

One Book at a Time: A Worldwide Study on the Impact of Shared Book

Reading

This research investigated the impact of shared book reading - specifically Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in Australia, Ireland, Canada, United Kingdom and the United States.

Background: Research consistently identifies shared book reading as one of the most influential components of the home literacy environment (HLE; Niklas et al., 2016). Infants and toddlers who are read to regularly from an early age show stronger language skills (Ho et al., 2023). Having access to books is a necessary component of the HLE. Book-gifting programs, such as Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, which has provided over 300 million books to children, delivers books directly to the child's home.

Research Question: Does building inclusive communities in areas where children receive the books enhance the impact of book-gifting for families and communities?

Methodology: Over 18,000 caregivers in Australia and the world were surveyed over 12 months and reported on participation in the Imagination Library. Using both quantitative and qualitative analyses this research examined the aspects of the HLE, both caregiver and child engagement, the child's emerging literacy skills and community wide engagement / impact.

Findings: Caregivers around the world were nearly twice as likely to read to their child at least four days per week and reported increased use of engagement through interactive strategies. Children were ten times more likely to show interest in books and actively seek out shared reading experiences. Communities embraced the books developing a culture of reading across generations.

Significance: Participants will gain an in-depth understanding on how taking an integrated and aligned approach working together to support every child to have access to the books can develop a culture of reading across communities (e.g., Rosie's Reading - Tasmania, Tamworth) government areas and generations.