ForeWord Reviews

PICTURE BOOKS

I Can't Wait to Meet You
Claudia Santorelli-Bates
Caleb Sawyer, illustrator
So No Wonder Publishing
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One of the best ways to explain something to a small child is through picture books. Potty training, sex, bullying, financial hardship—all of these issues may be best approached through simple language and fun graphics. Claudia Santorelli-Bates provides a similar education on in vitro fertilization (IVF) with her picture book, *I Can't Wait to Meet You*.

We first meet Grace and Charlie gazing hopefully across a park watching kids and moms frolic among the autumnal trees. "One day Grace and her husband Charlie decided to start a family," states the text. Good intentions meet with consistent disappointment, however, as the red arrow on the pregnancy test keeps pointing to NO. Help arrives in the form of Dr. Nelson, who explains the process of IVF with funny cartoons featuring dynamic eggs, sperm, and embryos. The pregnancy test finally says YES, and the remaining pages of the book depict classic where-babies-come-from images: a smiling, pregnant Grace; Mommy and Daddy holding a newborn; the whole family playing in the park.

Santorelli-Bates, a writer who experienced IVF firsthand, does an excellent job at capturing the complex process in clear, entertaining sentences that small children will be able to follow. While the exact science may be beyond the scope of even grownup readers, the simplified version presented in *I Can't Wait to Meet You* covers the most important aspects while maintaining readers' interest. Most importantly, children will respond to the hearty reassurance that they are loved and wanted, a message that is reiterated at the end of the story: "You were so wanted and loved long before we met you. That's what makes an I.V.F. Baby so special!"

The fourteen color illustrations by Caleb Sawyer inject even more fun and whimsy into Santorelli-Bates' light treatment of a serious topic. Children and adults will appreciate the comical introduction between egg and sperm, and the body-building efforts of the developing embryos.

With honesty, clarity, and a good dose of fun, Santorelli-Bates and Sawyer make a

complicated, potentially frightening process friendly and accessible. *I Can't Wait to Meet You* is a much-needed addition to the educational picture book genre.

Andi Diehn