

Access to Print Materials Improves Children's Reading

A Meta-Analysis of 108 Most Relevant Studies Shows Positive Impacts



What impact, if any, does access to print materials have on children's educational outcomes?

Children's book distribution programs were created to provide greater access to high-quality, age-appropriate reading materials to children from low-income homes as one effort to address the achievement gap. In 2010, Reading Is Fundamental commissioned Learning Point Associates to conduct a meta-analytic research synthesis of children's book lending and book ownership programs to determine the effect of providing access to print materials on children's educational outcomes.

Giving children access to print materials is associated with positive behavioral, educational, and psychological outcomes.

Meta-analysis of the 44 studies classified as rigorous of the 108 examined in the review found that access to print materials:

- **Improves children's reading performance** Findings from the rigorous studies suggest that providing children with print materials helps children read better. Among the studies reviewed, Kindergarten students showed the biggest increase in reading performance.
- **Are instrumental in helping children learn the basics of reading** The review found that providing children with reading materials allowed them to develop basic reading skills such as letter and word identification, phonemic awareness and completion of sentences.
- **Causes children to read more and for longer lengths of time** Giving children print materials leads them to read more frequently and for greater amounts of time.
- **Produces improved attitudes toward reading and learning among children** The review found that when children have greater access to books and other print materials—through either borrowing books or receiving books to own—they develop more positive attitudes toward reading and learning.

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Additional findings

The meta-analytic review of all 108 rigorous and non-rigorous research reports found positive relationships between children's access to print materials and four additional outcomes: motivation to and interest in reading; writing performance; language development; and academic performance in subjects other than reading after performance. While these outcomes are related to children's access to print materials, the evidence does not show—or too few rigorous studies exist to conclude—that providing print materials improves or increases these categories of outcomes.

About the Study

Reading Is Fundamental commissioned Learning Point Associates to conduct a meta-analytic research synthesis that examines as many research findings on the relationship between children's access to print materials and education-related outcomes as can be found. The research team performed a near-exhaustive search uncovering more than 11,000 reports. Studies of children's book lending and book ownership programs were analyzed.

After rigorous screening to determine inclusion in the full review, the final meta-analyses were conducted on the 108 empirical reports that directly addressed the research question. A subset of those reports using rigorous research designs was analyzed to determine the causal link between the access to print material and the eight categories of outcomes.

About Learning Point Associates

Learning Point Associates, an affiliate of the American Institutes for Research, is a nonprofit education research and consulting organization with more than 25 years of experience in evaluating education programs and policies and researching critical issues. We work to ensure that educators have solid, accurate information to drive their decision making. For more information, visit www.learningpt.org.

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