



Research Partnerships

Reading to Young Children: A Head-Start in Life

The research sets out to explore the connections between parents reading to their young children and their child's later reading and other cognitive skills.

Key Findings

The frequency of reading to children at a young age has a direct causal effect on their schooling outcomes regardless of their family background and home environment.

- Reading to children at age 4-5 every day has a significant positive effect on their reading skills and cognitive skills (i.e., language and literacy, numeracy and cognition) later in life.
 - Reading to children 3-5 days per week (compared to 2 or less) has the same effect on the child's reading skills at age 4-5 as being six months older.
 - Reading to them 6-7 days per week has the same effect as being almost 12 months older.
- Children read to more frequently at age 4-5 achieve higher scores on the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests for both Reading and Numeracy in Year 3 (age 8 to 9).
- These differences in reading and cognitive skills are not related to the child's family background or home environment but are the direct result of how frequently they have been read to prior to starting school.

This research is a result of a partnership arrangement between the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research.