Efficacy Study of Sadlier's *From Phonics to Reading* Program in Brooklyn Diocese Schools (NY): A Two-Year Study

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this mixed-methods study, we examined the second year of implementation of the *From Phonics to Reading (FPR)* supplemental foundational skills program in Brooklyn Diocese Schools in Brooklyn, New York during the 2024-25 school year. *From Phonics to Reading* prescribes a range of 20-40 minutes of program use as part of supplemental reading instruction time, depending on grade level. Primary focuses were impacts on reading performance and teacher perceptions of their experiences with the program.

- The study employed a mixed-methods quasi-experimental design (QED) to examine the impact on student achievement of *From Phonics to Reading* after two years of implementation, as well as perceptions of teachers who implemented the program.
- The study was situated within Brooklyn Diocese Schools in Brooklyn, New York, where six schools implemented the program and four schools served as comparison during the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years.
- Data sources included student achievement data on the i-Ready reading assessment, and a teacher survey.
- Impact analyses showed statistically significant positive impacts of FPR on i-Ready Reading score gains after two years, with treatment students outgaining comparison students by 7.5 points.
- Subgroup analyses showed significant positive program impacts for kindergarten, Black, ELL, and high-achieving students.
- Teachers conveyed that they observed improvement in all areas of student reading skills surveyed and increases in students' effort and engagement.
- Teachers most appreciated the program's activities for engaging students and consistent instructional routine.
- Comparisons between Year 1 and Year 2 survey results showed that teacher opinions mostly remained stable, though confidence in student reading skills increased across years.

INTRODUCTION

From Phonics to Reading Program Overview[1]

Sadlier's *From Phonics to Reading* K-3 ©2019, by Wiley Blevins, is a supplemental foundational skills program built on the Science of Reading and years of author-conducted classroom application research. The systematic Scope & Sequence, when carefully implemented using direct and explicit instruction with a built-in review and repetition cycle, allows teachers and students to maximize and accelerate learning. Students apply phonics skills to real reading and writing with decodable texts that help teachers assess progress and personalize instruction for foundational skills growth. Ongoing professional development is provided in the form of videos, guides, white papers, webinars, and master classes.

Overview of the Evaluation

Sadlier contracted with the Center for Research and Reform in Education (CRRE) at Johns Hopkins University to conduct a follow-up efficacy study in the 2024-25 school year of its foundational skills program, *From Phonics to Reading (FPR*). The goal was to examine two-year impacts on student reading achievement following a prior analysis of first-year impacts in 2023-24 (Cook et al., 2024). The initial study showed positive directional trends that did not reach statistical significance. This report focuses on findings from the mixed-methods study that examined the impact and perceptions of the program as implemented in Brooklyn Diocese Schools in Brooklyn, New York.

Prior to the implementation of *FPR* in these studies, intervention teachers received a one-hour virtual professional development session that introduced them to the program. This onboarding session also introduced the online components of the program that could be used to further teacher training in the program material. Ongoing training was provided in the form of videos, guides, white papers, webinars, and online training guides. Treatment classrooms that implemented *FPR* were given slightly different recommendations on duration of use depending on grade level. Kindergarten and 1st grade classrooms were prescribed 30-40 minutes per day of program use, and 2nd and 3rd grade classrooms 20-25 minutes per day of program use. Regardless of grade level, teachers were advised to implement the program from four to five days per week.

In the present study, we examined the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of FPR on student achievement after two years, as measured by the i-Ready Reading assessment?
    a. How do the two-year impacts of FPR vary by student characteristics (e.g., gender, ethnicity, baseline achievement, and grade level)?
2. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding:

[1] Information from Sadlier, https://www.sadlier.com/school/from-phonics-to-reading

a. Preparedness for using the program?
b. The quality of program implementation?
c. The quality and types of professional development?
d. Impacts on students' achievement and interest in reading?
e. Recommendations for program improvement?

3. How did teacher perceptions change from Year 1 to Year 2 of implementation?

METHOD

Research Design

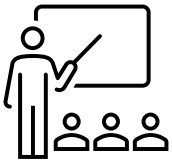
To evaluate the effectiveness of *FPR* on student learning, we employed a mixed-methods QED. During Year 1 (2023-24 school year), the treatment schools implemented *FPR* in Grade K-2 classrooms, while comparison-school teachers continued their normal (e.g., "business as usual") phonics approach. In Year 2 (2024-25), program usage was expanded to Grades K-3. Spring 2025 i-Ready Reading scores were the outcome measure of student achievement for this Year 2 study. Qualitative data (e.g., teacher survey) were collected to supplement and explain the results of quantitative data analyses.

Participants

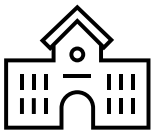
Details about study participants in Year 2[2] are presented below.

6 treatment schools

262 treatment students

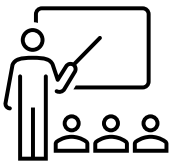


29 treatment teachers



4 comparison schools

166 comparison students

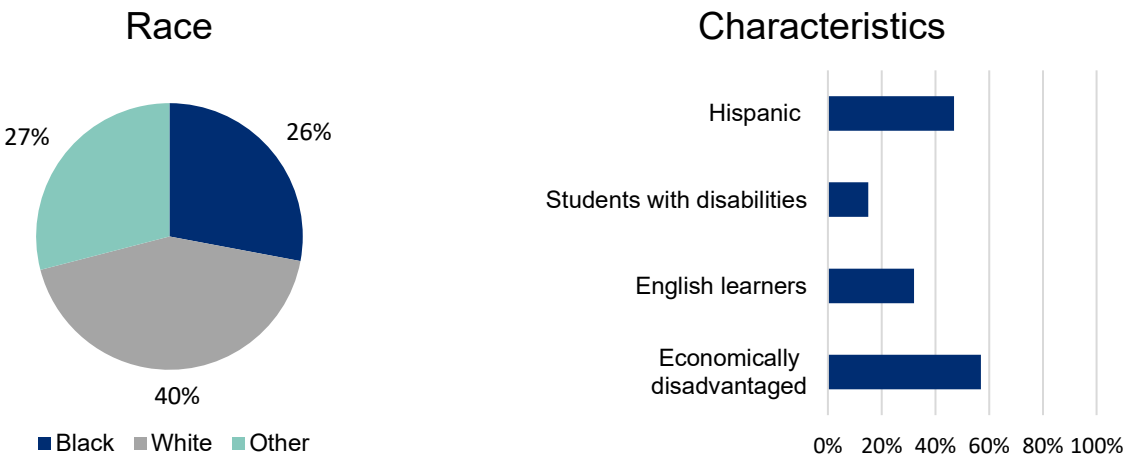


16 comparison teachers

[2] All students in the schools with a score on the spring 2025 i-Ready assessment.

The context for the study was Brooklyn Diocese Schools, a private, Catholic-affiliated urban district in the northeast United States. The Brooklyn Diocese operates 80 schools and serves approximately 27,000 students. A total of six treatment schools and four comparison schools participated in the study beginning in Year 1, 2023-24, including 444 Grades K-2 students (261 treatment and 183 comparison). After Year 1, two of the schools closed (one treatment and one comparison school each), but many of those students transferred to other schools in the study and thus are still included in the analysis. In Year 2, 2024-25, 428 students in Grades K-3 were present in the remaining schools and had available outcome data. However, the main impact analyses in this report focus on the two-year impacts for the 288 Grades 1 to 3 students (177 treatment and 111 comparison) in Year 2, who were present in the schools during both years and had both Year 1 fall (2023) and Year 2 spring (2025) scores. This group will be called the "analytic sample" throughout this report. Supplementary analyses examined program impacts on the achievement gains for treatment and comparison students in Year 2 only (see Appendix A). Some of the treatment students in those analyses were experiencing FPR for the first time (e.g., all Grade K students), while others were in their second year of program exposure.

Demographic snapshot of student participants in 2024-25[3]



Student analytic sample. Table 1 shows student demographic data, by condition, for students in the analytic sample for the two-year impact analyses.[4]

[3] Data provided by Brooklyn Diocese Schools.

[4] We used Year 1 demographic data because it was more complete and reliable than demographic data provided in Year 2. Information about the full sample of students in the Year 2 data, including demographics, baseline equivalence, and impacts are found in Appendix A.

Table 1
Demographics of two-year student analytic sample

	Treatment %	Comparison (All) %
Female	49.72	52.25
Hispanic (ethnicity)	68.36*	18.02
Race - White	53.67	45.95
Black	25.42	40.54*
Other	20.90	13.51
SPED	4.52	17.12*
ELL	28.81	19.82
FARMS	46.33	42.34
N	177	111

Note. Data from Year 1. Analytic sample only includes students with non-missing Year 1 fall and Year 2 spring i-Ready scores (the two-year analytic sample) were included in these calculations.
* $p < .05$.

Table 1 shows that there were considerable demographic differences between students in the treatment and comparison groups among the analytic sample. The treatment group contained significantly larger percentages of Hispanic students, while the comparison group contained significantly larger percentages of Black and special education students. We elected to use propensity score-weighting (PSW) to partially adjust for these differences (discussed in more detail below).

Survey sample. The teacher survey was administered online to teachers in May-June of 2025 via the Qualtrics online survey platform. All Brooklyn Diocese elementary school teachers utilizing Sadlier's *FPR* program were invited to complete the survey during this administration window. Sadlier's Brooklyn Diocese Schools district liaisons distributed links to complete the survey in conjunction with the JHU CRRE research team. Of the 20 teachers in treatment classrooms using *FPR*, 19 teachers completed the survey, resulting in a 95% response rate. An overview of the characteristics of this participant sample, in terms of grade level taught, years of teaching experience, and implementation practices with *FPR*, is provided in Table 2.

Table 2
Demographics of teacher survey sample

Grade level taught	%	*N*
Kindergarten	21	4
1st	21	4
2nd	21	4
3rd	37	7
Years experience teaching	**%**	
1st Year teacher	16	3
1-2 Years	21	4
3-5 Years	26	5
6-10 Years	11	2
11+ Years	26	5
Class size	**%**	
Less than 10 students	21	4
11-15 students	26	5
16-20 students	21	4
21-25 students	21	4
26-30 students	11	2
Duration of *FPR* use in 2023-24	**%**	
I used *FPR* during the first half of the year only	6	1
I used *FPR* during the second half of the year only	6	1
I used *FPR* throughout the entire school year	83	15
I have used *FPR* for multiple school years	6	1

Though survey participation varied in terms of teaching experience, class size, and duration of *FPR* usage, responses were most frequent from third-grade teachers (37%) and from those who implemented *FPR* throughout the entire school year (83%).

Measures

To address the research questions, the present study encompasses two primary data collection measures: student achievement data, and a teacher survey (see Table 3).

Table 3
Research questions with data sources and measures

Research questions	Student achievement data	Teacher survey
1. What is the impact of *FPR* on student achievement after two years, as measured by the i-Ready Reading assessment?	✓	
2. What are teachers' perceptions of their experiences using *From Phonics to Reading*?		✓

Data sources and measures for the present report are described below.

Student achievement data. i-Ready Diagnostic Reading assessment scores were obtained for all Grades K-2 students in the 2023-24 school year and Grades K-3 students in the 2024-25 school year. We obtained fall (beginning of year, BOY), winter (middle of year, MOY), and spring (end of year, EOY) i-Ready scores for both years. Our main achievement analyses focused on fall 2023 scores (from Year 1) as the prior achievement variable, and spring 2025 scores (from Year 2) as the outcome variable. Supplementary analyses of single-year impacts in Year 2 look at the same outcome but utilize fall 2024 i-Ready scores as the pretest. i-Ready diagnostic assessment scores range from 0-800 and are vertically scaled and nationally normed across grades, meaning that scores can be directly compared to each other, regardless of a student's current grade level.

Student demographic data. Demographic data were taken from Year 1 with missing values filled in by Year 2 data. Data were provided on students' grade level, assigned school and teacher, gender, race/ethnicity, and SPED, ELL, and FRL statuses.

Teacher Survey. The teacher survey was administered at the close of the 2024-25 school year to Brooklyn Diocese Schools *FPR* users. The survey instrument and detailed survey results can be found in Appendices D and E, respectively. The survey was co-designed by the JHU CRRE research team in conjunction with Sadlier program developers and employed a combination of Likert-type (i.e., closed-ended) and narrative-type (i.e., open-ended) questions to assess teachers' impressions and experiences using *FPR*. In specific, topics addressed through the survey included:

- Preparedness for using the program
- The quality of program implementation
- Impacts on students' achievement and interest in reading
- Recommendations for program improvement

Analytical Approach

Student achievement data for students in Grades 1-3 in 2024-25 were analyzed in Stata (v 18.0). After descriptively examining patterns in i-Ready Reading scores, the main analysis employed Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) with students nested within schools to determine the impacts of *FPR* on i-Ready Reading scores in spring 2025, adjusting for prior achievement in fall 2023, restricting the analytic sample to the 288 students with data at both of these time points. Demographic variables (for Hispanic ethnicity, gender, ELL status, disability status, and race) were included in all analytic models, as well as dummy variables for student grade levels.

Baseline equivalence between the treatment and comparison analysis groups is shown in Table 4, prior to any sample adjustments. Initially, the baseline difference between the two groups was fairly large, with a Standardized Mean Difference of .22 SDs. Although this difference is technically below the WWC cutoff of .25 SDs, it is large enough to indicate that treatment and comparison students were substantively different in prior reading achievement. Thus, we elected to proceed with a weighted analysis adjusting for the differences on the pretest.

Table 4
Baseline equivalence, Year 1 fall i-Ready Reading overall scores

All students	Treatment			Comparison			Standardized mean difference
n	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*M*
288	177	390.97	55.15	111	378.99	54.26	0.22

To adjust for these prior achievement differences, we employed inverse probability weighting (IPW) to create comparable groups of treatment and comparison students using weights, keeping all students in the analytic sample. In IPW, treatment students are all weighted equally (weight = 1), and comparison students are weighted based on how similar they appear to treatment students in terms of prior achievement on fall 2023 i-Ready reading scores (and grade level).[5] Comparison students' weights were of an acceptable range from 1.2 to 2.8 (where more similar students have higher weight value and are thus weighted more heavily in the impact estimates and vice versa for less similar students).

After applying the weights, Table 5 shows that baseline equivalence between the treatment and comparison groups was greatly improved from 0.22 SDs to 0.02 SDs, well below the WWC's .25 SD cutoff criteria.

[5] Additional model specifications were explored – including the dropping of outlier weighed cases and analyses without weighting. Some of these estimates are provided in Appendix C.

Table 5
Baseline equivalence after weighting, Year 1 fall i-Ready Reading overall scores

All students	Treatment			Comparison			Standardized mean difference
n	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*M*
288	177	391.00	55.15	111	392.23	59.46	0.02

A supplementary analysis of single-year impacts in Year 2 followed the same analysis plan described above (including the multilevel model, covariates, and IPW approach) for students in Grades K-3 in 2024-25. The main differences were that demographic data from Year 2 were used in place of Year 1, and fall 2024 scores were used as the pretest. Similar differences in baseline equivalence were observed and were resolved after weighting. Baseline equivalence (and impact) tables for this analysis are provided in Appendix A.

Qualitative data from teacher survey responses were analyzed using the constant comparison approach described by Miles et al. (2020). Data were first coded by segmenting and then assigning labels to passages of text. Following this initial coding, similar codes were combined to develop themes. Teacher survey data analysis included frequencies and descriptive statistics.

RESULTS

This section of the report begins with findings related to *FPR* two-year impacts on i-Ready Reading scores. This is followed by a summary of teachers' overall perceptions of *FPR* as expressed through the end-of-year survey. Teachers' responses to Likert-type items are provided first, which are then followed by findings for open-ended questions.

FPR Achievement Impacts

RQ1: What is the impact of *FPR* on student achievement after two years, as measured by the i-Ready Reading assessment?

Key Findings

- The main impact analysis showed that treatment students outgained comparison students by 7.5 points. This difference was statistically significant.

- Significant positive subgroup impacts were observed for students in Grade K, and who were Black, had ELL status, and were higher-achieving on the pretest.

Main Impact Analysis

The primary analysis examines the two-year impact of *FPR* on spring 2025 i-Ready Reading overall scale scores.[6] Table 6 shows the results from these multilevel models which adjust for the clustering of students in schools and which also incorporated weights to adjust for treatment-comparison group differences. This analysis was grand-mean centered to enable interpretation of the intercept.

Table 6
FPR two-year impacts on spring 2025 i-Ready Reading overall scale scores

Variable	Estimate	Standard error	*p* value	Effect size
FPR	7.457*	3.285	.023	0.13
Constant	472.731***	7.073	<.001	
Student *N*	288			
School *N*	10			

Note. * $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$.

FPR was found to have a positive, statistically significant impact on i-Ready Reading scale score gains from fall 2023 to spring 2025. The regression estimate can be interpreted as the average difference in i-Ready Reading score gains for treatment students relative to similar comparison students, adjusting for differences in prior achievement and student background. Thus, the results show that treatment students grew in reading achievement by 7.5 points ($p < .05$) more than comparison students did. This translates into an effect size of 0.13 SDs, indicating an educationally meaningful, medium-sized impact of *FPR* on student reading achievement (Kraft, 2020). When conceptualizing these gains in terms of percentile scores, the average comparison student at the 50th percentile would be expected to jump to the 55th percentile if they had received the *FPR* program.

Subgroup Impact Analysis

We also conducted subgroup analyses that examined *FPR* two-year impacts by grade level and student characteristics (gender, race/ethnicity, SPED status, ELL status, and prior achievement level). Student's prior achievement level was a 3-category variable based on the percentile rank of students' fall 2023 score: 0-25% was classified as low, 26-75% as middle, and 76-100% as high. Subgroup analyses were conducted by

[6] One-year impacts for Year 2 are found in Appendix A.

adding into our analytic model a term representing the interaction between each subgroup indicator variable and the treatment variable. This interaction term effectively breaks down the treatment effect into separate treatment effects for subgroups (such as Grades K, 1 and 2, instead of one effect for all grades combined).

Four subgroups (Grade K, Black, ELL, and High-Achieving students) experienced significant positive impacts from *FPR*, all of which were positive. These impacts are shown in Table 7. Full results of the subgroup analyses can be found in Appendix B, including Wald tests performed on the sum of the treatment and treatment-by-subgroup interaction term estimates.

Table 7

Subgroup analysis results, FPR impacts on spring 2025 i-Ready Reading scores

Subgroup	Estimate	*p* value	*n*
Grade			
K	15.283**	.008	92
1	-1.764	.847	96
2	8.054	.149	100
Female	9.549	.094	146
Hispanic	1.033	.875	141
Race			
White	3.768	.577	146
Black	12.458**	.001	90
Other	1.978	.88	52
SPED	-4.078	.665	27
ELL	12.665*	.048	73
Prior Achievement			
Low (0-25%)	7.086	.413	73
Middle (26-75%)	4.709	.481	143
High (76-100%)	17.692*	.049	72

Note. n = 288 overall; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Looking at the first row of Table 6, Grade K *FPR* students outscored similar Grade K comparison students by 15.3 points ($p < .008$). The impact among Grade 2 students was also positive, but smaller, and was close to zero for Grade 1 students. Of particular interest given their high representation in the sample (about one-third of the total) is the benefit for ELL and Black *FPR* students, who both outscored their comparison peers by 12.5 points. Finally, *FPR* higher-achieving students on the pretest (in the top 25 percent) significantly outscored comparison peers by 17.7 points. However, although not statistically significant, low-achieving and middle-achieving students were directionally superior to their comparison peers. No other subgroup impacts were significant although nearly all trended positively.

Year 2 Outcomes

In a secondary analysis, we also examined the one-year impact of *FPR* on spring 2025 i-Ready Reading overall scale scores, using the same analytic approach as the primary analysis. These results were positive in direction but not statistically significant. Full results are presented in Appendix A.

Teacher Experiences With *From Phonics to Reading*

RQ2: What are teachers' perceptions of their experiences using *From Phonics to Reading*?

Key Findings

- Teachers reported that they observed improvement in all student skills surveyed, especially sight word recognition and decoding.
- Teachers reported increases in their students' effort and engagement when using *FPR*.
- Teachers expressed appreciation of the program materials' focus on student engagement and the consistent format of the lessons.

The next section of the report begins with findings related to teachers' overall perceptions of *FPR* as expressed on the end-of-year survey. Teachers' responses to Likert-type items are provided first, which are then followed by findings for open-ended questions.

Implementation Quality

The majority of teachers in the study (89%) used the program throughout the entire school year. Most teachers reported using *FPR* between three (33%) and four (39%) days per week. Implementation time per day varied, though not all grade levels seemed to follow the recommended dosage times provided by the developer. Though *FPR* recommends that kindergarten classrooms use the program 30-40 minutes per day, all kindergarten teachers (n = 4) reported 20-30 minutes per day of program use. First-grade teachers spent a greater amount of time on *FPR* lessons daily, with half reporting 20-30 minutes of use (n = 2) and half reporting 31-45 minutes of use (n = 2); the latter two satisfied *FPR*'s recommended daily use of 30-40 minutes. Second-grade teachers reported using the program from 20-30 minutes daily (n = 2) or 31-45 minutes daily (n = 2), satisfying *FPR*'s recommended daily use of 20-25 minutes per day in that grade. The seven third-grade teachers reported the most varied daily usage times, ranging from

less than 20 minutes per day (*n* = 2), 20-30 minutes per day (*n* =1), 31-45 minutes per day (*n* = 2), and more than 45 minutes per day (*n* = 1). Thus, the majority (71%) of teachers satisfied *FPR*'s recommended daily use of at least 20 minutes per day.

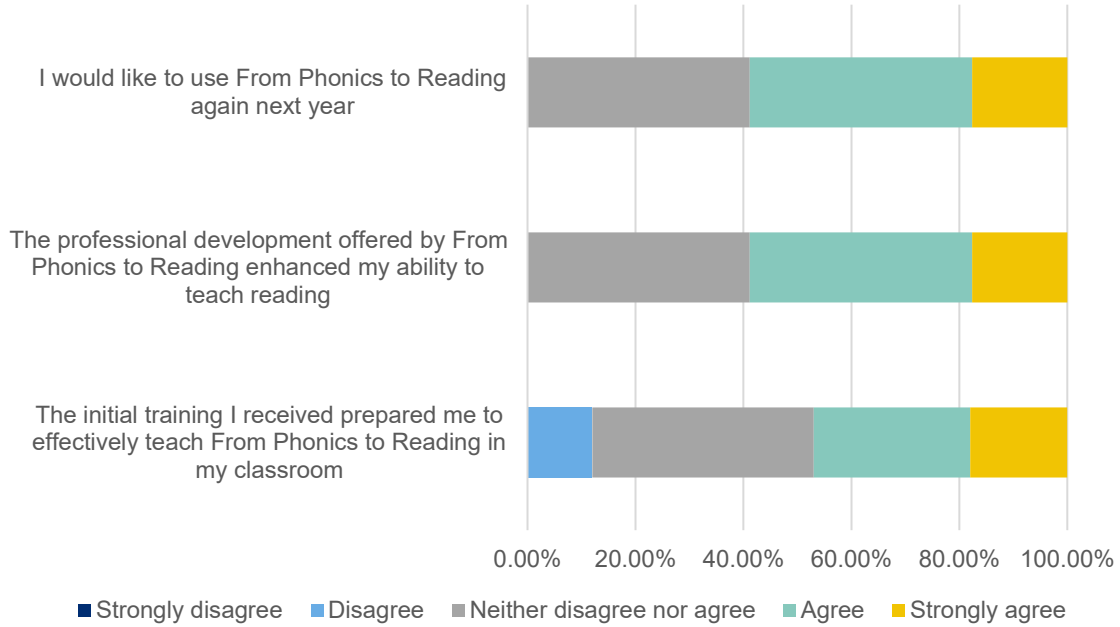
The *FPR* program was employed in a number of classroom contexts. Teachers most frequently (79%) used the program for whole-group instruction, but more than half (63%) also used the program for independent work. Over one-third of teachers found applications to use *FPR* for teacher-led small group instruction (42%) and homework (*37%*), while center-based work was the least frequent use for the program (26%).

Professional Development

As summarized in Figure 1 below, teachers provided their impressions with regard to the quality and utility of both the initial onboarding professional development they received, the ongoing training and support that was provided to them through *FPR* during the school year, and whether they would like to use the program again in the next school year.

Findings showed that a slight majority of all teachers (60%) agreed that they wanted to use *FPR* again in the next school year, and that the FPR training enhanced their ability to teach reading as an overall content area. None (0%) disagreed with either. Teachers were more mixed about whether their initial training prepared them to effectively implement *FPR*, as both agreement or strong agreement (47%) was only slightly more frequent than neutrality (41%). Here, a small segment (12%) expressed disagreement. One teacher who had used FPR in the previous school year strongly agreed that Sadlier provided adequate support to implement *FPR* in the second year of implementation.

Figure 1
Teacher survey responses regarding satisfaction with FPR training and future use



N = 17 responses per question. Values of < 5% are not labeled.

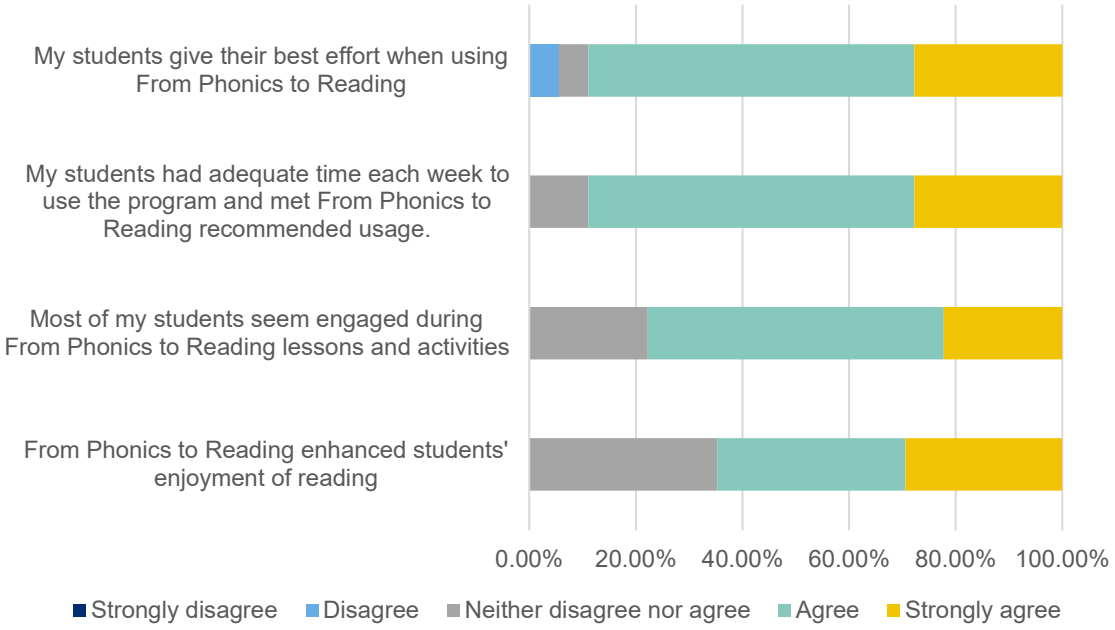
Though teachers were given the opportunity to elaborate on their ratings of *FPR*'s training in an open-ended response asking for their ideas of how to improve training to better meet teachers' needs, only two responded. One suggested that there should be more training provided overall and that differentiation methods should be covered. The second respondent was new to using the program and replied that it would just take time to properly learn how to pace the program.

Teachers were also surveyed about their use of the digital resources available on Sadlier Connect. Nearly half (41%) did not use the digital resources at all, and almost one-third (29%) explored the digital resources but did not use them regularly. One teacher noted that the lack of training on the digital resources was the biggest challenge faced while using the program, while another teacher indicated that they lacked access to the digital platform entirely. Few teachers used digital resources regularly (12%) or occasionally (18%).

Perceived Impacts

Teachers answered a number of survey questions that gauged their impressions of the curriculum's impact upon student attitudes and aptitudes in relationship to reading. We begin with responses about student engagement, enjoyment, and effort (see Figure 2).

Figure 2
Perceived impacts on student engagement



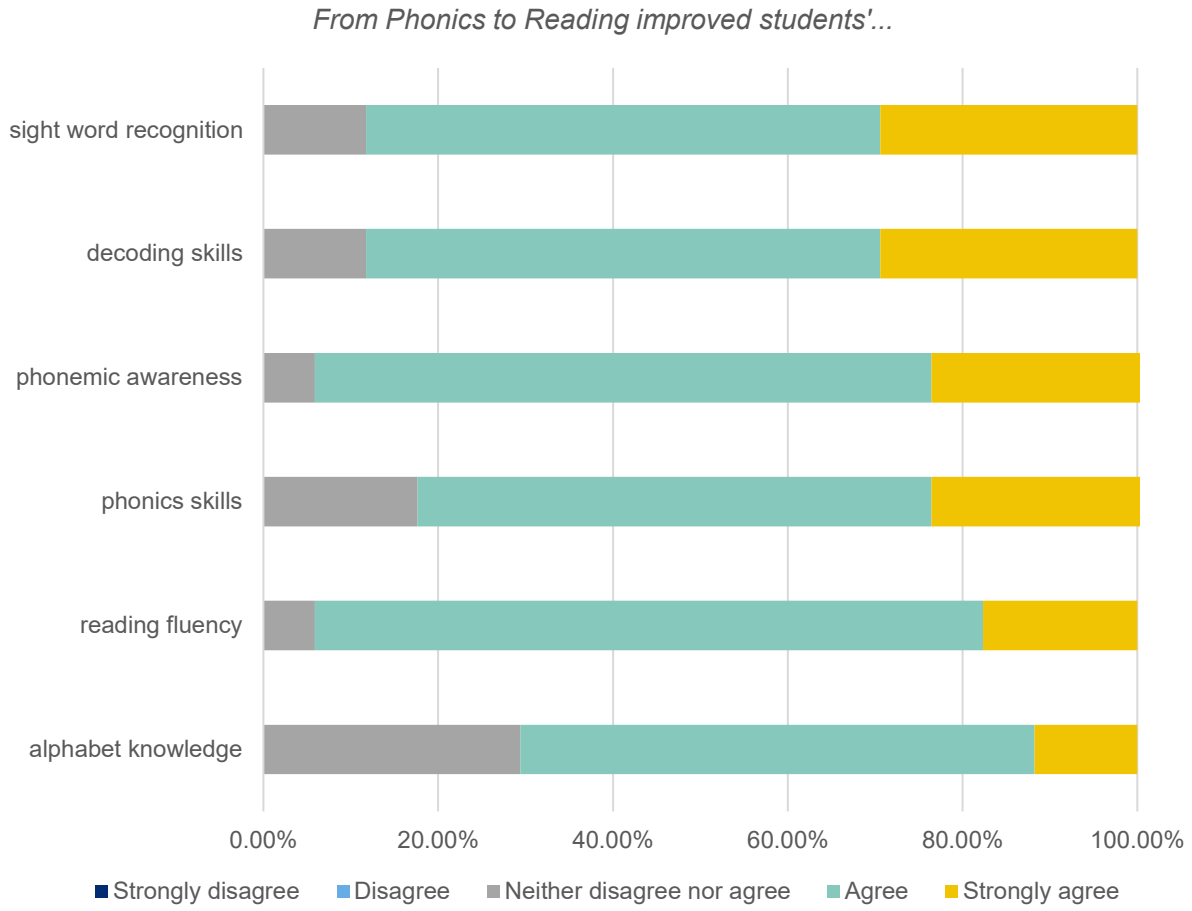
N = 18 responses per question. Values of < 5% are not labeled.

Teachers' perceptions of student attitudes were largely positive. A majority of participants (89%) agreed or strongly agreed that their students gave their best effort when using *FPR,* and that their students had adequate time to engage with the program and meet recommended weekly usage of the material. A similar majority (78%) agreed or strongly agreed that students seemed engaged during *FPR* lessons and activities.

Beyond student attitudes about reading, teachers were also asked to gauge the aptitudes of their pupils in specific reading skills (see Figure 3).

A clear majority of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the program has helped to improve all of the specific reading skills asked about in the survey. Agreement rates ranged from 94% for phonemic awareness and reading fluency, 88% for sight word recognition and decoding skills, 82% for phonics skills, and 70% for alphabet knowledge. Notably, none of the teachers expressed disagreement or strong disagreement on any of the items reported.

Figure 3
Perceived impacts on students' reading development



N = 17 responses per question. Values of < 5% are not labeled.

Program Strengths

In an open-ended survey question, teachers were prompted to share what they liked most about *FPR*. Feedback about the program's strengths coalesced around three major themes: engaging activities, instructional style, and student skills.

The student-focused activities included with the program were most often cited by teachers (*n* = 6) as a strength of *FPR*. The reading passages, visuals, and connected writing assignments throughout the worktexts were noted as important by three respondents. As explained by one teacher, the readings "helped the students understand the different concepts we were exploring." Three other teachers felt the entire program captivated student attention, with one adding that "it has the students engaged or even wanting to read more."

Another program strength was the consistent format of the lessons. Teachers (*n* = 5)

found that the format of the worktexts and organization of the instructional materials created a reliable structure for their reading instruction. “I like that each day is planned out because the lesson is broken down per day,” as one participant summarized.

Lastly, two respondents appreciated that *FPR* provided important foundational skills that their students needed consistent practice with. One respondent specified that “*Phonics to Reading* helped my students practice decoding skills, consonant blends, [and] compound words.”

Challenges

When asked about challenges, teachers reported several, though answers varied widely and no definitive trends were noted. Regardless, these challenges highlight areas where the program may consider possible adjustments to better meet the needs of both educators and students.

Two teachers struggled to plan for and maintain pacing, “…especially when students need additional time to master foundational skills.” In a related difficulty, two other teachers cited a general lack of time to properly implement the program, though one teacher conversely found that students sometimes didn’t have enough work to occupy them from just a single lesson. Feedback from two additional teachers reported that it was hard to implement independent work time with the program, with one citing struggles with “getting the students to read and not just search for answers.” Individual teachers noted that FPR didn’t coordinate with their phonics program, the vocabulary level was challenging for students, and that letter sounds and spelling needed additional remediation.

Recommendations

Teacher respondents were asked what they felt was missing from the program, as well as personal recommendations for how to improve the program moving forward.

- **Focus on improvements to the digital platform.** Three teachers wanted to see changes made to the digital platform so they could fully utilize all available resources. One teacher lacked access to the digital platform entirely, so individual check-ins with each newly implementing teacher would be beneficial to proactively troubleshoot any issues. Two other teachers wanted the digital resources to be more simplified and easier to access, as they felt there were too many links to click on or windows to open, and thus made it difficult to find the intended resource while working with students.

- **Provide more opportunities for differentiation.** Two teachers felt that FPR could be improved by including explicit opportunities for small-group instruction. This would allow teachers to work with students who need more personal attention and differentiation, such as students with IEPs and ELL populations.

- **Include more phonics practice.** One respondent advocated for more overt instruction on phonics and suggested that supplemental videos where students could watch other children pronounce unfamiliar words would be a beneficial improvement to the program.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to examine impacts of the *From Phonics to Reading* (*FPR*) program on Grades K-3 students in Diocese of Brooklyn elementary schools after two years of implementation. To address the primary research questions, hierarchical linear modeling was used to estimate *FPR* impacts on i-Ready Reading scores from fall 2023 to spring of the 2024-25 school year. Subgroup analyses were conducted to examine additional potential impacts of *FPR* on student sub-populations of interest. Additionally, teachers' perceptions of the *FPR* program were analyzed after implementation of the program in the 2024-25 school year.

Achievement Impacts

Results of the main impact analyses showed positive statistically significant impacts of *FPR* on Grades K-2 i-Ready Reading scale scores after two years. Treatment students outgained comparison students by 7.5 points: an effect size of 0.13 standard deviations. An effect size of this magnitude reflects an educationally meaningful, medium-sized impact of *FPR* on student reading achievement (Kraft, 2020). When conceptualizing these gains in terms of percentile scores, the average comparison student at the 50th percentile would be expected to jump to the 55th percentile if they had received the *FPR* program. This two-year program effect appears to meet criteria of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) for Tier 3 ("moderate") evidence support.[7]

This positive finding builds on the pattern of findings from the Year 1 study of one-year impacts (see Cook et al, 2024) and also the Year 2 one-year impacts, which were positive in direction but did not reach statistical significance. Two years of consistent positive findings that seem to build over time is encouraging evidence of *FPR's* efficacy for improving early elementary student's reading achievement.

Additionally, subgroup analyses showed particular benefit for kindergarten, Black, ELL and high-achieving students. The considerable gains for kindergarten students are notable but not entirely unexpected, given these students experienced the program in Grades K and 1, arguably the most formative years for developing phonics skills and demonstrating reading growth. Notably, Black and ELL students, two historically

[7] The present sample size was not sufficient to meet the ESSA Tier 2 criterion of 350 or more students in the analysis sample.

underrepresented subgroups, representing one-third of the study participants, also demonstrated significantly positive gains. Although high-achieving students' gains significantly surpassed their matched-comparison peers, those by middle- and low-achievers both reflected directional advantages as well.

Teacher Experiences with *From Phonics to Reading*

Teachers' survey responses provided generally positive impressions of the program's impacts on student effort and engagement. In addition, teachers agreed that they saw an increase in every surveyed area of their students' reading skills, especially sight word recognition and decoding. More than half of teachers would like to use *FPR* again next year. There is room for improving the training and professional development, as more teachers agreed that their training better prepared them for teaching reading as an overall content area than it did to prepare them to use *FPR* specifically.

Teachers most appreciated the program's activities for student engagement and consistent instructional routine. The challenges that were most frequently reported included a lack of time to implement all aspects of the program, struggles to maintain pacing, and difficulty incorporating independent work time. Participants had multiple recommendations for improving the program's utility in the future and especially wanted to see changes made to the digital platform, which was not utilized to its fullest extent throughout the year. Overall, teachers in Brooklyn Diocese schools had positive experiences implementing *FPR*, and a more consistent implementation of the program in the future could yield even greater teacher satisfaction.

References

Cook, M. A., Giorgos, E. C., & Ross, S.M. (2024). *Efficacy Study of Sadlier's From Phonics to Reading Program in Brooklyn Diocese Schools (NY).* Center for Research and Reform in Education, The Johns Hopkins University.

Kraft, M. A. (2020). Interpreting effect sizes of education interventions. *Educational Researcher*, *49*(4), 241-253.

Von Hippel, P. T. (2025). Multiply by 37 (or divide by 0.027): A surprisingly accurate rule of thumb for converting effect sizes from standard deviations to percentile points. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 47*(3), 960-969.

APPENDIX A: Year 2 (Single Year) Analysis

Table A2
Demographics of student Year 2 sample (in 2024-25)

	Treatment %	Comparison (All) %
Female	51.49	55.00
Hispanic	66.42*	13.75
White	37.31	43.75
Black	25.37	27.50
Asian	3.36	13.12*
Other Race	34.00*	15.63
SPED	12.69	17.50
ELL	41.04*	18.13
FARMS	56.72	56.25
N	268	160

Note. * $p < .05$; only students with non-missing fall 2024 and spring 2025 (Year 2) i-Ready scores were included in these calculations.

Table A2
Baseline equivalence before and after weighting, Year 2 fall i-Ready Reading overall scores

Weights	All students	Treatment			Comparison			Standardized mean difference
	n	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*M*
None	428	268	425.56	65.81	160	431.01	73.23	0.08
Pretest & grade levels	428	268	425.56	65.81	160	407.58	71.32	0.26

Table A3
FPR impacts on spring 2025 i-Ready Reading overall scale scores in Year 2

Variable	Estimate	Standard error	*p* value	Effect size
FPR	1.469	4.892	.764	0.02
Constant	429.175***	3.755	<.001	
Student *N*	428			
School *N*	8			

Note. *** $p < .001$.

Table A4

Subgroup analysis results, FPR impacts on i-Ready Reading scores in Year 2

Subgroup	Estimate	*p* value	*n*
Grade			
K	-9.006	.370	81
1	7.702	.148	104
2	-0.348	.961	120
3	2.460	.758	123
Female	-1.445	.769	226
Hispanic	-8.298	.151	200
Race			
White	-3.241	.519	170
Black	8.598	.331	112
Other	2.228	.745	146
SPED	5.505	.639	27
ELL	2.103	.680	139
Prior Achievement			
Low	0.458	.949	108
Middle	-5.086	.340	211
High	13.874***	<.001	109

Note. n = 428 overall; *** $p < .001$.

APPENDIX B: Full Subgroup Regression Tables for Two-Year Impact Analysis

Table B1

FPR two-year impacts on spring 2025 i-Ready Reading overall scale scores, by grade level

Variable	Estimate	Standard error	*p* value
FPR (Grade K)	15.283**	5.725	.008
FPR * Grade 1	-17.047	11.090	.124
FPR * Grade 2	-7.229	6.149	.240
Constant	470.172***	5.497	<.001
Student *N*	288		
School *N*	10		

Note. *n(Grade K)* = 92, *n(Grade 1)* = 96, *n(Grade 2)* = 100. ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table B2

FPR two-year impacts on spring 2025 i-Ready Reading overall scale scores, by gender

Variable	Estimate	Standard error	*p* value
FPR	9.549	5.694	.094
FPR * Female	-4.612	6.633	.487
Constant	471.791***	6.756	<.001
Student *N*	288		
School *N*	10		

Note. *n(female)* = 146, *n(male)* = 142. *** $p < .001$.

Table B3

FPR two-year impacts on spring 2025 i-Ready Reading overall scale scores, by ethnicity (Hispanic or non-Hispanic)

Variable	Estimate	Standard error	*p* value
FPR	11.669***	3.204	.000
FPR * Hispanic	-10.636	8.133	.191
Constant	473.113***	6.890	<.001
Student *N*	288		
School *N*	10		

Note. *n(Hispanic)* = 141, *n(non-Hispanic)* = 147. *** $p < .001$.

Table B4

FPR two-year impacts on spring 2025 i-Ready Reading overall scale scores, by race

Variable	Estimate	Standard error	*p* value
FPR (White)	3.768	6.753	.577
FPR * Black	8.690	7.336	.236
FPR * Other	-1.790	18.199	.922
Constant	468.726***	7.917	<.001
Student *N*	288		
Classroom *N*	10		

Note. * *n(White)* = 146, *n(Black)* = 90, *n(Other)* = 52. *** $p < .001$.

Table B4

FPR two-year impacts on spring 2025 i-Ready Reading overall scale scores, by SPED status

Variable	Estimate	Standard error	*p* value
FPR	8.557*	3.534	.015
FPR * SPED	-12.636	10.092	.211
Constant	472.237***	6.792	<.001
Student *N*	288		
Classroom *N*	10		

Note. *n(SPED)* = 27, *n(non-SPED)* = 261. * $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$.

Table B5

FPR two-year impacts on spring 2025 i-Ready Reading overall scale scores, by ELL status

Variable	Estimate	Standard error	*p* value
FPR	5.577	4.143	.178
FPR * ELL	7.088	7.170	.323
Constant	472.757***	7.002	<.001
Student *N*	288		
Classroom *N*	10		

Note. *n(ELL)* = 73, *n(non-ELL)* = 215. *** $p < .001$.

Table B6

FPR two-year impacts on spring 2025 i-Ready Reading overall scale scores, by prior achievement level

Variable	Estimate	Standard error	*p* value
FPR (Middle 50)	4.709	6.687	.481
FPR * Low (bottom 25%)	2.377	7.636	.756
FPR * High (top 25%)	12.983	10.783	.229
Constant	485.256***	11.282	<.001
Student *N*	288		
School *N*	10		

Note. *n(Middle)* = 143, *n(Low)* = 73, *n(High)* = 72. *** $p < .001$.

APPENDIX C: ALTERNATIVE MODELS

Table C1

FPR two-year impacts on spring 2025 i-Ready Reading overall scale scores, without outlier weighted cases

Variable	Estimate	Standard error	*p* value	Effect Size
FPR	9.457***	2.441	<.001	0.16
Constant	428.463***	7.483	<.001	
Student *N*	280			
School *N*	10			

Note. *** $p < .001$.

Table C2

FPR two-year impacts on spring 2025 i-Ready Reading overall scale scores, without weighting

Variable	Estimate	Standard error	*p* value	Effect Size
FPR	8.255	5.553	.137	0.14
Constant	477.970***	8.123	<.001	
Student *N*	288			
School *N*	10			

Note. *** $p < .001$.

APPENDIX D: FPR TEACHER SURVEY

Johns Hopkins University is working with Sadlier to evaluate the effectiveness of their *From Phonics to Reading* curriculum in Southwestern City Schools. Feedback from teachers is essential to this work.

This survey should take about 10 minutes to complete, and your responses will be kept anonymous and confidential. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

By completing this survey, you are consenting to be in this research study. Your participation is voluntary and you can stop at any time.

1. What is the name of the school where you teach?

- o Blessed Sacrament Brooklyn
- o St. Bartholomew
- o St. Brigid's St. Francis Cabrini
- o St. Leo
- o Sacred Heart Cambria Heights
- o Other _____

2. In what grade(s) do you currently teach?

- ☐ Pre-K
- ☐ K
- ☐ 1st
- ☐ 2nd
- ☐ 3rd

3. How many years have you been a teacher?

- o Less than 1
- o 1-2
- o 3-5
- o 6-10
- o 11+

4. Approximately how many students are in your classroom?

- Less than 10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 21-25
- 26-30
- 31+

5. Approximately how long did you use *From Phonics to Reading* in your classroom this year?

- I used *From Phonics to Reading* during the first half of the year only
- I used *From Phonics to Reading* during the second half of the year only
- I used *From Phonics to Reading* throughout the entire school year
- I have used *From Phonics to Reading* for multiple school years

6. (Please note: Question 6 is displayed differently to participants based on their response to the above question 5)

(Option A) Sadlier provided adequate support to implement *From Phonics to Reading* in the second year of implementation.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither disagree nor agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

(Option B) The initial training I received prepared me to effectively teach *From Phonics to Reading* in my classroom.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither disagree nor agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

7. *(Please note: Question 7 is displayed only if participant answered strongly disagree or disagree to the above question 6)*

(Option A) How can *From Phonics to Reading* training be improved to better meet teachers' needs in the second year of implementation?

(Option B) How can *From Phonics to Reading* training be improved to better meet teachers' needs?

8. How did you use *From Phonics to Reading* in your classroom? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Whole group instruction
- ☐ Teacher led small group instruction
- ☐ Independent work
- ☐ Center based work
- ☐ Homework
- ☐ Other _____

9. How much instructional time was spent on *From Phonics to Reading* each day? Please give your best estimate in minutes.

- o Less than 20 minutes
- o 20-30 minutes
- o 31-45 minutes
- o More than 45 minutes

10. Typically, how many days per week did you implement *From Phonics to Reading* in your classroom?

- o 1
- o 2
- o 3
- o 4
- o 5

11. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
My students had adequate time each week to use the program and met *From Phonics to Reading* recommended usage.					
My students give their best effort when using *From Phonics to Reading*.					
Most of my students seem engaged during *From Phonics to Reading* lessons and activities.					

12. *(Please note: Question 12 is displayed only if participant answered strongly disagree or disagree to the above question)*

    Why did you disagree that your students seem very engaged during program lessons and activities? Please explain how student engagement could be improved.

13. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements: *From Phonics to Reading* improved students'

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
alphabet knowledge					
phonemic awareness					
phonics skills					
decoding skills					
sight word recognition					
reading fluency					
enjoyment of reading					

14. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The professional development offered by *From Phonics to Reading* enhanced my ability to teach reading					
I would like to use *From Phonics to Reading* again next year					

15. How often did you use the digital resources for *From Phonics to Reading* on Sadlier Connect?

- o I used them regularly
- o I used them occasionally
- o I explored the resources but did not use them regularly
- o I did not use the digital resources

16. What do you like most about *From Phonics to Reading?*

17. What do you find most challenging in implementing *From Phonics to Reading?*

18. Was there anything missing from the *From Phonics to Reading* curriculum that would have benefited you and your students?

19. What recommendations do you have for improving *From Phonics to Reading*?

APPENDIX E: *FPR* TEACHER SURVEY RESPONSES

1. What is the name of the school where you teach?

	%	*N*
Blessed Sacrament Brooklyn	16	3
St. Bartholomew	21	4
St. Brigid's St. Francis Cabrini	21	4
St. Leo	21	4
Sacred Heart Cambria Heights	21	4

2. In what grade(s) do you currently teach?

	%	*N*
Kindergarten	21	4
1st	21	4
2nd	21	4
3rd	37	7

3. How many years have you been a teacher?

	%	*N*
Less than 1	16	3
1-2 Years	21	4
3-5 Years	26	5
6-10 Years	11	2
11+ Years	26	5

4. Approximately how many students are in your classroom?

	%	*N*
Less than 10 students	22	4
11-15 students	26	5
16-20 students	21	4
21-25 students	21	4
26-30 students	11	2

5. Approximately how long did you use *From Phonics to Reading* in your classroom this year?

	%	*N*
I used *FPR* during the first half of the year only	6	1
I used *FPR* during the second half of the year only	6	1
I used *FPR* throughout the entire school year	83	15
I have used *FPR* for multiple school years	6	1

6. (Option A – second year implementers) Sadlier provided adequate support to implement *From Phonics to Reading* in the second year of implementation.

	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Agree %	Strongly agree %	*N*	*M*	*SD*
	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100	1	8.00	0.00

6. (Option B – first year implementers) The initial training I received prepared me to effectively teach *From Phonics to Reading* in my classroom.

	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Agree %	Strongly agree %	*N*	*M*	*SD*
	0.00	12.00	41.00	29.00	18.00	17	3.53	0.92

7. How did you use *From Phonics to Reading* in your classroom? (Check all that apply)

	N
Whole group instruction	15
Teacher led small group instruction	8
Independent work	12
Center based work	5
Homework	7

8. How much instructional time was spent on *From Phonics to Reading* each day? Please give your best estimate in minutes.

	%	*N*
Less than 20 minutes	11.00	2
20-30 minutes	50.00	9
31-45 minutes	33.00	6
More than 45 minutes	6.00	1

9. Typically, how many days per week did you implement *From Phonics to Reading* in your classroom?

	%	*N*
1 day	0.00	0
2 days	6.00	1
3 days	33.00	6
4 days	39.00	7
5 days	22.00	4

10. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements:

	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Agree %	Strongly agree %	*N*	*M*	*SD*
My students had adequate time each week to use the program and met From Phonics to Reading recommended usage.	0.00	0.00	11.11	61.11	27.78	18	4.17	0.60
My students give their best effort when using From Phonics to Reading.	0.00	5.56	5.56	61.11	27.78	18	4.11	0.74
Most of my students seem engaged during From Phonics to Reading lessons and activities.	0.00	0.00	22.22	55.56	22.22	18	4.00	0.67

11. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements: *From Phonics to Reading* improved students'

	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Agree %	Strongly agree %	*N*	*M*	*SD*
alphabet knowledge	0.00	0.00	29.41	58.82	11.76	17	3.82	0.62
phonemic awareness	0.00	0.00	5.88	70.59	25.53	17	4.18	0.51
phonics skills	0.00	0.00	17.65	58.82	23.53	17	4.06	0.64
decoding skills	0.00	0.00	11.76	64.71	25.53	17	4.12	0.58
sight word recognition	0.00	0.00	11.76	58.82	29.41	17	4.18	0.62
reading fluency	0.00	0.00	5.88	76.47	17.65	17	4.12	0.47
enjoyment of reading	0.00	0.00	35.29	35.29	29.41	17	3.94	0.80

12. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements:

	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Agree %	Strongly agree %	*N*	*M*	*SD*
The professional development offered by *From Phonics to Reading* enhanced my ability to teach reading	0.00	0.00	41.18	41.18	17.65	17	3.76	0.73
I would like to use *From Phonics to Reading* again next year	0.00	0.00	41.18	41.18	17.65	17	3.76	0.73

13. How often did you use the digital resources for *From Phonics to Reading* on Sadlier Connect?

	%	*N*
I used them regularly	12.00	2
I used them occasionally	18.00	3
I explored the resources but did not use them regularly	29.00	5
I did not use the digital resources	41.00	7