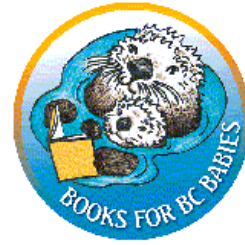


Books for BC Babies Brings Parents into Libraries

By Caroline Johnson.



Introduction

The Books for BC Babies program is a province-wide partnership program between the Ministry of Education, Public Library Services Branch, the Ministry of Children and Families, the Ministry of Health and British Columbia Library Association. This program provides parents of newborns in the province of British Columbia with a book bag containing a board book, a cd of songs, rhymes and lullabies, and information about how reading to babies stimulates their brain development and encourages literacy.

Thanks to the cooperation of the public health nurses and public librarians across British Columbia, we were able to survey 415 parents at community health centres ranging from Agassiz to Haida Gwaii and many communities in between. The parents answered questions related to changes in behavior as a result of receiving the book bag as well as giving feedback and suggestions for improvements to the bag.

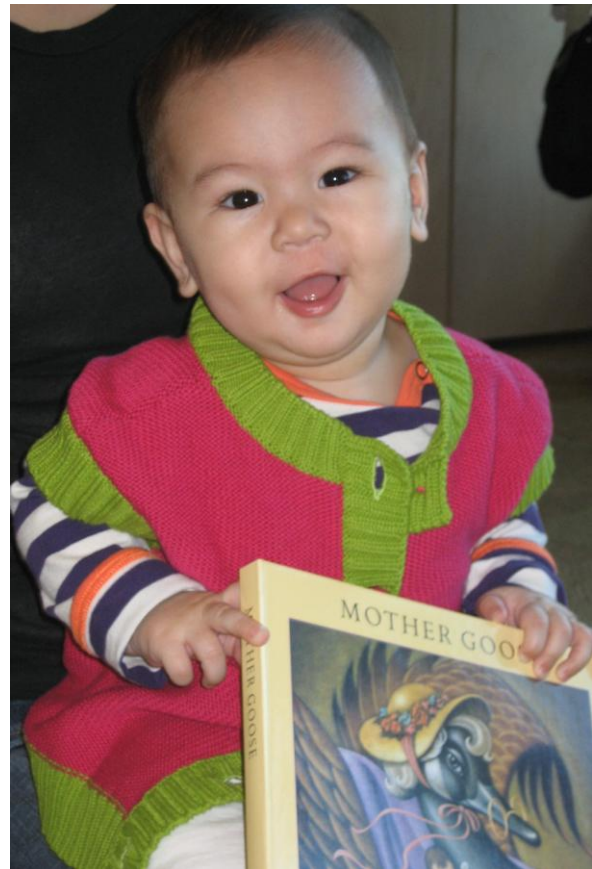
Results

60.4% of parents stated that they read to their babies more as a result of receiving the book bag. This is a very positive result, which clearly demonstrates that the program is succeeding in achieving its goal of promoting emergent literacy: parents reading to pre-school children is the most significant factor in children's literacy development before they start school.

In addition, the program is clearly having an impact on parents' use of the library and its programs: 48% of parents in the study use the library more often (78% of whom use the library once a week or more), 33.7% joined the library after receiving the bag, and 91% of parents attend or plan to attend library programs as a result of the program.

These results demonstrate a direct relationship between the parents receiving the Books for BC Babies bag, and increased library membership, visits and circulation. Once parents are in the library, they are more likely to check out books. If a large majority

of parents attend baby story times because of the Books for BC Babies program, and as a result some end up borrowing books from the library, this could mean an increase in circulation as a result of the literacy bag program. In addition, parents who are attending infant programs may well decide to join the library in order to borrow books, resulting in increased membership for the library.



A happy recipient of the 2009 book!

Here are some comments from the survey:

- *Fabulous resource.*
- *We LOVE "I Heard a Little Baa," it is one of our favorite books. I can see it being quite interactive*

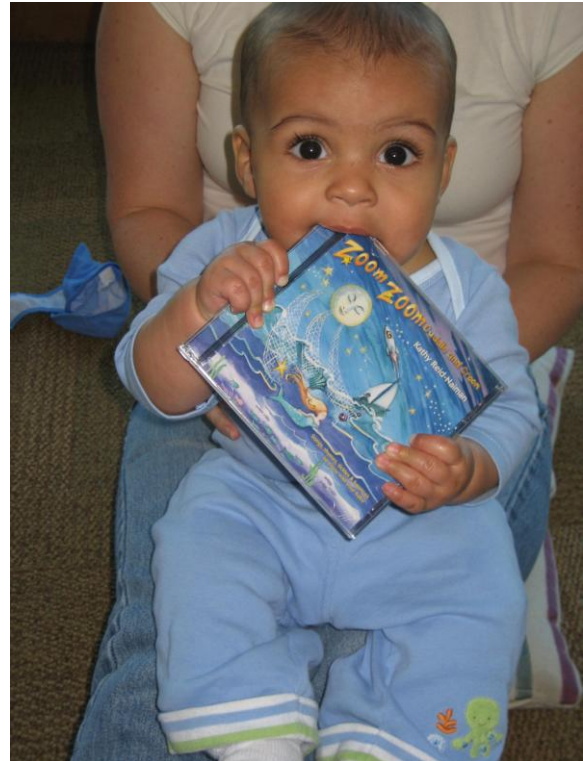
once she is a little older and can guess the animal on the next page.

- *I hadn't thought to read to a baby before – when I received the bag/book, I started reading every day to him and borrowed lots of different books from library*
- *It motivated me to read books and have music in my son's life*
- *Nice to have the bag, it reiterates the importance of reading and fitting it into routine.*
- *I love that it was given right away because people that don't know how good reading is are shown and given the material to promote healthy brain development.*
- *I thought this was a great program really hitting home the importance of reading at any age. Thanks*
- *He loves the book, he likes looking at the babies.*
- *This book bag is fantastic! One of the best gifts I have gotten*
- *I think it's an important program to continue especially for new or young mums.*
- *It (receiving the bag) gave me very warm feelings from the library and inspired me to check out their programs (RPL).*
- *I believe it is very important to start infants with books early.*
- *It definitely attracts attention and creates interest to visit the library and learn more.*
- *It was great to get local library listings and story times*
- *It was a great surprise and a very useful and much appreciated gift.*

One benefit of the study came from those respondents who had not received a book bag: we were able to determine why they had not received it and subsequently are working to close the gaps in distribution.

Overall the results of the survey were very encouraging. It clearly demonstrates that the Books for BC Babies program is having a positive impact on

parental behaviour, in reading to their babies, joining the library, attending library programs and borrowing materials.



Liam goes zoom zoom.

Acknowledgements:

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<http://books4babies.bclibrary.ca>

Complete survey results and the survey questions are available via email: caroline.johnson@shaw.ca

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