



Early Child Development Toolkit: Case Study #2, Program Description

This document is designed to promote a county-wide early literacy program. This case study looks at the document before and after implementing reframing recommendations and illustrates the importance of connecting values to society as a whole, and fully expressing the brain architecture simplifying model.

BEFORE (opening paragraphs):

Spartanburg County's economic future depends on having healthy, educated and productive citizens. The ability to read well allows an individual to succeed in school, learn about the world, become a productive citizen and have good job opportunities.

"Imagination is everything. It is the preview of life's coming attractions" said Albert Einstein. Imagination is one of the keys to success. When children can imagine their possibilities, a better future becomes a reality as they grow up to be successful parents, community leaders, employees and citizens.

Science tells us that from as early as birth to 2 years, children's experiences with oral language development and literacy begin to build the foundation for later reading success. Birth to age 5 is a critical time in the development of the brain's architecture.

Imagination Library is an early literacy program that helps prepare children for success in school by eliminating one of the reasons children do not read – access to books. The program provides a free, age-appropriate book to enrolled children each month from birth to age 5. Books are received via the U.S. Postal Service and are addressed to the child.

Analysis:

The document incorporates a value of future prosperity in the opening, but the benefits of that prosperity are described as accruing to individuals, not society as a whole. The phrase "brain architecture" also is used, but the model is not fully explained in a way that will fill gaps in the

reader's understanding of early child development. The reframed version corrects these problems by strengthening both of these components.

AFTER REFRAMING:

Today's children will become tomorrow's citizens, workers and parents. When we invest wisely in children and families, the next generation will pay that back through a lifetime of productivity and responsible citizenship. One of the most responsible things we can do now is provide opportunities and encouragement for our youngest citizens.

Science tells us that children's early experiences with language development and literacy begin to build the foundation for later reading success. Birth to age 5 is a critical time in the development of the architecture of a child's brain. The foundations for learning and skills development are built "from the bottom up," with simple circuits and skills providing the scaffolding for more advanced circuits and skills over time. Learning to read and write is a developmental process that also begins at birth. When we ensure that all children have access to books early in life, we help to prepare them for a lifetime of learning.

There is a program in Spartanburg County working toward the goal of making sure children here grow up with books in the preschool years. It's called Imagination Library.

Imagination Library builds pre-reading and language skills. Learning begins when the enrolled child receives his or her own first free, age-appropriate book in the mail. The excitement of reading and learning continues with a new book each month, from birth to age five.

BEFORE (subsequent paragraphs):

Founded by Dolly Parton and the Dollywood Foundation in 1996, the Foundation provides program management services, makes book selections and covers a percentage of the books' purchase and postage cost at no charge to local communities.

However, it is up to each local chapter to raise \$30.00 per year per child to support the remaining purchase and postage costs. Local operating expenses are provided in-kind to the program through the support of the United Way of the Piedmont and First Steps of Spartanburg County. This means that every dollar raised for support of Imagination Library goes directly to the cost of books.

The High Scope Educational Research Foundation study commissioned by the Dollywood Foundation supports the efficacy of the Imagination Library program. The study found that children enrolled in the program have increased access to books, are read to more frequently by their parents, and enter first grade better prepared.

Analysis:

These paragraphs are improved in the revised document to more clearly state the effectiveness of the program, and to reinforce the value of future prosperity introduced at the beginning.

AFTER REFRAMING:

A child enrolled in Imagination Library at birth will have a personal library of about sixty books by the time he or she starts kindergarten. That can have a huge impact.

The books come free of charge to enrolled children. The program is funded partly by its founder, Dolly Parton, and the Dollywood Foundation. Local costs, about \$30 per year per child, are covered by donations from the community through a partnership with the United Way of the Piedmont and First Steps of Spartanburg County.

Imagination Library works. A recent study found that children enrolled in our program have increased access to books, are read to more frequently by their parents, and enter first grade better prepared to learn. Children who are read to build a large vocabulary and they develop a wide range of background knowledge.

About 45% of children in Spartanburg County under age 5 are enrolled in Imagination Library. To date, the program has distributed about 500,000 books to Spartanburg County children. The more children we can enroll, the brighter our community's future will be.

Albert Einstein said, "Imagination is everything. It is the preview life's coming attractions." Imagination is one of the keys to success. When children can imagine their possibilities, a better future becomes a reality as they grow up to be successful parents, community leaders, employees and citizens.

(Thanks to Kirsten Cribb, Imagination Library, United Way of the Piedmont for permission to use this example.)