individuals and society. Strong adult literacy skills are significantly correlated with:

- ◆ lower high school dropout rates,
  - ◆ better adult job performance,
  - ◆ lower rates of unemployment,
  - ◆ increased civic, cultural, and social engagement,
  - ◆ decreased crime rates, and
  - ◆ increased happiness and satisfaction with life
- (Hodges, 2010; Baines, 2009; National Endowment for the Arts, 2007).*

The literature supports the notion that every effort should be made to provide numerous opportunities for children to read for pleasure. Habitual leisure reading has been shown to directly increase all of the literacy skills that are necessary to reap the benefits of lifelong reading (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007; Nippold, Duthie, & Larsen, 2005).

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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.

Reading is one of the most effective activities to increase children’s vocabulary, decoding, and comprehensions skills, all of which are essential components of lifelong literacy (Nippold et. al, 2005). Leisure reading exposes children to an enormous variety of words used in different contexts that they would not necessarily hear in spoken communication. Leisure reading allows them to develop skills in determining meaning from information, which they will need for life and work (Hodges, 2010; Baines, 2009; Nippold et. al, 2005). In addition to improving general literacy skills, several studies have suggested that higher levels of leisure reading are directly related to increased achievement on traditional educational testing measures (Baines, 2009; National Endowment for the Arts, 2007; Flowers, 2005). Studies have also found that in young adults, reading for pleasure is also strongly and positively correlated with creativity and that participating in leisure reading could help second-language learners gain fluency more quickly (Kelly, Kneipp, & Lee, 2009).

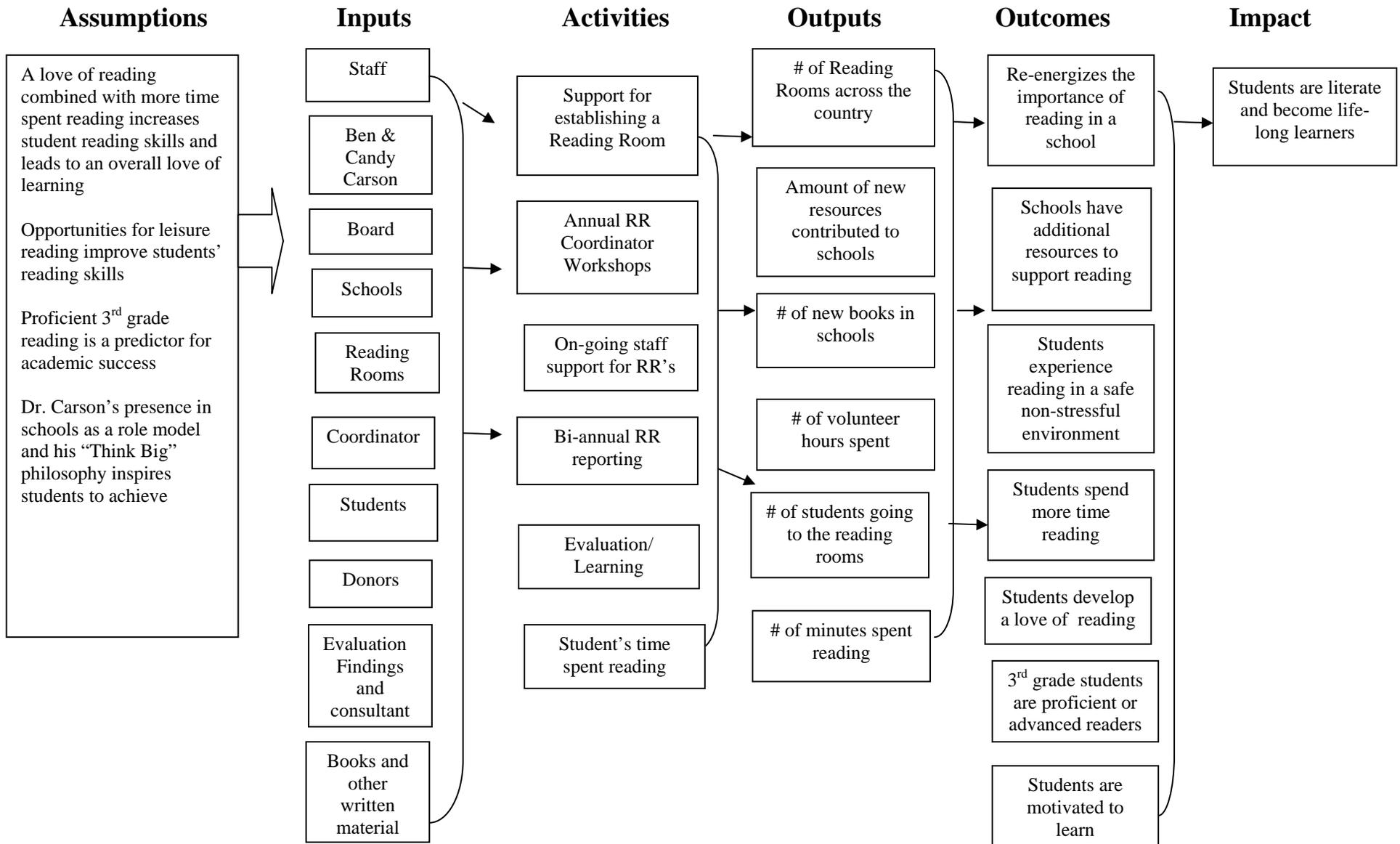
While research is not available that directly discusses the benefits of reading rooms in schools, literature does indicate that educational best-practice goals concerning reading can easily be met through the introduction of reading rooms into schools. For example, best practices indicate that schools can encourage a stronger student desire to participate in leisure reading and nurture positive attitudes toward the practice by making a variety of materials available in differing genres and types of literature, and at varying reading levels (Ratcliffe, 2009; Ediger, 2002). Reading rooms provide an excellent environment that allows many opportunities to implement best-practices that encourage leisure reading. The use of reading rooms facilitates the ability of schools to provide children with a safe and engaging place to read for pleasure.

To summarize, building upon what researchers have already documented, Reading Rooms provide an opportunity for children to spend more time reading books that they select for leisure, not homework. This opportunity is expected to encourage students to enjoy reading for its own sake. If they enjoy reading and spend more time reading at a young age, they will gain the reading skills that are critically important for future academic success.

FERA worked with the Carson Scholars Fund Board to develop a theory of change for the Reading Rooms (see Figure 1). A Theory of Change can guide program implementation and also program evaluation. The activities column (the third from the left) provides a focus for evaluation that can develop information about the activities that are effective and those that can

be improved. The outputs, outcomes and impact columns can be a special focus for evaluation as well.

**Figure 1**  
**Ben Carson Reading Rooms Theory of Change**



## **EVALUATION DESIGN OVERVIEW**

This section provides an overview of the purposes of the evaluation, key questions and data collection methods. FERA conducted a two-day evaluation design site visit to the Carson Scholars Fund in October 2010. The visit included: 1) background interviews with Carson Scholars Fund staff; 2) a review of existing documents and data; 3) a visit to a Reading Room; 4) a conversation with the Carson Scholar's Fund Executive Committee about what they hoped to learn from the evaluation and how they anticipated using the information; and 5) a structured 3-hour evaluation design workshop with Carson Fund staff, Board members, educators and other key stakeholders. The evaluation design workshop clarified *what* information the stakeholders needed (purposes, questions) as well as *why* they needed it and *how* it would be used. Based on the design site visit, FERA developed an evaluation plan to guide our work on both the Carson Scholars and Reading Rooms.

### **Purposes**

The key purposes of the Reading Room evaluation in Years I and II are to:

- 1) Document the extent to which the Reading Rooms initiative has been implemented
- 2) Assess outcomes for students and schools
- 3) Provide feedback about strengths and challenges

### **Evaluation Questions**

The following four evaluation questions were developed collaboratively by participants in the evaluation design workshop and FERA. It is important to note that participants generated a larger list of questions that will be answered throughout the ten-year evaluation. The questions below were addressed during the first year of the evaluation.

1. What are the intended and unintended outcomes for students in schools with Reading Rooms?
2. How and to what extent do Reading Rooms impact students' motivation to read, to achieve in school and their reading test scores?
3. What is the value of having a Reading Room for a school?

4. What feedback do school coordinators and principals have regarding the Reading Rooms in their schools?

### **Methods**

FERA used several methods to gather data on the Reading Rooms during the first year of the evaluation. The first three methods listed are described in more detail below.

FERA conducted:

1. an analysis of standardized 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading test scores;
2. an online survey with school principals;
3. an online survey with Reading Room coordinators;
4. a background site visit to a Reading Room;
5. background interviews with Carson Scholars Fund staff; and
6. a review of existing data and documents.

FERA will gather additional data on Reading Rooms over the remaining eight years of the evaluation. In year three of the evaluation, FERA will conduct a case study of a Reading Room to document student and school outcomes. In year five, another survey will be conducted. FERA will also focus on understanding the effects of the Reading Room and Carson Scholars on students in general and on the school at large.

### **Reading Test Score Analysis (conducted in August 2011)**

Maryland School Assessment (MSA) is a standardized test administered to students throughout the State of Maryland. FERA analyzed 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading test score data from six schools with Reading Rooms from 2003 to 2010. This analysis was done in August of 2011. These six schools began Reading Rooms in 2006, therefore providing at least three years of comparison data both before and after implementation of the Reading Room. This data was also compared to state and Baltimore City 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading test scores for the same time period 2003 to 2010 (See Appendix C).

### **School Principal Survey (conducted May-June 2011)**

FERA implemented an online survey with principals who have a Ben Carson Reading Room in their school. A total of 21 out of 42 principals responded, for a response rate of 50%. This survey focused on: 1) background information about the schools; and 2) the principals' perceptions of the Reading Room's impact on their

students and schools. FERA created a survey data summary with descriptive statistics including frequencies, percents, and means (see Appendix A for a shortened version of the data summary without all of the verbatim responses).

Principals who completed the survey had either been at their school for four to six years (41%) or one to three years (35%). The schools represented were mostly Title I elementary schools with an average student population of 460, most of whom (76%, on average) receive free and reduced priced lunches. According to the principals, across the schools an average of 69% of the third and 68% of the fifth grade students in their school, read at or above grade level. For eighth graders, a combined average of only 34% read at or above grade level (see Appendix A question #4 for all responses).

### **Reading Room Coordinator Survey (conducted May-June 2011)**

FERA implemented an online survey with Reading Room Coordinators in May and June of 2011. A total of 42 out of 50 coordinators responded, for a strong response rate of 84%. This survey focused on: 1) the nature and extent of Reading Room implementation; 2) outcomes for students and schools; and 3) feedback for the Carson Scholars Fund. FERA created a data summary with descriptive statistics including frequencies, percents, and means (see Appendix B).

Reading Room Coordinators who completed the survey were school librarians (n=13, 33%), teachers (n=7, 18%), or reading specialists (n=6, 15%). Thirty percent (30%) of the respondents gave a range of titles including: para educator, resource teacher, instructional coach, media assistant, and family liaison. All the schools had functioning libraries, and most of the schools had a full- or part-time librarian. Four schools had a library, but no librarian. The majority of the respondents (55%) had been Reading Room Coordinators for one to three years, while 20% had been coordinators for four to six years, and another 20% had been coordinators for less than a year.

### **BEN CARSON READING ROOMS**

This section provides an overview of Ben Carson Reading Rooms. It details how they are started and their purpose, physical configuration and activities. The section also documents the ways and extent to which Reading Rooms are being implemented over time and across the country.

## **Overview**

Ben Carson Reading Rooms are the products of the Ben Carson Reading Project and are implemented at the national level by the Carson Scholars Fund. A Ben Carson Reading Room is a special place in a school where students can read in an inviting, quiet, and secure environment. Reading Rooms contain at least 500 books, and are decorated in fun child-friendly themes with furniture (e.g., bean bag chairs, sofas) in which students can comfortably read. The reading done in Ben Carson Reading Rooms is not part of any school curriculum, and is not done for the purposes of grading or assessing students' reading ability. Students use the Reading Rooms for self-directed reading, and schools with Reading Rooms are encouraged to use incentives and rewards to motivate students to use the rooms.

Ben Carson Reading Rooms are sponsored by businesses and non-profit organizations with an interest in improving schools in their communities. In the past, Reading Rooms have been sponsored by businesses and organizations such as Bank of America, the W.K. Kellogg Corporation, the Indiana University School of Medicine, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

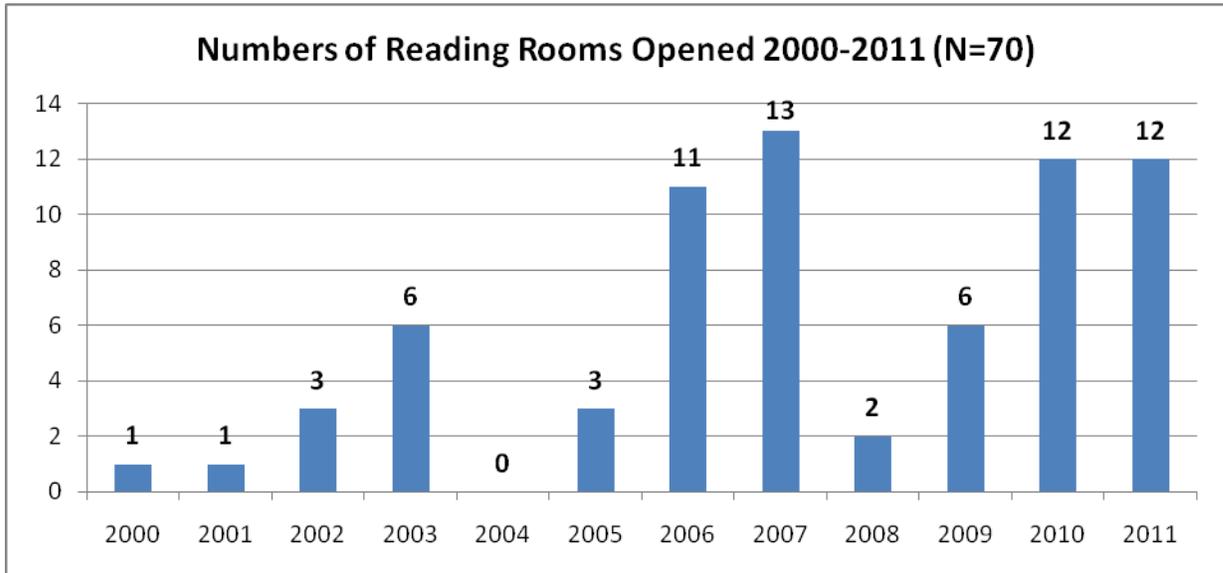
The Carson Scholars Fund provides a Ben Carson Reading Room Manual to new Reading Rooms that outlines the steps for establishing a Reading Room, including the formation of a committee, deciding on a theme, purchasing books, and planning the ribbon-cutting ceremony. The manual also describes how to garner community and staff support for the Reading Room as well as how to manage and financially sustain the Reading Room. Once the sponsorship is awarded to a school, the Carson Scholars Fund Inc. disperses the donated funds to the school for the purchase of books, furniture, and other materials needed for the Reading Room. Each Reading Room is decorated and organized according to the needs and wishes of the school. However, upon the establishment of a new Reading Room, Carson Scholars Fund staff members send a basic package to the school that includes materials that must be incorporated into the design of the Reading Room. The materials in the basic package include artwork based on Dr. Ben Carson's "Think Big" philosophy, and are present in every Reading Room in the country. "THINK BIG is Dr. Ben Carson's philosophy which promotes outstanding academic achievement and dedication to helping others. Children, students, and adults have all

found that when they THINK BIG, they are on their way to achieving their goals.”  
<http://carsonscholars.org/dr-ben-carson/think-big>

**Extent of Implementation**

The first Ben Carson Reading Room opened in 2000 at Hall’s Cross Roads Elementary School in Aberdeen, Maryland. As of December 2011, a total of 70 Reading Rooms had opened across the country, mostly in Title I elementary schools located in low-income neighborhoods (see Figure 2). Reading Rooms are located in ten states (Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Pennsylvania and Virginia). Currently, 68 of the 70 established Reading Rooms remain active.

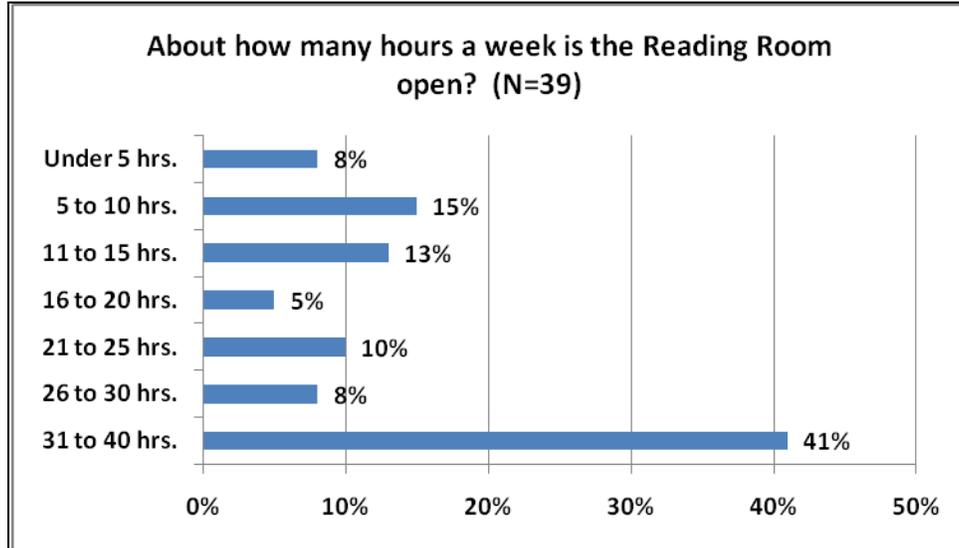
**Figure 2**



**Extent of Use by Students**

**First**, we wanted to know how long the Reading Rooms were open. More than half of Reading Rooms represented by survey respondents (n=23, 59%) are open for more than 20 hours a week and some ( n=16, 42%) of these are open between 30 and 40 hours a week. A fairly large portion of Reading Rooms (33%), however, are only open less than 5 hours and not more than 15 hours a week.

**Figure 3**



**Second**, we wanted to know how many students in the schools experienced the reading room. Survey responses indicate that the Reading Rooms are made available to and used by most of the students in any given school.

Approximately what percent of the students in the school experience the Reading Room over the course of a school year?	
<u>15% (6)</u>	100%
<u>42% (17)</u>	75% - 99%
<u>29% (12)</u>	50% - 74%
<u>10% (4)</u>	25% - 49%
<u>2% (1)</u>	Less than 25%
<u>2% (1)</u>	Don't know

**Third**, we wanted to know about the amount of exposure to leisure reading that students were gaining because of the reading rooms. Not surprisingly we found that **Reading Rooms increase the amount of time students spend reading.** We asked Coordinators about the amount of time students spent in the Reading Rooms from September 2010 to March 2011. Some of the Reading Room Coordinators record the amount of time students spend in Reading Rooms and others do not. Coordinators use different standards for tracking time. The Coordinators' data summary in Appendix A provides ample evidence that students spend time in the reading rooms, but it is not possible to glean patterns from their responses. How many times and for what length of

time students visit their Reading Room varies widely as evidenced by the following Coordinator comments.

- ◆ “On average our Pre-K to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students visit the Reading Room at least 2-3 times a week, and our grade 4-8 students visit the Reading Room at least twice a week. This just reflects classroom teachers taking the students to the Reading Room. We have other opportunities where the students visit the room as a Positive Behavior Intervention Program with our Social Worker, during lunch periods, and during after-school events.”
- ◆ “There are 3 lunch shifts, so every day many students visit the Reading Room. There are differences among grade levels.”
- ◆ “Students visited the Reading Center about 6 times over the course of the 2010-2011 school year.”
- ◆ “Every week or so at least 40 times and then there are additional times given to all grade levels to visit the room for reading.”

The length of visits to the Reading Rooms varies from as short as 10 minutes to as long as 45 minutes.

Schools that did not track minutes as a means of documenting student progress reported several other methods they used, including using assessments from the Accelerated Reader program. One Reading Room Coordinator reported how the Accelerated Reader program allowed him/her to measure the impact of the Reading Room on students’ reading achievement. The coordinator wrote<sup>3</sup>:

*“We opened the Reading Room last May with only a few weeks of school left but it was accessible for the entire year this school year. [The Accelerated Reader] data shows the impact. I consolidated this data a few weeks before the library closed so the numbers have only continued to grow since I did my calculations. We had between 255 and 245 students enrolled in Accelerated Reader both years. The number of comprehension tests taken by students increased by 54% from 2009-10 to 2010-11 (5,116 and 7,867); The number of comprehension tests passed increased by 89% from 2009-10 to 2010-11 (3,843 and 7,265). The number of points that students earned increased 84% (5,180 in 2009-10 to 9,506 in 2010-11.) The average % correct on quizzes for the entire group increased by 3%. The number of students averaging above the 85% average goal increased by 34% (32% of students had a +85% average in 2009-10 and 43% of students had a +85% average in 2010-11). Students as a whole read 31,841,322 words in 2009-10 and read 47,685,197 this year. I would*

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<sup>3</sup> Survey responses are included in this report verbatim.

*attribute this overall increase to the fact that I ordered books 3 times this year for the Reading Room along with the school's state funded book order."*

The vast majority of the Reading Room Coordinators (86%) reported that at least half of the students at their school experience the Reading Room over the course of the school year. Reading Room Coordinators indicated that students access the Reading Rooms in a number of different ways, with no one way being preferred. Some Coordinators (22%) reported that the entire school comes through the Reading Room at some point during the school year. Other Coordinators (27%) stated that classes are scheduled to come to the Reading Room, while still others (20%) indicated that students earn the privilege to go to the Reading Room through their reading achievements. The survey responses indicate that most Reading Rooms provide access to students in two ways: 1) based on a schedule, where certain grades or students are allowed to use the Reading Rooms on particular days or during a particular time of day, and 2) based on free-time, where students are allowed to visit the Reading Rooms whenever they have free time or during independent reading time.

The information above has documented the considerable extent of student exposure to Reading Rooms in the 68 active Reading Room locations, primarily in Maryland but across the country as well. It has also suggested the impact of having Reading Rooms in schools. The section below focuses on student and school outcomes based on information from the Reading Room Coordinators and School Principal surveys.

## **STUDENT OUTCOMES**

National research shows that: 1) habitual leisure reading directly increases literacy skills, and 2) that schools can encourage a stronger desire to participate in leisure reading and positive attitudes towards reading by making a variety of materials available in differing genres and types and at varying reading levels. Reading Rooms provide opportunities for students to be exposed to a wide variety of reading materials and encourage them to read for pleasure. Coordinators' views on 10 key aspects of students' Reading Room experience are displayed in Table 1 below.

**All (100%) of the Reading Room Coordinators agree that:**

- ◆ Students gain positive attitudes towards reading in the Reading Room
- ◆ Students are motivated to read in the Reading Room and like to spend time there
- ◆ Having a relaxing environment devoid of pressure to perform is conducive to reading
- ◆ Dr. Carson’s “Think Big” philosophy inspires students to achieve
- ◆ The Reading Room is an important resource for their school

**Nearly all the Coordinators (94-97%) agree that:**

- ◆ Students learn about what types of books, (e.g., fiction, non-fiction) appeal to them in the Reading Room
- ◆ Struggling readers become better readers as a result of the Reading Room
- ◆ Students who visit the Reading Room are more motivated to learn in the classroom

Several Coordinators emphasized in their verbatim comments the value of having a place where students could relax and read without pressure to perform. Reading Rooms often contain more recent books and magazines than school libraries have. Student perceptions of how libraries and Reading Rooms are different may be explored in the future.

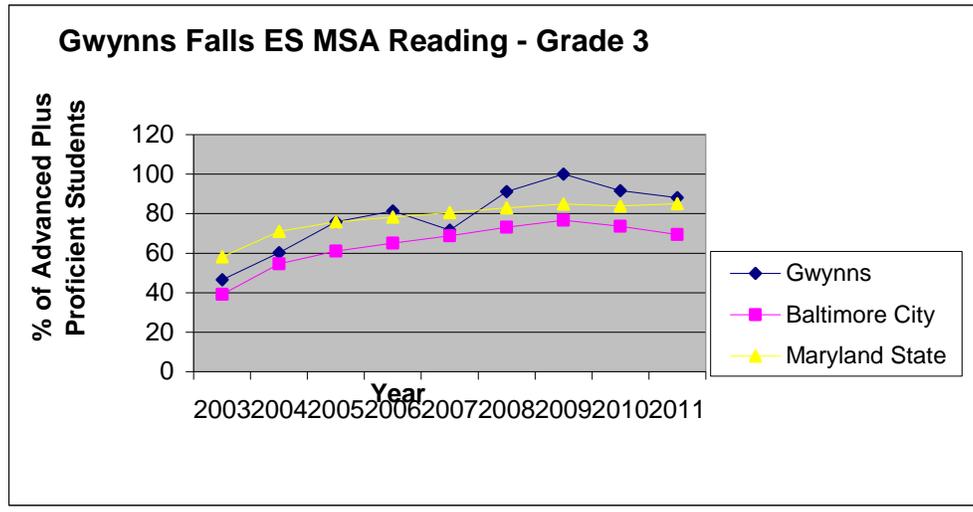
**Table 1**  
**Reading Room Coordinators' Perceptions about the Impact of Reading Rooms on Student Motivation and Reading Achievement**

Survey Statement	Responses (n = 35)					Rating Average*
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
Students like to spend time in the Reading Room.	74% (26)	23% (8)	0	0	3% (1)	3.8
When students are in the Reading Room they are engaged in reading	54% (19)	43% (15)	0	0	3% (1)	3.6
Students are motivated to <b>read</b> in the Reading Room	62% (21)	35% (12)	0	0	3% (1)	3.6
Students become excited about <b>learning</b> in the Reading Room	51% (18)	43% (15)	3% (1)	0	3% (1)	3.5
Struggling readers become better readers as a result of the Reading Room	37% (13)	40% (14)	6% (2)	0	17% (6)	3.4
Having a relaxing environment devoid of pressure to perform is conducive to reading	80% (28)	17% (6)	0	0	3% (1)	3.8
Students who visit the Reading Room are more motivated to <b>learn in the classroom</b>	34% (12)	46% (16)	3% (1)	0	17% (6)	3.4
Students gain positive attitudes towards reading in the Reading Room	63% (22)	34% (12)	0	0	3% (1)	3.7
Students learn about what types of books, (e.g. fiction, non-fiction) appeal to them in the Reading Room.	51% (18)	46% (16)	0	0	3% (1)	3.5
Dr. Carson's Think Big philosophy inspires students to achieve	49% (17)	46% (16)	0	0	6% (2)	3.5
Teachers learn about who needs more support with reading in the Reading Room	18% (6)	38% (13)	27% (9)	0	18% (6)	2.9
The Reading Room is an important resource for this school	69% (24)	29% (10)	0	0	3% (1)	3.7

\* Rating Averages were calculated based on the following scale: Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1. Don't Know responses were not included in the Rating Average calculations.

**Reading Rooms contribute to improved reading skills and reading test scores.** 100% of the school principals surveyed agree that the Reading Room in their school has a positive effect on student reading test scores. FERA analyzed 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading test score data from six schools between 2002 and 2010.<sup>4</sup> Each of these six schools installed Reading Rooms in 2006 providing a least three years of comparison data both before and after implementation of the Reading Room. Figure 4 presents the data from the Reading Room school demonstrating the greatest increase in reading scores. Graphs presenting data for additional Reading Room schools can be found in Appendix C.

**Figure 4**  
**Reading Test Score Comparison Data - Gwynns Falls Grade 3**



**Grade 3 MSA Reading – % of Advanced Plus Proficient Students**

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Gwynns Falls ES	46.5	60.3	75.8	81.4	71.6	91.1	100	91.7	88.1
Baltimore City	39.1	54.6	61	65.1	68.8	73.1	76.7	73.6	69.4
Maryland State	58.1	71	75.9	78.3	80.5	83	84.9	84	85.1

In four out of six schools 3<sup>rd</sup> graders performed below their Baltimore City peers on the Maryland State Assessment (MSA), three years before the Reading Room was implemented. Four years after the Reading Rooms opened, reading test scores were equal to or above Baltimore City scores. This data combined with the principals’

<sup>4</sup> Maryland State Assessment (MSA), a standardized test administered to students throughout the state of Maryland, data was used.

perceptions suggests that Ben Carson Reading Rooms positively contribute to improved reading skills. Other factors that may have affected test scores include: 1) a change in Baltimore City Superintendent in 2007; 2) changes in school principals; 3) loss or change in reading specialists and/or libraries in schools; and 4) highly mobile student populations.<sup>5</sup>

School principals offered several reasons for *how* the Reading Room has led to improvements in reading achievement. The school principals' responses indicated that the Ben Carson Reading Rooms:

- 1) motivate and excite students to read,
- 2) expose students to different kinds of books,
- 3) provide a comfortable, safe, and quiet environment with fewer students,
- 4) make reading a rewarding experience, and
- 5) develop independent reading and comprehension as a lifelong skill.

Some of the principals' verbatim comments were:

- ◆ "Students have become more aware of the variety of reading choices available, they have also become more enthusiastic about the opportunity to read."
- ◆ "The environment invites and encourages independent reading".
- ◆ The reading room reinforces reading for pleasure which facilitates increased comprehension and enhances students' vocabulary.
- ◆ "It supports the importance of independent reading as a lifelong skill. Students enjoy reading and don't view it as a school task."

**Low achieving students gain self-esteem and confidence with reading.** The impact of Ben Carson Reading Rooms on low-achieving students is particularly important since most Reading Rooms are located in high-need, high-poverty schools. Thus, principals and Reading Room Coordinators were asked the following question: **Ben Carson attributes his early reading with helping him move from the bottom of the class to the top. To the extent you know, is the Reading Room inspiring low achieving students to aim higher?** Their responses are found in Table 2:

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<sup>5</sup> FERA was not able to obtain student level data for this analysis. Highly mobile populations mean that the individual students in the classrooms will most likely have changed over time. This could skew the findings to be either more positive or negative. As such it is not possible to make generalizations based on this information.

**Table 2**

**Principal and Reading Room Coordinator Perceptions of the Impact of Reading Rooms on Low Achieving Students**

Respondents	Number of Responses	Responses					Rating Average*
		Yes, Definitely	Yes, Probably	No, Probably Not	No, Definitely Not	Don't Know	
Principals	20	40% (8)	40% (8)	5% (1)	0	15% (3)	3.4
Reading Room Coordinators	34	38% (13)	47% (16)	3% (1)	0	12% (4)	3.4
Total	54	39% (21)	44% (24)	4% (2)	0	13% (7)	3.4

\* Rating Averages were calculated based on the following scale: Yes, Definitely = 4, Yes, Probably = 3, No, Probably Not = 2, No, Definitely Not = 1. Don't Know responses were not included in the Rating Average calculations.

The principals' and coordinators' written comments reveal how low-achieving students are inspired by the Reading Rooms. Many of the comments indicate that the Reading Rooms help students to gain self-esteem and confidence in their reading abilities. The comments also suggest that the Reading Rooms inspire low-achieving students by allowing them to read at their own level without feeling any pressure from teachers or peers. Examples of these comments include:

- ◆ *“When students have no pressure from peers to choose books that are not on their level they feel more comfortable about what they are reading. Often in the media center students will pick books based on what their friends are picking that are too hard and they never read them. In the THINK BIG READING ROOM the pressure is off and they are choosing books they can easily read and enjoy.”* (Reading Room Coordinator)
- ◆ *“The students are allowed to read what they want without pressure from the other students or teachers about their choices, therefore they want to read more often in the Reading Room.”* (Reading Room Coordinator)
- ◆ *“Our students go to the Reading Room at lunchtime to read their ability level books, which has increased their reading levels. It is a comfortable place where confidence in reading blossoms. The books are organized by independent reading levels so students can read at their independent level. Every student knows their reading level and the reading level they aspire to achieve.”* (School Principal)

**Other benefits for students.** Because Reading Rooms are not associated with any particular curriculum, they can often provide unique experiences for students unlike those provided in a formal classroom. The school principals reported several advantages that a Reading Room provides that a student would not receive in a classroom. The principals suggested that the Reading Room: 1) provides an opportunity for independent learning; 2) allows for peer assistance; and 3) allows students to choose what to read and to read at their own pace.

The Reading Room Coordinators also reported several other ways in which the Reading Rooms have had a unique impact on the students in their school. A few of the coordinators suggested that the Reading Room has helped students to identify and develop their reading interests (e.g., favorite genres, authors, and book series). Other coordinators reported that the Reading Room has had a positive impact on student behavior, since many schools use the Reading Room as an incentive for good behavior.

The additional resources allow teachers, librarians, and reading specialists to use the Reading Room to enhance their classroom reading instruction. One survey respondent wrote: *“The Reading Room benefits the staff by providing additional resources to reinforce literacy instruction. Also, students' time in the reading room offer another opportunity to support what is taught by teachers, reading specialists, and librarians.”* (Reading Room Coordinator)

## **SCHOOL OUTCOMES**

Reading Rooms are intended to contribute to the overall academic culture of a school and focus on academic achievement in the school. Principals and Coordinators identified ways that Reading Rooms benefit their schools.

- ◆ **Reading Rooms are viewed as a valuable resource for schools.** They highlight that independent reading is important. Reading Rooms reinforce what is taught by teachers, reading specialists, and librarians. -- *“The Reading Room is the intellectual hub of our school!”* (Coordinator)
- ◆ **Reading Rooms bring new books and other reading materials to schools with limited resources.** One Coordinator explained, *“The library does not have the best selection of books for the students to read. The books that are in our Carson Reading room offer exciting and entertaining material that grabs our readers' attention.”* Another coordinator commented, *“The benefits are that every book in the Ben Carson Room is current and the variety so large.*

*There is always something for every level and interest of a child.”*

- ◆ **Reading Rooms help to create a culture of high expectations and learning.** “Students are explained the importance of reading and education. We have changed our school's vision to Work Harder, Think Bigger and Aim Higher to extend the motivation to learning is power.”...“It inspires them [teachers] to raise the bar for their students when it comes to reading expectations.” (Coordinators)
- ◆ **Reading Rooms serve as a valuable resource for teachers.** “Teachers call it “The Think Tank.” They meet there to use these resource books and students’ books of interest to guide them in planning wonderful lessons and challenge scenarios.”(School Principal) The additional resources allow teachers, librarians, and reading specialists to use the Reading Room to enhance their classroom reading instruction.

Two survey respondents wrote:

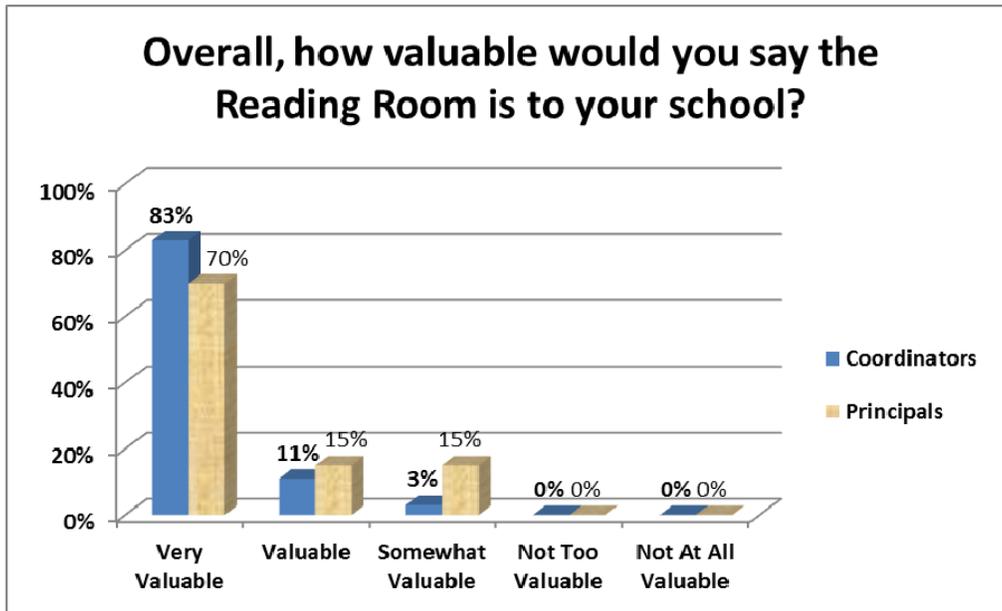
*“The Reading Room is a place where all necessary resources to support all students' literacy growth can be found. Teachers throughout the building come to this room seeking support to improve reading instruction and they can find it here either from one of the reading specialists or by borrowing a valuable resource from the professional library.”* (Reading Room Coordinator)

*“The Reading Room benefits the staff by providing additional resources to reinforce literacy instruction. Also, students' time in the reading room offers another opportunity to support what is taught by teachers, reading specialists, and librarians.”* (Reading Room Coordinator)

**Reading Rooms contribute to an environment where a love of reading is connected with future success.** One survey respondent explained, “*Students have learned that reading is to be celebrated. Students understand that great futures begin with reading as demonstrated by Dr. Carson's achievements.*” Another person commented, “*Students feel better about themselves and what they can achieve. They understand that success in reading can help them reach goals that they have set for themselves.*”

Overwhelmingly, Coordinators and Principals thought that the Ben Carson Reading Rooms are a very valuable addition to their schools (See Figure 5). Reading Rooms help to create an environment where students are excited about reading.

**Figure 5**



**FEEDBACK**

Carson Scholars Fund intends to “scale up” their efforts to expand the number of Reading Rooms across the nation. As such, one of the purposes for this evaluation is to provide insights into how Reading Rooms and the national support provided by the Carson Scholars Fund could be strengthened. More extensive feedback has already been provided to and used by Carson Scholars Fund staff. This section summarizes the responses from the Reading Room Coordinator Survey regarding the strengths and challenges of the Reading Rooms.

**Strengths.** Reading Room Coordinators reported several strengths of the Reading Room, mostly echoing the positive sentiments stated in previous survey responses. The Coordinators reiterated that the Reading Room provides a positive environment for students to read, and motivates and inspires students to read and learn. Another strength is the variety of books that are available in the Reading Rooms. Several Coordinators stated that the Reading Room contains many books from different genres that students may not have read before.

**Challenges.** The Reading Room Coordinators also reported several challenges to maintaining and operating the Reading Rooms. For a majority of the Coordinators, the greatest challenge is adequately staffing the Reading Room. Many Coordinators pointed

to a lack of parent volunteers as a factor in limiting the capacity of the Reading Room.

One Coordinator wrote:

*“The Reading Room would be more effective if our school had consistent volunteers to help supervise the room. As the media specialist, I have a large collection and overwhelming responsibilities within my library. Therefore, the Reading Room has not been utilized to its fullest within our school. Our school has faced many challenges within; however, despite what we have been faced with we have been able to use the room to the best of our ability.”*

The Coordinators also reported that time and space constraints are other major challenges regarding the Reading Room. According to one Coordinator, “The student's time limitation for reading is our greatest challenge. We have wonderful new chapter books that can't possibly be read in the 20-minute visits.”

**Carson Scholars Fund Support Assessment.** The Carson Scholars Fund offers several methods for supporting the development and maintenance of the Carson Reading Rooms, including the Reading Room basic package, Reading Room workshops, and a national Reading Room Coordinator. The Reading Room Coordinators who responded to the survey were asked to rate the usefulness of these different support resources. Most of the coordinators perceived the support resources as useful to some degree. Their responses are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
**Reading Room Coordinators’ Perceptions Regarding the Usefulness**  
**of Reading Room Support Resources**

Support Resource	Responses						Rating Average*
	Very Useful	Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not Too Useful	Not At All Useful	N/A Don’t Know	
Reading Room basic package	35% (12)	27% (9)	12% (4)	0	0	27% (9)	4.3
Reading Room workshops	44% (15)	12% (4)	6% (2)	3% (1)	0	35% (12)	4.5
Support from the national Reading Room Coordinator	32% (11)	18% (6)	6% (2)	0	0	44% (15)	4.5

\* Rating Averages were calculated based on the following scale: *Very Useful = 5, Valuable = 4, Somewhat Useful = 3, Not Too Useful = 2, Not At All Useful = 1. Not Applicable/Don’t Know responses were not included in the Rating Average calculations.*

When the Reading Room Coordinators were asked specifically about the 2010 Reading Room workshop, 90% of the coordinators who attended the workshop reported that it was useful or very useful to their work. Those who did not attend reported several reasons for their absence, including an inability to take time away from their job responsibilities and a lack of awareness of the workshop. The coordinators offered several suggestions for future Reading Room workshops and comments about what they valued from past workshops. These include:

- ◆ “[A need for information about] how to integrate the Reading Room concept into weekly library periods. Information about the Reading Room basic package. The role of the National Reading coordinator. Record keeping”
- ◆ “Love the open forum and brainstorming ideas. Guest speakers have been great keep on having them.”
- ◆ “I thought that the workshop in the fall was beautifully planned. I took back some great ideas and enjoyed the presentations as they were all very meaningful.”
- ◆ “It would be nice to get more ideas for the middle school Reading Rooms. Most of the time the ideas are great but are more elementary than middle school. A lot of the ideas for elementary would not work well for middle school.”
- ◆ “Closer to the Glen Burnie area would be a tremendous convenience for me.... I really enjoyed the workshop last year and took a lot of valuable information with me.”

- ◆ “I think talking to others who have a Reading Room was so valuable. There were experienced schools and schools like myself who had just opened. Next year I look forward to other ideas now that we are opened and established.”
- ◆ “I have enjoyed all of the workshops so far and walk away with at least one idea that we had not tried before. Keep up the good work!”
- ◆ “Share ideas for expanding the collection - I do not have any budget within my school for adding or replacing books. We count totally on donations.”

The Reading Room Coordinators offered several ways that their Reading Room could be strengthened and supported by Carson Scholars Fund staff. While a few of the coordinators reported that their Reading Room was good as it is, most of the Coordinators provided a few suggestions for strengthening the Reading Room Project. The most commonly suggested way that the Reading Rooms could be strengthened was by providing new books and materials, and promoting greater participation from teachers and the community. The Coordinators reported that the Carson Scholars Fund could support their Reading Room by providing additional financial support. One coordinator wrote: *“We’d love a “boost grant” for purchasing even more books! Our students are avid readers and we want to have those engaging books on hand for them always. I hope that we can continue to get financial support to acquire new books a couple times each year. Providing new material is a big deal when trying to encourage and maintain interest in reading, especially with low achievers.”*

Another Coordinator suggested: *“Perhaps help with a parent newsletter on how parents can encourage more reading at home. We send home communications from school, but an additional communication from the Carson Fund each term might be a way to emphasize parental support since we are a Title I school.”*

## **SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS**

The Ben Carson Reading Project was initiated in 2000 and by 2011, 68 schools located in low-income neighborhoods had active Reading Rooms. The overwhelming majority of Reading Room Coordinators (83%) and school principals (70%) believe that the reading room is a **very valuable** addition to their schools. The reasons that 100% of the Reading Room Coordinators, those closest to the students in reading rooms, offer for this value are:

- ◆ Students gain positive attitudes towards reading in the Reading Room

- ◆ Students are motivated to read in the Reading Room and like to spend time there
- ◆ Having a relaxing environment devoid of pressure to perform is conducive to reading
- ◆ Dr. Carson’s “Think Big” philosophy inspires students to achieve
- ◆ The Reading Room is an important resource for their school

In addition to Coordinators’ opinions, other evaluation findings suggest that having a Reading Room in a school contributes to the improvement of standardized reading test scores. Fully 100% of principals responding to FERA’s survey indicated that this was true in their schools.

**In your opinion, has the Ben Carson Reading Room had a positive effect on student reading test scores?**

100% (20) Yes    0 No

These perceptions are supported by a comparison study, reported in Appendix C, of test score increases in six Baltimore City Schools before and after the introduction of reading rooms.

Perhaps most important are the positive attitudes and love of reading that students gain that are associated with the Reading Room experience. Reading Rooms are warm and inviting places where students can relax and read without the pressure to perform. They spend more time reading because of Reading Rooms and learn to enjoy reading. Dr. Carson provides a positive role model for students as well. Low-achieving students, in particular, gain confidence and self-esteem through their Reading Room experience and through his example. When using the Reading Room students are more likely to select books that have special appeal and that are at their own reading level. This builds confidence, self-esteem and is linked to building the joy and learning associated with reading.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Reading Room Principals Survey Data Summary**

**Carson Scholars Fund Ben Carson Reading Room  
Principals' Survey Data Summary and Verbatim Responses (N=21)**

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**Introduction:** We need your help! The key purpose of this survey is to better understand the impact of the Reading Room on your school. Reading Room Coordinators are also being asked to respond to a confidential on-line survey. Survey findings will be used to document the impact of Reading Rooms across the country.

Carson Scholars Fund, with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, has asked Formative Evaluation Research Associates (FERA), an independent evaluation group, to implement this evaluation research. This confidential survey will take about 10-15 minutes to complete.

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**Impact on students**

**1. Does your school serve (Select only one):**

- 57% (12) Elementary students
- 5% (1) Middle school students
- 33% (7) Pre K - 8
- 0 High school students
- 5% (1) Other (Describe)
  - ◆ K-10

**2. Is your school a Title I school?**

86% (18) Yes 14% (3) No

**3. Has your school had a Carson Scholar within the past three years?**

52% (11) Yes 48% (10) No

**4. If your school serves elementary and/or middle school students:**

a) What percentage of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders are reading at or above grade level? 69%

Average

- ◆ 35
- ◆ 80
- ◆ 50
- ◆ 85
- ◆ 85
- ◆ 75
- ◆ 94
- ◆ 70
- ◆ 80
- ◆ 67
- ◆ 70
- ◆ 85
- ◆ 25
- ◆ 80
- ◆ 50
- ◆ 85

- ◆ 70
- ◆ 46
- ◆ 80

b) What percentage of 5th graders are reading at or above grade level? 68%

Average

- ◆ 44
- ◆ 50
- ◆ 70
- ◆ 88
- ◆ 70
- ◆ 45
- ◆ 97
- ◆ 70
- ◆ 90
- ◆ 67
- ◆ 65
- ◆ 86
- ◆ 20
- ◆ 75
- ◆ 50
- ◆ 90
- ◆ 70
- ◆ 57
- ◆ 85

c) What percentage of 8<sup>th</sup> graders are reading at or above grade level? 34%

Average

- ◆ 0 (n=7)
- ◆ 60
- ◆ 90
- ◆ 67
- ◆ 80
- ◆ 15
- ◆ 75
- ◆ 70
- ◆ 52

5. **In your opinion, has the Ben Carson Reading Room had a positive effect on student reading test scores?**

100% (20) Yes 0 No

The key themes that emerged were as follows:

- ◆ The Ben Carson Reading Room motivates and excites students to read.
- ◆ It exposes students to different kinds of books.
- ◆ It provides a “cozy environment” to read.

- ◆ It makes reading a rewarding experience.
- ◆ It develops independent reading and comprehension as a lifelong skill.

If **yes**, do you have any evidence that we might be able to use to show this effect?

- ◆ Ben Carson Reading Library contributes to the guided reading initiative here at Belmont.
- ◆ Excites children and encourages the act of enjoying a great book!
- ◆ As students have become more aware of the variety of reading choices available, they have also become more enthusiastic about the opportunity to read. The environment is invitational and encourages independent reading.
- ◆ The room has become a haven for students throughout the day to enjoy books and reading. The single focus on simply enjoying reading has given our students more practice with self selected books.
- ◆ Students are explained the importance of reading and education. We have changed our school's vision to Work Harder, Think bigger and Aim Higher to extend the motivation to learning is power.
- ◆ It is a contributing factor due to the increase in time spent reading by our students
- ◆ It is motivating for students.
- ◆ Students enjoy going to the room to read. It gives them an opportunity to be in a quiet area that is non-threatening . They can choose a book that is appropriate for their reading level that doesn't make them feel inadequate.
- ◆ It is utilized to provide a variety of genres across grade levels to support reading across the content area.
- ◆ Students have an appealing safe place to read and enjoy literature. They are rewarded regularly for their independent reading accomplishments and permitted to use the reading room when this occurs.
- ◆ While we have not had a dedicated director of the room this year and therefore it has been used less it does still act as a resource for wide-reading for students.
- ◆ It has helped create a positive place for casual reading and added high interest books to our collection.
- ◆ The students love going into the room as a reward. We use a shift schedule and the children can earn time if they read for 150 minutes documented by an adult. We have levels from 150 minutes to 600 minutes of documented reading time and this earns 20 minutes and other prizes in Carson Room! Once that is completed they move to the next level.
- ◆ The reading room reinforces reading for pleasure which facilitates increased comprehension and enhances students' vocabulary.
- ◆ Our students are in love with reading. Our 8th graders who have been with us for a majority of their schooling have made tremendous progress. Many of our 3rd and 5th graders are new to the school and have shown tremendous growth (more than one grade level of progress in one year) though they are still below level.
- ◆ It supports the importance of independent reading as a lifelong skill. Students enjoy reading and don't view it as a school task.
- ◆ Students relax in a cozy environment. It is quiet and conducive to reading. Students do not have to worry about reporting about their reading. They are reading for enjoyment.

**6. Ben Carson attributes his early reading with helping him go from the bottom of the class to the top. To the extent you know, is the Reading Room inspiring low achieving students to aim higher?**

<b>Yes, Definitely [5]</b>	<b>Yes, Probably [4]</b>	<b>No, Probably Not [3]</b>	<b>No, Definitely Not [2]</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>
40% (8)	40% (8)	5% (1)	0	15% (3)	3.4

The key themes that emerged were as follows:

- ◆ The Ben Carson Reading Room improves students' self esteem.
- ◆ It allows students to make choices in reading and read at their own level.
- ◆ It provides for an enjoyable reading experience.
- ◆ It sets high expectations for reading and learning.
- ◆ It helps struggling students.
- ◆ It provides a variety of books.

If yes, can you give us one or more examples?

- ◆ Improved self esteem and participation in reading initiatives.
- ◆ Reluctant readers want to go there!
- ◆ The Ben Carson reading room has helped us to establish high expectations for reading and learning.
- ◆ Students are given the opportunity to select books of their choices and enjoy the love of reading. Having that time is precious!
- ◆ Our students go to the reading room at lunchtime to read their ability level books, which has increased their reading levels. It is a comfortable place where confidence in reading blossoms. The books are organized by independent reading levels so students can read at their independent level....every student knows their reading level and the reading level they aspire to achieve.
- ◆ Students participate in group and independent activities and the room serves as an intervention for struggling students.
- ◆ We have a significant African American student population in our school. They are able to connect with Dr. Carson's story on how to better yourself through motivation and reading.
- ◆ It is a popular place to hang out and read.
- ◆ Some of the frequent office flyers have been able to take advantage of the Carson Room.
- ◆ Our students love spending time in the Reading Room with a good book. It is wonderful to hear them talking about their favorite books!
- ◆ Students are able to enjoy reading on their level and see their peers also enjoying reading.
- ◆ Students have read about people who have influenced them to read and learn more. They have researched on the Internet in the computer lab about the educational background they need to pursue a career. They have imagined visiting places and learning about the geography and culture of countries. They have been motivated to make board games, art work, cartoons, and comic books.
- ◆ The Carson room provides a variety of books for the varied of interest of students. A few of my male students who were not interested in reading at all have a new found interest in reading because of the library.

**7. What advantages does a Reading Room provide that a student does not receive in a classroom setting?**

The key themes that emerged were as follows:

- ◆ The Ben Carson Reading Room provides an opportunity for independent learning.
- ◆ It provides a comfortable, safe, and quiet environment with fewer students.
- ◆ It offers a multitude of various books of interest.
- ◆ It allows for peer assistance.
- ◆ Students can choose what to read and read at their own pace.
  - ◆ The entire environment is focused on reading...
  - ◆ A more relaxed environment and a different collection of books to choose from.
  - ◆ Increased opportunities for independent reading and independent choices.
  - ◆ It provides them with a safe comfortable place to where they can read for pleasure.
  - ◆ A comfortable and quiet environment with fewer students. Students increase their reading time.
  - ◆ Opportunities for selection of a variety of books, time to enjoy and being around others to enjoy a good book.
  - ◆ A multitude of various books of interest.
  - ◆ It helps them view reading as something that can be done for pleasure as well as learning.
  - ◆ They can choose a book that is interesting to them on their level. In the classroom, they are required to perform at a given level. In the Reading Room, they can read at their pace and not have to worry about being intimidated by their grade level peers or teachers.
  - ◆ Peer assistance and interventions. Where students are working collaboratively with a variety of reading materials to promote student achievement
  - ◆ It is a place that students can be rewarded outside the regular classroom setting.
  - ◆ The reading room provides the opportunity for students to read connected text that is not specifically crafted for a specific instructional lesson. This "wide-reading" experience is why we teach reading in the first place - to read for information and enjoyment.
  - ◆ It is self directed space.
  - ◆ See the above
  - ◆ A reading room provides additional choice and fosters greater independence. A reading room also enables students to discuss literature in a non- threatening environment.
  - ◆ The Reading Room is a cozy, colorful place where students are surrounded by great books. It just lends itself to reading!
  - ◆ It is a different environment. Our setting is the "meadow." Students lay on the carpet or chairs and are not confined to classroom and/or desk.
  - ◆ Private reading time
  - ◆ Less pressure and more relaxing atmosphere
  - ◆ The Reading room is a very relaxed environment and inviting for the students. It's not punitive but meant for pure enjoyment causing the students to literally beg to be in it.

**8. From your perspective, what has been the impact of the Ben Carson Reading Room on the faculty?**

The key themes that emerged were as follows:

- ◆ The Ben Carson Reading Room is seen as a positive addition to the school by faculty.
- ◆ Faculty see the room as relaxing for themselves and students.
- ◆ Faculty see the room as supporting the reading effort.
  - ◆ Faculty utilize the Ben Carson Reading Room for an alternative behavior modification area...
  - ◆ same level of excitement for good literature.
  - ◆ It supports the high expectations that all students at all levels read.
  - ◆ Or faculty members like to visit the Ben Carson room to see students actual reading because they want to and not because they have to read.
  - ◆ The faculty see the Reading room as a positive addition to our school for our students to enjoy reading. the reading room provides another option for the faculty to encourage the love of learning.
  - ◆ Faculty is still striving to see the importance outside of SSR (Self Selected Reading). Professional Development will be done to increase their knowledge and expand the room to all students.
  - ◆ There are teacher's professional resources for teachers to read in the room. Teachers call it "The Think Tank." They meet there to use these resource books and students books of interest to guide them in planning wonderful lessons and challenge scenarios.
  - ◆ It provides a way to motivate and reward students' efforts.
  - ◆ It is place where they can take their class to provide that 20 -30 minute reading time. It is an alternative to the classroom library.
  - ◆ Teacher have used a variety of text as supplemental reading materials to support instruction.
  - ◆ They enjoy the inviting nature of the reading room. It inspires them to raise the bar for their students when it comes to reading expectations.
  - ◆ They enjoy seeing the kids reading.
  - ◆ Teachers allow documented reading time to help support the use of the room.
  - ◆ Our Reading Room is our preferred place for meetings and events because it is so colorful and inviting.
  - ◆ Everyone's awareness of the significant impact of independent reading has been heightened.
  - ◆ None at this time
  - ◆ They can also relax and read when they are with their classes. They enjoy read aloud in the room as well. They can get more creative and dramatic when reading in the room.
  - ◆ The faculty enjoys relaxing with a good book in the room as well as the students.

**9. Are there any other benefits from having a Ben Carson Reading Room in your school?**

The key themes that emerged were as follows:

- ◆ The Ben Carson Reading Room excites and motivates students to read.
- ◆ It is a fun and inviting place where children can read at their own pace.
- ◆ It allows for various reading initiatives and projects.
  - ◆ Behavior Modification, Guided Reading Initiative, Intermediate grades book club,
  - ◆ Visitors always love seeing the room! It is a selling point for our school when new families come to tour!
  - ◆ Our reading room is also used as an incentive,.
  - ◆ We have parents who enjoy coming in and spending time in the room with the students. the books are all favorites of students. The students feel ownership to the room.
  - ◆ Yes, it encourages students to strive and motivate themselves to be the best through EDUCATION. Again, we believe education is power. Parents love using the reading room. Younger siblings enjoy it too. We are in the process of modernizing it to be better and bigger.
  - ◆ It is exciting, motivating, allows for differentiation, a place where 100 of the students are engaged in reading and learning.
  - ◆ Its peaceful. As the administrator, I have escaped to the Reading Room to read as well.
  - ◆ It's a home away from home for students to engage in reading at their own pace and it provides numerous opportunities for students to read at their own pace.
  - ◆ It provided and continues to do so a focal point to our library. Reading is a critical component to our academic promotion in our school. The reading room demonstrates our commitment to literature and reading within our school.
  - ◆ It looks great!
  - ◆ It is a fun get away spot for the children. Many students do not have an opportunity at home to have quiet reading time in a colorful room.
  - ◆ Makes us "feel special" when compared to the surrounding elementary schools.
  - ◆ Still new to school
  - ◆ We have used it as an extra incentive for free time. Students can earn Brent Bucks to earn time in the reading room with the social worker. Community members read to our student in the room. They bring their own little ones with them. We have had transition activities from PreK to K in the room with teachers and parents.  
Next year we will start a bulletin on which students can write book reviews.
  - ◆ The Reading Room identifies Reading as a very important subject for our students. If students are given the opportunity to just read and enjoy it they will naturally improve in all subject areas and eventually in life.

**10. Overall, how valuable would you say the Reading Room is to your school?**

<b>Very Valuable [5]</b>	<b>Valuable [4]</b>	<b>Somewhat Valuable [3]</b>	<b>Not Too Valuable [2]</b>	<b>Not At All Valuable [1]</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>
70% (14)	15% (3)	15% (3)	0	0	4.6

**11. If your school has had a Carson Scholar over the past three years, what has been the impact of having a Scholar on the school? Are there any synergies between the Reading Room and the Carson Scholars' Programs?**

- ◆ We have tried to help students understand the connection between Ben Carson reading room and the Carson Scholar program. There has been greater interest in the scholar program.
- ◆ Students and parents are thrilled. We have more student competing each year. It is very exciting. I believe there is a connection. Students are reinforcing what they hear and see in Ben Carson and the importance of reading and the reading room.
- ◆ The more students read the better readers they become! Our students have more opportunities to read!
- ◆ No. The students who have been Scholar recipients have been good students overall. They have a general drive to succeed.
- ◆ It gives students a visual perspective of the benefit of reading. The scholar shares their experience at an assembly and really brings the experience to life for our students.
- ◆ We had a student apply this past year but did not earn the scholarship. We will continue to apply in future years.
- ◆ Mrs. Carson's visit really helped many of the children connect reading and the importance of it.
- ◆ The Carson Scholar award is a coveted award by our students. Many of our Carson Scholars have gone on to great high schools in Baltimore.
- ◆ n/a

**12. Does your school have other special reading programs in addition to the Ben Carson Reading Room?**

55% (11) Yes 45% (9) No

If **yes**, please describe them and tell us how, if at all, the programs compliment one another.

- ◆ Guided Reading, 100 book club,
  - ◆ Reading Interventions. technology related
  - ◆ We have Balanced Literacy which encourages personal choice for reading.
  - ◆ Early reading interventions
  - ◆ We have a reading incentive program each year and time spent in the Carson reading room counts toward the reading minutes.
  - ◆ Wide level reading is reading at the student's independent level and conferencing with the teacher to advance in skill development at the student's reading pace and level. They work in harmony because all books in the reading room are leveled.
  - ◆ Well stocked library, classroom libraries
  - ◆ Family Literacy
  - ◆ Saturday Academy
  - ◆ Extended Day
- These work in concert with the program to promote literacy for all students.
- ◆ Yes, we use Accelerated Reader which allows teachers to establish independent reading goals for students. Students who obtain their goal are rewarded time in the reading room.
  - ◆ Reading Champions-- recognizes kids who have good reading habits.
  - ◆ We do have many books in the classroom libraries. The middle schoolers have read at least one of Dr. Carson's books because it is required by the Language Arts teacher.
  - ◆ The school has participated in the Pizza Hut reading program.

**13. Is there anything else you would like us to know about your school and the Ben Carson Reading Room?**

- ◆ We love our Carson Room!
- ◆ We love it!
- ◆ No, thank you for the reading room. We do appreciate it!
- ◆ Thank you! It is the best present our students and teachers could ever want and need!
- ◆ Thank for the continued support.
- ◆ It has benefited our students in order to motivate them to read independently.
- ◆ Every school should have a Carson Reading Room. This way all students can go to many different places through great books.
- ◆ We can't thank the foundation enough for bringing this opportunity to the students and teachers. They love the opportunity to visit the reading room.
- ◆ Not at this time.
- ◆ I would appreciate funding to keep the room updated with more books, bookshelves, etc..

**Background**

**14. How many years have you served as Principal at your school?**

- 6% (1) Less than 1
- 35% (6) 1 – 3
- 41% (7) 4-6
- 18% (3) 7 or more

**15. What is the name of your school?**

*16 schools responded.*

**16. How many students are served by your school?**

- 3 100 to 300
- 8 301 to 500
- 5 501 to 700
- 1 More than 700

**17. What percent of students in the school you serve receive free and reduced school lunches? %**

- ◆ 100
- ◆ 98
- ◆ 98
- ◆ 97
- ◆ 96
- ◆ 94
- ◆ 94
- ◆ 92
- ◆ 92
- ◆ 90
- ◆ 90
- ◆ 85
- ◆ 79

- ◆ 68
- ◆ 20
- ◆ 10
- ◆ 5

**18. What percent of the students in the school you serve have learning disabilities? %**

- ◆ 38
- ◆ 33
- ◆ 30
- ◆ 23
- ◆ 20
- ◆ 20
- ◆ 20
- ◆ 20
- ◆ 20
- ◆ 20
- ◆ 18
- ◆ 18
- ◆ 16
- ◆ 15
- ◆ 12
- ◆ 12
- ◆ 11
- ◆ 11

**19. What is your district's high school graduation rate?**

- ◆ 96
- ◆ 96
- ◆ 90
- ◆ 88
- ◆ 79
- ◆ 68
- ◆ 60
- ◆ 55

**20. What percent of the students are:**

- 24% (4) Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander
- 88% (15) African-American/Black (Non-Hispanic)
- 53% (9) Latino/Hispanic
- 0 Native American
- 59% (10) White (Caucasian, Non-Hispanic)
- 12% (2) Other (please describe)
  - ◆ Middle Eastern, African
  - ◆ 99%

**Thank you for your time!**

**APPENDIX B**

**Reading Room Coordinators Survey Data Summary**

**Carson Scholars Fund  
Ben Carson Reading Room Coordinators' Survey  
Data Summary and Verbatim Responses (N=43)**

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**Introduction:** We need your help! The key purposes of this survey are to: 1) take a baseline "snapshot" of Ben Carson Reading Rooms across the country; 2) further document impact; and 3) provide you an opportunity to offer confidential feedback. Carson Scholars Fund, with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, has asked Formative Evaluation Research Associates (FERA), an independent evaluation group, to implement this evaluation research. This survey will take about 20 minutes to complete.

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- 1. What is the name of your school?**  
*42 schools responded.*

**Background**

- 2. Are you a? (Select only one)**
- 33% (13) School librarian
  - 15% (6) Reading room specialist
  - 18% (7) Teacher
  - 5% (2) Parent
  - 30% (12) Other
    - ◆ Para educator
    - ◆ Paraeducator
    - ◆ Family Liaison
    - ◆ Instructional Coach
    - ◆ GT Resource Teacher
    - ◆ TEACHER ASSISTANT/ MEDIA CENTER
    - ◆ Retired Teacher
    - ◆ Secretary
    - ◆ Media Assistant
    - ◆ Family Engagement Coordinator and Resource Teacher
    - ◆ Staff Developer
    - ◆ Para Educator
- 3. How many years have you been a Reading Room coordinator?**
- 20% (8) Less than 1
  - 55% (22) 1 – 3
  - 20% (8) 4 – 6
  - 5% (2) 7 or more
- 4. Does your school serve (Select only one):**
- 59% (24) Elementary students
  - 15% (6) Middle school students
  - 20% (8) Pre K - 8
  - 2% (1) High school students
  - 5% (2) Other (Describe)
    - ◆ K-8
    - ◆ Pre-K - 5

**5. Is your school a Title I school?**  
67% (26) Yes 31% (12) No 3% (1) Don't Know

**6. How many students attend the school you serve?**  
1 100 – 200  
5 201 – 300  
14 301 – 400  
8 401 – 500  
9 501 – 600  
3 Over 600

**7. Does your Reading Room school have:**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
a. A Functioning Library	100% (36)	0
b. A full-time librarian	70% (23)	30% (10)
c. A part-time librarian	50% (11)	50% (11)
d. No librarian	22% (4)	78% (14)

**8. What percent of students in the school you serve receive free and reduced school lunches?**

- %
- ◆ 100
  - ◆ 99
  - ◆ 98
  - ◆ 98
  - ◆ 98
  - ◆ 95
  - ◆ 95
  - ◆ 90
  - ◆ 84
  - ◆ 82
  - ◆ 80
  - ◆ 80
  - ◆ 67
  - ◆ 65
  - ◆ 64
  - ◆ 56
  - ◆ 42
  - ◆ 37
  - ◆ 32
  - ◆ 30
  - ◆ 0

**9. About how many hours a week is the Reading Room open?**  
8% (3) Under 5 hours/week  
15% (6) 5+ to 10 hours  
13% (5) 10+ to 15 hours

- 5% (2) 15+ to 20 hours
- 10% (4) 20+ to 25 hours
- 8% (3) 25+ to 30 hours
- 41% (16) 30+ to 40 hours

**10. How do students access the Reading Room?**

- 22% (9) The entire school comes through the Reading Room at some point during the school year?
- 5% (2) Specific grades come
- 27% (11) Classes are scheduled to come
- 20% (8) Individual students earn the privilege through reading
- 27% (11) Other (please describe)
  - ◆ during library periods
  - ◆ All students attend at least once each week for 15-20 minutes of independent reading
  - ◆ Classes visit at the request of the teacher or students come for free reading time
  - ◆ Students earn a privilege pass from the librarian or are given a pass by their classroom teacher.
  - ◆ The entire school has a scheduled time once a week. About half of the teachers come on a regular basis.
  - ◆ Grades are assigned specific days where they can send students to the Reading Room. Two days of the week are "will-call" and are open to any grade.
  - ◆ Classes use the Carson area during free reading time.
  - ◆ The Reading Room is located in the school library. It is a separated by beaded curtains that allows me to view the students but gives them a special place to go. We function on a combination of fixed and flexible schedule in the library. That means that students are free to come independently to the library when they want. I encourage open access. We also incorporate Accelerated Reader with our library. This encourages students to visit the library to get new books so they can meet their reading goals that have been set for them. The Reading Room was a great addition to our school. The ability to acquire new books several times during the course of the year really motivated the students to read even more.
  - ◆ Plan is in development
  - ◆ Small groups from each classroom rotate a visit; so, a student gets to come about once a month for a 20 minute visit. We did not include the kindergarteners due to scheduling conflicts.
  - ◆ Some classes use it for reading buddies. It is open daily during lunch for 2 students per class. One-on-one with parent volunteers.

**11. Approximately what percent of the students in the school experience the Reading Room over the course of a school year?**

- 15% (6) 100%
- 42% (17) 75% - 99%
- 29% (12) 50% - 74%
- 10% (4) 25% - 49%
- 2% (1) Less than 25%
- 2% (1) Don't know

## Impact of the Reading Room

**12. If your school tracks the number of minutes students read in the Ben Carson Reading Room, how many minutes were read from (September 2010 – March 2011)?**

- ◆ 1,400 minutes
- ◆ We did not track minutes this year.
- ◆ The information can be found in Kara Horst's responses. I do not have the data on hand.
- ◆ I don't know. The Media specialist keeps track of this info. She has a log that students and teachers sign in when they use the room.
- ◆ do not count minutes
- ◆ 2700
- ◆ No tracking
- ◆ I am no longer the coordinator therefore I do not know.
- ◆ We track by minutes. Again this year at least 7,000 minutes were read during the time frame.
- ◆ NA
- ◆ Primary- 201,900 minutes  
Intermediate- 199,000 minutes  
School Total- 400,900 minutes
- ◆ approx. 3000
- ◆ Approximately 20 hours per student.
- ◆ 39,905 minutes
- ◆ N/A at this time
- ◆ N/A
- ◆ 75,200 minutes!!!
- ◆ The average was 35 minute per student
- ◆ 8,640 mins
- ◆ Each student can spent 30 minutes in the Reading Room.

**13. If your school does not track the number of minutes read, please tell us how you keep track of the students' progress and/or achievements.**

*25 Individuals responded to this open-ended question. Verbatims are available upon request.*

**14. Please estimate the number of times an average student visited the reading room over the course of the 2010/2011 school year. If there are differences among grade levels please provide as much detail as possible.**

*14 individuals responded to this open-ended question. Verbatims are available upon request.*

**15. How long is the average visit to the Reading Room?**

- 8 15 minutes or less
- 23 16 – 30 minutes
- 3 31 – 45 minutes
- 1 more than 45 minutes

**16. Please read each statement carefully and decide the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.**

	<b>Strongly Agree [5]</b>	<b>Agree [4]</b>	<b>Disagree [3]</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree [2]</b>	<b>Don't Know [1]</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>
a. Students like to spend time in the Reading Room.	74% (26)	23% (8)	0	0	3% (1)	3.8
b. When students are in the Reading Room they are engaged in reading	54% (19)	43% (15)	0	0	3% (1)	3.6
c. Students are motivated to <b>read</b> in the Reading Room	62% (21)	35% (12)	0	0	3% (1)	3.6
d. Students become excited about <b>learning</b> in the Reading Room	51% (18)	43% (15)	3% (1)	0	3% (1)	3.5
e. Struggling readers become better readers as a result of the Reading Room	37% (13)	40% (14)	6% (2)	0	17% (6)	3.4
f. Having a relaxing environment devoid of pressure to perform is conducive to reading	80% (28)	17% (6)	0	0	3% (1)	3.8
g. Students who visit the Reading Room are more motivated to <b>learn in the classroom</b>	34% (12)	46% (16)	3% (1)	0	17% (6)	3.4
h. Students gain positive attitudes towards reading in the Reading Room	63% (22)	34% (12)	0	0	3% (1)	3.7
i. Students learn about what types of books, (e.g. fiction, non-fiction) appeal to them in the Reading Room.	51% (18)	46% (16)	0	0	3% (1)	3.5
j. Dr. Carson's Think Big philosophy inspires students to achieve	49% (17)	46% (16)	0	0	6% (2)	3.5
k. Teachers learn about who needs more support with reading in the Reading Room	18% (6)	38% (13)	27% (9)	0	18% (6)	2.9
l. The Reading Room is an important resource for this school	69% (24)	29% (10)	0	0	3% (1)	3.7
m. Other (describe)	75% (6)	13% (1)	0	0	13% (1)	3.9

- ◆ The Reading Room is used as an incentive to read in the classroom and at home. I also teach small reading groups in the Reading Room. The students who use the Reading Room love coming here either because they completed their minutes of reading and were rewarded to come or if they are in a small group for reading instruction. I would say that the students who receive reading interventions and small group reading instruction have become better readers. However, there is not means of measuring those students who visit just to relax and read have become better readers by visiting the Reading Room.

- ◆ Reading Room acts a motivation to 3-5 lower achievers. It a place where they can read at their own levels without being embarrassed.
- ◆ We use the Reading Room each day as a motivational place for students, teachers, and parents to see the value of reading on their own growth!
- ◆ Students have made reading a priority in their lives now!
- ◆ Reluctant readers become interested in books as a result of visiting the reading room and begin to check out books from the library.
- ◆ The use of the Reading Room also helps students to develop self esteem in their reading habits.
- ◆ The Reading Room also open to parents.

**17. How valuable would you say the each of the following are in supporting a culture of academic achievement is in your school? leave**

	<b>Very Valuable [5]</b>	<b>Valuable [4]</b>	<b>Some-what Valuable [3]</b>	<b>Not Too Valuable [2]</b>	<b>Not At All Valuable [1]</b>	<b>Not Applicable Don't Know</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>
a. Reading Room	83% (29)	11% (4)	3% (1)	0	0	3% (1)	4.8
b. Ben Carson Reading Day	37% (13)	23% (8)	20% (7)	0	3% (1)	17% (6)	4.1
c. Think Big Philosophy	54% (19)	29% (10)	14% (5)	0	0	3% (1)	4.4

Please explain your answer:

- ◆ The Reading Room is valuable because it provides an additional opportunity for students to read independently in a different setting and with greater resources. The small group setting and variety of reading material allows students to discover and engage in the type of books they enjoy, that may not be available in the classroom. The Think Big philosophy supports academic achievement in our school because of its foundation. The intermediate students understand its importance more than the primary students. However, with constant reinforcement of the philosophy's key points, all students will benefit from the core values of the Think Big philosophy. Ben Carson Reading Day wasn't promoted and highlighted as much as it should have been this school year, but will become more valuable with increased use of the reading room and reiteration of the Think Big Philosophy.
- ◆ excellent tools for promoting the value of reading and ethnic pride
- ◆ The students enjoy reading and being able to see their accomplishments by finishing a level. The Reading room gives them the opportunity to read for enjoyment and a goal to accomplish a level. The students take pride in their name being listed on the level board.
- ◆ I am no longer the coordinator therefore I do not know.
- ◆ Participation in the reading room has increased students' self-esteem. The Ben Carson Reading Day are important, but could be even more important with more advance notice and materials. The Think Big philosophy is in line with our school's way of talking to children. It helps.
- ◆ We launched the Reading Room with a visit from Mrs. Carson, and we all found her remarks about the philosophy behind the concept and her personal stories about Ben's childhood and emphasis on reading and learning inspiring. We value the experiences the students have each day in the Reading Room to help them see first-hand many reasons to read. We have decided to revisit the inspirational messages from Dr. Carson to energize our students for their summer reading.
- ◆ Students have learned that reading is to be celebrated. Students understand that great futures begin with reading as demonstrated by Dr. Carson's achievements.
- ◆ Students enjoy having free time to read for fun. Hearing and celebrating Dr. Carson's message is motivating to the students.
- ◆ Students are in a comfortable environment and can concentrate on comprehension skills of reading.
- ◆ Think Big hasn't been a focus, even though it is up on the wall. I will try to incorporate it more by emphasizing it and drawing attention to what it really means.

- ◆ Students feel better about themselves and what they can achieve. They understand that success in reading can help them reach goals that they have set for themselves.
- ◆ The reading room is a comfortable place and it's bright and cheerful. Students love to be in this room. The Ben Carson Reading Day is special and fun but the children like their independence in this room to browse and select what they want to read and where they want to relax. The Think Big Philosophy is best understood by the older students.
- ◆ The child know that the Think Big Philosophy is important and that they can achieve anything they set out to do.
- ◆ Every student in our building is familiar with Dr. Carson and his "Think Big" philosophy. We simply need to encourage teachers to spend more time with the classes in the Reading Room.
- ◆ I believe any time we can get a child excited about reading, it is a valuable achievement! The Reading Room does just that!
- ◆ The reading room provides students with an alternative reading environment that is just for enjoyment, and at the same time allows them to practice their skills as readers without them knowing it.

**18. Ben Carson attributes his early reading with helping him go from the bottom of the class to the top. To the extent you know, is the Reading Room inspiring low achieving students to aim higher?**

<b>Yes, Definitely</b> [5]	<b>Yes, Probably</b> [4]	<b>No, Probably Not</b> [3]	<b>No, Definitely Not</b> [2]	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>
38% (13)	47% (16)	3% (1)	0	12% (4)	3.4

If yes, can you give us one or more examples?

- ◆ Not able to answer based solely on the effect of the Reading Room. Teachers have noticed students' reading interests have been motivated through the use of the Reading Room and Ben Carson incentives. Students often comment on how the Reading Room contains books that our own school library doesn't carry. They often ask me to purchase books seen in the Reading Room that can be eventually circulated within our school library.
- ◆ The Ben Carson Reading Room and program here at Wellwood fosters a positive and supportive environment about reading.
- ◆ I work with a few students who have become better readers because we use the Ben Carson room.
- ◆ By reinforcing Dr. Carson's story to struggling readers.
- ◆ Low achievers can read at their low levels. Low achievers now have a place where they are sometimes chosen when higher achievers are not. Low achievers can find a place where they can feel "special."
- ◆ As I mentioned before, our "Rapid Readers" groups (3rd, 4th, and 5th graders who come to the Reading Room for time to read, expert coaching from our reading specialists, and a commitment to read an extra hour each night at home) have made remarkable progress this year. Of our 23 fifth graders, about 60% have made two year's progress in reading levels over a five-month period with this program. They are the only group allowed to actually take home books from the Ben Carson Reading Room (for their extra hour of reading each night), then bring the books back the next day to get new ones. We're expanding this program for next year.
- ◆ Students are more aware of their reading skills and potential. They are more self reflective readers and are taking more ownership as far as making progress. Students want to become better readers.
- ◆ Each classroom has a chart of all of the students and what destination they have reached. This reminder has helped encourage students to want to record their minutes and read.
- ◆ There are some who have been inspired.
- ◆ When students have no pressure from peers to choose books that are not on their level they feel more comfortable about what they are reading. Often in the media center students will pick books based on what their friends are picking that are too hard and they never read them. In the THINK BIG READING ROOM the pressure is off and they are choosing books they can easily read and enjoy.

- ◆ Some struggling readers have found out for the first time that they are willing to try to read a chapter book and surprised when they can get through it. The new materials in the Reading Room also allows me to select books for this group - low level/high interest books. I simply don't have enough funds to do this normally. The room itself is a motivation. The kids love going in there and spending time there. They know it is supposed to be quiet and it gives them a chance to chill out and spend time reading with me one on one if time allows.
- ◆ Gives the student an opportunity to relax and read to the best of their ability.
- ◆ One student in particular was a very slow, unsure reader. Whenever she was given the opportunity to visit the Carson Reading Room, she would ask for help in choosing books for pleasure as well as information. As a matter of fact, her mother requested she be retained because of her poor reading and other academic issues. I recently visited the third grade class and heard this student reading right along with her classmates. She was on target pronouncing words and reading with enthusiasm and expression.
- ◆ Some students will tell me about the books their parents have bought for them that are available in the reading room. Some students want to read the books in the room to me that they have at home. Students also continually ask if they can take books home from the Reading Room.
- ◆ The students are allowed to read what they want without pressure from the other students or teachers about their choices, therefore they want to read more often in the Reading Room.
- ◆ The children are happy to go to this room and self select what they read. There is no pressure and no assignments. The message is reading is fun!
- ◆ Even our low achieving students love to spend time with books.
- ◆ The chance to visit and read in the Reading Room provides more incentive points which excites the children to want to earn their yearend prizes!
- ◆ The achievements of Dr. Carson are a true testament to all students that if they believe in themselves, and try to do their best then they can be successful and productive citizens in their community.
- ◆ To encourage the students to read books on any level. If they like the book, read the book.

**19. Have you observed, or heard about, any other ways the Reading Room has had an impact on students?**

47% (16) Yes    53% (18) No

a. If yes, please explain and give examples. (16 people responded)

**20. What are the benefits of the Reading Room for teachers, Reading Specialists and/or Librarians?**

**The reading room provides a supportive environment for reading**

7 Individuals responded

**The reading room provides additional resources**

7 Individuals responded

**The reading room provides resources such as good books for students to read**

5 individuals responded

**The Reading room encourages good reading habits # of response**

4 individuals responded

**Teachers find benefits in the use of the reading room**

3 individuals responded

**Other**

4 individuals responded

## **Feedback for Carson Scholars Fund**

### **21. What advantages does a Reading Room provide that a student does not receive in a classroom setting?**

- ◆ Students have access to more reading materials of different genres and levels than in the classroom. The Reading Room offers a space free from distractions that may be in the classroom. It gives the students another chance to enjoy a book for the pleasure of reading and not associated with completing a task.
- ◆ The Reading Room provides a place for students to enjoy literature and practice independent reading with a variety of books to select from.
- ◆ The biggest advantage is that a student who receives reading instruction in this room is receiving that instruction in a small group or even one-on-one setting in a very fun, colorful room that they want to go to every day.
- ◆ Some of the advantages are it is quiet and very relaxing. The furnishings and floor are more like a home atmosphere. As these books cannot be removed from the room, the next time the student returns, they can continue with the book they did not complete.
- ◆ to not feel pressure when reading  
make personal choices of what to read  
discover personal favorites; authors ,books ,characters, genres
- ◆ It is a more leisurely setting, fostering the pleasure of reading.
- ◆ More relaxed atmosphere and less restrictive. The student can pick up a book and discuss it with a classmate.
- ◆ less distractions
- ◆ A place outside of the classroom, void of performance pressures and expectations, where the student chooses what he/she wants to read and can enjoy reading.
- ◆ I am no longer the coordinator therefore I do not know.
- ◆ The big advantage of the reading room program over the classroom is choice. Students in the reading room are not confined to curriculum-based materials. Therefore, the lower achievers and ones who love super heroes, etc. have found a home!
- ◆ no pressure ability to read solely for pleasure
- ◆ It is so much more inviting--especially for our reluctant learners. Students who struggle in school learn to love reading in the Reading Room.
- ◆ A special themed room where students can read and dream about their futures. It is a quiet area and all books are accessible. Students have the freedom to explore books for just the purpose of reading them and enjoying them. A classroom setting does not allow for enough space or books for this to occur. We love our reading room!
- ◆ A time to choose a book that they are interested in.
- ◆ A place that has no interruptions, where they can focus on reading.
- ◆ Comfortable furniture and the ability to read independently without pressure from peers or adults.
- ◆ The reading room provides a space where students can relax outside of the regular class room setting.
- ◆ The students select books that they want to read, not that they are forced to read.
- ◆ The Reading Room provides a relaxed environment without the pressures of the classroom setting.
- ◆ Independence, solitude, freedom of choice. Kids say it looks like a nice spot to relax and read at the same time. They love going into it. It is less crowded then a classroom but it is colorful and inspiring to them I think. Plus they know they are helping to choose what goes into it.
- ◆ A chance to relax and read.
- ◆ Our Reading Room has comfortable, colorful furniture that the students enjoy sitting on while they are reading their books. The area has Pictures of Dr. Carson as an inspiration to the students.

- ◆ The reading room at this time has a much nicer and larger selection of books than any of the classroom libraries.
- ◆ The children can go in with their friends and read in a nonthreatening, nonstructured environment.
- ◆ The room is less structured and permits small groups to work together without distracting others. The students know that upon entering the room, they will be reading for entertainment value as opposed to required reading assignments.
- ◆ It provides a quiet comfortable and fun place to sit back and enjoy a beautiful new book, some of which are not available in our school library.
- ◆ more books
- ◆ The reading room is a break away from the classroom norm. It is a magical and motivating place where students feel relaxed and comfortable.
- ◆ Students can take books home and return them.
- ◆ There is no pressure to complete assigned readings. Reading is for pure enjoyment. Reading can be social and kids can work with other students who are not in their reading class.
- ◆ Leisure time to read texts of their own choice.

**22. How useful is/are the:**

	<b>Very Useful [5]</b>	<b>Useful [4]</b>	<b>Somewh at Useful [3]</b>	<b>Not Too Useful [2]</b>	<b>Not At All Useful [1]</b>	<b>N/A Don't Know</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>
a. Reading Room basic package	35% (12)	27% (9)	12% (4)	0	0	27% (9)	4.3
b. Reading Room workshops	44% (15)	12% (4)	6% (2)	3% (1)	0	35% (12)	4.5
c. Support from the national Reading Room coordinator	32% (11)	18% (6)	6% (2)	0	0	44% (15)	4.5

**23. From your perspective, what are the greatest strengths of the Reading Room in your school?**

**The reading room provides a positive environment for reading**  
15 individuals responded

**The reading room motivates and inspires students to learn**  
8 individuals responded

**The reading room offers a lot of books**  
3 individuals responded

**The reading room is accessible to students**  
3 individuals responded

**Other**  
4 individuals responded

**24. From your perspective, what are the Reading Room’s greatest challenges?**

**Staffing is a challenge –**  
10 individuals responded

**Time and space constraints**  
7 individuals responded

**The reading room needs more books**  
4 individuals responded

**Not being able to check out books**  
2 individuals responded

**Other**  
6 individuals responded

**25. Are there any ways that the Reading Room in your school could be strengthened?**

**It is good as is**  
8 individuals responded

**Need more books and materials**  
7 individuals responded

**Promoting participation**  
3 individuals responded

**Other**  
9 individuals responded

**26. If you attended the 2010 Reading Room workshop how useful was it to your work?**

<b>Very Useful</b> [5]	<b>Useful</b> [4]	<b>Somewhat Useful</b> [3]	<b>Not Too Useful</b> [2]	<b>Not At All Useful</b> [1]	<b>Rating Average</b>
76% (16)	14% (3)	5% (1)	0	5% (1)	4.6

**27. If you did not attend the 2010 Reading Room Workshop, why not?**

- ◆ I would like to attend and need to find time in my teaching schedule to make it happen.
- ◆ Attended 2 years ago and since we do not have anyone to monitor the reading room it is used during library and some lunch time. With our reading clubs we use it as supplemental reading time.
- ◆ I did not attend--but my co-leader (Kim) attended and thought the workshop was full of great ideas!
- ◆ I honestly don't remember being invited...
- ◆ Was not able to participate by webcam.
- ◆ Scheduling and distance
- ◆ Other responsibilities of my job.
- ◆ Could not take the time away from instruction for a full day workshop.
- ◆ No travel \$, not interested
- ◆ Personal Issues
- ◆ I was not aware of them.
- ◆ Was not Reading Room coordinator at that time.
- ◆ I am no longer the coordinator therefore I do not know.
- ◆ Didn't know about it
- ◆ NA
- ◆ N/A
- ◆ N/A

**28. Do you have any suggestions for future Reading Room workshops?**

- ◆ how to integrate the Reading Room concept into weekly library periods  
information about the Reading Room basic package, the role of the National Reading coordinator  
record keeping
- ◆ Love the open forum and brainstorming ideas. Guest speakers have been great keep on having them.
- ◆ No.
- ◆ I am no longer the coordinator therefore I do not know.
- ◆ I thought that the workshop in the fall was beautifully planned. I took back some great ideas and enjoyed the presentations as they were all very meaningful.
- ◆ It would be nice to get more ideas for the middle school reading rooms. Most of the time the ideas are great but are more elementary than middle school. A lot of the ideas for elementary would not work well for middle school.
- ◆ Closer to the Glen Burnie area would be a tremendous convenience for me.... I really enjoyed the workshop last year and took a lot of valuable information with me.
- ◆ N/A
- ◆ N/A
- ◆ Leveled books are definitely needed.
- ◆ I think talking to others who have a reading room was so valuable. There were experienced schools and schools like myself who had just opened. Next year I look forward to other ideas now that we are opened and established.
- ◆ I have enjoyed all of the workshops so far and walk away with at least one idea that we had not tried before. Keep up the good work!
- ◆ N/A
- ◆ Share ideas for expanding the collection - I do not have any budget within my school for adding or replacing books. We count totally on donations.

**29. Is there anything else the Carson Scholars Fund could do or offer to support the Reading Room in your school?**

**Dr. Carson**

- ◆ Yes...I would love to have access to newspaper articles, magazine articles, photos, etc. of anything having to do with Dr. Carson. I would love to develop an on-going collage/timeline of his contributions, challenges, achievements so that the students realize that he is continuing to give back all the time. Would it be possible for the CSF website to post links to articles as they become available about him so that we could download them to share with our students? It would also be great if stickers or bookmarks or posters could be distributed to every school for Ben Carson Reading Day in order to celebrate the occasion!
- ◆ Tell Ben Carson we'd like a personal appearance.... at his convenience of course.

**Funding**

- ◆ I would like our sponsors to check with the school coordinators to see how they can continue to help with the room in areas of funding, volunteering, Ben Carson Reading Day, or educational support.
- ◆ Perhaps the original funders from each site could be invited for a visit to see how their generous support has helped schools. Then a "boost grant" idea might provide another \$1,000 or \$2,000 to buy more books. Even without the "boost grant" idea, it may be good to invite sponsors to visit Reading Rooms at special celebration times to see how their contributions are paying off to really help our impoverished and struggling learners.
- ◆ Funds for purchasing more books and maintaining what we have! :)
- ◆ I hope that we can continue to get financial support to acquire new books a couple times each year. Providing new material is a big deal when trying to encourage and maintain interest in reading, especially with low achievers.
- ◆ More funds/reading materials.

**Other**

- ◆ More publicity, more high-profile guests to schools.
- ◆ Let us know where we can get free books on Levels AA through P.
- ◆ Computers or any type of technology.
- ◆ Unsure
- ◆ Nothing I can think of at the time. They have been very supportive and we appreciate that.
- ◆ No, not really!
- ◆ No, we are so fortunate to have a reading room and their support.
- ◆ N/A (n=4)

**30. Is there anything else you would like the Carson Fund and its funders to know?**

- ◆ I would like them to know how appreciative our school is for the funds necessary to create this great atmosphere for students and providing the opportunity for our students to read for pure pleasure in a fun, colorful room that is loaded with all kinds of books to choose from. I am very appreciate to have the funds to support our reading program, "Wellwood Reads Around the World" so that the students can earn reading incentives and be rewarded for choosing to read! It is wonderful.
- ◆ Thank you so much for gifting our school with this wonderful resource!!!!!!
- ◆ Children enjoy reading the books, especially the recently ones.
- ◆ No. We are blessed to have the funding, and such a wonderful space dedicated to the love of reading!
- ◆ No. Great program; gratifying experiences with students.
- ◆ I am no longer the coordinator therefore I do not know.
- ◆ We'd like to sincerely thank the Carson Fund for this fantastic opportunity to establish the Ben Carson Reading Room. This room is an open invitation to entice every child and adult in our school to read and learn!
- ◆ A big thank you to all of the funders as they have made such an incredible difference in so many students' lives. Please keep funding this wonderful program!

- ◆ We appreciate their help and support. Our students benefit greatly from the reading room, because some of them do not have access to books at home.
- ◆ Thank you for your support!
- ◆ Thank you for all you do for our children. The READING room is so valuable to our community and students.
- ◆ I would like book bins to categorize the books selections by genres.
- ◆ What they are doing is great. Libraries, especially in large urban districts are not funded well or thought of much as being inspirational and instrumental aspects in a child's education - but books can change lives. Thanks so much for funding elementary libraries where the seeds can be sown for future growth. Our Reading Room is a blessing.
- ◆ N/A
- ◆ Ten thousand dollars is very much appreciated but to actually have a library that adequately serves a school population much more money is needed (especially for struggling readers). It is also difficult to purchase enough of the right kind of books, if you need to include things such as furniture, etc
- ◆ Thank you for giving Jacksonville the opportunity to have a reading room. We know we are blessed!
- ◆ We appreciate the annual gift of either a book, video, etc. connecting Dr. Carson to literacy. The children enjoy the materials and it gives me an opportunity to discuss the importance of the Reading Room and the pivotal role which Dr. Carson has played and continues to play. Thank you!
- ◆ I'd just like to take this moment to say Thank You again...  
Our students love their Reading Room and it does get them excited about reading!  
Thank you, Thank you, Thank you!!!

**Thank you for your time!**

**APPENDIX C**

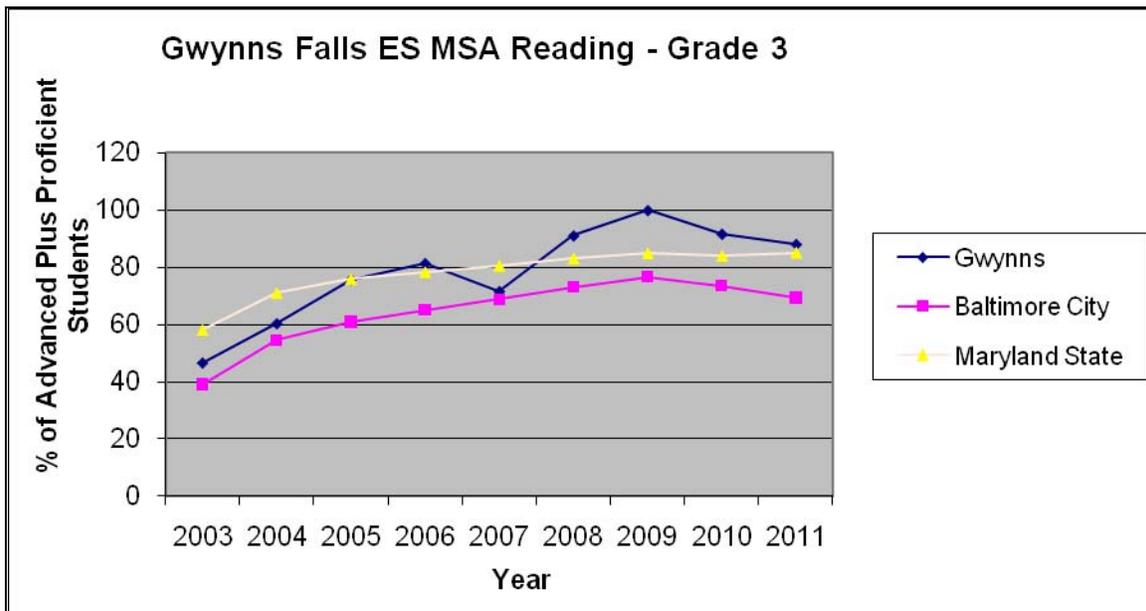
**Reading Test Score Comparison Data – Grade 3**

**Charts of Grade 3 MSA Reading - % of Advanced and Proficient Students**

**Grade 3 MSA Reading – % of Advanced and Proficient Students**

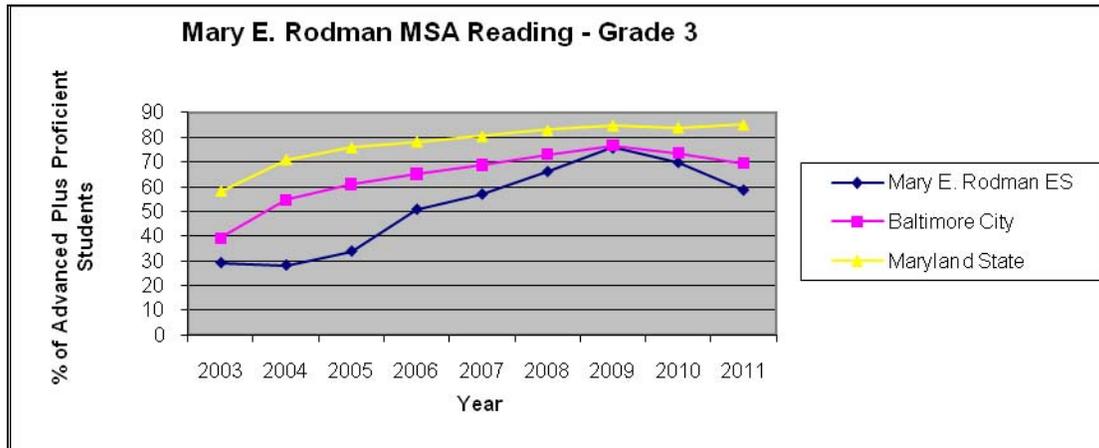
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
*Gwynns Falls ES	46.5	60.3	75.8	81.4	71.6	91.1	100	91.7	88.1
Baltimore City	39.1	54.6	61	65.1	68.8	73.1	76.7	73.6	69.4
Maryland State	58.1	71	75.9	78.3	80.5	83	84.9	84	85.1

\* Also included in the text of the report. ES = Elementary School



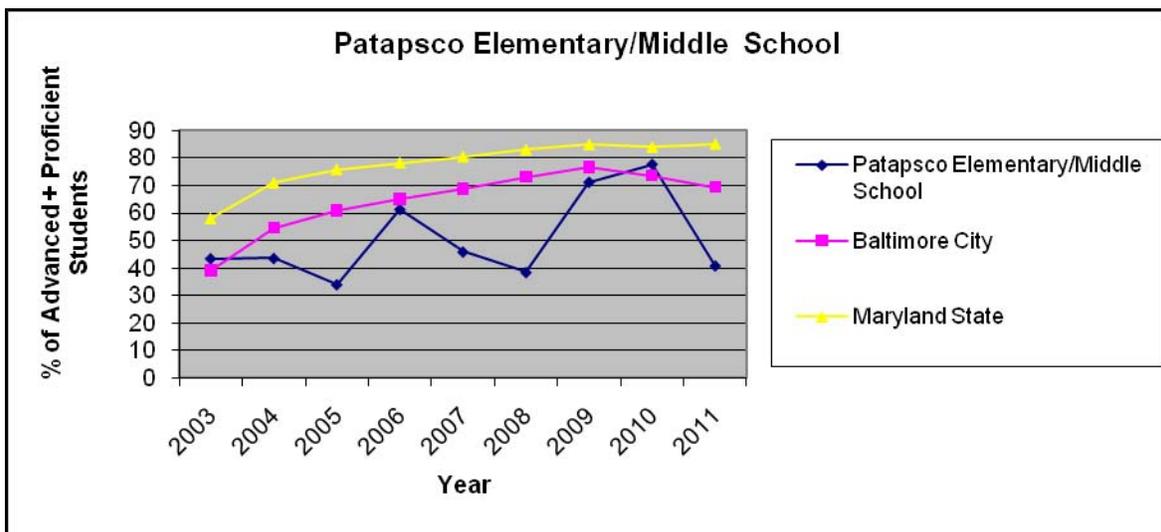
**Grade 3 MSA Reading – % of Advanced and Proficient Students**

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>Mary E. Rodman ES</b>	29.1	28.1	33.8	50.9	57.1	66.3	75.9	70	58.7
<b>Baltimore City</b>	39.1	54.6	61	65.1	68.8	73.1	76.7	73.6	69.4
<b>Maryland State</b>	58.1	71	75.9	78.3	80.5	83	84.9	84	85.1



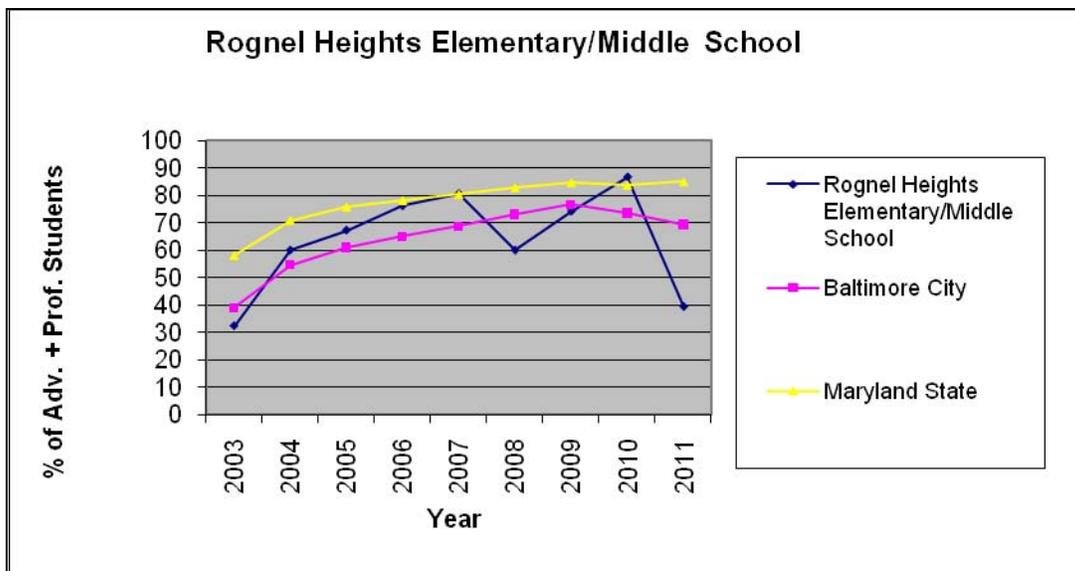
**Grade 3 MSA Reading – % of Advanced and Proficient Students**

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>Patapsco Elementary/Middle School</b>	43.5	43.6	34.1	61.3	45.9	38.5	71.1	77.6	40.9
<b>Baltimore City</b>	39.1	54.6	61	65.1	68.8	73.1	76.7	73.6	69.4
<b>Maryland State</b>	58.1	71	75.9	78.3	80.5	83	84.9	84	85.1



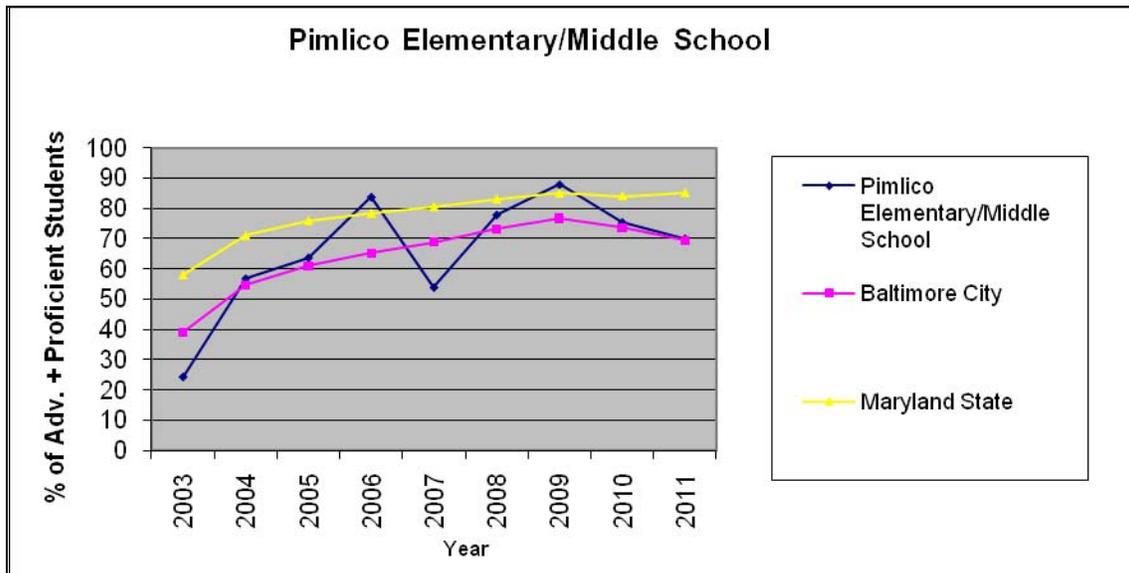
**Grade 3 MSA Reading – % of Advanced and Proficient Students**

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>Rognel Heights Elementary/Middle School</b>	32.4	60	67.3	76.2	80.6	60	74.2	86.7	39.4
<b>Baltimore City</b>	39.1	54.6	61	65.1	68.8	73.1	76.7	73.6	69.4
<b>Maryland State</b>	58.1	71	75.9	78.3	80.5	83	84.9	84	85.1



**Grade 3 MSA Reading – % of Advanced and Proficient Students**

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>Pimlico Elementary/Middle School</b>	24.3	56.8	63.7	83.8	53.9	77.9	87.9	75.4	70
<b>Baltimore City</b>	39.1	54.6	61	65.1	68.8	73.1	76.7	73.6	69.4
<b>Maryland State</b>	58.1	71	75.9	78.3	80.5	83	84.9	84	85.1



**Grade 3 MSA Reading – % of Advanced and Proficient Students**

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>Coldstream Park Elementary/Middle School</b>	54.8	75.4	71.7	80.7	50.8	71.1	70.5	79.1	76.7
<b>Baltimore City</b>	39.1	54.6	61	65.1	68.8	73.1	76.7	73.6	69.4
<b>Maryland State</b>	58.1	71	75.9	78.3	80.5	83	84.9	84	85.1

