What's the BIG Idea?

Math & Science for Children and Families in the Library

Research Abstract

As part of its final evaluation in 2008-2009, RMC Research interviewed the 52 librarians who participated in *What's the BIG Idea?* Here are their responses:

Will you continue to implement the *What's the BIG Idea?* concepts and activities?

- 53% are very likely to continue
- 33% will definitely continue
- 14% are somewhat likely to continue

These responses were most often based on their perceptions of children's interest. Other variables affecting their choices were staffing issues, costs for materials and support of their library systems.

How did *What's the BIG Idea?* change librarians' practice?

- 43% implement math and science activities
- 27% focus on and incorporate math and science activities into storytimes
- 18% have changed the vocabulary and terms they use every day with children

How did *What's the BIG Idea?* change collection development or outreach?

- 69% increased their math and science resources, including adding math and science titles, family kits, and manipulatives.
- 37% conducted replication activities at other sites such as conducting storytimes for Head Start, day care centers, preschools, Girl Scouts, 4-H groups, and after school programs.

> *This is now the "new normal." I'm planning storytime with a different mindset. We're using different terminology and pulling different resources. Instead of doing arts and crafts afterwards, we are doing math and science. They are able to do something showing the concepts instead of just coloring a picture of a plant (about the concepts).*
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> *We have permanently incorporated into all that we do and it has become second nature.*
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> *Our library system has bought into the concept, we have the resources and there is a high public interest. There is no doubt that we will continue incorporating What's the BIG Idea? into our programming and practice.*

How did *What's the BIG Idea?* impact participating children?

The most frequent response given by librarians was that the children were excited and interested in storytime and the math and science components. Librarians reported that children were learning new skills, were enjoying the hands on activities, were learning new vocabulary words, asking more questions and were using the library resources more often.

Librarians said the biggest impacts on parents and caregivers were that they were more likely to discuss math and science concepts with their children at home. Librarians said that the parents and caregivers liked that their children were learning serious topics and that they were excited about discovery, and were checking out more math and science books. Librarians also thought that the parents or caregivers showed greater interest in storytime and were more likely to work with their children on the activities.