



Book Report from The BookStart Fund

October 2018

“Getting babies and books together”

Chapter. 13

Local expert’s research confirms growth in language development from reading with Babies and Toddlers

From my experiences as a speech-language pathologist and researcher, I found the following to be true in my studies of parents living in poverty with their infants and toddlers:

- Reading to children helps develop language.
- Books shared with and read to infants and toddlers encourage children to have better vocabulary, sentences, conversation skills and readiness to use books to learn.

After 18 months of videotaping parent-child conversations at three-month intervals, the results from my studies showed that the best talk from both the parents (father and mother) and the child occurred when they were engaging in play with toys and when they were using books. Although both playing with toys and sharing picture books resulted in better talk for the child than everyday conversation, it was sharing books with pictures that offered a tangible framework for both parent and child. Parents used different words from those in their daily talk with the child that helped enlarge the child’s vocabulary. Having a relaxed and enjoyable conversation about the book encouraged the parent to use better sentences. and pleasant social talk.

As a result, the child could hear and learn proper sentence structure and more easily attach meaning to the talk. The children pointed more, used more words spontaneously and at times “read along” with the parent. As a participant in and supporter of early intervention, especially for language development for at risk infants and toddlers, the importance of books cannot be overemphasized. University students where I taught could easily see, from the videotapes of parent interactions with children, how much better learning occurred



when the parents used books to have conversations. It was exciting to see a child use a new word, engage the parent and begin to point to pictures and letters. Books give both the

parent and child something to share that is fun and colorful as well as a calm way to play and learn together. Along with an apple a day perhaps, we also should suggest a book a day for effective language learning experiences.

Lucille Hess, Ph.D. CCC-SLP
Professor Emeritus, Communication Sciences and Disorders
(Indiana) Purdue University Fort Wayne

Dr. Hess is Professor Emeritus from IPFW and former department chair for Communication Sciences and Disorders. Between 1995 and 2010 Dr. Hess worked with SCAN’s Healthy Families program sharing tips about early language development and parent interaction with new case workers.

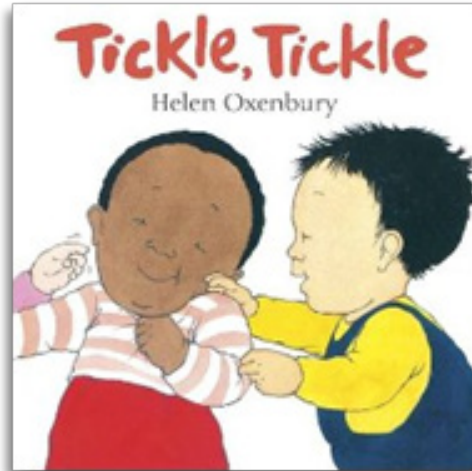
In this column she shares conclusions from her study of parent-child conversations in some families enrolled in the Healthy Families program. The conversations were analyzed for both the parent involvement and the children’s language during the conversations. Papers about these findings were delivered at national and state conventions.

The Makings of Great Board Books

The major criterion for a really good board book is: do the reader and the child both enjoy it? Sharing a board book bonds grownup and very young child through reading.

Certainly, great baby books aren't boring! Words can sing and charm. Good rhythm and vocabulary in the text help foster language and literacy skills. Pictures can fascinate the baby. The objects and their actions are recognizable, and often they include one of every baby's favorites—other babies. The thick, sturdy pages of board books for babies can absorb a lot of hard use. They can be stomped on, spilled on, thrown across the room, tasted...just not put in the bath.

Books for babies should have big, simple pictures and a text with a rhythmic and predictable pattern, sometimes rhyming, and they should be full of love!



Tiny babies won't understand the words, but they will love the sound of a parent's voice. And understanding will develop sooner than inexperienced parents will expect.

Betsy Hearn, in *Choosing Books for Children*, writes that “a good book is clever, not cloying; engaging, not boring; original, not clichéd. The illustrations should bear slow and careful perusal, the way a child will look at them.”

Here's a thought.

Do you know someone you'd like to surprise with a donation in their name? A child, perhaps? Or would you like to honor someone who read to you when you were young? Or a teacher you know, who wishes all their students had been read to as babies? This could be a very nice gesture.



100 of the 110 different books provided to families since 2014!

BookStart has now purchased 110 different titles in the four+ years since this program began. (See photo above.) Why so many? First, the agencies need to have a variety of titles on hand so no client family is given the same book twice. Also, books go out of print or are no longer available at a price we can afford. And we need to provide books for both tiny babies and active three year olds.

BookStart Advisors Bring Expert Knowledge and Experience



Here is a photo of our wonderful advisors at their September meeting.

Back row: Terri Swim, Greta McKinney, Dana Wichern, Ginny Clark
Front row: John Peirce, Becky Hill, Dee Szyndrowski
Not shown: Madeleine Baker, Lanissa Maggert, Odelet Nance

BookStart Fund Advisors

Madeleine Baker, CEO Early Childhood Alliance
Becky Hill, FWCS Board, retired
Lanissa Maggert, Early Childhood Alliance
Greta McKinney, CEO MLK Montessori School
Odelet Nance, Vincennes University, Assistant Dean
John Peirce, Early Learning and Public Policy Consultant
Terri Jo Swim, IPFW, Early Childhood Education
Dee Szyndrowski, CEO of SCAN, Inc.
Dana Wichern, BookStart Co-Founder, FWCS, retired

These nine community friends of BookStart meet two or three times a year and offer their advice whenever asked. They are hugely helpful! It's a great group.

Some Advisor's Opinions

Dr. Terri Jo Swim

“The importance of reading to babies as soon as they are born should not be underestimated, which is why BookStart is such an important resource in our community. Babies’ brains are primed for snuggling close, listening to language patterns, and learning to be part of the give and take of conversations with books. By partnering with community agencies, BookStart puts high-quality books into the hands of parents and family members who then read to their babies and toddlers.”

Becky Hill

“The power of one little book is proved daily as babies throughout Allen County have their first experiences with colors, words, pictures and connectedness with the readers. A little book carries hope and joy for a generation of new readers.”

John Peirce

“BookStart does far more than give away books. It is about teaching parents and caregivers the secrets of how to read aloud--like when you point at something, it helps the baby associate words with objects; and when you engage in “serve-and-return” conversations, you are building the very architecture of your baby’s brain.” –

BookStart Partner Agencies

Bright Point: Early Head Start Home Visits
Fort Wayne Urban League: Read & Rise
Healthier Moms & Babies
Just Neighbors Interfaith Homeless Network

Rescue Mission: Charis House
SCAN: Healthy Families & other programs
Vincent Village
YWCA Shelter

It's the home visiting staff and parent educators from these agencies who take the books you provide to the families who need and treasure them!

How To Donate

Write a check to the
Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne
(Write BookStart on the memo line).

Mail it to CFGFW
555 East Wayne Street
Fort Wayne IN 46802

Or donate on line at cfgfw.org/donate
Check "Other" and write "BookStart" as the fund name.

Questions? Ginny Clark: 625-3837

Be sure to say if your gift is in honor of someone!

The BookStart Fund Needs You!

The Fort Wayne Community has been incredibly generous in your support of the BookStart Fund. Thank you! But since this is an ongoing program, there is an ongoing need for funds to purchase great books for babies and toddlers.

BookStart now orders 300 copies at a time of each book we buy, always at a 50% or higher discount. Some of our favorite board books, are \$8.00 each, so 300 copies, after our 50% discount, is \$1,200. Will you help us order more of these? Learn more about BookStart and the research behind it on our website: BookStartFund.org.



The BookStart Fund
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