

TENNESSEE'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY IMPROVES SCHOOL PREPAREDNESS

The Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) completed the first large-scale study on the Imagination Library's impact on the learning preparedness of children now enrolled in public schools.

In 2007, the Governor's Books from Birth Foundation® commissioned the TBR to solicit public school kindergarten and pre-kindergarten teachers' professional judgments on the **readiness and performance** of students who had participated in **Dolly Parton's Imagination Library** – a program that mails a new, age-appropriate, hardcover book every month to registered children, from birth until age five, at no cost to the family and regardless of income.

Nearly 320 kindergarten teachers and over 150 pre-kindergarten teachers responded:

Tennessee kindergarten and pre-K teachers *collectively affirmed* that children who had participated in the Imagination Library were “**better prepared**” than students who had not participated in the program.

On average, Imagination Library participants also exceeded teacher expectations:

- **48%** of kindergarten teachers and **64%** of pre-K teachers stated that Imagination Library participants performed “**better than expected**” or “**much better than expected**” than students from previous classes.
- Compared to only 10% of kindergarten teachers and 11% of pre-K teachers reporting that non-participants performed “**better than expected**” or “**much better than expected**.”

“This research underscores how reading to a child early and often improves their ability to succeed right from the start of their formal education. I hope these promising results will encourage all Tennessee families with children under age five to register for the Imagination Library and make a commitment to read with a child every day, starting at birth.”

– Governor Phil Bredesen



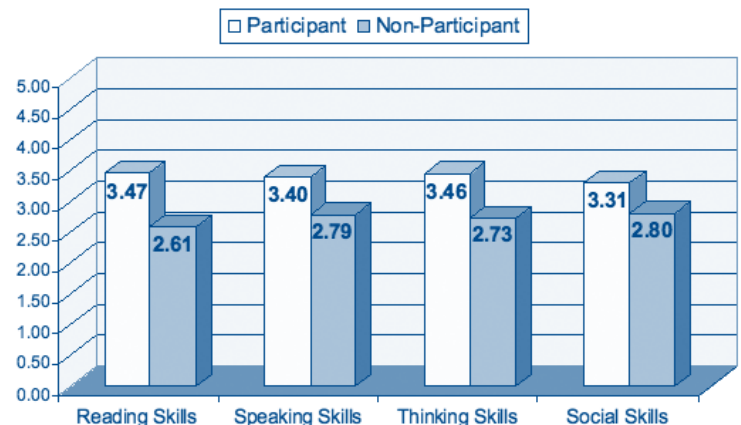
“Lap time and story reading prior to entering kindergarten is directly related to how well a child will read in the future.” – Tennessee kindergarten teacher

Administered in partnership with the Tennessee Dept. of Education, the Web-based survey contained questions related to overall learning preparedness (**reading, thinking, listening and social skills**) for two groups of students in a teacher’s class: those who had participated in Tennessee’s Imagination Library, and those who had not. Teachers were asked to consider all students in each group as a whole, and used a **five-point rating scale** of expectations for assessing readiness, performance, and comparison to previous classes.

Additional highlights from the TBR study’s findings:

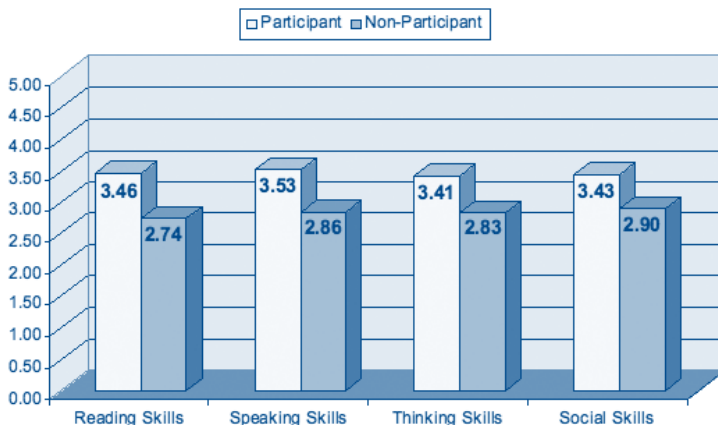
- Teachers believed that Imagination Library participants enjoyed learning new stories more than non-participants –especially at the pre-kindergarten level– and that the Imagination Library fostered creativity.
- Open-ended comments were highly positive: Teachers applauded the fact that the Imagination Library provides books to children who might not otherwise be able to own any books, and that the books were useful classroom learning tools.
- Some teachers thought that the Imagination Library would be even more effective if parents and communities would take **full** advantage of it (i.e., registration of any & all children under age 5).
- *Experienced teachers agreed* that the Imagination Library has aided students’ preparation for pre-K and kindergarten.

Average Scores of Pre-Kindergarten Survey Population: Selected Skills



“Children need books put into their hands at birth, and need to be read to on a consistent basis. We can really tell a difference between those children who are read to all of the time, and those who are not.” – Tennessee kindergarten teacher

Average Scores of Kindergarten Survey Population: Selected Skills



- Although survey responses could not be controlled for extraneous factors in early childhood development such as intervention from other programs (i.e., *Voluntary Pre-K for All* or *Head Start*), student backgrounds, or number of years enrolled in the Imagination Library, the survey still allows for understanding the probable effects of Imagination Library participation on **literacy and early childhood learning**, as an aggregate.

- As more Tennessee children are enrolled in the Imagination Library at the *earliest possible opportunity* (ideally at birth), the abilities gained from participating in the program –as already apparent in these 2007 charts– will be ever more noticeable.

