

**Routes to Reading: *Books to Go***  
**Waves I, II, and III Program Evaluation Report**  
**December 19, 2015**

**Submitted by Roger A. Stewart, Ph.D.**

Running Head: *Books to Go* Waves I, II & III Evaluation Report

## Executive Summary

*Books to Go (BTG)* is a program developed and sponsored by the Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICfL) and funded through a grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services. Local public libraries partner with the ICfL and early childhood care and education providers in their service areas to provide young children, primarily ages 3-5 years, access to a wide variety of high-quality, age-appropriate children's books. Plastic tubs containing 30-40 canvas bags with four books in each bag are placed in early childhood care and education sites so that parents and caregivers can readily and conveniently check out books to take home and read to their children. Each bag contains a tip sheet, called *The Bookworm*, suggesting extension activities and other books similar to those contained in the bag.

Although libraries and partner sites were continuously recruited from the program's inception in fall 2012, distinct annual program evaluations have been conducted at the conclusion of each academic year. Thus this report synthesizes the findings from the three academic years the program encompassed. Wave I of *Books to Go* launched November, 2012 and ended June, 2013. Wave II started August, 2013 and ended June, 2014. And Wave III started August 2014 and concluded June, 2015. Total number of libraries participating rose to 65 during Wave II and further increased to 107 during Wave III. Over 8,000 Idaho children were served during both Waves II and III. All of this represents a dramatic increase from the 27 libraries and 54 partners that participated during Wave I. Where possible, this report compares results from Wave I, Wave II, and Wave III. The program evaluation included a number of different surveys along with other data sources. Parents/caregivers completed Quick Surveys contained in each bag of books. Quick Surveys asked how many books were read in the bag, how many were liked by the children, and asked for feedback about the books themselves. Parent/caregivers were also asked to complete an end-of-program survey asking more detailed questions about changes in reading habits with their children, things they liked or disliked about the program, etc. Partners, that is the early childhood centers that received *Books to Go* tubs, were also asked to complete end-of-program surveys asking for their experiences with and opinions of the program. Libraries that sponsored the tubs were also asked to complete an end-of-program survey that asked about their experiences and suggestions for future waves of the program. And finally, a quasi-experimental design study was conducted during Waves I and II of multiple *Books to Go* sites to compare effects to the *My First Books* program and a control condition. During Wave III, a qualitative study was conducted exploring highly successful *Books to Go* programs around Idaho. The study employed interviews and site visits to collect information from key staff at libraries and early childhood care and education centers to learn about important elements of successful programs. This report presents the results from these evaluation activities in three sections. The first section presents results from the surveys. The second section presents the results of the qualitative interview study of high performing sites. The results of the quasi-experimental studies have been previously reported so they will not be included here. A third and final section provides conclusions and recommendations.

Results from surveys and end-of-year reports strongly support the assertion that *Books to Go* is another example of a near flawlessly implemented and scaled ICfL program that is well-liked by libraries, their early childhood facility partners, and the children's parents/caregivers. Additionally, survey data revealed that *BTG* produces more reading and more literacy activities in the home, and oftentimes in homes where access to books can be severely restricted because

of a host of economic and logistical factors. Finally, the qualitative study provided important insights into what makes a successful program, including a dynamic and active local librarian who has regular and positive contact with the early childhood centers partnering on the program.

## Introduction

*Books to Go (BTG)* is a program developed and sponsored by the Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICfL) and funded through a grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services. Local public libraries partner with the ICfL and early childhood care and education providers in their service areas to provide young children, primarily ages 3-5 years, access to a wide variety of high-quality, age-appropriate children's books. Plastic tubs containing 30-40 canvas bags with four books in each bag are placed in early childhood care and education sites so that parents and caregivers can readily and conveniently check out books to take home and read to their children. Each bag contains a tip sheet, called *The Bookworm*, suggesting extension activities and other books similar to those contained in the bag. Bags are arranged thematically and include both fiction and nonfiction titles. For example, there is a bag devoted to dinosaurs and another one devoted to phonological awareness. The program works on the honor system. There is no set time frame for when books have to be returned. No library cards are required, and lost or damaged books are replaced free of charge with no questions asked. The primary purpose of the *Books to Go* program is to make access to books as easy and convenient as possible to a wide range of childcare providers, parents, and caregivers. Bags with Spanish or Spanish/English books are also available. During the second year of implementation, board books were added to the tubs to increase the age range of children served and an infant-toddler *Books to Go* program was launched. Appendix A of this report provides a brief evaluation of the infant-toddler program. To date, through the *Books to Go* program tubs have been placed in private daycares, private preschools, Head Start/Early Head Start centers, and public school developmental preschool programs.

Although beginning in the fall of 2012 libraries and partner sites were continuously recruited and thus began the program throughout the calendar year, distinct annual program evaluations have been conducted at the conclusion of each academic year. Thus this report synthesizes the findings from the three academic years the program encompassed. Wave I of the *Books to Go* program launched November, 2012 and ended June, 2013. Wave II started August, 2013 and ended June, 2014. And Wave III started August 2014 and concluded June, 2015. Total number of libraries participating rose to 65 during Wave II and further increased to 107 during Wave III. There was a commensurate increase in partner sites with 176 in Wave II and 181 in Wave III. Over 8,000 Idaho children were served during both Waves II and III. All of this represents a dramatic increase from the 27 libraries and 54 partners that participated during Wave I. Where possible, this report compares results from Wave I, Wave II, and Wave III. The program evaluation included a number of different surveys along with other data sources. Parents/caregivers completed Quick Surveys contained in each bag of books. Quick Surveys asked how many books were read in the bag, how many were liked by the children, and asked for feedback about the books themselves. Parent/caregivers were also asked to complete an end-of-program survey asking more detailed questions about changes in reading habits with their children, things they liked or disliked about the program, etc. Partners, that is the early childhood centers that received *Books to Go* tubs, were also asked to complete end-of-program surveys asking for their experiences with and opinions of the program. Libraries that sponsored the tubs were also asked to complete an end-of-program survey that asked about their experiences and suggestions for future waves of the program. And finally, a quasi-experimental design study was conducted during Waves I and II of multiple *Books to Go* sites to compare

effects to the *My First Books* program and a control condition. For Wave III, a qualitative study was conducted of high performing *BTG* sites. This report presents the results from all of these evaluation activities in three sections. The first section presents results from the surveys and other data sources and the second section presents the results from the qualitative interview study. A third and final section provides conclusions and recommendations.

**Section 1: Survey Results**

**Books to Go Quick Surveys: Analyses of Results**

A brief, half-page survey was to be included in each bag of books that was checked out. The surveys asked parents/caregivers about their experience with the particular books in the bag. *Books to Go* sites should be commended on the large number of Quick Surveys returned during all of the waves. Table I shows the totals by wave. For Waves II and III, because of the large number of surveys returned (Wave II: n=3,014; Wave III: n=4,248) a sample of surveys was drawn for analysis resulting in 99% confidence intervals with +/- 3% error. For Wave II, of the 1,507 in the sample, 177 were in Spanish. And for Wave III, of the 2,124 in the sample 50 were Spanish. Receiving this large number of surveys after each wave is commendable. Please recall that the tubs of books were used during Wave I only from January, 2014 to May, 2014. Waves II and III spanned entire academic years. Also please keep in mind that after each check out of a bag someone had to place a new survey in that bag or parents/caregivers had to be asked to pick up a blank survey as they checked bags out. Either way, having an all volunteer workforce achieve such a large response is highly commendable.

The first question on the Quick Survey asked from what type of organization was the *Books to Go* bag checked out. Table 1 shows the number of surveys returned from each type of site by wave.

Table 1: Number of Quick Surveys returned by type of site and by wave

Type of Site	Surveys Returned		
	Wave I* (n=1,327)	Wave II (n=3,014)	Wave III (n=4,248)
a. Private Daycare or Preschool	517	680	1074
b. Head Start/Even Start	381	364	469
c. School District Developmental Preschool	163	245	349
d. Other	205	133	150
e. Surveys Missing Type of Site Information	61	85	82
<b>Total</b>	1,327	1,507	2,124

\*All Wave I surveys were included in analyses. Half of Wave II and III surveys were included in the sample that was used for analysis. These samples resulted in 99% confidence intervals with +/-3% error.

The “Other” category predominantly included kindergartens and charter schools. An excellent number of surveys were returned by all types of sites. This is a positive finding since it shows that whether a partner is a public or private organization parents/caregivers are willing to complete the surveys which provide important information about how the books are used and their popularity.

The second question asked how many of the books in the bag were read to the child. This is an important question because responses provide an indicator for how fully utilized bags were. If only one or two books were read each time a bag was checked out then that would indicate less than full utilization, but such was not the case. Table 2 shows results for the three waves.

Table 2: Quick Surveys: Number of books read in bag by wave (Wave I: n=1,153); Wave II: n=1,491; Wave III: n=2,109)

Number of Books Read in Bag											
1			2			3			4		
I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
1 (13)*	1 (14)	1 (28)	3 (39)	3 (53)	4 (75)	9 (114)	11 (162)	13 (269)	87 (1153)	85 (1262)	82 (1737)

\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

Results across the waves are quite consistent with 82% or more of respondents saying they read all four books in a bag. Only four percent or less in each wave reported reading just one or two and just around 10% reported reading three. It is known that in some instances, parents/caregivers reported reading less than four books because the bag was missing one or more books. This is known because parents/caregivers wrote a note on the Quick Survey to this effect. Although this did not occur that often, the actual percentage of responses reporting reading four books would probably be even higher if all bags at all times had all four books. This is an outstanding result and underscores the assertion that ICfL staff were adept at selecting high-quality, age-appropriate literature for the bags. In summary, there is no way to tell at this time how many total bags were checked out and how many surveys were returned in relation to the total, but when surveys were returned the evidence strongly points to virtually all of the books being utilized.

A third question asked parent/caregivers how many books in the bag the child liked. This is important information since if the books are not popular with the children the bags will not be as likely to be checked out over time. Table 3 shows results for this question by wave.

Table 3: Quick Surveys: Number of books liked by children in bag by wave (Wave I: n=1,310); Wave II: n=1,462; Wave III: n=2073)

Number of Books Liked in Bag											
1			2			3			4		
I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
4 (53)*	3 (50)	4 (79)	7 (92)	10 (151)	10 (200)	18 (232)	22 (317)	22 (463)	71 (933)	65 (944)	64 (1331)

\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

Large majorities in all waves reported their child liked all four books. Although the percentage saying this dropped by 6-7% from Wave I to Waves II and III, this is probably not a significant drop given that Wave II and III data are samples and thus the statistics derived have a range of error about them. Additionally, more than two years are needed to establish a trend. These results clearly show that the books chosen by ICfL personnel were excellent choices and that ICfL personnel know what young children and their parents/caregivers enjoy.

The fourth question asked respondents to write comments about the books. When aggregated across waves, over 2,300 comments were received. Some were submitted in Spanish and these were professionally translated into English. Virtually all of the comments were positive with many of them glowing. Only a handful were critical of the books and these few centered around such things as the books being too old for the children or the children not enjoying certain books. Responses about books being too old or too young were sometimes the result of the right tubs not being at that particular location. For example, daycares typically serve children from 0-school age, so a preschool collection of books could either be too high or too low. When libraries were advised that infant/toddler bins were available and they subsequently made them available to their partners, it fixed the misalignment problem for the younger set. The issue of misalignment underscores the importance of libraries fully understanding the ages of the children served at each *BTG* site. That way the proper mix of tubs can be delivered at the launch of the program. In the future as more libraries participate, this is a detail that needs to be incorporated into staff training. The following verbatim comments are representative of the tone and content of the body of comments:

- Thank you. I spend more time with my son. We talked more and he pays more attention to the sound and changes in my voice when I'm reading.
- He loved *Froggy Gets Dressed* and liked to see what Froggy had missed. He also loved telling the pigeon no. We have a 2 yr. old who also loved to read the books and kept walking around the house saying More Bears!! It is fun to have these new books that my kids haven't seen before and we can read together as a family!!
- Absolutely loved Bark George and "I like the cat book, mom lets buy it from them."
- We loved this program!
- Love how each book is different and gets a different part of my child's imagination and curiosity going.
- I love Courduroy! And Goldilocks sparked a good discussion about asking permission and sharing.
- The only one we had rad [read] was Knuffle Bunny. It is nice to be exposed to know [new] books.
- Gracias a books to Go no compra no los libros y tienen los niños calidad de libros. (Thanks to books to Go we do not buy books and the children have quality books.)
- Aprendio las minúsculas, las mayúscula y letras. (Learned lowercase, the uppercase and letters.)
- Mi hija trata de leer los libros tomanos turnos para leer uno yo y ella otro. (My daughter tries to read the books we take turns, me and then her.)

Having thousands of comments returned and having them be so overwhelmingly positive says much about the quality of the books included in the bags and the overall success of the *Books to Go* program.

The next question on the survey was a block of three Yes/No questions with the following common stem: "As a result of receiving this *Books to Go* bag, did you...." The stem

was followed by several important early literacy behaviors. Table 4 shows the percentages and frequencies of responses for each question by wave.

Table 4: Behavior changes reported on Quick Surveys by wave

Question Stem: As a result of receiving this <i>Books to Go</i> bag, did you....	Response					
	Yes			No		
	I	II	III	I	II	III
a. increase the amount of time spent reading with your child? (I: n=1311; II: n=1492; III: n=2086)	87 (1137)*	85 (1265)	83 (1731)	13 (174)	15 (227)	17 (355)
b. increase the amount of time spent talking with your child? (I: n=1303; II: n=1492; III: n=2079)	81 (1060)	79 (1184)	79 (1649)	19 (243)	21 (308)	21 (430)
c. do any of the suggested activities found in the enclosed <i>Bookworm</i> ? (I: n=1274; II: n=1438; III: n=2034)	58 (732)	61 (873)	57 (1164)	42 (542)	39 (565)	43 (870)

\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

All waves show large percentages of respondents reporting increased amounts of time spent reading with their children. This is a very positive finding that provides strong evidence that the program achieves its primary goal of having young children read to more and exposed to more books. Additionally, the consistency of the finding across the three waves adds additional support for the stability of this finding. About 80% of respondents reported that they talked more with their child. Again, this is a highly favorable outcome since reading to and speaking with children have been shown to be strongly correlated to children’s development of early literacy skills and vocabulary. These percentages are similar to those found in other ICfL evaluations of *Read to Me* programs such as *My First Books*. It appears that *Books to Go* is just as successful and consistent over time at fostering these important behaviors in parents/caregivers. Over half of respondents reported doing activities from the *Bookworms* that were enclosed in each bag of books. Again results were quite consistent over the waves. This, too, is a very positive finding and even more so since in past ICfL program evaluations that have asked about *Bookworm* usage, the percentages have not been this high, so it appears that the *Books to Go* program may be more successful at stimulating parents/caregivers to take the time to complete literacy-related activities with their children. Doing so further increases the amount of time these parents/caregivers spend helping their children develop critical early literacy skills.

In summary, the Quick Surveys clearly showed that the *Books to Go* program was highly popular with children and their parents/caregivers and was also quite effective at fostering important parent/caregiver behaviors that predict early literacy development.

**Books to Go End-of-Program Parent/Caregiver Surveys: Analysis of Results**

Participating libraries were asked to distribute a parent/caregiver survey during late spring 2013, 2014, and 2015 to all of their participating *Books to Go* sites. Respondents were asked the type of program in which their child participated. Table 5 shows results by wave.

Table 5: Types of sites represented in surveys by wave: Percentages and frequencies

Wave	No. Libraries Participating	No. Libraries Returning Surveys	Private Daycare/Preschool	Head Start/Even Start	Public School Dev. Preschool	Other
I (n=151)*	27	14	42(64)**	30(46)	12(19)	14(22)
II (n=279)	65	19	39(110)	34(96)	16(44)	10(29)
III (n=353)	80	30	55(193)	24(86)	16(57)	5(17)

\* Number of surveys returned with type of site information included.

\*\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

Program types were represented in similar proportions when Waves I and II are compared, but during Wave III more private daycare/preschool programs were represented in the sample. Why this was the case is not known. All program types are adequately represented in the sample. The sample, however, is perhaps not representative of all libraries and partners since only half of the libraries returned surveys spring 2013, only 29% of libraries returned surveys spring 2014, and only 38% of libraries returned surveys during spring 2015. Thus, although parent/caregiver surveys were received from all of the various types of partnering organizations that participated in *Books to Go*, in the future resources should be applied so that all libraries and all partners return surveys so that results are more likely to be representative of the population of parents/caregivers who utilize *Books to Go*. Thus the results that are reported here should be cautiously interpreted because they may or may not be representative.

Respondents were asked what month they began receiving *Books to Go*. This information provides an indication for how long the respondents had exposure to the program. Table 6 shows the reported start times by month and wave.

Table 6: Parent/caregiver report of first month BTG available by wave

Wave	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.
I (n=139)	0(0)	<1(1)	0(0)	2(3)	17(24)	53(73)	17(24)	9(13)	<1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
II (n=233)	31(73)	18(42)	8(19)	1(2)	18(41)	11(25)	7(16)	3(8)	1(3)	0(0)	0(0)	2(4)
III (n=292)	47(137)	12(37)	3(10)	2(7)	11(31)	8(22)	5(13)	4(11)	<1(2)	<1(1)	<1(1)	7(20)

\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

Recall that Wave I rolled out over the course of several months during fall 2012 after the grant began. Since most Wave I parent/caregiver surveys were collected in late April and throughout May, 2013, most respondents had 3-4 months of exposure to the program. For Wave II, which spanned an entire academic year, the percentages and frequencies found in table 6 make sense within the context of the *Books to Go* project. It takes considerable time to identify libraries who wish to participate, have the libraries find partners who wish to participate, and then assemble and deliver to the libraries and their partners the tubs. Much of this work was completed over late

spring and summer 2013 so that the first full year of implementation could launch at the beginning of the 2013-2014 academic year when the children returned from summer vacation. Table 6 shows that this was accomplished. Thirty-one percent of respondents reported beginning receiving books in September. Another 18% reported October. Thus 49% of all respondents began receiving books within the first month or two of the academic year. This is excellent and attests to the hard work of ICfL personnel and their superb organization and coordination of resources. Hundreds of tubs containing thousands of books were efficiently and strategically delivered throughout Idaho. Furthermore, a primary goal of the first full year of implementation was to have the books in children’s hands as early as possible in the school year so they would have as many months of exposure to the books as possible. Importantly, this goal was also accomplished. The same pattern of roll-out occurred during Wave III. The ICfL, once again, worked hard throughout late 2013 and spring and summer of 2014 to recruit new libraries. This round of recruitment was even more successful since 59% of parent/caregiver respondents reported receiving *BTG* books either in September or October 2014, thus maximizing children’s exposure to the books across an entire academic year.

Parents/caregivers were asked how many of their children participated in the *Books to Go* program by three age groups: newborn to two years, 3-5 years (preschool), and 5-6 years (kindergarten). Table 7 shows the distribution of children’s ages by wave.

Table 7: Distribution of children’s ages by wave

Wave	No. of Surveys	No. of Children Represented	Newborn	3-5 Years (preschoolers)	5-6 Years (kindergarteners)
I	155	211	17 (35)	61 (129)	22 (47)
II	277	332	15 (50)	68 (224)	17 (58)
III	359	408	15 (61)	70 (287)	15 (60)

\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

For all waves, the distribution of children’s ages is in keeping with the program goal of primarily targeting preschoolers. This shows that the ICfL was successful at communicating with library partners about appropriate sites for tubs. This is no small feat given the number of libraries involved and the number of partner sites where tubs were placed. The ICfL only has direct contact with the libraries. It does not have direct contact with the partner sites, and thus relies almost exclusively on the libraries to do coordination with their partners. There is significant potential for communication problems. Such was not the case, however, and this is very much in keeping with previous evaluations of ICfL programs. The ICfL has excellent mechanisms for initial training of libraries on new programs and for communicating about and monitoring programs once they are released to libraries for implementation at the local level.

Surveys also asked respondents how often they checked out bags. Table 8 provides the response percentages and frequencies for all waves.

Table 8: Bag check-out regularity by wave

Wave	More Than Once Each Week	Once Each Week	Once Every Two Weeks	Once Each Month	Did not Receive
I (n=143)	8 (11)	48 (69)	26 (37)	18 (26)	0 (0)
II (n=267)	6 (16)	47(126)	16 (43)	30 (79)	1 (3)
III (n=331)	5 (15)	32 (106)	30 (99)	30 (99)	3 (12)

\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

The goal of *Books to Go* is to have children check books out often, optimally each week or more. During Waves I and II a little over 50% of respondents did this, but during Wave III the percentage dropped to 37%. Such a finding is quite positive for the program and also reflects quite positively on the partners who were responsible for promoting regular check-outs to parents/caregivers. Having said this, however, there still remains nearly half of respondents who checked books out less often and in some cases much less often than optimal. A future goal for the program might be to increase the percentage of respondents who report checking out books “once each week” while significantly reducing the number who report checking out less often. One final comment, the percentage of respondents reporting “once each month” had a large increase from Wave I to Waves II and III. These samples are not large so statistics might experience significant variation over time, but since two years of data show the increase the finding is becoming more reliable. Thus, if a third year of data shows a similar percentage then this represents an important challenge for the program to overcome.

On most previous ICfL *Read to Me* program evaluations a series of questions asking about parent/caregiver behaviors has been asked. Having a common set of questions about key program outcomes allows comparisons to be made across various programs. This same set of questions was asked on the *Books to Go* parent/caregiver survey for this purpose. Table 9 shows the questions and results by wave.

Table 9: Parent/caregiver reported changes in behaviors by wave

<i>As a result of the Books to Go program, I .....</i>	Yes			No			Already did this regularly before participating in the program.		
	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
<b>a.</b> spend more time reading with my child/children. (I: n=153; II: n=280; III: n=354)*	73 (112)* *	73 (204)	69 (243)	1 (1)	2 (5)	4 (14)	26 (40)	25 (71)	27 (97)
<b>b.</b> spend more time talking with my child/children about the books I read to them. (I: n=154; II: n=279; III: n=353)	83 (128)	77 (216)	70 (246)	1 (2)	3 (7)	7 (25)	16 (24)	20 (56)	23 (82)
<b>c.</b> spend more time singing with my child/children. (I: n=151; II:n=279; III:n=352)	43 (65)	49 (137)	46 (162)	26 (39)	30 (84)	30 (104)	31 (47)	21 (58)	24 (86)

<b>d.</b> spend more time rhyming with my child/children (e.g., rhyming games, fingerplays that rhyme, nursery rhymes). (I: n=150; II: n=278; III: n=351)	67 (100)	65 (180)	60 (210)	13 (20)	18 (50)	22 (76)	20 (30)	17 (48)	18 (65)
<b>e.</b> am more likely to use the library to check out books. (I: n=151; II: n=278; III: n=350)	71 (108)	60 (168)	63 (222)	7 (10)	14 (39)	12 (42)	22 (33)	26 (71)	25 (86)

\* n is the total number of respondents to this particular item.

\*\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

In all instances except one, the percentages of yes responses across the waves were quite high providing strong evidence that *Books to Go* impacts important parent/caregiver early literacy behaviors. In the one instance where the yes responses were not so large, that is singing with children, it is important to note that prior evaluations of IC/L early literacy programs have shown that stimulating parents/caregivers to sing more to their children is quite difficult. Thus, having nearly half of respondents say yes is also a strongly positive finding within this context. Results across the waves are also quite consistent lending support to the reliability of these findings. Finally, it is important to note that these results from the *Books to Go* program are quite consistent with a number of years of data from evaluating the *My First Books* program. Thus, it can be asserted with confidence that *Books to Go* is just as effective at positively influencing important parent/caregiver early literacy behaviors as that highly successful and popular program.

Respondents were asked to rate the usefulness of various aspects of the *Books to Go* program. Table 10 shows the questions asked and the results by wave.

Table 10: Usefulness of information by wave

Please rate the following for usefulness:	Wave I			Wave II			Wave III		
	Very	Useful	Not	Very	Useful	Not	Very	Useful	Not
a. Learning about great books for my child/children. (I: n=151; II: n=275; III: n=351)	85 (128)	14 (22)	1 (1)	69 (189)	27 (74)	4 (12)	68 (239)	30 (106)	2 (6)
b. Learning things I can do at home to help my child/children get ready to read. (I: n=151; II: n=273; III: n=349)	72 (108)	25 (38)	3 (5)	59 (160)	37 (103)	4 (10)	56 (197)	40 (138)	4 (14)
c. Learning about library resources I can use with my child/children. (I: n=150; II: n=272; III: n=350)	68 (101)	31 (47)	1 (2)	56 (151)	38 (105)	6 (16)	48 (166)	47 (165)	5 (19)
d. The <i>Bookworm</i> Newsletter. (I: n=148; II: n=272; III: n=350)	63 (93)	31 (46)	6 (9)	50 (132)	46 (124)	4 (11)	43 (146)	48 (164)	9 (31)

n=267; III: n=341)									
e. Please list other aspects of the <i>BTG</i> program and rate them for usefulness: (I: n=21; II: n=85; III: n=82)	90 (19)	5 (1)	5 (1)	64 (54)	36 (31)	0 (0)	75 (61)	24 (20)	1 (1)

\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

In all instances the percentages of very useful responses dropped 13-20% between Wave I and Waves II and III. What is positive, however, is the percentage of not useful responses remained at low levels across all of the waves. What happened is that fewer respondents said very useful while more said useful. If this drop is verified in subsequent waves of the program, action may be needed to raise the percentages since there is evidence that other ICfL early literacy programs achieve better and more consistent results on these same questions. For example, Table 11 shows results of a comparison between the *My First Books* program evaluated during 2011-2012 and the waves of *Books to Go*. Only percentages and frequencies of very useful responses are included in the comparisons.

Table 11: Usefulness of information: Comparison of *Books to Go* Waves to *My First Books*

Please rate the following for usefulness:	MFB 2011-2012	Wave I	Wave II	Wave III
	Very Useful	Very Useful	Very Useful	Very Useful
a. Learning about great books for my child/children. (MFB: n=1185; Wave I: n=151 ; Wave II: n=275; Wave III: n=351)	76(900)*	85 (151)	69 (189)	68(239)
b. Learning things I can do at home to help my child/children get ready to read. (MFB: n=1193; Wave I: n=151 ; Wave II: n=273; Wave III: n=349)	74 (883)	72 (151)	59 (160)	56(197)
c. Learning about library resources I can use with my child/children. (MFB: n=1189; Wave I: n=150 ; Wave II: n=272; Wave III: n=350)	65 (773)	67 (150)	56 (151)	48(166)
d. The <i>Bookworm</i> Newsletter. (MFB: n=1180; Wave I: n=148 ; Wave II: n=267; Wave III: n=341)	65 (767)	63 (148)	50 (132)	43(146)
e. Please list other aspects of the _____ program and rate them for usefulness: (MFB: n=356; Wave I: n=21 ; Wave II: n=85; Wave III: n=82)	79 (281)	91 (21)	64 (54)	75(61)

\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

Wave I compared quite favorably to *My First Books*, meeting or exceeding the *MFB* percentages. But such was the not case in Waves II and III. As was previously discussed, if subsequent years of *Books to Go* data show that these lower percentages are the norm, then action should probably be considered.

Respondents were asked how frequently they visited their public library, checked out books, and accessed free Web services available through their library. These are important

questions since an important secondary goal of the *Books to Go* program is to increase library patronage of all kinds. Table 12 provides results by wave.

Table 12: Library services usage rates by wave

When was the last time you.....	Wave	Within the past week	Within the past month	Within the past 6 months	Within the past year	More than two years ago	Never
a. visited your public library? (I: n=150; II: n=274; III: n=350)*	I	29(43)**	23(35)	21(32)	9(14)	9(13)	9(13)
	II	22(60)	28(76)	25(68)	14(39)	8(22)	3(9)
	III	27(93)	27(95)	19(66)	12(41)	11(40)	4(15)
b. checked out books at your public library? (I: n=149; II: n=278; III: n=353)	I	21(31)	26(39)	17(25)	13(20)	10(15)	13(19)
	II	18(51)	24(66)	25(68)	15(41)	9(26)	9(26)
	III	23(80)	24(85)	17(61)	13(44)	14(51)	9(32)
c. accessed <i>Tumblebooks</i> through your public library's web site? (I: n=148; II: n=273; III: n=347)	I	3(5)	6(9)	3(4)	1(2)	1(1)	86(127)
	II	2(4)	6(16)	5(15)	4(12)	4(11)	79(215)
	III	2(6)	3(11)	4(13)	5(16)	4(14)	82(287)
d. accessed <i>Day by Day ID.org</i> through your public library's web site? (I: n=147; II: n=274; III: n=349)	I	1(2)	2(3)	3(4)	2(3)	1(1)	91(134)
	II	2(4)	4(11)	3(9)	3(9)	4(11)	84(230)
	III	<1(3)	2(6)	3(10)	2(7)	3(10)	90(313)

\* n is the total number of respondents to this particular item by wave.

\*\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

Having roughly 50% of respondents visit their public library within the past month or sooner during all three waves is a positive finding, but with relatively few surveys being returned, it is difficult to know how representative these results are of the overall parent/caregiver population that utilized *Books to Go*. Checking out books is similar to visits to the public library with 42-47% doing so within the past month or sooner. Again, results were quite consistent over all waves. But when the results for the usage of online resources are examined dramatic changes occur. Very few respondents made use of these resources. Again, how representative these results are of the overall population can not be known, but given that these respondents for the most part are library users, and half or more of them are quite regular users, if *Tumblebooks* and *Day by Day ID.org* were well known and were perceived by parents/caregivers as useful the number of never responses would probably be lower. Even though these results don't represent many *Books to Go* parents/caregivers, given the extremely large number of never responses and that the results are similar across all waves of the program, the ICfL probably needs to revisit how they promote these two online resources to see if more successful approaches can be developed. It is important to note that the results in table 12 are similar to those found in the 2011-2012 *My First Books* evaluation. This is a positive finding since *MFB* is a long-standing and highly successful program.

The question "Overall, how satisfied were you with the *Books to Go* program?" was asked with three response options: very satisfied, satisfied, and not satisfied. Table 13 reports results from the waves and the 2011-2012 *My First Books* program evaluation for comparative purposes.

Table 13: Degree of overall satisfaction by wave

<b>Program</b>	<b>Very Satisfied</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>Not Satisfied</b>
<b>Wave I</b> (n=152)*	88 (134)**	11 (17)	<1 (1)
<b>Wave II</b> (n=274)	80 (218)	20 (55)	<1 (1)
<b>Wave III</b> (n=345)	77 (263)	21 (74)	2 (8)
<b>My First Books</b> (n=1,164)	81 (940)	19 (223)	<1 (1)

\* n is the total number of respondents to this particular item.

\*\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

These are stellar results and compare favorably to the 2011-2012 *My First Books* results. It appears that *Books to Go* is as positively received as *My First Books* and other *Read to Me* programs and can be added to the list of highly valued programs. But as has been emphasized before, the number of *Books to Go* parent/caregiver surveys returned was not great. Thus, these results may not be representative of all parents/caregivers who utilized the program. In the future, efforts should be made to increase the number of surveys returned so that data has a higher probability of being representative.

An important question to ask is “If *Books to Go* continues to be available from your provider, how likely are you to continue using them?” This question gets at the heart of program sustainability from the end-user perspective. If parent/caregivers respond that it is unlikely they will continue using them, then that signals the need to restructure the program. Four response options were given: very likely, likely, not sure, and unlikely. Table 14 presents results from all three waves.

Table 14: Likelihood of continuing to use BTG program by wave

<b>Wave</b>	<b>Very Likely</b>	<b>Likely</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>	<b>Unlikely</b>
<b>I</b> (n=149)*	85 (127) **	11 (17)	3 (4)	<1 (1)
<b>II</b> (n=273)	60 (163)	34 (92)	6 (16)	<1 (1)
<b>III</b> (n=347)	72 (250)	20 (69)	7 (23)	1 (5)

\* n is the total number of respondents to this particular item.

\*\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

There was no comparable question asked in other evaluations so no comparisons are possible. Results were quite positive for Wave I but somewhat less so for Waves II and III. This drop in very likely responses should be noted, but the problem is not severe since likely responses went up commensurately, and likely is still a quite positive response.

A question about acquiring library cards at public libraries was asked. This question has also been asked in the same format on the *My First Books* surveys so comparisons can be made. Respondents were asked to check who had received a card as a consequence of the *Books to Go* program: self, child, or other. Table 15 shows the results for all waves of *Books to Go* along with a comparison to the 2011-2012 *My First Books* program.

Table 15: Library card status of respondents: Comparison of *Books to Go Waves* to *My First Books*

Statement	MFB 2011-2012 (n=1,141)*	Wave I (n=155)	Wave II (n=285)	Wave III (n=359)
a. Did you or your child receive a library card as a result of the _____ program?	Self: 6 (71)**	Self: 5 (8)	Self: 11 (30)	Self: 5 (19)
	Child: 7 (77)	Child: 5 (8)	Child: 9 (25)	Child: 4 (14)
	Other: <1 (6)	Other: 1 (2)	Other: 1 (4)	Other: 2 (6)
b. We already had a library card in the family before this program.	64 (728)	59 (91)	67 (192)	65 (233)
c. We did not get a library card.	25 (286)	28 (43)	18 (51)	24 (87)

\* n is the number of respondents for this item on the survey.

\*\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

Results were quite similar for the two programs showing that *Books to Go* is equally efficacious at stimulating respondents to acquire library cards. A matter of fact, Wave II nearly doubled the percentage of parents/caregivers reporting they acquired a library card, but this increase was not sustained during Wave III. Respondents are still not acquiring library cards in droves since only about 10% of respondents and their children do so, but this is an important outcome for any ICjL program.

The final question on the survey was open-ended and asked respondents the following: “In order to make the *Books to Go* program better, I suggest:” Eighteen respondents wrote comments during Wave I, 20 did so during Wave II, and 64 for Wave III. Of these, only a few were negative. For example, one respondent said that better control over the books was needed since bags were not complete at times and two mentioned needing bilingual books and *The Book Worm* in Spanish. Importantly, the overall theme in the comments showed very positive regard for the program and appreciation for having it available.

### ***Books to Go* End-of-Program Library Partner Surveys: Analysis of Results**

Libraries partnered with early childhood care and education centers in their service areas. Each partner was asked to complete a summative survey in late spring during each wave. For Wave I, surveys were returned by 26 of 44 partner sites representing 11 of 27 participating public libraries. For Wave II, surveys were returned by 90 of 176 partners representing 31 of 65 libraries. For Wave III, 78 of 181 partners returned surveys. The number of participating libraries this represents was not possible to calculate since for Wave III partners completed surveys online and did not identify which library sponsored them. Overall, these are not high response rates, so in the future efforts should be expended to increase the number of partners returning surveys and the number of libraries these partners represent.

Respondents were asked the type of organization of which they were a part. Table 16 shows the composition of respondents by wave.

Table 16: Type of partnering organization by wave

Wave	Head Start/Even Start	School District Developmental Preschool	Private Daycare	Private Preschool	Other
<b>I</b> (n=26)*	39 (10)**	11 (3)	31 (8)	8 (2)	11 (3)
<b>II</b> (n=89)	26 (23)	7 (6)	18 (16)	12 (11)	37 (33)
<b>III</b> (n=78)	33 (26)	8 (6)	18 (14)	23 (18)	24 (19)

\* n is the number of respondents for this item on the survey.

\*\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

The large percentage of other responses during Wave II was the consequence of a significant number of infant/toddler programs that were recruited for Wave II. This group appears to have been quite conscientious about returning surveys. The organizations that classified themselves in the other category included such sites as transitional kindergartens, public elementary schools, charter schools, shelters, and combination private daycares and preschools.

Respondents also provided the number of children at their site. Twenty-one respondents provided this information during Wave I, 72 did in Wave II, and 76 did during Wave III. Organizations ranged in size from 1 to 250 children. Only a few organizations, however, served 200 or more children. Most served 40 or fewer and many of those served less than 20.

It was important to know for how long partners had been participating in the *Books to Go* program. If the time was too short, then partners might not be able to provide an accurate assessment of the program. Partners were asked to select the month that they received the *Books to Go* materials. Table 17 provides results for Waves II and III. This same question was asked during Wave I but since that wave only spanned a maximum of six months the information will not be included here.

Table 17: Partner report of first month *Books to Go* books available (Wave II: n=78; Wave III: n=78)

Wave	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July
<b>II</b>	5(4)*	20(16)	8(6)	1(1)	1(1)	9(7)	15(12)	22(17)	4(3)	10(8)	0(0)	4(3)
<b>III</b>	13(10)	37(29)	9(7)	2(2)	1(1)	20(16)	9(7)	3(2)	5(4)	5(4)	4(3)	3(2)

\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

Thirty-three percent of partners during Wave II reported beginning during August, September, and October with the greatest percentage beginning in September. This percentage increased to 59% during Wave III. This is a positive finding since starting the program at the beginning of the academic year provides the greatest span of time for the program to operate with the greatest numbers of children. Furthermore, having a third of all partners start the program at the beginning of the academic year attests to the hard work and high degree of logistical organization of ICfL staff and volunteers who work on this program. To identify all of these sites during the spring and summer and then construct and ship all of the tubs of books in time for the start of the academic year is a formidable task. Additionally, in keeping with the continuous enrollment goal of the *Books to Go* program, all other months except June during Wave II were reported as starting months for partners. This, too, is a positive finding since it shows ICfL staff and volunteers worked continuously and successfully to bring more sites on board throughout the calendar years.

Libraries were instructed that partners should feel free to use the books and *The Bookworm* in their curriculum and instruction because an important component of the *Books to Go* program is to enhance early childhood caregivers’ and educators’ access to high-quality, age-appropriate books in addition to enhancing access by parents/caregivers. To see how often this occurred the questions in Table 18 were asked.

Table 18: Partner utilization of *Books to Go* in curricula and instruction by wave

How often did you do each of the following?	Wave	Daily	Weekly	Twice a Month	Monthly	Rarely	Never
a. Use the <i>Books to Go</i> books as part of your curriculum and instruction. (Wave I: n=26; Wave II: n=78; Wave III: n=76)*	I	11 (3)**	42 (11)	8 (2)	4 (1)	8 (2)	27 (7)
	II	11 (10)	25 (22)	18 (16)	17 (15)	13 (11)	16 (14)
	III	7 (5)	34 (26)	24 (18)	17 (13)	14 (11)	4 (3)
b. Use the ideas and suggestions in the <i>Bookworm</i> in your curriculum and instruction. (Wave I: n=19; Wave II: n=79; Wave III: n=74)	I	10 (2)	32 (6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	16 (3)	42 (8)
	II	8 (6)	16 (13)	8 (6)	15 (12)	28 (22)	25 (20)
	III	5 (4)	19 (14)	11 (8)	19 (14)	30 (22)	16 (12)

\* n is the number of respondents for this item on the survey.

\*\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

The number of partners represented in this data is not large so interpretations need to be cautiously made. During Wave I, 53% of respondents reported using the books on a daily or weekly basis. This was a positive finding, but during Waves II and III the percentages dropped to 36% and 41% respectively. With relatively small samples like these, statistics can vary quite a lot from sample to sample so more years of data are needed to establish a trend, but if the lower value holds in the future, it would mean roughly a third of responding partners are regularly using the books while two-thirds seldom, rarely, or never do so. On a positive note, the percentage of respondents who never used the books dropped substantially during Wave II and even more dramatically during Wave III. If this drop is sustained in subsequent years, exploring why the drop is occurring would be informative. An important goal for the future should be to significantly decrease the percentage of partners using the books only monthly or rarely while moving them into categories representing greater use. Use of *The Bookworm* saw similar shifts in usage between Waves I, II, and III. Daily and weekly use dropped from 42% to 24% while twice monthly, monthly, and rarely increased. And there was an even bigger drop in the percentage of respondents reporting never using *The Bookworm*, with the drop continuing to increase during Wave III. This is a quite positive finding. In past ICfL program evaluations getting participants to use *The Bookworm* has been a challenge. It appears that *BTG* partners will use it but many only do so occasionally. A positive start, but now what needs to be done is to ascertain what is needed to move these respondents into higher usage categories. The same recommendations given immediately above for the books themselves hold for *The Bookworm*. In summary, if in later evaluations of the *Books to Go* program more partners respond to these questions and similar results are found, then follow-up with respondents and their sponsoring libraries to find out why sizable percentages under-utilize these two resources will be important information to collect.

Partners were asked to rate the quality of their relationship with their library partners. This is an important question since the quality of this relationship will probably determine if the

partner continues using *Books to Go* and whether or not the partner provides positive affirmation and support for the program with parents/caregivers and other people in their communities. Table 19 provides results by wave.

Table 19: Partner rating of quality of partner/library relationship by wave (Wave I: n=19; Wave II: n=79; Wave III: n=78\*)

Excellent			Good			Neutral			Poor		
I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
73 (17)**	59 (47)	79 (62)	5 (1)	28 (22)	14 (11)	5 (1)	13 (10)	6 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)

\* n is the number of respondents for this item on the survey.

\*\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

Again, the sample sizes are relatively small, especially so for Wave I, so these statistics might vary quite a bit from year-to-year. It is a strongly positive finding, however, that no one rated their relationship poor over two waves of implementation and that only one did during Wave III. Also, 73%, 59%, and 79% of respondents during the three waves rated their relationship as excellent. This is a credit to the libraries who work hard to maintain positive relationships with all of their many partners.

The final selected response question was “Please rate your overall experience with the *Books to Go* program.” Table 20 presents the results by wave.

Table 20: Partner rating of overall BTG experience by wave (Wave I: n=26; Wave II: n=79; Wave III: n=76\*)

Excellent			Good			Neutral			Poor		
I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
73 (19)**	71 (56)	82 (62)	23 (6)	20 (16)	14 (11)	4 (1)	9 (7)	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (2)

\* n is the number of respondents for this item on the survey.

\*\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

Virtually all respondents during all waves rated their overall experience as excellent or good, with the majority of those rating it excellent. This is a strongly positive finding and underscores the hard work of the libraries to provide support and guidance during program implementation.

A series of open-ended questions was asked. The first being “What successes did you experience from participating in the *Books to Go* program?” Twenty-four Wave II sites responded to this question and 73 of 78 Wave III sites did so. During both waves, respondents could provide multiple successes so the total number mentioned exceeds the number of partners. Table 21 presents a summary of the comments with their frequencies.

Table 21: Open-ended question asking about Books to Go program successes: Summary and frequencies of responses by wave

Success	Wave II	Wave III
a. Children excited about books, reading, taking bags home, etc.	13	35
b. More reading with child or more reading in the home (bonding time around books, enjoyed reading books to children)	12	26
c. Families/parents taking literacy into the home (parent involvement,	8	19

parent knowledge about early literacy)		
d. Families having access to books	5	24
e. Educators/providers integrated books and activities into curricula	4	14
f. Supplemental activities good (The Book Worm, pamphlets, etc.)	3	3
g. Families checked out/returned independently	2	0
h. Lost/damaged books replaced	2	2
i. Program taught the importance of reading	2	3
j. Program focused on children's interests	2	0
k. Regular or significant numbers of parents checking out bags (e.g., regular group of mothers checking out bags)	2	6
l. Large variety of books (e.g., variety of topics, high quality books going into home)	2	10
m. Program provided connection between home and school (e.g., children learned different things, talked about books read at home)	2	2
n. Parents love the program/appreciate it/pleased with it/enjoy it	1	8
o. Program is easy to use	1	3
p. Older siblings can read books to younger	1	1
q. Adult ELL's used books for language acquisition while also being able to read to their children in Spanish.	1	5
r. Learning responsibility for book care	1	6
s. Encourage families to utilize public library	1	1
t. Library partnership strengthened	0	3
u. Themed packets	0	2
v. Promoted early literacy skills development (e.g., letter recognition, rhyming, site words)	0	8
w. All of these mentioned once during Wave II: children listen to more sophisticated literature, alphabet magnets were helpful	1	N/A
x. All of these mentioned once during Wave III: no successes, books are Accelerated Reader ready, improvements in case management, parents connecting with each other and sharing	N/A	1

Children's excitement was the most common comment during both waves. Children loved the books and were excited to check them out. Checking out the bags made the children feel important and grown up since they were like older children taking books home from school. Another common and important comment was that more reading in the home occurred as a consequence of the program. And similarly, comments were made about parents taking literacy into the home because of the program which increased parent involvement in their child's learning. Families having access to books was also a common success. One item from the list that was not mentioned very often, Learning responsibility for book care, needs to be highlighted. Respondents said that children were learning how to be good stewards of books because of the program. This is an important point when placed within the context of *Books to Go* and another *Read to Me* program. For the past three years, the *Elementary School Library Access to Books* program has been operating. This program provides incentives to public elementary school libraries throughout Idaho to allow preschoolers through 2<sup>nd</sup> graders to check out multiple books each week from the school library. It was found through previous research that many Idaho public schools were not allowing young students to check out books to take

home or were severely restricting the number of books that could be checked out. The program evaluation for the *School Library Access* program revealed that some elementary school librarians and primary grade teachers were concerned that young children would not know how to properly take care of the books and were thus concerned about damage and loss. Thus, if *Books to Go* teaches children before they arrive at public school how to check books in and out and how to properly care for them, then those public school librarians and teachers who expressed concerns will have less cause to do so. It is important to underscore that only a few *BTG* partners mentioned this, but in the future it might be something that the IC/L could emphasize. When all of the many successes discussed and listed above are taken together, a very positive profile emerges of the *Books to Go* program. Parents liked the program because of its convenience and the wide variety of books. Center staff liked the program because the children became excited about books and reading, and parents/caregivers became involved and read and talked more with their children as a consequence.

As a follow-up to the listing of successes, respondents were asked “Why do you think these successes occurred? Please explain.” Wave II respondents listed only access to books and convenience more than once with access being mentioned four times and convenience mentioned twice. When talking about access, respondents mentioned such things as parents not visiting the library so having the books so readily available made it easy for them to check books out and parents who live outside library district boundaries don’t have library cards and must pay to check books out, if they do visit the library. All the other reasons follow:

- Students’ love of reading grew with each bag checked out,
- Parents/families are very involved in school so it was natural for them to adopt the program,
- Parents/children interested in reading,
- Reminded parents of importance of reading,
- Exposure to wide variety of books, and
- Children were aware of the books so were eager to check them out and use them.

Wave III respondents, however, listed many more reasons. Sixty-four of 78 respondents provided one or more. Table 22 provides them in thematic form and the frequencies with which they occurred.

Table 22: Open-ended question asking about why Books to Go program successes occurred: Wave III only

Comment	Wave III
a. Ease and convenience of program for parents and teachers	24
b. Books (fun, thematic approach, variety of books and themes, quality, age appropriate, high interest to children, excited children about books)	23
c. Access to books	18
d. Parents recognized need to strengthen child’s literacy skills (buy in)	8
e. Provided opportunity for parents to read to their children	6
f. Activities (fun, easy, wide variety)	6
g. Children like checking out books (feel proud, like bags)	3
h. Regular reminders to parents about program	2
i. Placed tub in location easy for parents to access—children’s eye level	1

j. Teacher introduction of BTG to parents and children	1
k. Greater communication between library and Head Start	1
l. Children have greater control (choice, availability)	1

No matter whether respondents were from Wave II or III, they underscored the importance of convenience and access to a sizable number of high-quality, highly engaging books as key components of successful *BTG* implementation.

The second open-ended question was “What barriers or problems did you experience from participating in the *Books to Go* program?” Twenty-one Wave II sites responded to this question and 65 Wave III sites did so. Table 23 shows a thematic summary of the comments along with their frequency.

Table 23: Open-ended question asking about *Books to Go* program barriers/problems: Summary and frequencies of responses

Comment	Wave II	Wave III
a. Book returns (e.g., loss, people moving away, slow)	8	20
b. Implementing program (e.g., time, tracking books, time to manage inventory, need to simplify check out sheet, someone to check out books, parents wanted bags more than once each week)	6	26
c. Parents not completing paperwork, mostly surveys	5	8
d. Books matched to audience (e.g., too few Spanish books, need Spanish/English books, books too old for children—need board books)	3	2
e. Parents’ finding time to read	2	2
f. Parents not allowing checkouts (fear of loss/damage, don’t need one more thing to be responsible for)	2	3
g. Lack of parent interest—didn’t see importance of program	2	11
h. Child receiving books from multiple locations—gets confusing	2	2
i. Books same as last year so returning families need different books	1	0
j. Preschool already using program so need different books	1	0
k. Lack of program development with parents (e.g., didn’t develop program with parents of bused children, failed to provide reminders, forgot to offer books)	1	8
l. Too many books home at once	1	0
m. Lack of space to display books (books arrive in storage tubs)	0	5
n. Staffing (e.g., new staff training, teacher on leave)	0	2
o. Don’t get to keep books	0	1
p. Parents don’t come into center—students are bused	0	2
q. No barriers	4	23

Loss, damage, and slow return of books were mentioned the most; however, loss does not appear to be a significant problem. Please recall that the ICfL replaces all damaged and lost *Books to Go* books free of charge. In order to receive replacements, partnering libraries simply put in requests

for the specific titles and the ICfL quickly ships them. According to ICfL data, during Waves I and II, out of a total of 44,307 books shipped in tubs, only 1,467 books were replaced. This represents a loss/damage rate of 3.3%. This is quite low considering the tubs were placed in a variety of early childhood education and care centers and oftentimes operated strictly on the honor system where parents/caregivers checked books in and out for their children. But even though the actual loss rate doesn't appear to be a problem, about a third of respondents during Wave III mentioned this issue, so in future library trainings, the ICfL might consider going into greater depth and detail about the issue of loss and damage. Not to present ideas about how to minimize them, but instead to present ideas for how to put their partners at ease about them. Another often mentioned group of barriers involved variables associated with implementing the program such as managing the inventory of books or finding time for check outs. Again, about a third of respondents mentioned these problems so the ICfL might consider addressing this in future trainings by showing libraries how others have efficiently and successfully managed the program. Parents were mentioned a number of times, but even when these comments are aggregated they do not appear to be a significant problem. And finally, one interesting but relatively minor barrier about lack of space to display the books needs to be discussed. These respondents said they lacked space to house and/or display the books. Some it seems thought that the tub was for travel and storage and the books were to be removed from the tub and displayed in the early childhood center. They said that they did not have space for this. Another respondent said that her daycare is in her home and she tires of having the large tub sitting in her living space. The issue of space was only mentioned five times, but it reveals a lack of understanding on the part of some of these respondents about how the program was to operate in their center. When looking across all of the barriers none appear to be pervasive and troubling. But the ICfL might consider providing enhanced training in some of these areas since such training would probably not be too time or resource intensive. For example, providing successful ideas for how to engage parents with the program, fostering a discussion about book loss so that the problem is put into proper perspective, and reducing and simplifying the paperwork associated with the program might be excellent places to start. The lack of pervasive barriers is a very positive finding given that this was an all-volunteer program coordinated by a host of public libraries. To have so few barriers and problems shows the quality of the materials, organization, and communication from the ICfL down through the chain of libraries and partners.

As a follow-up to the listing of barriers, respondents were asked, "What is needed to avoid or overcome these barriers and problems? Please explain." Not a lot of Wave II respondents provided responses to this question, but 49 Wave III respondents did so. On the whole, Wave II respondents mentioned things like the following. None of these occurred more than twice:

- Fewer books going home at one time,
- Persistence on the part of teachers/caregivers,
- Reduce the paper work for teachers/caregivers and parents,
- Need multiple sets of books for parents who use the program more than one year,
- Teach parents about the importance of reading,
- Improve tracking system for bags, and
- More board books.

Wave III respondents provided much greater detail about how to overcome barriers. Table 24 provides a thematic listing of these along with their frequencies of occurrence.

Table 24: Open-ended question asking about how to overcome barriers to Books to Go program implementation: Wave III summary and frequencies

Comment	Wave III
a. Partner behaviors needing to change/improve (e.g., organization, planning, parent communication, parent education about program, reminders to parents, make program routine)	20
b. Less paper work including no Quick Surveys	2
c. All mentioned once: more space, time, rewards when child completes a book set, more Spanish bags, separate bags by age, get parents to try the program once, don't know how to overcome barriers, don't see parents on daily basis, additional book bins to handle volume	9
d. No barriers encountered or no response	15

Most of the ways mentioned to overcome barriers revolved around behaviors the partners recognized that they needed to change. Partners mentioned needing to have better organization, better parent communication including regular reminders to check books out, better parent education about the program, and working more to make the program a regular part of the school or center routine. These are all laudable goals but the partners should not be solely responsible for all of them. If *BTG* is to be successful in a wide variety of settings, then some of these partner behaviors will have to be mitigated either by the sponsoring libraries or by the way the program itself is structured to operate. To expect the partners to impose better organization on the program such as devising better check out sheets or to expect them to do extensive program promotion or parent education is not feasible in many partnering sites. Either the partners don't have the time to do these things or they don't have the interest or knowledge to do so. In the future, as *BTG* continues to evolve, a focus of these efforts might be to make the program more independent of the particular partner characteristics that influence implementation. Since there were few barriers and suggestions for how to overcome them, the conclusion can be drawn that the *Books to Go* program is well-received by partners. This is a positive finding especially since this program requires extended coordination by local libraries (over the span of an academic year, at least) and sustained promotion of the program by partners to their parents/caregivers so materials are consistently used over time.

Another open-ended question asked, "What suggestions do you have for improvements to *Books to Go* (e.g., additional resources, further training, etc.)?" Eighteen Wave II respondents wrote comments and 50 Wave III did so. Table 25 presents a summary of the comments and the frequencies with which they occurred by wave.

Table 25: Open-ended question asking for suggested improvements to *Books to Go*: Summary of responses and frequencies by wave (Wave II: n=18 respondents; Wave III: n=50)

Comment	Wave II	Wave III
a. Books (e.g., more bags; more Spanish books; books for older ages; board books; books that teach colors, shapes, numbers, easy words for adults to read/learn with child; puppets with books; more books per bag; sturdier bags; more nonfiction; different books each year; season and holiday books; e books or online books; add more themes)	7	12
b. Compliments and thanks (e.g. great program; informative and well-organized materials and notebook containing forms and instructions; easy to implement; high-quality books; appreciative for having opportunity)	4	11
c. No suggestions	3	17
d. Ways to get parents involved	2	0
e. Less paperwork and less feedback required	1	1
f. Different color for bilingual bags	1	0
g. Mark bags by teacher to reduce confusion (e.g., on bus or with other classes and programs)	1	0
h. Rewards (e.g., punch card system to earn coupons for books—speed up return of bags; treats/rewards for completing bags)	1	2
i. Need special place to display books (e.g., children’s eye level shelf or rack )	0	5
j. Incorporate technology into management system (e.g., web site to download paper work; barcoded materials)	0	2
k. Educational and promotional materials (e.g., monthly <i>BTG</i> newsletter; informational handout for parents)	0	3
l. Management system (e.g., hooks and bulletin boards for check out sheets; individualized check out sheets for families; storage container for parent surveys)	0	4
m. Better knowledge of what is in each bag so can better lend books based on individual interests.	0	1

All of the suggestions were excellent and might be considered by the IC/L as they work to improve the program. Receiving compliments within the context of a question asking for improvements shows the overall positive regard partners had for the program and attests to its success. Management suggestions are important since this program requires quite a lot of it at the end user level. Anything that can be done to streamline the program such as using technology to monitor check outs would be beneficial. And the suggestions about displaying the books in more inviting and engaging ways instead of in large plastic tubs that usually sit on the floor make a lot of sense. Perhaps if this were to occur more parents would check books out and continue to do so. But such displays would take more room, and has been previously discussed a few partners mentioned that they did not have room in their centers for even the tubs.

Another open-ended question asked, “Please include one anecdote that is the consequence of *Books to Go* for a specific child or family (no names needed – but please be specific). Fourteen Wave II respondents provided anecdotes and 51 Wave III did so. Not all of them will be listed here but instead a representative sample beginning with positive anecdotes:

- A child that was being read to for the first time didn't want to bring back the books. He fell in love with them!
- One family I work with only had one book for their child, he loved that book, but it was getting very tattered. By providing the books to go, I was able to introduce him to additional books and he is always very excited to see me come to the house with a new blue bag with new books. His language has improved significantly since I started bringing the books to our home visits.
- I have one male child that cannot stand to read or worse, sit still. Once I found a theme he was really interested in, I started reading the books without obligating him to sit and listen to them. But eventually, he became interested in the stories and then sat to look at the pictures. I sent that themed book bag home for the weekend and the boy sat and listened as both of his parents read to him! He now enjoys to choose his own themed bag to take home on the weekends.
- I have a handful of ELL students who reading is not a priority for at home. The parents don't read and feel like it is necessary or important to read at home. These homes simply don't have books in them. Through this program, I had one child in particular that came to love books, even just the material nature of having/holding a book. He was able to take them home, practice, and through doing so, I believe his parents are beginning to see the value in reading, not just for their child but for themselves.
- "We had a little girl from Russia who was learning English. Her father would help her pick a book bag almost daily! By the end of the school year her English had greatly improved. Parents and staff attributed much of the success to *Books To Go*. \*We are missing book bags #3, #4, and #23 if replacements are possible. Thank you!"
- "Our children blossomed from taking the responsibility of taking a bag home and carrying it back. They took this foundation for checking out books from a library. They are taking this more serious than we thought they would. Two parents reported using the books to help an older sibling read and exposing a younger sibling to reading."
- "Look teacher, I brought my bag of books back and I'm getting more!"
- "I really hope I get a pirate book next!"

There were a few less positive anecdotes but nothing critical of the program itself but instead things that happened during the course of implementation. Both of these are from Wave II. No comments like these occurred in Wave III responses:

- "We put it out in our newsletter that if they stayed for ½ hour after picking their kids up they would get 1 day of free daycare. Only 2 parents stayed for that incentive."
- "One mom didn't like the books about different cultures, she stopped checking out."

Overall the anecdotes corroborate what has been said about the program thus far in this report. It is well-received by parents/caregivers and library partners and it has the potential to significantly impact early literacy in the home.

The final question on the survey asked for "Additional Comments." Ten Wave II respondents provided these and 29 Wave III did so. A representative sample of them follows:

- This Books to Go Program works wonderfully with our Preschool. Students and parents alike are excited about choosing the theme of the books to take home. Some of the

themes fit in with my Houghton Mifflin curriculum, so that is good, too. This program puts books in the hands of students who might not otherwise get them.

- Think this is a GREAT program. Especially for the preschool age parents. Maybe they haven't taken advantage of the library yet....they realize that their preschooler is at a perfect age for the library!
- I have been teaching Preschool for over twenty years and have always sent home Book Buddy Bags, with four books in them to be read on our days out of school each week. But these books to go bags that are on only one subject, already chosen and bagged have saved me lots of time and money that I can spend on other areas of our curriculum. I feel that our program has improved by this help alone. Thank you!
- Parents additionally said, Great books! Not one book we didn't like. Read them over and over.
- Keep it going even if it only impacts one kid it's worth it. It was organized well and the material was easy. We copied many things and handed those out to parents. It was fantastic.
- Thanks!
- Thank you! We love it. P.S It reaches people who don't have time to go to the library.
- A student whose father is raising her on his own really enjoyed having books to read at home!
- A great program!
- We love the program!
- This is a really great idea! Thank you.
- Families that did take books home were exposed to more opportunities to read to their children.
- This family is able to take books home from us instead of having to travel to library! Family has no car!

All but one of the comments were quite positive and most expressed appreciation for the program. The one comment that wasn't overtly positive and/or appreciative follows: "Not for lack of trying or training, this just doesn't really work for us. The books could be getting more traction elsewhere. These kids are too young to understand they can't keep books and parents see it as a struggle to wrestle them back from them once they have fallen in love with a book." This respondent saw the program as not being effective for the children and parents, but the respondent failed to see the power and importance of children falling in love with books to the point where they don't want to return them. No doubt, *Books to Go* was not well-received by this particular partner, but the comment underscores the potential of the program to positively impact children and families.

In conclusion, results from the partner surveys show quite clearly that most partners find the *BTG* program beneficial for them and for the children they are responsible for and their families. The report now turns to a presentation of results from the end-of-year surveys completed by participating libraries.

**Books to Go End-of-Program Library Surveys: Analysis of Results**

Libraries submitted final reports describing their experiences with the program. For Wave II, 31 of 65 participating libraries submitted reports. For Wave III, 48 of 80 did so. For both waves, this represents 50-60% of the participating libraries so the results provided in this section may or may not be representative of all of the libraries that participated.

Libraries were asked to list all of their partner sites and provide information about them. Sixty partners were listed during Wave II and 77 partners during Wave III. For Wave II, this is 41% of the 176 total partners that were reported by all of the participating libraries. For Wave III, this is 36% of the 216 total partners that were reported by all of the participating libraries. Table 26 provides a breakdown of the type of partners by wave. Wave I is included also to show shifts in type of partner sites, if any occurred, over time.

Table 26: Type of partner site by wave

Wave	Head Start/Even Start	School District Developmental Preschool	Private Daycare	Private Preschool	Other
I (n=28)*	32 (14)**	16 (7)	23 (10)	23 (10)	7 (3)
II (n=31)	33 (20)	22 (13)	20 (12)	20 (12)	5 (3)
III (n=48)	27 (21)	16 (12)	26 (20)	25 (19)	6 (5)

\* n is the number of respondents for this item on the survey.

\*\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

Type of partner site did not vary much across the waves with Head Start/Even Starts being the most common followed by private daycares and preschools. For those who listed other, these included charter schools, kindergartens, Early Head Start, Migrant Head Start, and a domestic abuse shelter preschool.

Libraries were asked whether the partner was an existing partner prior to the start of *BTG* or was a new partner recruited for *BTG*. During Wave I, of the 44 partner sites 20 had been previous partners with their library and 24 were new partners. During Wave II, of the 60 partners, 44 had been previous partners and 16 were new. For Wave III, of 77 partners 60 were existing and 17 were new. Having the *Books to Go* program generate so many new partners is a wonderful outcome. Not only does *Books to Go* promote early literacy but it also facilitates local libraries’ ongoing efforts to build extensive networks of partners of all types in their service areas.

Approximate numbers of children served at each of the partner sites were provided. Twenty-eight Wave II libraries provided information. A total of 2,397 children were served. Forty Wave III libraries provided counts that totaled 2,930 children. The large numbers of children served during each wave of the program attests to the success of the ICfL’s efforts to continuously recruit new libraries while retaining the participation of those who signed on earlier. But it was not just the efforts of the ICfL that were important in this. The libraries themselves obviously worked very hard and very successfully to retain existing partners and recruit new ones. Having thousands of Idaho’s young children exposed to the program is an important, positive outcome. Additionally, having so many young children in Idaho be reached by just one ICfL program underscores the significant size and reach of *BTG*.

Respondents were asked to estimate “How many hours per month on average did you spend over the course of the project devoted to it?” This was an open-ended question where

respondents simply wrote in their estimates. Table 27 shows the frequency distribution of responses by wave.

Table 27: Frequencies of average hours spent per month by wave (Wave I: n=22; Wave II: n=28; Wave III: n=37)\*

Wave	0 hrs.	.25-.33	.5-.75	1.0	1.5	2.0	3.0	4.0	5.0	>5.0
<b>I</b>	4 (1)**	4 (1)	5 (1)	36 (8)	23 (5)	18 (4)	0 (0)	5 (1)	5 (1)	0 (0)
<b>II</b>	17 (5)	7 (2)	24 (7)	28 (8)	3 (1)	7 (2)	7 (2)	0 (0)	7 (2)	0 (0)
<b>III</b>	8 (3)	5 (2)	8 (3)	41 (15)	0 (0)	16 (6)	3 (1)	8 (3)	3 (1)	8 (3)

\* Number of libraries providing information

\*\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

For all waves the most common amount of time spent per month was one hour. Additionally, for all waves, 62-82% of libraries fell within .5 to 2.0 hours per month. This is a positive finding since librarians are busy with all of their regular duties and oftentimes don't have spare time to devote to new programs like *BTG*. It is thus important to have evidence that the program does not overly burden librarians. Also positive is the relatively low number of libraries reporting three or more hours per month. Ten percent did so during Wave I, 14% during Wave II, and during Wave III a slightly higher number did, 22%. Having, however, 4-17% of libraries report spending no time on *BTG* is not a positive finding. The *BTG* program doesn't require a lot of ongoing attention from libraries but it does require some on a regular basis. Libraries should visit their partner sites probably at least once a month to check on the status of the collection (e.g., missing books, damaged books, books in wrong bag, volume of check outs, etc.) and to maintain a visible presence with their partners. Thus, all libraries should report at least some time each month spent on the program. In the future when recruiting new libraries and librarians to participate in the program, the amount of time the program requires each month should be clearly articulated so everyone knows the demands of the program. Given the depth of experience accumulated over the three waves, solid evidence exists for how much time the program requires.

Libraries were also asked to rate whether this amount of work was too much or just right. During Wave III, 39 respondents provided this information and all but one person reported the amount of time being just right. During Wave II, 30 of 31 provided this information and all said that the amount of time each month was just right. This is identical to the Wave I respondents who also all said that the amount of time was just right. Thus, only one person said that *BTG* was too much work over three waves of the program. This is a very positive finding since librarians are already quite busy and if *BTG* took too much time it would be hard to implement at the library level.

Libraries were also asked "How many books were lost over the course of the project?" and "How many books were damaged over the course of the project?" Table 28 shows the number of libraries reporting various levels of lost or damaged books by wave.

Table 28: Number of libraries reporting lost or damaged books by number of books and wave (Wave I: n=22; Wave II: n=30; Wave III: n=39\*)

Wave	Books	0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-29	>30	Don't Know
I	Lost	59(13)**	18 (4)	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)	0 (0)	4 (1)	4 (1)
	Damaged	68 (15)	23 (5)	5 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (1)
II	Lost	17 (5)	20 (6)	7 (2)	14 (4)	3 (1)	3 (1)	3 (1)	33 (10)
	Damaged	50 (15)	14 (4)	0 (0)	3 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	33 (10)
III	Lost	36 (14)	18 (7)	10 (4)	10 (4)	8 (3)	0 (0)	5 (2)	13 (5)
	Damaged	46 (18)	26 (10)	8 (3)	5 (2)	2 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	13 (5)

\* Number of libraries providing information

\*\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

Lost or damaged books are important issues for libraries, their partners, and the parents/caregivers who check out the books since participants at all levels are usually reluctant to participate in a program where there is high loss or damage. Thus, having a large number of libraries report no loss or damage or minimal loss or damage across all waves of the program is a positive finding that supports the assertion that programs like *BTG* can be widely implemented while maintaining reasonable levels of loss or damage. Eighty-two percent of Wave I respondents had 0-10 lost books, and 44% of Wave II respondents and 63% of Wave III respondents experienced this low level of loss. Some of the drop between the first wave and the subsequent waves might be attributable to the longer span of time that the tubs of books were at partner sites during Waves II and III. Recall that Waves II and III were implemented over entire academic years whereas Wave I was roughly half an academic year. There is one area of concern that needs to be addressed and that is the larger number of respondents who did not know their loss or damage rates during Waves II and III. This could be attributable to a variety of things such as the person completing the survey was not directly responsible for the *BTG* program and thus did not have the information or it could be an indicator that libraries did not spend enough time at their partner sites to know these rates. In the future, IC/L trainings might include estimates for how much time libraries should spend on a monthly basis monitoring the collections so that all respondents know the loss and damage rates at all of their sites. Additional evidence for low loss and damage rates comes from aggregate statistics for all library participants, not just those that submitted final reports. Approximately 42,166 books were distributed during the three waves of the program and about 3,200 have been replaced. That represents a 7.6% replacement rate, underscoring that loss and damage were not significant issues during the program. This is an important finding because the program is completely driven by an honor system so there is significant potential for such problems.

As was mentioned above, libraries are constantly working on developing new partnerships and expanding the activities they do with their current ones. Thus respondents were asked “What **new** activities did you do with your partner(s) as a result of *Books to Go*? Please check all that apply.” Table 29 provides results by wave.

Table 29: Frequency of new activities with partner sites by wave (Wave I: n=22; Wave II: n=31 Wave III: n=48\*)

Wave	Storytimes	Deposit Collections	My First Books	Library Visits	Other
<b>I</b>	59 (13)**	32 (7)	32 (7)	28 (9)	28 (9)
<b>II</b>	35 (11)	29 (9)	19 (6)	13 (4)	29 (9)
<b>III</b>	46 (22)	25 (12)	19 (9)	31 (15)	21 (10)

\* Number of libraries providing information

\*\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

Storytimes were the most frequent across waves. Deposit collections and *My First Books* were also commonly mentioned. The other category was sizable in all waves. Respondents were asked to explain these responses. They included such things as the librarian presenting a literacy workshop for the site staff, sending library calendars to all families, math/science workshops, developing new relationships with teachers, and library card sign-ups. In summary, the data shows that the program stimulated many new activities with partners that had not occurred before. This is a positive and important finding since it shows additional evidence that the *Books to Go* program not only achieves its primary outcome of increasing access to books for young children but also has a number of positive corollary outcomes including stimulating new activities between libraries and their partners. The program achieves much return on investment.

Two final selected response items were asked: “Please rate the quality of the working relationship you had with your partners.” and “Please rate your overall experience with the *Books to Go* program.” Each of these used an excellent, good, neutral, poor scale. Table 30 shows results from the two questions by wave.

Table 30: Ratings of working relationship and overall experience by wave

Wave	Question	Excellent	Good	Neutral	Poor
<b>I</b> (n=22)*	a. Working Relationship	55 (12)**	36 (8)	9 (2)	0 (0)
	b. Overall Experience	50 (11)	36 (8)	9 (2)	5 (1)
<b>II</b> (n=30)	a. Working Relationship	60 (18)	23 (7)	10 (3)	7 (2)
	b. Overall Experience	43 (13)	40 (12)	17 (5)	0 (0)
<b>III</b> (a: n=39; b: n=38)	a. Working Relationship	54 (21)	33 (13)	13 (5)	0 (0)
	b. Overall Experience	52 (20)	24 (9)	24 (9)	0 (0)

\* Number of libraries providing information

\*\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

During each wave, over half of the respondents rated their working relationships as excellent. The majority of the remaining responses were good, and only a few people rated their relationships as neutral or poor. The same pattern held for respondents’ ratings of their overall experience. Over 80% of responses were excellent or good and few rated their experience as neutral or poor. These, again, are positive findings for the *Books to Go* program because the questions get to the heart of sustainability. If libraries report poor working relationships with

their partners and poor overall experiences with the program, then sustainability will be difficult, but just the opposite occurred in all but a few instances.

The report asked a number of different open-ended response questions. The first being ‘How did participating in *Books to Go* benefit your library and community?’ Table 31 provides frequencies of responses by theme for each wave.

Table 31: Benefits to library and community by category and wave (Wave I: n=22; Wave II: n=31; Wave III: n=39\*)

Response Category	Frequency**		
	Wave I	Wave II	Wave III
a. Increased access to books	59 (13)	68 (21)	59 (23)
b. Increased library’s ability to serve community	50 (11)	29 (9)	38 (15)
c. Increased library patronage	14 (3)	19 (6)	18 (7)
d. Increased library card applications	14 (3)	6 (2)	5 (2)
e. Other	27 (6)	39 (12)	21 (8)

\* Number of libraries providing information

\*\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

Providing increased access to books was the most common comment made across the waves. The second most common comment was *Books to Go* increased the libraries’ abilities to serve their communities. Comments in this category included such things as reaching underserved populations, increased awareness of the library and its services, and experiencing increased exposure in their service areas because of the program. Other responses in this category mentioned that the program had helped the library strengthen relationships with their partners, created goodwill, and some said the program helped their English language learner families improve their English. Importantly, during all waves respondents mentioned increased library patronage and increased library card applications as benefits. Although the number of respondents reporting these benefits is not large, the findings are promising and positive outcomes for the program. And finally, the other category contained a variety of responses as would be expected. These included such things as comments about parents and children enjoying the program and books, reading becoming a priority at partner sites, the children enjoying checking bags out and taking them home, positive teacher responses, increased reading to children, and increased parent awareness and knowledge of early literacy skills. All of which are additional positive benefits from the program.

Respondents were asked about successes and barriers they experienced as a consequence of participating in the *Books to Go* program. Successes will be discussed first followed by barriers. Table 32 shows them collapsed into thematic categories with the number of successes that fell into each category by wave. Respondents were also asked why they thought these successes occurred. The reasons will be discussed within the context of the discussion of the successes themselves.

Table 32: Library successes by category and wave (Wave I: n=21; Wave II: n=30; Wave III: n=37\*)

Response Category	Frequency**		
	Wave I	Wave II	Wave III
a. Partner & community relationships	62 (13)	27 (8)	49 (18)
b. Happy parents/caregivers, children, & teachers	57 (12)	37 (11)	35 (13)
c. Exposure & access (e.g., number & quality of books, 6 skills, underserved, activities associated with books)	33 (7)	47 (14)	57 (21)
d. Increased reading by parents/caregivers	24 (5)	37 (11)	22 (8)
e. Library (e.g., increased visits, parent interest, parent awareness of resources, new partners, children learned how to use library)	14 (3)	37 (11)	51 (19)
f. High utilization of program	19 (4)	7 (2)	5 (2)
g. User friendly program	10 (2)	7 (2)	14 (5)
h. Partners used books in their curricula and instruction	5 (1)	3 (1)	5 (2)
i. Parents/children talked about <i>BTG</i> when visiting library	5 (1)	7 (2)	5 (2)
j. Other	0 (0)	27 (8)	22 (8)

\* Number of libraries providing information

\*\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

Response categories a through e were all quite common successes although percentages varied from wave-to-wave. As has been previously shown, the *Books to Go* program helped libraries deepen and expand their community partnerships via the relationships that were developed and the interactions that occurred around the program. All of which resulted in increased community presence by the libraries. Another common success was simply having happy people who were involved in the program. This stemmed from a host of factors including ease of use, availability of high-quality materials, and partner, parent, and children enthusiasm for the program. An additional and highly important success was increased reading in the home that also included the amount and quality of interactions that occurred in the family around books and reading. And libraries reported a variety of other benefits including children becoming aware of the library and how it operates, new children and families coming to the library, children recognizing librarians, and issuing library card applications. The remaining successes listed in the table were not mentioned that often but when taken together reveal a program that was very well received by participants and produced a wide variety of important successes. And finally, the other category emerged from the Wave II data. This category was a repository for successes that didn't fit well in the other categories. These included such things as teachers issuing reading certificates to the children, assertions that the program would probably help children to like to read, and the inclusion of bilingual books. Over the course of the three waves of the program, hundreds of successes were listed. Taken together they present a convincing body of evidence for the success of this program.

It is important to know specifically why these successes occurred so that future participants can be given this information so that their chances for success are enhanced. To that end, libraries were asked "Why do you think these successes occurred? Please explain." Table 33 provides the results by wave.

Table 33: Reasons for library successes by category and wave (Wave I: n=21; Wave II: n=30; Wave III: n=37\*)

Response Category	Frequency**		
	Wave I	Wave II	Wave III
a. Easy to implement	29 (6)	10 (3)	14 (5)
b. Convenient for parents/caregivers & no fear of loss/damage	24 (5)	27 (8)	27 (10)
c. Ready access to books	29 (6)	37 (11)	24 (9)
d. Teachers' positive attitudes and promotion of program	24 (5)	20 (6)	14 (5)
e. Partners' active support (e.g., recognized potential of program to meet needs)	19 (4)	27 (8)	19 (7)
f. Excellent book selection	10 (2)	10 (3)	8 (3)
g. Families enjoyed the books	5 (1)	7 (2)	5 (2)
h. Increased library presence (e.g., tubs are physical presence of library at partner site, fostered discussion of other library programs with partners, partners promoted library, familiarized children with library procedures)	0 (0)	20 (6)	16 (6)
i. Bookworm/activities	0 (0)	7 (2)	3 (1)
j. BTG was catalyst to promote successful outreach	0 (0)	0 (0)	14 (5)
k. Library's enthusiasm for program	0 (0)	0 (0)	11 (4)

\* Number of libraries providing information

\*\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

A number of reasons were provided for the successes including ease of implementation, convenience for parents/caregivers, and access to high quality, age-appropriate books. Other important reasons were teachers' and caregivers' positive attitudes about and promotion of the program and partners' active support. Two categories emerged during Wave II: (1) increased library presence at partner sites lead to greater awareness of and promotion of library programs and services and (2) the *Bookworm* was mentioned as an asset. All in all, the reasons for success coalesced around two things. First, high-quality books were conveniently available to partners and parents/caregivers; and, second, people saw value in the program and worked together to make it a success.

Barriers to success were also asked about on the survey. Table 34 shows responses grouped by category and wave.

Table 34: Library barriers by category and wave (Wave I: n=22; Wave II: n=30; Wave III: n=37\*)

Response Category	Frequency**		
	Wave I	Wave II	Wave III
a. Families (e.g., returning surveys, weak participation, slow return of bags)	27 (6)	33 (10)	35 (13)
b. Partner participation (e.g., too busy, didn't send bags home, called for tubs to be picked up, not sending surveys, not promoting program, low interest)	9 (2)	60 (18)	38 (14)
c. Communication problems with partners or parents/caregivers	18 (4)	20 (6)	30 (11)
d. Time constraints/limited resources at library (e.g., low staff	14 (3)	13 (4)	27 (10)

involvement, limited outreach time)			
e. Fear of loss or damage (Note: Occurred with both partners and parents.)	9 (2)	13 (4)	3 (1)
f. Loss/damage problems	9 (2)	10 (3)	13 (5)
g. Logistics with program (e.g., not enough bags in tub for all children to check out, children attending more than one site, confusion between <i>My First Books</i> and <i>BTG</i> )	9 (2)	10 (3)	13 (5)
h. Teacher/staff turnover (e.g., problems training new staff)	9 (2)	3 (1)	16 (6)
i. School issues (e.g., late start in year, no librarian to check out bags, ended up partnering with a school did not want to partner with)	9 (2)	3 (1)	0 (0)
j. Language issues (e.g., more Spanish/bilingual books, need surveys in Spanish)	9 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)
k. None	32 (7)	27 (8)	19 (7)

\* Number of libraries providing information

\*\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

Barriers to success are important variables to explore since they can be factors that keep a program from attaining maximum effect, being sustained, or growing in the future. Families appeared to be one of the more common barriers with roughly a third of libraries mentioning this during each wave. A third might appear to be too many and thus this issue needs to be addressed in the future, but many of the mentions in this category revolved around getting families to return surveys. All of the surveys involved in *BTG* were the result of the program evaluation. Thus, once the program evaluation ends, there will no longer be the requirement for surveys and consequently most of the mentions associated with families will disappear. But libraries did report families not wanting to participate or doing so only half-heartedly. Additionally, libraries reported that some families were slow to return book bags even after notes were sent home. Even though these problems did not occur often, they do represent significant barriers to the program's success. In the future, the IC/L might consider providing tips and resources to libraries and their partners about how to motivate families to actively participate since families are an integral part of *BTG* and when they don't participate children do not have access to books. The second most common barrier mentioned was partner participation. Libraries reported partners not being interested in the program, being too busy to implement the program, and not promoting the program, among other things. The reasons for why some partners were not engaged are not known, but both Wave II and Wave III resulted in sizable increases in the number of participating libraries and the number of participating partners. It's possible that as the program scaled up partners were not as carefully chosen by participating libraries which may have increased the likelihood of getting some partners who really weren't all that interested or motivated. In the future, a process should be put in place to screen both libraries and their partners for interest in the program and capacity to deliver the program. That will increase the potential to maximize effects of limited resources while maintaining consistent program quality and high levels of success. The remaining barriers were not mentioned often. Communication with libraries and parents was mentioned a bit more than the others but it still remains a minimal barrier. Some of the others are also interesting to note because they were not mentioned more often. For example, loss and damage could have been significant problems with an all volunteer and honor system program like *BTG*, but neither were. And logistics problems with a program

the size and scope of *BTG* could have been significant barriers to success, but once again they were not. The small number of logistical problems attests to the ICfL’s capacity to initiate, scale, and sustain complex programs throughout the State of Idaho. Hundreds of tubs containing thousands of books with all the attendant paper work for checking the books in and out, etc. were shipped all over Idaho with hardly a glitch. And finally, having 20-30% of libraries report no barriers is further evidence for the success of this program. In summary, barriers of any sort no matter how often they are mentioned should be taken seriously, but when taken in aggregate the barriers reported here do not represent significant problems with the *Books to Go* program. Instead they appear to be normal “bumps in the road” one would expect to encounter when many people across a large geographic area are working together to implement a program that by its nature presents logistical challenges at a number of levels. Some of the barriers can be addressed by the ICfL in future waves of the program by preparing libraries for the barriers they might encounter. Others can be addressed by the libraries themselves by selecting partners more carefully, only entering into program participation if resources are available, and by making sure lines of communication are opened and maintained from the start of their work with their partners.

Libraries were asked for ideas about how to avoid or overcome the barriers. Like the barriers themselves, a lengthy list was provided. Table 35 provides the suggestions by category and wave.

Table 35: Ways to avoid barriers by category and wave (Wave I: n=22; Wave II: n=30; Wave III: n=38\*)

Response Category	Frequency**		
	Wave I	Wave II	Wave III
a. Better and more communication	36 (8)	27 (8)	16 (6)
b. Promote program (e.g., signs: “Check me out,” demonstrate bags, parent sessions, open houses, family nights)	9 (2)	33 (10)	5 (2)
c. Regular monitoring	9 (2)	17 (5)	11 (4)
d. More training (partners, new hires, parents; more program organization (e.g., set deadlines for returns, incentives, regular check out schedules))	9 (2)	7 (2)	13 (5)
e. Get teacher/partner caregivers on board (e.g., help sites see benefits to children—this success will motivate them.)	5 (1)	7 (2)	8 (3)
f. Get children excited because they will pressure parents/caregivers	0 (0)	7 (2)	0 (0)
g. Conduct outreach at partner sites (e.g., leverage MFB and other programs; storytimes)	0 (0)	7 (2)	0 (0)
h. Stable teacher population	0 (0)	3 (1)	0 (0)
i. Reduce paperwork	0 (0)	3 (1)	5 (2)
j. More time and/or personnel	0 (0)	3 (1)	18 (7)
k. Start earlier in school year	9 (2)	0 (0)	3 (1)
l. Have surveys filled out at final parent meeting of the year;	5 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)
m. Patience	5 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)
n. More time to plan program—don’t add program after libraries have set their outreach programs for the year.	5 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)
o. Provide more Spanish/bilingual books.	9 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)

p. Color code bags by partner site so bags do not get mixed up when children participate at two sites.	5 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)
q. More effort from library	0	0	11 (4)
r. Don't know/not sure much can be done	9 (2)	13 (4)	18 (7)
s. None	32(7)	7 (2)	13 (5)

\* Number of libraries providing information

\*\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

Better and more communication were the most consistently mentioned suggestions across the waves. These suggestions were not directed at the ICfL's communication but instead were directed at the libraries themselves. Libraries emphasized the need for regular communication with partners and the need to communicate with parents so they understand the program and why reading to their child is important. All of the other categories were not mentioned that often, but when taken in aggregate represent a body of solid suggestions that the ICfL may want to incorporate into a tip sheet that is provided to future participating libraries.

Libraries were asked for suggestions for improvement. Table 36 provides a listing of these by category and wave.

Table 36: Suggestions for improvement by category and wave (Wave I: n=22; Wave II: n=30; Wave III: n=39\*)

Response Category	Frequency**		
	Wave I	Wave II	Wave III
a. Bags (e.g., need more than 30 bags, new set for year 2, put only two books in bag, include ECRR2 information, include dialogic reading information, more Spanish/bilingual books, more board books, clear tubs and bags, bookmarks, )	23 (5)	23 (7)	13 (5)
b. Training (i.e., partners, libraries, parents, sites doing both <i>MFB</i> and <i>BTG</i> need special training)	9 (2)	20 (6)	15 (6)
c. Increased contact/communication with partners (e.g., attend back to school night, attend teacher meeting, regular communication, collect stats monthly or quarterly to structure more contact, regular email reminders to partners)	0 (0)	17 (5)	8 (3)
d. Program organization (e.g., set up book inventory system at partner, set up system to track missing books, collect data before summer begins; provide book list for tub; sign up dates aren't clear)	5 (1)	7 (2)	0 (0)
e. Surveys/reports (e.g., fewer, make surveys available in Spanish)	5 (1)	3 (1)	15 (6)
f. Encourage all daycares to be Star Certified	0 (0)	3 (1)	0 (0)
g. <i>Books to Go</i> better for public school preschools. Have more effective programs for Head Starts and daycares.	0 (0)	3 (1)	0 (0)
h. Offer program during summer months at the library	5 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)
i. Run program through partners—don't involve libraries	5 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)
j. Great program, wonderful program, parents loved it, easy to use	18 (4)	33 (10)	26 (10)
k. Not sure	5 (1)	7 (2)	0 (0)
l. None	45 (10)	40 (12)	36 (14)

\* Number of libraries providing information

\*\* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

Bags garnered the most suggestions but this does not imply that they posed problems. On the contrary, they worked quite well and most suggestions were for more of them, more of a specific type of book, or for additional information to be included for parents/caregivers. Increased training was also mentioned as was increased contact between libraries and partners. Concerning training, a few libraries mentioned that when partners implement both *My First Books* and *Books to Go* they need special training in how to do so. The remaining suggestions were mentioned less often but many of them, although not all of them, provide excellent ideas for the program. In summary, no suggestion or type of suggestion emerged as overly important to respondents. Instead the suggested improvements provide a range of suggestions many of which are quite helpful and some of which were addressed during Wave II, namely surveys were available in Spanish, more bilingual/Spanish books were available, and board books were included in tubs. In the future, most of the other suggestions could be addressed also, but since they are quite eclectic and don't represent significant problems with the program, resources might be better applied elsewhere.

Anecdotes were also requested. Thirteen of 22 Wave I respondents, 21 of 30 Wave II, and 29 of 48 Wave III provided anecdotes. Representative anecdotes are provided below under descriptive categorical headings.

#### *BTG Fostered More Reading or Enjoyment of Reading:*

- We had a family visit the library who had never been here before. They were city residents and could get a card, but they didn't bother until they saw how much their son enjoyed bringing books home from his daycare!
- We had a family who came in together to get library cards for everyone in the family because the youngest child participated in the Books to Go program at daycare. This family has been living in the community for a few years but they never thought to come in and they were excited to see all we offer!
- One parent wrote that they read more as a family now thanks to BTG.
- While reading through the surveys, I noticed that several parents had filled them out. One mother talked about her son and how much he enjoyed these books. She wrote down how much extra time they spent reading and talking about the books. Another parent recorded on her survey that she was able to get her 9 year old to read the books with the targeted child, thus increasing family time. To me, that's the best part about this program: families are reading together!
- One of the partners related a story about one of the children who regularly used the program. When he would take a new bag home, he would round up all the siblings and pet to the couch and tell them that it was time for story time.
- A little boy was scared to ride the school bus alone for long periods of time and then he received his bag of books to read and now he looks forward to his long trips on the bus.
- I had a child that hated reading but after a couple book bags going home he got very into it and absolutely loved them.
- The youngest of 3 children began reading to the older siblings, because she enjoyed it so much and thought they needed to be reading more.

- I talked to a parent who thanked me for the program and told me that they were reading a larger genre of books than they ever had because of the *Books to Go* program. They loved the fact that the selections were grouped by theme, and felt that they had widened their horizons by using the program. Her child was in the developmental preschool.

*Convenience and Popularity with Parents/Caregivers:*

- I've heard from a couple of parents who have come to the library that they love the Books to Go program and that they are now reading even more at home because the books are so easily available.
- "Love that we can keep the books at home as long as we want to and get "fresh" books when we're ready." "Great Program! I would read them then it was fun to see him try and read it back. :)" "Love this program. He wants to read."
- Can we do it all summer! It is so easy for me [mother] to grab a few bags and go.....
- Shortly after I delivered the bins to our two preschool sites, a mother came into the library to find a copy of one of the books she had read to her son from *Books to Go*. She said he liked the book so much that she wanted to find it and check it out from the library (thus keeping it at home for four weeks rather than one), and she also wanted to see what other books this particular author had written. She was all smiles and full of praise for what she described as a WONDERFUL way to get books to read at home when picking up her son from preschool at the end of the day.
- One parent wrote in her survey that although she had always read books to her son since he was young, this program has helped her to be able to do this with greater convenience. She loved the fact that the books were right there for her son to take home for her to read. She said, "It's a library without the charges."

*Benefits to Library:*

- I see many of the families around the community. I get recognized as "The Library Lady" and the parents say, "Oh yeah, the lady who gives us the blue bags!"
- I take books to the parks in the bookwagon every week during the summer. One day, two girls shyly walked up to get a book. They whispered, "Do you remember us? We're Frank's kids." I looked into their eyes and saw the little faces of children whose daycare, Mary's Daycare (pseudonym), participates in the Books to Go Program. I could never forget these children! So I happily told them so and gave them books. They left happy and confident.
- I was overwhelmed to see the great big poster with a picture of the children looking through the bins and thanking me for bringing them. I have heard nothing but praise for this program.
- One family came and got a library card and came to summer reading program daily.
- I know of at least three families who began bringing their preschool-aged children into our library for story time during the summer when the children were not in preschool. One of these children recognized a title from the Books to Go bin at his school, and seemed so proud that he already knew that book! (And was perfectly OK with hearing it again.)

- One family specifically told me that they "discovered" the library as a result of having those wonderful book bags at their child's school.
- I talked to one parent who had never checked out nonfiction from the library for her child, who now does so on a regular basis.

*Benefits to Partner Sites:*

- At Little Ones Daycare (pseudonym), after the daycare provider reads a book, a few of the kids beg to be the one to get to check it out and take it home.
- It is just such a joy and a blessing to see the kids faces light up when they received their books and know that they are able to keep these book bags with all the activities.
- I am a Head Start teacher. Our families love the *Books to Go*, especially the kids. They get to take four books home at a time, instead of just 1. One parent was very happy, remarking, "Oh good! No Curious George today". We have about 20 Curious George books in our library and his son kept bringing home the same books. The exchange system is faster for the teachers, too. Instead of each child looking through all of the books on the Lending Library shelves to find one they haven't read, they just choose a bag that they haven't borrowed yet and they know they will have 4 books to read. Thank you for thinking of us for your program!

*Benefits to English Language Learners:*

- We issued a Library Card to a family that only speaks Spanish because of this program. It has been wonderful watching the rate they read books from our Spanish selection.
- One father came in and said that it helped him to read English as well because he only read in Spanish previously and to be able to read to his daughter he used the books she was bringing home so they could learn together.

Anecdotes were overwhelmingly positive and revealed benefits for all parties involved with the program. Only one negative anecdote was reported between the three waves: "One family stated after one check out that it was just one more thing to keep track of and they didn't want to do it." Receiving only one negative anecdote after three years of program implementation where thousands of families and children participated is quite amazing. When the overwhelmingly positive anecdotes are combined with all of the other results showing positive outcomes, it becomes quite clear that the *Books to Go* program was highly successful.

The last question on the survey asked for additional comments. Thirteen respondents during Wave I, 14 during Wave II, and 14 during Wave III provided comments. The majority of these were thank-you's to the IC/L for providing the program, compliments about the program, and statements about how much partners and parents/caregivers enjoyed the program. But there were a few that talked about barriers and plans libraries had for the future to address them. Following are representative comments:

- This is a wonderful grant and hopefully will continue to be spread across the state for other community partners of libraries to enjoy.
- Just a thank you for providing all these special programs and making it so easy to participate in.

- I know this program was an immense labor of love, and I want to commend all the people who put it together. This program is one of the most positive and effective programs I have seen in Idaho public schools for many years. Thank you very much.
- This program has been so wonderful for our library to be a part of. We hope that it continues and gets stronger each and every year. Thank you to all the staff and volunteers at ICfL for helping to make this happen for us.
- Thank you for all you do! I know many of these kids wouldn't have as much access to books in their homes unless they had a program like this (and others, like My First Books). We are really so lucky to have such a great staff at ICfL!!!!!!
- I felt like I need to be in better contact with all of our partners next year.
- Overall, our partners and parents really loved the program. I'm not sure why we had some of the barriers that we did. Perhaps communication is the key in those noted areas.
- The parents who participate enjoy the program. It appears that it may take time for some of the partners to adjust to the implementation of the program.
- I need to make sure the teachers are getting educated on the program before the new school year begins.
- I think a day each week that is library day was the most successful. Then parents know to look for the blue bags and to send them back ready for the next library day. I do realize that some families might want to read more books and they could make special arrangements. Parents need to have a reminder too.
- I love this program! It has been really good for our school and the library.
- I have not received a lot of feedback regarding this program from my partners. They all say that they like it, but it's hard to get families to take the books home.

The comments were quite positive with most providing thanks and/or praising the program and the ICfL. This is the norm when ICfL sponsored programs are evaluated; but even though such sentiments are quite common, they remain important, because it is the consistent high-quality and value of ICfL sponsored programs that maintains the large amount of goodwill and willingness to try new things that appear to be characteristic of the relationships between Idaho libraries and the ICfL. So each time additional evidence accrues that this “status quo” is alive and well, it is important information.

## **Section 2: Wave III 2014-2015 On-site Follow-up Interviews with High Performing Participants**

During late winter/early spring of 2015, the third year of *Books to Go* implementation, the lead evaluator, Dr. Roger Stewart, and Julie Armstrong, *Books to Go* Project Coordinator, identified sites that experienced strong success with the *Books to Go* program. Success was defined using several criteria:

- Systematic utilization of book bags by most, if not all children, at the site;
- Parents and staff report positive benefits from *Books to Go*; and
- Parents and staff exhibit enthusiasm for the *Books to Go* program.

All of the *BTG* sites were screened using these criteria. Once identified, sites were contacted and asked to participate in an interview about their experiences and insights concerning the *Books to*

*Go* program. Dr. Stewart and Ms. Armstrong travelled to the sites and spent roughly 45-60 minutes with key staff. In two instances interviews were also conducted with the local public libraries that sponsored and supported the *BTG* program at the high performing sites. Following are synopses of each site and library visited. After the synopses is a section synthesizing and discussing findings from the interviews.

### **Highly Successful Public School Developmental Preschool #1:**

Preschool #1 was a pretest-posttest site during the 2013-2014 school year. They continued the *BTG* program during the 2014-2015 school year. When pretest-posttest data from this site was compared to data from the other developmental preschools and all of the testing sites aggregated together, Developmental Preschool #1 students made greater growth in their early literacy development. Additionally, the teacher and her assistant were highly enthusiastic about *BTG* as were parents and caregivers. Book bags were continuously utilized by all students throughout the school year. Developmental Preschool #1 also participated in the *My First Books* program during 2014-2015.

We met with the classroom teacher and her teaching assistant. The teaching assistant manages this program for the classroom. She developed her own checkout sheets, book bag return reminder notices, and program overview letters sent home to families that she believes work best for the families they work with. One of the elements she added to the overview letter introducing and explaining the *BTG* program to parents/caregivers was an emphasis on parents spending quality time and making memories with their children while regularly reading the *BTG* books, as opposed to what would perhaps be a more typical emphasis upon the importance of working on early literacy skills with the children. She believed that emphasizing the affective instead of the cognitive reduced, or perhaps removed, parents'/caregivers' feeling that *BTG* is just one more thing they have to do in an already busy schedule, which then leads to guilt when they fail to complete the task. The overview letter goes home at the beginning of the school year or whenever a new child enrolls in the class. She also includes information about the program in the fall parent meeting announcement.

Each Wednesday the teaching assistant checks a bag out to each child and puts the bags in the children's backpacks. The bags are to be returned on Monday so staff have two days to inventory and prepare them to go home again.

Changes were made to the classroom structure of Developmental Preschool #1 during 2014-2015 that impacted implementation of *BTG*. As in the past there were both morning and afternoon classes, but beginning in 2014-2015, the afternoon class was integrated into the Head Start program that is also housed in the building. The Head Start teacher is the lead teacher for this class and the developmental preschool staff are there for support. Although the Head Start staff have their own *Books to Go* bins, they do not actively use them. Thus, only morning students at Developmental Preschool #1 continue to receive book bags on a systematic basis.

Offsetting some of the negative consequences of the structural changes made during 2014-2015, the public elementary school in which Developmental Preschool #1 is housed received a School Library Mini-Grant from the Idaho Commission for Libraries (IC/L). This program provides money for public elementary school libraries to build their collections for young children (i.e., preschool through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade). One of the stipulations for receiving the funds is that children in the developmental preschool be allowed to check-out books each week. Prior research in Idaho had shown that most developmental preschoolers were not being allowed to do

so. Thus, beginning in 2014-2015, Developmental Preschool #1 students began going to the library every Thursday where they were allowed to check-out at least one book.

The teacher said that they don't use *BTG* books in their curriculum. This made sense to Dr. Stewart and Ms. Armstrong since their classroom observations at Developmental Preschool #1 had revealed tightly choreographed curricula and instruction that filled the available class time. The curricula already had children's books and early literacy activities so the need to use *BTG* books was minimal. But both the teacher and her assistant reported that *BTG* books and materials are of high quality and are appropriately targeted for their developmental preschool population. They enthusiastically spoke about the books and program and how it had helped them achieve their goals for their students. They stated that the program models good behaviors for parents and students and these are the types of behavior required in kindergarten for both students and parents (e.g., checking backpacks for Friday folders, etc.) They attributed their lack of problems with loss or damage to their thorough education of parents about the purpose and importance of the program and their weekly sending book bags home. Parents quickly learned that finding, using, and then returning the weekly *BTG* bag was part of the school routine.

### **Highly Successful Public School Developmental Preschool #2:**

Developmental Preschool #2 started *BTG* the first year and was chosen as a pretest-posttest site during spring 2013. They continued to use the program throughout the three years of the project. When students in the program were pretested and post tested using the Get Ready to Read! Screener, growth at this site was noticeably greater than at other testing sites. The teacher attributed this to the large amount of exposure to print the children received as a consequence of *BTG*. The teacher said that she had embraced the *Books to Go* program and because of this her students had been exposed to much more fiction and nonfiction literature in their homes. She regularly sent bags home with all of her students and reported parents enjoyed having access to the books. The school is a small rural school in western Idaho that houses pre-k through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The teacher is a veteran educator who is supported by a para-educator. During the pretest-posttest period, there were about 13 students in the class, representing a range in developmental delays and disabilities.

The teacher was contacted in January 2015 to see how the program was going and to ask her about the system she used to produce such powerful results. She reported that her classroom situation had changed in the 2014-2015 school year, in that she was working with high school students as well as with her preschool class. These changes prevented her from being in the preschool when parents dropped off and picked up their children. As a consequence, the *Books to Go* bags were not being checked out by parents. She said that her teaching assignment would change again during fall 2015 and that she would be back in the developmental preschool classroom full-time and would be administering the *Books to Go* program as she had previously done.

She was asked what she had done that caused her parents to actively use the bags and caused her students to show such improvement in their early literacy skills. She replied that she made the *Books to Go* program a part of the daily routine in her classroom. When parents dropped their children off in class, she asked them if they wanted to check a bag out now or when they picked up their child after class. She said that many of the parents were experiencing having a child in school for the first time, so making checking out book bags an expectation for them resulted in them seeing it as part of the school routine.

### Highly Successful Public School Developmental Preschool #3:

Public School Developmental Preschool #3 produced a video that showcased their *BTG* program. The video and the underlying success of the program garnered quite a bit of attention so the site was contacted about participating in an interview. The town where the program is located is in south-central Idaho and has a population of 5,500 people. The town and surrounding area have a significant Hispanic population and are a rural, low-income community. The site has both *BTG* and *My First Books*.

We met with all of the preschool staff. They are in a building that houses special education specialists, an alternative junior high program, two day treatment classrooms for elementary students experiencing behavior problems, and three preschool classrooms. Two preschool classrooms are developmental and one is a migrant program. The classrooms have about 30 students per program. There is no library in the building. Following are descriptions of each of the three classrooms.

Jane's (pseudonym) class is a developmental preschool and she "loves" the *Books to Go* program. Her teacher's aide also participated in the interview. Jane is grateful for the support from the local public library and the Idaho Commission for Libraries. She specifically commented on the quality of the books in the bins. She is a veteran teacher with a strong background in children's literature, and she said that she immediately recognized the quality and appropriateness of the materials. Her teacher's aide has taken responsibility for *Books to Go*. The aide sends bags home each Monday. To help the children and families keep and organize the books while they are at home, the teachers purchased small plastic bins for home use. Students are encouraged to put their *My First Books* and *BTG* books in these bins. The aide has modified the checkout sheets to suit her needs, and in order to make survey collection as efficient as possible she has parents/caregivers complete the end-of-year surveys at parent-teacher conferences which are scheduled towards the end of the school year. It was apparent that the aide was an integral part of the success of the *BTG* program and that in addition to her enthusiasm for the program her attention to detail and efficiency were keys to that success. Both Jane and her aide noted that it is sometimes hard to remember to include new students into the program when they come in at different times throughout the year. Jane appreciates how this program creates a home-school connection and supports literacy habits in the home. She occasionally uses the books in the classroom.

Mary's (pseudonym) class is also a developmental preschool and like Jane's class her teacher's aide manages the *Books to Go* program. Mary and her aide love the program and were highly positive and appreciative of Sharon (pseudonym), the local public library outreach librarian, who provides excellent support for both the *My First Books* and *BTG* programs. Mary also uses the plastic bin system with her students. She commented about how she and her aide have worked to instill responsibility in their students to care for the books they receive and borrow and that *My First Books* and *BTG* have been integral to those efforts.

Their checkout system is from Wednesday-Monday. On Monday and Tuesday they inventory bags and get them ready to send out again. When books are not returned, the aide calls families first and then sends a note home. The aide is quite persistent in getting books back. She compiles a list of parents who haven't returned books and she talks with them when they attend parent/teacher nights or other classroom functions. Mary said about her aide's conscientiousness and persistence, "It's her thing." This was said in a humorous, respectful, and thankful way.

They have altered the checkout sheet and are considering making the checkout system electronic on an Excel spreadsheet. Mary occasionally uses the books and materials in her classroom. She uses the master list to find particular books. It was obvious that they had made *BTG* a part of their early literacy program that will remain in the future.

Mary commented that she had quite a few parents who were hesitant at first to participate in the program, but after the parents hear Sharon, the local public library outreach librarian, talk about the importance of reading at the school's open house in October they get on board. Her students eagerly anticipate Sharon's story times and ask her if it's "Sharon's day." This was the second year that Mary has been involved with *Books to Go*. She said that she had returning parents ask her at the beginning of the school year when they would get the blue bags sent home. She said that she enjoys getting high-quality books into the home and that this is an important component of the *BTG* program.

Sophia's (pseudonym) class is a pilot program that enrolls children who qualify for migrant status. She has two teaching assistants who work with her. They, too, participated in the interview. The assistants manage the *BTG* checkout system. They check books out weekly but they allow more than weekly check-outs if the child returns the bag and wants another. Children make a library box for home.

All three of them are highly positive about *BTG* and said an important aspect of the program is exposure to books which they feel is critically important. They said they loved the program, every family participates in it, and all of their parents want the books. No one refuses or is reluctant. Sophia and her assistants were surprised to hear that some parents are reluctant or refuse in other *BTG* programs. They appreciate the quality of the program, but encouraged the ICfL to add more bilingual books. Overall they said that students are very responsible and only a few don't return the books on time. Sophia shared a story of a student who lost a book and the mother wanted to pay for the loss. Sophia told the mother not to worry as the book would be replaced for free, but the mother wanted the child to learn responsibility for books, so the teacher suggested that she send a quarter to "pay" for it. They said that the *BTG* program teaches additional responsibility beyond book return and care. They mentioned homework as an example.

Sharon comes to a parent meeting once a year and talks with the parents through an interpreter about the importance of reading with their children. She also conducts a monthly story time. The children enjoy it and look forward to it. It appears that Sharon is an important part of the success of *BTG* in all three classrooms. All of the teachers and their assistants spoke highly of Sharon and the importance of the work she does to make *BTG* successful.

### **High Performing Public Library Supporting Public School Developmental Preschool #3:**

Sharon (pseudonym), the outreach librarian at the local public library, has been previously mentioned. We met with her at the library to discuss *BTG*. Sharon works 15 hours a week doing outreach, which she spends doing *My First Books* and *Books to Go*. During that time she does story times, distributes books, and inventories bins. She checks in monthly with all of her *Books to Go* sites and inventories and organizes the book tubs at each visit. She said that her being at each site once each month prods staff to use the *BTG* program. Sharon leaves the bins at the sites over the summer. This makes sense since she monitors their condition and keeps them organized each month throughout the year. Sharon considers the outreach that she does vital for

her small library. She feels that it builds the capacity of their library by bringing in children and families. The library has an in-house storyteller and onsite children's programming.

Sharon has a number of *BTG* partnership sites including the public school developmental preschool discussed above and Head Start and Early Head Start centers. She explained how she first partnered with these sites on the *My First Books* program before adopting the *Books to Go* program during its second year. The library waited to adopt *BTG* during the second wave of implementation since they wanted to see how it was working for others and to determine how they could best implement it.

At the public school development preschool, Sharon meets with the parents of the children in the classrooms a few times a year. She attends two school open houses where she sets up literacy or math and science stations for children and families. As was previously mentioned, she also meets with parents of the migrant program to teach them about the importance of reading with their children with the help of an interpreter. Please recall that the developmental preschool teachers commented that families who were reluctant to participate in the *Books to Go* program changed their minds after hearing Sharon's presentation. Everyone spoke highly of Sharon's work and how effective she is at promoting and sustaining both *My First Books* and *BTG*.

All of Sharon's partners participate in both *My First Books* and *BTG*. She said that *BTG* was a natural extension to her work with *My First Books (MFB)* at the sites, but the school district did become confused between the two programs. The parents and children did also. *MFB* books were coming back to school and *BTG* books were being kept in the home. It was because of this that the two programs are phased in differently at the beginning of the school year. *MFB* begins in September and *BTG* starts in October/November. The parents become accustomed to regularly going through backpacks and fully understanding one program before they begin another. Sharon, the school district, and teachers found that the staggered start eliminated confusion between the programs.

Sharon expressed that she doesn't know how to work with partners who are not using the program as it's designed to be used. She has been surprised by childcare providers in her community who do not want to participate in the program.

### **Highly Successful Private Daycare/Preschool #1:**

Private Daycare/Preschool #1 started the *Books to Go* program at the program's inception in January, 2013. They were a pretest-posttest site during spring 2013 and have continued to use the program since. The children at this site showed strong growth in their test scores compared to other similar sites. They also received the *My First Books* program in the 2013-14 school year. The daycare is a small center managed by staff who have received on-the-job training. They are active users of the *Books to Go* program, with the owner/director overseeing its usage. She designed a checkout sheet that meets her needs. The sheets have two children on each page so she can see each child's record of check-outs. This way she can see which bags have gone home and which have not, which have not been returned, etc.

Importantly, she reported shifting from a one week checkout period for the first 1 ½ years to a two week checkout during 2014-2015. She found that this works better for both herself and her childcare families. Specifically, she said that the program is easier for her to manage and that returns are better with the two week cycle. Because of all of the work involved in running the center, it was difficult for her to check in, organize, and then check-out another round of bags

each week. She also stated that busy parents sometimes need more than a week to get around to reading the books in the bag. Thus, the two week check-out period is better for all. She has a bucket for book bag returns in the area where parents/caregivers drop off and pick-up their children. Bags can be returned at any time.

When asked about lost or damaged books, she reported that some loss occurred in previous years but it is better this year. She attributed this to a different mix of parents this year who appear to be more responsible and that some parents have now had two years of experience with the program and understand how it works. The director has been doing some book replacement of her own even though *BTG* program literature states that the Idaho Commission for Libraries will replace lost or damaged books at any time for free.

She doesn't do *BTG* year round because her enrollments change a lot over the summer as children come and go for vacations, etc. She said this would cause problems getting books returned in a timely manner and some children don't return to the center after a lengthy time away over the summer. Also the sponsoring local public library picks up the tubs at the beginning of summer and inventories them and organizes them for return in the fall. The children in her care change often enough that there are no complaints about repetition in the book collection.

During 2013-2014 a children's librarian from the sponsoring local public library went to the center once each month and conducted a story time and book give-away as part of the *My First Books* program. After the *My First Books* program ended the children's librarian continued to visit the center each month and provide a story time. The owner/director expressed that she is grateful for her partnership with the public library. It is unclear as to whether the relationship between the library and the center "caused" the center owner's willingness to work on early literacy development and embrace the *BTG* program. But given the lack of formal training of the owner and her staff (She told us that she doesn't know how to teach young children how to read.), it appears that she intuitively understands the importance of fostering literacy development in young children and thus was open to using such programs as *My First Books* and *Books to Go*. She said that she uses the *Books to Go* books and activities in her curriculum and instruction and has appreciated them. When asked whether she assesses her children's growth during the school year, she replied that she does not conduct formal assessments. She said she doesn't feel qualified to do them since she has no formal training. She said, "I'm just a mom." Specific components of the program that she finds useful are:

- The laminated theme key that details the contents of each bag;
- The variety of books that are helpful in her lesson planning. She said that parents also enjoy them;
- Her using activities that are in *The Bookworm*. She said that she doesn't think parents use the *Bookworms* much; and
- She feels her students have stronger rhyming skills because of the selection of books.

Components of the program that have been a struggle:

- Quick surveys are hard to get back from parents;
- Split families can find it hard to keep track of who has the book bag; and
- Parents have a lot to remember when they drop off and pick up children, so the director assigns bags to kids to take home instead of relying on the parents to do check-outs.

The *BTG* program at both Developmental Public Preschool #1 and Private Daycare/Preschool #1 were sponsored by the same local public library. It became apparent that the local public library was instrumental in the success of the *BTG* program at these sites so we made an appointment to talk with the library's administration and librarians to discuss with them how they interact with and support the early childhood care and education centers that they recruit for the various programs they provide. Following is a synopsis of our discussion.

### **High Performing Public Library Supporting Public School Developmental Preschool #1 and Private Daycare/Preschool #1:**

The library had assembled a team to meet with us about the *Books to Go* program. It included the library director, an administrative assistant, and two youth services librarians. They had prepared a document that listed their partners, contact information, and *BTG* bin types and numbers for each partner. They were also prepared with questions they had about the program and partners they were working with. Their level of preparation for our meeting was impressive.

They have had a system in place to monitor the *BTG* program from the beginning of their partnerships. Important elements of the system follow:

- They have monthly communication with all of their partners. This can be an email but it also occurs when the travelling story time person visits the sites;
- They collect the tubs of book bags at the end of the school year to inventory and get ready for the following school year;
- They invite all of their partners to a training in August to review the program and return the bins to the partners for the upcoming school year. They have good attendance and individually contact any provider who doesn't attend the meeting. They hold the meeting in the mid-afternoon to work within their partners' schedules;
- They present a monthly story time at all of their partner's sites; and
- They train new staff at the sites as they become aware of them.

Library staff did have some concerns about the program. Most focused on problems associated with sites. The concerns follow:

- Not all daycares approached about the program want to participate in the program. This was of significant concern to the librarians and they were stymied about how to proceed to educate the daycares about the importance of early literacy development;
- At some sites where bins were in place, no specific staff were in charge of the bins and a collective sense of ownership of the bins had not evolved. Thus the bins were not being effectively utilized. Such situations led to two important questions:
  - How can they work with partners who are not fully on board with the program?
  - Can bins be removed and placed at another site?
- Some sites reported that the books are either too easy or too difficult for their children. It is important for sponsoring libraries to know the level of children at each *BTG* site and make sure the books are appropriate. For example, the librarians reported that a local charter school kindergarten used *BTG*. Parents reported that the books were too easy for the children. This misalignment made sense since *BTG* is targeted at pre-kindergarten children.

Much additional salient information came from the discussion. For example, within the discussion of how to motivate sites to fully participate in the program, parent education was a topic. Although the library currently does not do parent training at their partner sites, this was suggested as perhaps a successful means of getting sites on board. But the library staff did not see a clear path for how this could be accomplished given current resources.

Given that this library invests so much time and resources into *BTG*, we asked if the program is helping them build capacity. They emphatically replied yes and said that it especially helps with outreach and is an excellent means for increasing the library's presence in the community. Library staff also put library card materials in the *BTG* take home materials. This resulted in many parents/caregivers who might not consider applying for a library card receiving the opportunity to do so. Because of their deep investment in the program and their valuing it highly, library staff wanted assurances there would continue to be an evaluation component to the program after the grant period ends so they can ensure ongoing quality control.

### **Synthesis and Discussion**

Readers have probably noticed by now that Head Start or Early Head Start programs have not been included in the discussion. The reason for this is that no high performing programs were identified because no Head Start center consistently used the program. This is not said to disparage such programs or the staff who work within them, but instead to point out that *BTG* "fits" better at some sites than others. We did visit three Head Start centers to discuss *BTG* with staff and parents/caregivers. At one center we attended a monthly family gathering focused on kindergarten readiness. We attended the meeting to ascertain how families were using *Books to Go* and hear comments from them about things that could be improved. A Spanish speaking mother and father were asked through an interpreter how often they checked out *Books to Go* bags. The mother responded that they check them out weekly. She was asked if they read them to their children nightly, and she said that the father reads to them nightly in English and Spanish. They were then asked if there were things they would change to make the program work better, and the mother said they were happy with it. However, when asked if there were enough books in Spanish, she said that they sometimes had to repeatedly read the same books because there are not many Spanish books in the set. Contrast this family's experience with another family that was interviewed from the same teacher's class. When this mother and father were asked about *Books to Go*, they were familiar with it, but they said they did not use it. When asked why, the mother responded that it's not organized enough. When asked to elaborate on what she meant, she said it's hard to keep track of that many books. She said that her children don't always take care of things so she doesn't want to be responsible for more than one book at a time. She said that she does frequently go to the local public library and that she likes the story time area and activities they do there. A number of other families were approached and were willing to talk. All of them were unfamiliar with the program. They had seen the tub sitting in the hallway by their child's classroom door but had not been introduced to the program and did not know about it. The take-away from our conversations at the family gathering was that *BTG* was not being systematically promoted and utilized at this site. No teacher or assistant had embraced the program to the point where they either systematically sent bags home in the children's backpacks or promoted the program to the parents/caregivers so they would regularly check-out bags.

At the same Head Start program, we asked agency staff to remain to talk about the *Books to Go* program after they participated in an Idaho Child Care Reads workshop. There were 60 in

attendance at the workshop and about 20 stayed for the discussion. The group was asked what is working well with the program in their classrooms. Their comments follow:

- It's a positive resource for dual-language families, but teachers would like books and materials in more languages other than English. Some teachers didn't know there is a Spanish bilingual set to supplement the English bin;
- Some teachers use the books and activities to support the child's individual goals;
- Some teachers appreciate having the books and Bookworms to use in the classroom and for lesson planning;
- One teacher taught her families to do the check-out and return. Another teacher had a designated parent keep the bin organized. Teachers said that this piece is hard for them to manage. They asked if they could check-out bags to send home with children, instead of having the parents/caregivers do it, and they were told that was perfectly fine and that some of the most successful *BTG* sites do it that way;
- Some teachers feel like they need more library support. For example, new staff are hired who don't know about the program and have not been trained;
- Where and how the bin is placed and displayed was discussed. It was agreed that they could do a better job marketing the program to families; and
- Some parents are hesitant to use the program.

Although this particular Head Start program with several centers spread across a large geographic region of Idaho appeared to utilize the program more than the previously discussed center did, there were still systemic problems that hindered full utilization. One being the lack of dynamic and ongoing library and librarian support that had occurred at the previously discussed high performing sites. But this is not the only probable cause of the problems. Please recall that the library supporting High Performing Public School Developmental Preschool #1 and High Performing Private Daycare/Preschool #1 also had a Head Start program as one of their *BTG* partners. The library was providing excellent support and service to the Head Start but the teachers were not utilizing the program. So, when it comes to Head Starts, it appears to take more than just strong library support to have successful *BTG* implementation.

We visited one other Head Start center which also housed an Early Head Start. We did not have an appointment at this particular center but we were in the vicinity doing one of the other *BTG* evaluation interviews, so we stopped in and one of the Early Head Start teachers was kind enough to speak with us. She said that she takes the book bags with her on home visits and that the children get excited when they see the blue bags. This particular Early Head Start program is structured around a home visiting model, with three home visitors. They are actively using the program and find it a useful tool. They use the Bookworms and like the other materials. These particular Head Start and Early Head Start programs were located in the service area of High Performing Library #2. Thus Sharon interacted with site staff and supported the *BTG* program. When we spoke with Sharon she said that one of the Head Start teachers used the *BTG* program quite well, but it was a mystery to her what the others were doing with the program. She said, however, that the Early Head Start teachers were using it more, thus corroborating what we were told by the Early Head Start teacher.

So, what can be learned from the interviews about how to successfully implement the *Books to Go* program? It appears that a constellation of factors must align for success:

- Center directors or staff and teachers or their assistants make sending bags home and having them returned in a timely manner part of the daily and weekly routine;
- Center directors or staff and teachers or their assistants establish an expectation that virtually all of their parents/caregivers will participate in the program, but this is accomplished without coercing the parents/caregivers or making them feel guilty about their parenting and care;
- Local public libraries introduce, regularly monitor, and provide continued support to *BTG* sites; and
- All adults involved with program implementation see value in having books in homes so that children have greater access to high-quality, age-appropriate children's fiction and nonfiction.

On the surface the bulleted list appears to be a simple and easily enacted recipe for success, and indeed where all of these variables coalesce the *Books to Go* program is a resounding success, but there are enough places where all of the variables are not in place and *BTG* is not successful that some modifications to the program may be warranted. For example, both libraries and the sites chosen by the libraries to receive *BTG* tubs need to be screened for capacity to introduce and support the program. It appears that at least monthly contact between libraries and sites is quite important. It also appears that one or more staff at each site needs to be designated as responsible for the program. All of this represents a significant investment of time on everyone's part and libraries and sites need to be fully informed of this. This is something the ICfL might do at regional and annual meetings or via webinars where libraries come together. With as much experience as has been generated over the past three years with state-wide implementation of *BTG*, quite accurate time commitment ranges could be derived through surveys and/or interviews. These could then be articulated to libraries interested in adopting the program. And in turn, the libraries could use the information to screen potential *BTG* sites in their service areas. If selection became more strategic, more sites might be high performing sites resulting in better resource utilization. One of the libraries interviewed and discussed above encapsulated the recommendations in the following comment about their outreach work in general and their *Books to Go* experience in particular: "Our early philosophy was "Build it and they will come." We learned that this doesn't always work so we started doing a lot of communication and follow-up with our outreach programs."

### **Section 3: Conclusions and Recommendations**

All waves of *Books to Go* were successes. All of the data showed strongly positive effects. Libraries liked the program and found it easy to implement, and partners felt the same way. Parents/caregivers appreciated the program and found it convenient and easy to use. Everyone said that the selection of books was superb. Both open-ended responses commenting on the wide variety and quality of the books and also the high percentage of parents/caregivers reporting reading three or four books from each bag support the assertion that the selection of books was excellent. The interviews with high performing sites revealed key characteristics that appear to be important to the program's success.

Having reiterated the overall success of *Books to Go*, evidence has, however, accumulated that at times *Books to Go* is not enthusiastically and readily implemented at some sites. The original vision for *BTG* at the ICfL was for it to be a program that mostly ran itself

once the tubs were dropped off at partner sites. This is probably not the case, however. Even if parents/caregivers and teachers are carefully checking bags in and out, books are bound to be placed in the wrong bags as children and adults look through them, bags and books will be lost or their return will be delayed, along with other things that hinder the ongoing smooth implementation of the program. In short, the tubs require monitoring and periodic maintenance to keep them complete and orderly and to keep them in mind so teachers and parents/caregivers continue utilizing the resource as other programs, events, and necessities compete for scarce attention and time. It was mentioned above that there was a continuum of implementation at *BTG* sites. Concomitant with higher implementation was greater levels of program monitoring and promotion by the sponsoring library and/or the partner site. Thus, it can be concluded, that although *Books to Go* is a relatively low maintenance program, it does require regular maintenance and attention for it to be successful. This may be one reason why *My First Books* is so consistently popular and effective even after it has been scaled to considerable size by the ICfL. *My First Books* requires librarians to visit the partner site once each month for nine months to conduct a storytime with children and distribute the *My First Book* title for that month to the children. Partners have virtually no responsibility for the program except to allow the librarian in to distribute books. And for the librarian it is a once a month commitment the amount of time for which can be easily estimated and scheduled well in advance. Saying this does not mean to assert that *My First Books* is an easy program to implement. On the contrary it is resource intensive in that books have to be shipped to libraries and delivered to partner sites and librarians need to take time away from their libraries to conduct the storytimes and distribute the books. But *My First Books* doesn't appear to be as time intensive as *Books to Go*. For *BTG* to work well, it appears that librarians need to visit at least once each month, maybe more often, to inventory and organize the book bags in the tubs. They probably also need to teach both parents/caregivers and many of the early childhood providers the importance of reading to children and how *BTG* can be an important tool for this. The providers at the sites need to continually promote the program until it becomes so popular with children and their parents/caregivers that program utilization stays constant and high. Contrast this with *My First Books* where the librarian arrives at the partner site with the book of the month in tow, provides an exciting and engaging storytime focused on the book of the month to get the children excited about the book, distributes the books, and then leaves. The children then eagerly and excitedly take the book home and urgently request that their parents/caregivers/older siblings read it to them. This *My First Books* scenario is not conjecture. It is based on several years of evaluating the program and hearing from parents/caregivers, partners, and librarians about the functioning of the program. For the adults involved in *My First Book*, the time involved is easily estimated and comes at specific, regular intervals. And perhaps even more important is the simple fact that the children become ambassadors for books and reading in the home when they excitedly take the books home from school. *Books to Go* could also operate this way if someone promotes the books to the children and puts the bags in their hands to take home, but if no one does this, then the bags of books languish unless a parent/caregiver takes the initiative to open the tub, leaf through the bags to find one of interest, and check it out. What this all means for *Books to Go* moving forward is that only libraries willing and able to devote ongoing time to maintenance, promotion, and education about the program should participate. And the same holds true for partners. Only those that have the capacity or are willing to acquire the capacity to promote and maintain the program should receive tubs. If these requirements are adhered to, then evidence is quite clear, just as it is in the case of *My First Books*, that *Books to Go* can be a highly popular

and effective program to increase access to books for children and their families and to increase the amount of reading and literacy activities occurring in homes. Additional recommendations are listed below by category:

*Education and Oversight of Books to Go Partners:*

- The percentage of children participating in *Books to Go* varied across partners. *Books to Go* partner sites should be monitored more closely to make sure most children are participating; and if they are not, then program personnel and parents and caregivers need to be asked why they are refraining from participation.
- More partners need to regularly incorporate *Books to Go* materials in their curricula and instruction. Education and promotion activities should be implemented to decrease the percentage of partners who never use the books and *Bookworms* while moving those who seldom use them into categories representing greater use.
- Although few barriers to implementation were mentioned by libraries and partners, most that were can be addressed through enhanced education and communication. Libraries should provide education for sites' childcare providers and parents/caregivers about the program, how it works, and why reading to children is so important.

*Education and Oversight of Libraries:*

- Future library training should include discussion of the barriers they might encounter. Topics might include library resources needed to implement the program, how to carefully select and educate partners, and making sure lines of communication are opened and maintained from the start of their work with their partners.
- Additional topics during training should include the importance of educating partners about how the program works, why it is important, positive outcomes that partners will see, and how partners can communicate this to parents/caregivers.
- It is recommended that in future waves libraries be selected for participation who have the resources necessary to visit partner sites on a regular basis so that library involvement remains high throughout the duration of the project. It is also recommended that training emphasize the need for regular contact with partners.

*Changing Parent/Caregiver Behaviors:*

- Weekly or more often check outs were a goal of *BTG*. There remain a sizable percentage of parents/caregivers who are not doing this. Thus, a goal should be to increase this percentage through education, promotions, and incentives.
- Few respondents used *TumbleBooks* or *Day by Day ID.org*. The ICfL should revisit how they promote these two online resources to see if more successful approaches can be developed.
- Although Waves II and III produced better results concerning library card applications, a sizable number of respondents continue to not have and to not get library cards so a goal in the future should be to reduce this number.

*Achieving High Response Rates and Return Rates for Surveys and Data Sources:*

- With the size of the *BTG* program now, not all libraries need to return check out sheets and Quick Surveys from their partners. But a representative sample of libraries should so that valid and reliable conclusions can be drawn. In the future, the IC/L might consider developing a sampling structure for libraries and partners to accomplish this along with incentives for both libraries and their partners to collect and return all of their documents.
- Check out sheets should have prompts for partners to put their name and type of program.
- Although parent/caregiver surveys were received from all of the various types of organizations that participated in *Books to Go*, not all libraries returned surveys. In the future resources should be applied so that a representative sample of libraries and their partners return parent/caregiver surveys and the total number of surveys increases so that results are more likely to be representative of the population of people provided access to *Books to Go*.
- The number of partner surveys returned was not great. Future efforts should be made to increase these rates in a representative sample of libraries and their partners.

*Book Bags:*

- Loss and damage were not significant problems. This is an important finding since sustainability of the program could be compromised if there were large costs involved in replacing books.

**Appendix A: Program Evaluation of Infant-Toddler Books to Go Program 2014-2015**

A *Books to Go* program specifically targeted at infant-toddlers was initiated in 2013 and continued throughout the remainder of the grant. Bins of books specifically targeted at this age group were developed and disseminated throughout the state. Seventy-one bins were distributed totaling 6,000 books. An additional 35 sets of bilingual supplemental bags were also distributed. The program reached approximately 3,700 children. Like the regular *BTG* program, infant-toddler parents/caregivers and partners were surveyed. Quick surveys were also included in the book bags. In the remainder of this appendix, results from an evaluation of the program will be provided.

**Infant-Toddler Books to Go Quick Surveys 2014-2015: Analysis of Results**

A total of 374 quick surveys were returned. Of these, 368 provided information about the type of organization from which the parent/caregiver received services. Three hundred and fifty-nine of the surveys came from parents/caregivers who participated in the Idaho Health and Welfare Infant Toddler Program. Eight were returned by Even Start parents/caregivers and one was returned by a private daycare or preschool parent/caregiver. The Idaho Infant Toddler Program surveys came from seven different sites representing all geographic regions of the state.

Two questions were asked about the number of books read in the bag and how many of the books the child liked. Table 1 provides the questions and the results.

Table 1: Number of books read and how many liked: Percentages and frequencies

Question	Number of Books		
	1	2	3
1. How many books in this bag did you read with your child? (n=374)*	3 (10)**	10 (37)	87 (327)
2. How many books in this bag did your child like? (n=368)	12 (45)	23 (86)	65 (237)

\* n = number of respondents providing this information

\*\* Percentages outside ( ). Frequencies inside ( ).

The vast majority of the time all three books in a bag were read and two thirds of the time all three were liked. When less than all three were liked, most liked two and very few liked only one. Obviously, the books were both extensively utilized and liked. These results provide strong evidence that the ICfL is adept at selecting high-quality, age-appropriate books that are highly popular.

Respondents were also asked to comment about the books. Hundreds of comments were received and virtually all of them were positive. When a comment wasn't, it was something like the following, "Topic did not interest my child." Nothing negative was said about the books or the program. Following are some representative comments:

- My child really enjoy "Bear Snores On" and would sit and listen to it over & over again.
- I found it useful to have themed books to read & share with my child. It helped me to have something to talk to him about every day. He enjoyed learning to turn pages & sitting still to read together.
- My son enjoyed the books so much he wants me to read them over and over.

- Enjoyed Wheels on the Bus rhyme. (Heart) Sheep in a Jeep. Spent more time talking on an educational level. We loved the books- Mason would go get the bag for us to read.
- We love Elephant & Piggie books! So much inflection. The Sheep in the Jeep books are really enjoyable too. We like the variety of books so all the kids in the family want to read together!
- We read multiple books everyday & spend lots of talking about each page.

Comments expressed appreciation and thanks for the program. Comments also revealed that having the books stimulated reading in the home and also interactions between parent/caregiver and child around books and reading. All of which are extremely positive outcomes.

Respondents were asked a series of questions about reading behaviors. Table 2 provides the specific questions and the results.

Table 2: Quick Survey changes in reading behaviors: Percentages and frequencies

As a result of receiving this <i>Books to Go</i> bag, did you.....	Yes**	No
a. increase the amount of time spent reading with your child? (n=373)*	86 (320)	14 (53)
b. increase the amount of time spent talking with your child? (n=371)	82 (304)	18 (67)
c. do any of the suggested activities found in the enclosed <i>Bookworm</i> ?(n=353)	46 (162)	54 (191)

\* n = number of responses to this item

\*\* Percentages outside ( ). Frequencies inside ( ).

Nearly all respondents read more to their child and talked more with their child as a result of receiving the books. The very large percentages of respondents reporting these behaviors is a strongly positive outcome of the program and shows that the program achieved its primary goals. And stimulating nearly half the respondents to undertake activities from the *Bookworm* is also a very positive finding. In previous ICfL program evaluations not as many respondents reported doing so. Thus it can be concluded that the Infant-Toddler *BTG* program is very effective at stimulating parents/caregivers to spend the extra time and effort to closely interact with their child around literacy activities.

One final question on the Quick Survey asked for additional comments. It was an open ended question and many were received. Very few were neutral and none were negative.

Following are some representative examples of the comments:

- Took a nature walk talked about animal & plant life found. Made meal together, discussed healthy eating.
- Good books!
- Enjoyed the books with my two children. We spent extra time together.
- He loved the repetitive books- I think he remembers them better when I read them.
- Board book was fun to hold, but not much to read. We read every day regardless.

Based on the quantity and content of the comments, the program was effective, popular, and effective.

**Infant-Toddler Books to Go Parent Surveys 2014-2015: Analysis of Results**

Parents were surveyed. Only 46 surveys were returned from six regions in the state so the results presented here may or may not be representative of the overall population of parents who participated in the program. Most likely they are not since such a small sample of surveys was returned. The first question asked from what type of organization the *BTG* books were received. All of the surveys came from Idaho Department of Health and Welfare Infant Toddler Program sites.

The second question asked, “What month did you begin checking out *Books to Go*?” Respondents were provided a list of all the months and were asked to circle one. Table 3 provides the responses.

Table 3: Reported starting dates by month: Percentages and frequencies (n=32)

Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
9 (3)	3 (1)	9 (3)	6 (2)	12 (4)	0 (0)	3 (1)	25 (8)	16 (5)	9 (3)	6 (2)	0 (0)

August and September were the most common starting months. The others were mentioned roughly equal amounts. The results makes sense since *BTG* oftentimes starts at the beginning of the academic year after summer vacations are over; and when it doesn’t start then, the program begins most any other month since the ICfL continually works to increase participation in the program by establishing new sites. The profile of start dates shows that the ICfL was very successful in their efforts to continually build out the program.

Another question asked parents/caregivers “How often did you check out *Books to Go*?” Forty-four provided this information. Forty-six percent said that they did so “More than once each week.” Thirty-two percent said that they checked out “Once each week,” and 23% said “Once every two weeks.” No one responded “Once each month” or “Did not receive.” Having nearly half the respondents report multiple check-outs in a week is higher than what was found in the regular *BTG* program. As was discussed above, these results may not be representative because of the small sample size, but if future research produces larger sample sizes and the same result is found, then such a finding is quite positive for the *Infant-Toddler BTG* program.

Respondents were asked a series of questions about reading behaviors. Table 4 presents the questions and the results.

Table 4: Parent/caregiver reported changes in reading behaviors: Percentages and frequencies

As a result of the <i>Books to Go</i> program, I .....	Yes**	No	Already <sup>1</sup>
a. spend more time reading with my child/children. (n=44)*	77(34)	9(4)	14 (6)
b. spend more time talking with my child/children about the books I read to them. (n=43)	81(35)	5(2)	14 (6)
c. spend more time singing with my child/children. (n=43)	48(21)	26(11)	26(11)
d. spend more time rhyming with my child/children (e.g., rhyming games, finger plays that rhyme, nursery rhymes). (n=43)	61(26)	28(12)	11(5)
e. am more likely to use the library to check out books. (n=44)	59(26)	23(10)	18(8)

\* n = number of respondents to this item.

\*\* Percentages outside ( ). Frequencies inside ( ).

<sup>1</sup> Full option provided: Already did this *regularly* before participating in the program.

Large percentages of parents/caregivers reported more reading and talking with their child as a consequence of the program. Interestingly, the number of parents/caregivers reporting that they “Already did this *regularly* before participating in the program” for these two items was not nearly as large as in the regular *BTG* program. What this probably means is that this particular group of parents/caregivers were not reading or talking with their children about books all that much prior to the program. Thus, the program might have caused considerable, positive behavior changes to occur. Although more parents/caregivers reported singing to their children before the program, for those who did not report doing so, nearly half increased their singing with their child. This, too, is a quite robust finding. Also, significantly more rhyming occurred because of the program. And finally, only 18% of the respondents reported regular library use before the program. For those who did not report this, 59% said that they are now more likely to use the library to check out books. This is a very positive finding.

Respondents were asked to rate the usefulness of a series of program attributes. Table 5 provides the results.

Table 5: Parent/caregiver ratings of usefulness: Percentages and frequencies

<b>Please rate the following for usefulness:</b>	<b>Very Useful</b>	<b>Useful</b>	<b>Not Useful</b>
a. Learning about great books for my child/children. (n=44)*	75(33)* *	21(9)	4(2)
b. Learning things I can do at home to help my child/children get ready to read. (n=43)	54(23)	46(20)	0(0)
c. Learning about library resources I can use with my child/children. (n=40)	40(16)	40(16)	20(8)
d. <i>The Bookworm</i> handout in each bag. (n=42)	48(20)	31(13)	21(9)

\* n = number of respondents to this item.

\*\* Percentages outside ( ). Frequencies inside ( ).

Learning about great books was very useful for three quarters of respondents. This is a very positive finding since because of the program these respondents are more aware of high-quality, age-appropriate books for their children. All respondents felt that learning things to do at home were either very useful or useful, and equal percentages of respondents felt that learning about library resources was very useful or useful. There were, however, 20% of respondents who felt learning about library resources was not useful. These may have been library users before the program so they already knew about resources, but this is only one interpretation. Other interpretations are just as likely. Additional research is needed to ascertain why a fifth of these respondents felt as they did. And finally, nearly half of respondents found the *Bookworm* to be very useful and an additional 31% found it useful. These are quite high percentages and are higher than those found when other IC/L programs are evaluated. It appears that this particular group of parents/caregivers are especially receptive to the contents of the *Bookworm*.

A series of additional behavior questions were asked that focused on visiting the library and utilizing library resources. Table 6 provides the specific questions and results.

Table 6: Parent/caregiver reports of frequency of behaviors: Percentages and frequencies

When was the last time you...	Within the past week	Within the past month	Within the past six months	Within the past year	More than two years ago	Never
a. visited your public library? (n=45)*	16(7)**	18(8)	20(9)	13(6)	20(9)	13(6)
b. check out books at your public library? (n=45)	9(4)	20(9)	18(8)	6(3)	27(12)	20(9)
c. accessed <i>TumbleBooks</i> through your public library's web site? (n=42)	0(0)	2(1)	2(1)	0(0)	0(0)	96(40)
d. accessed DayByDayID.org through your public library's web site? (n=42)	0(0)	2(1)	2(1)	0(0)	0(0)	96(40)

\* n = number of respondents to this item.

\*\* Percentages outside ( ). Frequencies inside ( ).

About a third of respondents were regular library users. But that leaves two thirds who seldom if ever visited the library or checked out books. Only two respondents had accessed *TumbleBooks* and only two had accessed DayByDayID.org. In short, these two Web-based resources were hardly used. This is similar to what has been found in other ICfL evaluations, so the ICfL might consider revising how they promote these particular programs to see if more effective marketing strategies can be developed.

The question was asked, “Overall, how satisfied were you with the *Books to Go* program?” Of the 45 respondents, 76% were very satisfied and 24% were satisfied. No one responded not satisfied. These are very positive results and are in line with those found for the regular *BTG* program where respondents are also overwhelmingly very satisfied or satisfied with the program.

Respondents were also asked, “If *Books to Go* continues to be available from your provider, how likely are you to continue using them?” Of the 44 respondents, 73% were very likely to do so, 25% were likely, and 2% were not sure. No one said that their continuing to use the program was unlikely. Again, these are positive findings and provide further evidence that the program is popular with parents/caregivers and something that they would continue to use. This is an important finding since if parents were unlikely to continue using the program, then the program would not be sustainable over time. And it is with use over time where the maximum benefits to children will probably accrue.

The final selected response question was one that the ICfL has asked on a variety of surveys evaluating various programs. Respondents were asked, “Did you or your child receive a library card as a result of the *Books to Go* program?” Six respondents said they received a library card and two reported their child receiving a library card. Eighteen said they already had a library card before the *BTG* program. Having 8 of 46 respondents receive library cards is 17% of the total. This is quite good when compared to other ICfL programs where lower percentages of library card acquisition are usually the case.

The survey closed with an open-ended question asking, “In order to make the *Books to Go* program better, I suggest:” Since this was an open-ended question not all people responded and those that did provided a range of comments. Some examples follow:

- More board books vs. paper ones.
- Offer via mail after my child is no longer in the program.
- Maybe include something to do with the activities that is re-usable (stuffed animal, binoculars, puzzle)

No consistent themes emerged from the comments. Overall, they were positive, constructive, and provided some interesting ideas.

**Infant-Toddler Books to Go Partner Surveys 2014-2015: Analysis of Results**

Partners were asked to complete surveys asking them about their experiences with the program. Twenty-eight returned surveys representing about a third of the total partners. Because of this relatively low response rate, the results presented here may or may not be representative of the entire group of participants. All of the respondents were employed by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare Infant Toddler Program. These respondents used *BTG* materials as part of their home visits.

Respondents were asked to provide the “Approximate number of families who receive *Books to Go* bags.” The 24 responses ranged from 1-24 with an average of six (sd=5.0) and 21 of 24 being under 10. This is an interesting model for the *Books to Go* program since these case workers take the bags to the homes and deliver them to the parents/caregivers and children. This is in contrast to most other sites where the bags are checked out by parents/caregivers on a voluntary basis or the bags are sent home with the children by teachers and childcare providers.

Since the partners included in this report were from agencies where home visits occurred and thus *BTG* was taken into the home by the staff, two questions were asked about how the books and materials were utilized. Table 7 provides the specific questions and results.

Table 7: How *Books to Go* was utilized in home visits: Percentages and Frequencies

How often did you do each of the following?	Daily	Weekly	Twice a Month	Monthly	Rarely	Never
a. Use the <i>Books to Go</i> books during your home visits. (n=28)*	4 (1)**	14 (4)	29 (8)	21 (6)	18 (5)	14 (4)
b. Use the ideas and suggestions in the <i>Bookworm</i> during your home visits. (n=27)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (1)	19 (5)	44 (12)	33 (9)

\* n = number of respondents to this item.

\*\* Percentages outside ( ). Frequencies inside ( ).

Most likely the schedule for including *BTG* in home visits followed the visitation schedule in the homes. For example, if homes were visited twice a month then the books would be utilized twice a month. Half the respondents reported using the books in home visits either twice a month or monthly. What is of some concern, however, is the 32% reporting never using the books or rarely doing so. But as has been mentioned several times before, the sample size is

small so statistics like these can be unreliable. Thus, larger samples are needed to verify this finding, but if it were to hold, then actions are needed to reduce the number of respondents reporting very low program usage. Regarding the *Bookworm*, 77% of respondents reported that they rarely or never used ideas and suggestions from it during home visits. Given this very high response rate, the *Bookworm* should be reviewed to see whether it is appropriate in a home visit environment with young children. If it is appropriate, then additional research is needed to ascertain why it is not being used. If it is not appropriate for this specific audience, then it needs to be revised or it should not be included in the bags.

Two overarching evaluation questions were asked regarding working relationships with the sponsoring library and overall experience with the program. Table 8 provides the specific questions and the results.

Table 8: Ratings of working relationships and overall experience: Percentages and frequencies

Question	Excellent	Good	Neutral	Poor
a. Please rate the quality of the working relationship you had with your library partner. (n=26)*	19 (5)	46 (12)	35 (9)	0 (0)
b. Please rate your overall experience with the <i>Books to Go</i> program. (n=28)	36 (10)	57 (16)	7 (2)	0 (0)

\* n = number of respondents to this item.

\*\* Percentages outside ( ). Frequencies inside ( ).

Working relationships with sponsoring libraries were primarily in the good and neutral categories. This is different from most previous *BTG* evaluations and also other *ICfL* program evaluations. Usually working relationships between partners and libraries are primarily in the excellent and good categories with just a few falling in the neutral category. But in the case of *Infant-Toddler BTG* respondents, about a third were neutral and only 19% were excellent. The *ICfL* might consider exploring why these less positive responses occurred. It is important to note, however, that having no poor relationships is characteristic of both *BTG* and other *ICfL* programs, so the *Infant Toddler BTG* respondents are quite similar in this regard. When respondents were asked to rate their overall experience with the program, more excellent and good responses were given with few neutral and no poor. But it should be noted that good responses were more common than excellent and this is not in keeping with most previous evaluations where the most common response is excellent followed by good.

A series of open-ended questions were asked. The first being “What successes did you experience from participating in the *Books to Go* program? Respondents were prompted to provide up to three and then they were asked, “Why do you think these successes occurred? Please explain.” Twenty-four respondents provided successes and many of these provided multiple successes. Responses were coded into thematic categories. Table 9 provides these along with frequencies of occurrence.

Table 9: Frequency of program successes by thematic category

<b>Thematic Categories of Successes</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
a. Increased literacy opportunities in the home (e.g., more reading, enjoyed books, increased access to books, greater variety of books, generated excitement)	33
b. Promoted positive interaction between parent/caregiver and child	9
c. Illustrated for parents/caregivers the importance of books to language development	7
d. Provided resources and support for families to achieve priorities	3
e. Increased rapport and communication with families	2
f. None listed	4

Most of the successes revolved around the theme of increasing and enhancing literacy opportunities in the homes. More reading occurred. Adults and children enjoyed the books and were excited to receive them. Access to larger numbers of books of greater variety also occurred. These are quite positive successes of the program. Less often mentioned but still quite important successes were the program promoting positive interactions within the home around books and parents/caregivers realizing the importance of books in their child’s language development. Three respondents mentioned that the program provided resources that allowed parents/caregivers to achieve priorities within their families and two mentioned that the program helped them to increase rapport and communication with families. All of these are important successes and show that the program was effective at achieving its goals of enhancing children’s access to books while improving the literacy environments in their homes.

When asked “Why do you think these successes occurred? Please explain” only nine provided responses. Two said that just having accessibility to the program was the cause. Three said that ease of access and convenience were the causative factors. Three said that families’ increasing awareness of literature and the importance of literacy in the home were the causes. And one said that the lack of fear of damage and loss allowed the families to let their children explore the books. These are all quite heartening reasons for the successes and also add further evidence to the assertion that the program achieves its goals.

Partners were asked “What barriers or problems did you experience from participating in the *Books to Go* program?” Respondents were prompted to list up to three barriers and then were asked, “What is needed to avoid or overcome these barriers and problems. Please explain.” Table 10 provides thematic categories that were developed as responses were read and coded and their frequency of occurrence.

Table 10: Frequency of program barriers and problems by thematic category

<b>Thematic Categories of Barriers and Problems</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
a. Getting books and bags back from families	5
b. Record keeping and organization	5
c. Loss/damage—actual and also fear of	4
d. Not enough Spanish books—both variety and number of books	4
e. Time (e.g., time to familiarize self with materials, time to pick up books)	3
f. Ran out of books	2
g. Surveys in English only	1
h. Therapists not having access to bags	1

i. No Braille books	1
j. Completing the partner survey	1
k. No barriers listed	9

A variety of barriers were listed but none were mentioned so often to be cause for concern. Retrieving books from families who misplace them and can't find them during a visit was mentioned five times. And five respondents mentioned having trouble keeping records of each family's current bag in their possession and those bags that they had received in the past. Actual loss/damage or fear of it were mentioned four times as were not having enough Spanish books. Time was not mentioned often at all. This is a positive finding since if the program were too time intensive it would most likely encounter significant resistance from partners. All of the other barriers were rarely mentioned, most only once. But they are listed to show the wide range of barriers that came to respondents' minds as they completed the survey. Some of the barriers in table 10 can be addressed by the ICfL, but some cannot. For example, therapists not having access to the books is a local decision and thus the ICfL has no control over that barrier.

Respondents were asked "What is needed to avoid or overcome these barriers and problems. Please explain." Only seven provided responses. More time was mentioned twice. Two people mentioned the need for more Spanish books, books in Braille, and more bins to cover demand. Similarly, one respondent mentioned needing a tub with new books because it appears that some families had read all of the books in a tub multiple times and thus needed new books to read. All of the following were mentioned once: better memory, more effort from partner, and having a better understanding of how to request replacement books and bags. All of the suggestions for overcoming barriers appear reasonable but none were mentioned often enough to require action. It appears that the program generates very few barriers. This is a positive finding and further underscores the assertion that the ICfL is adept at developing and administering at scale effective, user-friendly programs.

Suggestions for improvements were also solicited on the survey. Seventeen respondents either said none or left the question blank. Table 11 provides the improvements that were provided in thematic categories along with their frequency of occurrence.

Table 11: Frequency of suggested program improvements by thematic category

<b>Thematic Categories of Suggested Improvements</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
a. Books (e.g., tactile books, board books only, action books, Braille, Spanish)	6
b. Compliments about program (e.g., great, awesome)	2
c. Library (e.g., list of local libraries to distribute to families, community event at library to introduce families to resources)	2
d. No suggestions listed	17

Other suggestions that were mentioned only once follow:

- Put the partner survey online
- Parents remain concerned about loss/damage
- Make the program available to all families—instead of Netflix have Bookflix
- Most families already have a lot of books in their homes

Not many suggestions were received and except for those related to books most were mentioned only one or two times. Because of the low number of suggestions and the lack of a clear focus

concerning them, they remain interesting but they do not provide enough information to initiate or guide program changes at this time.

Anecdotes were requested. Only three were provided. They follow:

“One bilingual family I work with tells me everytime I come to visit about one or more of the books in their previous bag and how she—the mom—remembers a book from her childhood or the book had a song in it which her mother or grandmother had sung to her. She always tells me how good it is to have that part of her culture shared with her daughter.”

“An illiterate father became confident in looking at and talking with his child while using the books. He had fun making the animal sounds with his child. Focused on enjoyment of books together. Positive experience for them.”

“BTG helped with language development with a child who’s family had little resources and had difficulty going to the library. These books brought the “library” to their home.”

All of these illustrate the potential for *BTG* to have immediate and important impacts on the family. Perhaps a goal for the program should be to work toward having as many partners as possible have anecdotes like those listed above. If more were to have them, it would be a strong additional indicator that the program was achieving success at most sites.

The final question on the survey asked for additional comments. Only seven comments were received. They follow:

“Some families have had the same book, but lost it, or didn’t have it. Parents are happy they don’t have to pay a late fee.”

“I love the “Books to Go” program! I am a big advocate for literacy development and this program helps families as most families are unable to go to their local library.”

“non us citizens now have books in home when they are not able to get library card. Increased use of English language.”

“I have not used Books to Go but now that I am more familiar with the program and remember that it is available, I will use it often.”

“language and family interaction”

“Parents have seen improvement in attention span & communication.”

“Thanks!”

The comments are diverse in content but when taken together they reveal that the program has important impacts on families.

### Brief Summary and Recommendations

The *Infant Toddler Books to Go* program was quite successful. It is another example of a large-scale, state-wide ICfL developed and implemented program that was very well executed. The selection of books was excellent. The program stimulated more reading in homes and more interaction around books, along with other important behavior changes. The program appears to be especially effective at stimulating *Bookworm* use in the home. Following are some recommendations for the program:

- Approximately a third of the case workers who took *BTG* into the homes reported never or rarely using the books during their home visits, and even higher numbers reported never or rarely using the *Bookworm*. Additional research is needed to ascertain why these particular case workers did not utilize the materials. It might be that their home visits are quite scripted and already full of tasks needing completion so the addition of books and literacy-related activities is not possible because of time constraints. It could also be that the case workers do not know how to incorporate the materials into their home visits. Additional research might answer these questions.
- This particular group of respondents' relationships with their sponsoring libraries were less positive than what has been found in previous *BTG* and other ICfL program evaluations. This is not to say that the relationships were negative. They were not, but instead they were overall less positive. The relationship between partners and libraries is a critical component to the *BTG* program. Thus the ICfL might consider doing some follow-up work to ascertain whether a problem exists and if so its nature and scope.