

BOOK BABIES

Randomized Control Study



2021 Final Report: Executive Summary

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Iheoma U. Iruka, Ph.D.**
Ximena Franco, Ph.D.
Fernando Andrade, Ph.D.

Equity Research Action Coalition at the UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute with The Center for Early Education Research and Evaluation at HighScope Educational Research Foundation.

***At the start of this study, Iheoma U. Iruka was affiliated with HighScope Educational Research Foundation. At the time of the final report, Dr. Iruka was affiliated with the Department of Public Policy and Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she is the founding director at the Equity Research Action Coalition.*



In March 2019 Book Harvest engaged HighScope Educational Research Foundation to conduct a longitudinal Randomized Control Trial (RCT) evaluation of Book Babies. The goal of this two-site longitudinal study was to examine the impact of the five-year Book Babies intervention on parents' reading practices, children's literacy and language skills, and kindergarten readiness. Unfortunately, the evaluation study was paused in April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and was unable to resume. This is the final report, which was produced after the lead principal investigator transferred her affiliation to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Parents in the full intervention group (Books Babies) from both locations reported higher rates of ease in their ability to read, engage in daily reading, and point at text than the Books Only and Control groups.



Equity Research Action Coalition

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book harvest

Study Findings

Findings are based on data collected through April 30, 2020.

Demographic findings:

- Child, caregiver, and home demographics were generally equivalent across the three groups (Book Babies, Books Only, Control) in both locations, with some slight differences in age of child and number of hospitalizations, single-parent status, education and income level, ethnicity (at one site), and age of parents.
- In both locations (Durham and Winston-Salem), the level of poverty across all study groups is striking: 93% of Durham families reported an annual family income of less than \$35,000, with 48% reporting an annual family income of less than \$15,000. In Winston-Salem, 87% of all families reported an annual family income of less than \$35,000, with 31% reporting an annual family income of less than \$15,000. (N.B.: the federal poverty level for a family of four is \$27,750)



Assessment findings¹:

- Full Intervention group parents in both locations reported higher rates of ease in their ability to read, engage in daily reading, and point at text than the Books Only and Control groups.
- Full Intervention group parents in both locations reported the same or higher level of parent literacy practices than the Books Only and Control groups.
- Spanish-speaking children in the Full Intervention groups in both locations showed more growth in their production and comprehension scores compared to the Books Only and Control groups.
- Almost half of the Book Babies sample in the Durham site (49%) was lost by April 30, 2020.

Although this study ended prematurely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the final report indicates that more Book Babies parents are engaging in literacy-promoting activities compared to parents in the two control groups, and that children in the Book Babies group show stronger early literacy skills, especially in Spanish-speaking families.

¹ It is important to note is that, due to the very young ages of the children, all the findings to date are based on parent report, as measured by the MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventories (MB-CDI). In 2020, when many of the children in the first cohort in the Durham evaluation were at least three years old, direct assessments should have been conducted to provide more and richer data to help answer the four research questions among the three groups in both locations. However, the study was unable to resume given the COVID-19 pandemic.