

Brief Report
First Book 2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011
Analysis of Longitudinal Data

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Introduction

The purpose of this brief report is to highlight any significant changes or trends in the evaluation data collected from the First Book program sponsored by the Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICFL). Parent/caregiver surveys administered at the end of the nine month cycle of book distributions are the focus of this report. Key tables are provided showing results from three years of program implementation. These results are discussed and recommendations are provided.

Results

The primary goal of First Book is to get high-quality, age-appropriate books in children's hands who might not otherwise have access to such books. An additional goal of significant importance is to educate parents and caregivers about early literacy skills and how they can help their child acquire and practice these skills. Table 1 lists important behaviors that parents and caregivers can do with their child. The survey asks respondents to choose "Yes" or "No" concerning whether or not their child's participation in the First Book program caused the listed change in behavior. The percentage of "Yes" responses is provided in the table for three years of program implementation.

Table 1: Parent/Caregiver Changes in Reading Behaviors with Their Children: Percentage of "Yes" Responses

As a result of the First Book program, I	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
	Yes	Yes	Yes
a. spend more time reading with my child/children.	94.1* (307)	93.8 (532)	94.7 (1177)
b. spend more time talking with my child/children about the books I read to them.	91.9 (308)	91.9 (532)	92.4 (1173)
c. spend more time singing with my child/children.	59.5 (304)	58.2 (526)	62.5 (1164)
d. spend more time playing rhyming games with my child/children.	67.3 (309)	69.1 (530)	74.7 (1164)
e. am more likely to use the library to check out books.	85.3 (306)	79.0 (525)	81.7 (1156)
f. am more likely to attend programs at the library.	71.9 (303)	69.5 (522)	76.0 (1156)
g. am more aware of good books to share with my child/children.	96.1 (307)	93.0 (531)	92.9 (1164)
New h. am more knowledgeable about the six early literacy skills.			78.3 (1122)
<i>If you <u>only</u> have a child/children age 0-2, please skip to question #4.</i>			
Old h. am more likely to ask my child/children questions that will prompt a retelling of a story.	94.2 (259)	89.0 (527)	93.4 (1053)
i. spend more time "playing" with letters with my	83.0	79.2	86.8

child/children.	(277)	(529)	(1075)
j. show my child/children the print in signs.	73.3 (277)	69.5 (525)	80.5 (1058)

* Percentage of all respondents who marked “Yes.” Below this in () is the total number of respondents to this statement.

An example will assure that Table 1 is being interpreted correctly. Where row a and the 2008-2009 column intersect 94.1% of 307 total respondents marked “Yes” on the survey concerning their spending more time reading with their child as a consequence of participation in the First Book program. All the other cells in the table are interpreted in the same way.

Table 2 provides brief comments about trends in the data listed in Table 1. Further discussion of Table 1 data is provided below Table 2.

Table 2: Parent/Caregiver Changes in Reading Behaviors with Their Children: Comments by Item

As a result of the First Book program, I	
a. spend more time reading with my child/children.	The percentage of “Yes” responses has remained quite constant. Having such a high percentage of respondents report increases in reading to their child as a consequence of the program is an exceptionally positive finding. There is probably little room for improvement since the percentages are already so high.
b. spend more time talking with my child/children about the books I read to them.	The percentage of “Yes” responses has remained quite constant. Having such a high percentage of respondents report increases in talking about books read to their child as a consequence of the program is an exceptionally positive finding. There is probably little room for improvement since the percentages are already so high.
c. spend more time singing with my child/children.	The percentage of “Yes” responses has remained quite constant. There is room for improvement, however, since only about 60% of respondents say “Yes.”
d. spend more time playing rhyming games with my child/children.	There might be an emerging up trend, albeit a small one. Additional years of data are needed to establish the trend. There is room for improvement, however, since only about 70% of respondents say “Yes.”
e. am more likely to use the library to check out books.	The percentage of “Yes” responses has varied some and appears to be centered somewhere in the low to mid 80’s. There is some room for improvement, however, since it is probably possible to push the percentage into the 90’s.
f. am more likely to attend programs at the library.	The percentage of “Yes” responses has varied some and appears to be centered somewhere in the low to mid 70’s. There is room for improvement, however, since it is probably possible to push the percentage into the 90’s.
g. am more aware of good	The percentage of “Yes” responses has remained quite

books to share with my child/children.	constant. Having such a high percentage of respondents report greater awareness of good books as a consequence of the program is an exceptionally positive finding. There is probably little room for improvement since the percentages are already so high.
New h. am more knowledgeable about the six early literacy skills.	Only one year of data is available for this particular statement, but achieving 78% “Yes” responses from a very large sample is excellent given that First Book parents/caregivers have little contact with librarians who could formally teach them the six skills. There is some room for improvement, however, since it is probably possible to push the percentage into the 90’s.
<i>If you <u>only</u> have a child/children age 0-2, please skip to question #4.</i> Old h. am more likely to ask my child/children questions that will prompt a retelling of a story.	The percentage of “Yes” responses has varied some and appears to be centered somewhere in the low 90’s. Having such a high percentage of respondents report increases in asking questions that prompt a retelling as a consequence of the program is an exceptionally positive finding. There is probably little room for improvement since the percentages are already so high.
i. spend more time “playing” with letters with my child/children.	The percentage of “Yes” responses has varied some and appears to be centered somewhere in the low to mid 80’s. There is only limited room for improvement, however, since it is probably possible to push the percentage into the 90’s.
j. show my child/children the print in signs.	This item shows the greatest variability and is thus difficult to ascertain a trend. The percentage of “Yes” responses increased substantially for 2010-2011 but additional years of data are needed to establish the stability of this higher threshold.

The impact on parent/caregiver behaviors is quite striking. The more so since the evidence is sustained over three years of program implementation. The ICFL may want to examine those items where growth is still possible and strategize about how the program can be adjusted or augmented to establish upward trends.

Table 3 provides longitudinal data concerning how useful parents/caregivers found various aspects of the First Book program. Response options included “Very Useful, Useful, or Not Useful.” Table 3 provides the percentages of “Very Useful” responses.

Table 3: Usefulness of Information: Percentage of “Very Useful” Responses

Please rate the following for usefulness:	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
	Very Useful	Very Useful	Very Useful
a. Learning about great books for my child/children.	72.8* (305)	73.0 (529)	74.1 (1141)
b. Learning things I can do at home to help my	68.7	68.9	70.6

child/children get ready to read.	(307)	(531)	(1145)
c. Learning rhymes and songs that will help my child develop early literacy skills.	60.5 (304)	63.1 (531)	64.3 (1141)
d. Learning about library resources I can use with my child/children.	56.5 (306)	61.9 (530)	62.4 (1130)
e. The free books provided.	88.2 (306)	86.3 (531)	86.3 (1136)
f. The Bookworm Newsletter.	56.7 (298)	57.4 (521)	62.5 (1136)
New g. The Family Reading Partnerships 2011 calendar provided.			58.5 (1089)
Old g. Please list other aspects of the First Book program and rate them for usefulness:	100 (25)	94.7 (38)	86.4 (59)

* * Percentage of all respondents who marked Yes. Below this in () is the total number of respondents to this statement.

An example will assure that Table 3 is being interpreted correctly. Where row a and the 2008-2009 column intersect 72.8% of 305 total respondents marked “Very Useful” on the survey concerning their learning about great books for their children. All the other cells in the table are interpreted in the same way.

Table 4 provides brief comments about trends in the data listed in Table 3. Further discussion of Table 3 data is provided below Table 4. It is important to note that Table 3 provides the percentage of respondents marking “Very Useful.” It does not provide the percentages for “Useful” and “Not Useful” responses. Very few respondents marked “Not Useful” for any of the items in Table 3 across the three years of data collection. For example, during 2010-2011, item g, “The Family Reading Partnerships 2011 calendar provided,” received 5.1% “Not Useful” responses. Items c and d received 2.4% and 2.2% respectively. All other items had less than 1% “Not Useful” responses. The previous two years of data had even lower percentages of “Not Useful” responses. Thus the vast majority of responses were “Very Useful” and “Useful.” Across all three years of data collection, the “Very Useful” and “Useful” categories captured 95% or more of the responses for all of the items. Both of these categories should be considered positive responses so when it is mentioned in Table 4 that room for growth remains, this should not in any way be taken as a negative judgment. A matter of fact, having such high percentages of respondents in the “Very Useful” and “Useful” categories may make it difficult to increase the percentages in the “Very Useful” category since the distinction between something being “Useful” and “Very Useful” is not as clear as it is for something being “Not Useful” and “Useful.” In short, if more respondents had marked “Not Useful,” the ICFL would have clear targets for improvement to address, but with so few in this category, the potential for improvement is not as clear.

Table 4: Parent/Caregiver Ratings of Usefulness: Comments by Item

Please rate the following for usefulness:	
a. Learning about great books for my child/children.	Probable sideways trend but additional years of data are needed for confirmation. There is room

	for growth.
b. Learning things I can do at home to help my child/children get ready to read.	Probable sideways trend but additional years of data are needed for confirmation. There is room for growth.
c. Learning rhymes and songs that will help my child develop early literacy skills.	There might be an emerging up trend, albeit a small one, but additional years of data are needed to establish the trend. There is room for improvement.
d. Learning about library resources I can use with my child/children.	There might be an emerging up trend, albeit a small one, but additional years of data are needed to establish the trend. There is room for improvement.
e. The free books provided.	The percentage of “Very Useful” responses has remained quite constant. Having such a high percentage of respondents marking “Very Useful” is an exceptionally positive finding. There is probably little room for improvement since the percentages are already so high.
f. The Bookworm Newsletter.	There might be an emerging up trend, albeit a small one, but additional years of data are needed to establish the trend. There is room for improvement.
New g. The Family Reading Partnerships 2011 calendar provided.	Only one year of data is available on this particular statement. There is room for improvement.
Old g. Please list other aspects of the First Book program and rate them for usefulness:	Very few respondents complete this item so insufficient data is available for analysis.

As was discussed above, just how much growth is possible on these items remains to be seen given that virtually all responses fall in the “Very Useful” and “Useful” categories. It is clearly obvious that respondents find the free books provided “Very Useful” and greatly appreciate them. Perhaps, the ICFL might want to target some of the items in Table 3 that have room for growth to see if new incentives, materials, or programming impacts the response profiles, but with so many people finding the items to be “Very Useful” and “Useful” these efforts should probably not be a high priority if scarce resources are needed elsewhere.

During 2010-2011 the ICFL provided a free book and CD of children’s songs to First Book parents and caregivers. The adults were required to stop by the sponsoring public library and pick up the materials. The purpose of the give-away was to foster parent/caregivers singing with their children. Previous program evaluations, both of First Book and other ICFL early literacy programs, had shown that parents/caregivers were not as apt to sing with their children when compared to other early literacy behaviors. The ICFL responded to this finding in several ways and the free book and CD of children’s songs was one of their responses. To assess whether or not parents/caregivers found the book and CD useful, two questions were asked on the exit survey: (1) “Did you pick-up

from your local library a free book and CD called *The Best of Wee Sing?*” and (2) “If you responded Yes, please answer the following: How useful were the book and CD?” The second question had as responses “Very Useful, Useful, and Not Useful.” The results for these two questions follow.

There were 1,092 respondents to the first question asking if the book and CD had been picked up. Of these 313 or 28.6% said “Yes” meaning that they had picked up the materials. It follows that 779 or 71.1% responded “No” and thus did not pick up the book and CD. Having only a little more than a quarter of respondents take advantage of the free materials is disappointing but probably understandable in hindsight. Parents and caregivers are busy and dropping by the library may be difficult for some to do. Also, historically, survey items asking parents/caregivers about singing with their children receive some of the lowest percentages of “Yes” and “Very Useful” responses of all the survey items. It may be that the low number of respondents who picked up the book and CD is another piece of evidence showing that this group of parents and caregivers is not that interested or motivated to sing with their children. It is recommended that the ICFL continue their efforts to increase the number of respondents who sing with their children.

If respondents reported that they had picked up the book and CD the second question asked them to rate the usefulness of the materials. There were three choices: “Very Useful, Useful, and Not Useful.” Three hundred and twelve respondents completed this question. This represents all but one of the 313 respondents who said that they had picked up the materials. Two hundred and twelve rated the materials as “Very Useful.” This is 67.9% of the respondents to this question. Ninety-five respondents or 30.4% rated the materials “Useful,” and five or 1.6% said they were “Not Useful.” Virtually everyone who received the materials rated them either “Very Useful” or “Useful” with two thirds of respondents being in the “Very Useful” category. This is a very positive finding, but one that is not easily generalized to the entire group of respondents. Only 28.6% of respondents picked up the materials. How representative they are of the entire group of respondents is not known.

What this outreach effort underscores is how difficult it is to get parents and caregivers to spend more time singing and interacting with their children using children’s songs. Several years ago, shortly after initial program evaluation data revealed this behavior being less frequent when compared to other early literacy behaviors, the ICFL produced an instructional pamphlet about singing to your children and distributed it widely to local libraries with Read to Me programs. The ICFL also provided professional development to local library staff concerning the importance of emphasizing and modeling singing with children. Neither of these efforts resulted in meaningful increases in this important behavior by parents and caregivers. The next step in these ongoing efforts was providing the above mentioned book and CD. Again, no appreciable changes in the behaviors occurred. Table 1 above shows that singing with children remains the lowest reported behavior change, and Table 3 above shows learning about songs and rhymes having some of the lowest percentages of “Very Useful” responses. What can be done at this point is difficult to say, but it might be useful to convene focus groups of parents and caregivers to probe more deeply as to why they are reluctant to engage in more singing with their children.

Respondents were asked if they attended a reading event hosted by their local public library during the year in which the book distributions occurred. This was a “Yes”

or “No” question. Table 5 provides the results over the past three years of program implementation.

Table 5: Attendance at Reading Event: Percentages and Frequencies of Responses

Response	Yes		No	
Year	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency
2008-2009 (n=308)*	37.3	115	62.7	193
2009-2010 (n=534)	26.2	140	73.8	394
2010-2011 (n=1104)	31.8	351	68.2	753

* Number of people responding to question

An example of how to interpret Table 5 will assure accurate interpretation of the data. Please look across the row labeled 2008-2009. There were a total of 308 respondents to this question. Of these, 115 marked “Yes” which was 37.3% of all the responses and 193 marked “No” which was 62.7% of all responses. The remaining rows are interpreted the same way.

No dramatic increases nor decreases occurred in the number of respondents reporting attending a reading event hosted by their library. The percentage of “Yes” responses has remained relatively low across the three years of data. A recommendation is for the ICFL to continue trying incentive programs and other means to increase this percentage since a secondary goal of the First Book program is to increase library usage by the parents and caregivers of First Book children.

Respondents were also asked that if they did attend a reading event did they learn new and useful information at the event. This was also a “Yes” or “No” question. Table 6 provides the results over the past three years of program implementation.

Table 6: Learn Useful Information: Percentages and Frequencies of Responses

Response	Yes		No	
Year	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency
2008-2009 (n=107)*	89.7	96	10.3	11
2009-2010 (n=129)	96.1	124	3.9	5
2010-2011 (n=342)	86.0	294	14.0	48

* Number of people responding to question

An example of how to interpret Table 6 will assure accurate interpretation of the data. Please look across the row labeled 2008-2009. There were a total of 107 respondents to this question. Of these, 96 marked “Yes” which was 89.7% of all the responses and 11 marked “No” which was 10.3% of all responses. The remaining rows are interpreted the same way.

The percentages of “Yes” responses is quite high for all three years. This is a positive finding since providing an event that results in new and useful information for participants is critically important for continued participation in such events. It is interesting to note, however, that 96.1% of respondents during 2009-2010 marked “Yes” which is substantially higher than the other two years. If the percentages begin to hold in the mid to high 80’s in the coming two or three years, then the ICFL may want to reflect on 2009-2010 when 96.1% of respondents said “Yes.” It may be that such a high “Yes”

response rate was due to the nature of the library events First Book parents and caregivers attended that year which might provide valuable information for the types of events First Book parents and caregivers find the most valuable. It is important to mention also that the spike in “Yes” responses during 2009-2010 could just be random variation.

Respondents were asked “When was the last time you visited your public library?” Table 7 shows the response options and the data for the two years of program implementation where data is available.

Table 7: When was Your Last Visit: Percentages and Frequencies of Responses

Response	2009-2010 (n=502)*	2010-2011 (n=1128)
Within the past week	30.9 (155)*	27.6 (311)
Within the past month	27.3 (137)	34.0 (384)
Within the past six months	18.3 (92)	19.9 (224)
Within the past year	11.6 (58)	8.9 (100)
More than two years ago	12.0 (60)	9.7 (109)

* n is the total number of responses to this question.

** The first number is the percentage of responses in this category. The number in () is the number of responses which fell in this category.

Again no major shifts occurred in responses across the two years. A somewhat higher percentage of the 2010-2011 respondents had visited the library within the past month but the increase was not great. Overall, the two years of data show that roughly 60% of respondents had visited the library within the past week or month showing that many First Book survey respondents are quite regular library users. There remains, however, a sizable percentage of respondents, roughly 40%, who seldom visit the library. The ICFL may want to strategize how to leverage First Book participation into more library visits by those who historically don’t patronize their local library.

Respondents were asked “Overall, how satisfied were you with the First Book program?” Response options included “Very Satisfied, Satisfied, and Not Satisfied.” Table 8 provides the results for the past three years of program implementation.

Table 8: Parent Satisfaction with First Book Program: Percentages and Frequencies of Responses

Question	Year	VS*	S	NS
Overall, how satisfied were you with the First Book program? (n=304; n=517; n=1130)**	2008-2009	83.6*** (254)	16.4 (50)	0 (0)
	2009-2010	77.4 (400)	22.6 (117)	0 (0)
	2010-2011	77.3 (873)	22.5 (255)	.2 (2)

* VS=Very Satisfied; S=Satisfied; NS=Not Satisfied

** n is the total number of respondents. The first number is for 2008-2009, the second for 2009-2010, and the third for 2010-2011.

*** The percentage of respondents marking this category is on top. The number of respondents marking this category is underneath in ().

Over the past three years, virtually no respondents reported being “Not Satisfied” with the First Book program. This is a very positive outcome. Having only two of nearly 2,000 total respondents over three years mark “Not Satisfied” is striking to say the least. Obviously, this, like the other ICFL sponsored early literacy programs, is an extremely well-managed and effectively delivered program that experiences very high positive regard from virtually all participants.

As previously stated, the primary goal of First Book is to distribute high quality children’s books to children who might not otherwise have access to such books and then stimulate reading and talking about those books by parents and caregivers, but a secondary goal is to increase library use by First Book families. Respondents were asked to check one of the following statements:

_____ I received a library card as a result of the First Book program.

_____ I already had a library card before this program.

_____ I did not get a library card.

Table 9 provides the responses to this list of items for the past three years.

Table 9: Library Card Status of Respondents (2008-2009: n=299; 2009-2010: n=516; 2010-2011: n=1120)*

Statement	Response Percentage & (Frequency) 2008-2009	Response Percentage & (Frequency) 2009-2010	Response Percentage & (Frequency) 2010-2011
1. I received a library card as a result of the First Book program.	10.0** (30)	10.1 (52)	9.7 (109)
2. I already had a library card before this program.	67.9 (203)	68.0 (351)	70.2 (786)
3. I did not get a library card.	22.1 (66)	21.9 (113)	20.1 (225)

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

** Number on top is the percentage of respondents marking this particular item. Number below in () is the number of people who marked this item.

No appreciable shifts in response percentages occurred across the three years. Roughly 10% of respondents received a library card as a result of the First Book program. This is a very positive finding since librarians have only minimal contact with First Book parents and caregivers. But on the other hand, for each of the three years roughly 20% of respondents did not get a library card. If these respondents were to receive library cards, fully one third of respondents would have received a library card as a result of the First Book program. The ICFL may want to set a goal for increasing the number of cards issued and discuss incentive programs and other means to accomplish the goal.

Summary and Recommendations

It is important to note that the First Book program was greatly expanded during the 2010-2011 implementation year. But even with this significant expansion the overwhelmingly positive evaluation of the program by respondents held firm. This shows that a much expanded program can retain quality while also reaching much larger numbers of children, parents, and caregivers.

The longitudinal data shows that the First Book program is highly regarded by parent and caregiver participants. This high regard is consistent across multiple years of program implementation. Although there remains room for growth on some of the survey items, no item has what would be considered a low rating. Indeed, all items have quite positive response profiles, and importantly, there are a number of items where further growth is not likely since participants' ratings on these particular items are so consistently high. For the ICFL, participating libraries, and First Book partners this is a wonderful position to be in. The data shows that a strong foundation of consistently high performance has been established and maintained while also revealing specific areas of strength and areas where additional improvements are possible. Following are recommendations derived from the longitudinal data analyses:

- The impact on parent/caregiver behaviors is quite striking. The more so since the evidence is sustained over three years of program implementation. The ICFL may want to examine those items where growth is still possible and strategize about how the program can be adjusted or augmented to establish upward trends.
- It is recommended that the ICFL continue their efforts to increase the number of respondents who sing with their children. Given the intractable nature of this problem, what can be done at this point is difficult to say, but it might be useful to convene focus groups of parents and caregivers to probe more deeply as to why they are reluctant to engage in more singing with their children.
- A secondary goal of the First Book program is to increase library usage by the parents and caregivers of First Book children. There remain, however, a sizable percentage of respondents, roughly 40%, who seldom visit the library. A recommendation is for the ICFL to strategize how to leverage First Book participation into more library visits by those who historically don't patronize their local library.
- For each of the three years roughly 20% of respondents did not receive a library card. If these respondents were to receive library cards, fully one third of respondents would have done so as a result of the First Book program. The ICFL may want to explore ways to increase the number of library cards issued to First Book participants.