

BEGIN WITH BOOKS



Berkshire Baby Box welcomes all new babies to Berkshire County.

As we met with health care professionals in 2016 to curate the items that we would include with the Box, everyone agreed that books were as essential as diapers and wipes.

For 2017, the books were donated by our local independent bookseller - 2 baby board books in every Berkshire Baby Box.



Pam Pescosolido, owner of The BookLoft in Great Barrington and Hinda Bodinger, Berkshire Baby Box
The BookLoft donated all of our books in 2017

We have continued to keep books as a priority item, even as we face tight funding.



Huge shout out to the Mt Everett High School community, students and staff. Their National Honor Society (Advisor Mrs. Melino on the left, NHS member Madeline Von Ruden on the right) ran a book drive and were able to donate 100 baby board books in June 2018 to be included in our Berkshire Baby Boxes!

We know the value of reading to help parents and caregivers bond with their babies, and the books provide a talking point during the workshops Box recipients attend to get their Baby Boxes. The importance of reading and the critical window of the first 3 years of child development is stressed, and establishing the ritual of reading--even with the preverbal infant-- is encouraged.

With early screen exposure linked to cognitive and developmental problems in children we feel especially committed to promote reading.

In introducing “Begin With Books,” we emphasize the myriad, intangible benefits of starting the child with literature for a lifetime. Literature tells us stories about ourselves, our culture, our nation, our world. In books, we imagine far off places, future selves, dreams, and aspirations. We learn how heroes and heroines solve problems, overcome adversity, and find resolution. We contemplate who we are and what we are about.



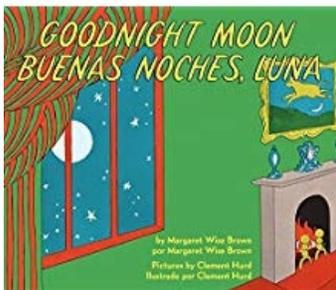
For immigrant children whose first language is not English, bilingual literature helps maintain a foundation in the first language, family, and culture of origin.

“Kiddie lit” is full of adventure and fun, suspense and excitement, and calming, peaceful imagery. Rhythmic verse, silly poems, outrageous stories, and engaging illustrations provide the family with shared experience, and the baby with sensory stimulation in the familiar tones of parents’ voices.

The family experience of reading expands to community and connections. Berkshire Baby Box workshops are held at organizations and agencies which have a broad range of ongoing groups and programs for new families. Baby Box recipients learn about these opportunities at the workshop. Friendships are formed, play groups ensue, culture is shared, and caregivers and little ones connect in reading groups. “Begin With Books” creates readers and relationships for a lifetime of belonging.

The innovation of “Begin With Books” is the belief that all parents and all babies benefit from reading, from the very beginning. Promoting cognitive development and language acquisition, exposure to a rich, word-filled environment through reading is essential. At the same time, access to a wide variety of quality literature is essential to the nurturing of the human spirit.

In our early interactions with Box recipients, we learned that many immigrant moms (who may not speak English, or for whom English is not their first language), do not speak to, sing to or read to their infants because they want their new babies to learn English. They worry that they will confuse their baby by speaking another language, or by speaking English poorly.



We include bilingual books for these families, and workshop leaders now present the benefits of learning multiple languages at an early age, including improved executive functioning skills, better working memory and improved ability to see things from others’ perspectives. Moms and caregivers are assured that their babies WILL learn English, and that reading to their baby provides the opportunity to bond.

All families receive two baby board books, and program leaders emphasize the importance of establishing the ritual of reading, even with preverbal infants. “Begin With Books” encourages parents to continue reading with their children throughout the critical first years of development and beyond, and to take advantage of the wonderful programs at local libraries, even from the beginning. It is our fervent hope that these books will help begin a lifetime practice of reading and enjoyment of a variety of types of literature.



Donations of new baby board books to be included in our Boxes are always welcome.

