

Research

Common Outcomes for Imagination Library Programs

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is the flagship program of The Dollywood Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit Tennessee organization. The Imagination Library is dedicated to inspiring a love of reading by gifting FREE books to children from birth to age five. The program is made possible through funding shared by Dolly Parton herself, and local Program Partners in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, and the Republic of Ireland.

Inspired by her father's inability to read and write, Dolly started the Imagination Library in 1995 to serve the children of her hometown in Sevier County, Tennessee. Today, her program spans five countries and gifts over 3 million free, high-quality, age-appropriate books each month to children around the world. There is never a charge to families who participate in the program and it is open to all children under the age of five in geographic areas with operating programs.



Since its founding, The Dollywood Foundation has encouraged research on the Imagination Library program to assess communities' reactions to the program and its impact on children's literacy.

The majority of this research has been implemented by local program partners or local researchers at the local community level to provide formative and summative feedback to support local Dolly Parton's Imagination Library implementations.

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90% of physical brain development occurs in the first three years of life, when a baby forms over 1 million new neural connections per second.



Scan Me

The Dollywood Foundation initiated a review of over 20 years of research conducted on Imagination Library programs in the U.S. and Internationally.

The findings from the body of DPIL research indicate the program is extremely popular in the communities where it is implemented and show promise in promoting changes in home literacy environments, children's attitudes toward reading, and early literacy skills.

Richer Home Literacy Environments

- Parents read aloud more to their children and were more comfortable reading as a result of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.
- Parents reported their children owned more books as a result of participating in the program.



Positive Perceptions

- Participating family members were overwhelmingly positive about the program and its impact on their children when asked in questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups.
- Community members, including Imagination Library partners and preschool and kindergarten teachers, also had positive views of the program and its impact on book ownership and literacy practices in homes.
- The positive views of the program and its impacts were present regardless of the demographic characteristics of the community or its participants, and longer program participation often resulted in more positive outcomes.

Improving Attitude and Skills

- Parents believed their children were more interested in reading due to receiving the books each month.
- Participating children were excited when their DPIL books arrived in the mail monthly, addressed specifically to the child.
- Some studies found DPIL had promise with respect to developing children's early literacy skills, as participants had more advanced skills than their classmates who did not participate in the program.



Logic Model

The Dollywood Foundation is committed to supporting local DPIL programs and communities.

One focus of our recent work has been identifying common outcomes for all DPIL programs. This will ensure we are all on the same page and provide the best program possible for children and families. These research-based outcomes were identified through reviews of literature and are considered to be building blocks for lifelong literacy, supported by the research, and aligned with DPIL's philosophy and goals.



Imagination Library Strives to...

Enhance participants' home literacy environments so that...

- Books are available in homes
- Caregivers begin reading to children early in life
- Caregivers read to children frequently and for increasing amounts of time as they age

Promote positive attitudes and increased motivation to read so....

- Children ask adults to read to them
- Children "play" with books independently

Increase the number of interactions between caregivers and children during reading so...

- Children respond and contribute to book reading
- Children practice reading skills

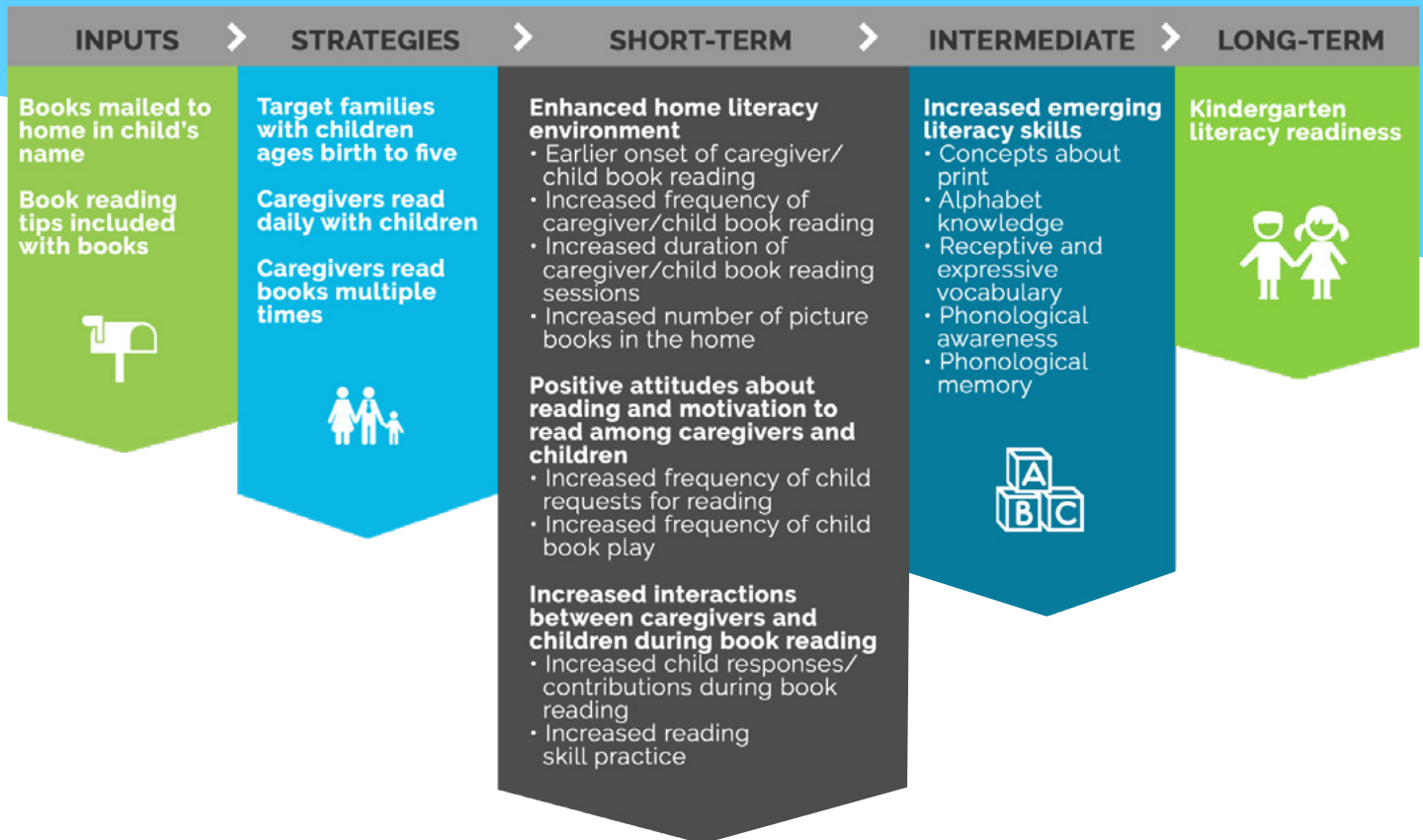
Such that children develop emerging literacy skills including...

- Understanding print conventions
- Naming letters and making letter sounds
- Increasing their vocabulary
- Understanding oral sounds, syllables, and words
- Improving auditory memory



Logic Model

Based on Imagination Library Research Findings and Literature Review



The Dollywood Foundation is committed to guiding and assisting community-based DPIL programs to provide the best experience for all participants. The Foundation will support both beginning and existing community-based DPIL programs by providing resources to help organizations...

- ✓ Become familiar with the research on DPIL and what lessons were learned
- ✓ Use The Dollywood Foundation's resources and guidance to communicate effectively with researchers and other community stakeholders
- ✓ Provide a security-first process when data is requested

The Foundation looks forward to continuing our work supporting rigorous research on Imagination Library in existing and new DPIL communities. Through this research, we can continue to expand Dolly's vision of ensuring every child is exposed to the magic of books!

