



book harvest



Book Babies Short-Term Evaluation: Executive Summary November, 2017

In 2015, Book Harvest, based in Durham, North Carolina, received a grant to evaluate its Book Babies program. Duke University's Center for Child and Family Policy conducted the evaluation over a two-year period, beginning in the fall of 2015 and continuing through the fall of 2017. This report highlights the findings of the evaluation and offers recommendations for future directions.

Children and families from two Book Babies cohorts (those born in 2013 and 2014) were included in the evaluation. Families participating in the Book Babies program were compared with a comparison group of local families who were not involved in the Book Babies program. Data were collected on demographics, participation in enrichment programs, and frequency of reading. Families also participated in three assessments:

- The Get Ready To Read (GRTR-R) and its Spanish equivalent, a test of pre-literacy skills (phonological awareness, phonics, print knowledge and book knowledge).
- The Adult-Child Interactive Reading Inventory (ACIRI), an observational measure designed to evaluate interactive reading across three categories: enhancing attention to text, promoting interactive reading and supporting comprehension, and using literacy strategies.
- The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-4) and its Spanish equivalent, an assessment of receptive vocabulary.

Statistical analyses showed that the Book Babies group and the comparison group were largely the same across demographic variables. Where the groups differed significantly, variables were controlled for statistically in order to more closely isolate the effect of the intervention. The findings of this evaluation indicated that:

- Book Babies children scored better than the comparison group on the GRTR-R. Children in the Book Babies program scored significantly higher than comparison children on both Step Scores and Performance Levels. The results were statistically significant.
- Book Babies families' overall ACIRI scores were slightly higher than those of the comparison group. Specifically, both Book Babies parents and children scored higher than their counterparts with respect to promoting interactive reading and supporting comprehension, as well as enhancing attention to text. While this is a positive finding, the results were not statistically significant.

- The two groups did not differ on PPVT-4 scores, indicating that both groups demonstrated average receptive vocabulary skills.

The first finding is very encouraging, as it indicates that Book Babies children show advanced knowledge of emergent literacy skills such as print knowledge and phonological awareness. This finding demonstrates that the Book Babies program is successfully targeting the key early literacy skills measured by the GRTR-R. Exposure to these skills is critical for kindergarten readiness, later reading ability, and future academic success.

Overall, this evaluation sought to provide a snapshot of Book Babies families and their performance on several key measures of emergent literacy skills. The findings of this evaluation are both encouraging and exciting, as they indicate that the Book Babies intervention has unique potential to positively impact the literacy skills of Durham's youngest children. As Book Babies has evolved in recent years, it has developed into a more structured and manualized intervention positioning the program for a more rigorous examination of outcomes. A Randomized-Controlled Trial (RCT) complete with larger sample sizes is needed to yield stronger, more definitive, results. As such, in January of 2017, Book Harvest began implementation of a five-year RCT to closely track individual level outcomes for children and measure overall program effectiveness. The findings of the randomized controlled trial, in addition to the foundation laid by the current study, will provide an evidence base for the Book Babies intervention and its impact on kindergarten readiness and beyond.

For more information about this evaluation or to view the full report, please contact Sonya Ulrich at Duke University's Center for Child and Family Policy, at sonya.ulrich@duke.edu, or Ginger Young at Book Harvest, at ginger@bookharvestnc.org

To learn more about Book Harvest, please visit www.bookharvestnc.org.

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