



**1. What does this research paper evaluate?:** Research shows that children who are strong readers come from families that value books and promote literacy activities such as reading aloud. The Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) program in Syracuse New York has 2 parts – monthly book distribution through the Dollywood Foundation from birth to age 5 (60 books) and wrap around services such as Literacy Champions designed to model effective reading behavior to parents and especially parents who do not read themselves. This research evaluates the impact of the book distribution part of the program only since the wrap around services were not in place at the time data were collected for this evaluation.

**2. How was the evaluation conducted?:** Academic literature suggests that the best way to assess family reading behavior is through surveying parents. We replicated a national survey used by the National Center for Education Statistics about reading frequency and behavior. We sent these surveys to parents of enrolled children and followed up with phone calls to 712 families and had a 24% response rate yielding 170 completed surveys.

**3. What did the research find?:** Being enrolled longer makes a person more likely to read frequently to their children. When comparing those enrolled for 4 months or less versus more than 4 months, we found that reading 3 times a week or more jumped from 59.7% to 85.2%. The percent that read to their child daily doubled from 29% to 59.3%. This positive effect was statistically significant at the 99% confidence level. When we then used more advanced statistics we found that each month a child is enrolled increases the likelihood that they will be read to daily. This was also statistically significant at the 99% level even after controlling for the influence of child age, gender, family income, parental education, race, parental nation of birth and primary language.

**4. Besides months of enrollment in DPIL what other factors made a difference when it comes to reading daily?:** Race and nation of birth of respondents were significant predictors such that being Black or African American or being non US born made a child less likely to be read to daily. However, after a few extra months of enrollment these groups caught up and had nearly identical probability of reading to their child daily as other groups. This suggests that DPIL is an efficient way to overcome gaps that exist among groups.

**5. What else did the research uncover?:** The likelihood that an adult discusses the story with the child also increases with longer enrollment in the IL program.

**6. How does this contribute to the literature?:** While others have surveyed, we are aware of no other studies that have statistically predicted the impact of longer DPIL enrollment on reading behavior. Now we know that the longer a child is enrolled the more frequently they are likely to be read to and to have the story discussed with them. Also, although literature suggests that many demographic factors impact family reading, no other research had controlled for these factors. Now we are confident that the DPIL has a positive effect on family reading regardless of child age, gender, family income, parental education, race, parental nation of birth and primary language.

**7. How else does the Literacy Coalition of Onondaga County Plan to Evaluate the DPIL?:** We are in the process of conducting a pre and post survey of families to measure change in reading behavior, but it will be difficult to control for natural changes that would have occurred anyway due to a child's maturation. The present study, however, helps to assure us that the DPIL has a positive influence regardless of age because it controlled for age. We also plan to examine DIBELS scores that are used by the school district to assess kindergarten reading readiness. The present study shows that DPIL is associated with a positive change in family reading behavior. Examining DIBELS will allow us to assess whether these reading behaviors result in increased readiness for kindergarten once children graduate from DPIL. DIBELS analyses will be conducted on data that we receive in a format that conceals each student's identity.