

Improving Family Literacy Practices

- Ann Harvey, author
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Abstract

A 10-question Likert-type scale survey was presented to parents of children enrolled in the Imagination Library's (IL) program. IL sends age-appropriate books once a month to children from birth to age 5 so that their parent can read to them. After registering for the program and receiving books, 93 parents answered the survey questions electronically. The questions noted the difference in family literacy behavior after receiving the books. Nine of the questions were multiple-choice whereas the last question was open-ended. This third-year survey was compared with the earlier surveys to establish reliability and used repeated questions to establish validity. The respondents were drawn from a rural minority population in an economically depressed area. The survey results suggested that parents spend more time reading to their children regularly after enrolling in the program. The percentage of parents who read to their children more than once a day rose from 24% to 43%. According to the survey, 48% of parents reported that their child was much more interested in reading. More than half of the parents (67%) reported that their child asked more frequently for books to be read to them after enrolling in the program. In addition, 68% of the families reported that multiple members of the family were engaged with the reading activities. Families report that reading the books had been a positive experience for their children and had helped 70% with vocabulary development and 66% with listening skills.

The 'early language gap' is about more than words

Author: Valerie Strauss

Washington Post: [online](#)

It is now well established that children's oral language development is **crucial to their academic success**, with the documentation of **profound differences** in word learning and the acquisition of content knowledge between children living in poverty and those from more economically advantaged homes. By the time they enter school, children from advantaged backgrounds may know as many as **15,000 more words** than their less affluent peers. This early language gap sets children up to be at risk for other all too familiar gaps, such as the gaps in high school graduation, arrest and incarceration, post-secondary education, and lifetime earnings. So, what can we do to prevent this "early catastrophe"?

If a child suffers from malnutrition, simply giving him/her *more* food **might not be sufficient to alleviate the problem**. A better approach would be to figure out which *specific* foods and supplements best provide the vitamins and nutrients that are needed, and then deliver these to the child. Recent press coverage on the “word gap,” spurred by initiatives such as *Too Small to Fail* and *Thirty Million Words*, suffers from a similar failing...

Grant County, New Mexico Imagination Library Survey

https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxGQ1Z0VwA4tUE0wNmVlck1lYmM/view?resourcekey=0-Q5_XJ9S_b9yXilEeugCSPQ

A ten-question survey was sent to parents of children enrolled in the Imagination Library of Grant County’s program. After registering for the program, parents receive age-appropriate books once a month to read to their children. Ninety-three parents answered the survey questions electronically. The questions noted the difference in family literacy behavior after receiving the books and asked about the extent of use of electronic books (eBooks) in the home.

Nine of the questions were multiple-choice while the last question was open-ended. This third-year survey was compared to the earlier surveys to establish validity and reliability. The respondents were drawn from a rural minority population in an economically depressed area of southwestern New Mexico.

The survey results suggested that parents spend more time reading to their children regularly. Approximately 46% of the children had experienced electronic books. It also suggested that children are more motivated to listen to stories and ask more frequently for books to be read to them. Fathers are often engaged with the reading activities, as well as grandparents and older siblings. Families report that reading the books has been a positive experience for their children and has helped with vocabulary development and listening skills.

The Imagination Library Program: Increasing Parental Reading Through Book Distribution

Authors: Frank Ridzia, Monica R. Sylviab and Sunita Singh

Reading Psychology, 10:1–29, 2014

Available at

https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxGQ1Z0VwA4tMnZ2dEZOR3hPaFk/view?resourcekey=0-Vt7mpTBFV_L5mNcbGZth6Q

Research has established a connection between print exposure and reading skills. The authors examined the impact of book access on print exposure via a monthly book distribution program. At 10 months of implementation, 170 families enrolled in the Imagination Library Program in Syracuse, New York responded to a survey. Results indicated that length of enrollment was associated with frequency of child-directed reading and story discussion, even when controlling for child age, gender, income, parental education, race, parental nation of birth, and primary language spoken at home. Consequently, the authors conceptualize such programs as catalysts for developing early literacy skills by increasing child-directed reading.

A Combined Reach Out and Read and Imagination Library Program on Kindergarten Readiness

Authors: [Gregory A. Szumlas, MD](#); [Peter Petronio, MS](#); [Monica J. Mitchell, PhD](#); [Alisha J. Johnson, MPA](#); [Tiana R. Henry, MEd](#); [Thomas G. DeWitt, MD](#)

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Arriving at kindergarten ready to learn is vitally important. Not only has it been shown that children who start behind often stay behind, but adequate kindergarten readiness is also strongly correlated with later achievement.¹⁻³ Unfortunately, only 50% to 75% of children in the United States enter kindergarten ready to learn, with children from economically disadvantaged households at particular risk for poor kindergarten readiness.⁴

Sharing books with preschoolers promotes speech and language development, preliteracy skills, and ultimately kindergarten readiness. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that pediatricians promote reading from birth, and it has even been suggested that literacy be treated as a distinct developmental domain.

CONCLUSIONS:

With these results, we suggest that a program combining literacy anticipatory guidance at clinic visits and more books in the home can potentially improve kindergarten readiness. Pediatric health care providers can play an important role in promoting kindergarten readiness through literacy promotion.

Sharing books with preschoolers promotes speech and language development, preliteracy skills, and, ultimately, kindergarten readiness. Both Reach Out and Read and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library have shown positive influences on the home literacy environment of preschoolers.

In this early study, we suggest that when combined and sustained, these two programs have the potential for effectively reaching large populations of at-risk children and improving kindergarten readiness.

Many more studies are available on the Dolly Parton Imagination Library website at <https://imaginationlibrary.com/news-resources/research/>