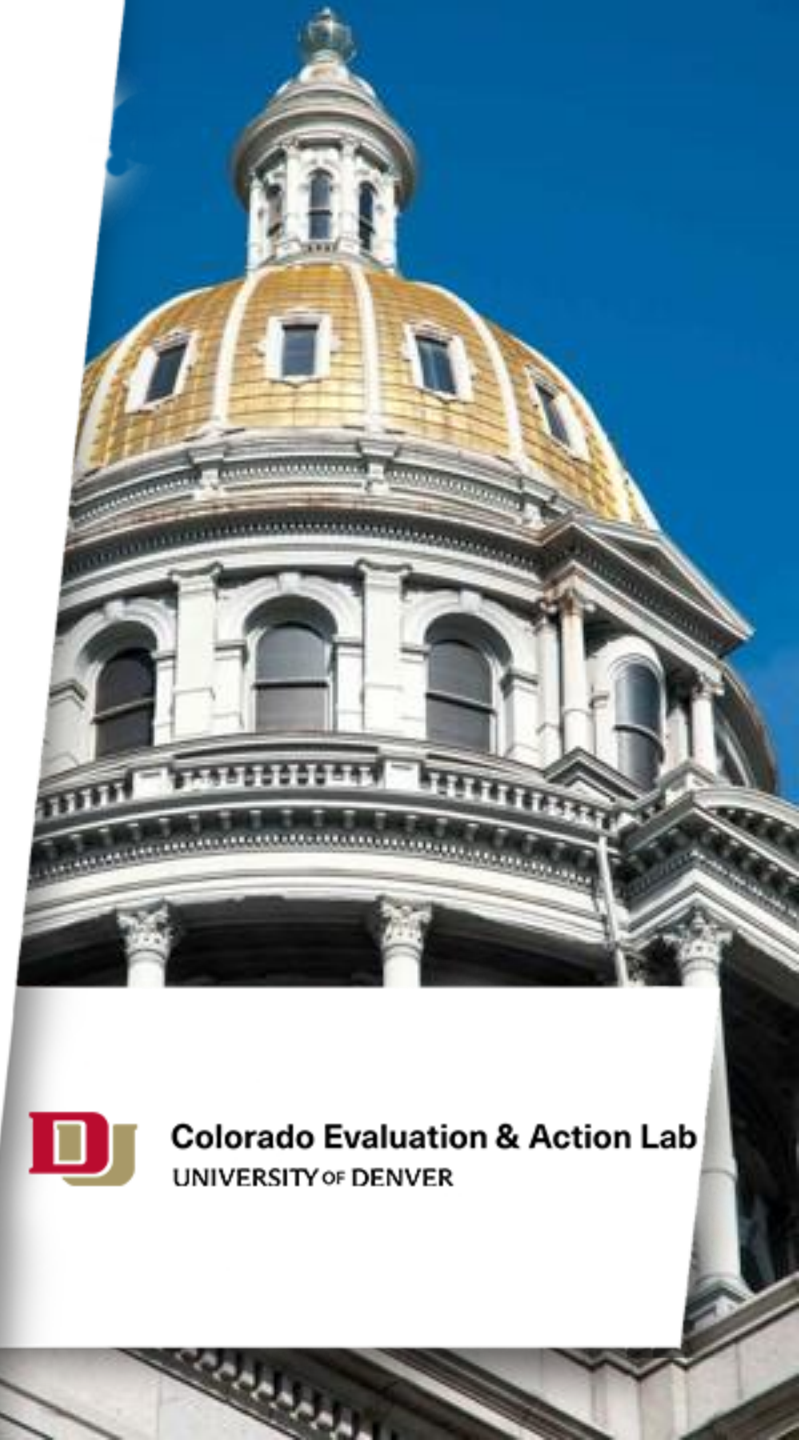


Imagination Library of Colorado

Evaluation Findings and Implications

Allie Kallmann Wegner

October 3, 2025



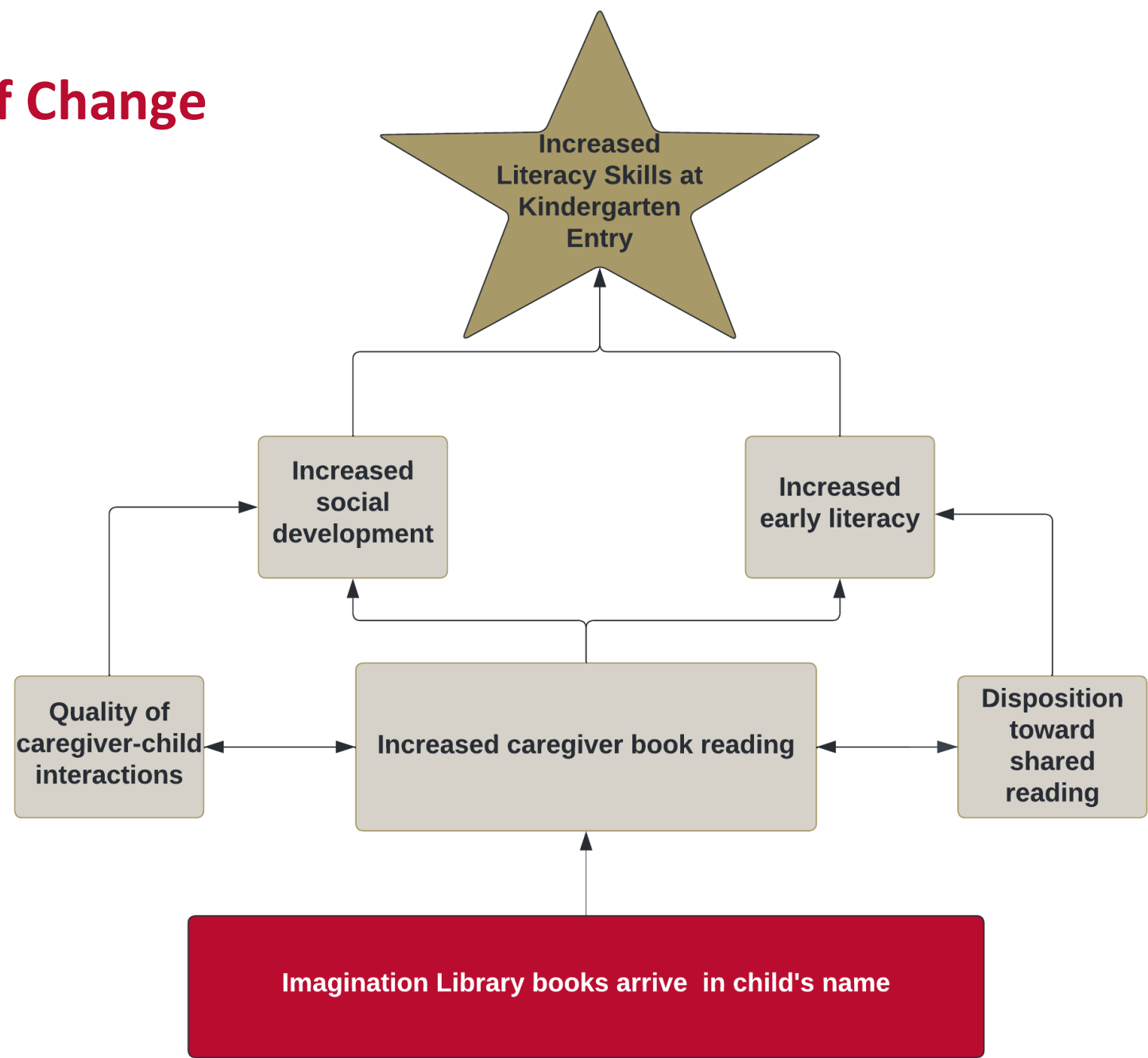
Imagination Library in Colorado

- 2005: first Imagination Library affiliate in Colorado
- 2021: Established state-level program through Senate Bill (SB) 20-185
- 2022: Evaluation required by SB21-268
 - Child literacy
 - Parent and family engagement
- 2024: Enrolling children in all 64 Colorado counties
 - 41% of books in ZIP codes identified as providing “low” or “very low” opportunity



Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

ILCO Theory of Change



Imagination Library Prior Research

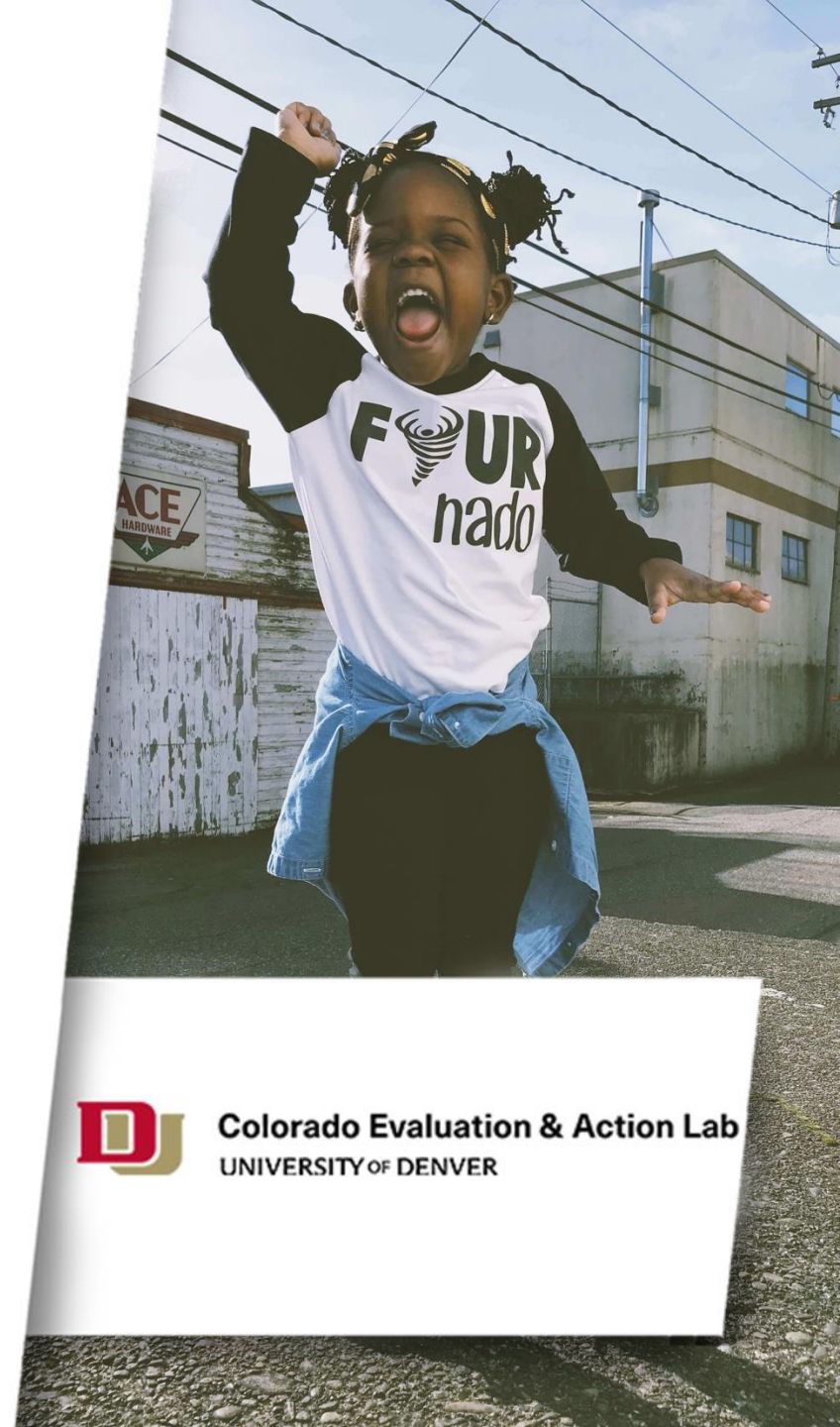
Survey data across Colorado indicate parent satisfaction with the program

Imagination Library and similar programs show evidence of:

- ↑ child attitudes toward reading
- ↑ home literacy environment
- ↑ literacy skills: letter identification, phonological awareness
- ↑ language skills: expressive vocabulary, receptive vocabulary



Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER



Measuring Early Literacy in Colorado

READ Act

Measure discrete skills:
phonemic segmenting, letter
naming

Hypothesis: Predictive of later
reading but less likely to be
impacted by ILCO

Kindergarten School Readiness Assessment (KSRA)

Measure broader skills:
phonological and phonemic
awareness, expressive and
receptive language

Hypothesis: Likely to be
positively impacted by ILCO



Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER



Research Questions

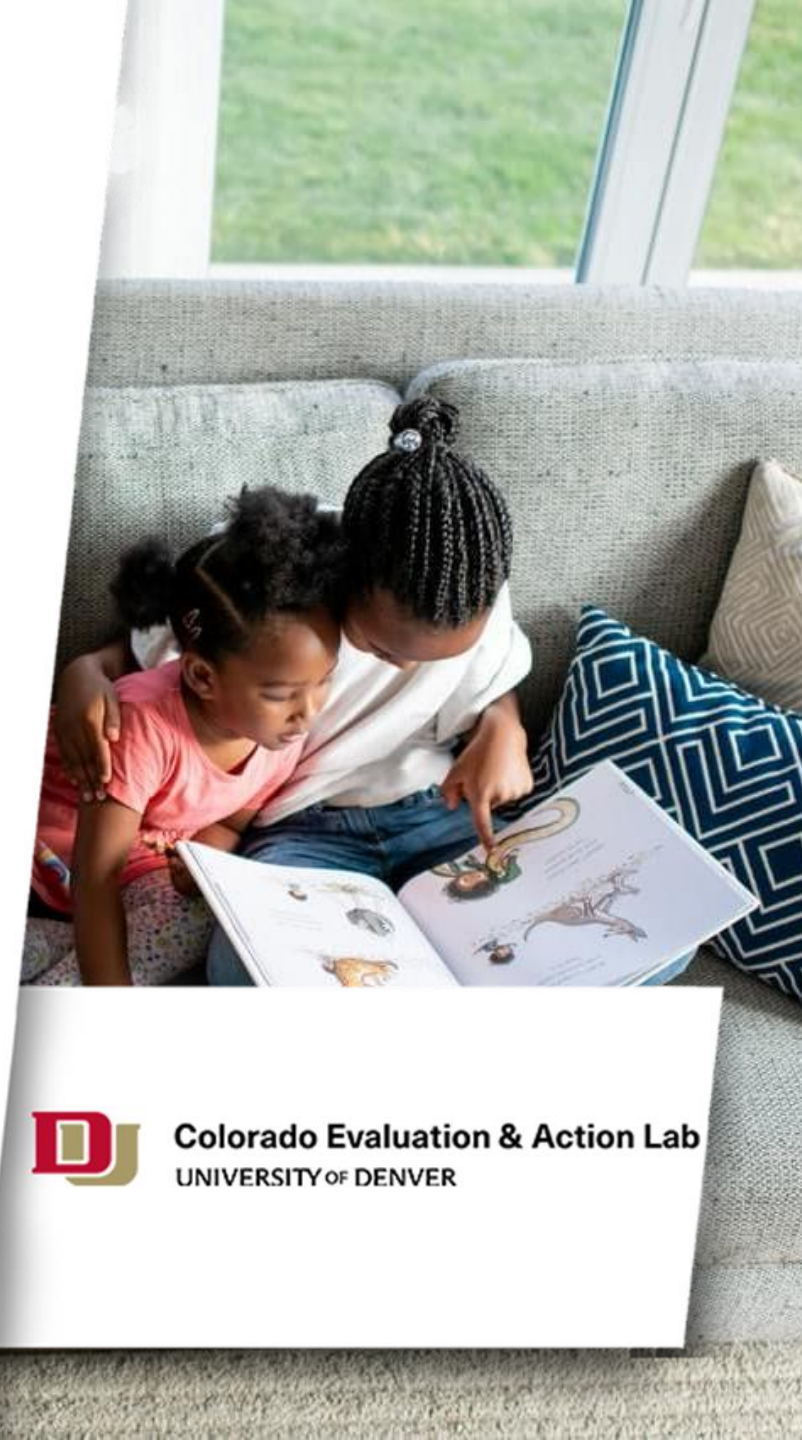
Compared to demographically similar children attending the same school who did not participate, what is the impact of participating in the ILCO book program on...

Literacy Skills

Likelihood of Scoring “Well Below Benchmark” on Literacy Assessment

KSRA Language Domain

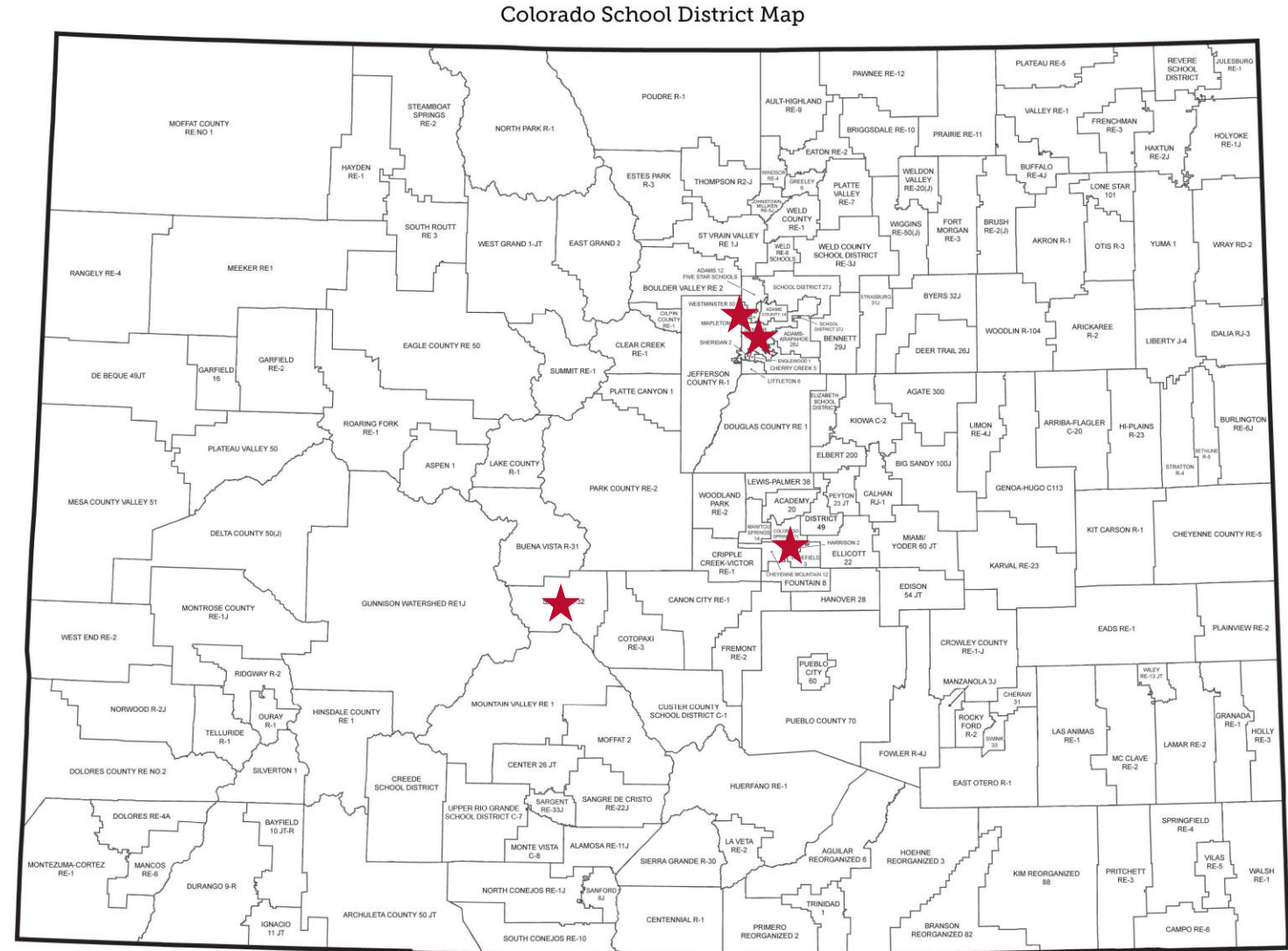
KSRA Literacy Domain



Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

Participating School Districts

- Long Imagination Library history
- Range of geographic locations
- Use same assessments
- Capacity and interest to participate



Produced by the Colorado Department of Education - July 2019

Participating School Districts

Validity concern with previous studies: Imagination Library recruitment/enrollment approach

ILCO affiliates partnered with programs serving a range of families:

- Early childhood council
- Birthing hospitals
- United Way
- Denver Housing Authority
- Head Start

ILCO affiliates recruited in demographically diverse settings:

- Preschools
- Low-income elementary schools in catchment area
- Spanish-speaking communities in Denver

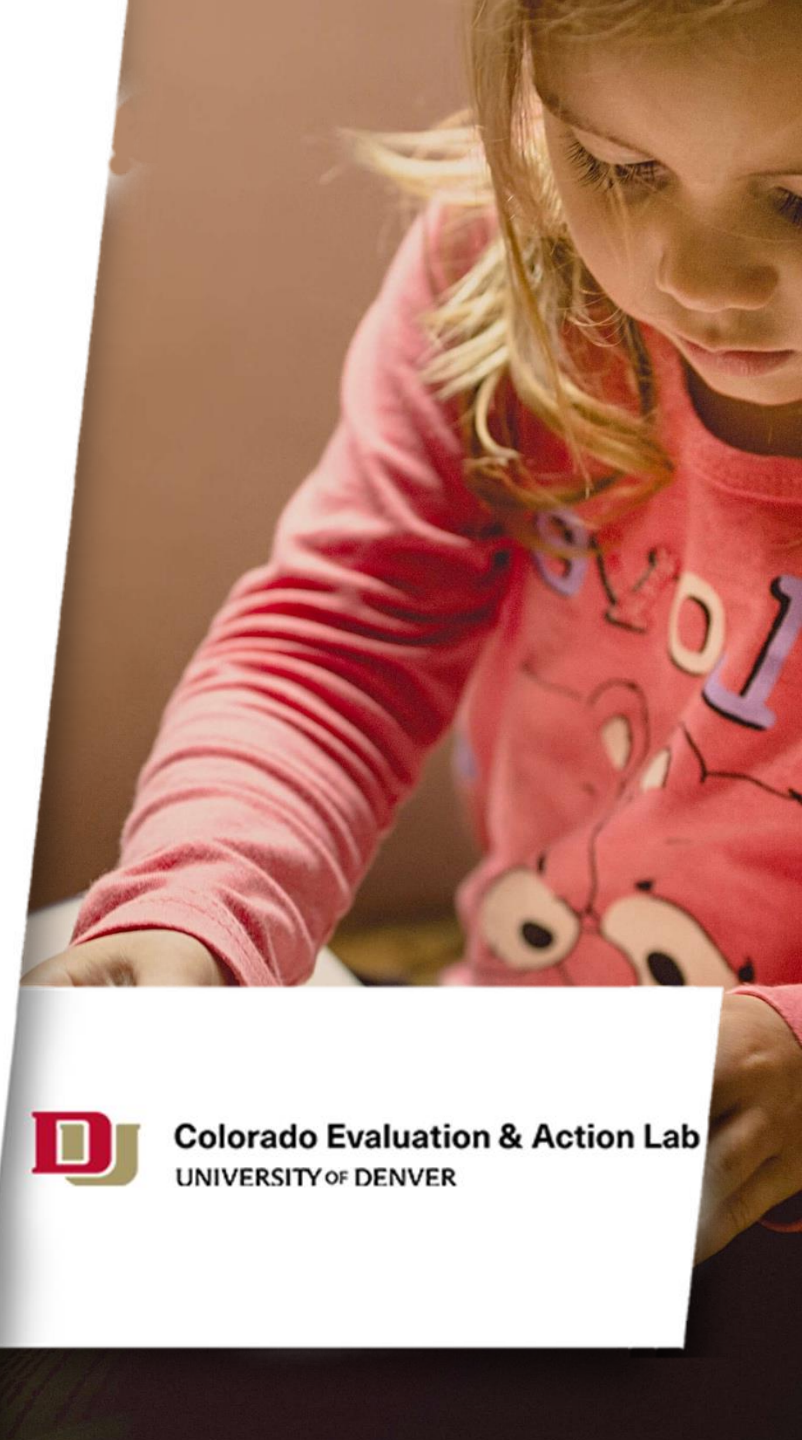


Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER



Study and Sample Details

- **Goal:** compare participating and non-participating children at kindergarten entry *within the same school and academic year*
- **Participation:** 3 years or 18 months right before 5th birthday
- **Eligibility:** entered K fall 2018–fall 2023, excluding 2020 for COVID; at least 5 years old
- **Matching:** age in months, multilingual learner status (MLL), sex (M/F), eligible for free/reduced price lunch (FRL)
- **Data Access:** participation data provided by the Dollywood Foundation, outcomes and demographic data provided by school districts
- **Sample Size:** between 1,800 and 2,700 for each analysis, based on data availability
- **Methods:** linear regression for score questions; logistic regression for likelihood of scoring well below benchmark



Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

Research Findings

Literacy Skills

- Measured with the DIBELS scale score (i.e., points)
- ILCO participation => 0.13 standard deviation higher score
- No differences based on multilingual learner (MLL) or free/reduced-price lunch (FRL) status = broadly effective
- Substantial difference for a low-cost intervention



Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER



Research Findings

Likelihood of Scoring “Well Below Benchmark” on Literacy Assessment

- Based on DIBELS “band”, Well Below Benchmark (WBB) vs. higher range
- ILCO participation => 37% lower odds of scoring WBB
 - Equivalent to reducing the likelihood by between 16% and 24%



Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

Research Findings

KSRA Language Domain

KSRA Literacy Domain

- Based on Teaching Strategies GOLD ratings by teachers
- No effect of ILCO participation



Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

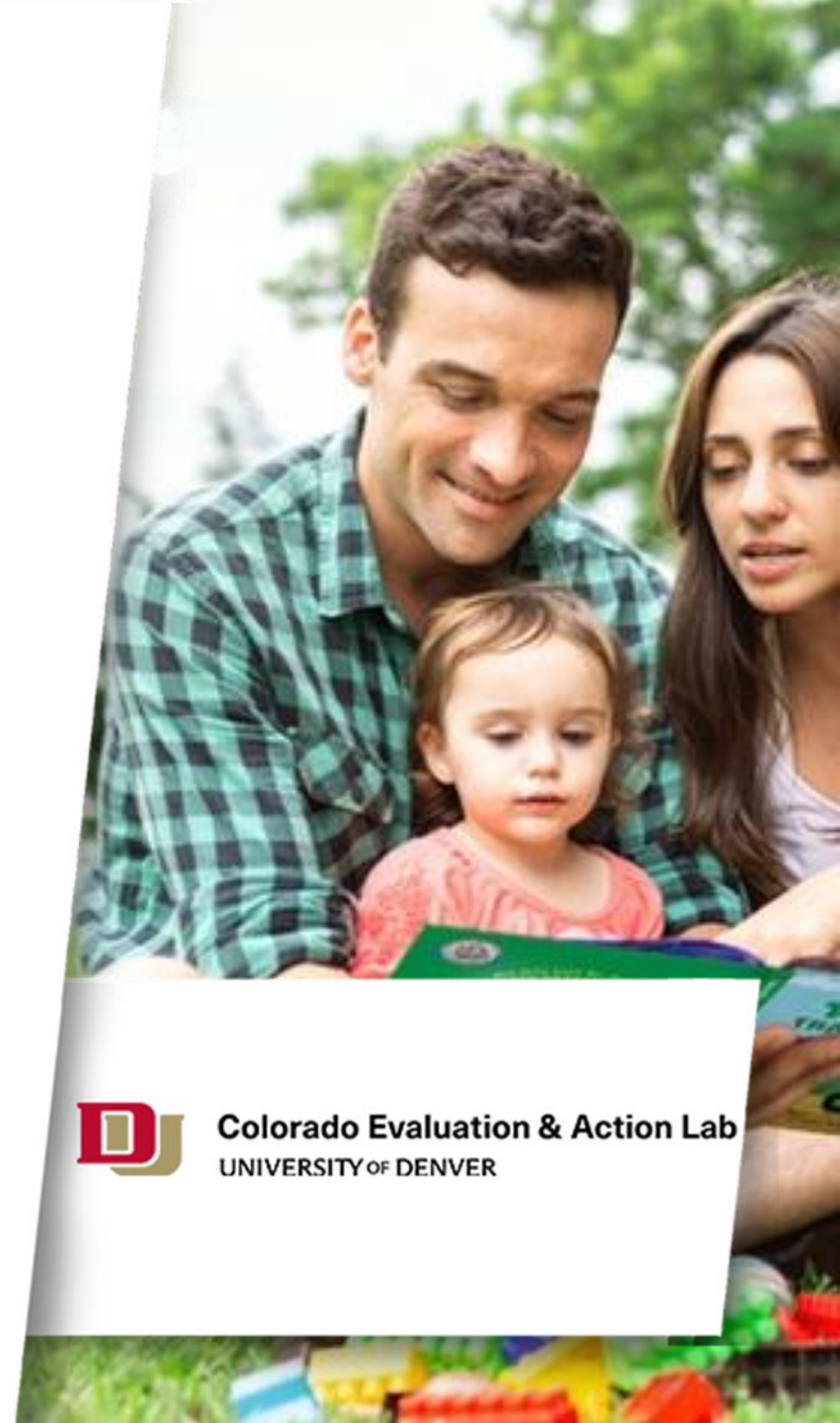


Interpreting Our Results

- Exciting differences for low cost
- Imagination Library showed potential to decrease later need for intervention
- Null findings for KSRA were surprising
 - Hypothesize that this is about the way KSRA data are used in kindergarten, rather than truly no impact
- Evaluation in Colorado = should not overgeneralize findings
 - Geography
 - COVID context
 - Specific assessments used

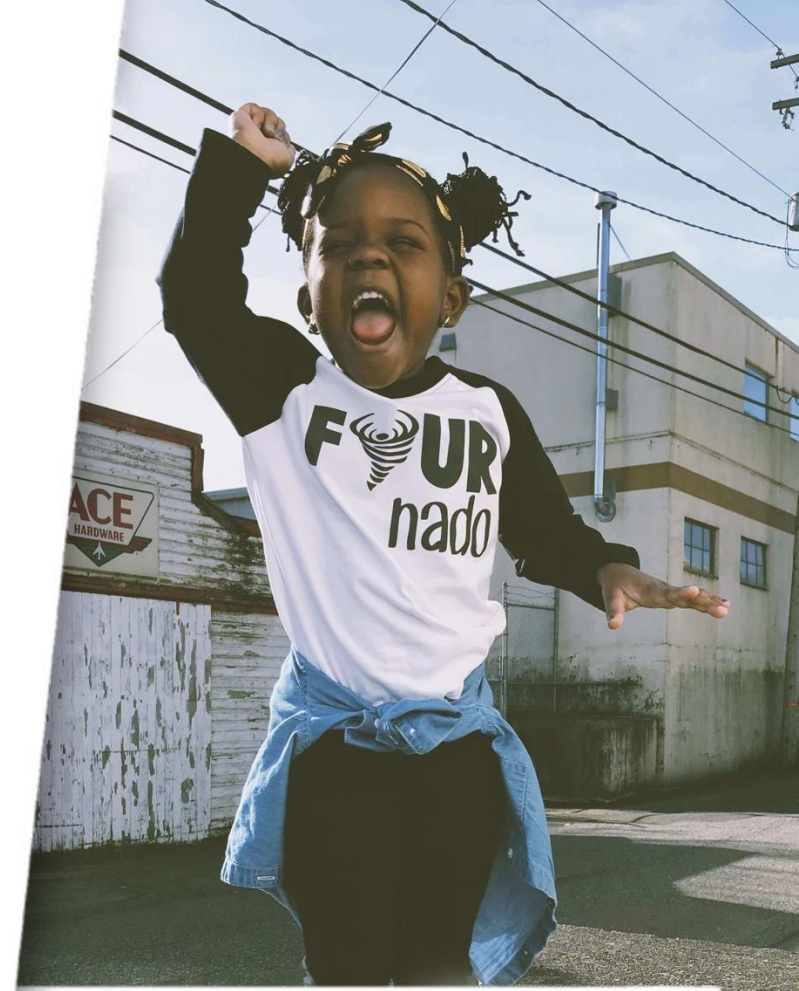


Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER



Acknowledgements

- Regional affiliates
- The Dollywood Foundation for providing participant data, especially Sam Wolfe
- Participating school districts:
 - Denver Public Schools (Jolene Gregory)
 - Harrison 2 School District (David Rodgers)
 - Salida School District R-32 (Jim Sampson)
 - Westminster Public Schools (Amy Sulley, Mat Aubuchon)
- Imagination Library of Colorado (Laura Douglas, Jack Tate)
- The Linked Information Network of Colorado
- Colorado Department of Early Childhood
- Colorado Department of Education





Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

Questions for the Research Team?

Questions? Reach out!

Dr. Kristin Klopfenstein

Director, Colorado Lab
Kristin@coloradolab.org

Allie Kallmann Wegner

Senior Researcher, Colorado Lab
Allie@coloradolab.org



ColoradoLab.org



@ColoradoLab

