



Book Babies Randomized Control Trial Evaluation 2019 Annual Report: Executive Summary

In 2013, [Book Harvest](#) launched Book Babies, a home visiting literacy coaching intervention for Medicaid-eligible newborns in Durham, NC that starts at birth and continues for five full years, through kindergarten entry. Professional staff works alongside parents, at their kitchen tables and on their living room sofas, to identify their goals for their children; provide them with brand new, culturally appropriate books and resources; model dialogic reading techniques; and supply information they need to thrive in their role as their child's first and best teacher. Today, Book Babies is also implemented in Winston-Salem, NC through the venerable child-serving agency Imprints Cares.

The Book Babies model is parent-guided and parent-informed. Its unique dosage, frequency, duration, and affordability makes it a candidate for population-level scaling; it holds the potential to confer large-scale kindergarten-readiness, a critical milestone that has long eluded low-income families and families of color stuck in conditions of generational poverty and systemic racism.

THE EVALUATION

Book Harvest has engaged [HighScope Educational Research Foundation](#) to conduct a longitudinal Randomized Control Trial (RCT) evaluation of Book Babies. This two-site, \$1.5 million, longitudinal study examines the impact of the five-year Book Babies intervention on parents' reading practices, children's literacy and language skills, and kindergarten readiness. Interim findings are available yearly; the full final report is expected in 2025. See page 2 for an overview of the study design.

SUMMARY OF EARLY FINDINGS

Findings are from the full annual report dated February 17, 2020 (incorporating study data through December 31, 2019).

Assessment findings¹:

- Full Intervention group parents in both locations report 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.
- The 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.
- While the overall attrition rate is within the acceptable range for study efficacy, it is critical to examine the extent to which participants remain in the study over time and whether it differs across treatment groups.

Demographic findings:

- Child, caregiver, and home demographics are equivalent across the three groups in both locations.
- In both locations, the level of poverty across all study groups is striking: 48% of Durham families report an annual family income of less than \$15,000, with 93% reporting an annual family income of less than \$35,000. In Winston-Salem, 31% of all families report an annual family income of less than \$15,000, with 87% reporting an annual family income of less than \$35,000. (N.B.: the federal poverty level for a family of four is \$27,750)

Principal Investigator Dr. Iheoma Iruka observes, "Overall, at this early point in the study, there is indication 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 are showing stronger early literacy skills, especially in Spanish-speaking families. *These preliminary results give us hope that Book Babies can potentially serve as exemplar of an evidence-based home visiting model that can support low-resourced families and their young children, with lifelong and intergenerational effects*".

¹ Important to note is that, due to the very young ages of the children, all the findings to date are based on parent report. In 2020, when many of the children in the first cohort in the Durham evaluation are at least three years old, direct assessments will be conducted by data collectors, providing more and richer data to help answer the four research questions (see below) among the three groups in both locations. The next report from HighScope will be available in February 2021.

STUDY DESIGN

Methodology Overview

Three groups are being studied:

- Full Intervention group: full complement of home visiting services plus full book provision over 5 years
- Books Only group: full book provision only over 5 years
- Control group: cash incentives only over 5 years

HighScope researchers are following the children from birth until entry into kindergarten and conducting surveys, observations, and direct assessments of children's early literacy and language development.

Research Questions

We seek to answer the following questions:

- **Research Question #1:** Is the development of the early language abilities of Book Babies children better than the Books Only and Control groups?
- **Research Question #2:** Do Book Babies parents utilize the Dialogic Reading strategies modeled throughout the home visits to promote interactive reading with their children and support comprehension, as well as enhance attention to text in their daily reading routines?
- **Research Question #3:** Do Book Babies children show better developmentally appropriate knowledge of emergent literacy skills than the Books Only and Control groups?
- **Research Question #4:** Do more Book Babies children meet literacy benchmarks at kindergarten entry compared to the Books Only and Control groups?

Measurement Tools

To evaluate children's emergent literacy and language development, we are using a multi-method, multi-source battery including direct measures, observations, and parent reports.

- The MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventories (CDIs; Fenson et al., 1993) assess children's **early language and communication skills**.
- The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-IV (PPVT-4; Dunn & Dunn, 2007)/Test de Vocab en Imágenes Peabody (TVIP; Dunn et al., 1986) assesses children's **receptive vocabulary**.
- The Get Ready to Read!/¡Prepárate a Leer! (GRTR; Whitehurst, 2001) assesses **print knowledge and phonological awareness**.
- The Adult-Child Interactive Reading Inventory (ACIRI) evaluates interactive reading across three categories: **enhancing attention to text, promoting interactive reading and supporting comprehension, and using literacy strategies**.
- The Broad Reading subtests of the Woodcock-Johnson IV Test of Achievement (Schrank et al., 2014) for English speaking children and the Batería IV Woodcock-Muñoz (Muñoz-Sandoval et al., 2005) for Spanish-speaking children assess **school readiness**, using measures of letter word identification and picture vocabulary.
- The primary caregiver for the child is given a survey to complete during each home visit (available in English and Spanish), including questions about family demographic characteristics (e.g., home language, education, employment) and beliefs (e.g., Parental Modernity Scale [Schaefer & Edgerton, 1985]); stress and other risk factors (e.g., Parenting Stress Index [Abidin, 1995], food and housing insecurity); parents' engagement in their children's learning; and parents' educational expectations for their children.

The full report of findings to date is available upon request. For more information about this evaluation, please contact Ginger Young, Book Harvest Executive Director, at ginger@bookharvestnc.org.

To learn more about HighScope, visit highscope.org. To learn more about Imprints Cares, visit imprintscares.org. To learn more about Book Harvest, visit bookharvestnc.org.