

# Braille for Emergent Readers – Books Everywhere! The Print/Braille Early Literacy Program in Florida



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# Introductions

- ❖ A little bit about the presenter.
- ❖ Please tell me about yourselves.





# Learning Objectives

- 1) Learn about the Print/Braille Early Literacy Program offered in Florida.
- 2) Compare data and growth of the program over the years.
- 3) Discuss the feedback from teachers, parents, and students.

# FIMC-VI Vision

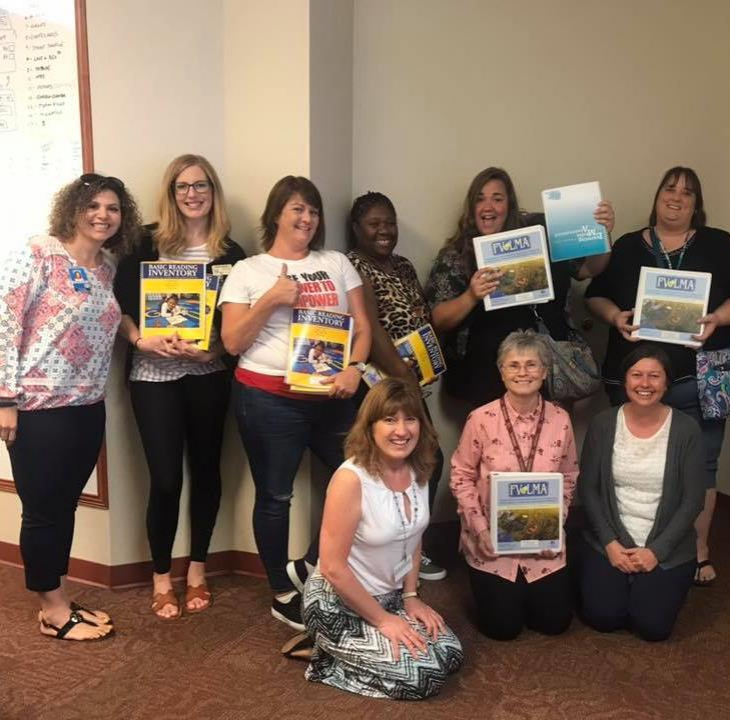
Striving for access and success at the highest levels for ALL students with visual impairments.

## FIMC-VI Mission

To promote the success of Florida's students with visual impairments by:

- ✓ Providing free, high-quality accessible instructional materials in a timely manner; and
- ✓ Providing teachers, administrators, families, agency personnel and others with resources and opportunities for training and professional learning.





# FIMC-VI Information

- Statewide resource center for K-12 students who are visually impaired and enrolled in a public school, private school, or students being homeschooled. FIMC-VI is located in the Hillsborough County Public School District.
- FIMC-VI is a discretionary project maintained by the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS).





# FIMC-VI Services



- Support districts in the procurement or production and distribution of accessible instructional materials (braille, large print)
- Professional learning opportunities
- Volunteer services for braille
- American Printing House for the Blind (APH) products
- Loan library
- Student and family events (Florida Regional Braille Challenge, Florida Cane Quest, Florida Festival of Families, Florida APH Abacus Math Bee)
- Quality Programs for the Visually Impaired district support
- **Print/Braille Early Literacy Program**

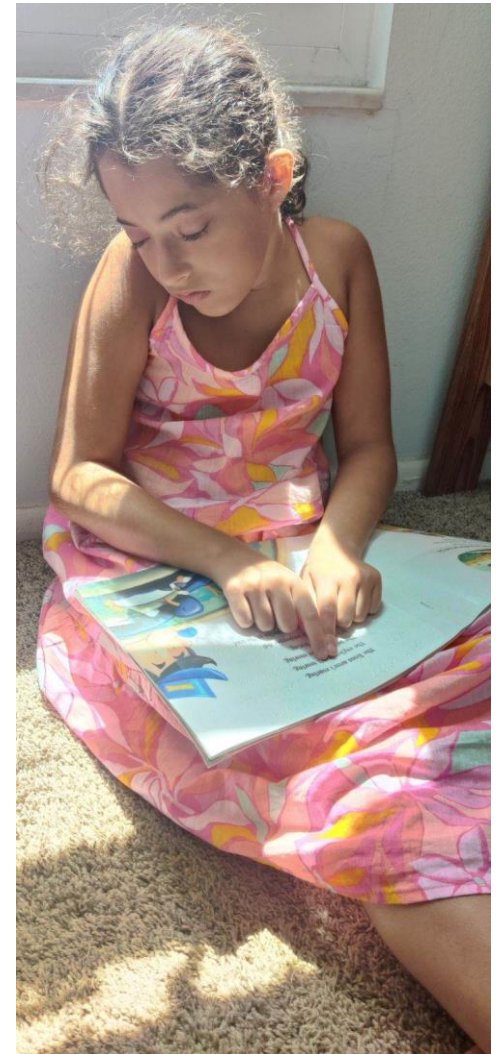


# Inspirational Quote

“Braille has played a critical role in ensuring I have access to knowledge... it’s different, but equal value to reading print.”

- Haben Girma

A Million Laughs for Literacy Gala, 2016



# The Print/Braille Early Literacy Program from the Beginning



- The program began in 2013.
- The goal was to get braille into the hands of as many emergent braille readers as possible.
- Produced by a small group of dedicated volunteers.





# Visual Aid Volunteers of Florida, Inc.

## “Dedication Makes the Difference”



- A non-profit association with members from all over the state and country.
- The purpose of VAVF is to provide education, mentorship, and training to our members who produce reading and instructional materials in a tactile format for persons in Florida who are blind or visually impaired.
- These amazing volunteers make this program possible!



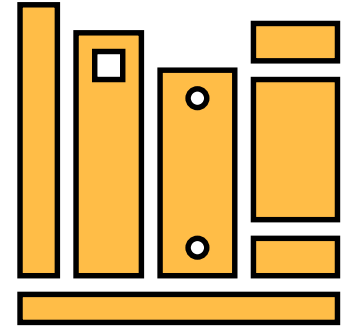
# What is it?

- A program that provides free print/braille books (i.e. “twin-vision” books) to teachers of students with visual impairments in public and private schools.
- These print/braille books allow emerging braille readers to have access to a variety of accessible, current, and age-appropriate reading materials at home and in schools.
- The print on the page can be read by family members, teachers, and paraprofessionals while the child follows along with the braille. This type of shared reading experience is important for fostering literacy skills in students who read braille.



# How Does the Program Work?

- Teachers of students with visual impairments in the state of Florida can order 10 free print/braille books per month.
- This program runs all 12 months of the year.
- Books are purchased using FIMC-VI's IDEA funds.
- Available in contracted or uncontracted Unified English Braille (UEB).
- Books are for the students and teachers to keep so they can be read over and over again.
- Provides students with a visual impairment the same opportunity and access to emergent reading books.
- They can be used in classroom libraries, school libraries and homes.



# Florida's District Book Vetting Process

[Title 48 C.F.R. § 300.101 - 1006.40 - Purchase of instructional materials](#)

- Each district school board is responsible for the content of all materials used in a classroom or otherwise made available to students. Each district school board shall adopt rules, and each district school superintendent shall implement procedures, that:
  - (a) Maximize student use of the district-approved instructional materials.
  - (b) Provide a process for public review of, public comment on, and the adoption of materials, including those used to provide instruction.



# Print/Braille Early Literacy Program in Action

- Real-world or real-classroom applications from fellow teachers:
  - Used the book for braille instruction and practice at school. Once the student was proficient, the book was sent home to keep and read to their family as often as they like.
  - Ordered multiple copies of one book and used them with sighted peers in reading groups.
  - Created book clubs within a school so students could converse about common favorites.
  - Ordered specific shape or counting books to teach braille along with basic concepts in a fun way.





# Additional Ideas

- Use all-time favorites to enhance daily living skills lessons for preschool students – *Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons*.
  - Sort buttons by shape, size and/or color. Use a button board or a shirt to practice dressing and buttoning skills.
- Gather real objects found in the books to create book-boxes for a more meaningful experience.



([Paths to Literacy](#), July 2023)

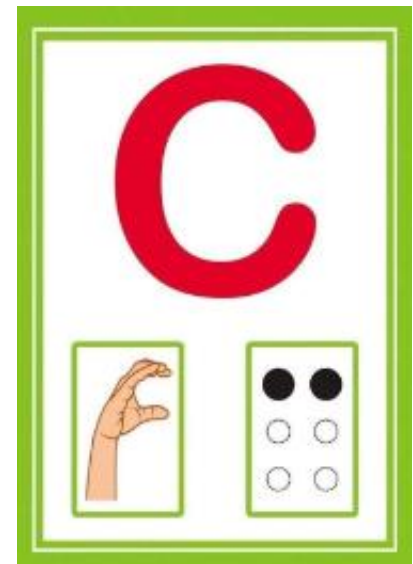


**Student  
Video –  
*Big Cat*  
by Ethan Long**



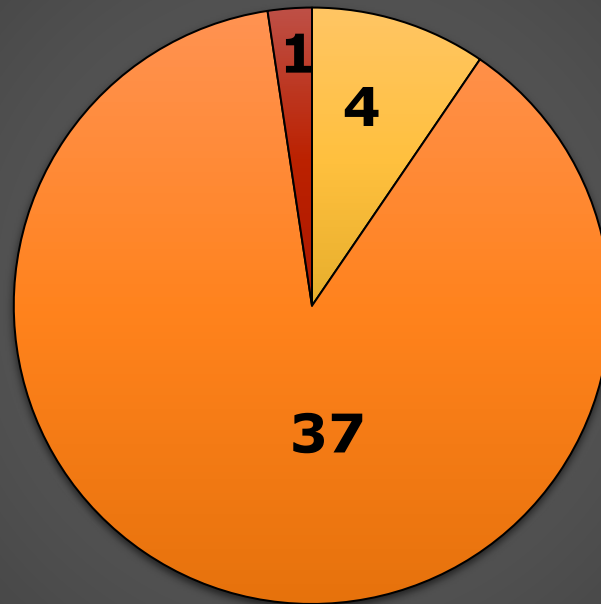
# Florida Virgin Island Deafblind Project (FAVI) and the Print/Braille Early Literacy Program

- Created a “Book Buddies” program for students that are deaf-blind using the print/braille books
- Match the books with other types of media and resources:
  - American Sign Language (ASL)
  - Described and Captioned Media Program
  - Narrated video/audio versions of each story
- Provide objects and craft activities to help families engage in shared reading at home



# FIMC-VI Print/Braille Early Literacy Program Survey

## Participant Role

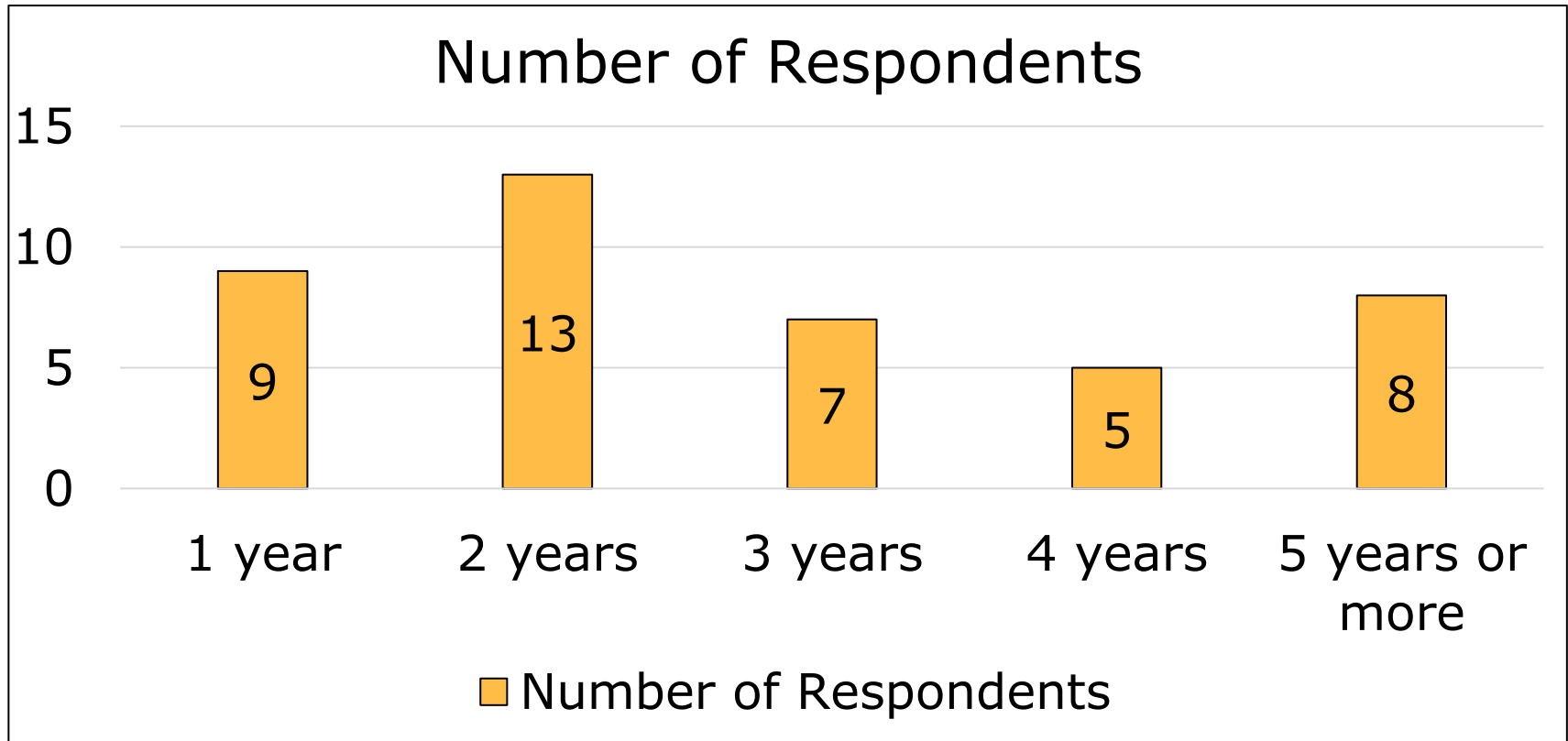


■ Parent ■ TVI or O&M ■ Agency Staff

- An FIMC-VI survey was sent out to everyone that ordered book from the program in the past few years.

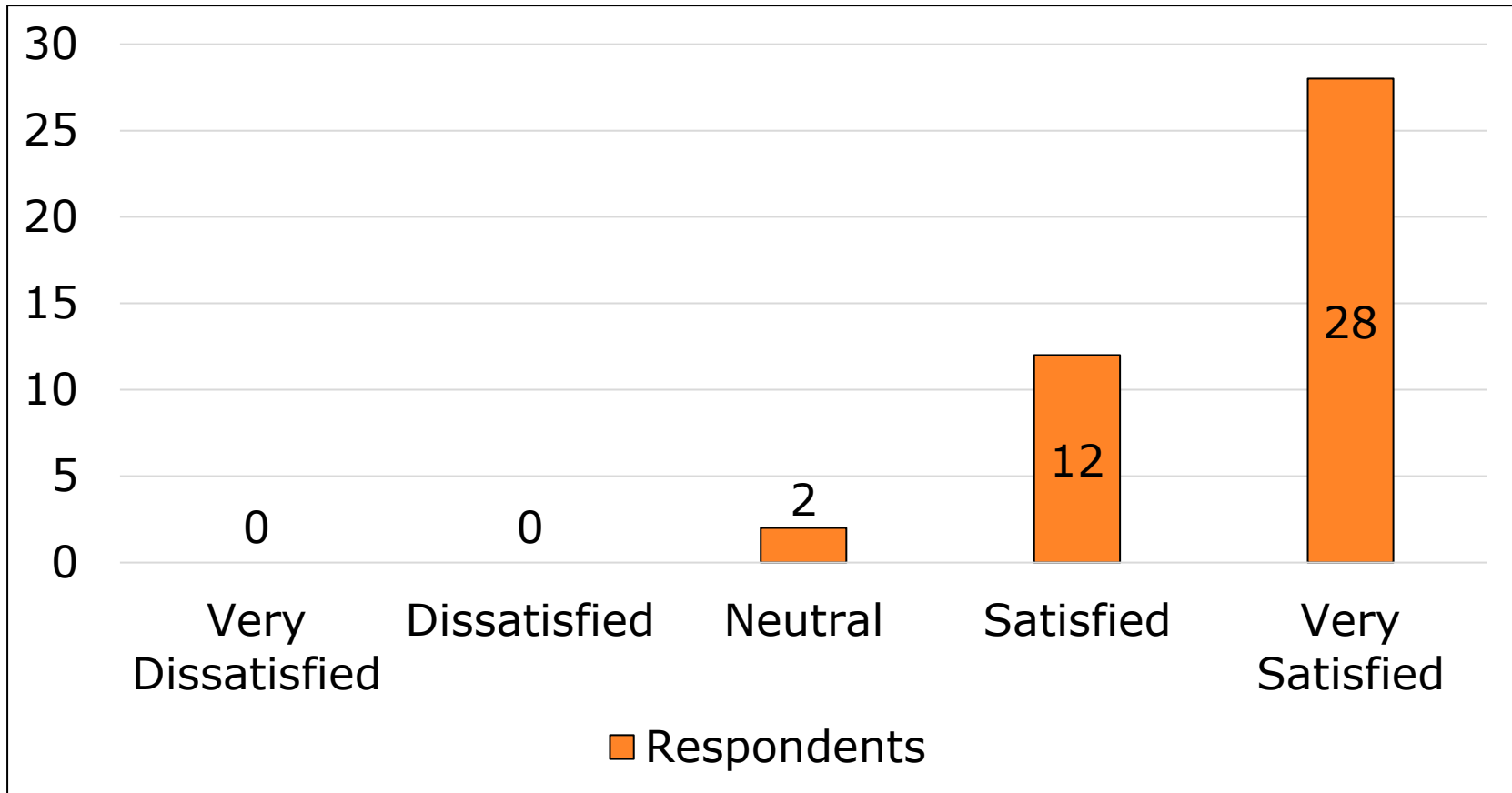


# Participation in Years

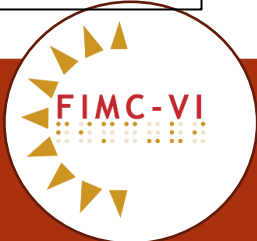
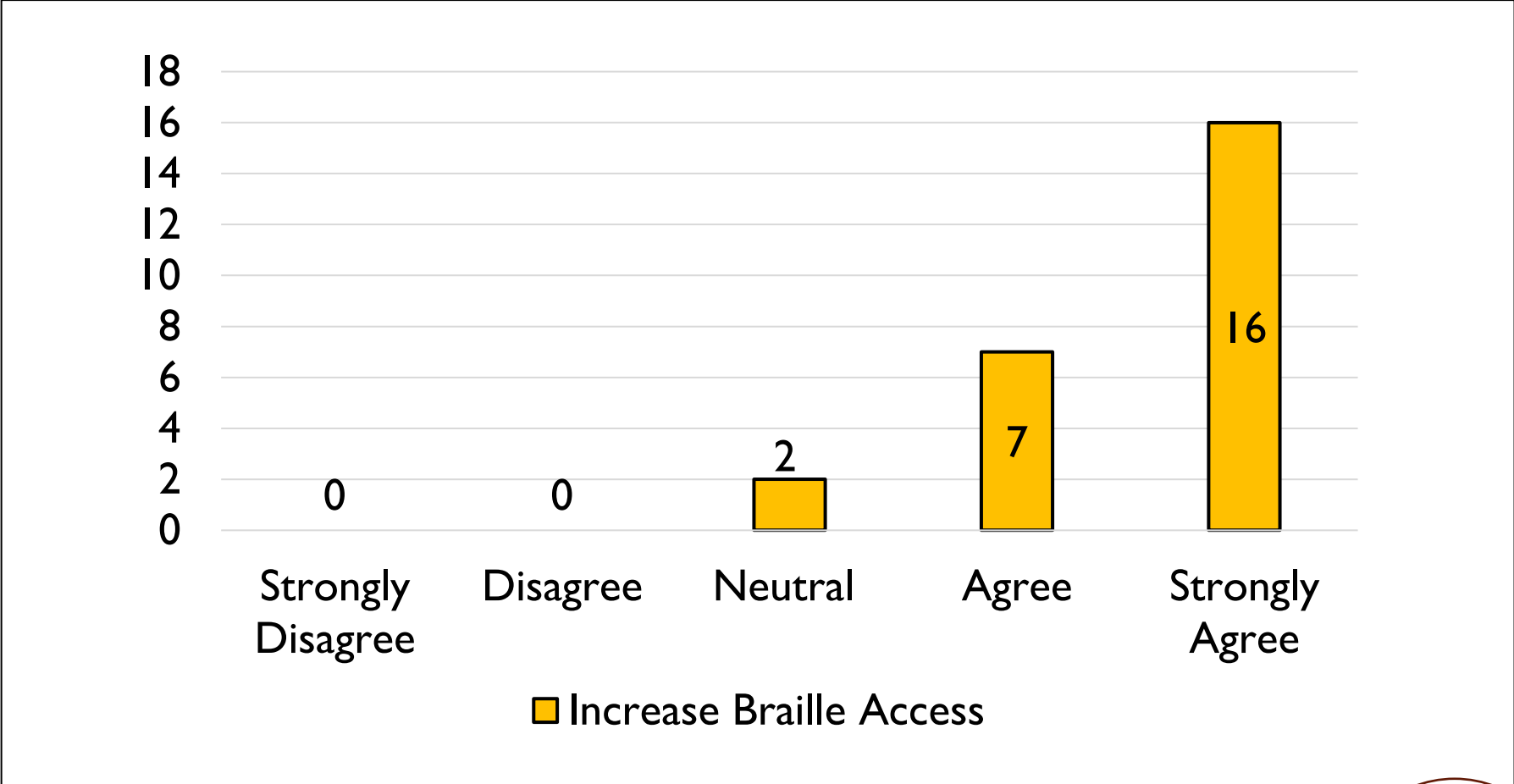




# Program Overall Ratings

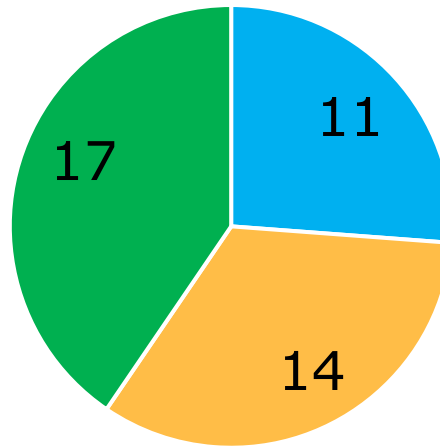


# Student Access to Braille



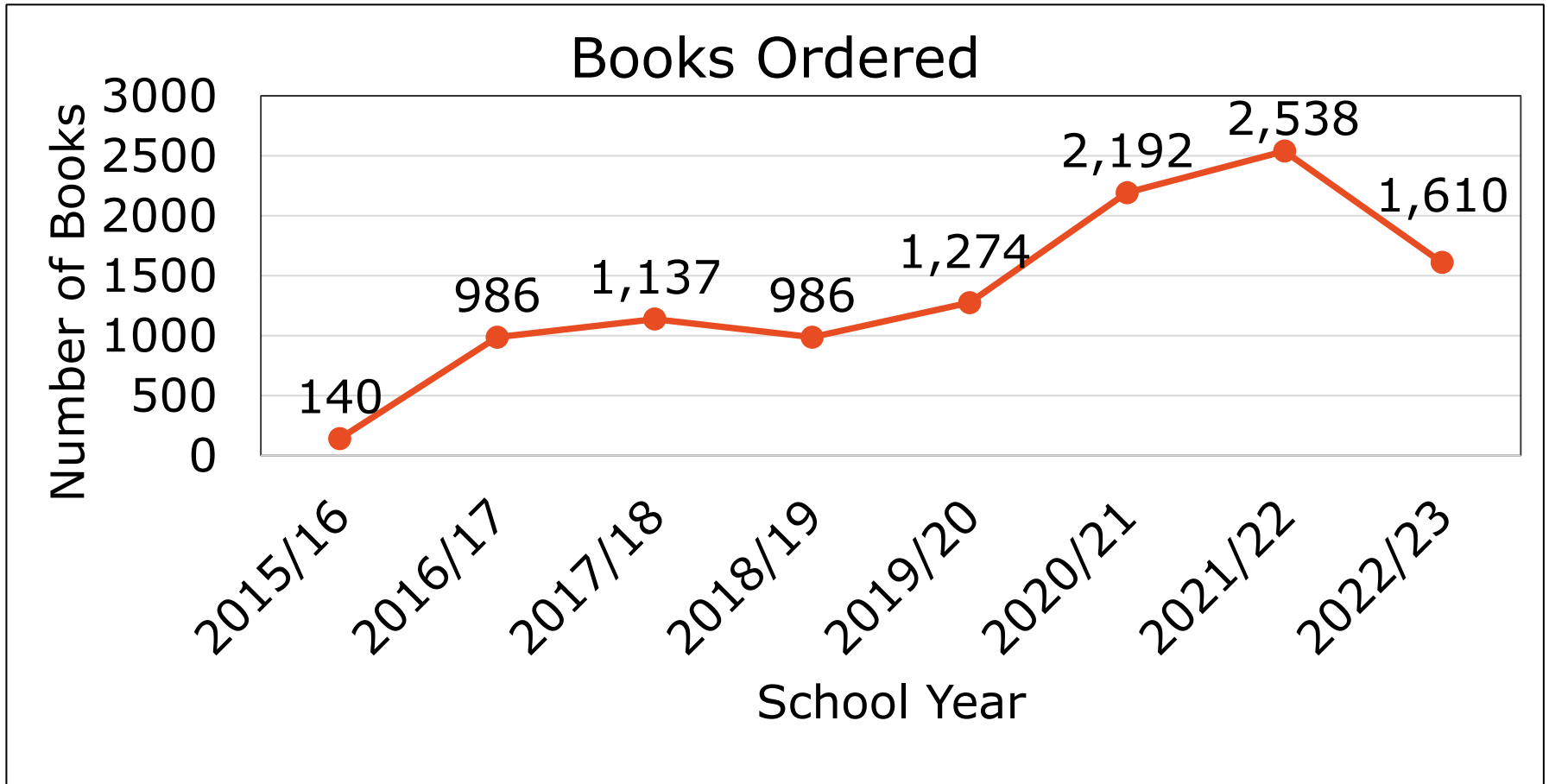
# Braille Reading Abilities

Increased Braille Reading



- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

# Number of Books Ordered



# Reading for Success!



“The largest-ever international study of reading found that the single most important predictor of academic success is the amount of time children spend reading books...”

- Nancie Atwell, [The Reading Zone: How to Help Kids Become Skilled, Passionate, Habitual, Critical Readers](#)





# What are Teachers Saying?

- “It is a great way to show the students in their general classrooms that my students are no different than other students their age.”
- “It encouraged the parent to read with their child since they had access to the print.”
- “It is nice for them to read books their peers read or things they have interest in. I also like that the books have pictures so if they have vision, they can explore the picture with their dome.”
- “For me, I did not have to buy any books any longer, nor spend the time to Braille them. For my students, it was more fun to read books of their choice, and that are appropriate for their age/grade.”



# Teacher Testimonial



# What are Parents Saying?

- “This program has given access to books in Braille in a wide variety.”
- “This program has offered a variety of books and has supported my son's love for books!”
- “It helped to enable her to become more confident in herself through the books.
- “What a wonderful program to offer visually impaired children this opportunity as they have limited or no access to a public library that has braille books.”
- “We are so grateful!!!! Thank you!!!!”



# Parent Testimonial



# Parting Thought

Braille is knowledge,  
and knowledge is power.  
- Louis Braille

(AZ Quotes)

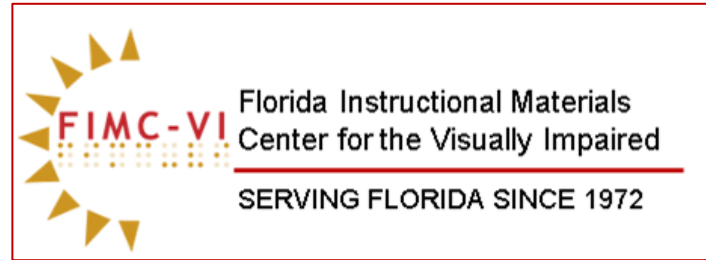




# Questions?



# Thank you!



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