



MEASURING SUCCESS

Motheread^{Inc.}

REVIEW OF
RESEARCH & EVALUATION



The Cover

The images on the cover are taken from various sections of the report. The numbers in the background are CASAS competencies most frequently taught using the Motherhead® *Teachers Guide*. The bar graph represents student achievement as measured by the Test of Adult Basic Education. The pie chart depicts the student retention rate in adult classes.

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Literacy Achievement and Parental Support Results

How do we know what's real? In the age of reality television, seeing is no longer believing. And in a time of marketing and spin, what seemed true one day can become suspect the next. For those of us in the literacy field, the notion of “proof” has never been more critical. All of our programs are being asked to justify their effectiveness, applying increasingly rigorous standards.

At Motherhead, Inc., we have always had a strong research grounding. The proposal that generated our initial funding reflected research findings on child development by Dr. Joseph Sparling at UNC-Chapel Hill’s Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center and an adult education theoretical model based on the work of Dr. Hanna Fingeret, former associate professor of adult education at North Carolina State University. In the ensuing years, we have added to our original body of research and, in conjunction with our affiliates, have been involved in a number of studies and evaluations. This publication contains synopses of current findings that point to the effectiveness of Motherhead’s programming for adults and for children.

Additionally, it includes data about student outcomes collected both at Motherhead, Inc.’s National Office and through studies conducted by our network of affiliates. Included in its entirety is a study by Dr. Bertha Gorham, which describes the types of gains, both skill scores and personal goals, made by students in our adult classes. This study affirms that perhaps the most profound way to find out what’s real is to explore what is true in the classroom—what resonates and reaffirms our lives as both teachers and learners. At Motherhead, Inc., we are truly gratified that scientifically based research and personal experience validate the same principles and practices.

RESEARCH: *Finding what's real*

Best practices

Since children's literacy results from considerable adult guidance and instruction (Durkin, 1966; Anbar, 1986), Motherhead, Inc. provides teachers and parents with a curriculum (including *Guides* and *Plans* for 127 multi-cultural titles) and an approach to reading which is research-based. This research demonstrates that reading aloud to children is the single most important activity that parents and early childhood education teachers can do to help children build the understandings and skills necessary to succeed as readers and students. (Wells, 1985; Bus, van Ijzendoorn & Pellegrini, 1995)

1) The process is based on techniques known to help children develop comprehension strategies: reviewing and asking open-ended questions about the story, clarifying words and sentences they do not understand, and asking them to predict what might occur next in the text. Research has shown that these techniques are particularly effective. (Armbruster, Lehr and Osborn, 2001)

2) The curriculum includes a variety of activities that promote the use of oral and written language to explore everyday experiences and encourage vocabulary development. Research shows that children learn word meanings indirectly in three ways: They engage daily in oral language; they listen to adults read to them; and they read extensively on their own. (Armbruster, Lehr and Osborn, 2001)

3) The curriculum incorporates a multi-style approach to teaching (auditory, visual, and kinesthetic) that reaches a diverse audience. This approach is supported by research (Neuman, 1998) showing that a variety of teaching techniques is essential in meeting the needs of all children.

4) The process encourages adults to hold or sit close to children, engaging them in the story-reading process through the use of props, discussion questions, and story-related activities, songs, and games. High-quality book reading experiences occur when children feel secure (Bus & van Ijzenfoorn, 1995; Bus et al, 1997) and are active participants in the process. (Whitehurse et al., 1994)

5) Story review using predictive and analytic questions is incorporated into each lesson. Research shows that this process appears to positively affect children's vocabulary and comprehension skills. (Karweit & Wasik, 1996)

6) Storysharing activities reinforce comprehension skills and encourage children to relate to the story and link prior knowledge to what they have learned. Discussions with adults help children bridge what goes on in a story to their own life experiences. (Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Snow et al, 1995) Such conversations also help children develop higher-thinking skills by moving them beyond an actual story to what they can imagine. (Snow, 1991)

Children

RESEARCH: *Finding what's real*

Current Research Documents Best Practices

The Motheread® instructional approach, established more than 15 years ago, was based on the most current research of the day. Through the intervening years, we have continued to review trends and new research to ensure that we are always promoting the best practices for adult learners. An extensive new body of research has now become widely available through the US Department of Education. In various initiatives, the department has recently applied rigorous scientific research processes to the entire field of reading—from emergent literacy through adult education. From this coordinated effort, practitioners can access more information about how adults learn best and, therefore, how programs can best teach.

The Partnership for Reading (an initiative of the National Institute for Literacy, the US Department of Education, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and the US Department of Health and Human Services) has compiled a publication, *Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction*, which reports on valuable studies in a format particularly useful to educators and program planners. According to the National Reading Panel in its 2000 report, "The goal of the reading process is to construct meaning from a text" through a variety of comprehension skills. Furthermore, comprehension is an active process made up of specific strategies, which can be taught. Motheread®/Fatheread® adult classes use the following strategies that are based on and recommended by the current scientific research.

1) Classes provide multiple opportunities to develop specific comprehension skills through individual and group activities.

Providing explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies leads to increased reading comprehension achievement. (Alessi, Siegel, Silver, and Barnes, 1982; Mikulecky and Lloyd, 1997; Rich and Shepherd, 1993)

2) The training and curriculum guide instructors in eliciting concerns and issues from participants. Throughout the class cycle, this participatory curriculum development process continues as instructors select and individualize lessons from the *Teacher's Guide* that connect with the students' lives.

Learner-centered instruction leads to increased comprehension among adults who score below GE 9 and among ESL students. Use of a highly individualized curriculum increases adults' reading comprehension. (Fitzgerald and Young, 1997)

3) Both formal and informal methods are used to assess students' individual needs. Instructors pre-and-post-test students using the reading comprehension section of the CASAS or TABE. Daily reviews completed after each class give students an opportunity to reflect on their own learning. Every class also provides an opportunity for literature-based instruction and student-teacher interaction.

With adult readers at the intermediate level (around GE 6), a meaning-based, diagnostic-prescriptive approach to teaching leads to increased reading comprehension achievement. This approach has several important characteristics: formal and informal assessments to identify learners' strengths, needs, and interests in reading; use of these assessment results to develop individualized teaching strategies, methods, and materials; and language-experience and literature-based instruction emphasizing regular student-teacher interaction, real-life reading material, and reading as a meaning-making activity. (Cheek and Lindsey, 1994)

Adults

4) The *Teacher's Guide* incorporates adult texts into each lesson.

Integrating adult-oriented contextually relevant material into literacy programs leads to increased reading achievement. (Mikulecky and Lloyd, 1997; Sticht, Armstrong, and Hickey, Caylor, 1987; Sticht, 1989 and 1997; McDonald, 1997; Aderman, 1987; and Curtis and Chmelka, 1994)

5) Motherhead® training and methodology are based on a team-teaching approach for all adult classes.

In programs in which a teacher has instructional assistance in the classroom, students make greater gains in reading comprehension achievement. (Brooks, Davies, Ducke, Hutchison, Kendal, and Wilkin, 2001)

6) Motherhead® philosophical principles outlined in the curriculum and training encourage students to identify and accomplish learning goals.

The direct or deliberate discussion of learners' literacy beliefs and plans in order to deal with readers' self-efficacy and motivation increases reading comprehension achievement. (Friedlander and Martinson, 1996; Mikulecky and Lloyd, 1997; Boudett and Friedlander, 1997)

7) The holistic approach found in Motherhead® training and curriculum creates a learning environment devoted entirely to the development of specific literacy skills.

Spending at least 70 percent of classroom time practicing reading and writing, including the occasional but direct or deliberate discussion of reading strategies, increases learners' meta-comprehension abilities. (Baudette and Friedlander, 1997; Friedlander and Martinson, 1996; Mikulecky and Lloyd, 1997)

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EVALUATION: *Knowing what works*

STUDIES DOCUMENT OUTCOMES

Measuring Success in Motherhead® Classes: Literacy Achievement & Parental Support Results Motherhead, Inc./Dr. Bertha Gorham, Raleigh, North Carolina, 2001

Finding: Students' reading scores on the TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) increase between 1 and 4 grade-level equivalents.

Summary: A study was conducted by the National Office between October 2000 and September 2001 on literacy skill achievement in Motherhead/Fatheread® classes. The reading subscale of the TABE, Form 7, levels E through A, was administered to students in five sets of classes. Reading levels were measured at the beginning and end of each class cycle. Each cycle ran for 16-to-36 hours and enrolled, on average, eight to ten participants. A review of results revealed an increase in average grade-equivalent scores ranging from 1.4 - 4.3 grade levels for the five classes. The entire report appears on pages 8 - 11 of this publication.

Minnesota Humanities Commission Motherhead®/Fatheread® Program Evaluation

Wilder Research Center, St. Paul, Minnesota, 2001

Findings: English-speaking and Hmong-speaking parents improve their reading skills. Participants' children increase overall reading skills, including comprehension and question-asking ability.

Summary: The study showed that participants found the class materials, the teachers' abilities to get them interested in the stories, and the support they received from other parents in the class satisfying. Participants also observed improvements in their children's overall reading skills, understanding of what was read, and interest in asking questions about stories. A large percentage of respondents also felt that their own reading had improved since starting classes. Similar results were found among parents involved in the Council's Hmong Translation Initiative, in which 20 translated children's books selected from the curriculum were used in classes.

Motherhead®/Fatheread®: An Evaluation of Five Program Sites in Southwest Washington State Clegg and Associates, Seattle, Washington, 1999

Findings: Students read and/or tell stories more frequently to their children. Students' ability to help their children read and do schoolwork increases. Motherhead® curriculum is responsive to cultural diversity.

Summary: The study found that the frequency with which parents read or told stories to their children increased over the course of their class participation. At the end of the classes, participants reported improvement in their ability to help their children read, as well as in their ability to help their children in school. Participants also recognized the importance of reading to their children, talking most about how reading develops speech and comprehension skills and teaches a love of reading. The study also noted that, through the choice of books to be read in the classes, the program is responsive to the ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds of the participants.

Minnesota Humanities Commission Motherread®/Fatheread® Program Evaluation

Wilder Research Center, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1995

Finding: Participants' children gain greater comprehension of stories read aloud.

Summary: Parents found that the program helped them increase their patience with their children, increase their ability to cope with stress, and develop new discipline skills. Parents also reported that they observed changes in their children's understanding of what is read to them and their interest in asking questions about it.

Evaluation of North Carolina Humanities Council/Motherread® Institute

North Carolina State University/Dr. Lucinda MacKethan, Raleigh, North Carolina 1995

Findings: The Motherread® Institute effectively balanced the practical issues of program implementation with a thorough grounding in guiding theories.

Summary: The study concluded that training participants are challenged to find ways to identify, to teach, and to honor the resources of memory, sharing, imagination, creativity, and self-respect. They are also challenged to make these resources available to as many citizens as possible through literacy development. Motherread, Inc., by its definitions and its training design, meets these essential challenges with remarkable success.

Motherread® Program Evaluation: Goals, Literacy and Training

UCLA/Dr. Marcyliena Morgan, Los Angeles, California, 1994

Findings: Spanish-speaking parents learn how to identify and accomplish their own literacy goals.

The Motherread® curriculum is responsive to ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds of participating families.

Summary: The interview-based study found classes actively engage parents in their children's literacy process, while motivating them to pursue their own literacy development. By focusing on empowerment and long-term results, classes were found to "open up a whole new world to semi-or-totally illiterate parents." These parents, predominately Spanish-speaking, found that the program helped them to identify and accomplish their own reading goals without feeling intimidated. They valued the opportunity to talk about their own experiences and memories with each other and to make personal connections to a written text.

Evaluation of the Motherread® Program

Motherread, Inc./Dr. Sandra L. Martin, Raleigh, North Carolina 1993

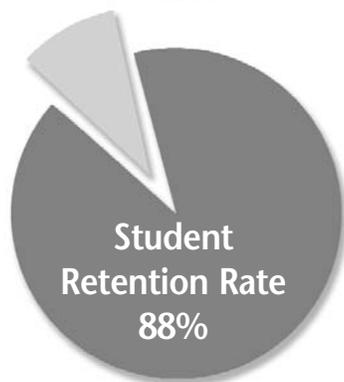
Findings: Students improve their literacy behaviors relating to their children.

Classes help students gain greater self-esteem and control of their lives.

Summary: Using a pre-test/post-test design, the study found that the classes helped parents achieve their primary goals of improving their relationship with their children and wanting to learn how to help their children learn to read. In addition, the study found that the classes improved the emotional health of the women and improved their parenting attitudes, as documented on standardized assessment instruments.

NATIONAL OFFICE REPORTS

Student Retention Rate in Mothered/Fathered® Classes



Source: North Carolina Community College System Annual Report 2004-2005

Classes for Adults Get Results

Every state's literacy office sets goals for student improvement in the classes it funds. The 2002 program audit by the North Carolina Community College System Office found that most Mothered® students exceeded the state's target percentages for improvement in literacy. These students were those in Beginning Literacy ABE, Beginning Basic Education ABE, Low Intermediate ABE, High Intermediate ABE, Low Adult Secondary Education, Beginning Literacy ESL, and High Intermediate ESL levels. Additionally, these classes, staffed through the National Office, posted an 88% retention rate.

Mothered, Inc. National Outcome Project

The National Office has undertaken a nationwide project to provide academic skill outcome data. Each student enrolling in a 16+ hour class completed a Student Interview form which provided basic demographic and contact information. At the beginning of each class cycle, instructors pre-assessed all students with either the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) Reading Test or the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) Life Skills Reading Test. All Student Interview and assessment information were entered into our database. In addition, students were post-assessed with TABE or CASAS at the end of the class cycle. Student demographic and assessment information will be reported through assigned numbers to ensure confidentiality and protect individual privacy. Results are currently being compiled.

Participating states: Alabama, California, Connecticut, Hawai'i, North Carolina, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin

Mentoring Study

A study "Training and Mentoring Child Care Providers in Story Sharing: Effects on Vocabulary and Story Retelling for Four-Year-Olds, and Story Sharing Behaviors on Childcare Providers," was conducted by Dr. Jody L. Cleven at North Carolina State University. The research examined the effects of Story Exploring training and mentoring on receptive and expressive vocabulary and story retelling of 121 four-year-old children, and the effects of a 6-week intervention on literacy behaviors of 18 child care providers. The independent variable was the training and mentoring intervention for child care providers. Data were analyzed to examine differences between the performance of teachers who received training and mentoring and teachers who received no intervention for each outcome measure. Analysis showed that on expressive vocabulary, children taught by teachers who received training and mentoring significantly outperformed children whose teachers did not receive training and mentoring. Data also showed a highly significant difference among gain scores for children in the two groups on the retelling rubric. Further analysis revealed a highly significant difference between the groups on the post-test measure for story reading behaviors of child care providers.

MEASURING SUCCESS IN MOTHEREAD® CLASSES: *Literacy Achievement and Parental Support Results*

Background

This study was conducted by Bertha Gorham, Ph.D., Motherhead® evaluator, in cooperation with Research Triangle Institute during 2000-2001. The report is reprinted in its entirety.

Since 1987, Motherhead, Inc. has provided a range of family literacy services to a wide variety of programs in North Carolina and more than twenty other states, the Island of Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands. Family literacy services offered include curriculum development, training and technical assistance, research, adult literacy classes, and emergent literacy services for children. With an emphasis on joint book reading and Storysharing, services are designed to strengthen the bond between parents and their children, increase adult literacy skills, promote school readiness, and help parents become reading role models for their children.

Developing literacy skills and strengthening the bond between parent and child has remained a priority of the organization for curriculum development, technical assistance, instruction, and training. Along with an emphasis on building skills and relationships, Motherhead, Inc. helps parents see themselves as learners and participants in a literate society.

According to Macmillan and Chavis (1986), a sense of community develops among a group through formal membership, influence (making a difference to a group and the group mattering to its members), integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection. Building a sense of community among students in classroom settings has been positively associated with success in school, active engagement in the learning process, and persistence toward academic achievement.

An important aspect of the Motherhead® classes is the dialogue that flows from reading good children's literature. Usually a lively discussion ensues and this interchange fosters a spirit of support among participants and the class facilitators. Because the Motherhead® curriculum uses good children's books and adult poems and narratives to illustrate and teach life lessons, adult learners find the power of the story a safe place to explore their own experiences, attitudes, and beliefs about parenting with those of other parents.

In writing curricula, Motherhead, Inc. constructs lesson plans and class activities to draw upon child development themes in the books selected. The lessons enhance and reinforce adult literacy development through reading and writing exercises, opportunities for reflective listening and speaking, and discussion of practical ways to adapt the lesson at home with children. The motivation toward self-improvement for the sake of their children and a supportive environment enhance the teaching and learning that takes place in classes. Over several weeks, the group begins to form a "sense of community" around helping their children by helping themselves.

This report presents findings from a study of adult reading achievement among participants in classes in a variety of locations. The class cycles lasted from 8 to 12 weeks (16 to 36 hours) and were held during the 2000 - 2001 academic year.

Four broad research questions guided the study:

- Do participants who enter Motherhead® classes reading below grade 12 increase their reading competency after at least 16 hours of instruction?
- What do participants gain from their experiences with Motherhead® classes?
- How do they use or intend to use what they have learned with their children, other family members, and other adults?
- What do participants see as the greatest impact of their participation in Motherhead® classes?

Study Procedures

To answer these questions, instructors gather information about students throughout the cycle of classes, as part of the instructional process. Class records include the following documents:

- attendance logs
- student profile sheets
- goal setting forms
- weekly reading logs
- a standardized reading assessment [Test of Adult Basic Education (T.A.B.E.)]
- class reflection form
- mid-point reflection
- writing activities
- end of class evaluation

Reading Assessment

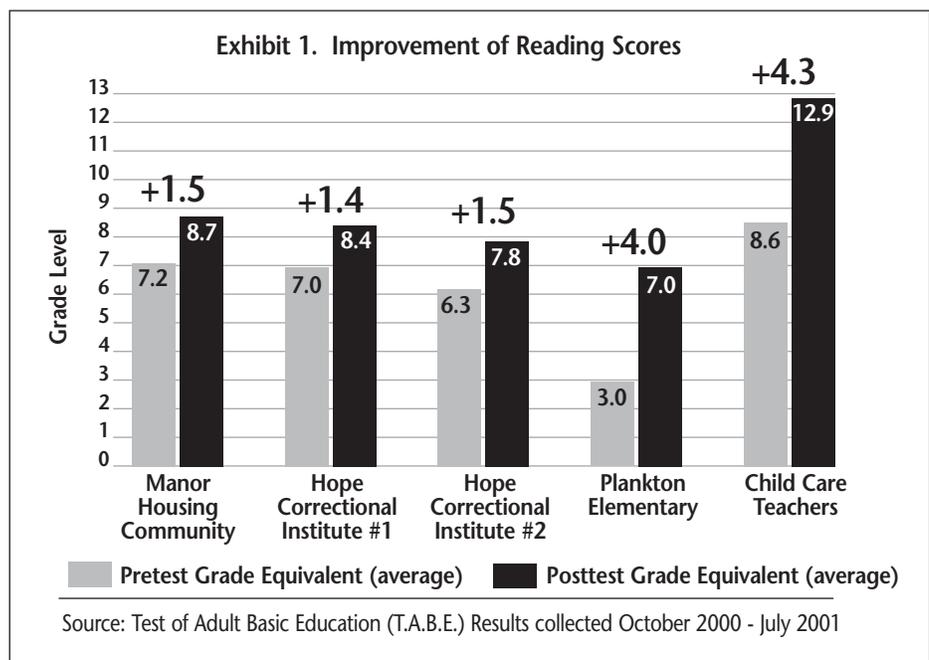
To assess reading ability, participants completed the reading subscale of the Test of Adult Basic Education (T.A.B.E.), Form 7, levels E through A. The evaluator or one of the two instructors administered the assessment to the class as a group according to guidelines recommended by the test developer. Participants were allowed 25 minutes to complete the test.

Reading levels were measured at the beginning and end of each class cycle, usually on the first and last day of classes. Each cycle of classes extended from 16 to 36 hours and enrolled an average of eight to ten participants. Nearly half of the women enrolled in prison classes were unable to complete the cycle for various reasons, including reassignments or transfers to other facilities or release from prison. The present study included only those participants who completed at least eight classes and for whom pre- and post-test scores were available. Results from five classes are included in this report.

Results

Reading Competency

Exhibit 1 presents an analysis of pre- and post-group T.A.B.E. grade equivalent scores for the classes studied. A review of results reveals an increase in average grade equivalent scores ranging from 1.4 - 4.3 grade levels for the five classes. In other words, within classes lasting from 16 to 36 hours, students improved their tested reading scores an average of 1 to 4 grade levels. While these results are encouraging, they should be viewed as preliminary findings that are subject to further analysis as more groups are included in the database.



Strengthening the Parent-Child Bond

Besides assessment of reading levels, adults in Motherhead® classes are asked to complete a "Setting Goals" sheet at the beginning of the cycle of classes. The sheet allows participants to think about their expectations for the class and write down what they hope to accomplish by the end of the cycle. Typically, participants state as their main goal a desire to formulate a better relationship with their children, which often means better communication and support for learning. They see participation in classes as a way to accomplish these important goals. The classes provide parents with an opportunity to explore their own parenting styles by reading and discussing the lessons with other adults. Exploring a book's theme encourages development of thinking and problem solving, communication, and writing skills. As parents see their skills improve in these areas, they sense accomplishment of their larger goals.

In addition to goal sheets, participants complete daily and midpoint reflections on class participation as part of ongoing student assessments in prison and community-based literacy and parenting classes. These reflection sheets encourage self-discovery as students write down their thoughts about the lesson and their intent to use this instruction in other settings, with their children or other adults. By writing down their thoughts, students maintain a record of the books read in class and see their ideas take shape over the cycle of classes.

Analysis of participant goals and reflection sheets provides strong evidence that students believe they either attain their stated goals or have made substantial progress toward achieving them. Reflecting on their classroom experiences, participants give the lessons high ratings and comment on how they intend to use what has been learned. In response to open-ended questions, parents rate the classes as valuable for learning "how to talk with my child"; obtaining new approaches to reading a book and how to look for meaning in text; the importance of listening to others, especially their children, and "how to treat my children."

In answer to the question "In what areas have you improved the most?" one student wrote that she had improved in the areas of thinking and problem solving. She stated, "I think this is true because I talk more openly to my children about what is going on with me and what's going on with them." This student's response illustrates a typical reaction to the class materials and the style of teaching in which stories are used to explore such topics as dealing with anger and expressing needs and feelings. Each story provides an opportunity for adults to reflect on ways to teach life lessons to their children through literature. Parents read a storybook and relate their own life experiences or their children's experiences to those of the characters. This student goes on to say, "I spend more time thinking things through. I need to spend more time on reading and writing. I need to write my children more and read to them as often as feasible on the telephone."

On the first day of class, one mother writes that she hopes to learn how to "be a better parent, reading and teaching them [her children] the ways I would like for them to grow into adulthood."

In a later reflection, this same student explains how she uses what is learned in class. She states, "I talked to my parents about how they raised me. When I was younger, I thought they were so hard on me, but they just wanted me to be a decent, respectful woman. I feel now that my parents were not hard enough. I have learned how to take more stock in what someone else is saying. Just to be quiet and listen. Sometimes silence is more comforting than words."

Another student in the same class notes, "I learned how to understand feelings of my children and facial expressions. I talked about feelings and how important it is to know your kid's emotions."

Student Assessment of Learning

As an additional assessment of progress, participants complete an evaluation rating form at the end of the class cycle. The ten-item instrument measures student perception of progress in three areas:

1. Improved reading and writing skills
2. Goal attainment: Building a bond with their children
3. Feelings about the usefulness of class activities and materials covered

Exhibit 2 summarizes results from the ratings of 25 participants randomly chosen from the five classes. The items are scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Mean scores are reported on nine of the ten items measuring the three outcome areas.

In all three areas, the majority of students provide strong, positive statements about their experiences with the classes.

Exhibit 2: Benefits From Class Participation	
Item	Mean
1. Improved reading and writing skills	
The classes made me feel more confident about reading aloud in a group.	4.7
I read more often on my own, since I participated in the classes.	4.0
The classes have helped me understand and remember what I have read.	4.4
I feel better able to share a story or book with other adults.	4.6
2. Goal attainment: Building a bond with their children	
The classes made me feel more confident about reading a book or sharing a story with my children.	4.9
Children's books are a good way for children and adults to communicate.	4.9
3. Feelings about the usefulness of class activities and materials covered	
I can use Storysharing techniques I learned in class to share a story with my child.	4.7
Improved my view of children's books as a way to teach life lessons.	4.8
I was able to apply topics discussed in classes to my own experiences.	4.8

Summary

An important goal of Motherhead® classes is to develop a learning environment where students improve their literacy skills as they also enjoy reading and discussing themes in children's books and other literature. Participants invest time and effort in their own skill development, with support from other adults, with an aim toward improving their relationships with their children. Results from goal-setting, midpoint reflections, and evaluation forms provide strong evidence that classes benefit parents in supporting them as reading role models for their children and for their own development as effective parents.

Results from reading assessments and evaluations completed by students suggest that classes can have a positive impact on reading competency and parents' motivation to apply these skills at home with their children. Reading assessments indicate that among students with low to medium reading skills, participation in these classes can improve their recall and reading comprehension as measured by the T.A.B.E. reading subscale. Further, students indicate through written evaluations that the classes are making a difference in the way they think about books and their approach to shared reading with their children. The sense of belonging that develops among parents is a strong motivator for parents to invest their time in attendance at Motherhead® classes.

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