



PRIME TIME IN NORTH LOUISIANA

A RETROSPECTIVE REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

Prime Time Family Reading and Prime Time Preschool are learning and literacy intervention programs built on family engagement with children ages 3-10, their parents/caregivers, and the educators serving them. Prime Time Family Reading was developed in 1991 with the goal of interrupting the cycle of intergenerational illiteracy and promoting academic achievement, while creating a life-long connection to—and love of—reading for children and families. The original program model was later adapted to meet the unique literacy needs of educators and families with children ages 3-5, with service delivery expanded to these families as Prime Time Preschool, developed in 2012.

Prime Time partners with local schools, libraries, and community centers to implement the Prime Time programming in economically and/or educationally vulnerable communities across Louisiana. Twice a year, Prime Time staff and experienced Prime Time team members provide training to facilitators (often teachers or librarians employed at the partner agency) how to implement programming and model literacy-building learning strategies that caregivers can replicate at home. The training itself is rooted in the same methodological pillars that Prime Time employs in its literacy programming:

- Participant-centered instruction and learning: reading and discussion based on participant interests and responses
- Socratic method and open-ended questioning: facilitating learning by asking, rather than telling. Asking follow-up questions to deepen the consideration and understanding of a subject or issue
- Development of higher-order thinking skills: adhere to text and guiding participants to compare and contrast, analyze, describe, predict, etc.
- Making personal connections: utilizing humanities themes to gain a framework of understanding in relation to current events, movies, or personal stories
- Collective learning strategies: promoting respectful, diverse audiences where participants learn from each other



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Prime Time programming typically runs in six-week cycles. During the six-week program, participants begin each 90-minute weekly session with a meal. The meal time promotes balanced eating habits and encourages families to use that time for shared discussion and building community while simultaneously lowering a barrier to participation for families facing food insecurity, or those simply crushed for time in the afterschool and early evening hours.

After the meal, a pair of trained facilitators from the program site team read a high-quality, engaging children's book and lead a discussion on the story's humanities-based themes. Prime Time Family participants will then read a second book together that builds on the themes established in the first book. For Prime Time Preschool participants, the storysharing and group discussion is followed by center-based exploratory play that extends learning and connects to the ideas/themes of the book. Families are given the books the group reads to take home and add to their home libraries each week.

The goals of both Prime Time Family and Prime Time Preschool are to:

- Deliver quality humanities education experiences,
- Increase public library use,
- Increase family bonding and reading time,
- Positively affect the attitude and behavior regarding reading, and
- Improve academic achievement and/or school readiness.

HISTORY OF PRIME TIME IN NWLA

Initially piloted in Baton Rouge, Prime Time programming expanded to northwest Louisiana in 1995 with the installation of Prime Time's first regional program at Shreve Memorial Library. Since then, Prime Time has partnered with 76 libraries, schools, early childhood education (ECE) centers, and community organizations to implement 294 programs in Caddo and Bossier parishes. The NWLA region has been especially important to the development and ongoing implementation of Prime Time Preschool programming. Host sites in Shreveport were among the first implementing partners of Prime Time Preschool. Since its development in 2012, 148 Prime Time Preschool programs have been implemented in Caddo and Bossier parishes—more than any other region after Orleans parish (where Prime Time's administrative headquarters are located).

Across the 14 parishes that make up greater Northwest Louisiana (Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Claiborne, DeSoto, Jackson, Lincoln, Morehouse, Natchitoches, Ouachita, Red River, Sabine, Union, and Webster), Prime Time has partnered with 150 schools, libraries, and community organizations to implement 548 programs, supporting literacy development for over 6,992 families and 21,392 individuals.



Table 1: Prime Time Programming In North Louisiana, By the Numbers

	Caddo/Bossier	All other NWLA	Total
Total programs	294	254	548
Family Reading programs	146	152	298
Preschool Reading programs	148	102	250
Number of families participated	3,751	3,241	6,992
Number of individuals participated	11,477	9,915	21,392
Adults	4,591	3,966	8,557
Children	6,886	5,949	12,835
Number of meals served	50,498	43,627	94,125
Number of books distributed to families	38,176	35,044	73,220
Total hours of participant literacy engagement	75,746.7	65,441	141,187.7



SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This report explores:

- The ways in which family attitudes toward the importance of literacy developed in response to Prime Time participation
- The degree to which families' understanding of how to support literacy development for children grew in response to Prime Time participation
- The ways in which family literacy practices changed in response to Prime Time participation

METHODS

Throughout 2025, Prime Time staff, with the support of an evaluation consultant, investigated family satisfaction with Prime Time programs in northwestern Louisiana. Using surveys and focus groups, Prime Time sought feedback on how the program met families' needs and on how the program might improve. Families received pre- and post-surveys on the first and last session of their Prime Time program to assess their satisfaction with the program, as well as the ways in which Prime Time impacted their attitudes toward literacy and their family literacy behaviors.

Other sources of evaluative data included surveys collected from 812 families attending NWLA Prime Time programs between 2021 and 2025. Additionally, twelve families participated in a focus group in June 2025 to dig more deeply into their attitudes, behaviors, and suggestions for program improvement.

Figure 1: Prime Time Programming In North Louisiana, By the Numbers

- 812 unique families across all sites (2021-2025)
- Pre- and post-survey design with matched Family IDs
- Surveys collected from 90 programs 2021-2025

ANALYSIS

Quantitative survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. Survey data were analyzed to determine pre- and post-programming ratings on participant satisfaction, attitudes, and behaviors. While data were not robust enough to support significance testing, changes in ratings from pre- to post-programming survey administration are reported here descriptively. Analyses capture changes in ratings of satisfaction, attitudes, and behaviors; as well as proportion of participants who reported such changes.



Qualitative survey and focus group data were analyzed using both inductive and deductive methods. A thematic framework was derived using a grounded theory-based analysis of focus group data. This method allows for the analysis of both hypothesized results (e.g. increase in positive attitudes and literacy-supporting behaviors) as well as the discovery of emergent findings (i.e. common themes that were not anticipated but which have robust representation in the data set). Qualitative survey data were then analyzed deductively within that framework, in order to confirm the viability of the framework, incorporate qualitative survey evidence into analytic interpretations, and test hypothesized findings more completely.

This report provides insight into Prime Time families' literacy goals for their children and the ways in which Prime Time could and did support those goals. The Findings section immediately below is organized around both hypothesized and emergent themes.

FINDINGS

The findings discussed here include insights derived regarding hypothesized outcomes regarding participation targets and family behavior change; as well as insights derived from emergent analyses of focus group and survey data. Note that Prime Time parent survey data from 2021-2025 indicated similar findings as the focus group investigation; we focus here primarily on 2021-25 findings.

INCREASED LITERACY BEHAVIORS

Pre-participation survey results indicated that families entered into Prime Time programming with fairly positive attitudes toward literacy, literacy activities, and Prime Time in particular. Over time, those positive attitudes increased even further. All sites surveyed from 2021-2025 showed an increase in reported literacy behaviors, increased attitudinal positivity toward literacy activity, and increased ratings of satisfaction with Prime Time as a program (see Appendix for operational definitions of literacy behaviors and attitudes).

Families across all sites and all time periods showed particular growth (about 4% increases) in their frequency of deep reading behaviors—asking/answering questions with their children during and after reading stories, and drawing new insights and conclusions from the stories they read. As one parent explained, Prime Time helped them “realize that I could read with my child at home. Using the skills I learned at PrimeTime, I feel good about reading at home with my child.”

Families also reported a notable increase in children's independent reading. Families note that their children “are excited about additional learning” and that children show “more



Table 2: Average family literacy indicators pre-and post- Prime Time participation, 2021-2025

Indicator	Pre-program mean	Post-program mean	Mean point change (Post-Pre)	Mean Percent Change
Critical Thinking	3.19	3.38	0.20	6.28%
Library Use	2.67	2.99	0.31	11.86%
Reading Attitude	3.58	3.62	0.04	1.22%
Reading Behavior	3.28	3.42	0.14	4.24%

Note: survey responses are measured on a 4-point Likert-type scale. Values reflect averages across program years 2021-2025.

interest in reading independently” after attending Prime Time. As one parent explained, Prime Time helped “my child learn to read on her own and participate in discussions with others; I love this program for [my child].”

Across the sample, we also observed an increase in library-going. Families rated the frequency of their library-going with their children over 11.8% higher after program participation. Overall, 83.1% percent of families reported increases in at least one literacy behavior.



Table 3. Percent of surveyed families indicating an increase in literacy behaviors and attitudes, 2021-2025

Indicator	Percent
Adult-School Bonding	35.8 %
Critical Thinking	53.8 %
Discussion Behavior	28.5 %
Identify as Educator	27.4 %
Library Use	37 %
Reading Attitude	19.5 %
Reading Behavior	37.7 %

NAVIGATING THE WORLD AND EXPANDING EMPATHY

In open-ended survey responses and focus group interviews, families appreciated the critical importance of literacy as a life skill. They articulated that children must be literate to navigate the world, noting basic skills such as reading signs, following instructions, etc. “Reading is essential for everyday life,” one parent explains.



But families also believed that Prime Time's storytelling exposed their children to elements of their worlds to which they would otherwise not have access. Families anticipated that this exposure, as much as functional literacy, will support their children in parsing new contexts and navigating the wider world their children will encounter as they get older.

Specifically, families loved that Prime Time's approach to reading comprehension—including Socratic and inquiry techniques—supported their children in building perspective-taking skills. They reported that their children enjoyed stories that much more when they had room to interpret how each character felt, and how their peers and their Prime Time leaders felt about what happened in the story. “My kids love talking to other kids about their perspective,” explained one parent.

Families appreciated not merely the opportunity for their children to explore the opinions and experiences of other participating children, but for their children to learn about perspectives and experiences from all over the world, courtesy of Prime Time's book choices. As one parent explained, they particularly appreciated “the chance to expose my children to new books and subjects.” Another noted that Prime Time exposed “my kids to different ideas and perspectives.”

EFFECTIVE PEDAGOGY FOR ALL CHILDREN

Families of children with learning differences were quick to recognize that Prime Time's activities, designed in alignment to literacy best practices and the principles of positive youth development, worked better for their children than much of the school-based literacy instruction their children receive (see fuller exploration of this finding immediately below). But Prime Time's approach was appreciated by many participating families, not only those whose children have exceptional needs.

Families noted that Prime Time improves children's critical thinking skills. One parent credited conversations about texts that were led by the children themselves with supporting and refining children's thinking about complex topics such as economic disparity. “We were impressed as adults with what they thought!” the parent explained.

As noted above, families found Prime Time's use of questions and reflection particularly powerful. When Prime Time staff asked questions about a story, challenged children to think more fully about their own interpretations, and encouraged perspective-taking, families reported changes in how children thought not just about what they had read, but about the wider world around them. One grandparent spoke of how their grandchildren have “become more aware of themselves and [what's] around them. They [have] become more involved in their world now through [Prime Time].”



Families expressed generalized enthusiasm about “the engaging way [Prime Time staff] present[ed]” stories. They viewed Prime Time’s approach as a “new learning experience for my child.” Prime Time “helps my children grow,” one parent stated. Another noted that Prime Time “enhances reading skills and imagination.” Speaking specifically of Prime Time’s pedagogy, one parent said candidly, “I honestly like the way they teach my child.”

SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DIFFERENCES

Families of children with ADHD, ASD, and other learning differences credited Prime Time with providing supports that introduced their children to their first successes as readers, and which kept their children engaged in reading. In the experience of these families, the read aloud/read along model works for students with learning differences in a way that their school-based literacy instruction never has.

One parent reported that they believed Prime Time would help their nonverbal autistic child “develop more.” Another parent of a child with ADHD loved that Prime Time has helped their child “actually read on his own.” Nearly all parents (regardless of children’s learning needs) reported that Prime Time built their children’s literacy skills, but that growth was especially salient to families of children with special needs.

SOCIAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Families of all children noted that Prime Time’s read-along features, as well as the provision of meals and a generally welcoming space, allowed for literacy development to unfold in a social context. This supported not only literacy development but social skill development as well.

Parents consistently reported positive social engagement between themselves and their children, as well as among the other families with whom they interacted during Prime Time programming. “Be[ing] around people [has helped] my child(ren) become more social,” one parent reported. Another appreciated how Prime Time prepares children to “speak and interact with adults” beyond their families. Social engagement “sharpens skills” of participating children.

Families also attributed improved peer-to-peer socialization to the Prime Time experience. “My kids love to hear the stories being read to them with their friends,” one parent noted. Another said, “I loved watching him enjoy reading with peers and interacting with teacher questioning.” By nurturing literacy development within children’s social context, Prime Time created an opportunity for children “to get more socializing with children [their] age,” for “socialization and interaction with others.” Put simply, Prime Time was “a great experience [for participants] to bond and socialize.”



HIGH QUALITY MATERIALS AND EXCELLENT HUMANS

Families consistently praised the books selected, the conversations Prime Time staff developed around those books, and the quality of child-staff interactions. Families found the books—and the broader topics those books explored—engaging, interesting, compelling. Families often named specific texts or conversations as their particular favorites (e.g. *The Rainbow Fish*, conversations about Ruby Bridges). Their general impression of the texts and topics chosen was highly positive, and they appreciated the thoughtfulness with which books were selected and presented.

Families also praised the -program implementors, local teachers and librarians trained in Prime Time's methodology. Staff were "very hands-on," "so patient," "excited and engaging," and highly "interactive with all the children." Families loved the questions that teachers asked during reading time, recognizing that this approach both supported children's critical thinking skills and modeled for families ways they could deepen their read-along experiences at home.

Family sentiment regarding Prime Time staff was, overall, extremely enthusiastic. Staff were frequently described as "awesome" and "the best." One parent noted, "The love the teachers have for the children, they go over and beyond their duties." Another enumerated: "I love how the teachers talk and interact with the kids, how they read the books, and the books that are chosen." A third simply noted, "We really have the best teachers."

POSITIVE IMPACT FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

Families reported that the positive impacts they attributed to Prime Time were not limited only to participating children. Rather, those impacts accrued for the parents themselves and their entire families. Prime Time offered "fun, family learning time" from which caregivers and siblings of participating children also benefited. For example, families reported examples in which an older sibling who has aged out of Prime Time became a reader for younger siblings still in the program.

Families also reported that Prime Time helped them build their own skills—both as readers and as teachers of reading. When young children asked adults in the household to read aloud, parents and grandparents found themselves conscripted—joyfully, by most accounts—into the role of literacy teacher. One parent worried, "As a parent I sometimes feel my personal lack of [skills] can/may hinder my child's growth."

But families deeply appreciated not just that Prime Time encouraged family reading, but encouraged deeper literacy. As one grandparent explained, "I love reading stories with my



grandchildren. Now, I stop to ask more questions.”

Another said Prime Time “teaches me new ways to help [my child] to be able to answer questions about stories we read together.” Thus Prime Time’s explicit caregiver-focused advice and support helped these families “learn ways to assist” their children’s reading journeys.

Perhaps most compelling, Prime Time supported more than just family literacy. Families also report that Prime Time enhanced family cohesion. The program created a time and a space for “togetherness,” “spending time with my kids,” and for participants to “engage in reading as a family.” One parent said Prime Time “unites families.”

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Despite multiple opportunities, in multiple media, across multiple time points, and with repeated assurances of confidentiality, families had almost no suggestions for changes to Prime Time programming. They consistently reported that the programming met their needs, was greatly appreciated, and was deeply loved by children and their families alike.

The only consistent request for change involved location and frequency: families wanted more Prime Time sites and extended hours/days of operations. More meetings per week, meetings at every neighborhood library and elementary school, programming during school vacations: families’ only suggestions for change revolved around these issues of increased access.

LIFELONG LOVE OF READING

Ultimately, Prime Time families hoped to instill in their children a lifelong love of reading. Prime Time supported families in achieving this goal by creating a safe and nurturing space to build literacy skills and engage in the joy of discovery. Families attended Prime Time because “we want our child to love to read,” because they “want to grow [their] child’s love of reading,” because their children “love reading and I want [them] to always love it.” Even though Prime Time families were a self-selected group with, presumably, pre-existing positive attitudes toward literacy, post-survey results indicated that nearly 20 percent of participating families reported increased positive attitudes toward literacy.

Prime Time created an environment in which skill development and nurturing intertwine. Families deeply appreciated that Prime Time staff cared about reading as a joyful component of children’s individual, holistic development, not merely about reading as a school-bound academic skill. They credited the program with instilling and sustaining a



commitment to “being a reader” in their children. Family participants in northwestern Louisiana Prime Time programming affirmed that Prime Time does not merely teach children to read, but is “teaching children to love to read.”

CONCLUSION

Prime Time Northwest Louisiana has provided an invaluable and effective service to families. Since its inception in northwestern Louisiana, Prime Time has served 6,992 families at 548 programs. These programs are meeting their goals: over 83 percent of Prime Time’s most recently participating families demonstrated an increase in their literacy behaviors, while nearly 20 percent showed increased positive attitudes toward literacy.

Further, families reported that Prime Time supported not only their children’s literacy development, but also children’s empathy, perspective-taking, and imagination; their familial and peer relationships; and their critical thinking skills. Perhaps most importantly, families reported that Prime Time’s impact was felt regardless of children’s learning needs: Prime Time’s activities and supports enhanced literacy for children who struggle with literacy development in traditional classroom settings.

Prime Time in northwestern Louisiana operates within a broader context of both academic and extracurricular commitment to literacy development. In recent years, early literacy has improved throughout the region (see, e.g., recent gains in literacy and numeracy proficiency in Caddo Parish schools). As such, Prime Time serves an anchor program within an ecosystem of schools, out-of-school-time programs, and family-provided supports that cumulatively create not just a set of activities or interventions to ratchet up children’s reading scores, but an entire literacy ecosystem in which children and their families are equipped to develop—and feel enthusiastic about the development of—lifelong literacy skills and the joy of reading.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Lauren J. Bierbaum works as a research and strategy consultant. Dr. Bierbaum’s areas of expertise include positive youth development; PK20 multi-sector systems reform; ethnographic, qualitative, and mixed methods research and evaluation; organizational development and strategic planning; and translational science/research for action. Prior to consulting, Dr. Bierbaum served as the Head of Research, Data, and Evaluation at XQ Institute from 2019 to 2023. She was previously a Senior Research Analyst at the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University (2015-2019); and served as the Executive Director of the Partnership for Youth Development, a nonprofit organization dedicated to rebuilding the K12, out-of-school time, and juvenile justice sectors in post-Katrina New Orleans (2008-2014). Dr. Bierbaum holds an M.S. in Developmental Psychology and a doctorate in American Studies from Yale University.



Appendix

APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPANT SURVEY

Participant Survey		<i>This Portion to be completed by the Program Coordinator</i>	
Site Name: _____	Date: ____/____/____	Circle: ☐ Pre-Survey ☐ Post Survey	
Family # From Attendance (or Adult's Last Name): _____		Family # _____	

A. Would you be willing to complete short online surveys sent by text message? Y / N If "Y", phone: _____

Thank you for participating in Prime Time! As you may know, we offer this program for communities, where children and their families develop into self-directed, self-motivated learners who are eager to absorb the world around them through literature, questioning & inquiry, and meaningful interaction with each other. Your responses to the statements and questions below will help us better understand how our program is affecting your family in reading, critical thinking skills, and family togetherness. Therefore, please feel free to answer as openly and honestly as possible. If you have any questions about the survey, please speak with your Prime Time team, and they will be able to address them accordingly.

Questions	Response Choices			
1. Do you think of yourself as a source of learning for your child?	Not Really	Yes, in some areas	Yes, in most areas	Yes, in all areas
2. Reading on my own is an important part of my life.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please respond to #3-11, using the following choices:	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently
3. How often does YOUR CHILD read or look at a book WITHOUT you?	1	2	3	4
4. How often do YOU read a book TOGETHER with your child?	1	2	3	4
5. How often do you and your child find new meaning, ideas, or conclusions during or after reading?	1	2	3	4
6. How often do you ask questions about stories during or after reading?	1	2	3	4
7. How often does your child ask questions about stories during or after reading?	1	2	3	4
8. How often does your child change their perspective on a topic after discussing a book?	1	2	3	4
9. How often does your child engage you in a conversation about something he/she saw, read, or experienced?	1	2	3	4
10. How often do you participate in your child's classroom/school?	1	2	3	4
11. How often do YOU visit the library TOGETHER with your child?	1	2	3	4
12. Where does your child get books from, most often? (Please choose only one, by marking with an "X")				
☐ Public Library ☐ Classroom Library ☐ School Library ☐ Bookstore ☐ Other (please specify): _____				
13. What makes you come to Prime Time?				

THANK YOU!

Appendix 1.1 Participant Survey Questions: Behavioral and Attitudinal Items

Behavioral Survey Items			Attitudinal Survey Items		
Item #	Item Text	Item Key Indicator	Item #	Item Text	Item Key Indicator
3	How often does YOUR CHILD read or look at a book WITHOUT you?	Reading Behavior	1	Do you think of yourself as a source of learning for your child?	Identification as an educator
4	How often do YOU read a book TOGETHER with your child?	Reading Behavior	2	Reading on my own is an important part of my life.	Reading Attitude
5	How often do you and your child find new meaning, ideas,	Perceived Critical Thinking	13	What makes you come to Prime Time?	



Appendix (cont.)

- or conclusions during or after reading?*
- | | | |
|----|---|------------------------------------|
| 6 | <i>How often do you ask questions about stories during or after reading?</i> | <i>Perceived Critical Thinking</i> |
| 7 | <i>How often does your child ask questions about stories during or after reading?</i> | <i>Perceived Critical Thinking</i> |
| 8 | <i>How often does your child change their perspective on a topic after discussing a book?</i> | <i>Perceived Critical Thinking</i> |
| 9 | <i>How often does your child engage you in a conversation about something he/she saw, read, or experienced?</i> | <i>Discussion Behavior</i> |
| 10 | <i>How often do you participate in your child's classroom/school?</i> | <i>Adult-School Bonding</i> |
| 11 | <i>How often do YOU visit the library TOGETHER with your child?</i> | <i>Library Use</i> |