

**ACHIEVEMENT OF CHILDREN INITIALLY ENROLLED DURING THE
SECOND YEAR OF THE
FAMILY LITERACY INITIATIVE PROGRAM**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes test results of children who were enrolled in the Family Literacy Initiative Program for the first time in 2017. The large majority of children with matched pre/post scores showed considerable progress as measured by the *Bracken School Readiness Assessment, Third Edition*. For example, while 32 of 57 children scored at the *Very Delayed* level on the pretest, only three did so at the end of the program year. Furthermore, while only one child scored at the *Average* level on the pretest, 35 scored at that level on the posttest. First-year performance was slightly better among 2017 enrollees than among children who completed their first year in 2016. For example, 47 percent of 2017 enrollees who had scored *Very Delayed* on the pretest scored *Average* on the posttest, while 33 percent of 2016 children had a similar shift. Additionally, 79 percent of 2017 enrollees who had scored *Delayed* on the pretest scored *Average* on the posttest, while 59 percent of 2016 enrollees who had scored *Delayed* on the pretest had progressed to *Average* on the posttest.

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INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes test results of children who were enrolled in the Family Literacy Initiative program for the first time in 2017. The Family Literacy Initiative is a cooperative effort between The Friends of Liberia (FOL), HIPPY International (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters), and the WE-CARE Foundation, a Liberian literacy non-profit. WE-CARE provided local management and implementation, and HIPPY provided the early childhood curriculum and materials as well as staff training.

During the first year, approximately 60 parent/caretakers were recruited in three communities located in Montserrado and Margibi Counties. Home visits were provided from January through August, 2016. For the second year, the program recruited an additional group of approximately 60 parent/caretakers from the same communities who received the first-year curriculum.

In order to obtain a standardized measure of children's school-related learning progress, the FOL Education Working Group (EWG) selected the *Bracken School Readiness Assessment, Third Edition*.¹

PROCEDURES

The test and types of scores

The Bracken has a total of 85 items divided into five subtests. The subtests and number of items in each are: Colors (10), Letters (15), Numbers/Counting (18), Sizes/Comparisons (22), and Shapes (20).

As discussed in the *Examiner's Manual*, several different scores can be generated from raw scores (percent correct).² While the percent correct is useful, especially for classroom assessments, one purpose of standardized tests, such as the Bracken, is to see how children did on the test compared to others who took the test. Once a child enters formal schooling, the most common comparison is to other children in the same grade. However, for preschool children the most meaningful comparison is to children who are the same age. Therefore, the Bracken provides age norms in three-month in-

¹ The test, published by Pearson Corporation, was selected for several reasons. First, it does not require assessment professionals to administer; second, it provides age norms in three month intervals from three years through six years, eleven months; third, it has been used by a number of HIPPY programs in the US and was recommended by a staff member at the University of South Florida's HIPPY Training and Technical Assistance Center.

² Bracken, Bruce. *Bracken School Readiness Assessment, Third Edition, Examiner's Manual*. Pearson, San Antonio, Texas, 2007.

tervals ranging from three years through six years, eleven months to convert raw scores into derived scores such as percentile ranks and standard scores.

Percentiles. The percentile indicates how children rank in comparison to children who took the test when it was given to a norming population. Since age norms are used, a percentile rank compares the child's performance on the test to children who are the same age (within a three-month interval). Percentile ranks range from 1 to 99. For example, a percentile score of 30 indicates that the child's score is higher than or equal to the score obtained by 30 percent of the children in the norming population.

Standard scores. Standard scores are derived from raw scores and range from 40 - 160 on the Bracken.

Descriptive classification categories. While percentiles are useful, the Bracken uses descriptive classification categories derived from standard scores to describe a child's rate of conceptual development. These categories, along with corresponding standard score and percentile ranges are shown below.

Very Delayed (standard scores 40-70; 2nd percentile or lower)

Delayed (standard scores 71-85; 3rd through 16th percentile)

Average (standard scores 86-114; 17th through 82nd percentile)

Advanced (standard scores 115-129; 83rd through 97th percentile)

Very Advanced (standard scores 130-160; 98th percentile or higher)

As indicated, most children in the norming population were in the *Average* category (18th through 82nd percentile). Only the lowest two percent of children were in the *Very Delayed* category, and children who ranked between the 3rd and 16th percentile were in the *Delayed* category.

The importance of age norms

Since the Bracken is designed for testing children from three years through six years, 11 months and has different norms for every three-month interval, it is important to understand that performance on the test in terms of percentile rank and descriptive classification category is dependent on the child's age. For example, children three years to three years, two months who obtain a raw score of 23 on the test would rank at the 50th percentile and would be classified as *Average*. However, children who are a year older with a raw score of 23 would rank at the eighth percentile and would be classified as *Delayed*, and those who were two years older with a raw score of 23 would rank at the first percentile and would be classified as *Very Delayed*. Even over a shorter time period, such as the 30-week FLI instructional program, a child who made only small raw score gains could possibly show losses in terms of percentile rank and descriptive classification category.

Test administration and scoring

The Bracken is individually administered. The child is shown a set of items in a *Stimulus Book* and is asked to point to the item designated by the examiner. Using the *Record Form*, the examiner records the child's answer as correct (1), incorrect (0), or "No response" (NR). After three consecutive incorrect responses in a subtest the examiner should move to the next subtest. When administration is completed, the examiner records the number of items answered correctly for each subtest.

For the FLI program, the record forms were scanned and then sent to the author as an email attachment. He reviewed each record form to check for observable recording and chronological age calculation errors. Using norms tables in the Examiner's Manual, he recorded the standard score, percentile rank, and descriptive classification on the Record Form and then entered the information in a spreadsheet.

For the last two years, the program coordinator and assistant coordinator administered the test to children soon after they were recruited. Then, after the end of each program year, individuals recruited by WE-CARE administered the posttest. In the first year, two examiners administered the posttest; this year, there were three, including one returning examiner and two new individuals.

Children in the analysis

Pre- and post-scores for a total of 57 children, including 33 males and 24 females, who were first served in 2017 were analyzed. Their average age when pretested was approximately three years, four months.³

³ Several children were not included because they were too young for the norms tables or because they entered the program later in the year.

FINDINGS

The majority of children who enrolled for the first time in 2017 showed substantial progress as measured by the *Bracken School Readiness Assessment*. These results are slightly better than those found in 2016.

Bracken results for children who entered the program in 2017 are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Progress of children who completed their first FLI year in 2017 in terms of descriptive classification categories as measured by the *Bracken School Readiness Assessment, Third Edition*.

Community (N)	Descriptive Classification Category	Number of Children on Pretest	Number of Children on Posttest.		
			Very Delayed	Delayed	Average
Caldwell (22)	Very Delayed	13	0	5	8
	Delayed	9	1	2	6
	Average	0	-	-	-
Duazon (14)	Very Delayed	8	-	4	4
	Delayed	6	-	1	5
	Average	0	-	-	-
West Point (21)	Very Delayed	11	2	6	3
	Delayed	9	-	1	8
	Average	1	-	-	1
TOTAL (57)	Very Delayed	32	2	15	15
	Delayed	24	1	4	19
	Average	1	-	-	1

As shown, 32 of the 57 children were classified as *Very Delayed* when initially tested, but only two remained at that level on the posttest. Of the remaining 30 children who had tested *Very Delayed* on the pretest, half tested at the *Delayed* level and half at the *Average* level on the posttest. Of the 24 children who were classified as *Delayed* on the pretest, the large majority (19) reached the *Average* range on the posttest, while four remained at the *Delayed* level and one fell back to *Very Delayed*. The only child who tested in the *Average* range on the pretest remained at that level on the posttest.

Outcomes for children who were in their initial program year in 2017 were similar to those who were in their initial year in 2016. In fact, as shown in Table 2, results were similar, but slightly more positive in 2017. For example, while 33 percent of the children who had scored *Very Delayed* on the 2016 pretest scored *Average* on the posttest, 47 percent did so in 2017. Similarly, a higher percent of children (79%) went from *Delayed* to *Average* in 2017 than in 2016 (59%).

Table 2. Comparison of the performance of first and second year children during their initial year of program participation

Number of children scoring in three descriptive classification levels on the pretest	Percent of children scoring in three descriptive classification levels on posttest		
	Very Delayed %	Delayed %	Average %
Year 1 Total N=54			
Very Delayed (36)	20	47	33
Delayed (17)	0	41	59
Average (1)	-	-	100
Year 2 Total N=57			
Very Delayed (32)	6	47	47
Delayed (24)	4	17	79
Average (1)	-	-	100

SUMMARY

The large majority of children who completed their first year in the Family Literacy Initiative Program in 2017 showed considerable progress as measured by the *Bracken School Readiness Assessment, Third Edition*. For example, while 32 of the children scored at the *Very Delayed* level on the pretest, only two did so at the end of the program year. Furthermore, while only one child scored at the *Average* level on the pretest, 35 scored at that level on the posttest.

First-year performance was slightly better among children who completed their first year in 2017 than children who completed their first year in 2016. For example, 47 percent of 2017 children who had scored *Very Delayed* on the pretest scored *Average* on the posttest, while 33 percent of 2016 children had a similar shift in performance. Additionally, 79 percent of 2017 enrollees who had scored *Delayed* on the pretest scored *Average* on the posttest, while 59 percent of 2016 enrollees who had scored *Delayed* on the pretest had progressed to *Average* on the posttest.