

Sifriyat Pijama



Evaluation Summary

For the 2013/14 school year

Dr. Hagit HaCohen Wolf

Dikla Mark

August 2014

A. Sifriyat Pijama in the 2013/14 school year- general background

Sifriyat Pijama strives to foster a love of reading among pre-school children, both at home and in school, while simultaneously introducing children to high-quality literature that stresses universal Jewish values. During its fifth year in Israel, with the full support of the Ministry of Education, the program operated in 7,100 Jewish pre-school classrooms (from both the public education system and the public religious education system), reaching about 201,500 children in 164 districts throughout the country. Since its inception, Sifriyat Pijama has distributed 218,000 books a month-- more than 1.5 million books in total.

The goal of this evaluation is to provide Sifriyat Pijama's administrators and supporters with the data they need to assess and enhance the program. The evaluation measures the following criteria: a) teachers' opinions of the selected books; b) the program's impact on the school, the children and the families in terms of both reading-readiness and values; c) the suitability of the program for families for whom Hebrew is not a first language; and d) the utilization of Sifriyat Pijama books from previous years.

The evaluation is based on interviews and meetings with the program's staff, as well as teacher feedback on the content and impact of the program. This feedback was obtained through two questionnaires that can be viewed in full at the end of this report. There was a mid-year questionnaire with 3,904 respondents (57% response rate) and an end-of-year questionnaire with 3,262 respondents (48% response rate). (The end-of-year questionnaires were distributed during Operation Protective Edge, and may explain the lower response rate.)

It should be noted that the cohort of pre-schools included in this study is representative of the larger group of participating schools; thus, the study's findings can be confidently applied beyond the sample of respondents (See Appendix I for more details).

B. Teacher opinion of books distributed in the 2013/14 school year

The teachers were asked to rate each of the books that were distributed during the 2013/14 school year in each of the following criteria: a) story-line, language, and age-appropriateness; b) illustrations; and c) overall impression. The summary of the teachers' responses (Table 1 and Table 2) indicates that the majority of the teachers (more than 75%) were extremely satisfied with the year's Sifriyat Pijama books. They were asked the extent to which they approved these various aspects in a range from "not at all/very little" to "to a very great extent"

Table 1

Kindergarten teachers' opinions of the books

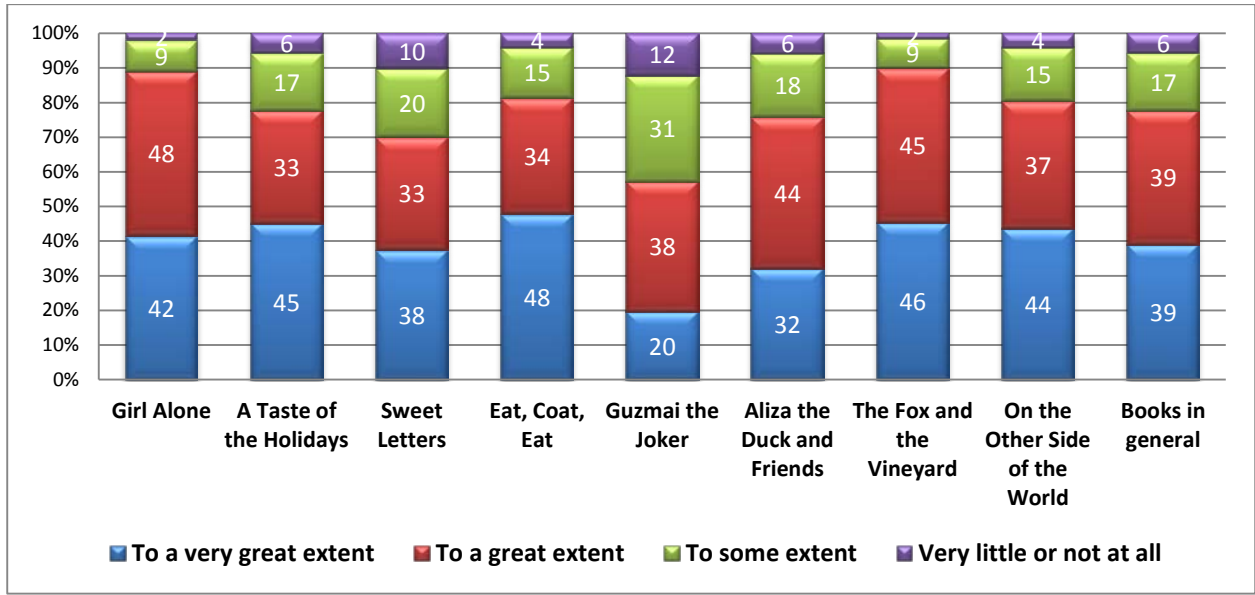
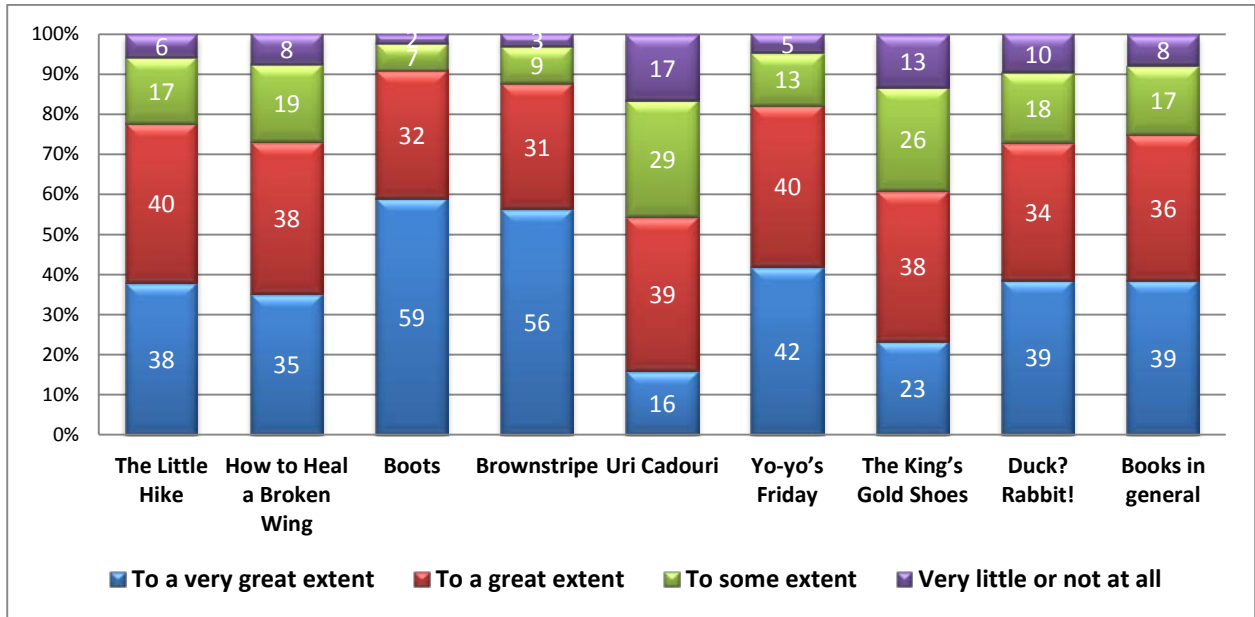


Table 2

Pre-kindergarten teachers' opinions of the books



C. Characteristics of the program’s implementation in class

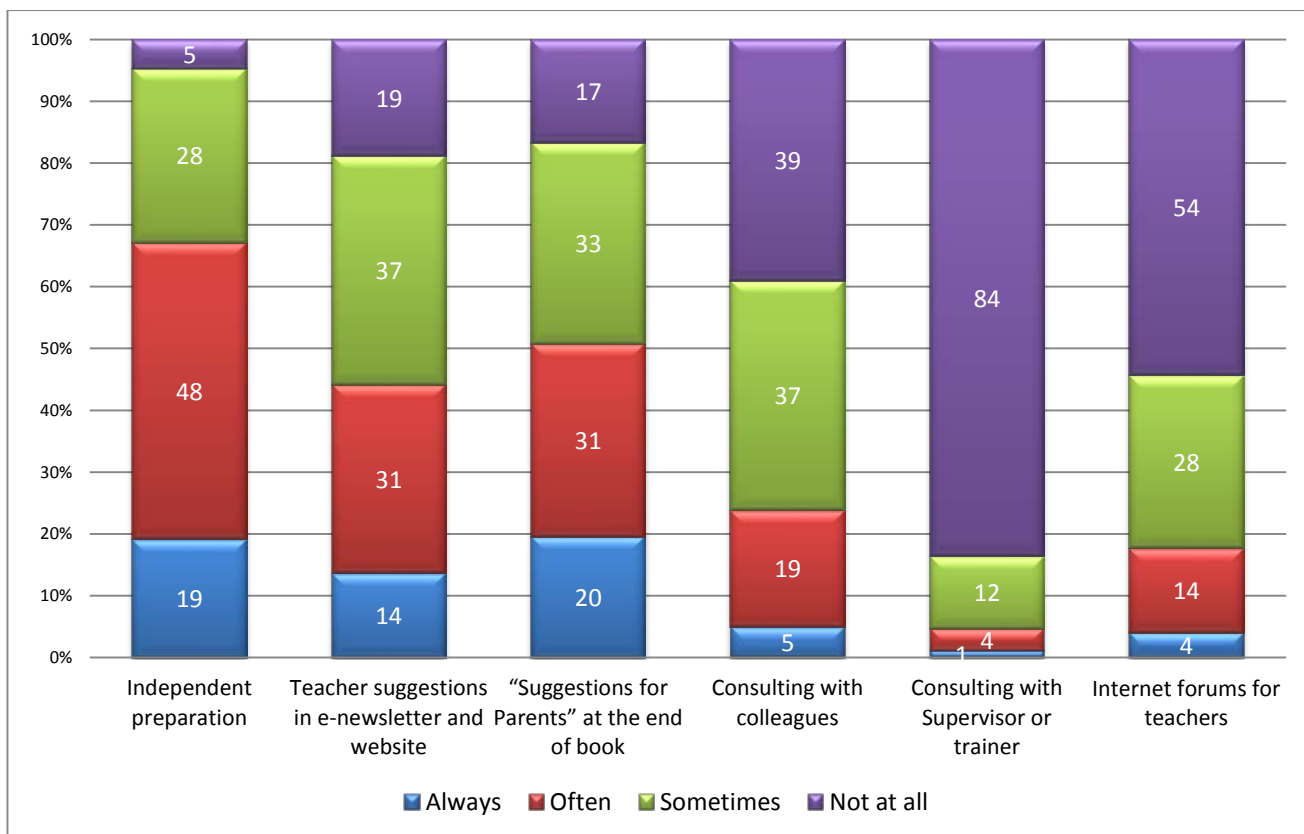
During the 2013/14 school year, Sifriyat Pijama distributed eight books to some 200,000 families. All of the books, which were distributed on a monthly basis, incorporated Jewish values and culture. After receiving the book, the teacher would show it to the class, read it out loud, and (usually) lead an activity related to the book. Afterwards, each child received a copy to take home and keep.

In terms of integrating the books into the pre-school curriculum, most of the teachers did so independently, with the help of a teacher e-newsletter, teacher suggestions on the program’s website, or the list of suggestions for parents at the end of the book (see Table 3). About one-quarter of the teachers consulted with their colleagues. Very few turned to internet forums for pre-school teachers, or consult with a supervisor or trainer.

Table 3:

Sources of ideas for integrating books into curriculum- teachers’ reports

This question was posed in a multi-answer format, so teachers could report more than one source.

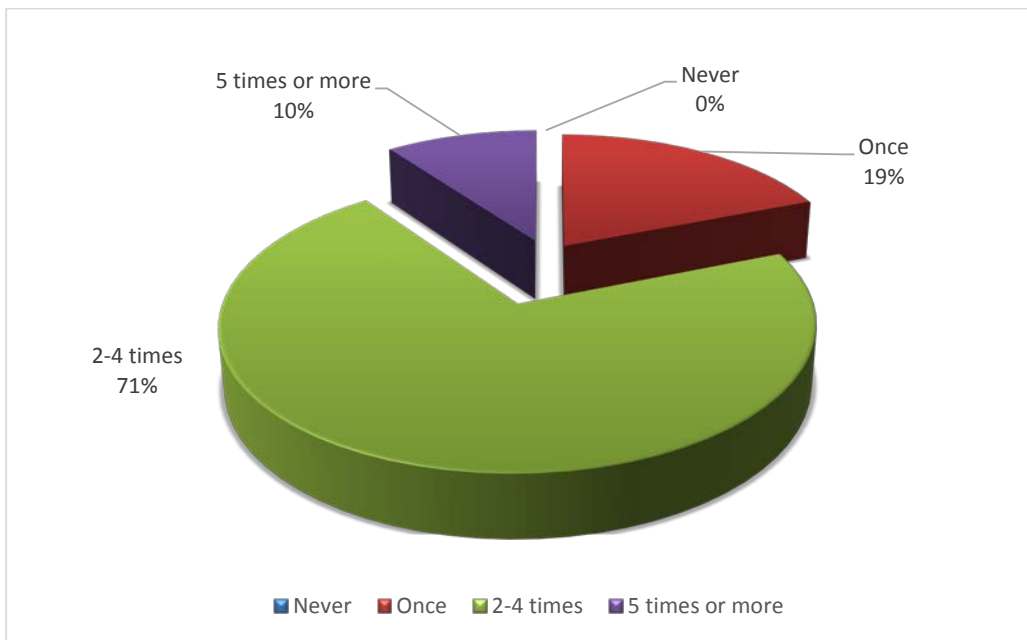


Reading the books to the children

All of the teachers who responded to the survey report that they read each of the books at least once. Approximately three-quarters of the teachers (71%) report reading each of the books 2-4 times.

Table 4

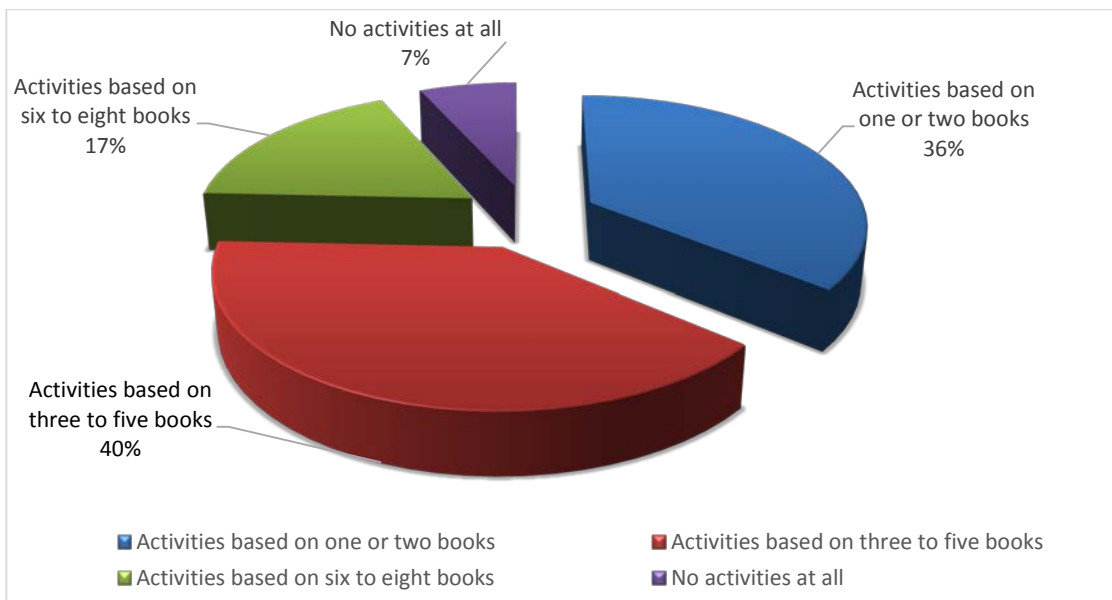
Teachers' reports on how often they read the Sifriyat Pijama books with their pupils



Book-based activities for children and parents

In addition to reading the books out loud in the classroom, **most of the teachers report that they led book-based activities with the children.** The activities reported were quite diverse. Some were based on Sifriyat Pijama's suggestions, while others were developed by the teachers themselves. Activities included arts and crafts projects, dramatic renditions of the story, projects based on the book's values, family projects, and personal sharing. A quarter of the teachers (26%) report leading activities for parents and children together. Similarly, a quarter of the teachers (26%) report that they organized activities based on the program as a whole, rather than on a particular book. (Examples include Family Day, Favorite Book Day, etc.)

Table 5

Teachers' reports on number of book-based activities over the course of the year

Additionally, **nearly all the teachers report that they encouraged the children to read at home.** This was achieved through conversations with the students (54%), teacher-parent communication (46%), positive reinforcement for the children who read (25%) or a combination of strategies. Moreover, more than half the teachers (56%) reported that they asked the parents to oversee family projects related to one or more books.

According to the teachers, the best ways to increase parental awareness of the importance of reading with their children are: after-school programs at the public library (75%), parent-child activities in the pre-school (71%), and, to a lesser extent, public service announcements on various media (55%), social networking (46%), and lectures for parents at the school (45%).

Suitability of program for children and families for whom Hebrew is not the first language

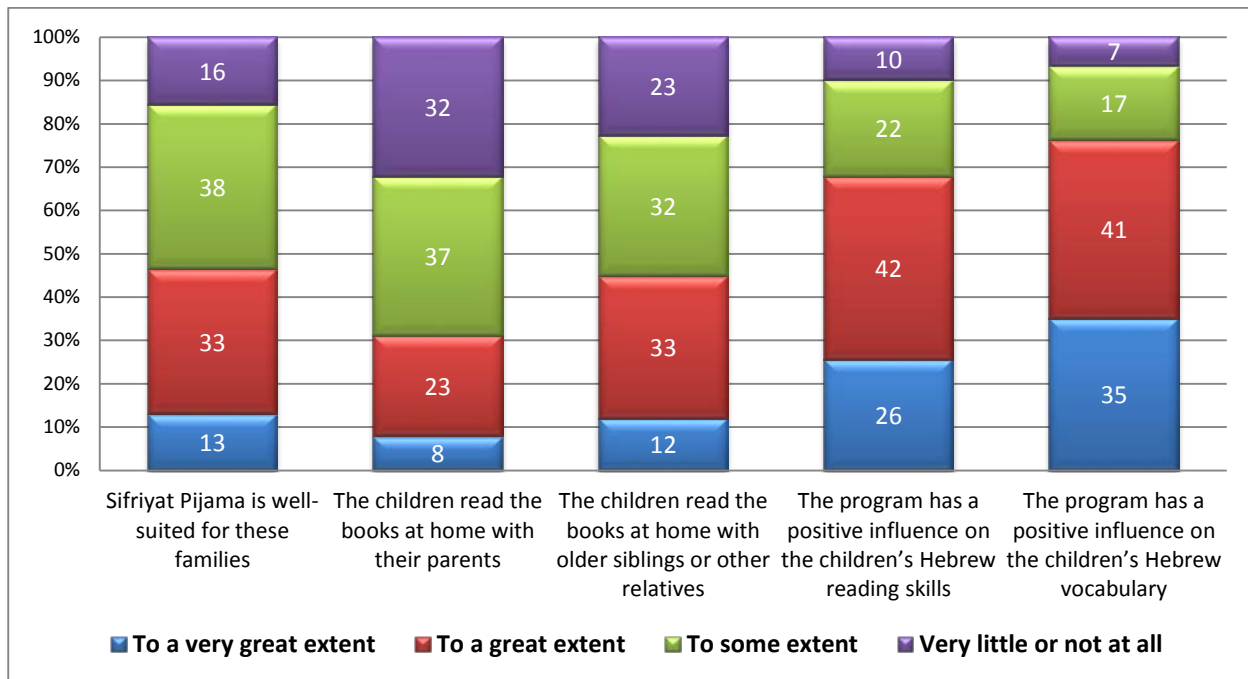
Approximately two-thirds of the teachers (65%) report that there are families in their pre-schools who have a hard time reading Hebrew. Most of these teachers report that there are 1-4 such families in each class, most of whom are immigrants from the Former Soviet Union. A small percentage of the families are immigrants from other countries, including Ethiopia.

One-tenth of the teachers (about 600) reported that there are more than 10 children of immigrants in their classes. Almost half of these teachers (44%) report that the books are not well-suited for these families; some of the teachers elaborated on this. However, an almost equal number of the teachers feel that the books are well-suited for these families, and most of these teachers assert that the

program has an extremely positive influence on the children’s Hebrew vocabulary (76%) and that it improves their Hebrew reading skills (68%).

Table 6

Teacher perception of program’s influence on families where Hebrew is not a first language



Teachers report that they utilized various strategies to encourage reading in these families. Primarily, they asked the parents who was reading the book with the child (80%), and suggested that if the families needed assistance, they call upon older siblings or neighbors (85%). Of the teachers who had Russian-speaking families in their classes, more than half of them directed the parents to the Russian translation of the “suggestions for parents” information sheet that could be found on the program’s website; one-third of these teachers reports that the parents went on to read these suggestions.

A minority of teachers (17%) utilized the assistance of a bilingual teacher aide, primarily because most of the schools did not offer this option. Similarly, only a small percentage of the teachers invited the parents to a joint reading at the school (13%), or turned to community members for help (10%).

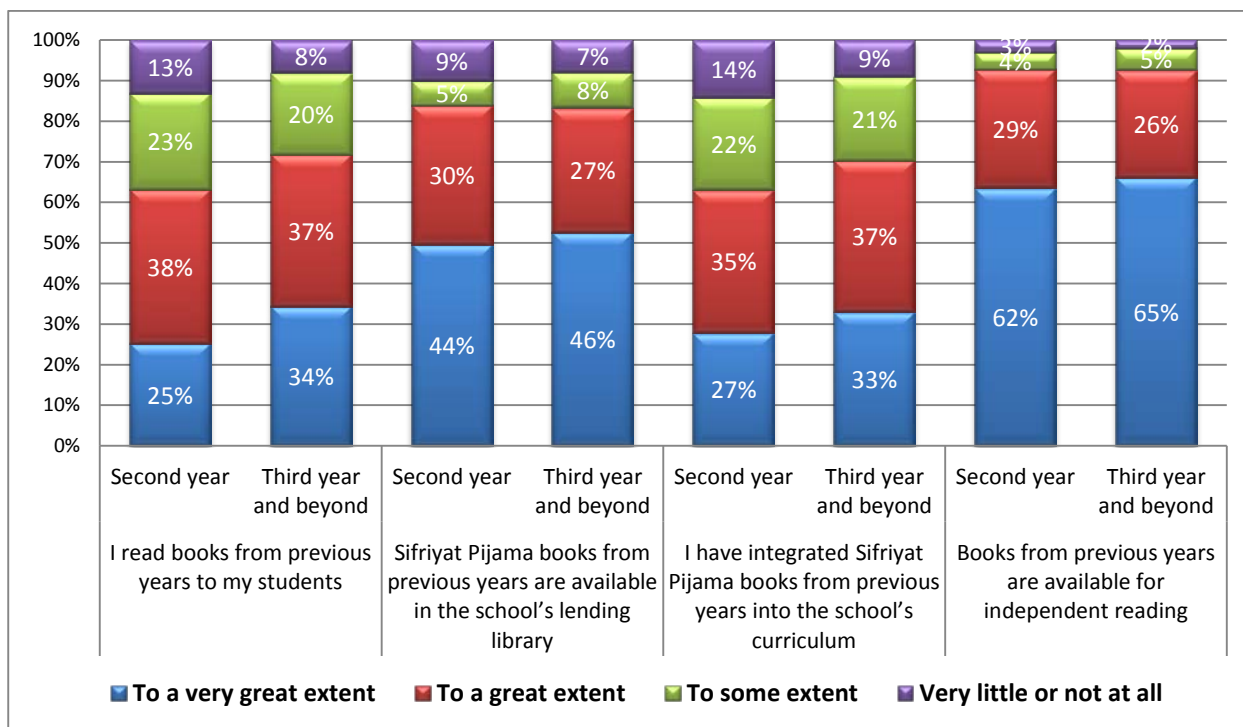
Utilization of Sifriyat Pijama books from previous years

Each classroom receives two classroom copies of every book. In the program’s fifth year, administrators wanted to better understand what was being done with classroom copies from previous years, considering that a class may have accumulated anywhere from 8-32 books from previous years, depending on how long the school has been in the program. Veteran teachers of the program (in at least their second year) report using books from previous years in a variety of ways.

Most of these books are integrated into the library’s general collection (74%), and are available for independent reading (91%). Teachers who have been participating in the program for three years or more report a higher rate of reading past years’ books to the children (34% do so often, compared to 25% of second-year teachers); similarly, they report a higher rate of integration of past books into the school’s curriculum (33%, compared to 27% of second-year teachers).

Table 7

Veteran teachers’ reports on utilization of Sifriyat Pijama books from previous years



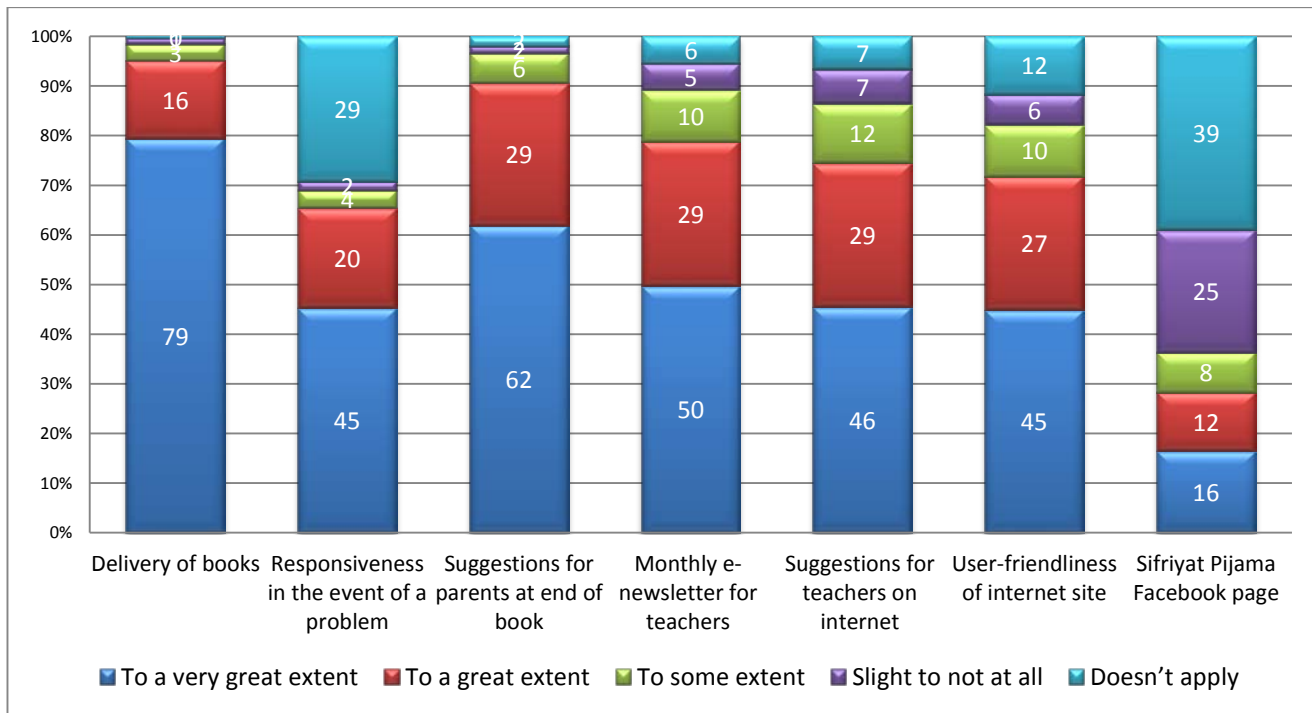
D. Teachers’ overall impressions of the program

A strong majority of the teachers (95%) report a high degree of satisfaction with the delivery of the books to the school (deliveries were on time, sent directly to the pre-school, contained the correct number of copies, etc.). Most of the teachers who have participated in the program for two or more years (80%) report that every book from past years was distributed to the children, aside from the copies that were designated for the school library.

In addition, most of the teachers were highly satisfied with other aspects of the program (Table 8). Approximately one-third of the teachers (29%) assert that the question regarding “responsiveness in the event of a problem” was irrelevant, as no problems arose. More than one-third (39%) report that they did not use the Facebook page at all.

Table 8

Teacher satisfaction with various components of the program



E. Program impact from the teachers' perspective

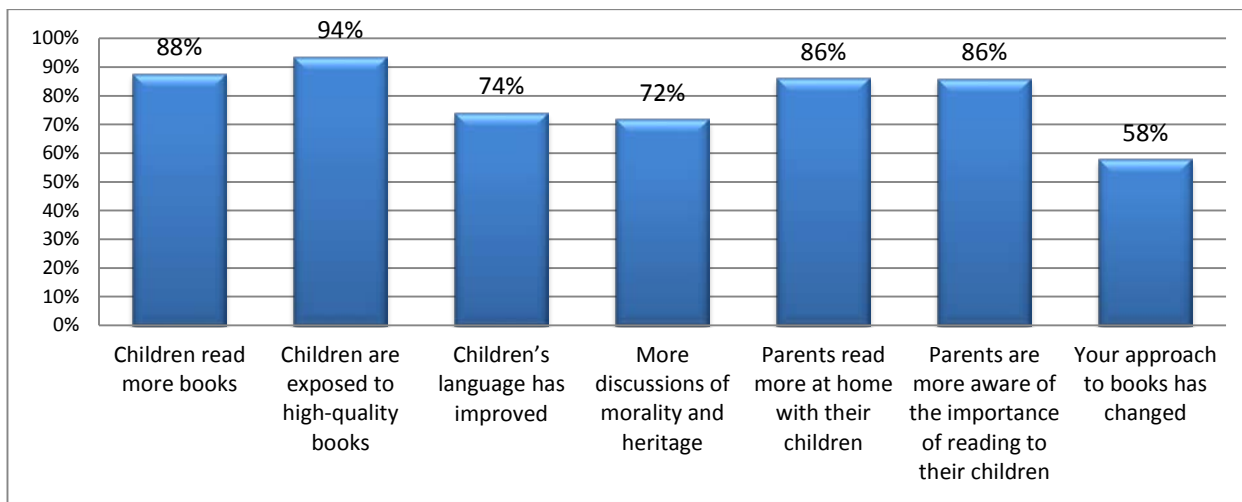
As shown in Table 9, at the end of the year, most teachers report that Sifriyat Pijama accomplished a number of things, most prominently **exposure of the children to high-quality literature** (94%), and **improving the children's reading skills** (88%). Moreover, a majority of the teachers report that as a result of the program, **more parents were reading with their children**, and were more aware of the importance of reading (86%).

The age group of the pre-school (kindergarten vs. pre-kindergarten) did not affect the teachers' assessments of the program's impact, with one exception: a higher percentage of kindergarten teachers (77%) report that the program spurred discussions of values and heritage, compared to pre-kindergarten teachers (71%).

The teachers' approaches varied depending on how many years they had participated in the program. Those who had participated for a longer time report an increased emphasis on morality and heritage. (First-year teachers: 64%; second-year teachers: 69%; third-year teachers or more: 76%.)

Table 9

The impact of Sifriyat Pijama on the class (teachers' perspective)



F. Conclusions

In summary, the evaluation demonstrates that the Sifriyat Pijama program is an integral part of the pre-schools, and is a significant component of the teachers' curriculum. Veterans of the program integrate books from past years into their teaching plans to a significant level.

All of the respondents report that they read all of the books at least once. Approximately three-quarters of the teachers (71%) read the books 2-4 times. Similarly, most of the teachers report that they led book-themed activities with their students. In addition, almost all of the teachers state that they encouraged the children to read at home, usually through class discussions or through communication with parents.

Most of the teachers report an extremely high degree of satisfaction with the Sifriyat Pijama books, and with the organizational and educational structure of the program (delivery of books, responsiveness to problems, the monthly information sheet that is sent to teachers, user-friendliness of website, etc.). The number of teachers who rely on the program's Facebook page is relatively small.

In their end-of-year evaluations, teachers report that the most significant effects of the program were that the children were reading more books, and that they were being exposed to high-quality literature. Other major outcomes were an increased awareness among parents of the importance of reading with their children, and an increase in how much time they spent reading with their children at home.

The study shows that more kindergarten teachers (than pre-kindergarten teachers) report that the program resulted in increased discussion of issues of morality and heritage, and that the more experience the teachers had with the program, the more they discussed these issues.

Two-thirds of the teachers report that there were children in their class for whom Hebrew is not a first language; most of these teachers had between one and four of these children. Approximately half of the teachers report that often, the books were not a good fit for these families, but that nonetheless, the program was valuable to them; it enriched the children's Hebrew vocabulary and had a positive impact on their Hebrew reading habits. Teachers report that they relied on a number of strategies to encourage reading among these families, primarily inquiring who was reading the books with the children and suggesting to parents that they turn to older siblings or neighbors for assistance.

The findings indicate an ongoing and growing presence of Sifriyat Pijama's books in those schools that have participated for more than a year in the program. Most of the teachers in these preschools report that the books from earlier years were in the class lending library, and were available for the children to browse through on their own. The more experienced teachers (in at least their third year) report a higher rate of reading Sifriyat Pijama books from previous years with the children compared to teachers newer to the program, and report that the books were more integrated in the school's curriculum than in the past.

Appendix

Appendix I: Demographic information on the study's participants

The mid-year questionnaire was sent to 6,785 pre-school teachers.

The end-of-year questionnaire was sent to 6,761 pre-school teachers.

The percentage of teachers responding to the mid-year questionnaire was 57.5% (3,904 teachers).

The percentage of teachers responding to the end-of-year questionnaire was 48% (3,262 teachers).

The following demographic information is based on the end-of-year questionnaire.

Grade level	Kindergarten- 27%	Pre-kindergarten 37.1%	Mixed ages 3-6 24.3%	Other 11.7%
School system	Public 63.0%	Public-religious 27.9%	Special Ed 7.7%	Other 1.4%
Length of participation in the program	One year 18.9%	Two years 29.3%	Three years 32.6%	Four years 19.3%
Families where Hebrew is not a first language	None that are known of 35.5%	1-4 families 46.3%	5-7 families 7.8%	8 or more families 10.4%

Appendix II: Mid-year questionnaire for teachers

Sifriyat Pijama 2013-14 school year

Mid-year questionnaire for teachers

Dear teacher,

This year, your school is participating in the Sifriyat Pijama program. In order to assess and enhance the program, a team of independent advisors evaluates the program on a regular basis. We are asking you to help us by filling out a short questionnaire, which can be accessed through the link below. It should take you no more than ten minutes to complete, and your input is essential for the continued development of the program.

When you have completed the questionnaire, please click the "submit" button. Once we have received your questionnaire, we will send you a confirmation e-mail. If you encounter any technical problems, please contact Dikla Mark at 054-7787915 or dmilim@netvision.net.il.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

The research team

=====

1. Background Information:

- a) Full name of principal:
- b) Name of pre-school:
- c) Who administers the program?
 - a. The head teacher
 - b. The head teacher along with a teacher's aide/teacher/volunteer. Please elaborate: _____
 - c. Only the supplementary teacher
- d) Are you the person administering the program?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- e) If you answered "no," please send the link to the teacher who is administering the program, and ask him/her to complete the questionnaire.
- f) Where is the pre-school located? (Please be specific)
- g) With which educational system is the school affiliated?
 - a. Public
 - b. Public-religious
 - c. Special education

- d. Other _____
- h) What is the grade level of the pre-school?
 - a. Kindergarten
 - b. Pre-kindergarten
 - c. Kindergarten and pre-kindergarten
 - d. Three-year pre-school
 - e. Other _____
- i) How many years have you been administering this program (at your current pre-school or at another pre-school)?
 - a. One
 - b. Two
 - c. Three
 - d. Four or more
- j) How would you describe your lifestyle?
 - a. Religious
 - b. Traditional
 - c. Secular
 - d. Other _____

2. The books:

We would like to hear your opinion of the four books that were distributed thus far. (This question is repeated for each of the four books)

Pre-kindergarten: "*The Little Hike*", "*How to Heal a Broken Wing*", "*Boots*", "*Brownstripe*", "*Uri Cadouri*" | kindergarten: "*Girl Alone*", "*A Taste of the Holidays*", "*Sweet Letters*", "*Eat, Coat, Eat*"

Which book did you receive? (Please choose one)

Name of book	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Story line, language, age-appropriateness					
Illustrations					
Overall					

Did you lead any activities specifically related to any of the books? If so, please give a brief description:

3. Reading the books/follow-up activities

a) On average, how many times did you read each of these books to the pre-school children (all of them or some of them)?

- a. Never
- b. Once
- c. 2-4 times
- d. 5 or more times

b) In addition to reading the books, did you lead any book-related activities for the children?

- a. I led an activity for the children related to one book.
- b. I led an activity for the children related to two books.
- c. I led an activity for the children related to three books.
- d. I led an activity for the children related to four books.
- e. I did not lead any book-related activities for the children.

c) In addition to reading the books, did you lead any book-related activities for the children and their parents?

- a. I led an activity for the children and their parents related to one book.
- b. I led an activity for the children and their parents related to two books.
- c. I led an activity for the children and their parents related to three books.
- d. I led an activity for the children and their parents related to four books.
- e. I did not lead any book-related activities for the children and their parents.

4. Reading during free time:

a) In the last month, did you encourage the children to read the books at home? How?

- a. I didn't encourage them to read the books at home.
- b. I talked to the children about the books.
- c. I talked, or wrote, to the parents about the books.
- d. I offered positive reinforcement to the children who read _____ (please write name of book/s)
- e. I assigned a family project related to a Sifriyat Pijama book.
- f. Other (please elaborate) _____

b) Are there families at your pre-school for whom Hebrew is not a first language?

- a. None that I am aware of
- b. 1-4 families
- c. 5-7 families
- d. 8 or more families

c) As far as you know, did any of these families find the books inaccessible?

- a. I don't know.
- b. To the best of my knowledge, there were no unusual difficulties.

c. To the best of my knowledge, there have been some difficulties (please elaborate) _____

d) The following statements apply to those families for whom Hebrew is not a first language.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

		To a very great extent	To a great extent	To some extent	To a very small extent	Not at all
1.	The Sifriyat Pijama program is suitable for these families					
2.	The children read these books at home with their parents					
3.	The children read these books at home with their older siblings, or with other relatives					
4.	The program has a positive effect on the children's Hebrew reading skills					
5.	The program has a positive effect on the children's Hebrew vocabulary					

e) What is the country of origin of these families?

- a. Some are from the Former Soviet Union and some are from Ethiopia.
- b. The majority are from the FSU.
- c. The majority are from Ethiopia.

f) Did you direct the Russian-speaking parents to the website's Russian translation of suggestions for parents?

- a. No.
- b. Yes, I directed them to the translation.
- c. Yes, I photo-copied the translation for them and sent it home with the book.

g) To the best of your knowledge, did the Russian-speaking parents read the suggestions?

- a. No
- b. Yes

h) Do you do any of the following to make the Sifriyat Pijama books more accessible to the non-Israeli families?

- a. Receive assistance from the teacher's aide who works with the children Yes No
- b. Invite the parents to a group reading at the school Yes No
- c. Ask the parents who is reading the book with the child Yes No
- d. Suggest that the families ask older siblings or neighbors for help Yes No
- e. Receive assistance from community organizations Yes No
- f. Other _____

5. Additional comments:

We would be happy to hear your suggestions or other constructive feedback regarding the program, including feedback that you have received from the parents and the children. Any insight that you deem relevant will be gratefully accepted.

Appendix III

Sifriyat Pijama 2013-14 school year

End-of-year questionnaire for teachers

Dear teacher,

As the 2013-14 school year draws to a close, **we are asking for your help** in assessing and enhancing the Sifriyat Pijama program. Please take a few minutes to complete our questionnaire, which you can access by the following link____. It should take you no more than ten minutes to complete, and your input is essential for the continued development of the program.

When you have completed the questionnaire, please click the “submit” button. Once we have received your questionnaire, we will send you a confirmation e-mail. If you encounter any technical problems while filling out the questionnaire, please contact Dikla Mark at 054-7787915 or dmilim@netvision.net.il.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

The research team

=====

1. Background Information:

- a) Full name of principal:
- b) Name of pre-school:
- c) Who administers the program?
 - i. The head teacher
 - ii. The head teacher, along with a teacher’s assistant/ supplementary teacher/a volunteer. Please elaborate: _____
 - iii. Only a supplementary teacher
- d) Are you the person administering the program?
 - i. Yes (If so, please proceed to question e.)
 - ii. No

If you are not the one administering the program, please send the link to the teacher who is, and ask him/her to complete the questionnaire.

- e) Where is the pre-school located? (Please be specific)
- f) With which educational system is the school affiliated?
 - a. Public
 - b. Public-religious
 - c. Special education
 - d. Other _____
- g) What is the grade level of the pre-school?
 - a. Kindergarten
 - b. Pre-kindergarten
 - c. Kindergarten and pre-kindergarten
 - d. Three-year pre-school
 - e. Other _____
- h) How many years have you been administering this program, whether at your current pre-school or at another pre-school?
 - a. One
 - b. Two
 - c. Three
 - d. Four or more
- i) Do you participate in the program with your own children? Yes No
- j) How would you describe your lifestyle?
 - a. Religious
 - b. Traditional
 - c. Secular
 - d. Other _____

2. The books:

- a) On average, how many times did you read each book to the pre-school children (whether all of them or some of them)?
 - a. Never
 - b. Once
 - c. 2-4 times
 - d. 5 or more times

- b) In addition to reading the books, did you lead any book-related activities for the children?
 - a. I led an activity for the children related to one-two books.
 - b. I led an activity for the children related to three-five books.
 - c. I led an activity for the children related to six-eight books.
 - d. I did not lead any book-related activities for the children.

- c) In addition to reading the books, did you lead any book-related activities for the children and their parents?
 - a. I led an activity for the children and their parents related to one book.
 - b. I led an activity for the children and their parents related to two books.
 - c. I led an activity for the children and their parents related to three books.

- d. I led an activity for the children and their parents related to four or more books.
 e. I did not lead any book-related activities for the children and their parents.

d) Did you assign any book-related projects for the family to complete at home?

- a. No.
 b. Yes, related to one-two books.
 c. Yes, related to three-five books.
 d. Yes, related to six-eight books.

e) When you are planning the implementation of the program, how often do you rely on the following sources for ideas?

		Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	I prepare independently					
2	The e-newsletter with suggestions (also available on the website)					
3	The suggestions for parents at the end of the book					
4	Other pre-school teachers					
5	The program supervisor					
6	Internet forums for pre-school teachers					
7	Other					

f) We would like to hear your opinion of the four books that were distributed during the second half of the year. (This question is repeated for each of the four books.)

Kindergarten: Guzmai the Joker, Aliza the Duck and Friends, The Fox and the Vineyard, On the Other Side of the World

Pre-kindergarten: Uri Cadouri, Yo-Yo's Friday, The King's Gold Shoes, Duck? Rabbit!

To what extent do you consider the following aspects of the books to be good

Name of book	To a very great extent	To a great extent	To some extent	To a very small extent	Not at all
Story line, language, age-appropriateness					
Illustrations					
Overall					

g) Did you lead any activities specifically connected to any of the books? If so, please give a brief description:

h) Do you have any special activities focused on the general program itself, rather than on a particular book (e.g. Family Day, Favorite Book Day, remedial teaching, etc.)? If so, please give a brief description:

3. Components of the program

a) To what extent were you satisfied with the following components of the Sifriyat Pijama program?

		To a very great extent	To a great extent	To some extent	To a very small extent	Not at all	n/a
1	Book delivery (punctuality, correct amount, direct delivery, etc)						
2	Responsiveness in the case of a problem						
3	Suggestions for parents (at the end of the book)						
4	Monthly e-mail updates for teachers						
5	Suggestions for teachers on website						
6	User-friendliness of website for other purposes (forms, copyrights, picture gallery, reading lists, etc.)						
7	Sifriyat Pijama Facebook page						

b) Help us understand the impact of the Sifriyat Pijama program on your pre-school.

	In your opinion, did the program lead to any of the following?	No	Yes	Please elaborate
1	The children are reading more books.			
2	The children are being exposed to high-quality books.			
3	Improved language skills			
4	Increased discussion of values and heritage			
5	Parents are reading more books with their children at home.			
6	Parents are more aware of the importance of reading for their children's development			
7	A change in the role of books in your classroom.			
8	Other:			

c) How many years have you been using the Sifriyat Pijama program (at your current pre-school or another pre-school)?

- a. this is my first year (please proceed to question "e")
- b. this is my second year
- c. this is my third year
- d. this is my fourth year

d) To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding your pre-school?

		To a very great extent	To a great extent	To some extent	To a very small extent	Not at all	n/a
1	This year, I read the children books from previous years						

2	The Sifriyat Pijama books are integrated into the class library's general collection						
3	I incorporated books from previous years into educational activities						
4	Books from previous years are available for the children for independent reading						

e) Aside from the copies that are set aside for the pre-school's library, were there any copies left over, this year or in the past?

- a. Yes, fewer than ten.
- b. Yes, between ten and twenty.
- c. Yes, more than twenty.

f) In your opinion, what are the best ways to increase parental awareness of the importance of reading with their children? (it is possible to indicate multiple ways)

		Most effective	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Not very effective	Not effective at all	Don't know
1	Afternoon programs at local library						
2	Lectures for parents						
3	Joint activities at the pre-school for parents and children						
4	Communications (e.g. newsletters for parents, internet sites, television, radio)						
5	Social networking (e.g. Facebook groups for Sifriyat Pijama parents)						
6	Advertisements (radio, television, newspapers, billboards)						
7	Other (please elaborate)						

4. Additional comments

We would be happy to hear your suggestions or other constructive feedback regarding the program, including feedback that you have received from the parents and the children. Any insight that you deem relevant will be gratefully accepted.

Thank you very much for your cooperation!