



Parent Training Affects Children's Reading Skills

Researchers consistently point to the importance of parent involvement on children's academic success. Whether this involves home-based or school-based activities, studies conclude that parent involvement is always a positive influence on children's growth and development. What type of parent involvement, however, is most effective in maximizing children's growth and development?

Sénéchal and Young (2008) published a meta-analytic review of 16 family literacy intervention studies¹ and their effect on reading skills of children in kindergarten to grade 3. The review focused on three aspects of parent involvement related to reading acquisition: reading to their child, listening to their child read, and training parents on specific activities for helping their child learn to read.

Overall, this meta-analysis revealed a strong, positive relationship between parent involvement and their children's reading acquisition skills in two of the three focus areas. Specifically, the analysis indicated that:

- Training parents to tutor their children in specific literacy activities provided the best results (an effect size equivalent to a 17-point increase on standardized tests).
- Parents listening to their children read had a similar positive effect size.

The third focus area, parents reading to their children, did not appear to have a strong relationship to children's reading acquisition skills. This finding should be viewed with caution due to the small number of studies examined in this category. In fact, other research reviews have found an impact from reading (Bus, van IJzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995; Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994).

In addition to finding that training parents is effective, the researchers also concluded that tutoring parents in specific activities, rather than more general parent involvement, is most likely to improve children's academic skills in the targeted areas. Sénéchal and Young (2008) recommended that resources to implement training programs for parents be found. Currently, the federally funded Even Start and similar state-funded family literacy programs do provide specific training to parents about activities that enhance children's reading acquisition. Parent education and interactive literacy activities (ILA) are key components of this educational approach, providing parents with practical language and literacy focused instruction as well as practice in applying newly learned skills with their children. This approach provides the springboard for parents to use these activities at home.

References

- Bus, A.G., & Van IJzendoorn, M.H., & Pellegrini, A.D. (1995). Joint book reading makes for success in learning to read: A meta-analysis on intergenerational transmission of literacy. *Review of Educational Research*, 65, 1-21.
- Scarborough, H.S., & Dobrich W. (1994). On the efficacy of reading to preschoolers. *Developmental Review*, 14, 245-302.
- Sénéchal, M., & Young, L. (2008). The effect of family literacy interventions on children's acquisition of reading from kindergarten to grade 3: A meta-analytic review. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(4), pp 880-907.

¹ Research criteria for selecting studies included peer-reviewed, experimental or quasi-experimental, hypothesis of parent involvement affects, at least 5 participants, and the reporting of appropriate statistics.