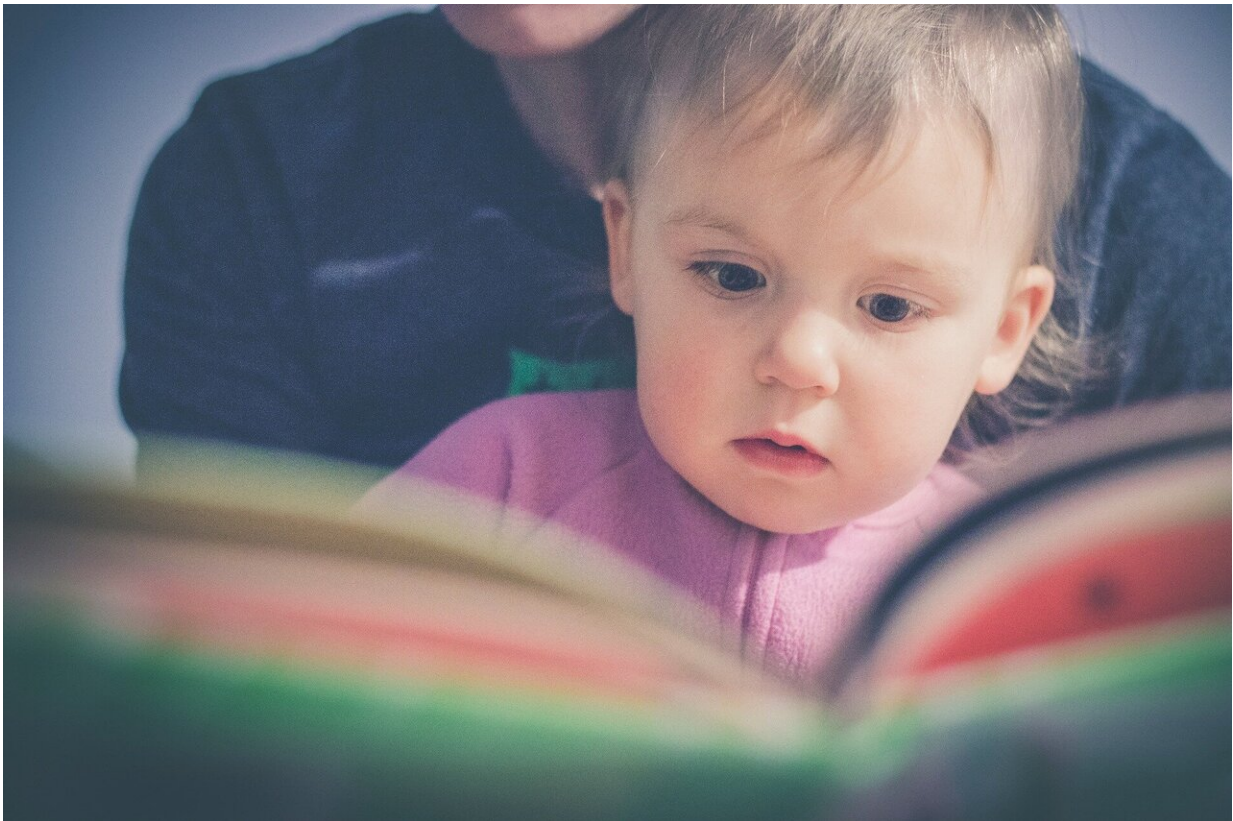


New study shows parents' concerns about children's reading should not be ignored

September 5 2023, by Crystal Mackay



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If you have concerns your child is having trouble reading, new research shows it's likely something that needs attention. As children across the country head back to class this week, a new study from Western

University researchers shows parental concern is often an accurate indicator of children's reading difficulty.

"The main takeaway is not to ignore parents' concern about reading. If a parent is concerned, there is often a learning difficulty that needs addressing," said Katelyn Bryant, assistant director at Western's Mary J. Wright Child and Youth Development Clinic and the study's lead author.

In the study of grade two children, the researchers found that parents' concern or lack thereof accurately corresponded with whether or not their children had reading difficulties more than 80 percent of the time.

The study authors point out that reading difficulties are extremely common among [school-aged children](#), with over a quarter of students in many Canadian provinces failing to meet provincial standards for reading proficiency, and that [early intervention](#) is crucial to avoiding persistent reading difficulty as children get older.

"Parents have a pretty good pulse on whether their kids are having reading difficulties or not," said Bryant, also an Education professor and school and [clinical psychologist](#) who works with children and adolescents with learning, development and mental health difficulties.

The study, published in the journal *Pediatrics & Child Health*, offers practical advice for professionals to help respond to parental concern and improve children's reading proficiency. Firstly, they emphasize the importance of acknowledging parents' concerns. They also recommend further assessment to determine whether children may have difficulty with word recognition—being able sound out words for example, or language comprehension—understanding and remembering the content they read.

"Parents can't always judge precisely what the difficulty is with their

child's reading so it's helpful to do some more testing," Bryant said.

The paper recommends also screening for commonly co-occurring conditions such as language disorders or ADHD, and counseling parents on creating a positive climate around reading and ensuring reading material is appropriately difficult.

The study authors say if [children](#) are reading books appropriate to their reading level, they should be able to read with at least 95 percent accuracy, which Bryant points out usually equates to a maximum of one to two mistakes per page.

"If they are reading books that are too challenging, they will end up being frustrated and they aren't going to learn," said Bryant. "We want to make sure the books they are practicing with are at the right level and that they are getting lots of practice in a way that makes reading enjoyable and fun."

More information: Katelyn J Bryant et al, Responding to parental concern about children's reading, *Paediatrics & Child Health* (2023). [DOI: 10.1093/pch/pxad038](https://doi.org/10.1093/pch/pxad038)

Provided by University of Western Ontario

Citation: New study shows parents' concerns about children's reading should not be ignored (2023, September 5) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-09-parents-children.html>

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