

# BOOKS FOR OWNERSHIP

## PROGRAM EVALUATION



**Reading**  
Is Fundamental.

until every child reads

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary .....	2
Introduction .....	4
Literature Review .....	4
Books for Ownership Theory of Change .....	5
Context .....	5
Nature of Evaluation .....	6
Research Design and Methods .....	7
Data Collection .....	7
Analysis .....	8
Findings .....	8
Limitations .....	18
Conclusions .....	18
Recommendations .....	19
References .....	20
Appendix A: Logic Model .....	21
Appendix B: Books for Ownership Survey .....	22

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) is committed to a literate America by inspiring a passion for reading among all children, providing quality content to create impact, and engaging communities in the solution to give every child the fundamentals for success. As the nation's largest nonprofit organization for children's literacy, RIF has provided more than 420 million books to over 100 million kids in all 50 states, inspiring generations to read, learn and grow.

## Purpose of Evaluation

The intent of this evaluation for RIF is to determine what and how the activities within the Books for Ownership (BFO) program are functioning and lead to reflections on ways to improve program operations. The following research questions guided the evaluation:

1. In what ways did BFO program coordinators engage students and families in the Book Celebration Events?
2. To what extent and in what ways did BFO program coordinators engage and build capacity in literacy advocates?
3. To what extent and in what ways did BFO program coordinators involve and provide resources to families?

## Sample Population

During 2020-2021 end-of-year survey, 360 BFO coordinators completed the activity reporting survey to accompany the program. In addition, 126 BFO coordinators participated in a 10-item survey that was sent in December 2021.

## Methods

A mixed-methods research design was utilized. Quantitative methods in the form of online surveys were used to determine frequency of resources provided to families and the amount of RIF resources utilized by program sites. Qualitative methods were used in the form of open-ended survey questions to learn how these resources were utilized. A two-phased open-coding and pattern-coding was used to interpret qualitative data.



## Major Findings

### Family Literacy Resources are Critical

55% of BFO coordinators surveyed indicated that they provided resources to families during the Book Celebration event.

### BFO Coordinators Pivoted Due to Pandemic

36% of BFO coordinators indicated that the pandemic had implications for their Book Celebration Events and shared the innovative ways they engaged students in reading during the pandemic.

### Themed Book Events Drive Engagement

33% of BFO coordinators indicated that they used a thematic approach to engage students at their Book Celebration events.

### Program Coordinators Feel Supported

51% of BFO coordinators did not make suggestions to improve the program and commented that the program is already great.



## Recommendations

1. Scale RIF's BFO program to apply to more grade levels.
2. During the initial BFO onboarding training, demonstrate how to locate and access RIF resources. Create an editorial calendar with RIF resources per month and share these with BFO coordinators through the monthly newsletter so they know which resources to send home to families each month. This will increase the frequency by which BFO coordinators provide resources to families.
3. Provide thematic curated booklists for BFO coordinators within the RIF Bookstore to save them time when ordering books.
4. Adapt more family resources to be available in a variety of languages.
5. Create a database or catalog of the innovative solutions and engagement activities that BFO coordinators have used to implement their Book Celebration events as a source of inspiration and information for other BFO coordinators.
6. Provide tools and resources, such as video modules, on how to build capacity in literacy advocates and volunteers to maximize the efficiency of the program.

## Introduction

Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) is committed to a literate America by inspiring a passion for reading among all children, providing quality content to create impact, and engaging communities in the solution to give every child the fundamentals for success. As the nation's largest nonprofit organization for children's literacy, RIF has provided more than 420 million books to over 100 million kids in all 50 states, inspiring generations to read, learn and grow.

## Literature Review

It has been well-documented that the presence of books in the home impacts academic outcomes for students (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003; Allington et al., 2010; Evans et al., 2014; Philips & Chin, 2004). According to Allington et al. (2010), children from under-resourced communities have less access to books in their schools, communities, and homes. For example, Evans et al. (2014) measured reading levels of 15-year-olds across 42 nations controlling for wealth, parents' education level and occupation, gender, and the country's gross national product, with results demonstrating that the biggest indicator of academic performance was having books in the family home. Furthermore, research demonstrates that limited access to books in the home is one of the key differences between children from families with differing income levels (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003; Allington et al., 2010; Philips & Chin, 2004).

Research suggests that reading aloud with children improves reading achievement for children (Cappella et al., 2016). Specifically, listening to parents read storybooks influences children's development of phonological awareness, vocabulary, concepts about print, and written syntax (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). Therefore, family literacy engagement initiatives emphasize placing value on literacy, making bilingual books available, and helping parents to engage in storybook reading with their children (Larrotta & Yamamura, 2011; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014; Wessels, 2014).

Succinctly defined, independent reading is when students spend time reading a self-selected text. The purpose of independent reading is to help students develop a positive attitude towards reading and to give them opportunities to practice reading (Gambrell et al., 2011). According to the National Reading Panel (NRP), many studies demonstrate a correlation between children who read more having better fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (National Institute for Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000). By having opportunities to engage in independent reading, children grow in both their reading achievement and their intrinsic motivation towards reading (McRae & Guthrie, 2009).

According to Marinak et al. (2015), "motivation to read is a critical consideration for educators because literacy learning requires an interaction between cognitive and affective factors" (p. 51). These affective factors include motivation to read and attitude towards reading. Motivated readers set their own learning goals, choose to read during free time, and challenge themselves. There are two subsets of reading motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation refers to being involved in the reading and having curiosity towards the subject. Extrinsic motivation refers being recognized and encouraged by loved ones and competition such as getting good grades. Research has indicated that intrinsically motivated readers have a positive experience with reading and are more likely to increase their frequency of reading and have better comprehension (Schiefele & Löweke, 2017). Furthermore, declines in intrinsic motivation can begin as early as first grade and continue throughout a child's educational career.

One way that teachers can enhance motivation is by recognizing that motivation changes throughout the school year and is different for each student so they may need to vary their strategies. Another way teachers can support motivation is by modeling a love of reading for their students (Johns & Lenski, 2019).

Research has found that students are most motivated to read books they have selected themselves (Fisher & Frey, 2018). For example, through interviews with children, Edmunds and Bauserman (2010) found that 84% talked about books that they selected themselves versus books that were assigned to them. Guthrie et al. (2007) demonstrate that book choice creates readers that are more intrinsically motivated to read.

Additionally, eBooks and multimodal texts have become increasingly common in elementary classrooms because they provide more opportunities for students to be motivated and engaged as well as offer unique features such as read-alouds and interactive supports for building background knowledge, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Furthermore, standards emphasizing 21st century learning and the need for distance reading alternatives during the COVID-19 pandemic have increased the need for eBooks and multimodal texts (Forzani & Ly, 2022).

RIF's theory of change is based on literature that suggests access to books and choice create more engaged readers. Children who are engaged and motivated will read more frequently. And more frequent reading creates more opportunities and positive outcomes for children.

## **Books for Ownership Theory of Change**

At the heart of the organization and aligned to research, RIF believes that giving children choice and access to own new, age-appropriate books is positively tied to reading behavior, motivation, and frequency. It also has a positive impact on reading and writing performance, language development, and academic performance in other subjects. Finally, it is associated with positive behavioral, educational, and psychological outcomes. RIF believes in keeping a continuously evolving online library of resources through both Literacy Central and Literacy Network because providing book-related resources for families, educators, and literacy advocates creates an engaged community of reading support leading to an increase in students' reading frequency, motivation, enjoyment, and confidence. Relatedly, being enthusiastic and engaged in reading improves reading frequency which leads to higher reading proficiency. And improvements in reading proficiency in children from historically under-resourced communities will close the reading achievement gap (Appendix A).

## **Context**

The Books for Ownership (BFO) Program includes the following components:

1. Schools and adjacent partners are recruited to participate in BFO by RIF's Programs Team through fully funded partnership grants, self-funded, or matching grants.
2. A diverse collection of books is curated for the RIF Bookstore online and related resources are developed to accompany books on Literacy Central. The BFO coordinators can order books that are most aligned to the interests of their student population, with special focus on providing bilingual and culturally diverse titles.
3. The Programs Team builds capacity in BFO coordinators by providing onboarding calls and training. The BFO coordinator has access to resources through Literacy Network, such as program implementation guides, read-aloud guides, featured best practices, and webinars, to initiate their program and support literacy advocates.

4. The BFO coordinator and literacy advocates host Book Celebration events at their School and Adjacent Partnership sites to create a culture of literacy and bolster excitement and motivation around reading.
5. Some schools are given access to Skybrary®, an interactive library of eBooks and video field trips, as an additional tool to engage young readers and foster a love of reading. Skybrary® includes features such as read-to-me narration feature to promote reading fluency and increase access for multilingual learners, informative videos to build background knowledge, animated illustration to promote engagement, and Big Thinker questions to support comprehension. Skybrary® is available on the Web, iPhone, and iPad making reading more accessible for a wider group of students.
6. As free online resource centers, Literacy Central and Literacy Network provide book related support materials for educators to engage families in at-home reading activities. Literacy Central provides book-specific resources such as educator and family guides, crisscross and crossword puzzles, and lesson plans. Literacy Network provides professional learning tools such as Quick Guides for read-alouds and recorded webinars on literacy best practices.

## Nature of Evaluation

A formative evaluation provides information that is used during the development of the programs and content and helps to improve it (Weiss, 1998). Since RIF is seeking an evaluation to inform the program model and content development of BFO, a formative evaluation was selected.

A process evaluation looks to the phase of the program being studied and is derived from the “activities” column of the logic model (Appendix A). In the Books for Ownership Program, these include developing resources, recruitment, onboarding, distribution of materials, engaging stakeholders, and implementation of BFO book celebration events. A process evaluation is used to help a program understand what and how the activities within the program are functioning and leads to reflections on ways to improve program operations (Weiss, 1998).

In discussing with RIF stakeholders which activities warrant evaluation, the team determined to focus on the ways in which BFO coordinators engage students and families, build capacity in literacy advocates, and how resources were used by families. Therefore, research questions that guided this evaluation were:

1. In what ways did BFO coordinators engage students and families in the Book Celebration Events?
2. To what extent and in what ways did BFO coordinators engage and build capacity in literacy advocates?
3. To what extent and in what ways did BFO coordinators involve and provide resources to families?



## Research Design and Methods

Weiss (1998) explains that “quantitative methods have the edge for developing specific answers about the relationship of particular program strategies or event outcomes” while qualitative methods are useful for “understanding the meaning of program processes” (p. 86). Since all three research questions involve “to what extent” a quantitative measure was used to determine the amount of Book Celebration Events. Qualitative measures were used to answer the remaining parts of the questions because these methods shed light on which elements of the program are salient and to whom (Weiss, 1998) and will help inform ways to enhance the program.

## Participants

BFO Coordinators serve as the point of contact for each RIF BFO program site. Their role in the school varies from classroom teacher, librarian or media specialist, and literacy coach, literacy coordinator, reading specialist. The BFO Coordinators’ responsibilities include ordering titles from the RIF Bookstore online, host at least one Book Celebration Event, provide families access to Skybrary® (when applicable), recruit and build capacity in literacy advocates, and provide resources and support for families to engage in at-home literacy practices. There were 566 BFO coordinators invited to participate in this study based on having an active program during the 2020-2021 school year.

## Data Collection

**Activity reporting.** For research question one, a secondary source was used to measure the quantity of Book Celebration Events and the ways in which BFO coordinators engaged students (and families). RIF currently uses an activity reporting form, accessible to BFO coordinators via Literacy Network and built out via Salesforce, to measure number of Book Celebration Events with a write-in section that asks BFO coordinators to describe the motivational activities used and the theme of the event(s). A total of 360 open-ended responses collected through the activity reporting platform at the end of the 2020-2021 school year were analyzed.

**Pilot Testing Questions.** A sample survey was sent to 66 number of BFO coordinators to pilot test the questions and determine whether participants interpret the questions in the same way and to identify patterns in participant responses. Revisions were made to the questions based on the responses to the pilot questionnaire/interview to ensure validity and reliability (Weiss, 1998). The pilot survey was sent out during the week of December 6, 2021, to 66 BFO coordinators who were incentivized to participate in the pilot with gifted tote bags. Based on data collected from the pilot survey, one question was amended from an open-ended response to a check all that apply (Appendix B). The change was made for two purposes: (1) the open-ended option did not yield many responses and (2) the check all that apply would give BFO coordinators a list of resources available that they could then be knowledgeable about and, hopefully, utilize.

**Survey.** A 10-item survey consisting of one geographic question, four multiple choices, one check all that apply, and four open-ended questions aligned to RQ #2. The survey was emailed to 500 BFO coordinators from emails provided by the Programs Team. Of the 500 emails, 265 were opened, 15 bounced back, and 103 participants completed the survey.

## Analysis

According to Weiss (1998), “coding is the practice of taking narrative information and slotting it into a set of categories that capture the essence of their meaning.” To better understand the ways in which BFO coordinators are engaging students and families, a first and second cycle of coding to analyze open-ended activity reporting questions, questionnaire responses, and semi-structured interview responses were used. For the first cycle, the evaluator read through the raw activity reporting written responses, questionnaire responses and, interview transcripts responses several times and noted in vivo codes in the margins. In vivo coding is an inductive coding scheme with codes created using exact language and terms used by the participants to allow the researcher to capture the exact experiences, ideas, and meanings. For the second cycle, the evaluator used pattern coding to identify themes and causes/explanations in the data sources (Miles et al., 2013). Qualitative data is presented in a narrative format organized by research question to give the readers an essence of how the BFO coordinators utilized RIF resources to engage students and families in the BFO program.

## Findings

The following results are organized by the three research questions. Key findings are presented in blue font and are supported with charts, descriptions, and quotes from surveys.

### **In what ways did BFO coordinators engage students and families in the Book Celebration Events?**

Book Celebration Events refer to the book distribution events in which BFO coordinators are expected to implement motivational activities for students when they select and take home their brand-new books. Based on the activity reporting submissions, a total of 845 book celebration events occurred during the 2020-2021 school year, however, projections estimate that over 9,000 events occurred. Through the activity reporting, BFO coordinators (n=360) responded to the question “Describe motivational activity used” and “summary of theme event(s).” Through in vivo and pattern coding, five themes emerged: (1) impact of COVID-19, (2) thematic approach, (3) read-alouds, book talks, and guest readers, (4) extrinsic motivation, and (5) the importance of reading. During the pattern coding process, descriptions could be coded into multiple themes (double coding). For example, a program coordinator may have indicated that they were impacted by COVID-19 and they incorporated a thematic approach. Each of these themes are further described and illustrated with examples and quotes.

### **Impact of Covid-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to pose challenges for BFO sites during the 2020-2021 school years and **36% of BFO coordinators who completed the activity report indicated that the pandemic had implications for their Book Celebration Events.** One BFO coordinator wrote,

**“We were mostly virtual this school year (2020-21). We returned hybrid in March 2021 with many students remaining virtual. We did not have any distributions and will plan for next school year.”**

While this quote emphasizes the downsides of the pandemic, only one coordinator indicated a complete postponement of Book Celebration Events. Most BFO coordinators met the COVID-19 challenges with optimism and creativity.

Logistically, many BFO coordinators arranged their book distributions during regularly scheduled supply or meal pick-ups, organized drive thru events for families, or sent book donations to homes through the bus routes or with teacher volunteers. One BFO coordinator explained,

**“ We were virtual all year so we couldn’t really do an event. Instead, we sent free books to each student on the bus routes at the end of 1st semester. Then 2nd semester, additional books were available from the buses for students to get new, free reading material along with their meal deliveries. Parents could come to the school to get materials for students not on our bus routes. ”**

One site even partnered with other nonprofits to create a Book Celebration Event in the parking lot of McDonalds with food, clothing, and diapers given in addition to the books. The supply and meal pick-ups as well as the bus routes meant that the books were often selected for students and placed into a plastic bag or backpack.

Other BFO coordinators found creative ways to offer choice such as through menus at the drive-thru events. The students selected their books from the menu and then the teachers packaged the books into a backpack to go. Another BFO coordinator explained,

**“ Virtual students filled out a form to choose their books and then were able to pick them up at a drive-thru giveaway. ”**

These BFO coordinators understood the importance of choice in RIF’s model and developed strategies to allow students to choose their books.

While BFO coordinators were creative and responsive, they still longed for the traditional Book Celebration Event model. One BFO coordinator shared,

**“ I know this is not the ideal way to implement the program but operating under our Covid protocols it was the best way to get books in kids’ hands this year. I do hope we are chosen to participate in the program again in the future when we can do the program justice! ”**

Some program sites found that while the COVID-19 protocols closed many doors, they opened some as well. Many BFO coordinators found fun and engaging ways to host book celebration events virtually such as having famous children’s book authors as guest speakers or virtual field trips which may not have been an option pre-pandemic. One BFO coordinator explained,

**“ The students listened to books read aloud by famous authors, celebrities, and school personnel. They also created favorite book video responses using Flipgrid. They culminated the week by taking virtual field trips to local libraries and libraries throughout the nation. ”**

Another BFO coordinator shared,

**“ Because we could not hold this event in person this year, we had an amazing 1 ½ hour virtual event. The virtual event was hosted by staff members from the Museum of the Rockies and staff members from our HRDC Head Start program. Families enjoyed dinosaur trivia, a sneak peak into the free children’s book from RIF, *Splendid Sea Creatures*, by Laaren Brown, a virtual tour through the current exhibit “Savage Ancient Seas” with the museum Education Specialist, Dillon Warn, fossil kit demonstration, live question & answer session, and free drawings. ”**

One site even had Jerry Pallota, author of the Who Would Win Series, join their Google Meets!

Overall, BFO coordinators demonstrated determination, dedication, and creativity to fulfill RIF's mission of getting new books into the hands of children. They adapted their Book Celebration Events based on their sites' COVID-19 safety protocols, but still found ways to include RIF's key components of book access and choice to foster a love of reading.

## Thematic Approach

While BFO coordinators may have experienced restrictions for their Book Celebration Events, many of them found ways to make their events engaging through a thematic approach. **Of the 360 BFO coordinators who completed the survey, 33% of BFO coordinators who completed the activity report indicated that they used a thematic approach to engage students at their Book Celebration Events.** Twenty BFO coordinators shared that they aligned their Book Celebration Events with holidays to be able to integrate a holiday theme. For example, "Gobbling Up Great Books" and "Thankful for Books" (Thanksgiving), "I Love Books" (Valentines), and "Holly Jolly Christmas." One BFO coordinator explained that they hosted a Christmas-themed drive thru for children to pick up books before the holiday break.

The other most common themes were a celebration of Dr. Seuss' birthday and Read Across America Day. One school named their themed event "Read Across Bethel Elementary." BFO coordinators found creative ways to incorporate a theme while adhering to Covid-19 safety protocols. One BFO coordinator explained,

**"We held our book celebration during Read Across America week. Administration dressed in Dr. Seuss-themed costumes to deliver books. A rolling cart decorated with a colorful sign and balloons were used to deliver books to students in a COVID-conscious way."**

Other themes included pajama party, camping trip, book characters, Hawaiian Luau, superheroes, and fairytales. Several sites described their STEM theme and corresponding activities,

**"After reading books about inventors, we had an invention convention where the students were challenged to create and invent using a variety of hands-on STEM activities."**

A thematic approach allowed BFO coordinators to demonstrate their creativity and find fun ways to engage their students in the events.

## Read Alouds, Book Talks, and Guest Readers

One of the most common activities at Book Celebration Events was to have read- alouds, book talks, and guest readers. Of the BFO coordinators who completed the activity reporting, 23% of BFO coordinators who completed the activity report shared that they incorporated one of these activities to build excitement around reading and choosing books. Read-alouds refer to someone reading a book aloud for children's enjoyment. One BFO coordinator explained,

**"I kicked off each event with read-alouds, highlighting some of the book choices and exciting students to select their own books. Some classes also opted to have virtual guest readers read aloud to their classes to excite them about reading."**

Often read-alouds were done by the classroom teacher, literacy coach, or principal and sometimes included an invited guest reader such as volunteers from a local university, a parent, or local author. One BFO coordinator shared,

**“The first grade students were able to hear each first grade teacher read books from a different genre (fiction, realistic fiction, nonfiction, and poetry).”**

Other sites made their read-alouds interactive by playing games, having students act out parts of the story, or recording themselves reading. One BFO Coordinator explained,

**“For the first RIF Celebration, we had mystery readers go into the classrooms and read a story....I also recorded a read- aloud for the book When Will It Be Spring.”**

Book talks refer to a short summary of the book to get students interested. Many BFO coordinators indicated that book talks were used for each of the books available to entice students about their book options. One BFO coordinator explains,

**“students previewed each of the books that were available for selection. We read a small excerpt of each book, talked about what we liked about the book and why we were excited to keep reading.”**

Research suggests that book talks can serve as both a motivational component to build students' interest in reading the book as well as can support comprehension by allowing students to draw from background knowledge and make connections (Texas Education Agency, n.d.). BFO coordinators also found that conducting book talks or previewing a part of the books that were available through BFO made their students excited about the books they would take home to own.

## **Extrinsic Motivation**

As previously described, extrinsic motivation for reading refers to activities such as receiving recognition from someone you admire or competition such as a reading contest (Schiefele & Löweke, 2017). **Ten percent of BFO coordinators who completed the activity report indicated that they incorporated some form of extrinsic motivation into their Book Celebration Events. Commonly, this included: reading logs, reading challenges and competitions, certificates and prizes, read-a-thons, and Accelerated Reader quizzes.** One BFO coordinator explained,

**“We used an incentive program for the children in our virtual reading camps. They earned points that were converted to prizes and opportunities to win an iPad. We also used lots of motivational fun literature and book choice. At the event we created a book walk with posters of one of the favorite books that families read together as they came into the event.”**

In addition, extrinsic motivation also refers to encouragement from loved ones. For example, “During Read Across America week, students were gifted with books from RIF by classroom delivery by the Instructional Coach and Assistant Principal. They were greeted with encouraging words to continue to grow with a good book.” Reading to a loved one also served as a motivational activity,

**“Our students adopted a “reading buddy” and chose 3 new books to take with their buddy. They signed an adoption certificate stating they would read to their new buddy at least 20 minutes each day.”**

BFO coordinators found ways to motivate students in their programs by incorporating opportunities to be recognized, encouraged, and share reading with those they look up to and care about.

## The Importance of Reading

Finally, six percent of the BFO coordinators that completed the activity report reported that they used the Book Celebration Events to stress the importance of reading to the children and their families. These BFO coordinators demonstrated a deep understanding of the mission of RIF and wanted to pass this on to their students and families.

Many BFO coordinators shared that they discussed the importance of reading directly with their students. For example, one BFO coordinator shared,

“I had a “Knowledge keepers” lesson through my virtual classroom. We talked about the importance of literacy and the long-term impact reading had on our education and lives.”

Another wrote,

“Students and teachers selected just right books for each child. Students got to help design the artwork for their bags. They also wrote thank you notes explaining why these were important to them. We had the firemen and other participating adults to explain to kids what they loved about reading and to share their favorite books.”

Other BFO coordinators incorporated a family literacy or information sharing into their Book Celebration Events. One BFO coordinator explained,

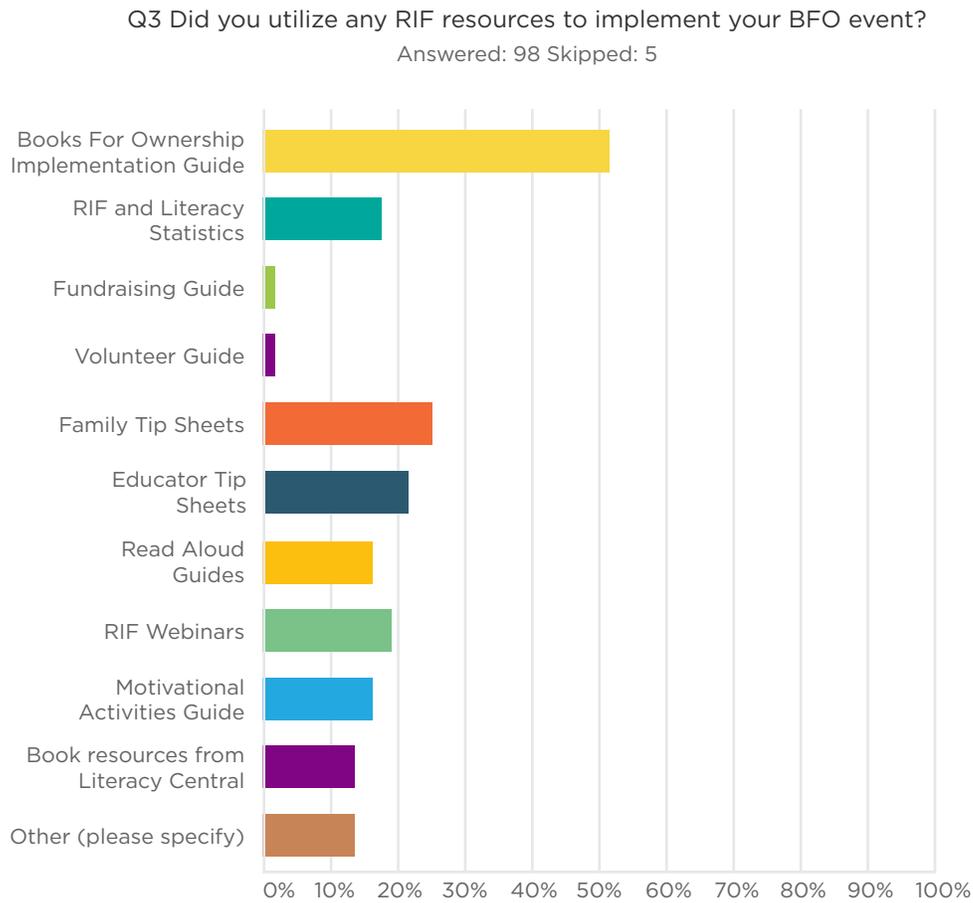
“Read Up Stop the Summer Slide was our theme. We spoke with parents and students about the importance of reading over the summer to stop the summer slide.”

And another stated,

“We know that being readers today make us leaders tomorrow! We incorporated our BFO program into our virtual Family Literacy Night.”

These BFO coordinators understood that the core of RIF’s mission is to foster a love for reading because we know that better readers make better learners and citizens. **Figure 1** shows the RIF resources that BFO coordinators indicated that they used to implement their BFO event.

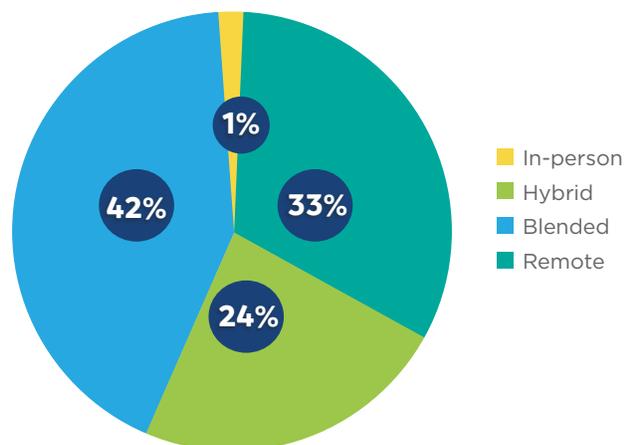
Figure 1. RIF resources provided at BFO event



### BFO Survey Responses

The descriptive statistics were collected through the pilot survey (n=23) and the full survey (n=103) for a total of 126 responses. The survey respondents were in all geographical locations of the United States. In response to the question “What format was your school or site for the 20-21 school year?” most respondents (n=52) indicated that their site was blended meaning that they began remote and moved to in-person or began in-person and moved to remote. Four respondents indicated “other” but were reassigned to one of the categories based on their written response. See **Figure 2.** for a graph of responses.

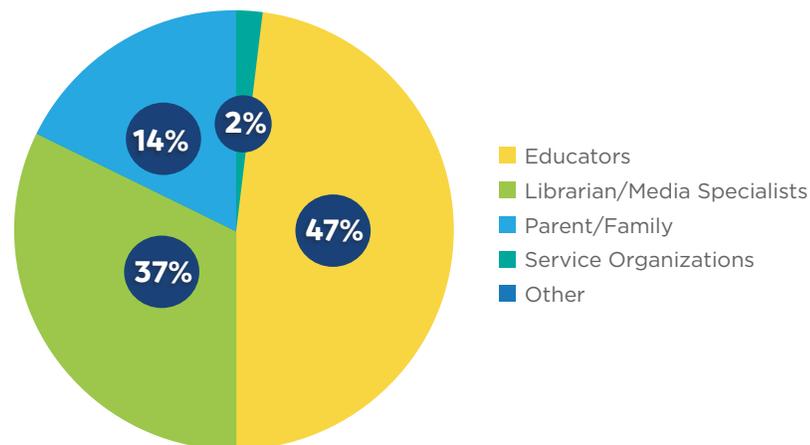
Figure 2.  
 School Format SY20-21



## To what extent and in what ways did BFO coordinators engage and build capacity in literacy advocates?

For the purposes of this program evaluation, literacy advocates are defined as anyone who volunteers to support the implementation of the BFO program at any stage. The survey provided space for BFO coordinators to select educators (n=59), librarian/media specialist (n=47), administrators (n=20), parent/family (n=18), service organizations (n=3), and other (n=18). Of the BFO coordinators who selected “other” (n=18), four responses were re-coded to fit into the categories above, 13 indicated that they had no volunteers during the SY20-21, one wrote International Paper, and one wrote “cowboys, sheriff’s department, and fire department.” See **Figure 3**. for types of volunteers at BFO sites during the 20-21 school year.

Figure 3.  
Types of Volunteers



The next question asked BFO coordinators how they recruited their volunteers and if they provided any training for their volunteers. Of the survey respondents who answered these questions (n=113), 97 (85%) indicated that they did not provide any training for their volunteers. In written responses, BFO coordinators provided several reasons for why they did not provide training for their volunteers such as volunteers were already familiar with the program and did not require training, unable to do so due to COVID-19 protocols, or did not utilize volunteers. In total, 16 BFO coordinators indicated that they did provide training for their volunteers. This included an overview of RIF such as the purpose and how the program works, educator tip sheet, mandated reporter training, setting expectations, and a webinar.

Finally, RIF asked BFO coordinators what resources we could provide to help support training volunteers. Of the respondents who answered the survey question (n=106), 88 responded that they could not think of any resources to better support the training of their volunteers. Many indicated that the resources provided were “great” and “very helpful” while others shared that they already felt prepared or did not have volunteers. Of the respondents who indicated they would like resources (n=16), the most highly requested resource was a video tutorial (n=9). Other BFO coordinators suggested that they would like more information on how to train adults, programming ideas and activities, give-aways to encourage more virtual training participation, written materials that provide instructions about book levels, Lexiles, and how to help a child choose a book they will enjoy, and a training guide. One BFO coordinator wrote,

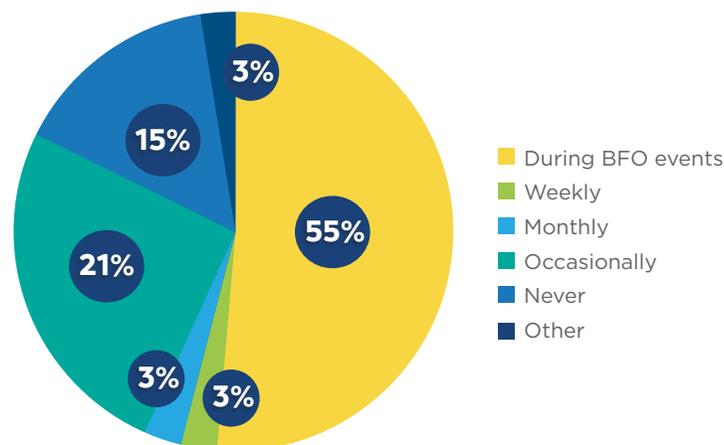
**“ I also think a school visit/virtual from someone would be cool with some RIF swag at the end or a drawing to keep them going! ”**

## To what extent and in what ways did BFO coordinators involve and provide resources to families?

Research indicates that involving families in school activities has important implications for literacy outcomes (Larrotta & Yamamura, 2011; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014; Wessels, 2014). Therefore, BFO coordinators were asked how they involve and provided resources for the families of the students they serve.

To answer the question “to what extent BFO coordinators provided resources to families,” a survey question asked how often BFO coordinators provided resources to families. Most (55%) indicated that they provided resources during the Book Celebration Event (n=65). Other survey responses included weekly (n=4), monthly (n=4), occasionally (n=25), and Never (n= 17). Eleven BFO coordinators responded “Other,” and five of these responses were re-coded. Of the remaining three responses, one wrote that families could access resources at any time through their website, as often as the school received resources, and one indicated that they provided family resources to an administrator and was unsure how they were used, two wrote beginning of the year, and one wrote before COVID. See **Figure 4** for a graph of frequency of resources provided to families by BFO coordinators.

Figure 4.  
Frequency of Resource Provided to Families



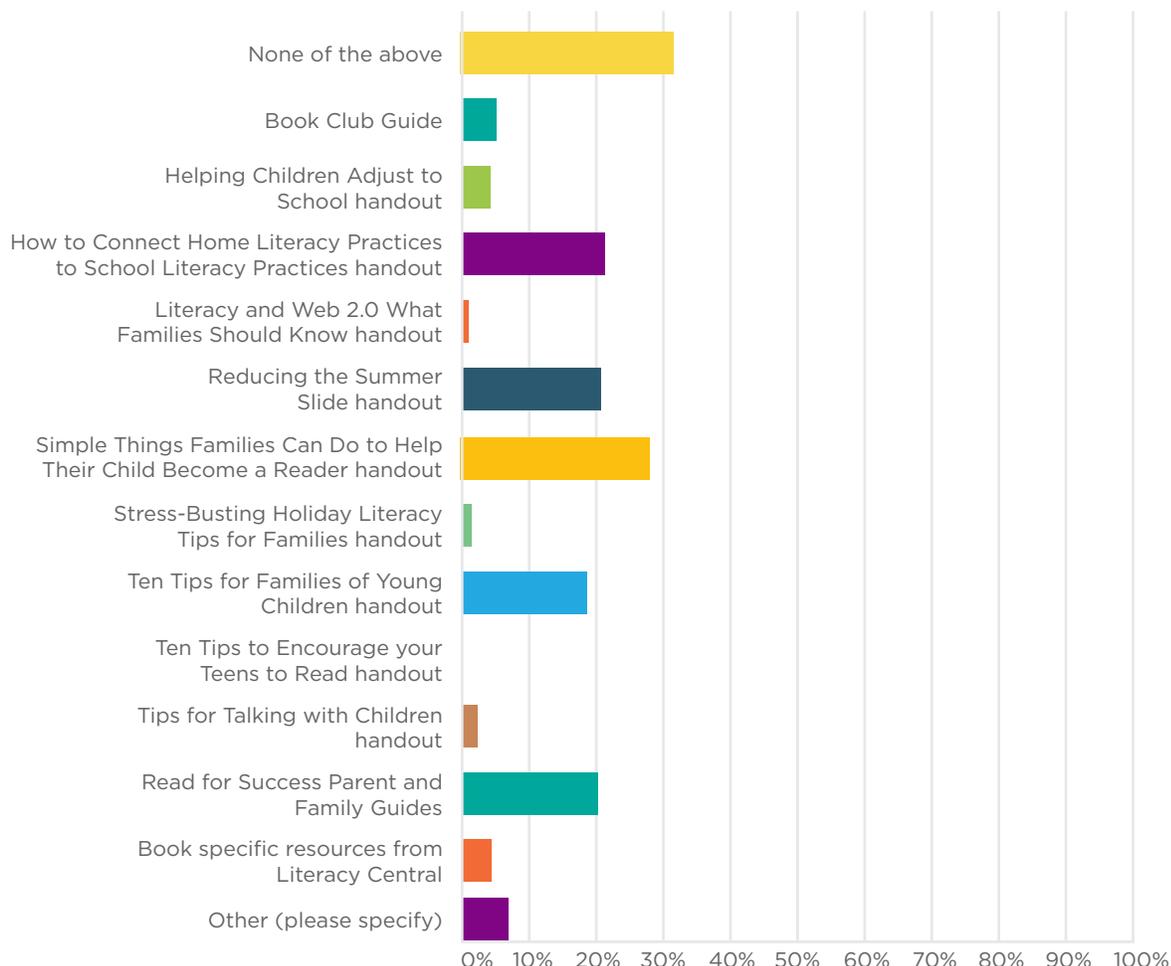
To answer the question “in what ways BFO coordinators involved families,” one survey question included a check all that apply for RIF resources provided to families. See Figure 5 for the number of RIF resources provided to families by BFO coordinators. Since this was a check all that apply option, many BFO coordinators may have selected multiple resources. The most provided resource was the handout “Simple Things Families Can do to Help their Child Become a Reader” (n= 29). Those BFO coordinators who indicated “Other” provided several examples of RIF resources they utilized such as activity calendars, UGI and Dollar General specific resources, templated letters to families about RIF, and Book Bingo game. See Figure 3 for a graph of the resources that BFO coordinators provided families. Seventeen BFO coordinators checked the box for other. Thirty-three percent of BFO coordinators that completed the survey (n=40) indicated that they did not provide any RIF resources to families. One BFO coordinator shared,

“I was unaware of these other resources! Would have certainly shared them with our parents.”

And another BFO coordinator responded,

**“I guess I didn’t know these were available. They look great.”**

Figure 5. Number of RIF Resources Provided to Families



An open-response survey question asked how BFO coordinators how they involved families in the BFO program. Several BFO coordinators indicated that they did not involve families due to COVID-19 restrictions. Others shared that they notified families about upcoming Book Celebration Events through apps and social media such as the school’s website, Class Dojo, emails, and virtual morning announcements. Other BFO coordinators sent home notices through flyers and newsletters. Some BFO coordinators held their Book Celebration Events during the school day while others opted to host theirs in the evening as a “Language Arts Evening” with activities, prizes, and food.

In an open response format, BFO coordinators were asked if they could think of any other resources that RIF could provide to help them engage their families. Eighty-five BFO coordinators responded to this question. Sixty-five indicate that there were no additional resources that RIF could provide. Some suggested that this is because they were satisfied with the current resources. One BFO coordinator wrote,

**“RIF provides lots of wonderful resources.”**

Another shared,

**“Wow.... looking at the list from the previous question and the resources available. Wow!”**

Several BFO coordinators expressed that they were not aware of RIF resources but were interested in the resources listed. One BFO coordinator explained,

**“I guess I did not know these were available. They look great.”**

One BFO coordinator even shared a solution stating,

**“I am unaware of any of the above-mentioned resources, so maybe a tutorial to show coordinators where to find these resources.”**

Some BFO coordinators did provide examples of resources they would like to have to better support them in engaging families. Three BFO coordinators said they would like to have the resources in additional languages,

**“Always need resources in Spanish. Additionally, ways for non-native speakers to help their children.”**

Another requested resource was handouts printed for the entire school. One BFO coordinator expressed that they would benefit from having resources spotlighted during the year so that they could remember to give them out. And another asked if RIF could help them in selecting which handouts to send home. Another request was for a generic discussion guide that families could use to know what types of questions to ask their children while reading at home. Others suggested that they would benefit from digital resources such as online books, interactive online activities for families to work together, and a storybook evening that families could tune into with their children.

Finally, BFO coordinators were provided with an open response format to share any feedback for enhancing the BFO program (n=101). Several BFO coordinators (n=8) expressed that they would like to see the program expanded to include other grades.

**“RIF is a wonderful program. Students love getting books to take home! It would be great if it could be extended to other grade levels.”**

Several BFO coordinators shared that they would like additional support with selecting the books. A few BFO coordinators shared that they would like to have other book options available within the RIF Bookstore and more diverse book options. Others expressed that they would benefit from having a thematic curated title list to save time. And the opportunity to have their older grades students log into the RIF Bookstore to select the books themselves. One BFO coordinator wrote,

**“Students are so different, and even though I feel like I know my readers, they will surprise me occasionally by checking out something I would not have considered for them. Therefore, if there was a way for them to select the books they like and then have me place the order, it would be very beneficial.”**

Most of the BFO coordinators (n=65) did not make suggestions to improve the program and commented that the program is already great. One BFO coordinator shared,

“This is a wonderful program. Our students look forward to our ‘RIF Day’ events. We attempt to hold these book give-away days 3 times per school year. Thank you for this opportunity to get books into the hands and homes of our students.”

## Limitations

With 566 BFO coordinators in the 2020-2021 school year, the activity reporting sample size (n=360) represents 63% and the survey respondent sample size from December 2021 (n=126) represents 21%. These sample sizes are considered moderate and, therefore, results should be interpreted with caution. Re-administering this survey at the end of this school year as part of the requirements for participating in the BFO program may yield more robust results. In addition, it is important to consider that this data was collected in relation to the 2020-2021 school year which was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Conclusions

Based on the findings of this evaluation, RIF’s BFO program, is meeting the activity requirements relating to BFO Coordinators creating engaging Book Celebration Events for students, providing resources to build capacity in literacy advocates, and providing resources to involve families. Book Celebration events were heavily impacted by the pandemic during the 2020-2021 school year as indicated by **36% of BFO coordinators** who completed the activity reporting. However, most of the BFO coordinators met these challenges with determination and creativity to fulfill RIF’s mission of getting books into the hands of children and creating engaging opportunities for reading. **This was accomplished through a thematic approach to Book Celebration events, read -alouds, book talks, and guest readers, extrinsic motivation, and sharing the importance of reading.** Overall, BFO coordinators faced challenges with involving literacy advocates and families due to the COVID-19 restrictions of how many people could be in school buildings. However, they found ways to involve these stakeholders virtually or through outdoor events.

A majority of BFO coordinators (85% of those surveyed) did not provide any training for their literacy advocates. This was due to a variety of reasons, and many indicated that they felt their literacy advocates were prepared and did not require training. Others suggested that they could benefit from RIF providing training videos for their volunteers.

Most BFO coordinators (55% of those surveyed) provided resources to families during the Book Celebration Events. Of the myriad of resources for families that RIF has available, many BFO coordinators selected that they used none of these resources. They indicated that they were not aware that these resources existed and would like to utilize them in the future.

Overall, when asked what improvements RIF could make to the BFO program, most BFO coordinators responded “It is a great program just the way it is! We love it.” BFO coordinators appreciated the program so much that several suggested expanding it to include older grades.

“RIF is a wonderful program. Students love getting books to take home! It would be great if it could be extended to other grade levels.”

## Recommendations

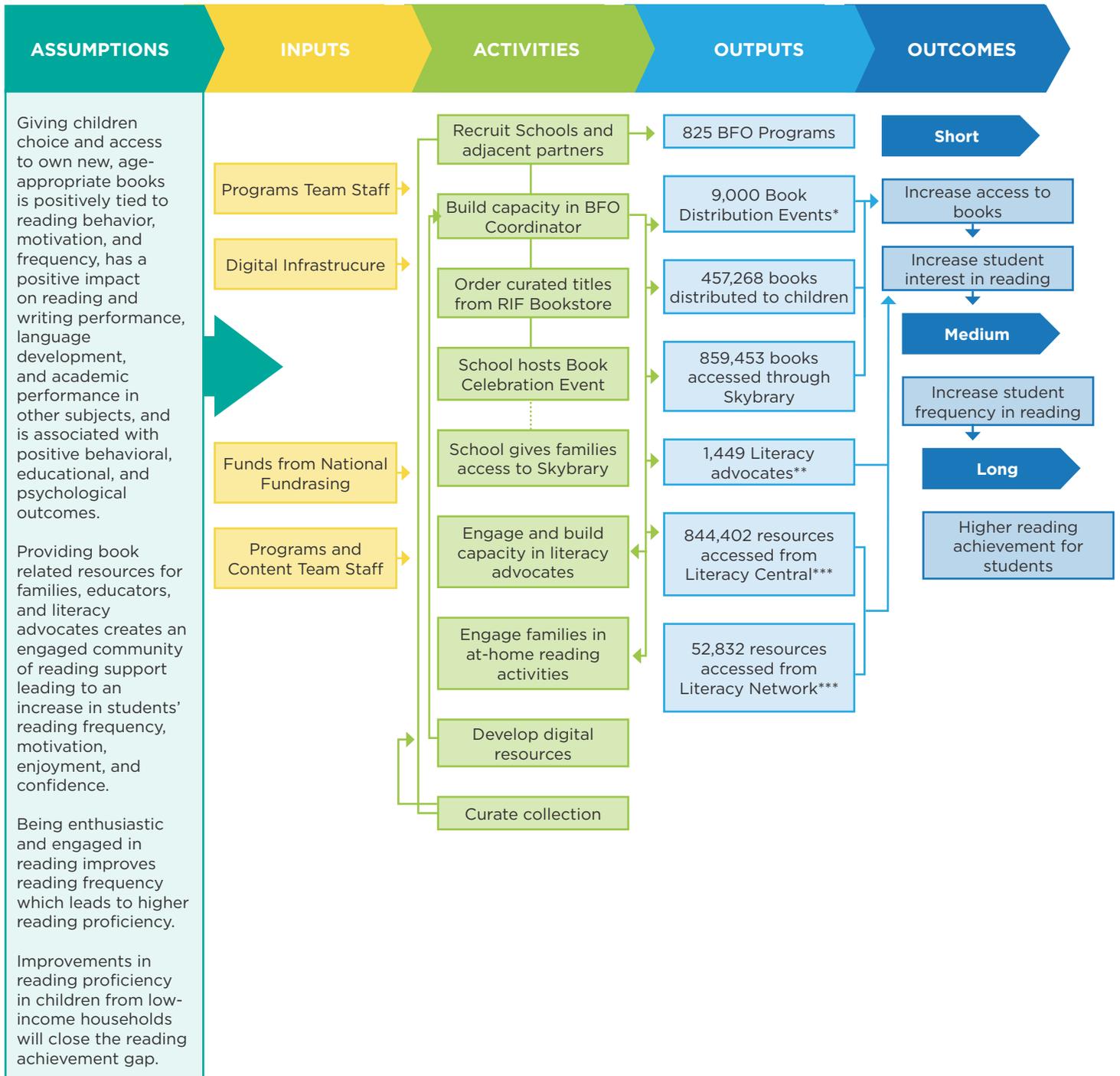
1. Scale RIF's BFO program to apply to more grade levels.
2. During the initial BFO onboarding training, demonstrate how to locate and access RIF resources. Create an editorial calendar with RIF resources per month and share these with BFO coordinators through the monthly newsletter so they know which resources to send home to families each month. This will increase the frequency by which BFO coordinators provide resources to families.
3. Provide thematic curated booklists for BFO coordinators within the RIF Bookstore to save them time when ordering books.
4. Adapt more family resources to be available in a variety of languages.
5. Create a database or catalog of the innovative solutions and engagement activities that BFO coordinators have used to implement their Book Celebration events as a source of inspiration and information for other BFO coordinators.
6. Provide tools and resources, such as video modules, on how to build capacity in literacy advocates and volunteers to maximize the efficiency of the program.



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## Appendix A: Books for Ownership Theory of Change



\*Sites host 1-3 events per year

\*\*avg. 14 volunteers per site

\*\*\*Users from BFO regions

## Appendix B: Books for Ownership Program Survey

Hello! My name is Erin Bailey, and I am the Director of Programs and Content at Reading Is Fundamental. I am conducting a study to determine the ways RIF resources were used in our Books for Ownership program so that we can enhance existing resources and create new resources. You are being asked to participate in this survey because you served as a BFO coordinator in the 2020-2021 school year. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. If you complete this survey, you will be mailed a RIF tote bag. If you are willing to participate in a follow-up phone interview and be entered in a chance to win 15 NEW books for a 15-minute phone call, please leave your email address and phone number at the end of the survey.

1. Where is your school or site located?

2. What format was your school or site for the 20-21 school year?

- Remote
- In-person
- Hybrid
- Blended (moved from one model to another)
- Other (please specify)

3. Did you utilize any RIF resources to implement your BFO event?

- Books For Ownership Implementation Guide
- Educator Tip Sheets
- RIF and Literacy Statistics
- Read Aloud Guides
- Fundraising Guide
- RIF Webinars
- Volunteer Guide
- Motivational Activities Guide
- Family Tip Sheets
- Book resources from Literacy Central
- Other (please specify)

4. What types of volunteers, if any, did your program use?

- Educators
- Parent/Family Service
- Librarian/Media Specialist
- Organizations
- Administrators
- Other (please specify)

5. Did you provide any training for your volunteers? If so, what types of training?

6. Can you think of any resources that could better support you in training your volunteers?

7. How often did you provide RIF resources to families?

- Weekly
- Monthly Occasionally
- Other (please specify)
- During BFO distribution events
- Never

8. What RIF resources did you provide to families?

- Book Club Guide
- Helping Children Adjust to School handout
- How to Connect Home Literacy Practices to School Literacy Practices handout
- Literacy and Web 2.0 What Families Should
- Know handout Reducing the Summer Slide handout
- Simple Things Families Can Do to Help Their Child Become a Reader handout
- Stress-Busting Holiday Literacy Tips for Families handout
- Other (please specify)
- Ten Tips for Families of Young Children handout
- Ten Tips to Encourage your Teens to Read handout
- Tips for Talking with Children handout
- Read for Success Parent and Family
- Guides Book specific resources from Literacy Central

- None of the above

9. Can you think of any resources that RIF could provide to better support you in engaging families?

10. What could RIF do to enhance the Books for Ownership Program?

11. Please leave your name and address to be mailed a RIF tote bag.

Name

Address

Address 2

City/Town

State/Province

ZIP/Postal Code

12. Are you interested in participating in a follow-up phone call and entered in the chance to win 15 new books for your classroom collection? If so, please leave your email address and phone number

Email Address

Phone Number