

**Evaluation of the 2009-2010 Idaho First Book Program with  
Comparisons to the 2008-2009 Idaho First Book Program**

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**Running Head: 2009-2010 First Book Evaluation Report**

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## **Section 1: Introduction**

First Book is a program of the Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICFL). Libraries apply for First Book support. They then receive multiple copies of a different book each month for 9 months beginning in the fall and ending in the spring of the following year. The books are high quality children's books that are distributed to preschool or primary grade children who come from homes of limited means. The books become the children's personal property so that they establish a small home library of "first books." Participating libraries partner with local agencies or organizations that have contact with low income families in order to facilitate distribution of the books each month to the target audience.

According to Stephanie Bailey-White of the Idaho Commission for Libraries, in 2007-2008 eight libraries participated in the First Book program. They distributed a total of 971 books each month. During 2008-2009, with additional state funding, the program grew dramatically and 25 libraries participated which served approximately 2,174 children and distributed a total of 19,568 books. For 2009-2010 the program remained approximately the same size with 22 libraries participating representing all regions of the state. Roughly 1,800 children ages 0-7 were served and 48,600 books were distributed. Given the serious budget cutbacks experienced in the past several years, having the program remain roughly the same size as the previous year is an accomplishment that should not go unnoticed.

First Book libraries submit final reports by June 1 of each year. They also submit evaluations that are collected from participating parents. This document summarizes the reports and parent evaluations submitted by participating libraries during the 2009-2010 program. In previous reports, results from the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 First Book programs were provided, although the evaluation for 2007-2008 was limited in scope. Thus, the program has consistent evaluation information for the past three years, an important and positive accomplishment.

During 2009-2010 of the 22 participating libraries 21 submitted final reports. The following sections synthesize information contained in the reports. The sections under the bold face headings coincide with individual questions on the final report form. Following the discussion of the final reports, results from the parent surveys will be provided.

## **Section 2: First Book Final Report**

### **First Book Final Report: Number of Children Served**

Libraries were asked to provide the number of children served by their First Book program. A total of 1,554 children were served by the 21 libraries that submitted final reports, all of which provided this data. The range was 17 to 233 with an average of 74. The standard deviation is quite large for this data ( $sd=54$ ). There were three libraries that served over 100 children and one library that served over 200 children. Thus, because of the wide range, the average of 74 may not be the best way to summarize this data. To provide a better picture of the number of children served per library, Table 1 provides frequency counts by 10 child intervals.

Table 1: Number of Libraries in Each Ten Child Interval (n=21)

| Number Served       | 0-10 | 11-20 | 21-30 | 31-40 | 41-50 | 51-60 | 61-70 | 71-80 | 81-90 | 91-100 | >100 |
|---------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|
| Number of Libraries | 0    | 2     | 3     | 3     | 0     | 2     | 2     | 2     | 3     | 0      | 4    |

Table 1 reveals a wide diversity of program sizes from small to quite large. Given that Idaho is a very rural state where population densities are low in the rural areas, to have such a large number of programs serving over 50 students is a positive outcome.

### **First Book Final Report: Number of Parent Surveys Collected to Submit to the ICFL**

Libraries were asked to report the number of completed parent surveys they submitted to the ICFL. This is an important statistic since the quality of the survey data is heavily dependent on the response rate for the survey. In order to get as many parents as possible to submit surveys, the ICFL for 2009-2010 provided an incentive to libraries who achieved an 80% response rate or better. This is an excellent course of action since high response rates allow more dependable conclusions to be drawn about the population of parents who participated in First Book. Low response rates undermine such conclusions since when too few people respond generalizations about all of the parents who participated can not be made.

Eighteen libraries reported this statistic. A total of 507 surveys were reported being submitted. The actual number received was higher at 559 (See the Parent Survey section below for a more detailed accounting). The number of surveys reported being submitted ranged from a low of 7 to a high of 94.

The total number of parents and caregivers who could have returned surveys is unknown at this time. First Book has no mechanism in place to inventory parents and caregivers and arrive at an accurate total. Thus, an overall response rate for the parent survey can not be computed. This is a weakness in the evaluation design but it is one that probably can not be addressed since counting the number of parents and caregivers whose children receive First Books would be quite time consuming and costly.

### **First Book Final Report: Library Partners**

Libraries were asked to list their partner organizations. As stated above, libraries partnered with one or more entities that had direct contact with young children from low-income families or could provide services that helped with the First Book program. Table 2 provides a list of the partners and also the number of times the particular partner was listed by participating libraries. Please note that in the First Book program public elementary school libraries can participate as the designated library. In such cases, the public school library's partner is usually the local public or community library in the school's service area. Three public school libraries participated during 2008-2009 and two participated in 2009-2010 (See line #6 of Table 2 for this information). The total number of partners exceeds the number of libraries participating because during 2009-

2010 fourteen of the 21 libraries reported more than one partner. For example, a library might partner with 2 daycares and a private preschool.

Table 2: Type and Number of Partners

| Partner  | Frequency<br>(n=21)<br>2009-2010 | Frequency<br>(n=24)<br>2008-2009 |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Daycare   | 12                               | 7                                |
| 2. Elementary school   | 10                               | 10                               |
| 3. Head Start  | 6                                | 9                                |
| 4. Private preschool   | 5                                | 2                                |
| 5. Developmental preschool   | 4                                | 2                                |
| 6. Community or public library   | 2                                | 3                                |
| 7. School district   | 1                                | 2                                |
| 8. High school teen parent class   | 1                                | 1                                |
| 9. 21 <sup>st</sup> Century After-School Program   | 0                                | 1                                |
| 10. Other (i.e., local story teller, volunteer community readers, name of local person without explanation of what the person did) | 3                                | 0                                |
| <b>Total</b>   | 44                               | 37                               |

First Book libraries partnered with 44 different entities. This is a larger number than last year even though the program was larger last year. The increase in the number of partners and the continued diversity of partners are positive outcomes for the program since much of the quality and success of First Book is dependent on partnerships.

A couple of changes from last year to this year need highlighting. The increase in partnerships with daycares and private preschools is a positive outcome since it reflects local libraries providing consistent, sustained, high-quality out-reach services to their communities. But not all children who attend daycares and private preschools are from homes of limited financial means. Granted some are and thus the primary target group for First Book is being addressed, but what proportion of children in daycares and private preschools are from low income families should be explored in the future to make sure First Book program resources are being appropriately targeted. The same concern holds for the increase in developmental preschool partners. Many of these children will come from financially challenged families but not all will. A closer look at the demographic profiles of these students is something that should be undertaken.

Finally, the drop in partnerships with Head Start programs should be monitored in subsequent years. Head Start programs focus on children from families who are of limited financial means. Thus, Head Start programs are ideal First Book partners. Ideally, the number of Head Start partners would increase each year. If the number of Head Start partners holds steady for two more years or continues to drop, then efforts should be made to promote these partnerships.

### **First Book Final Report: How did you distribute your First Books?**

Libraries were asked an open-ended question about how they distributed their First Books. There were several ways books were distributed. Table 3 provides a listing of the ways and the number of libraries reporting using the distribution method. There are more than 21 entries in the table because two libraries used more than one method.

Table 3: First Book Distribution Methods

| <b>Method of Distribution</b>   | <b>Number of Libraries<br/>2009-2010<br/>(n=21)</b> | <b>Number of Libraries<br/>2008-2009<br/>(n=24)</b> |
|---|---|---|
| 1. At partner site with story time included   | 17  | 16  |
| 2. Trip to local public library   | 5   | 5   |
| 3. At partner site—no evidence of story time being included                                   | 3   | 3   |
| 4. In public school library (public school was First Book site and local library was partner) | 2   | 0   |
| 5. Question left blank  | 0   | 1   |

The most common method was for the First Book library to travel to the partner's site and provide either a full or abbreviated story time followed by the book distribution. Seventeen libraries did this during 2009-2010 and 16 did it the previous year. The difference of one is not important since sample sizes varied year-to-year and the measurement is not perfect. The question was open-ended so responses varied widely in detail and thus coding the responses into the categories is not an exact science and may vary slightly from year-to-year.

Trips to the local library to visit and receive a First Book occurred in five libraries again this year. In one case, the children went to the library each month to receive their books since the library and the partnering elementary school were very close to one another and the children could easily, quickly, and safely walk from their school. In two other cases the children received their final First Book at the library on the last month of the program as part of a culminating event for the program. Two libraries said the children came to the library but did not say how often. In the future it would be a positive trend to have more children visiting libraries to receive their First Books. Transportation constraints and the cost and liability associated with transporting children are important considerations, but providing children early and regular exposure to their local public library is important and the First Book program provides a wonderful mechanism for doing so.

There were three libraries that reported traveling to their partner site to deliver and distribute the books but they provided little other detail. One said that they read the book to the children but did not elaborate beyond that. The other two said that they visited the partnership sites each month but provided no other details about what they did. The scant detail provided by these three libraries does not mean that they did not provide a full story time with activities. They may have but did not provide the information.

Two public schools were First Book sites. In each of these, First Books were distributed in the public school library. In one case, the books were distributed during regularly scheduled library time for the children, and in the other books were distributed after a 30 minute literacy lesson in the library once each month. There being two First Book sites falling into this category this year and none last year should not be interpreted

as a shift from year-to-year. More detail could have been provided this year giving rise to the inclusion of this category.

Finally, the descriptions this year of how books were distributed were more complete than last year. Good detail was provided by most libraries. Importantly, eight libraries mentioned the inclusion of early literacy skills in their book distributions and it is quite possible that more libraries included the early literacy skills but did not mention it. These mentions provide anecdotal evidence that the ICFL's goal of infusing the early literacy skills throughout their programming is being achieved. Perhaps, in subsequent years, a question could be asked on the final report about whether or not libraries include the early literacy skills in their book distributions. In summary, with the exception of one or two libraries who did not provide much detail, there was good and consistent evidence that the monthly book distributions were positive events where the First Books were showcased for the children.

### **First Book Final Report: Describe any problems you had in distributing books.**

Libraries were asked an open-ended question about problems encountered distributing the books. Both years, eleven libraries reported no problems. This is an excellent outcome given the complex logistics involved in getting the First Books to participating libraries from the ICFL each month and then from the participating libraries into the children's hands via the library partners. The low number of problems exemplifies the excellent planning, coordination, and ongoing support the ICFL provides participating libraries. It also underscores the hard work and excellent organization of the participating libraries.

Of the libraries reporting problems, none mentioned the ICFL either year. Instead, their problems stemmed from local issues, but none appeared serious. Table 4 provides a detailed accounting of the problems listed by libraries. It is important to carefully catalog problems from year-to-year to monitor both their number and type and to spot trends that emerge over time.

Table 4: Type and Number of Libraries Mentioning a Problem

| <b>Problem</b>  | <b>Frequency<br/>(n=21)<br/>2009-2010</b> | <b>Frequency<br/>(n=24)<br/>2008-2009</b> |
|---|---|---|
| 1. No problem   | 11  | 11  |
| 2. Child mobility impacted the number of books needed at sites.   | 2   | 4   |
| 3. Had to adjust distribution schedule to meet partner schedule   | 2   | 3   |
| 4. Had to skip one or more monthly distributions  | 2   | 1   |
| 5. Library/partner conflicts  | 1   | 1   |
| 6. "As staff hours were dramatically cut, finding time to get to the daycares became a big challenge."                    | 1   | 0   |
| 7. Inherited program from someone who no longer worked at the library, so transition was difficult.                       | 1   | 0   |
| 8. Book shipment did not arrive on time one month.  | 1   | 0   |
| 9. When younger siblings attended extra books were needed. Librarian took extra books they had on hand to cover this need | 0   | 1   |
| 10. In a Head Start program, the bus driver was given the   | 0   | 1   |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| responsibility for distributing “The Bookworm” newsletter, so the librarian didn’t know if it always arrived home with the children.  |   |   |
| 11. First Book parents were invited to a Family Reading Week event at the library, but they had already received the pirate book that was to be distributed at the event, so the library had to come up with another book to give away. | 0 | 1 |
| 12. A librarian stated that she targeted 3 <sup>rd</sup> graders for the First Books and said that the students were too old for the materials  | 0 | 1 |

Child mobility impacting the number of books needed at sites was mentioned more often last year than this year. But as was mentioned above, a difference of one or two should not be seen as meaningful since these are open-ended questions and the coding is not perfect. Sample sizes also vary. It is interesting to note, however, that in both years ten elementary schools participated. Four of ten schools reported student mobility problems in 2008-2009 but only two did so in 2009-2010. If this trend holds for another one or two years, then it is possible that either student mobility has decreased in the schools mollifying the problem or schools have learned to adjust their First Book programming to accommodate the fluctuations.

Schedule adjustments are inevitable when busy, diverse organizations like those involved in First Book try to align schedules for monthly book distributions. Having so few libraries report this problem for the past two years is a strongly positive outcome. It probably shows the high degree of regard libraries and their partners have for each other, which provides a strong foundation for their working well together.

Two libraries reported skipping one or more monthly distributions during 2009-2010. No specific reasons were given but conjectures as to possible reasons can be gleaned from the one library in 2008-2009 who reported skipping a book distribution. In that case, the librarian reported falling ill and no one had been trained to take her place. She reported last year that she would train a back up in the future. Additional insights can be gleaned from this year’s data. Item #6 in Table 4 states “As staff hours were dramatically cut, finding time to get to the daycares became a big challenge.” This library did not report skipping any book distributions but instead commented on the time constraints they were experiencing. Perhaps similar time constraints were the cause of the libraries skipping distributions who reported doing so. In the future, the number of libraries skipping book distributions should be monitored. Currently the number doing so is minimal but in the future because of continued resource constraints the number could increase. Monitoring this particular problem is important because regular monthly book distributions are important to the program. The children look forward to the librarian coming to read the story and distribute the books. Thus skipping months might cause a loss of program momentum or impact. Evaluation data also have shown that when the books are taken home the parents and caregivers experience the excitement the children have for the books and read the books to the children and their siblings. Stopping this routine for more than a month might negatively impact the formation of positive reading habits in the home.

Finally, Table 4 lists problems that were mentioned only once in each of the years. None appear serious but instead are typical things that will be encountered as a

large complex program unfolds over the course of nine months. Having so few reported problems attests to the success of the First Book program while underscoring the hard work and expertise of all those involved.

**First Book Final Report: If you did book distributions outside the library, what did you do to get families to visit/use the library?**

Libraries were asked “If you did book distributions outside the library, what did you do to get families to visit/use the library?” The primary goal of First Book is to place high-quality, age-appropriate children’s literature in children’s hands who might not otherwise have the opportunity to own books. A secondary goal is to increase library traffic, library card applications, and circulation statistics. This question explored how libraries were accomplishing this secondary goal.

A similar question was asked the previous year and it is important to note that responses have changed quite dramatically year-over-year. In order to understand the scope of the changes and the importance of the changes a section from last year’s report will be excerpted followed by a discussion of the 2009-2010 findings. Last year the report stated:

Four of the 24 responding libraries had active efforts to leverage First Book activities to increase library traffic. The others, it appears, did not. This same weakness was noticed in the final reports for the 2007-2008 implementation year. Thus, there are two years of data showing that few libraries have an adequate understanding of this issue. Two recommendations are thus warranted. First, the question on the report needs to be reviewed to make sure it is clearly asking for the information. Second, it is recommended that in future library trainings concerning the First Book program, the issue of actively and systematically pursuing the secondary goal of the program be an agenda item.

The ICFL responded to the above recommendations and the results were quite dramatic. Whereas only four of 24 libraries last year clearly reported active efforts to leverage First Book to increase library traffic, 20 of 21 reported doing so this year. The one library that did not left the question blank. It is important to note, however, that even though the responses this year were better there was still a range in quality and depth of activities. Some libraries were very dynamic and aggressive while others were more passive and employed means such as word-of-mouth or talking with the children about library programs and opportunities. Table 5 presents the ways libraries promoted their services and programs to draw more First Book parents and caregivers into their facilities.

Table 5: Methods of Promoting Library Visits

| Method  | Number of Libraries 2009-2010 (n=21) |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Information sent home with children (e.g., fliers (5)*; calendars (1); hand-outs attached to the Book Worm (1); book bags with information | 11                                   |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| (1); sent home information about library activities (3))   |    |
| 2. Invited First Book families to library events (e.g., Family Reading Night, Dr. Seuss Birthday Party, Back to School Open House, Parent Party, Literacy Fair, and Library Open House just for First Book Families)   | 10 |
| 3. Teacher encouragement (e.g., talk to the children about all the library has to offer (4); word of mouth (2))  | 6  |
| 4. Library cards (i.e., handed out library card applications (2); offered free library cards (2))  | 4  |
| 5. Direct incentives to go to library (e.g., take the craft to the library from the book distribution and get a treat or prize (2); coupons for free books, if brought into the library (1); if kids introduced their parents to a librarian they received a surprise (1)) | 4  |
| 6. Librarian attended school events (e.g., set up booth to promote library, book give aways, library card sign ups)  | 2  |
| 7. Field trip to library from school   | 2  |
| 8. Head Start activities held at library (e.g., held Head Start parent meeting at the library (1); head start employees did some home visits at the library (1))   | 2  |
| 9. Provided evening story time just for First Book children (will probably continue next year even without grant because of popularity)  | 1  |
| 10. Daycare is within walking distance and they attend some library summer events  | 1  |
| 11. No response  | 1  |

\* Numbers in parentheses represent the number of libraries reporting this particular method

Sending information home about library programs was the most popular, but invitations to First Book families to attend library events were nearly as common. This is a positive outcome since invitations can be quite effective if they are directed and focused appropriately.

Teacher encouragement was also quite popular. This mechanism is fine and teachers should always encourage their students to visit the library and attend library activities, but other mechanisms should be equally popular. For example, direct incentives to visit the library are relatively easy to implement and should thus be more common. If libraries lack the resources to provide direct incentives, then perhaps the ICFL could find some that could be passed on to the libraries. Free books are always a good draw, as are simple prizes that children enjoy. One final comment about direct incentives. A quite creative direct incentive was mentioned last year that was not mentioned this year. One library last year invited children to bring the art work they completed during First Book distributions to be displayed in the library. This is a very good idea since it does not involve extrinsic rewards such as prizes or free books, but instead the simple reward of having your work publicly displayed. In order to further promote the use of direct incentives, the ICFL might want to compile a list of direct incentive ideas and include the list in First Book training materials available on the web.

All in all, libraries are doing quite a lot to generate First Book family traffic in their facilities. This appears to be an important change from previous years. It is important to note, however, that the change in language in the question may account for some or all of the difference, but it is still heartening to know that First Book libraries are actively promoting First Book family patronage. The ICFL should continue emphasizing this important outcome during First Book trainings and in First Book informational literature.

**First Book Final Report: How did participating in First Book benefit the library? Describe any opportunities or unexpected benefits that have happened as a result of your First Book project.**

Libraries were asked “How did participating in First Book benefit the library?” This question had the following probe right after it: “Describe any opportunities or unexpected benefits that have happened as a result of your First Book project.” This was an open-ended question so responses were categorized and counted. Of course, First Book benefiting the children and families who receive the books is the primary outcome of the program, but as discussed above a secondary goal of the program is to increase library traffic. Table 6 lists the responses and the number of libraries making the comment. It is a lengthy table but the detail is important since it reveals the many, varied benefits that libraries receive from participating in the program.

Table 6: Library Benefits and Number of Libraries Reporting the Benefit

| <b>Benefit</b>   | <b>Number of Libraries 2009-2010 (n=21)</b> | <b>Number of Libraries 2008-2009 (n=24)</b> |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Established closer relationships or rapport with: public schools and teachers (4)*, Head Start (2), younger school-age children and their families (3), parents (2); and childcare providers in the community (1).  | 12  | 6   |
| 2. More visible in community (e.g., recognition by children, parents, and others of librarian in community; helped families and children get to know children’s librarian/library staff)   | 6   | 9   |
| 3. Increased circulation   | 5   | 1   |
| 4. Increased attendance at library programs and special events   | 5   | 0   |
| 5. Brought in new patrons (e.g., “It brought more readers into the library.”)  | 4   | 6   |
| 6. First Book families came to the library to get cards.   | 4   | 0   |
| 7. Increased awareness of and contact with under-served families (e.g., “I feel First Book has introduced the library to an entire new group of patrons that weren’t using the library previously;” realized there were more under-served families than originally thought; and more contact with under-served families) | 3   | 0   |
| 8. Children were excited about getting the books and talked about their home libraries and shared books with family  | 2   | 1   |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| members   |   |   |
| 9. Increased knowledge and awareness of library programs (e.g., Increased parent understanding that they can participate in library programs even if they don't have card.; and "More young families are aware of the services offered.") | 2 | 0 |
| 10. "It built enthusiasm with both the children and their parents in using library services."   | 1 | 0 |
| 11. Children have become better school library users  | 1 | 0 |
| 12. "Parents have expressed an excitement about being a part of the learning experience. Some have been more proactive about seeking books that will stimulate learning."   | 1 | 0 |
| 13. Increased summer reading enrollment   | 1 | 0 |
| 14. More support for library  | 0 | 1 |
| 15. Children enjoyed coming to library for the First Book   | 0 | 1 |
| 16. Family reading events—which were new to the library this year—were a hit.   | 0 | 1 |
| 17. "We have also been more aware of grants available to help sustain First Book."  | 0 | 1 |
| 18. Can't think of any  | 0 | 1 |
| 19. Not applicable  | 0 | 1 |
| 20. No response   | 0 | 2 |

\* Number of libraries reporting this benefit is in ().

The change from last year to this year in responses should not be interpreted as trends. The question was open-ended and new libraries participate each year plus the coding system is not perfect, so if trends are to be measured at least three years or perhaps even four are needed. But Table 6 presents an interesting group of benefits. Establishing closer relationships with stakeholders and increased visibility in the community remained common benefits. Item number 2 in Table 6 is also a wonderful outcome. Respondents reported that First Book children recognized the librarian in the community and were visibly excited to see the librarian. Increased collection circulation, increased attendance at library programs and special events, and increased numbers of new patrons and library cards issued were also some of the more often mentioned benefits.

Awareness and contact with under-served families was mentioned three times this year and was not mentioned last year. This is a positive outcome. As discussed previously, First Book should first focus on getting high quality children's books into children's hands who would not normally have the resources to develop a home library of that quality. But as has been mentioned before, an important secondary goal is to introduce families to what their local library has to offer so that they may become regular library patrons.

The remaining benefits listed in Table 6 were only mentioned one or two times each and some were only mentioned in one of the past two years, but they are still important to list because they are benefits that libraries reported. When taken in aggregate the list of benefits is impressive. In the future greater quantification of the benefits would enhance the quality of the First Book program evaluation. For example, knowing how many First Book families visit libraries who have not done so before would be wonderful

information, as would knowing how many First Book children check out library books for the first time or check out more library books than they have in the past.

In closing a quote from one of the participating libraries captures the essence of the benefits of the First Book program and puts voice behind the lengthy listing in Table 6:

I felt First Book has introduced the library to an entire new group of patrons that weren't using the library previously. The kids have been the best free advertisement for all my events this year. Dr. Suess's party was the biggest party Smithfield (pseudonym) has seen in years (our City Administrator came back into town and saw all the cars and thought there was a national emergency), my Summer Reading enrollment is the highest it's ever been, we are bursting at the seams. First Book has also helped my partnership with Smithfield Elementary (pseudonym) and a close relationship with the teachers, every grade this year came for an end of the year field trip to the library, this has never happened before. I'm finding new wonderful, unexpected benefits every day. Thank you!

What this quote and the list in Table 6 underscore is that First Book has quite pronounced positive effects on libraries and the children and families in their service areas.

**First Book Final Report: Did you issue any new library cards as a result of the First Book project? If yes, how many?**

Libraries were asked if they issued new library cards as a consequence of First Book. Fifteen of 21 libraries responded "yes" to this question. Sixteen of 24 did so during 2008-2009. Four said "no" (Six did so last year). And this year two said that they weren't sure since they didn't track this variable. Last year two libraries did not respond but this year all responded. The number of cards issued at libraries ranged from a low of only one card issued at two libraries to a high of 54 cards issued at one library. The highest number of cards issued at a library during 2008-2009 was 32. A total of 157 cards were issued this year and 173 cards were issued during 2008-2009. This is a sizable number given that only 15 libraries this year reported issuing new cards and many of these libraries are in very small rural communities in Idaho.

Given the wide range in number of cards issued by libraries this year (i.e., 0 to 54), Table 7 provides a frequency distribution of the number of library cards issued and the number of libraries reporting that amount.

Table 7: Frequency of Number of Library Cards Issued: 2009-2010 (n=21)

| Number Issued       | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 20 | 45 | 54 | Not Sure |
|---------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----------|
| Number of Libraries | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1  | 1  | 1  | 2        |

The four libraries who responded "no" to this question and the eight which issued three or fewer cards should be noted. Given that an important outcome of First Book is increased library traffic, having over half the respondents to this question either issue no or very few cards is a less than optimal outcome. Additionally, two libraries were not

sure because they did not track this information. This is a reasonable response and respects the privacy of applicants, but other libraries used creative incentive systems to draw First Book families into the library to apply for cards, such as post cards for a free book when they came to the library and requested a card. A recommendation would be to include in future trainings how to get First Book families into the library to get library cards and begin participating in other library programs while respecting the families' privacy. An emphasis should also continue to be placed upon the importance of achieving multiple outcomes through the First Book program.

Libraries were also asked "What challenges, if any, may have affected issuing library cards to First Book families? This was an excellent question to ask given the evidence that getting people to sign up for cards is proving to be challenging. This question was not asked on the 2008-2009 Final Report so comparisons are not possible. Twenty of 21 libraries responded to this question, although all of the responses did not clearly address the question. Table 8 provides a listing of all of the responses that addressed the question and how often they occurred. Those responses that did not focus on the question will be discussed below.

Table 8: Methods of Promoting Library Visits

| <b>Challenge</b>  | <b>Number of<br/>Libraries<br/>2009-2010<br/>(n=20)</b> |
|---|---|
| 1. Limited English speakers   | 2   |
| 2. Not enough contact with the entire family  | 1   |
| 3. Poor attendance at parent open house where free cards were to be distributed.  | 1   |
| 4. One family moved away  | 1   |
| 5. Current policy stipulates that cards have to be issued at the library. Parents may have signed up for cards if they were made available at the First Book distribution site. | 1   |
| 6. Rural fee—will try to get employers to pick up the fee—thought this was happening but there must have been some slippage.  | 1   |
| 7. Parent laziness or apathy  | 1   |
| 8. Time constraints—single parents already very busy. They offered free cards but they issued only one.   | 1   |
| 9. "The library simply cannot afford to increase card holders without the compensation to facilitate more staffing."  | 1   |
| 10. Getting First Book parents to ask for the free card when they were in the library. Library staff did not know which families participated so they didn't offer free cards.  | 1   |
| 11. No challenges were experienced  | 5   |
| 12. Left question blank   | 1   |

All of the challenges listed in Table 8 are reasonable and probably valid, but at the same time most of them can be addressed with changes in procedures and policies. For example, language barriers were mentioned by two libraries. To move toward

ameliorating this problem, library card applications could be translated into the dominant languages of the limited English speakers. As another example, one library stated that they didn't have enough contact with the entire family. This makes sense since First Book has minimal opportunity for contact with parents and other family members, if the family and its members are not already regular library users. One way to address this challenge is to provide incentives for the children and the family to come to the library for an orientation visit and while there apply for a library card.

Most of the other challenges in the list can be critiqued in similar ways. Such critique should not be construed as showing disrespect for these libraries or minimizing the very real challenges they face when it comes to getting people to visit the library and take out a card. Instead the critique can be seen as the beginnings of the problem solving process.

Three libraries responded but didn't provide specific challenges they faced. Instead their answers described what they did and the results. Their comments are paraphrased below:

- Library sent home the library card application with the first book distribution and got 20 of 80 to respond. They were surprised at the low response but did not talk about any particular challenges or what they might do differently in the future.
- Library was not sure why so few took advantage of receiving a free library card, but they did say that next year they might make a special card and send it home with the children. They also stated that they were "Not sure how to fix this."
- Most parents were already aware of the library and had cards so not getting many makes sense.

In the case of the 20 of 80 response rate, when put into context of the entire First Book program, this particular library was quite successful. Granted a greater than 25% success rate would be optimal, but to achieve the response rate they did by just sending the applications home in the First Books is quite surprising. The response by the second bullet doesn't state a challenge but it does state a possible solution. And the response by the third bullet provides a rationalization for why few library cards were issued. This may be a quite valid rationalization, but it does stimulate some questions. For example, is this particular First Book program devoting adequate time and resources to reach children and families who are not library users?

As discussed earlier, getting non-library users into the library to apply for a card and learn about library services and programs is an important corollary outcome of the First Book program. The number of library cards issued is probably a good proxy for how successful the libraries are at accomplishing this goal. If this is the case, First Book is meeting with mixed success. Thus, in future trainings, the importance of getting library cards into First Book parents' and caregivers' hands needs to be emphasized along with the importance of providing them thorough orientations to the library and its services and programs.

**First Book Final Report: Do you have any plans for sustaining First Book?**

Libraries were asked if they had plans to sustain First Book. This was a yes/no question with the follow-up probe “Please describe any plans you have.” All of the libraries provided a response. This is a great improvement from last year when four did not respond to the question. This year, 17 libraries said “yes.” Fourteen libraries responded “yes” last year. Four libraries said “no” whereas six did so last year. This year, however, one of the “yes” responses was really a “no.” Although the library responded “yes,” the detailed and well-written explanation said that they would not be doing First Book next year because the library was getting a new children’s librarian and the program would overwhelm her. But they did say they would consider re-applying for 2011-2012. So a more accurate accounting of “yes” and “no” responses this year would be 16 “yes” and 5 “no.” Thus response profiles to this question were quite similar year-over-year.

Last year, the libraries’ plans were not highly detailed but adequate enough to get a sense for the future of First Book in the participating libraries. This year, more detail was provided which is a positive development since this information is important to see where the First Book program is headed at the local library level. Continuing to prod local libraries to provide more detail is needed since there were still some quite cryptic responses that didn’t provide much information.

Ideally, libraries will look beyond the ICFL for funding and resources to continue First Book. Four libraries who responded “yes” appear to be doing this. Last year six reported doing so. Examples of statements showing how the four libraries are looking beyond ICFL for support follow:

- “I am seeking private funding through a couple different sources in order to keep this project going because I believe in it so much.”
- “Planning on doing some research about the cost and presenting it to the Library Board and Friends of the Library to see if it is something we could do on our own.”
- “There is the possibility that we could approach one of the bigger companies in the area to see if they might fund a similar program for a season. We may have to deliver books to fewer children which would be sad for them and for the library.”
- “If we are not fortunate enough to receive the grant for 2010-2011 I will be out looking for funding. We are hoping to add another center.”

The last item in the list is interesting. The library is counting on continued funding from the ICFL but if that does not materialize, they will go “out looking for funding.” More will be said about this dependence on the ICFL below. The nature of these comments is similar to those made last year by libraries looking beyond ICFL support for First Book. It is important to note that not many libraries made comments like these either year. Instead, most libraries that have plans to continue First Book continue to rely on the ICFL for support. Last year nine libraries who responded “yes” were looking primarily or solely to the ICFL for future support of their First Book programs. This year ten fall into this category. Eight of these ten reported either wanting to re-apply or re-applying to the ICFL for another year of funding. Five of these provided the following comments:

- “I would love to re-apply for next year.”

- “Will apply again next year.”
- “ZPL (pseudonym) will do this program for as many years as ICFL will let us.”
- “Hope to get 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the grant.”
- “I have applied for another year of First Book, which will be our third. After that I plan to continue to include the literacy skills information as part of our Family Reading events.”
- “I would like to continue much the way I have this year. I may modify Story Time, though, and have two age groups (0-2 & 3-4 year olds).”

The success and popularity of the program is obvious but it is equally obvious that these eight libraries are not thinking of other sources of support. The remaining two libraries of the ten who continue to count on ICFL support had contingency plans for supporting First Book if they did not receive ICFL funding. Following are the comments from these two libraries.

- “I am planning to use part of my budget next year to purchase books for the young kids if I do not receive the grant. I am making a plan to purchase kids books to replace our old books in the library.”
- “We will continue to have a story time and offer books as our funds allow if we do not get accepted. It is a great plan and we learned a lot and it will be better this next year.”

Of course, it is laudable for a local library to try to support their First Book program from internal library funds, but given the extreme budget situations most public entities find themselves in these days this source of support is probably quite tenuous. As was discussed in the evaluation report last year, future librarian training needs to be developed focused on how to successfully seek external funding for high value, proven programs like First Book. The success of this training can be monitored through end-of-year reports like the First Book report by counting how many libraries have found external support other than the ICFL to sustain their First Book program.

There were three other libraries who provided comments that didn't fit in the above categories. One said that the library will continue providing story times for kindergarteners in the local public school and the library will purchase the books but did not say how. Another library said, after stating they re-applied for funding, “We are also working more closely with our partners and getting things ready more in advance.” And finally, one library didn't provide a plan but instead a wonderful testimonial to the program:

This program has been such a wonderful incentive for our kindergarteners to become excited about having books in their home. When I spend the time talking about their home libraries with the classes (5 classes), they willingly share their stories of how they read with their parents, siblings and other family members. It is a very effective tool for developing some ownership by our young students in their reading progress.

As stated before, the program is popular with participants and quite effective at achieving its primary and secondary goals, so sustaining the program is all the more important.

But over-reliance on the ICFL for support is not good for the health and longevity of the program. The First Book program should be sustained for many years in as many localities as possible in Idaho. To do this, other sources of funding will be necessary and that means more libraries need to actively seek additional sources of funds. A few libraries are doing this but most are not and there has been no discernible improvement in this important outcome from last year to this year.

In the future, the ICFL may want to devote more time and resources to capacity building in local libraries with a focus on establishing a culture that ICFL is a starting point for support, but if a program works well in a particular library then the library should immediately begin looking for other sources of support to maintain the program over time. This recommendation is in no way meant to undermine the ICFL but instead to leverage the talents the organization has. The ICFL is adept at finding great programs for local libraries to become involved in and then helping those libraries to implement the programs in very positive ways in their service areas. But funding is fickle and if great programs get started at the local library level and then end when ICFL funding for that particular program ends, then strong programs come and go and communities are not continuously served with all the high quality programming that the system has the potential to offer. Thus, getting local libraries to be more entrepreneurial and begin looking for other than ICFL funds makes long term sense.

### **First Book Final Report: Anecdotes**

Respondents were asked to “include one anecdote that is a consequence of First Book for a specific child or family (no names needed – but please be specific).” Twenty of the 21 libraries that submitted final reports provided anecdotes. This is an improvement from last year when 17 of 24 libraries provided anecdotes. A few will be quoted from the 2009-2010 reports to illustrate the effects the First Book program has on librarians, individual children, and families. When taken in aggregate, the anecdotes are quite powerful as they depict very poignant moments for the librarians, partners, children, and adults involved in the program. In short, the anecdotes capture the power and efficacy of First Book. No differences from year-to-year were detected in the anecdotes. They were compelling both years and revealed and underscored similar things about the First Book program. The following quotes are verbatim transcriptions from the final reports so any spelling or grammatical errors were in the originals.

- “The children took their books and parents notes right after we read to them and put them into their backpacks to take home. One of the boys said “ I put my book in my library at home.” I asked him if he had lots of books in his library and he replied “ No, I just have the books you give me.” There is not bookstore for about 100 miles and many families just can’t afford to buy books in our depressed community. The books meant a lot to the children.”
- “I had one little girl tell me that she had set up a special shelf in her room for her own books. She was so excited that the books were hers and that she had her own library in her room.”
- “More than one child told me and the volunteer with whom they shared their book, that it was the only boo(s) they own. This is the beginning of a home

library for my students. One little girl in my class reads her books to her unborn baby brother. She is proud of her reading and loves sharing her books with all.”

- “I was at a restaurant with my family when one of the Head Start kids came in and when he saw me he start yelling, “that’s Melissa! That’s the lady that reads to us!” It was very cute!
- “A child approached me in the grocery store, parent in tow, telling mom that I was the book lady. “She gives us the books, mommy.” The mother thanked me and told me her child is so excited to own her own books now. She said that they had to read at least two or three books before bed; her child had never been into reading before.”
- “One of my favorite comments from a parent was that with having these books brought home to keep, the mom was able to read the story to all of her children and work with all of them on the skills she had learned in the ECRR class. She also really appreciated the helpful hints in the bookworm that she could use along with each book. She wanted to know if she could subscribe to the bookworm and if there was other versions for younger children.”
- “After our Family workshop we have one family who now comes to the library almost every day. I had not seen them in the library before this event. They are excited to check out books and read them together. They loved the activities so much. I also have children from the pre-school that now come up to me at the library and give me a hug or say hello to me.”
- “One little boy said to me I have been waiting for you every since I woke up this morning.”

The anecdotes underscore numerous important outcomes of the First Book program. For example, the anecdotes attest to:

- the power of providing children and families access to and ownership of high quality children’s books. This access facilitates more reading in the home not just for the target child who received the books but also their siblings;
- the power of book ownership to instill pride in the child and motivate them to read;
- the large amount of positive exposure the program provides libraries and librarians; and
- the importance of knowledge and resources about early literacy development for parents.

If anecdotes were the only data collected about First Book, not a lot of stock could be placed in them since they only represent testimonials and would lack corroboration. But that is not the case with this evaluation. There are several data points including paper surveys and follow-up telephone surveys that provide similar information to that provided by the anecdotes. Thus, the anecdotes provide compelling first-hand accounts of the effects of the First Book program on all those involved.

**First Book Final Report: Please tell us about your workshop/event.**

Participating libraries were asked to provide a parent workshop or First Book event as part of their First Book activities. The purpose of the workshop/event was to reward parents and their children for their participation in First Book and also provide additional early literacy awareness and training for the parents. A series of questions were asked about the workshops/events. These questions are found below followed by a summary of the responses and an interpretation of the results.

### **First Book Final Report: Attendance at Parent Workshop or Event**

Libraries were asked for the number of First Book children and the number of First Book parents or caregivers who attended the workshop or event. Eighteen of the 21 libraries reported statistics for children. Nineteen libraries reported statistics for parents/caregivers. The previous year twenty-two libraries reported attendance statistics. Attendance of both First Book children and parents/caregivers ranged from a low of zero, no one attended the event, to a high of 111. The previous year the range had been 0 to 400. Providing a range for this data is somewhat misleading since only five libraries had attendance over 30. Five libraries had less than ten attendees, and eight libraries had ten to 29. One library had no one attend their event. This occurred last year also when two libraries had no one attend their events. Total attendance across all 18 libraries was 522. Total attendance last year was 1,199. This much larger number includes data for 22 libraries instead of the 18 reporting this year, but still attendance was lower this year. This lower attendance will be discussed below.

Of additional interest are the specific statistics for just the First Book children who attended the workshop or event. The total number of First Book children attending all the events was 243. The number at any single event ranged from 0 to 46. Six libraries had 0-5 children present. Four libraries had 6-10 present. Five libraries had 11-20 present, and three libraries had greater than 20 children present. Of the libraries reporting, only one said that no children attended. This was the library where no one attended the event.

Two things need to be mentioned about these results. First, the drop in attendance from last year to this should be explored. There were changes made in the requirements concerning the First Book event for 2009-2010 and this may have influenced the attendance statistics. For example, last year some libraries combined their First Book event with other library events and this may have created difficulty in collecting accurate attendance statistics where First Book children and parents/caregivers attended an event with children and adults who did not participate in the program. Perhaps, because of this potential problem statistics for this year are more accurate than those reported for last year since this year's events were to be only for First Book participants. Second, not all libraries reported these statistics again this year. This information is important for ICFL planning purposes since achieving high rates of attendance at the First Book events/workshops is important. These gatherings provide libraries an opportunity to celebrate literacy while also providing important face-to-face contact with the parents/caregivers to answer questions, promote other library programs and services, and to solidify, refine, and deepen the adults' knowledge about early literacy development. Regrettably, the library that served the greatest number of children did not report statistics. They said that the numbers were unknown. The ICFL needs to make sure at

their First Book trainings each fall to emphasize the importance of collecting these statistics. Without such emphasis it would be quite easy for a participating library to not know that detailed attendance records need to be kept until the person responsible begins filling out the final report and sees that attendance for the event is asked for on the form.

**First Book Final Report: Did your partner organization participate in the workshop/event?**

Libraries were asked if their partner organization participated in the workshop or event. This was a yes/no response with the following probe, “If yes, what was their role?” Seventeen libraries responded “yes” and three said “no.” The previous year sixteen libraries responded “yes” and six said “no.” One library did not respond to this question. Response profiles across the two years were quite similar with the proportion responding “yes” being quite high.

**First Book Final Report: A requirement of Read to Me First Book is to host a parent workshop or family event just for your First Book families. Our library hosted:**

Libraries were asked to specify whether they hosted a parent workshop or a family event for just their First Book families. One library left this item blank. There were 18 family events and four parent workshops. Two libraries reported doing one of each. All other libraries conducted just one.

Libraries were then asked, “Please tell us about the event or workshop. Include the topics covered and an agenda or list of activities. Please send ICFL copies of the program agenda and/or any publicity, if available.” One library did not respond to this question. Table 9 lists the topics that were listed. Table 10 lists the activities.

Table 9: Topics with Number of Mentions

| Topic   | Number of<br>Libraries<br>2009-2010<br>(n=20) | Number of<br>Libraries<br>2008-2009<br>(n=24) |
|---|---|---|
| <i>1. Most Common Topics: Total</i>   | <i>30</i>                                     | <i>24</i>                                     |
| a. Six early literacy skills (Not always all six and sometimes a quick review. Several had centers where children and parents rotated through the skills doing activities and making crafts.)                                       | 17  | 15  |
| b. Tips on reading with your child (e.g., what to practice with them, literacy games, reading can be fun with your children, all ages can enjoy the same books, importance of reading to your child, importance of literacy skills) | 6   | 5   |
| c. First Book (e.g., overview of program, displayed all the books the children would receive, sample Book Worms)  | 6   | 4   |
| d. How the First Books that had been distributed during the year illustrated the early literacy skills  | 1   | 0   |
| <i>2. Other Library-Related Topics: Total</i>   | <i>2</i>                                      | <i>7</i>                                      |

|  |          |          |
|--|----------|----------|
| a. Discussed library programs and services (one provided overview of early literacy resources on library web site) | 2        | 1        |
| b. How to receive a library card   | 0        | 2        |
| c. Discussed popular books and educational books   | 0        | 2        |
| d. Family Reading Week   | 0        | 1        |
| e. Summer reading  | 0        | 1        |
| <i>3. Other Reading Readiness and Teaching Children to Read Topics: Total</i>                                      | <i>1</i> | <i>8</i> |
| a. Information about school readiness skills (last year this was Kindergarten readiness)                           | 1        | 2        |
| b. Early childhood education (e.g., how children learn)  | 0        | 2        |
| c. “Reading—Pre-Birth through age 12 years”  | 0        | 1        |
| d. Television and learning   | 0        | 1        |
| e. Resources for parents   | 0        | 1        |
| f. Curriculum selection and alignment for daycares   | 0        | 1        |

The “Most Common Topics” were quite similar from year to year in both topic and number of mentions. The single new mention of reviewing the First Books that had been distributed during the year showing how they illustrated the six early literacy skills is a very creative and potentially quite effective activity. The activity could easily fit under “a. Six early literacy skills,” and it probably should, but it was kept separate since it represents a novel way of illustrating to the parents and caregivers the literacy skills. Most likely the parents had become familiar with the books after having read them to their children, so revisiting the books with a focus on how they illustrate the skills is a very interesting idea and one that other libraries may want to experiment with in the future.

The “Other Library-Related Topics” and “Other Reading Readiness and Teaching Children to Read Topics” categories, however, appear to have been more diverse last year. This may be the result of the First Book events last year being combined with other library events such as family reading week. The broader focus of the events last year may have resulted in a greater diversity of topics being addressed. Whether this reduction in diversity is a positive or negative outcome can not be determined. On the one hand, the information provided last year appears to be important and relevant, although some of the topics may have been too broad while others too narrow. On the other hand, this year’s First Book parents and caregivers may have received more focused information on the First Book program and what they can do to help their children develop early literacy skills. It is the opinion of the evaluator that the more narrow focus is a positive outcome since it is more likely that a consistent, coherent, and manageable message about early literacy development is being disseminated throughout the state through the First Book program.

Table 10 lists the activities that were mentioned by respondents. There are very few activities listed for last year because the final report didn’t specifically ask for activities. A few were mentioned by respondents last year and these are included in Table 10 for comparative purposes.

Table 10: Activities with Number of Mentions

| Activity  | Number of Libraries<br>2009-2010<br>(n=20) | Number of Libraries<br>2008-2009<br>(n=24) |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Distributed the following: literacy materials (3)*, literacy skills handouts (3), literacy skills booklets (3), bookmarks (4), literacy skills flyer (1), brochures (1); rhymes (3); songs (2) | 20   | 1  |
| 2. Provided story time  | 11   | 2  |
| 3. Refreshments (3 provided dinner)   | 10   | 0  |
| 4. Free book  | 7  | 0  |
| 5. Craft  | 4  | 0  |
| 6. Conducted music & movement activities/sing alongs  | 4  | 1  |
| 7. Prizes/give-aways  | 3  | 0  |
| 8. Party (e.g., hula party with hula lessons, hula hoop contest and dress up; pajama party)   | 2  | 0  |
| 9. Conducted library tour   | 2  | 0  |
| 10. Modeled for parents/caregivers what a First Book distribution looked like   | 1  | 0  |
| 11. Handed out library cards  | 1  | 0  |

\* Number of libraries reporting this activity is in ().

Distributing various materials was the most common activity. This makes sense since the libraries have ample access to a variety of high quality and attractive materials from the ICFL and other sources. Story times and refreshments were also popular as were providing free books. Providing books can be expensive so it is a positive outcome that local libraries were able to find funding for purchasing free books. For example, one library stated that their Friends of the Library group had provided the funds for the books. Given the popularity of free books with children, parents, and caregivers, this activity might be one that could be emphasized by the ICFL in future trainings to help libraries increase attendance at these events.

One activity that was mentioned by only one library needs to be singled out because of its novelty and creativity. The library reported conducting a full book distribution with the children while their parents and caregivers watched. Librarians read the First Book to the children like they would if they were at the distribution site. The children wrote their names in the books and then completed a craft. It is reasonable to assume that parents were moved by watching their children engage enthusiastically in this activity and came to understand the power and importance of the First Book program, reading, books, and the importance of their local librarian. In short, the librarians modeled for the parents exactly what they had done throughout the year with the children in the First Book program. This modeling could be very effective. Thus, this might be another activity the ICFL may want to explore in the future. If it went well and was well-received by attendees, it could be something that could be incorporated into future trainings. Of course, not all libraries would be asked to do this activity, but it could be presented as a choice among many for activities at parent events.

**First Book Final Report: What changes might you make in order to strengthen the format/attendance rate of your event or workshop?**

Respondents were asked to provide changes they will make to improve their events or workshops for next year. Twenty participants responded. This question was asked last year but coding the responses was handled differently between the two years. Last year responses were grouped into six broad categories. These are listed in Table 11 and briefly discussed under the table. This year more detail was retained in the coding to better reveal the particular changes participants are planning. The coding scheme for this year's responses with the greater level of detail is provided in Table 12.

Table 11: Changes by Category and the Number of Libraries Reporting the Change: 2008-2009

| <b>Change</b>                          | <b>Number<br/>2008-2009</b> |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1. Attendance                          | 10                          |
| 2. Advertising                         | 3                           |
| 3. Better organization of presentation | 2                           |
| 4. Problems with partner               | 1                           |
| 5. Miscellaneous changes to be made    | 4                           |
| 6. Not a meaningful response           | 1                           |
| 7. Left blank                          | 2                           |

For 2008-2009 changes to improve attendance were the most common. Libraries said they were going to move the time or day of the workshop to better fit the schedules of attendees, make more direct invitations, and call or send reminders in advance of the workshop. Three libraries in this category didn't really say what changes they were going to make but instead expressed frustration with the low attendance at their workshop even after they had advertised quite extensively.

Closely related to attendance was advertising. Three libraries mentioned specific changes they will make to their advertising campaigns. For example, one said that they were considering taking "materials to the school at the time of parent/teacher conferences. Another said, "Advertise better; put in the newspaper for consecutive weeks, rotating the Every Child Ready to Read display board to different locations."

Two libraries mentioned that they would work on improving the organization and delivery of their workshop information. Only one library mentioned problems with a partner but didn't really say what they would change in the future. Four libraries made comments that didn't fit in the other categories. Comments included having trouble getting parents to complete the surveys, stating that the lunch they provided was a great addition and that they would like to make the workshop a bigger event next year, having more book distributions at the library along with giving out more free library cards, and incorporating field trips to the library from local day cares.

One library's response was difficult to interpret in this context. They simply wrote, "No attendance." The library did report that no one attended their event so they must have thought that since they had no attendance then no changes to the workshop were applicable. Two libraries did not respond to the question.

Changes remained quite similar for the 2009-2010. Table 12 provides the changes and the number of participants reporting them with the added detail previously

mentioned. The 2008-2009 categories have been retained in Table 12 for comparative purposes and these are in bold font. The increased level of detail found in Table 12 is needed because the changes participants report provide a clear window into the challenges they encountered doing their event or workshop and also how creative and dynamic their thinking is about how to address those challenges.

Table 12: Changes by Category and the Number of Libraries Reporting the Change: 2009-2010

| <b>Change</b>  | <b>Number<br/>2009-2010</b> |
|--|-----------------------------|
| <b><i>1. Scheduling</i></b> <span style="float: right;"><i>Total</i></span>  | <b>9</b>                    |
| a. Won't do it on Saturday   | 1                           |
| b. Try Saturday morning with breakfast. Evenings are hard for some families.   | 1                           |
| c. Maybe a Saturday morning or afternoon during winter when there are less events happening.   | 1                           |
| d. Make sure not competing with other school or church activity  | 1                           |
| e. Families are busy with school events. Have tried combining library and school events before but didn't work well.   | 1                           |
| f. Will try to hold more than one event  | 1                           |
| g. Will try to schedule the First Book workshop before the September book distribution so parents have information early in program. Midvale   | 1                           |
| h. Hold it later after more First Books and Bookworms have gone home   | 1                           |
| i. Hold library tour in fall instead of late winter  | 1                           |
| <b><i>2. Advertising</i></b> <span style="float: right;"><i>Total</i></span>   | <b>4</b>                    |
| a. Better advertisement  | 1                           |
| b. "We needed a bit more notice for the publicity planning."   | 1                           |
| c. Start earlier with the invitation so families can prepare   | 1                           |
| d. More contact with parents (encourage them to attend)  | 1                           |
| <b><i>3. Changes to Workshop or Event Presentation*</i></b> <span style="float: right;"><i>Total</i></span>  | <b>3</b>                    |
| a. Offer more exciting entertainment for the children (e.g., puppet show; make it more fun—carnival-like for whole family instead of a workshop)   | 2                           |
| b. May improve attendance if someone other than library personnel did presentation   | 1                           |
| <b><i>4. Miscellaneous Changes to be Made</i></b> <span style="float: right;"><i>Total</i></span>  | <b>3</b>                    |
| a. Start preparing earlier   | 1                           |
| b. Children went to another room to do early literacy activities while teacher worked with parents on early literacy. Will extend amount of time next year so parents can get more involved in activities.   | 1                           |
| c. Have public library attend to distribute library card applications.   | 1                           |
| <b><i>5. At a Loss to Make Changes</i></b> <span style="float: right;"><i>Total</i></span>   | <b>3</b>                    |
| a. "I am at a loss as to what more we could have done..."  | 1                           |
| b. "At this point, I am not sure"  | 1                           |
| c. "I'm not sure what changes would help. So many families live in outlying areas here and just don't come no matter the incentive."   | 1                           |
| <b><i>6. Attendance</i></b> <span style="float: right;"><i>Total</i></span>  | <b>3</b>                    |
| a. Could not have gotten a better turn out—very pleased  | 2                           |
| b. "We are a very rural community and are always affected by weather, families doing ranch chores and other school related activities. We were pleased that over half the children were able to come to the event this year. We do make changes each year in our outreach to children and their families based on the factors listed above." | 1                           |

|  |              |   |
|--|--------------|---|
| 7. <i>Space constraints</i>  | <i>Total</i> | 2 |
| a. Open house format is necessary because of limited library space |              | 1 |
| b. Probably could not have handled more since space is limited     |              | 1 |
| 8. <i>Partner**—make partner aware of importance of workshop</i>   |              | 1 |
| 9. <i>Not a meaningful response</i>                                |              | 0 |
| 10. <i>Left blank</i>  |              | 1 |

\* During 2008-2009, a similar category was “**Better organization of presentation.**”

\*\* During 2008-2009, a similar category was “**Problems with partner.**”

Scheduling was the most common change but no consistent themes emerged within this category. Some libraries were going to experiment with Saturday events while one reported they won't hold their event on Saturday again because it wasn't a good time. Conflicts with school and church activities were also mentioned. One library said they will try to hold more than one event. This is an excellent solution especially when libraries report having too little space to handle large crowds. Granted library resources are limited to hold multiple events, but conducting more than one event or workshop may be necessary to reach all of the parents and caregivers and to be able to hold the events or workshops in the library. Holding events or workshops in the library is important so participants get to visit the library and see what it has to offer.

Under the scheduling category, one library said they would hold their event earlier in the year so that parents and caregivers had information about First Book early in the program cycle while another library said just the opposite. They said they would hold their event later so that more First Books had gone home and parents had more experience with the program. Finally, one library reported that they will conduct library tours earlier in the year so that parents are exposed to the library earlier in the First Book program.

Advertising was the second most often mentioned change to be made. One library simply said they needed better advertising. Two said they needed to start earlier. And one reported that they needed more contact with parents to encourage them to attend. This last comment is interesting. The design of the First Book program does not automatically generate a lot of face-to-face contact with parents. Thus, creating such opportunities could be challenging. If First Book libraries have come up with good ideas for generating more contact, it would be important to share these with the network of participants.

Last year two respondents talked about achieving better organization of their presentation. No one mentioned this problem this year. Instead, two libraries talked about changing their presentations so that they are more exciting and engaging. One talked about providing a puppet show or a carnival-like format, and the other hypothesized that if an invited outsider did the presentation instead of internal library personnel attendance would improve.

The items under the “Miscellaneous Changes to be Made” category are self-explanatory. But the next two categories, “At a Loss to Make Changes” and “Attendance” warrant some discussion. The former category will be discussed first. One of the entries under “At a Loss” represents a library that did two events. One of the events had poor attendance while the other had very good attendance. The library partnered with a public school and it was this event targeted at the public school parents that had poor attendance. This was an interesting outcome since the library reported in

some detail an extensive list of things they did to promote the event, all of which would be expected to be successful. Thus, the library being at a loss makes sense. Their second partnership was with a daycare and their second event was targeted at this group of parents. They had five of six families attend this event so it was quite successful in that regard. The other two comments under this category in Table 12 are not as easy to explain. These libraries did not provide as much detail concerning what they did to promote their events. In one case no one attended the event and in the other very few did. Perhaps in future First Book trainings time could be spent on how to successfully promote an event. Many First Book libraries have done so and many have made improvements and changes over time which have improved their events and the attendance at them so there is a reservoir of experience and knowledge that could be tapped.

The attendance category is also interesting to discuss. These libraries were satisfied with their attendance. In one instance this conclusion is fully supported by the data the library provided. The number of First Book children and parents who attended the event was nearly as many as were served by the program at the site. But in the case of the other two libraries, their expectations for attendance may be set too low. One said that they could not have gotten a better turn out and were very pleased, but they only reported ten First Book children in attendance when they had served 30 in their program. Similarly, the other library under this category, which said that weather and other factors impinge on attendance at events, was pleased at getting over half the First Book children to attend. Setting a target percentage for attendance at events or workshops is not within the scope of this evaluation, but it should probably be greater than 50%.

Space constraints are a real challenge facing libraries in Idaho. Perhaps, as was mentioned above, holding multiple events might help solve this problem. But holding multiple events brings to the fore another equally intractable problem in Idaho libraries which is limited staff resources to set up, promote, and conduct multiple events. Holding the events away from the library where more space is available is an option but then attendees don't get exposure to the library itself, which is an important component of these events. A comment from one library illustrates the space constraint issue:

The library has limited space, so the open house format is almost a necessity if many families attend. We may have had better response if we had invited someone other than library personnel to do the presentation, but when no one attends, it is a waste of their time. I'll be excited to hear ideas from other libraries and find out if we were the only ones with such poor attendance.

Two things need mentioning about this comment. First, open houses are probably not the best format for First Book events. Some First Book parents and caregivers are not regular library users so an open house may not draw them into the library. There is no evidence in the data to support or refute this assertion so the ICFL may want to look at open house formats to see if they can be effective. In the case of this library it was not. One First Book child attended and two parents. This particular program served 69 students so the event should be considered a failure. Second, it is heartening to read that the respondent was interested in hearing from other libraries to see if their attendance was equally low, but this statement shows this respondent did not know what has happened in

the past with First Book events and workshops. If this person had such knowledge, he or she would already know that when structured and promoted properly most First Book events and workshops experience solid attendance. Thus, the ICFL may want to incorporate into future training a discussion about what libraries and partners can expect concerning attendance.

One library reported wanting to make their partner more aware of the importance of the event or workshop. They wrote,

“I will make sure that my partner realizes how important the workshop is to the success of the program. I think that if they make a good effort to remind the children and communicate with the parents, our attendance would be much better. When my partner realized how important getting the evaluations back were to the program, they made a valiant effort to get them back.”

Oftentimes libraries are quite dependent on their partners for informing parents and caregivers about the events, and thus if the partner is not aware of the purpose behind the event they may not promote it as much as needed. This appears to have been the case with this library. But it was a credit to this particular partner that once they did become aware they worked with the library to accomplish the goals.

Finally, attendance appears to be an ongoing issue, like it was last year. In the future, the ICFL may want to provide training on how successful libraries achieve strong attendance at functions like the parent workshops. There are a number of successful libraries in Idaho so there is a pool of talent and ideas that could be shared.

### **Section 3: First Book Parent Survey**

The First Book program provides free books for young children in need. Parents of children who received books during 2009-2010 completed questionnaires asking them about their early literacy behaviors with their children and their library use. A total of 559 surveys were returned. This compares with 311 surveys the previous year, that is 2008-2009. This year, 18 were Spanish versions of the survey. Last year, 12 Spanish versions were returned. There were problems, however, with some of the formatting and questions on the Spanish survey used this year rendering some of the data unusable, so these problems need to be addressed.

Like last year, the total number of surveys distributed is unknown so a response rate can not be calculated. Thus, the information provided in the following sections reporting the results from this survey may or may not be representative of all the parents who participated. The surveys came from 20 participating libraries this year and 19 last year.

#### **First Book Parent Survey: Demographic Profile of Children Receiving First Books**

Parents were asked to provide the number and ages of their children in each of the following categories: Newborn to two years, three to five years, and six to eight years. These children did not necessarily all receive First Books. Parents and caregivers were

asked to list all of their children in the age groups, not just those that received First Books.

A total of 1,140 children were listed on the surveys. This is many more than the previous year when 657 children were listed. But it is important to keep in mind that 248 more surveys were returned during 2009-2010 when compared to the previous year. This is an increase of 79% year-over-year. In a separate question, parents were asked how many of their male and how many of their female children received First Books this year. Tables 13 and 14 present the results for these two questions.

Table 13: Number of Children in Each Age Category

| <b>Age by Category</b> | <b>Number of Children 2009-2010</b> | <b>Percent of Total 2009-2010</b> | <b>Number of Children 2008-2009</b> | <b>Percent of Total 2008-2009</b> |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Newborn to Two Years   | 223                                 | 19.6                              | 131                                 | 20.0                              |
| Three to Five Years    | 485                                 | 42.5                              | 313                                 | 47.6                              |
| Six to Eight Years     | 432                                 | 37.9                              | 213                                 | 32.4                              |
| <b>Total</b>           | 1140                                | 100.0                             | 657                                 | 100                               |

Since the number of surveys differed across years, the number of children in each age category and the total number of children listed are not directly comparable. What is comparable are the percent of total statistics. These are mostly consistent year-over-year. The percentages for Newborn to Two Years were nearly identical across the two years. There was a five percent shift down in the three to five year old category for 2009-2010 with a corresponding five percent increase in the six to eight year olds for 2009-2010. If these trends were to continue, it might be something to explore but with only two years of data and the rather large variation in sample sizes, these changes could be due to sampling error. Importantly, the large number of children listed in Table 13 shows how many additional children may be being positively impacted by a sibling or relative bringing a First Book home. Many parents reported on their surveys that when their children brought the First Books home, the parents and all of their children would sit down together and read the book. This was an activity they looked forward to each month. The parents reported their children being very excited about receiving the new book, having it read to them and their siblings, and then discussing the story. In short, there is ample evidence in the parent surveys that the books are being used not just by the child who receives them but by that child's siblings and parents. This probably doesn't occur in all families, but where it does, the First Books are touching many more children's lives than just the children who receive the books. The information in Table 13 provides insight into how many additional children the First Books might reach as a consequence of this phenomenon.

Respondents were also asked to list how many of their male and female children received First Books. Table 14 provides these statistics.

Table 14: Number of Male and Female Children Receiving First Books

| <b>Gender</b> | <b>Number of Children 2009-2010</b> | <b>Percent of Total 2009-2010</b> | <b>Number of Children 2008-2009</b> | <b>Percent of Total 2008-2009</b> |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Female        | 337                                 | 48.3                              | 185                                 | 48.4                              |

|              |     |      |     |      |
|--------------|-----|------|-----|------|
| Male         | 361 | 51.7 | 197 | 51.6 |
| <b>Total</b> | 698 | 100  | 382 | 100  |

The question about gender provides two important pieces of information. First, it is always good to check that gender break downs are roughly equal to what would be expected in the overall population to make sure bias is not occurring. Table 14 shows rough parity between males and females receiving First Books. Second, the totals for children receiving First Books provides additional evidence for the point made above about more than just the children receiving the First Books benefiting from them. For example, 698 children were listed as receiving First Books for 2009-2010, but parents and caregivers listed 1,140 total children in the three age categories provided on the survey. The difference between these two numbers shows the potential number of additional children who might benefit from the First Books coming into the home. It is important to note that not all respondents provided information about the ages of their children and not all respondents provided gender information so an exact count of the additional children who might benefit can not be made, but the difference between the two numbers provides a rough idea of how many children may have benefited in the households who returned surveys.

### **First Book Parent Survey: Impact on Parent Behavior of First Book**

Parents were asked a series of Yes/No questions asking about how their literacy behaviors with their children had changed as a consequence of First Book. Table 15 lists the questions and the response frequencies and percentages.

Table 15: First Book 2009-2010 and 2008-2009 Parent Survey Response Frequencies and Percentages: Changes in Reading Behaviors with Their Children

| As a result of the First Book program, I .....  | Response Frequency and (Percentage)* 2009-2010 |               | Response Frequency and (Percentage) 2008-2009 |               |
|---|--|---------------|---|---------------|
|   | Yes  | No            | Yes   | No            |
| <b>a.</b> spend more time reading with my child/children. (n=532; n=307)**                              | 499<br>(93.8)                                  | 33<br>(6.2)   | 289<br>(94.1)                                 | 18<br>(5.9)   |
| <b>b.</b> spend more time talking with my child/children about the books I read to them. (n=532; n=308) | 489<br>(91.9)                                  | 43<br>(8.1)   | 283<br>(91.9)                                 | 25<br>(8.1)   |
| <b>c.</b> spend more time singing with my child/children. (n=526; n=304)                                | 306<br>(58.2)                                  | 220<br>(41.8) | 181<br>(59.5)                                 | 123<br>(40.5) |
| <b>d.</b> spend more time playing rhyming games with my child/children. (n=530; n=309)                  | 366<br>(69.1)                                  | 164<br>(30.9) | 208<br>(67.3)                                 | 101<br>(32.7) |
| <b>e.</b> am more likely to use the library to check out books. (n=525; n=306)                          | 415<br>(79.0)                                  | 110<br>(21.0) | 261<br>(85.3)                                 | 45<br>(14.7)  |
| <b>f.</b> am more likely to attend programs at the library. (n=522; n=303)                              | 363<br>(69.5)                                  | 159<br>(30.5) | 218<br>(71.9)                                 | 85<br>(28.1)  |
| <b>g.</b> am more aware of good books to share with my child/children. (n=531; n=307)                   | 494<br>(93.0)                                  | 37<br>(7.0)   | 297<br>(96.1)                                 | 12<br>(3.9)   |
| <b><i>If you <u>only</u> have a child/children age 0-2, please</i></b>                                  | 469  | 58            | 244   | 15.           |

|   |               |               |               |              |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| <i>skip to question #4.</i>   | (89.0)        | (11.0)        | (94.2)        | (5.8)        |
| <b>h.</b> am more likely to ask my child/children questions that will prompt a retelling of a story. (n=527; n=259) |               |               |               |              |
| <b>i.</b> spend more time “playing” with letters with my child/children. (n=529; n=277)                             | 419<br>(79.2) | 110<br>(20.8) | 230<br>(83.0) | 47<br>(17.0) |
| <b>j.</b> show my child/children the print in signs. (n=525; n=277)   | 365<br>(69.5) | 160<br>(30.5) | 203<br>(73.3) | 74<br>(26.7) |

\* Number of respondents who marked Yes or No. Underneath this is the percentage of respondents who marked Yes or No who responded to the statement.

\*\* n is the number of respondents for the particular statement. The first number is 2009-2010 and the second number is 2008-2009.

Based on the response percentages and frequencies the program was again quite successful in achieving its intended outcomes during 2009-2010. Year-over-year trends will be discussed first. Specific items will be discussed after trends.

Response profiles are quite consistent across the two years. This is a wonderful and important outcome for the program since the results are very positive. Stakeholders now have two year’s of data showing a consistently high degree of positive impact on parent and caregiver behaviors. Only one item probably shows a meaningful change from 2008-2009 to 2009-2010. That is item e which asked about using the library more often to check out books. There was about a 6% drop year-over-year in “yes” responses. If this trend were to continue for two or three more years, then addressing it would become important. But with just two years of data and the large change in sample size from last year to this year, conclusions can not be drawn about the importance of this change. A plausible explanation for the change could be that the larger sample this year contained more parents and caregivers who are not library users.

Three items had over a 90% “yes” response rate (i.e., a, b, and g). This compares with four items the previous year. This is extremely strong performance considering these statements represent important and significant behavioral changes in adults. The program appears to be highly successful at getting parents to spend more time reading and talking about books with their children. The program is also quite successful at making parents and caregivers more aware of good books to share with their children.

Three other statements had “yes” response rates below 90% but greater than 70% (i.e., e, h, and i). Three others were very close to fitting into this range (i.e., d, f, and j). These, too, are quite strong results with over two-thirds of respondents reporting positive behavior changes as a consequence of First Book. Such behavior changes included checking out library books, attending library programs, spending more time playing with letters, and showing children the print in signs.

There is one parent behavior that continues to be difficult to influence at the high level of the other behaviors. “Spend more time singing with my child/children” had the lowest “yes” response rate of all of the items. Only 58% of respondents said “yes.” This is still a quite high “yes” response rate since over half of all respondents reported that they spend more time singing with their children, but when examined within the context of the other behaviors, this item has the lowest “yes” response rate. This has been the case during 2009-2010, 2008-2009, and also 2007-2008, so a trend is emerging that

provides evidence that this is the most resistant behavior to change. The ICFL has taken steps for the 2010-2011 First Book program to address this. They purchased CD's of children's songs and rhymes to distribute to First Book parents. It will be important and very interesting to see if this distribution affects parent behaviors in this important area.

### **First Book Parent Survey: What else have you done differently as a result of the First Book program?**

Respondents were asked to provide other behaviors that changed as a consequence of their participation in First Book. This was an open-ended question so the responses were categorized and counted. Two hundred and one respondents out of a total of 559 wrote comments. This is 36% of the respondents and represents a much larger percentage of the total number of respondents compared to the previous year when 19.6% responded (61 out of a total of 311). Table 16 reports the responses by category and frequency in descending order of frequency of response. The total number of responses in Table 16 slightly exceeds 201 because a few of the comments fit into more than one of the categories in Table 16. Examples of verbatim comments are provided under each category for illustration purposes. Grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors were not corrected in the comments. They appear as they did in the surveys. The table is quite lengthy because of the examples but these are important so readers can understand the type of comments the category headings represent.

Table 16: Other Behavior Changes by Category and Frequency

| <b>Response Category with Example Comments</b>   | <b>Response Frequency 2009-2010</b> | <b>Response Frequency 2008-2009</b> |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <p><i>1. Read More</i></p> <p>a. "I read six books or more a night to all 3 of my kids thank you so much this worked very well"</p> <p>b. "We read on a more consistant basis"</p> <p>c. "I have made more time for Reading with my child and I enjoy it alot more!"</p>   | 53                                  | 15                                  |
| <p><i>2. Interact with Books and Child More &amp; Reinforce Skills</i></p> <p>a. "Listen to my children tell me about the books we read and their opinions on the book"</p> <p>b. "Help him sound out big letters"</p> <p>c. "We read the story and discuss them. We practice comprehension skills, like predicting to see what they think will happen. We enjoy our time spend together reading"</p>  | 31                                  | 15                                  |
| <p><i>3. Excitement about Books and Reading</i></p> <p>a. "Everyday my son received a new book, he couldn't wait to tell me about it. And we had to read it as soon as we got home. Not that night, like we normally did."</p> <p>b. "Not so much me as a parent as we have always read to our kids— daily. However my 5 yo comes home <u>so</u> excited about her new books, retelling the story, acting it out, etc."</p> <p>c. "see my child wanting to read more"</p> <p>d. "Started reading more myself" and "I have learned I like to read!"</p> | 25                                  | 8                                   |
| <p><i>4. Provided New Ideas and Materials</i></p> <p>a. "I have enjoyed reading some new books I have never heard of, as</p>   | 25                                  | 7                                   |

|  |    |   |
|--|----|---|
| <p>well as, some famous award winning books. I feel that this has provided us with an opportunity to diversify our reading and has allowed me to teach new and different things to my child. I have enjoyed the suggested learning opportunities provided by the Bookworm Newsletter, and have found that they not only provide great literacy opportunities for my child, but for me as well.</p> <p>b. "The handouts give me different ideas to do with the children."<br/>c. "We have done some of the craft/learning activities on the sheet."</p> |    |   |
| <p><i>5. Expanded Realm of Reading and Interaction</i></p> <p>a. "Spend more time with my child. Open a whole another world to her."<br/>b. "Got husband to read to kid."<br/>c. "Read with my daughter's friends as well."<br/>d. "Read to all my children the new books."<br/>e. "Just spent more time exploring new things with my daughter."</p>   | 23 | 5 |
| <p><i>7. Utilize Library More</i></p> <p>a. "We have gone to the library a lot more."<br/>b. "Went and got a library card for the hole family"</p>   | 8  | 3 |
| <p><i>6. Child Reads More to Parents and Reads Independently</i></p> <p>a. "Was able to sit and allow my son to "retell", read me the books."<br/>b. "Encouraged my son to "read" to me."<br/>c. "He tries to read to me after I read it to him"</p>   | 4  | 4 |
| <p><i>8. Love the Books</i></p> <p>a. "I love all the books that have been given to us!!"<br/>b. "Love the authors you've chosen. We look for books at library from the same author"</p>   | 4  | 3 |
| <p><i>9. Organizing, Keeping and Treating Books</i></p> <p>a. "I have started collecting book sets for my children to read."<br/>b. "Rec—free books for my child once a month is so exciting for her—she looks forward to it and enjoys the ownership. Keeps us reminded of how important it is to read, own and take care of books."</p>  | 3  | 3 |
| <p><i>10. Nothing Changed</i></p> <p>a. "Nothing"<br/>b. N/A</p>   | 29 | 1 |

Compared to last year, this year five of ten response categories had quite high response rates. These included reading more, increased interaction and reinforcing skills, excitement about books and reading, providing new ideas and materials, and expanded realm of reading and interaction. These are all wonderful outcomes because they represent increases in the quality and amount of time Reading First children experience meaningful early literacy activities.

The number of responses in the remaining categories did not have similar gains but in two instances this would be expected. "Utilize Library More" would not be expected to appear under this question since this information was requested in the previous question on the survey. "Love the Books" is also something that wouldn't be expected to appear under this question since it doesn't address the question. But "Child Reads More to Parents and Reads Independently" and "Organizing, Keeping and Treating Books" are things that do fit under this question but did not increase year-over-year. A matter of fact, the number of responses in these categories may have decreased from last year since the number of responses remained the same even though many more surveys were returned. Both of these categories represent parent/caregiver and child behavior that the ICFL and participating libraries may want to explore more. Having children

want to read to their parents and having parents open to this and knowledgeable about how to handle an early reader's attempts at processing print are important behaviors. Also having children do more independent reading and having children and families take pride in book ownership are important outcomes. It must be kept in mind that this question was open-ended and thus responses are spontaneously generated by respondents, so it is hard to tell just how prevalent these behaviors are in the sample. But these are important behaviors so increasing their prevalence while also working to improve how they are measured should be considered for future training and evaluation activities.

Finally, twenty-nine respondents wrote that nothing changed or put N/A (i.e., not applicable). This is a much greater number than last year but the finding should not be interpreted to mean that more people experienced no additional changes this year when compared to last. Instead the increased response rate could be an artifact of the increased number of surveys returned. Participating libraries worked very hard to achieve such a high number of surveys being returned. Since they took this important activity very seriously, respondents may have also taken the task quite seriously and thus tended to fill-in the surveys more completely. Whereas last year respondents just left this question blank when they had nothing additional to add, respondents this year wrote in this information. Additional years of data are needed to see if this trend holds.

All in all, the results reveal quite positive outcomes from the program. Specifically, parents are spending more quality time with their children centered around reading and talking about high quality children's books.

### **First Book Parent Survey: Usefulness of Information Provided by Program**

Parents were asked to rate a series of items for their usefulness. They were given three choices for each item: very useful, useful, and not useful. Table 17 provides the items and the frequencies and percentages of responses under each choice.

Table 17: Usefulness of Information: First Book 2009-2010 and 2008-2009 Parent Survey Response Frequencies and Percentages

| <b>Please rate the following for usefulness:</b>   | <b>Year</b> | <b>VU*</b>       | <b>U</b>      | <b>NU</b>   |
|--|-------------|------------------|---------------|-------------|
| a. Learning about great books for my child/children. (n=529; n=305)**                              | 2009-2010   | 386***<br>(73.0) | 139<br>(26.2) | 4<br>(.8)   |
|  | 2008-2009   | 222<br>(72.8)    | 81<br>(26.6)  | 2<br>(.7)   |
| b. Learning things I can do at home to help my child/children get ready to read. (n=531; n=307)    | 2009-2010   | 366<br>(68.9)    | 156<br>(29.4) | 9<br>(1.7)  |
|  | 2008-2009   | 211<br>(68.7)    | 90<br>(29.3)  | 6<br>(2.0)  |
| c. Learning rhymes and songs that will help my child develop early literacy skills. (n=531; n=304) | 2009-2010   | 335<br>(63.1)    | 176<br>(33.1) | 20<br>(3.8) |
|  | 2008-2009   | 184<br>(60.5)    | 111<br>(36.5) | 9<br>(3.0)  |
| d. Learning about library resources I can use with my child/children. (n=530; n=306)               | 2009-2010   | 328<br>(61.9)    | 185<br>(34.9) | 17<br>(3.2) |
|  | 2008-2009   | 173<br>(56.5)    | 120<br>(39.2) | 13<br>(4.2) |
| e. The free books provided. (n=531; n=306)   | 2009-2010   | 458<br>(86.3)    | 72<br>(13.6)  | 1<br>(.1)   |

|   |           |               |               |             |
|---|-----------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
|   | 2008-2009 | 270<br>(88.2) | 36<br>(11.8)  | 0<br>(0)    |
| f. The Bookworm Newsletter. (n=521; n=298)  | 2009-2010 | 299<br>(57.4) | 205<br>(39.3) | 17<br>(3.3) |
|   | 2008-2009 | 169<br>(56.7) | 122<br>(40.9) | 7<br>(2.4)  |
| g. Please list other aspects of the First Book program and rate them for usefulness: (n=38; n=25) | 2009-2010 | 36<br>(94.7)  | 2<br>(5.3)    | 0<br>(0)    |
|   | 2008-2009 | 25<br>(100)   | 0<br>(0)      | 0<br>(0)    |

\* VU=Very Useful; U=Useful; NU=Not Useful

\*\* n is the number of respondents for the particular statement. The first number is 2009-2010 data and the second is 2008-2009.

\*\*\* Number of respondents who marked the category. Underneath this is the percentage of respondents who marked the category who responded to the statement.

Response profiles were quite consistent across the two years. This is an excellent outcome. Results were very positive last year so to replicate them a second year with an even larger sample supports the validity of last year’s findings while underscoring the important finding that the program is highly regarded by and useful to respondents. The free books continued to be highly valued, and respondents were also quite positive about item a, “Learning about great books.” The remaining items were also positively evaluated with negligible percentages of “not useful” responses.

Items c and d edged up in the “Very Useful” category. Both of these are important and the ICFL put special emphasis on item c, “Learning rhymes and songs that will help my child develop early literacy skills.” Granted this item achieved less than a 3% increase in the “Very Useful” column but this behavior has been one of the most difficult to influence so if this trend holds for two or three more years, then the ICFL will have solid evidence that their efforts are meeting with success. Item d, “Learning about library resources” was one of the least positively evaluated items last year but made nearly a 5.5% increase in “Very Useful” responses this year. Again, if this trend holds for two or three more years, then the ICFL and participating libraries will be able to say that their efforts have been effective. Item d presents challenges to participating libraries since the First Book program provides little opportunity for parents and caregivers to come into direct contact with librarians and library personnel. In other words, participating libraries get very little face-to-face time with parents and caregivers to inform them about library resources. Some First Book parents and caregivers only had contact with librarians during the event hosted by the libraries for First Book families. Attendance at these functions was relatively low so many parents of children who received First Books had no systematic contact with librarians unless they were already regular library users. Thus, the less positive response profile for this item makes sense, and if this item continues to improve in subsequent years, the ICFL and participating libraries should be proud of the results.

The Bookworm Newsletter continues to be evaluated slightly lower than the other items on the survey. This also occurred in the 2007-2008 evaluation so the ICFL now has three years of data showing that the newsletter is considered not as useful as other aspects of the program. It is important to note that still over 95% of responses fall into either the “Very Useful” or “Useful” categories, so the Bookworm is highly regarded.

But when it is compared to the other items in this question block, it does perform less well. A re-evaluation of the newsletter including how it is distributed and its content might be in order.

Item g was an open-ended question asking respondents to add and rate additional information. Thirty-six people this year contributed information and rated it. One person put a rating in but did not add information so it was impossible to tell what the person was rating. Last year, twenty-five people wrote something and then rated it while eight others wrote something and didn't rate it. No matter whether they were rated or not, all 33 of last year's entries under Item g were categorized. The 36 items this year were also categorized. The categories and response frequencies can be found in Table 18 in descending order of prevalence. Examples of items are included under each category to provide context. All examples are verbatim comments from the surveys. Grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors were not corrected.

Table 18: Other Aspects by Category and Frequency

| Category with Example Comments  | Response Frequency 2009-2010 | Response Frequency 2008-2009 |
|---|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <p><i>1. Spend Quality Time with Child and Having Fun</i></p> <p>a. "Spending quality time with children."<br/> b. "Developed a more one on one time with child"<br/> c. "More quality family time--less tv, computer time<br/> d. "Lots of fun"</p>  | 9                            | 6                            |
| <p><i>2. Excitement about Books and Reading</i></p> <p>a. "Getting my child more excited about reading"<br/> b. "My children are very excited about the books.<br/> c. "Patricia absolutely loves to have the "booklady" read to her at daycare. Makes her evenmore excited to have them or read them to me at home."</p>   | 8                            | 4                            |
| <p><i>3. Miscellaneous Comments</i></p> <p>a. "Just great all around"<br/> b. "Helps him learn about life."<br/> c. "Helping children in need w/ early learning."<br/> d. "Building a personal relationship w/ our library"</p>   | 6                            | 0                            |
| <p><i>4. Adults and Children Enjoy the Books</i></p> <p>a. "Fun reading different and variety stories to sun."<br/> b. "Seem to be good qulaity books"<br/> c. "The books are also very fun for the kids to read and look at."<br/> d. "I love the book!"</p>   | 5                            | 6                            |
| <p><i>5. Specific Aspects of the Program (e.g., skills, newsletters, games, etc.)</i></p> <p>a. "The new ideas provided that I would have otherwise never thought of: such as new questions to ask him after we finish a book."<br/> b. "All of the things to go with the books—Games, songs rhymes...helped a lot"<br/> c. "The children are learning to sound out words &amp; have <u>fun</u> reading. They enjoy picking out words &amp; try to read them on their own."</p> | 4                            | 11                           |
| <p><i>6. Motivation to Read/Encourages a Love of Reading</i></p> <p>a. "educating parents about the importance of reading"<br/> b. "Makes my kids eager to ready."<br/> c. "Encourages a love of books &amp; reading"</p>   | 4                            | 3                            |

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| d. "keep child motivated"                                    |   |   |
| <b>7. Makes Kids Feel Special</b>                            |   |   |
| a. "Loved when my son brought home new books—he felt proud!" | 2 | 2 |
| b. "It made the kids feel special"                           |   |   |
| c. "Harley looked forward to the visits and felt special."   |   |   |
| <b>8. Craft Projects</b>                                     |   |   |
| a. "The little craft projects for kids"                      | 0 | 3 |
| b. "My daughter loves the craft projects"                    |   |   |
| c. "Decorate a box"  |   |   |

The nature of comments shifted some from year-to-year. This is expected, however, given that so few respondents chose to provide comments each year. The sample is thus quite small and this creates the potential for a lot of variation in responses.

"Spending Quality Time" and "Excitement about Books and Reading" topped the list, although relatively speaking very few people mentioned them when the entire sample is taken into consideration. "Miscellaneous Comments" was a new category that needed to be included because some of this year's comments wouldn't fit into the existing category scheme. "Specific Aspects of the Program" were not mentioned as often this year when compared to last, but this large variability is understandable given that the sample size is quite small and much of the content of this particular category of responses was covered in the block of statements asking respondents to rate for usefulness various aspects of the program.

Probably the best way to interpret these comments is as a whole. When taken in aggregate, the comments further underscore the excellent experience First Book provided these parents and their children. Parents and children were learning important information and skills and were enjoying it. The experience provided quality time between parents and their children, and this time revolved around the excitement and enjoyment that comes when interacting with quality books. These positive experiences led to increased motivation to read and the beginnings of a love of reading. These are all very positive outcomes that exemplify the efficacy of the First Book program.

### **First Book Parent Survey: Did you attend a reading event hosted by your library this year?**

Respondents were asked if they attended a reading event hosted by their library during the year. They checked either yes or no, and if they said "yes" they were asked to list the event or events attended. Five hundred and thirty-four people responded to this question out of the 559 surveys returned. Last year 308 people responded to this question out of the 311 returned surveys. Table 19 shows the break down of "yes" and "no" responses by year.

Table 19: Attendance at Reading Event: Frequencies and Percentages of Responses

| Response<br>Year  | Yes       |            | No        |            |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
|                   | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| 2009-2010 (n=534) | 140       | 26.2       | 394       | 73.8       |
| 2008-2009 (n=308) | 115       | 37.3       | 193       | 62.7       |

During both years, the number and percentage of people responding “yes” to this question was quite low. The number dropped by about 11% from last year to this year but this could be due to sampling error. Two to three years of additional data are needed to establish a solid number or a trend. But there are still two years of data showing quite low numbers of “yes” responses. We can’t know the exact number in the population of First Book parents and caregivers because of the aforementioned sampling error nor can we know whether that number is trending up or down, but it appears that participating libraries struggle with getting First Book parents and caregivers to attend a library event, even when it is devoted solely to First Book participants. The ICFL recognized this problem last year when the First Book program was initially evaluated. They adjusted the number and type of events that were to be delivered by libraries for First Book participants in an attempt to increase attendance and thus “yes” responses, but it doesn’t appear that their efforts met with immediate success. ICFL staff might consider additional training for participating libraries on how to have successful library events for First Book participants. There are examples in the data set where attendance was good. These libraries could be contacted to find out details about their events and how they promoted them. This information could then be shared in training sessions for participating libraries.

The events were categorized by type and counted and can be found in Table 20. Both years are included for comparative purposes.

Table 20: Library Events Attended by Category and Frequency

| <b>Category</b>  | <b>Response Frequency 2009-2010</b> | <b>Response Frequency 2008-2009</b> |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Story Time or Story Hour  | 23                                  | 25                                  |
| 2. Miscellaneous Library Programs and Events (e.g., wildlife exhibit, National Library Week, Book Week Read-a-thon, Dr. Seuss Night, Bed Time Stories, Spanish reading program, Wednesday Krafts, movie night) | 21                                  | 13                                  |
| 3. Can’t remember name of event attended   | 10                                  | 0                                   |
| 4. Summer Reading  | 9                                   | 10                                  |
| 5. Public School Events (e.g., Book Fair at Participating Elementary School Library, field trip, parent night, First grader night)   | 7                                   | 11                                  |
| 6. Family Focused Events: (e.g., Family Fun Story Time, Family Night @ the Library, Family Reading Week)   | 7                                   | 4                                   |
| 7. Specific First Book Events (e.g., First Book Dinner, Family Night for First Book)   | 6                                   | 0                                   |
| 8. Infant/Preschool Library Programs (e.g., book babies, lap time)   | 4                                   | 6                                   |
| 9. Every Child Ready to Read Family Workshops  | 2                                   | 9                                   |
| 10. Didn’t know about it/Library didn’t have one   | 2                                   | 0                                   |
| 11. Head Start Parent Meeting  | 2                                   | 0                                   |
| 12. Pirate Themed Events   | 1                                   | 17                                  |
| 13. Open houses  | 1                                   | 0                                   |

When looking at Table 20 it is important to keep in mind that more respondents reported attending an event during 2009-2010 and also more respondents took the time to list the event attended. Thus it becomes difficult to make direct comparisons across the two years. Probably what is important to note is that the range of events attended remained quite large. Libraries offered a diverse array of activities and events and it appears that for those First Book participants who attended library events their attendance patterns reflect this diversity. But it is important to repeat once more that nearly three quarters of respondents did not attend a library event, thus it is important for participating libraries to renew and redouble their efforts to educate all First Book participants about the wide array of high quality programming offered at their local library.

It is interesting to note that only six respondents mentioned “Specific First Book Events.” For 2009-2010, the ICFL asked participating libraries to host an event for just First Book participants, as was discussed above. It is known that many more than six people attended these events so having so few parent/caregivers list these events is curious. This question on the parent survey probably needs to be rewritten to be more clear. Perhaps two questions are needed. One such as the following asking specifically about attending an event focused solely on First Book participants: Did you attend an event at your local library specifically for First Book parents and caregivers? And then a second question asking about attendance at other library events such as “Apart from the event specifically for First Book participants, did you attend any other library events during the past year?” This second question could incorporate a checklist of possible events that respondents could choose from thus maintaining the efficiency of the survey.

**First Book Parent Survey: If you did attend an event, did you learn new and useful information at the event?**

The question “If you did attend an event, did you learn new and useful information at the event?” followed the one discussed immediately above. Participants responded yes or no. Table 21 provides the frequencies and percentages of responses.

Table 21: Learn Useful Information: Frequencies and Percentages of Responses

| Response                  | Yes       |            | No        |            |
|---------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
|                           | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| <b>2009-2010</b> (n=129)* | 124       | 96.1       | 5         | 3.9        |
| <b>2008-2009</b> (n=107)  | 96        | 89.7       | 11        | 10.3       |

\* Number of people responding to question

Both years very high percentages of respondents answering this question said “yes.” This is a very positive outcome showing that when parents and caregivers do attend a library event they overwhelmingly report learning new and useful information. Participating libraries should be commended for delivering programs that are valuable and beneficial to participants.

Respondents were asked for comments concerning their learning new and useful information at the event, but these will not be reported because during both years of the evaluation few comments were made and the content of the comments ranged widely.

But it is important to note that the comments were very positive, like the comments from other places on the survey that have been previously discussed.

**First Book Parent Survey: When was the last time you visited your public library?**

The question “When was the last time you visited your public library?” was a new question for 2009-2010. Thus comparisons across the two years of the evaluation are not possible. Respondents were given the following options to choose from: within the past week; within the past month; within the past six months; within the past year; and more than two years ago.

This question was asked to ascertain the library usage pattern of First Book parents and caregivers. This was deemed important since increasing library traffic is an important outcome of the First Book program. Also, as this question is asked in subsequent years, trends in library usage by this important constituent population can be measured. Table 22 provides the frequencies and percentages of responses. Five hundred and two people responded to this question.

Table 22: When was Your Last Visit: Frequencies and Percentages of Responses

| Response                   | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Within the past week       | 155       | 30.9       |
| Within the past month      | 137       | 27.3       |
| Within the past six months | 92        | 18.3       |
| Within the past year       | 58        | 11.6       |
| More than two years ago    | 60        | 12.0       |

Roughly 58% of respondents are quite regular library users. This is a positive finding but it is tempered by the 42% of respondents who visit the library much less often. A goal in subsequent years might be to shift this response distribution so that more respondents visit the library more often. But doing so will probably be a challenge since as was previously discussed libraries have very little contact with most First Book parents and caregivers. In order to begin addressing this challenge, a first step would be to dramatically increase attendance at First Book events. This will provide the important direct contact between librarians and First Book parents and caregivers. An important second step would be to include in these events a strong and effective component showing attendees what their local library has to offer them and then provide incentives for attendees to visit their library shortly after attending the event.

**First Book Parent Survey: Overall how satisfied were you with the First Book program?**

Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the First Book program. They could choose very satisfied, satisfied, or not satisfied. Table 23 presents the results for both this year and last.

Table 23: Parent Satisfaction with First Book Program: Response Frequencies and Percentages

| Question  | Year      | VS*              | S             | NS       |
|---|-----------|------------------|---------------|----------|
| Overall, how satisfied were you with the First Book program? (n=517; n=304)** | 2009-2010 | 400<br>(77.4)    | 117<br>(22.6) | 0<br>(0) |
|   | 2008-2009 | 254***<br>(83.6) | 50<br>(16.4)  | 0<br>(0) |

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

\*\* n is the number of respondents. The first number is for 2009-2010 and the second is for 2008-2009.

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

For both years, responses were overwhelmingly positive. Every respondent was either “very satisfied” or “satisfied.” No respondent either year marked “not satisfied.” To have a program that is state-wide and reaches as many different constituencies as this one does and have no one be dissatisfied over a two year period is amazing. First Book is a very powerful program that produces stellar results and leaves people feeling very positive about the experience.

### **First Book Parent Survey: In order to make the First Book program better, I suggest:**

Respondents were asked to provide suggestions for improving the program. This was an open-ended question so responses were categorized and counted. Table 24 reports the results by category and frequency. Representative comments are included under each category as they were written by respondents. No corrections have been made to the comments. One hundred and twenty-six respondents wrote comments during 2009-2010. This was 23% of respondents. This compares with 49 during 2008-2009 or 16% of respondents.

Table 24: Suggestions for Program Improvement by Category and Frequency

| Category with Example Comments  | Response Frequency 2009-2010 | Response Frequency 2008-2009 |
|---|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <p><i>1. Nothing Needs to Change, Keep Doing It and Compliments</i></p> <p>a. “Nothing. You guys do an awesome job. Thanks.”</p> <p>b. “Nothing to improve it, just keep doing it.”</p> <p>c. “It was great. Thank you!”</p>  | 61                           | 20                           |
| <p><i>2. General Suggestions for Library Operation and Programming</i></p> <p>a. “Discounted or free library cards for people who live outside city limits!”</p> <p>b. “Programs in Spanish or bilingual”</p> <p>c. “Sending list of books by same author”</p> <p>d. “list events @ local libraris in/with Bookworm newsletter”</p> | 19                           | 12                           |
| <p><i>3. More Books or Different Books</i></p> <p>a. “If possible, more books. My son really feels a sense of independence because he is getting the books from “his” school. Getting things from the school, makes him see their importance.”</p> <p>b. “More billengual books English/Spanish <u>Please!</u>”</p>                 | 17                           | 10                           |

|  |    |   |
|--|----|---|
| c. "Programs in Spanish and books in Spanish"  |    |   |
| 4. <i>Expand the Program</i><br>a. "Expand for a longer time line"<br>b. "Maybe being able to do it more than once a month. The kids love it."<br>c. "You continue but also extend it to older grades."  | 17 | 6 |
| 5. <i>Bookworm Newsletter</i><br>a. "Listing books on the newsletter that are similar to the book or by the same author"<br>b. "My son is in Preschool and we only received 1 Bookworm Newsletter. Was there more?? It would be nice to continue the program during the summer." | 1  | 4 |
| 6. <i>Not Applicable (N/A), Not Sure, or No Comment</i>  | 16 | 0 |

The quality of this program was once again revealed in the responses to this question. For 2009-2010, nearly half of all responses fell under category #1 which included compliments, directives to continue the program, and statements about nothing needing to change. To have this many people from such diverse backgrounds praise the program so highly is an accomplishment that needs to be recognized.

Comments in the remaining categories ranged widely, and like last year there were no consistent or serious criticisms of the program. No comment was negative in tone, but instead all of them provided helpful suggestions that could be taken into consideration to improve First Book and library programming in general. The "Expand the Program" category is especially heartening since once again this year respondents called for the program to be extended in time and across more children's ages. To have this many people respond in such positive ways underscores what has been said before: Idaho First Book is a high quality program that is delivered through-out Idaho in a highly consistent manner.

The "Not Applicable (N/A), Not Sure, or No Comment" category was new for 2009-2010. It appears that people were more conscientious this year about filling-in the survey as completely as possible, but just why this category appeared can not be known for sure.

It was mentioned earlier that the Bookworm Newsletter rates lower than other aspects of the program. Only one comment this year and four last year were focused on the newsletter, so it is still difficult to determine just why it rates lower when compared to other aspects of the program. In future evaluations of First Book more specific questions probing about the newsletter should be included.

**First Book Parent Survey: Library Card Applications as a Consequence of Participation in First Book**

The final question on the parent survey asked respondents to check one of the following statements: "I received a library card as a result of the First Book program; I already had a library card before this program; or I did not get a library card." Table 25 provides the results for 2009-2010 and 2008-2009.

Table 25: Library Card Status of Respondents (2009-2010: n=516; 2008-2009: n=299)\*

| Statement | Response | Response |
|-----------|----------|----------|
|-----------|----------|----------|

|   | Frequency and<br>(Percentage)**<br>2009-2010 | Frequency and<br>(Percentage)<br>2008-2009 |
|---|--|--|
| 1. I received a library card as a result of the First Book program. | 52<br>(10.1)                                 | 30<br>(10.0)                               |
| 2. I already had a library card before this program.                | 351<br>(68.0)                                | 203<br>(67.9)                              |
| 3. I did not get a library card.                                    | 113<br>(21.9)                                | 66<br>(22.1)                               |

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

\*\* Number of respondents who marked the statement. Underneath this is the percentage of respondents marking this statement who responded to the item.

The percentages for each statement remained highly consistent across the two years. Ten percent of respondents received a card while roughly two thirds already had cards. The number of library cards issued as a consequence of First Book is not great. But there is strong potential for many more to be issued. It appears that about a third of First Book participants begin the program without a card. Ten percent receive cards during the program which leaves about 20% of respondents without a card. In the future, the ICFL and participating libraries might target this group of participants who begin the program without cards with additional information and contacts to see if more cards could be issued. First Book is an excellent program that impacts children and their families in very positive ways, but the program design does not provide a lot of direct access by librarians to parents and caregivers of participating children. Without this access librarians will have difficulty impressing on parents the importance of having and regularly using their library card so creative mechanisms will need to be developed to accomplish this important goal.

#### **Section 4: Summary and Recommendations for First Book 2009-2010**

As previously stated, a variety of data collected over two First Book program cycles support the assertion that First Book is an extremely popular and effective program. Importantly, there appears to be substantial evidence that the program effectively educates parents and caregivers while also changing important parent and caregiver behaviors.

Results are quite consistent across the two primary years of evaluation activity (i.e., 2008-2009 and 2009-2010) providing strong support that the findings are reliable. It is too early yet to determine trends but because of the consistency of results dependable numbers are beginning to emerge.

Additional evidence accrued this year that the ICFL is highly responsive to evaluation data. They re-worked the few unclear survey questions that had been highlighted in last year's evaluation thereby collecting more sound data during 2009-2010. They heeded the finding last year that rhyming and singing behaviors by parents and caregivers were not changing as much as other behaviors and intervened with additional librarian training, a pamphlet containing ideas for parents and caregivers that was distributed throughout the state, and a children's song CD initiative that is rolling out during 2010-2011. Clearly, the ICFL practices data driven decision making in their

ongoing and successful efforts to maximize program outcomes and to achieve high levels of accuracy and efficiency in program delivery.

In 2007-2008 only eight libraries participated in First Book, but in the two subsequent years over twenty libraries participated. An important point that has not been discussed yet is that the ICFL obviously has the capacity to serve the increased number of libraries. There is no evidence in the data that any logistical or support problems emerged as a consequence of the program tripling in size. Therefore, if possible, the program should be further expanded because it appears to be highly popular and effective and there is strong evidence that the ICFL has the capacity to deliver the program in the expanded format. Following are some specific recommendations for the program.

*Recommendations from First Book Final Reports:*

1. The extensive partnering that occurs as a consequence of the First Book program should be retained in future implementation cycles.
2. The ICFL is highly adept at implementing the First Book program. The policies and procedures they follow including the many details that obviously are addressed throughout a program cycle should be carefully documented so as personnel change important institutional memory is not lost.
3. Include in future trainings instruction focused on how to get more First Book families to attend First Book events and go to their local library to apply for library cards and participate in programs. A discussion of how this can be done while protecting and respecting patron privacy should be an integral part of the instruction.
4. Direct incentives may be an effective means to get more families into libraries. If libraries lack the resources to provide direct incentives, then perhaps the ICFL could find some that could be passed on to the libraries. In order to further promote the use of direct incentives, the ICFL might want to compile a list of direct incentive ideas and include the list in First Book training materials available on the web.
5. Future training needs to focus on how to successfully seek external funding for high value, proven programs like First Book. The training should include how libraries can become more entrepreneurial with a focus on increasing external funding of library programs.
6. In the future, the number of libraries skipping book distributions should be monitored. Currently no problem exists since a negligible number skipped distributions either this year or last. But consistent book distributions appear to be a key element of the First Book program so this variable is an important one for quality control.
7. Since a goal of the ICFL is the infusion of the early literacy skills throughout early childhood library programming, a question could be asked on the final report about whether or not and if so how libraries include the early literacy skills in their book distributions.
8. In the future greater quantification of the benefits experienced by libraries participating in the First Book program would enhance the quality of the program evaluation. For example, knowing how many First Book children come to the library who have never done so before would be a valuable statistic to collect.
9. The ICFL needs to make sure at their First Book trainings each fall to emphasize the importance of collecting statistics so that the final report can be fully completed

with adequate detail. For example, without such emphasis it would be quite easy for a participating library to not know that detailed attendance records need to be kept for the First Book event or workshop until the person responsible begins filling out the final report and sees that attendance for the event is asked for on the form.

10. For 2010-2011 it will be important to carefully and fully evaluate the impact on parent and caregiver behaviors of the distribution of the CD containing children's songs and rhymes.

11. The breadth of topics covered at parent workshops and events appears to have narrowed for 2009-2010. This narrower focus should be retained because it is likely with fewer topics attendees receive a more focused message about First Book, what their library has to offer, and the importance of the early literacy skills.

*Recommendations from First Book Parent Evaluations:*

1. Attendance at workshops and events continues to be an issue. In the future, the ICFL may want to provide training on how successful libraries achieve strong attendance at events and workshops. Training should focus on how to successfully promote an event but also about what content and activities make up a successful event. There are a number of successful libraries in Idaho so there is a pool of talent and ideas that could be shared.
2. For 2009-2010, the ICFL asked participating libraries to host an event for just First Book participants. A question on the parent survey asked if respondents had attended a library event during the year. Only six people mentioned specific First Book events. It is known that many more than six people attended these events so having so few parent/caregivers list these events is curious. This question on the parent survey probably needs to be rewritten to be more clear. Perhaps two questions are needed.
3. Although attendance may still be an issue at events and workshops, there is little question about the quality of these gatherings. They are highly rated by attendees. These high ratings should be leveraged to draw more people into future events. Word-of-mouth and testimonials are cost effective and powerful mechanisms for recruiting new attendees.
4. Expectations for adequate attendance at workshops and events varies across participating libraries. Thus, the ICFL may want to incorporate into future training a discussion about what libraries and partners can expect concerning attendance.
5. The Bookworm Newsletter had positive but lower evaluations when compared with other aspects of the program that were rated. This has occurred in all three years of the program evaluation. Nothing is seriously wrong with the newsletter but additional experimentation with format, content, and delivery might result in improved ratings.
6. Nearly one half of respondents were not regular library users. A goal in subsequent years might be to shift this response distribution so that more respondents visit the library more often. But doing so will probably be a challenge since libraries have very little contact with most First Book parents and caregivers because of the design of the program. In order to begin addressing this challenge, a first step would be to dramatically increase attendance at First Book events. This will provide the important direct contact between librarians and First Book parents and caregivers. An important second step would be to include in these events a strong and effective component

showing attendees what their local library has to offer them and then provide incentives for attendees to visit their library shortly after their attending the event.

7. A number of library cards were issued as a consequence of the First Book program during both years of evaluation. But the data reveal the potential for many more to be issued. About one third of parents and caregivers begin the program not having cards. In the future, the ICFL and participating libraries might target this group of participants with additional information and contacts to see if more cards could be issued.

8. The Spanish version of the parent survey used this year had problems with formatting and a few of the questions. The survey needs to be revised to make corrections and to make it as parallel as possible with the English version.

### Section 5: Partner Surveys

Libraries partner with a great number and variety of organizations, programs, and businesses as part of their implementing the various Read to Me programs. Partners were asked to complete a survey asking about their experience. Thirty-six surveys were returned for 2009-2010. This is a great improvement over last year when only 19 surveys were returned for all of the Read to Me programs that were evaluated last year. Although nearly double the number of surveys were returned this year, it is still difficult to ascertain the exact response rate since the total number of partners is not known. Thus, any findings or conclusions from the partner surveys are tentative and in the future greater efforts should be made to arrive at an accurate total number of partners while continuing to increase the response rate. This is important because partners can play an integral supporting role in library programming of all types, and therefore a representative sample of their experiences and opinions is important.

The survey was comprised of both checklists and open-ended questions. Results from each question on the survey will be reported in the following sections.

#### **Partner Survey: What is the name of the Read to Me project you partnered with your library? (Check all that apply).**

Partners were asked to check which Read to Me project for which they were a partner. This question was a checklist listing all of the Read to Me programs. Table 26 shows the frequencies of the programs with which the partners were affiliated. The Read to Me programs are listed in the table as they appeared in the checklist on the survey. In some instances, brief descriptions follow the name of a program to help respondents recall the specific program they supported. The total number of programs partnered with is greater than the number of surveys received because some partners worked on more than one Read to Me program.

Table 26: Read to Me Programs Partner Affiliations

| <b>Read to Me Program</b>                           | <b>Response Frequency 2009-2010</b> | <b>Response Frequency 2008-2009</b> |
|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. First Book (book give aways to at-risk children) | 32                                  | 18                                  |
| 2. Read to Me mini-grant                            | 4                                   | 4                                   |

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| 3. Summer Reading  | 4 | 3 |
| 4. Jump Start (library information at kindergarten registration)                             | 3 | 2 |
| 5. Children Care Reads (training and books for child care providers)                         | 2 | 1 |
| 6. Every Child Ready to Read Family workshops (6 workshop sessions on early literacy skills) | 0 | 2 |
| 7. I don't know  | 0 | 0 |
| 8. Other (please specify):   | 0 | 0 |

The overwhelming majority of respondents marked First Book both this year and last. The other programs were checked by very few respondents. In the future efforts should be made to get a more representative and larger sample of Read to Me program partner evaluations.

**Partner Survey: Please check the statement that describes your business or organization.**

Partners were asked to identify their type of business or organization by checking items on a list. Table 27 presents the results. All of the checklist items are listed in the table. It is important to keep in mind that the data for 2008-2009 represents 19 partner surveys whereas the 2009-2010 data represents 36 partner surveys.

Table 27: Frequencies of Partnering Organization Type

| Type of Business or Organization   | Frequency |           |
|--|-----------|-----------|
|  | 2009-2010 | 2008-2009 |
| 1. Public school   | 20        | 8         |
| 2. Child care provider   | 9         | 2         |
| 3. Social service agency or program funded by public dollars (e.g., Health and Welfare Department, Head Start, etc.) | 4         | 4         |
| 4. Other (please specify) (e.g., pre-school owner (2)*, not specified (1))   | 3         | 3         |
| 5. Private for profit business (e.g., private preschool)   | 1         | 1         |
| 6. Private non-profit organization (i.e., 503C, philanthropic organization)  | 0         | 0         |

\* Number in parentheses is the number of respondents giving this response during 2009-2010.

Public schools were the majority of the partners. This makes sense given that most respondents were partners in the First Book program that provides free books for at-risk young children. Head Start programs and elementary schools who serve low socio-economic populations are natural outlets for the book give-aways.

The number of child care providers increased from last year to this year. This is probably the result of libraries across Idaho doing more outreach to daycares and private preschools in their service areas. This is a positive finding since children in these settings may benefit greatly from the outreach services provided by their local library. But as has been said previously, any year-over-year increases or decreases must be interpreted

cautiously since only two year's of data are available and response rates are both low and variable.

**Partner Survey: As a Read to Me library partner, what did you provide? (Check all that apply)**

Partners were asked what they provided to their library. This question was a checklist. Table 28 presents the results. The order of the checklist items in the table have been arranged in order of descending frequency.

Table 28: What Partners Provided by Type and Frequency

| What was Provided  | Frequency |           |
|--|-----------|-----------|
|  | 2009-2010 | 2008-2009 |
| 1. Access to the children who participated in the library program (e.g., private daycare center, private preschool, Head Start, etc.). | 31        | 15        |
| 2. Space for meetings  | 16        | 14        |
| 3. Access to parents of children who participated in the library program.  | 12        | 10        |
| 4. Volunteers who helped at library functions.   | 5         | 4         |
| 5. Transportation for children and families to and from the library function.  | 3         | 3         |
| 6. Materials (paper, books, etc.)  | 3         | 2         |
| 7. Equipment (computers, audio equipment, etc.)  | 3         | 2         |
| 8. Other (please specify) (e.g., "Participation in school events" (1)*; "Venue to market public library and its offerings"(1))         | 2         | 0         |
| 9. Financial support   | 0         | 0         |
| 10. No response  | 1         | 0         |

\* Number in parentheses is the number of respondents giving this response during 2009-2010.

No appreciable changes occurred between the two years. Access to children and their parents and providing space were by far the most common things partners provided. The lack of partners providing financial support over the two years is important to mention. Many of the partners were public institutions like public schools and Head Start programs so their not providing financial support makes sense. But not having any partner provide financial support causes some pause. If there were to be a larger sample of partners, which did occur to some degree this year, and if no or very few partners provided financial support, then this would underscore the need for libraries to increase their efforts to partner with more organizations who can and will provide financial support. There was evidence in the First Book final reports that some libraries received financial support in the form of donated food and prizes from partner organizations, but this was not a pervasive phenomenon. In summary, a clear recommendation calling for libraries to increase their partnerships with organizations that can and will provide financial support can not be made at this time, but limited evidence is emerging that there isn't perhaps as much of this occurring as would be optimal. If in another year additional

partner surveys are submitted and no or very few partners report providing financial support, then the evidence will be stronger and the issue should be explored more thoroughly in the future.

**Partner Survey: How did your organization or business benefit from the partnership? (Check all that apply)**

Partners were asked about the benefits they received as a consequence of their participation. This question was also in checklist format. Table 29 presents the results. All of the checklist items are in the table, however, their order has been arranged in descending order of frequency.

Table 29: Benefits by Type and Frequency

| Benefit  | Frequency |           |
|--|-----------|-----------|
|  | 2009-2010 | 2008-2009 |
| 1. Provided an additional way for us to help our clients and patrons.  | 26        | 15        |
| 2. Increased exposure in the community for our programs and/or services.   | 20        | 12        |
| 3. Helped us meet a program requirement, such as parent involvement or early literacy component.   | 15        | 9         |
| 4. Provided staff development concerning early literacy development and teaching.  | 10        | 7         |
| 5. Increased employee or employer morale as a consequence of helping the library.  | 9         | 9         |
| 6. Increased patronage at our business.  | 3         | 5         |
| 7. Other (please specify) (e.g., Raised awareness of library opportunities (1)*; Placed books in the home (2); Gets students excited about books and reading. (2)) | 5         | 1         |

\* Number in parentheses is the number of respondents giving this response during 2009-2010.

No appreciable changes occurred between last year and this year. The benefits to partners were many and varied. This is a positive finding since having partners report multiple benefits from participation is exactly the desired outcome. When partners experience positive benefits the probability increases of their continuing the partnership, expanding it, and telling others that they, too, should be involved. But it must be kept in mind that this was a small sample of partners heavily weighted towards the First Book program. Efforts should be made in the future to achieve a higher response rate representative of all Read to Me programs. In summary, all of the benefits are excellent outcomes and should be leveraged by the ICFL and local libraries in ongoing work to maintain existing partnerships and to stimulate more. The list of benefits clearly attests to the positive impact partnerships have on the agency or group partnering with the library.

**Partner Survey: How did the families you serve benefit from the partnership?  
(Check all that apply)**

Partners were asked how the families they serve benefit from the partnership. This question was in checklist format also. Table 30 provides the results. Like before, the checklist items have been arranged in descending order of frequency.

Table 30: Family Benefits by Type and Frequency

| Family Benefit  | Frequency |           |
|---|-----------|-----------|
|   | 2009-2010 | 2008-2009 |
| 1. Received books to be kept in the home.   | 35        | 18        |
| 2. Increased awareness of the importance of parents helping young children develop early literacy skills. | 29        | 14        |
| 3. Increased knowledge of library programs available to parents and their children.                       | 28        | 13        |
| 4. Increased knowledge of early literacy skills and how to develop them in their children.                | 28        | 12        |
| 5. Experienced a positive family activity.  | 23        | 9         |
| 6. Received a free library card.  | 11        | 7         |
| 7. Other (please specify)   | 1         | 0         |
| 8. No response  | 1         | 0         |

The large number and variety of benefits is a very positive outcome. Since most of the respondents partnered on the First Book program this is not surprising since that program has been found to be very effective.

**Partner Survey: How did you become a partner with the library?**

Partners were asked how they became a partner with the library. This question employed a checklist of possible answers. Table 31 lists the response options in descending order of frequency.

Table 31: Ways of Becoming a Partner: Type and Frequencies

| Ways of Becoming a Partner   | Frequency |           |
|--|-----------|-----------|
|  | 2009-2010 | 2008-2009 |
| 1. The library contacted my organization about being a partner.  | 23        | 14        |
| 2. Someone from the library visited my organization and asked us to be a partner.                          | 21        | 11        |
| 3. My organization contacted the library about partnership opportunities.                                  | 1         | 2         |
| 4. I am a member of the "Friends of the Library" group.  | 1         | 1         |
| 5. I am on the library board.  | 1         | 0         |
| 6. I heard from a friend that the library was looking for partners and subsequently contacted the library. | 0         | 1         |
| 7. Other (please specify) (e.g., Someone asked her or him (1)*; "I am a patron of the library." (1))       | 2         | 0         |

|                |   |   |
|----------------|---|---|
| 8. No response | 1 | 0 |
|----------------|---|---|

\* Number in parentheses is the number of respondents giving this response during 2009-2010.

The responses clearly show that for this group of respondents the libraries were very proactive in contacting potential partners. The large number of visits by library personnel at partner organizations is a very positive outcome. Idaho libraries are very thinly staffed so to have library staff out visiting potential partners shows their high level of dedication and hard work that has been discussed in other sections of this report.

The small number of partners reporting that they contacted the library about partnership opportunities should be mentioned. Nothing conclusive can be drawn from this small sample or from just two year's of data, but if this finding were to hold in a larger more representative sample and over time, it would point to an issue the ICFL and the libraries might want to address in the future. Namely, how to advertise libraries in their communities so potential partners see them as such. The question becomes do libraries have effective, ongoing marketing campaigns to potential partners in their service areas?

### **Partner Survey: How could your partnership with the library be improved?**

Partners were asked how their partnership with the library could be improved. This question was accompanied by a list of items that respondents checked all that applied. Table 32 lists the items and the frequencies with which they were checked in descending order.

Table 32: Suggested Improvements in Partnerships

| Improvements  | Frequency |           |
|---|-----------|-----------|
|   | 2009-2010 | 2008-2009 |
| 1. No improvement needed.   | 32        | 14        |
| 2. The library could be more clear about what they want my organization to do.                                      | 2         | 1         |
| 3. Better communication between my organization and the library.  | 1         | 1         |
| 4. The library could provide more lead time on projects so my organization has time to respond the best way it can. | 1         | 1         |
| 5. Other (please specify) (e.g., "I am so grateful for this opportunity." (1)*)                                     | 1         | 1         |
| 6. The library could ask us to do more.   | 0         | 1         |
| 7. The library asks us to do too much.  | 0         | 0         |
| 8. No response  | 1         | 0         |

\* Number in parentheses is the number of respondents giving this response during 2009-2010.

Even though the response rate was much higher this year, nearly double the number of respondents from last year, there was no increase in negative responses. This is a quite positive outcome. Obviously, almost all respondents were quite pleased with their

partnership and did not perceive any specific areas needing improvement. All other categories had negligible numbers of entries or none.

**Partner Survey: Please share any other comments or feedback.**

A final open-ended question asked partners to share other comments and feedback. For this year, 2009-2010, eight respondents did not respond but all the others did. Writing open-ended comments takes considerable time and effort so to have such a large number of partners contribute a response is a credit to the libraries and their programs. Not all of the comments will be included here. Instead a representative sample of them is provided that covers the various types of partners and agencies involved. The comments are excerpted verbatim from the surveys. Any spelling or grammatical errors were in the original and have not been corrected.

“We wish we could be recipients of this program every year! We truly want to express our appreciation for participating in this program. Every event provided an avenue for literacy to expand in each home environment. Families talked about the books. Children are memorizing the story lines and rhyming. It is so disheartening to go into a home when there are no books available. This condition exists. Thank you for helping change this condition.”

“The children love having the librarian come in and do activities with them, especially the read alouds. They can’t wait for her—the librarian to come back again. They love receiving the new free books from the librarian and they have great ideas in the packet for home activities.”

“The First Book program is a wonderful program, providing books and activities to children who have very few opportunities to enhance their early literacy skills. The children have been so excited to receive their “own” book to keep at home. They are so excited for the librarian to visit the classroom and the librarian is phenomenal at involving and engaging the children in the book. The handout given to the parents is very helpful in explaining ways to facilitate literacy within the home. I am very appreciative of the program and the benefits it provides to children and their families.”

“This is a wonderful program! I love books and try to pass that love on to my students. This program helps me to do that. After one month, the children were asking me daily if today was the day that the “Library Lady” was coming! Thanks again for a great program.”

“Susan Grady (pseudonym) makes the First Book experience very educational. Her Objectives align with our learning objectives in reading. Her lessons are very engaging. Susan is very organized and her lessons are well planned. She relates well with this age group. Students are excited to do their monthly visit to the Smithfield Public Library (pseudonym). The program builds a good school relationship with the public library. Getting the books into homes of underprivileged families is really

important. It also promotes continued use of the library by children and their parents.”

All but two of the comments were similar to those above, very positive and highly complimentary of the program and the librarians involved. The two less positive comments follow:

“I appreciate the First Book program. It was kind of frustrating when the regular person who came over to read quit. I would suggest training more than one person to do this job in case something happens to the regular person—sick, family emergency, etc.”

“I do not see my parents on a daily basis. Sometimes it is difficult to get questionnaires filled out and inform them of library activities. Maybe create a new way to get info. Loved the books! It is great to give lower income families books to take home.”

Any constructive criticism like that provided by the two comments immediately above should be appreciated and considered. But to have only two comments of this sort shows how accomplished local libraries are at working successfully with multiple constituencies. This evaluation has consistently shown that libraries implementing the First Book program not only meet the needs of the participating parents, caregivers and families but they do this while also meeting the needs of a diverse partner base. And they do more than just please people. There is ample evidence in the comments and throughout this evaluation report that important goals of the program are met and partners are aware of this, such as getting books into children’s hands who might not otherwise have this opportunity, getting families to read more to their children, and instilling in young children the desire to read and interact with good books. It is important to underscore that partners were aware of these goals being met because when partners are aware of program goals and see those goals being attained they feel a part of a positive accomplishment and will be more apt to return another year to partner again.

### **Partner Survey: Summary and Recommendations**

Looking at the 36 surveys returned this year and comparing them to the 19 surveys returned last year, it can be concluded that for both years partners had high praise for their affiliated libraries and no significant criticisms emerged. Partners also gained a lot from the partnerships, and if this finding holds in later more complete evaluations, then it should be leveraged as libraries continue their efforts to build and sustain effective partnerships in their communities.

The increased response rate for partner surveys this year is a positive outcome. Even with the increased response rate, however, it is still important to note that any summary or recommendations must be interpreted with caution since a relatively small number of surveys were received and the total number of partners is not known. A recommendation is to continue improving the response rate for partner surveys and to get

an accurate count each year of just how many partners there are so valid and reliable conclusions and recommendations can be drawn from the data.

Very few partners reported providing financial assistance to libraries as part of their partnering activities. If in another year additional partner surveys are submitted and no or very few partners report providing financial support, then evidence will be stronger for this emerging issue that will probably be of increasing importance in the future as more years accrue when libraries experience significant budget cuts. Consequently, training opportunities should be provided exploring how libraries can recruit partners who can provide financial support.

Very few partners approached their libraries about partnering. Instead, most often libraries approached partners. This is wonderful since it shows libraries dynamically reaching out to establish partnerships in their communities. But a question does arise with so few partners approaching the library. Do libraries have effective, ongoing marketing campaigns to potential partners in their service areas so the library is known in the community as needing partners and also a wonderful entity with which to partner? Another important corollary question is how do libraries advertise in their communities so potential partners see them as such?