

## BENEFITS OF BOOK READING FOR CHILDREN

Most parents know that a good bedtime story can lull a child to sleep. And parents have long assumed that reading books with their child improves that child's language skills and intellectual development.

So it is surprising that, until recently, there was not much real proof of the widely held notion that joint book reading improves children's communication skills.

Now, a University of Kansas researcher has added to that evidence, showing that joint book reading is indeed associated with a child's use of language and giving new details about how the variety of books and context of joint reading impacts linguistic development.

"It's not that we doubted that joint reading was a good thing for children, but we wanted to provide empirical evidence on the topic," said John Colombo, [BNCD Investigator], professor of psychology and associate



director for cognitive neuroscience at KU's Life Span Institute. "There were lots of proclamations, lots of declarations, lots of read-to-your-child weeks. But, for the most part, there wasn't a lot of hard, solid evidence that it actually was good and what it was good for."

Colombo recently published his findings in

the *Journal of Research in Higher Education*. The study, supported in part by a grant from the National Institutes of Health, was conducted with W. Allen Richman, an assistant professor of education at Macon State College who holds a doctorate in developmental and child psychology from KU.

"We sent out a questionnaire and tried to get a fix for how much reading was going on, when did people start, how long did they read and what was the frequency," said Colombo. "Then we asked some of those parents to keep a detailed, daily log of when and what they read with their children. For the most part, people read to their children about twice a day, for a little more than two hours per week on average."

The KU researchers found that parents most often read with their 10- to 18-month-old children as part of a scheduled routine, such as at bedtime, but also spontaneously during

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## A CHILD BECOMES A READER

The road to becoming a reader begins the day a child is born and continues through the end of third grade. At that point, a child must read with ease and understanding to take advantage of the learning opportunities in fourth grade and beyond—in school and in life.

Learning to read and write starts at home, long before children go to school. Very early, children begin to learn about the sounds of spoken language when they hear their family members talking, laughing, and singing, and when they respond to all of the sounds that fill their world. They begin to understand written language when they hear adults read stories to them and see adults reading newspapers, magazines, and

books for themselves. Your role, as parents, grandparents, or caregivers, in setting your child on the road to becoming a successful reader and writer does not end when a child begins kindergarten.

From several decades of research, we have learned a lot about how children learn to read and write. This research tells us that to become more skilled and confident readers over time, children need lots of opportunities to: Build spoken language by talking and listening, learn about the sounds of spoken language (this is called phonological awareness), learn about the letters of the alphabet, be read to and read on their own, spell and write, develop their ability to read quickly

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## BENEFITS OF BOOK READING

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play. Both kinds of reading had beneficial outcomes.

"We found in the end, the more book reading sessions there were, the higher the vocabulary of the child," said Colombo. "It was a stronger effect for expressive vocabulary than it was for receptive vocabulary."

Expressive vocabulary is the number of words one can produce, while receptive vocabulary is the number of words one understands. "By the time a child says a word, at 12 months typically, they actually know 50 to 75 words," said Colombo.

In the study, mothers did the lion's share of the reading, logging 66 percent of the titles read; fathers read 20 percent of the books; and others, like grandmothers, aunts and baby sitters, accounted for the rest.

"We have evidence from the original survey that people are reading regularly to their children from as early as four or five months," said Colombo.

During reading that is associated with routines like bedtime, typically the reader selected the book and the book was read cover-to-cover. But during play, the child usually initiated the reading and the book was read "in snippets,"

according to Colombo. Both kinds of reading had a positive effect on expressive vocabulary.

Another important factor was the variety of books read jointly during early childhood.

"The number of different books read per week was strongly associated with expressive vocabulary, even when you controlled statistically for the number of readings," Colombo said. "Both the absolute number of readings was predictive of vocabulary, as was the number of unique titles that they read per week."

Colombo said the message for parents is clear: Any kind of joint book reading is associated with improvement in a child's vocabulary.

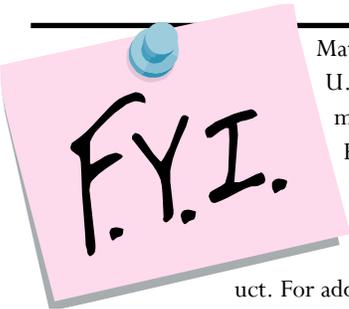
"We went out looking to confirm the veracity of claims about joint book reading," Colombo said. "The data we got very strongly emphasized that this is something good for children."

In the study, a total of 168 questionnaires were returned from the greater Kansas City area, while a subset of 45 participants logged their reading activity. Vocabulary was assessed using the MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventory.

Contact: Brendan M. Lynch, University Relations, (785) 864-8855. View this article online:

<http://www.news.ku.edu/2007/july/24/reading.shtml>

## TOY RECALL



F.Y.I.

Mattel™ has recently voluntarily recalled over a million toys in the U.S. due to use of lead paint and magnets. All affected products were made in factories in China. Some of the recalled toys include Fisher-Price™, Polly Pocket™, Power Wheels™, Doggie Day Care™, Batman™, Barbie™, and Cars™. The recalled toys need to be taken away from children immediately and then consumers should contact Mattel™ in order to arrange for the return of the product. For additional information about this recall and a full list of products affected, contact Mattel™ at (888) 597-6597 or visit their website at [www.service.mattel.com](http://www.service.mattel.com).

In addition to the Mattel™ recall, RC2 Corporation has recalled some of the wooden Thomas & Friends™ train sets also due to lead paint. Call toll-free (866) 725-4407 or visit [recalls.rc2.com](http://recalls.rc2.com).

Lead poisoning occurs when paint containing lead is ingested. All it takes is hand-to-mouth activity, which is normal for young children to engage in. Lead poisoning is associated with developmental delays and cognitive deficits in children. If you are concerned about your child having been in contact with toys containing lead paint, consult your pediatrician. Stay current on toy recalls by visiting the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission at <http://www.cpsc.gov/>.

## Developing Fluent Readers

Did you know that a third grader should be able to read 114 words per minute? This is reading fluency. Reading fluency is the ability to read text aloud quickly, smoothly, naturally, and automatically. These four steps promote reading fluency:

1. **Motivation:** It is essential to motivate students to want to read. To accomplish this, parents and teachers must provide frequent opportunities for children to listen to stories and read to others. Reading material that sparks children's individual interest is more likely to encourage them to want to read.
2. **Practice:** Provide plenty of time for students to practice reading and do repeated readings of the same stories or passages.
3. **Modeling:** Parents and teachers should model fluent reading everyday and encourage kids to practice doing the same. Children who struggle with basic decoding skills may benefit from echo reading where someone reads a short 3-5 word phrase and the child echoes the same phrase. This is an effective way of increasing students' confidence levels, as well.
4. **Help:** Parents and teachers should assist in developing self-correction skills by encouraging students to listen to themselves read and monitor their own reading. After they have read a selection, teach students to ask themselves, "Did what I just read make sense?" It is also important for teachers to demonstrate to students how to utilize illustrations, graphs, and captions to help make sense of what they've read.

Taken from *Developing Fluent Readers in the Classroom* by Wendy C. Ward. For the full text, visit <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/schoolimprovement/effective/briefs/developing>.

## Upcoming Events for Parents and Kids!

### Renaissance Festival:

Sept. 1 - Oct. 14 bring the family and enjoy a day like no other in this 16th century village located near the Speedway in Kansas City.

Call: (800) 373-0357 or

See: [www.kcrenfest.com](http://www.kcrenfest.com)

### Inflatable Theater Co.:

This show bursts with originality and delights audiences with hilarious visual comedy and plenty of mischief! See it at the KU Lied Center, Sept. 29th at 2:30.

See: [www.lied.ku.edu](http://www.lied.ku.edu)

### Pumpkin Patch

It's pumpkin time! And there are lots of locations to find the perfect pumpkin. In Lawrence, Schaaque's pumpkin patch is offering hayrides Oct. 1 - Oct. 31. (Call: (785) 843-2459 for details.) In Kansas City, on Oct. 13th Crown Center will have 30,000 lbs of pumpkins to choose from! (Call: (816) 274-8444 for details.)



### Enchanted Forest:

A non-scary Halloween event for families. Story book characters come to life as Effie the forest fairy casts her spell over the forest for the night. Oct. 19-20 and 26-27 in Independence. Admission is \$2.

Call: (816) 325-7370



### Scary on the Prairie:

A Halloween event for elementary school kids. Trick-or-treat at historic buildings, have cookies and cider, hear not-so-scary stories, and decorate pumpkins. Oct. 27th at Old Prairie Town in Topeka.

Call: (785) 368-2437

### Kid Zone:

Join Zona Rosa and Radio Disney in the Play Gardens for KidZone. There will be exciting activities and fun! Featuring games and activities, giveaways and much more! Oct. 27th at Zona Rosa (near the airport) in Kansas City. Admission is free.

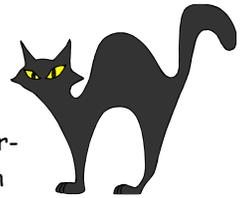
Call: (816) 587-8180 or

See: [www.zonarosa.com](http://www.zonarosa.com)

### Trick-or-Treating:

Come to downtown Lawrence on Oct. 31st as downtown merchants greet children with sweet treats and Halloween trinkets. This is an evening of family fun.

Call: (785) 842-3883



### Santa's Arrival:

The holiday season officially begins in Lawrence on Nov. 23rd with the arrival of Santa on the rooftop of Weaver's Department Store in Lawrence at 9th and Mass (Call: (785) 842-3883 for details), and in Kansas City at Crown Center (Call: (816) 274-8444 for details).

### Trees and Lights:

In Lawrence, Nov. 25 - 29 at Liberty Hall see the annual display of uniquely decorated Christmas Trees (Call: (785) 843-2085 for details). In Kansas City, The holiday season kicks off on Nov. 17th with The Legends 3rd Annual Lighting Ceremony (Call: (913) 788-3700 for details.)

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and naturally (this is called fluency), learn new words and build their vocabulary. Remember the old saying "children should be seen and not heard"? Research tells us that for children to become readers, they should listen and talk a lot. By the time children are one year old, they already know a lot about spoken language—talking and listening. They recognize some speech sounds. They know which sounds make the words that are important to them. Reading aloud to children has been called the single most important activity for building the knowl-

edge required for success in reading. Reading aloud, with children participating actively, helps children learn new words, learn more about the world, learn about written language, and see the connection between words that are spoken and words that are written.

*What to do for kindergarteners:*

- Talk often with your child to build listening and talking skills
- Have your child identify the letters of the alphabet
- Encourage your child to spell and write

• Help your child build vocabulary  
*What to do for first, second, and third graders:*

- Talk often with your child to build listening and talking skills
- Read to and with your child—often
- Ask your child's teacher how you can help your child practice at home.

For the full article, and the full list of suggested reading activities to do with your child, please visit [http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/html/parent\\_guides/k-3.html](http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/html/parent_guides/k-3.html)



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**About this Newsletter:**

The BNCD newsletter is designed to keep you informed about the ongoing research projects that are being conducted by BNCD researchers at the University of Kansas. Participants who have been part of recent research projects conducted by BNCD researchers, parents who have expressed interest in participating in future research, and individuals from organizations such as schools and daycare centers that have an interest in BNCD studies will receive this newsletter from time to time to keep them up-to-date about the research activities at the BNCD. If you do not wish to receive future newsletters, please call or e-mail the BNCD to have your name removed from our list. Research at the BNCD is supported in part by grant number 5 P30 DC05803 from the National Institute on Deafness and other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) at the University of Kansas.

**Back To School**

Find the hidden words within the grid of letters.

TWRITINGPLLFQHF  
 EPNWHIRSAUGYMYR  
 AEODAQPHPNTABOI  
 CNTVTGODECAPZYE  
 HCEMWFLXRHSPEAN  
 EIBEDKYCUSCLHID  
 RLOBEYXKHCIEBK  
 TZODSZWJEHEDDFQ  
 TMKRKCRA YONSWFV  
 LEARNINGUOCNTFY  
 READINGOHLTEGI  
 PXRORTDEBBCLASS  
 BACKPACKZUKWRQN  
 RMKYWYHWRSBOOKS  
 MATHDYERECESV N

- |          |         |          |         |            |
|----------|---------|----------|---------|------------|
| APPLE    | CRAYONS | LEARNING | PAPER   | SCHOOL BUS |
| BACKPACK | DESK    | LUNCH    | PENCIL  | SCIENCE    |
| BOOKS    | FRIENDS | MATH     | READING | TEACHER    |
| CLASS    | GYM     | NOTEBOOK | RECESS  | WRITING    |