Routes to Reading: *Books to Go*

Wave I Program Evaluation Report

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Running Head: *Books to Go* Wave I Evaluation Report

Executive Summary

   Books to Go is a new program developed and sponsored by the Idaho Commission for Libraries (IC*f*L) and funded through a grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services. Local public libraries partner with the IC*f*L 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.

   This report provides the results of a program evaluation of Wave I of the *Books to Go* program. The evaluation period began January, 2013 and ended May, 2013. Data sources included surveys, records of check outs, end-of-program reports submitted by libraries, and a quasi-experimental study. Results revealed the following:

Parents/Caregivers Results:
- There was a range of book bag check out rates at sites. At some all or nearly all children checked out bags while at others few did so.
- 87% reported reading all four books in the bag. Only 4% reported reading two or less in a bag. Parents/caregivers gave high praise for book quality and appropriateness.
- Over 80% reported reading more to their children and talking more with their children as a consequence of the program. These results are quite similar to findings from previous *Read to Me* program evaluations.
- 58% reported doing extension activities that were included in each bag of books. This is a higher percentage than previous findings from other *Read to Me* program evaluations.
- 56% reported checking out books each week or more often.
- Large majorities rated the *Books to Go* program as being very useful and 88% were very satisfied with the program with only one reporting being not satisfied.
- Very few respondents made use of online resources at their public libraries.

Partner Sites (i.e., daycares, preschools, Head Starts, etc.) Results:
- 85% said that it was very likely they would continue using the program.
- 54% used the books in their curricula and instruction on a daily or weekly basis.
- 73% rated their relationship with their library as excellent and one each (5.3%) rated their relationship as good or neutral. No one rated their relationship as poor.
- 73% rated their experience as excellent, six (23.1%) as good, and one (3.8%) as neutral. No one rated their overall experience as poor.
- Sites reported numerous successes with a common one being children and their parents/caregivers became excited about books.
- Few barriers to success were reported. Increasing parent participation was the most common.

Library Results:

- Libraries reported spending from 1-5 hours per month on average on the program. The most common amounts of time spent on average during a month were 1-1.5 hours. All 22 respondents said that the amount of time spent was just right. None said it was too much.
- Although some book loss and damage did occur, they were not significant problems.
- Half or more of the respondents rated their relationships and experiences with their partners as excellent. The majority of the remaining responses were good. Only two rated their working relationships as neutral and none rated theirs poor.
- Reported benefits to libraries and communities included a variety of things some of which were providing increased access to books, enhanced partner & community relationships, and happy parents/caregivers, children, & teachers.

Quasi-experimental Study Results:
- Although all groups (i.e., *Books to Go* only, *My First Books* only, *Books to Go & My First Books*, and Control Condition) all made statistically and practically significant gains pre to post on the *Get Ready to Read!—Revised* screener, there was no statistically significant difference in pretest to posttest growth between the groups. In other words, the *Books to Go* treatment did not lead to greater increases or decreases in growth when compared to the other conditions. In conclusion, there is no evidence at this time supporting the research hypothesis that children receiving the *Books to Go* program will perform better on the *Get Ready to Read!—Revised* screener.

Introduction

 Books to Go is a new program developed and sponsored by the Idaho Commission for Libraries (IC*f*L) and funded through a grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services. Local public libraries partner with the IC*f*L 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 phonemic 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. To date, tubs have been placed in private daycares, private preschools, Head Start/Early Head Start centers, and public school developmental preschool programs.

 Wave I of the *Books to Go* program launched in November and December of 2012 and ended in June, 2013. Wave II started in fall, 2013 and will conclude in late spring or early summer, 2014. This report covers only results from a program evaluation of Wave I. A subsequent report will be produced for Wave II during fall, 2014. The Wave I 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. Libraries also submitted check out sheets that were included in each tub of books. These sheets showed when bags were checked out and checked in and which child took the particular bag of books home. And finally, a quasi-experimental design study was conducted of multiple *Books to Go* sites to compare effects to the *My First Books* program and a control condition. 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 quasi-experiment. A third and final section provides conclusions and recommendations.

Section 1: Survey Results

*Books to Go* Check Out Sheets: Analysis of Results

How fully utilized the tubs were is an important question. Standardized check out sheets were provided with each tub and parents/caregivers were asked to sign book bags out and in at partner sites, providing check out and check in dates. Seven of the 27 participating libraries returned check out sheets. These were from eight of the 44 *Books to Go* partner sites. One set of check out sheets was not attributable to a library or a particular partner site, but from the children's names on the sheets it could be assumed that it came from a single partner site. Of the identifiable partner sites, four were Head Starts and three were public school developmental preschools. Within the eight partner sites, 13 distinct classrooms were identifiable by examining the children's names or in a few instances the sheets were labeled by teacher name or program (e.g., AM Head Start/Ms S.). This is a small number of libraries and a small number of partners so the data may not be representative of all the libraries and partners in Wave I. In the future two improvements are suggested. First, libraries should be urged to return check out sheets from all of their partners. Second, check out sheets should have prompts where partners put their names and type of program.

All of the following analyses are based on check outs that spanned a relatively short period of time, January, 2013 to early May, 2013. The short span is the consequence of the grant beginning fall, 2012. It took a couple of months during the fall to assemble the tubs and get them distributed. With only a few exceptions, check outs thus began after the start of the new year. The span in weeks for the 13 distinct classrooms/programs follows: 14, 13, 12, 12,10, 9, 9, 9, 8, 8, 8, 6, 3. The average weeks was 9.3 weeks (standard deviation=3.0).

Another important contextual variable to explore is how many different children at the partner sites checked out bags. Ideally all children at a site would participate in the program. This did occur, but in most instances not all children participated. It is important to note also that libraries were asked to provide an approximate number of children at each of their partner sites, so the percentages of children who participated at each site might not be entirely accurate. Libraries provided enrollment data for 7 of the 8 partner sites. Following is a listing of the percentages of children represented on the check out sheets for each of the 12 identifiable classrooms or programs for which there was sufficient data to do the computation: 100, 100, 86, 83, 75, 73, 64, 64, 64, 33, 23, 7. The average percentage of children who checked out books was 64% (standard deviation=29). There were three sites that had participation rates below 40% and one of these had 7% of their children check out books. In the future, *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.

A final variable of interest is how many times each bag of books was checked out. This is important because if some bags are more popular than others or if some bags are seldom checked out then the selection of books might need adjustment to maximize usage. Tubs were arranged in the following numerical order: bag numbers 1-30 English Language bags; bag numbers 31-40 Spanish/bilingual bags (not all sites had these since some did not serve English Language Learners); and bag numbers 41-43 board books. Figure 1 shows the total number of times each bag was checked out across all eight partners.

Figure 1: Frequency of check-out by bag number

Books to Go Wave I: Frequency of Book Bag Check Out
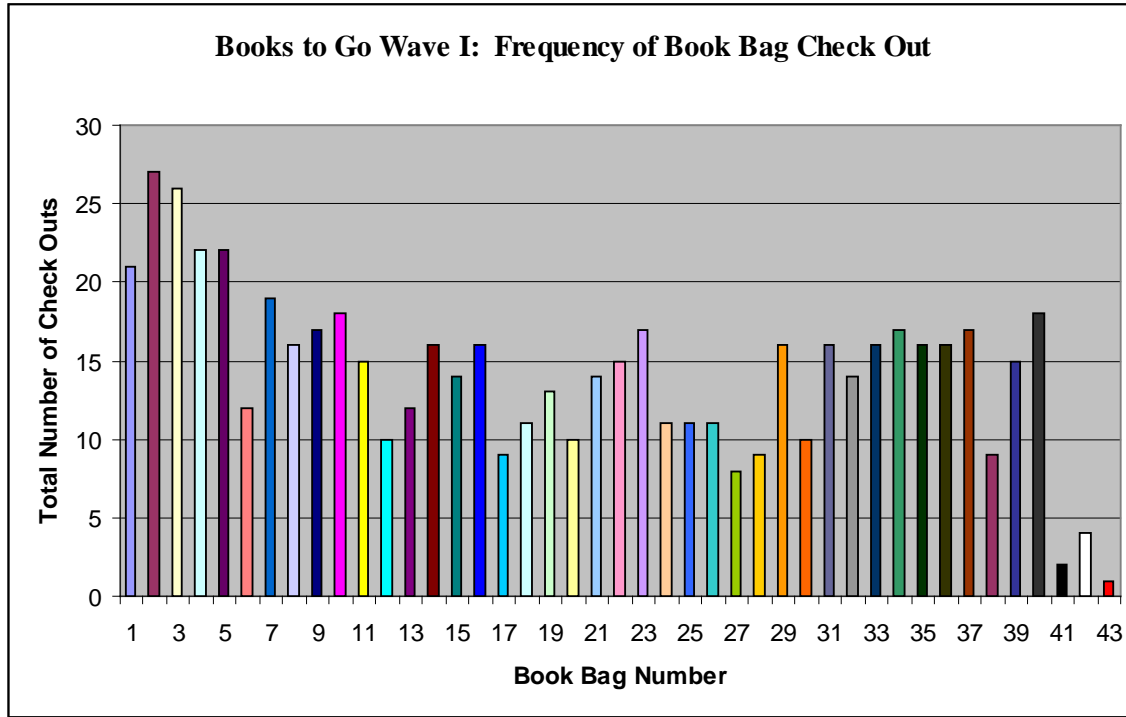
Bags 41-43 were each checked out less than five times but this may be due to these bags containing board books that were deposited in only a few sites. All of the other bags were checked out more than five times, but more data is needed from more partners and over longer periods of time to make definitive judgments about particular bags and their popularity. There is a trend, however, that needs mentioning. Assuming that bags are kept in the tubs in numerical order over time, then there is evidence that the first 10-15 bags are checked out more often than the next 10 bags or so. Check out rates then increase for the last 10 bags (roughly 31-40), which are the bags containing Spanish and bilingual books. What this might mean is that people leafing through the bags have a tendency to pick something from the front of the tub if they are looking for books in English or they go to the back of the tub if they are interested in Spanish or bilingual books. Those in the middle appear to get less attention. In the future, as more data is collected and more solid ratings of the popularity of the bags emerges, some simple experimentation might be in order to ascertain whether the books in the middle are less popular because of location or because the books are truly less well-liked than those at the front of the tub. This could be done by simply putting some of the titles that are currently in the middle of the tubs in lower numbered bags that go at the front of the tubs to see if placement influences check out rates.

It is also important to note that the Spanish/bilingual books were quite popular. This series of bags was not available at all sites yet the number of checkouts was quite high, meaning that even though fewer people had access to them they were checked out almost as often as those bags that were available to a greater number of people. There appears to be strong demand for Spanish/bilingual materials.

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. A total of 1,327 were returned. This is an impressive number given that the program was only in place three to four months during the spring of 2013 and also given the fact 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.

It is important to note that more partner sites returned Quick Surveys than returned the book bag check out sheets that were discussed immediately above. Why this occurred is not known at this time, but the larger response rate could be the result of the IC*f*L being more effective at communicating to participating libraries the need to collect the Quick Surveys than they were at communicating with the libraries the need to collect and return the check out sheets. In the future, the need for both types of information should receive equal emphasis.

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.

Table 1: Quick Surveys returned by type of site

Type of Site	Surveys Returned
a. Private Daycare or Preschool	517
b. Head Start/Even Start	381
c. School District Preschool	163
d. Other	205
e. Surveys Missing Type of Site Information	61
Total	1,327

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 because 87.4% of the respondents (n= 1,153) reported reading all four books and 8.6% (n=114) reported reading three books. Only 4% of respondents (n=52) reported reading two or fewer books in the bag. 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. But the books were overwhelmingly popular with 71.3%

of respondents (n=933) saying that their child liked all four books and 17.7% (n=232) saying three of the four books. Only 11% (n=145) said that they liked two or fewer of the books. These results clearly show that the books chosen by IC*f*L personnel were excellent choices and that IC*f*L personnel know what young children and their parents/caregivers enjoy.

The fourth question asked respondents to comment on the books. When all of the comments were put into a document they were 17 pages long. 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 the books. The following verbatim comments are representative of the tone and content of the body of comments:

- We read Barnyard Banter every night we had it and he would try to imitate the animals w/me. We read up to 4 books a night. We talk a lot anyway. I rather like this program. It helps give me more insight into what my child likes right now when we read different things other than what we have.
- 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!!
- All were cute & fun, <u>loved</u> the theme.
- We loved this program!

Having hundreds 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 2 shows the percentages and frequencies of responses for each question.

Table 2: Behavior changes reported on Quick Surveys: Percentages and frequencies of response

Question Stem: As a result of receiving this *Books to Go* bag, did you….	**Response**			
	Yes		**No**	
	%	**n**	**%**	**n**
a. increase the amount of time spent reading with your child? (n=1311)	86.7	1137	13.3	174
b. increase the amount of time spent talking with your child? (n=1303)	81.4	1060	18.6	243
c. do any of the suggested activities found in the enclosed *Bookworm*? (n=1274)	57.5	732	42.5	542

For 86.7% of respondents The *Books to Go* program increased the amount of time they spent reading with their children and for a little over 80% of respondents the program resulted in them talking more with their child. These are two highly favorable outcomes since reading to and speaking with children have been shown to be strongly correlated to children's development of early literacy skills. These percentages are similar to those found in other IC*f*L program

evaluations of *Read to Me* programs such as *My First Books*. It appears that *Books to Go* is just as successful 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. This, too, is a very positive finding. In past IC*f*L 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.

The final question was open-ended asking for additional comments. Many comments were received and these were discussed above. 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 Parent/Caregiver Surveys: Analysis of Results

Participating libraries were asked to distribute a parent/caregiver survey during late spring 2013 to all of their participating *Books to Go* sites. Fourteen libraries of the 27 returned a total of 155 surveys. Of the 155 surveys, 42.1% (n=64) were from private daycares and preschools, 30.3% (n=46) were from Head Start/Even Start programs, 12.5% (n=19) were from public school developmental preschools, and 14.5% (n=22) were from "Other" sites. The "Other" category included kindergartens and charter schools. There was one respondent that said they were a combination Head Start/Even Start *and* school district developmental preschool. Three respondents did not state from what type of program they received the *Books to Go* program. Although parent/caregiver surveys were received from all of the various types of organizations that participated in *Books to Go*, in the future resources should be applied so that all libraries return surveys and the total number of surveys increases so that results are more likely to be representative of the population of people 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. Over half (52.5%; n=73) started receiving *Books to Go* in February with January (17.3%; n=24) and March (17.3%; n=24) the other most common months. Thirteen respondents, or 9.4%, reported starting in April and one respondent started in May. There were three respondents who reported starting in December and one in October. These start times are possible because some *Books to Go* tubs were distributed as early as these months, but most did not get distributed until after the beginning of 2013. Since most parent/caregiver surveys were collected in late April and throughout May, 2013, most respondents had 3-4 months of exposure to the program.

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). A total of 211 children were represented on the 155 surveys with 35 (16.6%) newborn to two years, 129 (61.1%) preschool, and 47 (22.3%) kindergarten. Since *Books to Go* is targeted primarily at preschool children (ages 3-5), the distribution of children represented on the surveys is in keeping with program goals and shows that the IC*f*L 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 sites where tubs were placed. The IC*f*L 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 IC*f*L programs. The IC*f*L appears to have excellent mechanisms for initial training of libraries on new programs and for communicating about and monitoring their programs once they are released to libraries for implementation at the local level.

Surveys also asked respondents how often they checked out bags. One hundred and forty-three people provided this information. The choices and results were more than once each week (7.7%; n=11); once each week (48.3%; n=69); once every two weeks (25.9%; n=37), and once each month (18.2%; n=26). A final option, did not receive, was provided but no one checked it. Having 56% of respondents check out books each week or more is a positive finding. *Books to Go* is a new program so having this level of participation is an excellent outcome. A future goal might be to increase this percentage, however, since 44% of respondents checked out books less than once per week.

On most previous IC*f*L *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 the various programs. This same set of questions was asked on the *Books to Go* parent/caregiver survey for this purpose. Table 3 shows the questions and results.

Table 3: Parent/caregiver end of school year surveys: Changes in behaviors

As a result of the Books to Go program, I ……..	**Yes**	**No**	**Already did this** *regularly* **before participating in the program.**
a. spend more time reading with my child/children. (n=153)*	73.2** (112)	.7 (1)	26.1 (40)
b. spend more time talking with my child/children about the books I read to them. (n=154)	83.1 (128)	1.3 (2)	15.6 (24)
c. spend more time singing with my child/children. (n=151)	43.0 (65)	25.8 (39)	31.1 (47)
d. spend more time rhyming with my child/children (e.g., rhyming games, fingerplays that rhyme, nursery rhymes). (n=150)	66.7 (100)	13.3 (20)	20 (30)
e. am more likely to use the library to check out books. (n=151)	71.5 (108)	6.6 (10)	21.9 (33)

* n is the total number of respondents to this particular item.
** Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

It is important to restate that the number of surveys represented in Table 3 is not large so results should be cautiously interpreted, but the results are quite similar to the most recent results from the *My First Books* (*MFB*) program evaluation where a much greater number of surveys were returned. Table 4 shows a comparison of the most recent *My First Books* results to *Books to Go*.

Table 4: Parent/caregiver behaviors: Comparison of *Books to Go* to *My First Books*

As a result of the _____ program, I ………	*MFB* 2011-2012		*Books to Go* 2012-2013	
	Yes	**Already**	**Yes**	**Already**
a. spend more time reading with my child/children.	67.3* (779)	30.7 (355)	73.2 (112)	26.1 (40)
b. spend more time talking with my child/children about the books I read to them.	74.0 (881)	21.3 (253)	83.1 (128)	15.6 (24)
c. spend more time singing with my child/children.	47.5 (560)	30.0 (354)	43.0 (65)	31.1 (47)
d. spend more time rhyming with my child/children (e.g., rhyming games, fingerplays that rhyme, nursery rhymes).	66.7 (798)	18.5 (221)	66.7 (100)	20 (30)
e. am more likely to use the library to check out books.	64.1 (767)	21.2 (254)	71.5 (108)	21.9 (33)

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

What differences there are between the two programs could be the consequence of sampling error. In other words, as more data is collected from the *Books to Go* program, the similarities and differences between the two programs will become more clear. For now, however, the *Books to Go* program appears to produce quite similar results to the *My First Books* program, and in all instances the results are strongly positive. *Books to Go* results in parents/caregivers spending more time reading, talking, singing, and rhyming with their children—all important early literacy development behaviors. And just as importantly, *Books to Go* appears to be effective at getting parents/caregivers to check out books at the library.

Respondents were asked to rate the usefulness of various aspects of the *Books to Go* program. These same questions were asked on previous *Read to Me* program evaluations so, like above, comparisons can be made between these programs and *Books to Go*. Table 5 shows the questions asked and the results for *Books to Go*.

Table 5: Parent/caregiver end of school year surveys: Usefulness of aspects of *Books to Go*
* n is the total number of respondents to this particular item.
** Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

In all instances large majorities rated the *Books to Go* program as being very useful on these important outcomes. The remainder of the responses were useful with negligible numbers of respondents saying not useful. Again, these are very positive results for the program. Only 21 respondents listed "other aspects of the program" so since so few did and the responses varied the information will not be further analyzed.

Table 6 shows a comparison of the percentages and frequencies of very useful responses for the *Books to Go* program and the *My First Books* program using the most recent data from the latter.

Table 6: Usefulness of information: Comparison of *Books to Go* to *My First Books*

Please rate the following for usefulness:	*MFB* 2011-2012	*Books to Go* 2012-2013
	Very Useful	**Very Useful**
a. Learning about great books for my child/children.	76.0* (1185)	84.8 (151)
b. Learning things I can do at home to help my child/children get ready to read.	73.7 (1193)	71.5 (151)
c. Learning about library resources I can use with my child/children.	65.0 (1189)	67.3 (150)
d. The *Bookworm* Newsletter.	65.4 (1180)	62.8 (148)
e. Please list other aspects of the _____ program and rate them for usefulness:	79.2 (356)	90.5 (21)

* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ). Please note: Frequencies in this table are total number of respondents to the question, not just those responding very useful.

Similar to the comparison between *My First Books* and *Books to Go* above, very useful response percentages were quite similar across the two programs. Although there was nearly a 9% increase in very useful responses for *Books to Go* concerning learning about great books, this could be sampling error. But if such a difference holds as more parent/caregiver surveys are collected from *Books to Go*, a likely cause for the difference might be the increased number of books parent/caregivers are exposed to in the *Books to Go* program when compared to *My First Books*, where they are exposed to only nine books over the course of a nine month academic year.

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 7 provides the results.

Table 7: Parent/caregiver end of school year surveys: Library services usage rates

When was the last time you……	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? (n=150)*	28.7** (43)	23.3 (35)	21.3 (32)	9.3 (14)	8.7 (13)	8.7 (13)
b. checked out books at your public library? (n=149)	20.8 (31)	26.2 (39)	16.8 (25)	13.4 (20)	10.1 (15)	12.8 (19)
c. accessed *Tumblebooks* through your public library's web site? (n=148)	3.4 (5)	6.1 (9)	2.7 (4)	1.4 (2)	.7 (1)	85.8 (127)
d. accessed *Day by Day ID.org* through your public library's web site? (n=147)	1.4 (2)	2.0 (3)	2.7 (4)	2.0 (3)	.7 (1)	91.2 (134)

* n is the total number of respondents to this particular item.
** Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).

Having 52% of respondents visit their public library within the past month or sooner 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*. Thus

additional research is needed in the future. Checking out books is similar to visits to the public library with 47% doing so within the past month or sooner. 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 have been lower. Even though these results don't represent many *Books to Go* parents/caregivers, given the extremely large number of never responses, the IC*f*L probably needs to revisit how they are promoting these two online resources to see if more successful approaches can be developed.

A comparison to the *My First Books* program can be made here also but on only one item from Table 7: "When was the last time you visited your public library?" Table 8 shows results from this comparison.

Table 8: Last visit to public library: Comparison of *Books to Go* to *My First Books*

When was the last time you visited your public library?	*MFB* 2011-2012 (n=1149)	*Books to Go* 2012-2013 (n=150)
Within the past week	27.5 (316)	28.7 (43)
Within the past month	30.9 (353)	23.3 (35)
Within the past six months	18.5 (213)	21.3 (32)
Within the past year	12.5 (144)	9.3 (14)
More than two years ago	10.6 (122)	8.7 (13)
Never	N/A**	8.7 (13)

* Percentages are outside ( ). Frequencies are in ( ).
** Never was not a response option on the *My First Books* parent/caregiver survey.

The profiles of library usage are surprisingly similar between the two programs. Since the populations that participate in the two programs and return surveys are probably quite similar, such congruency lends credence to the assertion that the results from the relatively small *Books to Go* sample are representative of the group of people who accessed the program during spring 2013 and who were willing to return surveys.

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. Out of 152 responses to this question, almost every one was very satisfied (88.1%; n=134) with 11.2% (n=17) satisfied. Only one person reported being not satisfied. These are stellar results and compare favorably to the 2011-2012 *My First Book*s results where 80.8% (n=940) responded very satisfied and 19.2% (n=223) responded satisfied. Like the *Books to Go* program, only one *My First Books* respondent out of a total of 1,164 marked not satisfied. 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.

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. Responses were overwhelmingly

positive with 85.2% (n=127) saying that it was very likely they would continue using the program. Another 11.4% (n=17) said it was likely and only four said they were unsure and one said unlikely. There was no comparable question asked in other evaluations so no comparisons are possible here, but the results are very positive and show that for 144 out of the149 respondents who answered this question the program is something they would like to continue. *Books to Go* appears to be highly popular.

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 9 shows the results for *Books to Go* and also compares them to the data from the 2011-2012 *My First Books* program.

Table 9: Library card status of respondents: Comparison of *Books to Go* to *My First Books*

Statement	My First Books 2011-2012 (n=1141)*	Books to Go (n=155)
a. Did you or your child receive a library card as a result of the _____ program?	Self: 6.2 (71)** Child: 6.7 (77) Other: .53 (6)	Self: 5.2 (8) Child: 5.2 (8) Other: 1.3 (2)
b. We already had a library card in the family before this program.	63.8 (728)	58.7 (91)
c. We did not get a library card.	25.1 (286)	27.7 (43)

* 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. But there remains about a quarter of respondents who did not have and did not get library cards so a goal in the future should be to reduce this number.

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. There were a number of comments that were made only once such as including some harder books or including some read-along books with CD's, but most responses praised the program and expressed thanks for it. Six used terms like "great program" or "fabulous." Five said that nothing needed to change because the program was excellent as it was. Although there were not that many comments, none were negative and there was a strong theme in them of very positive regard for the program.

Books to Go 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 2013. Surveys were returned by 26 of 44 partner sites representing 11 of 27 public libraries. These are not high response rates so in the future efforts should be expended to increase these rates.

Respondents were asked the type of organization of which they were a part. There were 10 (38.5%) Head Start/Even Start programs, eight (30.8%) private daycares, three (11.5%) school district preschools, two (7.7%) private preschools, and three (11.5%) organizations that

classified themselves as "Other." The three organizations that classified themselves in the other category included a transitional kindergarten, a public elementary school, and a combination private daycare and preschool.

 Respondents also provided the number of children at their site. Twenty-one respondents provided this information. Organizations ranged in size from 6 to 88 children (mean=24.6; standard deviation=18.8). The organization that had 88 children was an outlier since the size of the next smaller center was 41. After removing this extreme value from the calculations, the mean adjusted down to 21.5 and the standard deviation dropped to 12.2.

 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 they received the *Books to Go* materials. Twenty-four of the 26 respondents provided this information. Of them, 12 (50.0%) selected February, seven (29.2%) March, four (16.7%) January, and one (4.1%) April. For some the amount of time that they worked with the program was not long, so although the information all of these respondents provided is important more definitive conclusions will be possible after Wave II of program implementation and partners have had as much as 12 months to work with the program.

 Libraries were instructed that partners should use the books and the *Bookworms* 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 10 were asked.

Table 10: Partner survey: Utilization of *Books to Go* in curricula and instruction

How often did you do each of the following?	Daily	Weekly	Twice a Month	Monthly	Rarely	Never
a. Use the *Books to Go* <u>books</u> as part of your curriculum and instruction. (n=26)*	11.5 (3)**	42.3(11)	7.7 (2)	3.8 (1)	7.7 (2)	26.9 (7)
b. Use the ideas and suggestions in the *Bookworm* in your curriculum and instruction. (n=19)	10.5 (2)	31.6 (6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	15.8 (3)	42.1 (8)

* 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. Having 54% of respondents use the books on a daily or weekly basis is a wonderful finding, but that still leaves 46% of respondents seldom if ever using the books. An important goal for the future should be to significantly decrease the percentage of partners who never use the books while moving those who seldom use them into categories representing greater use. Only 19 partners provided information about their use of the *Bookworm*. This lower response rate appears to be the consequence of a problem with the survey. Some respondents did not receive this question. About 42% used the ideas and suggestions from the *Bookwor*m daily or weekly and about 58% reported rarely or never using them. 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 to find out why sizable percentages don't use the books and even greater percentages don't use the *Bookworm* 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. Only 19 partners responded to this particular question but it appears that, like above, some respondents did not receive this question. These same seven sites did not answer the question discussed above about using the *Bookworm*. Of the 19 respondents, 17 (73.1%) rated their relationship as excellent and one each (5.3%) rated their relationship as good or neutral. No one rated their relationship as poor. The future of *Books to Go* is quite positive since it appears libraries have excellent ability to establish and maintain positive relationships with their partners.

For the next and final selected response question "Please rate your overall experience with the *Books to Go* program" all 26 answered. Nineteen (73.1%) rated their experience as excellent, six (23.1%) as good, and one (3.8%) as neutral. No one rated their overall experience as poor. These results support the assertion that if all 26 respondents had answered the questions discussed above that had lower response rates because of survey error the responses most likely would have been quite positive.

A series of open-ended questions was asked. The first being "What successes did you experience from participating in the *Books to Go* program? Why do you think these successes occurred? Please explain." Fourteen sites responded to this question and the comments were quite extensive. Twelve said that the children became excited about books and reading as a consequence of the program. Several said that 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 comment was that the program provided easy access to high-quality books for families. Nine respondents mentioned this and used words like "convenience" and "easy to use." Another common comment was that parents read more to their children, talked more to their children, and spent more quality time with their children. Seven comments like this were made. Three respondents reported that they used the books and *Bookworms* in their curriculum and instruction. Two said that they thought their partnership with their local library was successful and useful.

The rest of the comments were made by 1-4 respondents each, but when taken in aggregate they also provide a quite positive composite of the impact of the program. The comments (not verbatim) and their frequencies follow:

- Parents loved or enjoyed the program and were thankful for it (4)
- The variety of topics provided broad exposure to books for the children (3)
- Children talked with their teachers about the books that had been read to them at home (2)
- Some children had no books at home so access was critical for them (2)
- Parent involvement including Hispanic parents (2)
- Children read to their parents (1)
- Staff enjoyed the materials (1)
- Two thirds of the class checked out books at least once (1)
- Students learned new songs (1)

When all of the 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. The following quotation encapsulates the positive regard that the program engendered:

> Some of my students have <u>no</u> books in their home. These book bags were a BIG DEAL to them. The children were <u>so</u> proud to take them home and the parents were thankful for them. Everyone loved them! Children and parents felt valued and it gave them a sense of ownership. It leveled the playing field for families in poverty, in addition to spending time together reading quality literature. The wonderful books and activities helped increase and expand vocabulary. The children loved talking to each other about their favorite books and using new words, phrases from their stories. It was really fun to listen to their conversations. Families had the opportunity to talk about and practice using concepts of print. I believe <u>all</u> parents want the best for their children and want them to succeed. Often they just don't know what to do or how to help them. The *Books to Go* program really provides a wealth of information to use both when you have short or long snippets of time. It really packs it in! Parents seem to be very busy + on the go all the time. This program is a nice recipe for success for everyone! (Also provides fun memories for everyone).

The second open-ended question was "What barriers or problems did you experience from participating in the *Books to Go* program? What is needed to avoid or overcome these barriers and problems? Please explain." Thirteen of the 26 partners responded to this question. Answers were quite diverse. Four said that no barriers or problems occurred and four made comments about parent participation. For example, one respondent said that parents don't come to their center so getting them involved was difficult and one mentioned that parents didn't always feel comfortable checking out books because of the potential for loss or damage. One respondent suggested more advertising to make parents aware of the opportunity and to increase participation. Although there were not a lot of comments in this category, the comments reveal some possible areas for improvement. First, teachers can place book bags in children's' backpacks to take home even if parents don't come to the center. This may entail more work for the teachers, but if they understand the importance of increasing access to books for young children, they might be willing to spend the time. Parents feeling uncomfortable about checking out books can be addressed through better communication. The IC*f*L emphasized to participating libraries that lost or damaged books would be replaced free-of-charge. Only a few sites mentioned concerns about loss or damage, but it might have restricted utilization at these sites so making sure that everyone knows the loss and damage policy is probably quite important. The only other barrier or problem that received more than one response was check out cycles that were too long. Two partners mentioned that it took too long at times to get bags returned. One said that this was due to having too many books in a bag and the other did not provide a reason. All other comments were made only once. They follow: more baby books, lost books, need books in Spanish, need Quick Surveys in Spanish, parents did not do *Bookworm* activities, the center didn't always have children, time (didn't specify what was meant), and commotions (no elaboration). Overall there were few barriers or problems with the program and none were consistently cited by respondents. This 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 encountered shows the quality of the materials, organization, and communication from the IC*f*L down through the chain of libraries and partners.

Respondents were asked to provide suggestions for how to improve *Books to Go*. Twelve respondents answered this question. Except for six comments providing accolades for the program or stating that no improvements were needed, there was a wide variety of responses and most occurred only once. These follow with frequencies in parentheses:

- Include a space on the Quick Survey for parent/caregiver to provide the bag number so popularity of books can be measured (2)
- More baby books (1)
- As the program continues they will become better and more efficient with it (1)
- Their site did not need two tubs (1)
- Less books in each bag (1)
- Highlight *Books to Go* bags on Back to School night (1)
- Children's librarian from local city library offered to come to center and conduct an interactive workshop for parents/caregivers and children (1)
- Bags separated by topical groupings (1)
- Removed *Edwina the Emu* because some parents said that it illustrated poor parenting and low morals (1)

Since none of the suggestions occurred more than once or twice no definitive recommendations emerged, but some of the above are still worth taking into consideration since they represent some very good ideas.

Anecdotes are oftentimes excellent at providing intimate insights into the operation and outcomes of a program like *Books to Go*. Thus, respondents were asked to provide one anecdote for a specific child or family that was a consequence of the *Books to Go* program. Eight respondents provided anecdotes which follow:

- A retell through puppets on "Owl Babies" was fantastic as children re-enacted story with characters of owl finger puppets and a make-shift plant for the tree! ☺ AWESOME Resource!
- One of our students was going to be gone from school for a week. Her uncle made a special trip to come to school when she was sick to ask if he could pick up her book bag, so she wouldn't miss out on not having her books for a whole week. She and her family loved receiving new books each week. They spent a lot of time reading the books and re-reading them, in addition to doing the Bookworm activities. Going 2 weeks before receiving a new book bag was too long!
- One child checked out books often & would bring one every week for show "n" tell. She has been so excited about reading!
- Child whose Mom read thru all bags w/him now enjoys books on his own—spends time in class looking at books. This mom checked a bag out daily and is going through bags more than once. She says other siblings don't like books—but pleased that this child will pour through books & point things out to the other children.
- Busy working parents and this child would never have gotten books in their home.
- A parent said that their "Daughter loves it when we read to her."

- The children were excited to be able to check out books.
- Parent loved checking out books because it was easy to use.

The anecdotes further illustrate the positive outcomes generated by the program. They provide a more detailed look at just how the program impacted individual children and families. Not many anecdotes were provided so it is not appropriate at this time to make generalizations about the program based on them, but when they are put together with the extensive data provided thus far showing very positive regard for the program from partner sites, children, and parents/caregivers the picture of a very successful program continues to emerge and acquire clarity.

The last question on the survey asked for additional comments. Nine respondents provided comments. They follow:

- We've really enjoyed the program and can't wait until next fall to continue it.
- Allowing neighbors to have them.
- Child always wanted movies, but the take home packet replaced his TV mania.
- This program encouraged my daycare children to read and take care of books.
- One student, handing me her book bag said "Please be sure to replace these today, so I can read them tonight."
- 32 of our 41 students participated regularly in the *Books to Go* program.
- Thanks!! We have enjoyed it!!
- Thank you!
- I won't be doing daycare next fall.

Two of these comments could be considered anecdotes. The child that replaced his TV mania with books is one and the child handing the book bag back to the teacher and saying to replace them so she could read them that evening are wonderful anecdotes. The other comments are self-explanatory except for one. The person who said that they were allowing neighbors to have them did not elaborate on what was meant by neighbors or the pronoun "them." But if the book bags were being shared, which is a logical interpretation of the comment, then that is a positive outcome since the books achieved a wider audience.

Books to Go Library Surveys: Analysis of Results

Libraries submitted final reports describing their experiences with the program. Twenty-four of 27 participating libraries submitted reports.

Libraries were asked to list all of their partner sites and provide information about them. Forty-four partner sites were listed. Of these 14 (31.8%) were Head Starts, 10 (22.7%) each were private daycares and private preschools, and seven (15.9%) were school district developmental preschools. Three (6.8%) were listed in the "Other" category and these were charter schools or kindergartens. Of the 44 partner sites 20 had been previous partners with their library and 24 were new partners. 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 44 partner sites were provided. A total of 1,445 children were served by the program.

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 11 shows the frequency distribution of responses

Table 11: Library survey: Hours spent per month (n=22)

Average Hours Per Month Spent on *Books to Go*							
0 hrs.	.3 hrs.	.5 hrs.	1.0 hrs.	1.5 hrs.	2.0 hrs.	4.0 hrs.	5.0 hrs.
1	1	1	8	5	4	1	1

Twenty-two respondents provided this information. The most common amounts of time spent on average during a month was 1-1.5 hours. Thirteen (59.1%) libraries marked these categories. Six (27.3%) libraries reported spending more than 1-1.5 hours and three (13.6%) reported less. Libraries were also asked to rate whether this amount of work was too much or just right. All 22 respondents said that this amount of time each month was just right. None said it was too much work. Overall, *Books to Go* requires little librarian's time to set-up and administer. This is a positive finding since a time-intensive program away from the library itself would be difficult to sustain over time.

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?" Again, 22 libraries provided this information. Table 12 shows the number of libraries reporting various levels of lost or damaged books.

Table 12: Library survey: Number of lost or damaged books (n=22)

# of Books →	0	1	2	3	4	5	8	10	12	20	36	Don't Know
Lost	13	1	1	2				1	1	1	1	1
Damaged	15		3		1	1	1					1

Thirteen (59.1%) libraries reported no loss and 15 (68.2%) reported no damage.   These are excellent results and show that for most libraries loss and damage are not a problem. There were some libraries, however, who did report loss and damage. In the case of loss, only four libraries experienced 10 or more books. And in the case of damage, no library experienced greater than eight books. Two libraries did report 20 or more books lost so if this occurs again during Wave II of *Books to Go*, then follow-up with these libraries and the particular partner sites experiencing the relatively high loss rates would be important. Overall, loss and damage was not an issue during Wave I of the program. This is an important finding because the program is completely driven by an honor system so the potential for extensive loss and damage is there.

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." Twenty-two responded to this question. Thirteen checked storytimes, nine checked library visits, seven checked *My First Books*, seven checked deposit collections, and nine checked the other option and listed such things as library calendars to all families, math/science workshops, etc. The data shows that the program stimulated many new activities with partners that had not occurred before. This is also a positive and important finding since it shows additional evidence that the *Books to Go* program not only achieves its primary outcome

but also has a number of positive corollary outcomes. In short, the program gets a lot of 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 13 shows results from the two questions.

Table 13: Library survey: Ratings of working relationship and overall experience (n=22)

Rating →	Excellent	Good	Neutral	Poor
a. Working Relationship	54.5 (12)*	36.4 (8)	9.1 (2)	0 (0)
b. Overall Experience	50.0 (11)	36.4 (8)	9.1 (2)	4.5 (1)

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

In each case, half or more of the respondents rated their relationships and experiences as excellent. The majority of the remaining responses were good. Only two rated their working relationships as neutral and none rated theirs poor. Similarly two rated their overall experience as neutral and one rated theirs as 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?" Twenty-two libraries responded. Providing increased access to books was the most common comment made by 13 (59.1%) respondents. Two of the 13 mentioned that the *Books to Go* bags were being used over the summer. It appears one of the libraries allowed a rural family to take bags home to use over the summer months and another one gave bags to children in their summer reading program to take home. The second most common comment (11 respondents, 50.0%) was *Books to Go* increased the libraries' abilities to serve their communities. Comments in this category included such things as reaching underserved populations and experiencing increased exposure in their service areas because of the program. Three libraries (13.6%) said that more people were coming to the library and three (13.6%) mentioned they had given out more library cards as a consequence of the program. The other category of comments that emerged was things said about the program itself including ease of use (two comments; 9.1%), the high quality of the selections (one comment; 4.5%), and the thematic arrangement of the book bags (one comment; 4.5%). Finally, one respondent said the program made reading exciting for the children and one commented on how they had very little to do with the program. In this latter case, an elementary school had heard about the program through contact with the IC*f*L and had approached the library about partnering. The library had not intended to increase their outreach because of resource and staff limitations but since the school wanted the program they went ahead and sponsored it for them but had little contact with the program after that.

Respondents were asked about successes and barriers they experienced as consequence of participating in the *Books to Go* program. Successes will be discussed first followed by barriers. All but three libraries listed successes. Table 14 shows them collapsed into thematic categories with the number of successes that fell into each category. 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 14: Library survey: Successes by category and frequency (n=21)

Success Category	Frequency of Response
a. Partner & community relationships	13
b. Happy parents/caregivers, children, & teachers	12
c. Exposure & access (books, print, 6 skills, underserved)	7
d. Increased reading by parents/caregivers	5
e. High utilization of program	4
f. Increased library visits/parent interest in library	3
g. User friendly program	2
h. Partners used books in their curricula and instruction	1
i. Children who came to library talked about blue bags	1

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. Thirteen reported this as a success. A specific example was provided by one library. They reported that because of the *Books to Go* program they were invited to conduct a math/science workshop for a preschool. 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 enthusiasm for the program. Seven respondents mentioned that increased exposure and access to books, the six early literacy skills, and underserved populations were successes for them. The remaining successes listed in table 14 were not mentioned that often but when taken together they reveal a program that was very well received by participants and produced a wide variety of important successes.

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. Convenience and ease of use were the most common reasons given. Six respondents said that the program was easy for libraries and partners to implement, and five respondents said the program was convenient for parents and caregivers. Another reason given for success by six respondents was that books were readily available to children and families that don't always have convenient access to them. Teachers' positive attitudes toward the program and their promoting the book bags to children and adults were mentioned by five respondents. Three said that when partners saw the potential of the program and what the library could do for them, they came to better understand each others needs and resources and *Books to Go* became a mechanism to address the needs with available resources. And finally, two respondents mentioned that the book selection was very good and one each said that partners were active and supportive and families enjoyed the books. 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. Twenty-two libraries listed barriers. Seven said that there were none. Four mentioned communication problems with partners. These problems stemmed from not being able to make contact, not sharing diverse contact information so multiple avenues for making contact could be pursued instead of just playing phone tag, and confusion over who exactly the contact person at the partner was. One

respondent made a comment about not knowing who the teachers and caregivers were, which is similar to not being able to make contact. Families also presented barriers to success. Three respondents said families wouldn't return surveys. Two said that parents rarely came to the centers and one said that some parents did not want to participate. And according to two respondents, both partners and parents were initially reluctant to check out books because of fear of loss or damage. Three mentioned time constraints and limited resources at the library and two mentioned teacher turnover. Other barriers mentioned only once or twice each are listed below.

- Partner didn't send bags home with children.
- Partner accepted tub but then called and said it wasn't worth her time and to come and pick it up.
- Late start in school year.
- No school librarian to check out bags.
- One teacher needed an additional tub but had to wait until Wave II to receive it.
- There were not enough bags in the tub so that all children could check out a bag.
- Some partners felt they needed more Spanish and bilingual books.
- Surveys were not in Spanish.
- Some children attended two partner sites and book bags became mixed up in two separate tubs.
- All children in community were not included.

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 very nature presents logistical challenges at a number of levels. Some of the barriers can be addressed by the IC*f*L in future waves of the program by preparing libraries for the barriers they might encounter. Others can only 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. Only communication, however, was mentioned more than once or twice. Communication was mentioned in various forms by eight respondents. These comments 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. Two respondents who mentioned communication talked about the need to reassure partners and parents that they need not worry about loss and damage. Except for the seven respondents who said "none" or "nothing" and the one who said they "didn't know," all other suggestions occurred only once or twice. They follow:

- Need to reach out more and find daycares/preschools and promote the program.
- Incentives to return surveys.
- Have surveys filled out at final parent meeting of the year.
- Patience.

- Presence—a respondent wasn't able to always oversee the program so it was not attended to at times.
- Willingness to visit partner sites to pick up items such as surveys, etc.
- Make it easy for parents to know when books are coming home and when they are due back. One respondent suggested that a special day be designated for when the books go home each week.
- More organization from start.
- Start earlier in the school year.
- More time to plan program—don't add program after libraries have set their outreach programs for the year.
- Provide more Spanish/bilingual books.
- Color code bags by partner site so bags do not get mixed up when children participate at two sites.
- Help sites to see the benefits to children from the program—this success will motivate them.

All of these are excellent suggestions. In future training of libraries beginning the program, the IC*f*L should emphasize the importance of communication with both partners and parents. Emphasizing to libraries the importance of ongoing education of partners about how the program works, why it is important, positive outcomes that partners will see and how all of this can be communicated to parents/caregivers should be a part of such training. Many of the other suggestions will be automatically addressed during Wave II of the program because it will span an entire school year. Thus there should be more time for planning and implementation and for monitoring the program as it progresses during the academic year.

Libraries were asked for suggestions for improvement and 22 responded. Ten said that they didn't have any and one said they were not sure. All other suggestions were mentioned only once and they follow:

- Establish a rotational cycle for bags in bins so that new bags are available on a weekly basis. Libraries could mail the bags between them so that new bags were arriving each week.
- Lists of books in the bags so libraries can generate lists of similar books or take read-alike books to the sites when they do storytimes.
- Do data collection at end of school year because once the summer begins daycare enrollment and scheduling varies.
- Sign-up dates aren't clear.
- Surveys in Spanish for parents.
- More Spanish materials.
- A few bags with board books in them for each tub.
- More training of libraries including information about what libraries can do to help with the program.
- Offer program during summer months at the library after storytime stops and the focus changes to summer reading.
- Reduce the number of books in each bag to two—this will make it more efficient for children to return them.

- Educate parents about program expectations—books are to be returned.
- Run the program directly through the partners and don't involve libraries.

This was an interesting list of suggestions. Although none were mentioned more than once, providing surveys in Spanish and providing more books in Spanish are both quite easy to accomplish. A simple mechanism needs to be put in place at the libraries so partners can easily request such things. Similarly, the suggestion for a few bags with board books in them in each tub also makes sense for those centers where parents regularly visit. Many parents will have children of various ages so as they leaf through the tub looking for books, it is likely that they might pick board books for their younger children. Any 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 and 22 responded. Of the 22, however, not all provided an anecdote. Nine of the 22 reported not having an anecdote to share. This is somewhat problematic and may be evidence that some libraries had very little contact with their partners once the tubs had been delivered. For example, one respondent said, "I have no idea. Also I have no idea how many books were lost or damaged. None have been reported to me." Another said, "You'll have to ask the teacher." 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. Since there are only 13 anecdotes and they are of reasonable length, all of them are displayed below as they were received. Some of them are not really anecdotes but instead comments but all are included here to provide an accurate picture of what respondents said about the program:

- 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.
- 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.
- Can we do it all summer! It is so easy for me [mother] to grab a few bags and go.......................
- 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!
- 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.

- Reading the surveys that were returned, it was great to see parents comment on their child's favorite book from each bag. Some parents were very detailed in writing about their storytime experience and I think that is amazing!
- Parents and the pre-school teachers love this program!   "It was a big hit at our pre-school!"
- One parent stated that they did not feel they had time to read books, yet I noticed they had taken time not only to read the books, but to fill out the survey. Several families noted that they spent more time reading to their child as a result of the *Books to Go* program. The greatest thing I noticed was that it seemed the children initiated the reading time. This is incredible to see the children take the lead and want to read together.
- Several parents were happy to find they could check out some of the same books their children were familiar with in the classroom.
- 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.
- It would be nice to somehow really get the busy parents to take the time to read. Further education is needed to help them to understand that a reader is a leader.
- During a visit to Elm Street School (pseudonym), the children showed me some of the crafts that they were working on--snowman art--and we talked a bit about books that have snow men in them.

The anecdotes reveal some very positive outcomes from the program. When these are combined with all of the other results showing overwhelmingly positive outcomes, it becomes quite clear that the *Books to Go* program was highly successful. Not one overtly negative anecdote was reported. This is important because if the program had significant weaknesses, such as the books being inappropriate for the audience, they would have been revealed in the data and most likely would have also appeared in the anecdotes.

The last question on the survey asked for additional comments. Of the 13 libraries who responded to this question, two said, "none" and one of the comments was a note to the IC*f*L saying that additional information not included on the evaluation form would be sent later. The remaining 10 comments were of reasonable length so they are all included here just as they were received:

- This is a wonderful grant and hopefully will continue to be spread across the state for other community partners of Libraries to enjoy.
- I'm excited about this program (having just taken it over last month) and looking forward to working on the communication and relationship with our partner.
- I need to sign up another pre-school, but am not sure how or when to do it.
- Just a thank you for providing all these special programs and making it so easy to participate in.
- 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 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 IC*f*L for helping to make this happen for us.
- I love this program! It has been really good for our school and the library.
- Love the idea of the program and thanks for offering it! We just weren't well prepared for it this year.
- I felt like I need to be in better contact with all of our partners next year.

The comments were quite positive with most providing thanks and/or praising the program and the IC*f*L. This is quite common when IC*f*L sponsored programs are evaluated but even though such sentiments are quite common they remain important. This is because IC*f*L programs are underpinned and driven by their consistently high quality and the large amount of goodwill the IC*f*L has developed with libraries all around the state. So each time additional evidence accrues that this "status quo" is alive and well, it is important information.

Section 2: Pretest-Posttest Quasi-Experimental Design Evaluation Study of *Books to Go* Sites
Wave I 2012-2013

A pretest-posttest quasi-experimental evaluation study was conducted during Wave I of the *Books to Go* project. This same design will be employed again during Wave II which began fall 2013 and will end spring of 2014. The design utilized the following groups: *Books to Go* only, *Books to Go* plus *My First Books*, *My First Books* only, and Control . *My First Books* is a long-running, popular, and effective IC*f*L program that has been widely implemented in Idaho. *My First Books* provides low income children one book per month for the nine months of the school year for them to take home and keep. The books are high-quality, age-appropriate children's books that librarians deliver to participating sites each month. Usually the librarians do a story time showcasing the book. Prior program evaluations of the *My First Books* program have shown the program to be highly popular and effective at changing parent/caregiver early literacy behaviors in the home, including increasing the amount of time parents/caregivers spend reading to their children. It was thus deemed important to control for the *My First Books* variable by including it in the grouping arrangement since a number of the participating libraries and their partner sites have or will be participating in the program.

Two types of partner sites were included in the design: Head Start programs and federally funded developmental preschool programs housed in Idaho public schools. The State of Idaho does not apply state funding to preschool programs in the public schools so those that do exist are federally funded and primarily serve children who have identified developmental needs. Given that both Head Start programs and development preschool programs were included in the design, there were a total of eight groups. There was one Head Start program assigned to each of the four groups listed above and there was one developmental preschool program assigned to each of the groups.

Children were pretested and posttested with the revised version of the *Get Ready to Read!—Revised Screening Tool* (Pearson, 2009) in late January or early February of 2013 and then again in late April or early May of 2013. This instrument is widely used in early childhood educational settings and research has shown the instrument to reliable and valid for ages 3-5. All of the children in this study fell within this age range.

This study had approval of the Institutional Review Board of Boise State University. All children had signed parental permission slips on file before screening occurred. Given that acquiring parental permission can be challenging and that children are absent on testing days or move during the school year, it is important to report participation rates within the various groups. Table 15 shows this.

Table 15: Quasi-experiment: Attrition rates by type of program and group

| Type of Site and Group	Children in Program	Number and Percent Pretested		Number & Percent Pre & Post Tested		Drop Pre to Post
		Num.	%	Num.	%	
Preschool						
Books to Go	13	12	92	12	92	0
Books to Go + My First Books	10	6	60	5	50	10
My First Books	8	6	75	6	75	0
Control	22	12	55	8	36	19
Head Start						
Books to Go	34	25	74	22	65	9
Books to Go + My First Books	68	49	72	47	69	3
My First Books	68	46	68	38	56	12
Control	68	44	65	40	59	6

Sites should be commended for the excellent initial participation rates. They are actually higher than the Percent Pretested in table 15 because on any given day children are absent so the actual percentages of signed permission forms was higher than the percent of children pretested. Obviously teachers and coordinators at each site worked diligently to get as many signed parent permission slips as possible. Additionally all of the teachers and coordinators were flexible and accommodating in allowing the lead evaluator and an IC*f*L employee into their facilities and classrooms to conduct the testing. They even went so far as to allow evaluators to return on a later day to test children who had been absent on the original day of testing. Their diligence resulted in excellent initial participation rates across all groups. But, as would be expected, over time some children moved away thus causing attrition. Also, some children were absent on the days of posttesting. Because of children moving and children being absent, fewer children than had been pretested were posttested causing overall participation rates to drop. All but one held at 50% or more but one did drop to 36% from 55% initially. Results are probably still representative of the children in these classrooms but because of the small sample sizes in the preschools and the lower overall participation rates, findings should be cautiously interpreted.

As additional data is collected during Wave II of *Books to Go* more solid findings and interpretations will be possible.

The *Get Ready to Read!—Revised* screener has 25 items and produces a raw score, a step score, and a performance level. The step score has four levels designated by the numbers 1-4. According to the *Get Ready to Read!* answer sheet, children who score at step 1 (0-4 correct answers) "have limited understanding of print and letter-sound associations." Children who score at step 2 (5-13 correct answers) "have a basic understanding of books and print and can recognize some letters." Step 3 children (14-20 correct answers) "have gone beyond the basic understanding of books and print and are learning to identify letter-sound associations." Finally, step 4 children (21-25 correct answers) "have a solid understanding of print and letter-sound associations." There are three performance levels, below average, average, and above average; and these are based on the age of the child at time of testing and their raw score. The performance level is a norm referenced score so children of a given age can be compared to other children of that same age.

Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance (RMANOVA) was conducted on raw scores. Repeated Measures ANOVA takes into account the correlation between pretest and posttest scores and reveals whether groups differed over time in performance. Thus the hypothesis underpinning this study was that the groups of children who received the *Books to Go* program would over time perform statistically significantly higher than groups of children who received only *My First Books* or were in the Control condition. A secondary hypothesis was the group that received both *Books to Go* and *My First Books* would show the highest amount of growth over time. Figure 2 shows graphically the results of these comparisons.

Figure 2: Repeated Measures ANOVA: Whole group results
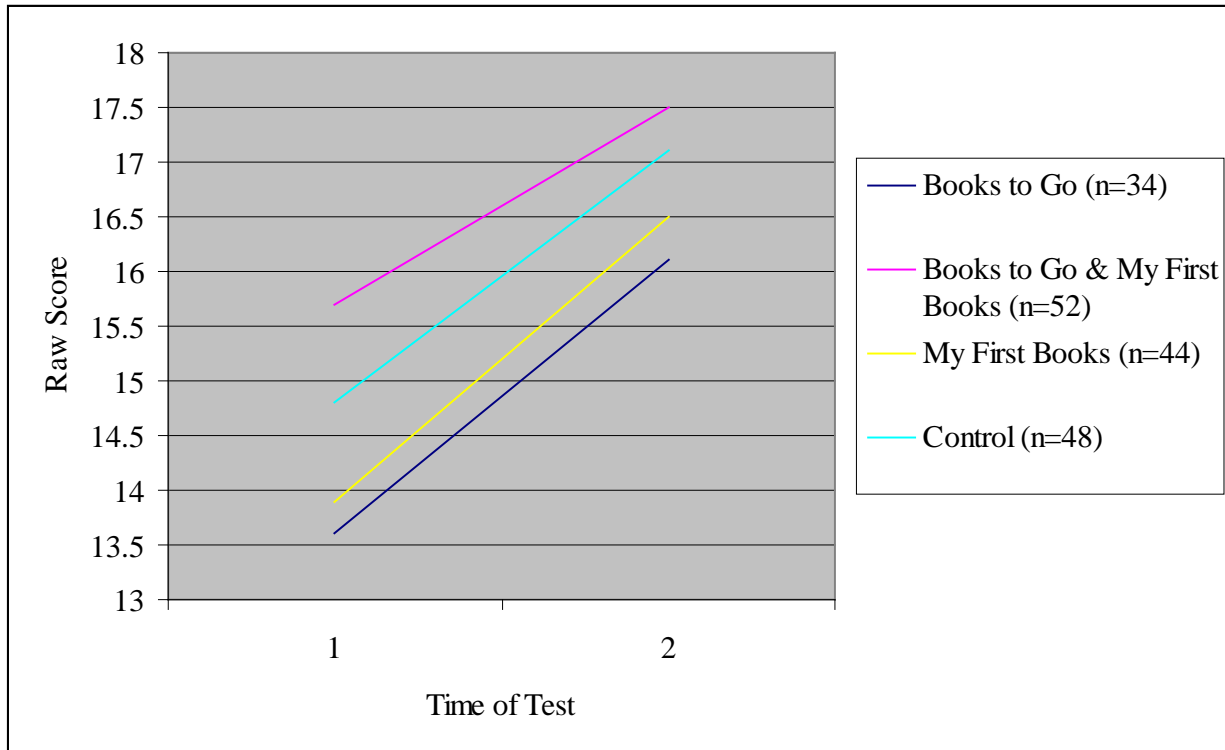
Although the groups scored differently on the pretest, all made similar gains. This similarity is shown in Figure 2 by the quite similar upward slopes of the lines. Additional evidence for the similarity in gains comes from the lack of statistical significance of the group by time of test interaction term in the Repeated Measures ANOVA (F=.72; df=3/174; p=.54). Based on these results, the *Books to Go* program had no greater impact on posttest scores than the other treatments or when compared to the Control condition.

Gender was explored within the whole group raw scores to ascertain whether the treatment conditions functioned differentially across the genders. In other words, did females respond differently to the conditions when compared to males? The Repeated Measure ANOVA was not statistically significant (F=.41; df=3/170; p=.75) showing that there was no differential treatment effects by gender.

It can be concluded that none of the treatment conditions, that is *Books to Go*, *Books to Go & My First Books*, or *My First Books*, had an impact on raw score gains when compared to each other and to the Control condition. But as was discussed above, the *Get Ready to Read!— Revised* screener produces two other scores, the step score and performance level. The analyses now turn to these.

Step scores will not be of value in these analyses because they are just a categorical form of raw score and thus performing analyses on step scores will produce similar results to the raw score analyses presented above. The performance level scores, however, are derived from a combination of the child's raw score and norms for children's performance on the screener at various age ranges. They are therefore normative scores and might thus shed light on the research hypotheses.

Whereas the raw score data was continuous in nature and therefore Repeated Measures ANOVA was appropriate, the performance level scores are categorical data and must be analyzed using different statistical techniques. Specifically, chi square measures of association were applied to the performance level data to see if a relationship between performance level category, that is below average, average, or above average, and group existed. A statistically significant relationship in this context means that by knowing the group the child was in a more accurate prediction of their performance level can be derived. Conversely, if a nonsignificant finding occurs, it means knowing group membership does not allow more accurate predictions of performance levels. An example might help to understand these relationships. The original research hypothesis was that children in the two groups that received *Books to Go* would score higher than the group that received only *My First Books* or the Control condition. If this hypothesis were true, then knowing that a child was in, for example, the *Books to Go* only group would predict that this child would have a higher performance level than a child in the *My First Books* group or the Control condition. Such was the not case, however. Neither the chi square analysis of the pretest performance levels (Pearson Chi Square=11.2; df=6; p=.08) nor the chi square analysis of the posttest performance levels (Pearson Chi Square=5.1; df=6; p=.53) showed a significant relationship between the group a child was in and their performance level. It is interesting to note that the pretest performance level chi square was significant at the p<.10 level but not at the more stringent p<.05 level. And this marginally statistically significant finding disappeared on the posttest performance level chi square. Analysis of the shifts in counts of performance levels showed trends for the *My First Books* only group with more children than what would be expected by chance moving from below average to average between pretest and posttest than in the other groups. This is a positive finding for the *My First Books* program.

A final anecdote will be shared not to call into question the non-significant findings but instead to pique further discussion while underscoring the importance of fostering full implementation of the *Books to Go* program at future partner sites so that the treatment is given a full test for efficacy. One *Books to Go* site made quite noticeable progress when compared to the other treatment conditions and the controls. Because of the need to retain strict anonymity in this study, no identifying information will be provided about this site. This particular *Books to Go* site started quite low according to raw pretest scores. This is not a negative reflection on this site because all of the research sites served at-risk children so variability in initial performance across sites is to be expected. There was a statistically and practically significant difference between raw pretest scores when the site was compared to an aggregate of raw pretest scores from the other sites (t=2.0; df=198; p=.047; d=.59). To make this comparison, scores from all the other sites were treated as a single group and then compared to the focal site's scores (see Table 16).

Table 16: Focal *Books to Go* site compared to all others

Group	Pretest Mean	Pretest Standard Deviation	Posttest Mean	Posttest Standard Deviation
Focal Books to Go Site	11.7	4.5	15.2	5.1
Composite Comparison	14.7	5.1	17.0	4.6

On posttest raw scores the significant difference between the focal *Books to Go* site and the composite comparison group disappeared (t=1.3; df=176; p=.18). The focal site remained lower than the overall group but did make progress in catching up because it gained an average of 3.5 raw score points compared to 2.3 for the composite comparison group. It is important to emphasize that it can not be established that participation in *Books to Go* caused this difference, but it is interesting that 100% of the children at this site checked out bags and each bag was checked out at least once and most were checked out multiple times. Additionally, the educators at this site were also highly enthusiastic about the program and actively promoted it. This anecdote serves as an interesting counterpoint to the overall nonsignificant findings.

In conclusion, there is no evidence at this time supporting the research hypothesis that children receiving the *Books to Go* program will perform better on the *Get Ready to Read!—Revised* screener. It is important to note, however, that the treatment period was relatively short during Wave I and participation by the children at the various *Books to Go* sites varied considerably. During Wave II of the *Books to Go* program most of an entire academic year will pass between pretesting and posttesting and additional efforts will be made to assure high percentages of children at the sites participate in the *Books to Go* program. It will be interesting to see if the longer treatment period and the enhanced efforts to foster full participation result in significant findings.

Section 3: Conclusions and Recommendations

Wave I of *Books to Go* was a success. All of the data, with the exception of the quasi-experimental study, 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. Finally, although the quasi-experimental study did not find *Books to Go* superior to the other interventions or the control condition, it did not fair any worse than the other treatment conditions since no intervention was superior or inferior to any other. Thus, what the quasi-experimental study revealed is that *Books to Go* doesn't harm children and performs just as well as any other intervention tested. What is of interest, however, is that no treatment condition out-performed the control. If similar results are found in future research on *Books to Go* and *My First Books*, more in-depth study using several different measures should be undertaken since interventions that take time and money to implement should produce superior early literacy development in children when compared to a control condition. Additional recommendations are listed below by category:

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

- Libraries should be urged to return check out sheets from all of their partners. Libraries and partners were excellent at collecting and returning Quick Surveys, so communication about the importance of these was highly effective. Similar communication needs to occur about the importance of check out sheets.
- 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 all libraries 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.

Book Bags:

- As more solid ratings of the popularity of the bags emerges, some simple experimentation might be in order to ascertain whether the books in the middle of the tub are less popular because of location or because the books are less well-liked than those at the front of the tub.
- Two libraries reported 20 or more books lost so if this occurs again during Wave II of *Books to Go*, then follow-up with the libraries and the particular partner sites experiencing the relatively high loss rates would be important to explore why the losses occurred at these particular sites. This should not be punitive in any way or judgmental but instead simply a fact finding endeavor to figure out why losses were occurring in particular locations.
- There were a few instances where partners needed things and had some difficulty acquiring them such as surveys in Spanish and more book bags in Spanish. A simple mechanism needs to be put in place at the libraries so partners can easily request such things.
- A suggestion was made by one or two libraries to include a few bags with board books for younger children in each tub. This should be done in centers where parents regularly visit and check out bags. Many parents will have children of various ages so as they leaf

through the tub looking for books, it is likely that they might pick board books for their younger children.

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.
- Not many partners used the *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, some that were can be addressed through enhanced education. For example, for those centers where parents seldom visit so they seldom have opportunities to check out book bags, teachers can place book bags in children's' backpacks to take home. This may entail more work for the teachers, but if they understand the importance of increasing access to books for young children, they might be willing to spend the time. Parents feeling uncomfortable about checking out books because of potential loss or damage can be addressed through better communication.

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:

- Forty-four percent of parents/caregivers checked out books less than once per week. A goal should be to increase this percentage through education, promotions, and incentives.
- Few respondents used *TumbleBooks* or *Day by Day ID.org*. The IC*f*L should revisit how they promote these two online resources to see if more successful approaches can be developed.
- A quarter of respondents do not have and did not get library cards so a goal in the future should be to reduce this number.