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Early Literacy and Emotional Development


**USA, study**

The study presented in this article assessed children’s social development at 24 months old and results indicated that home literacy was positively associated with children’s social-emotional development. This journal article analyzes and assesses the importance of mothers and fathers engaging in home literacy (i.e. reading books aloud) with children at a young age.

“...research has demonstrated that mothers who engage in more frequent home literacy involvement have children with more advanced language, literacy and social emotional skills during early childhood,” (p. 184).

“Emergent literacy, language and reading competence in young children have been linked to better social skills and emotional adjustment during early childhood” (p. 186).

“Data from this study showed that both fathers’ and mothers’ home literacy involvement positively contributed to children’s cognitive and social emotional development. Specifically, fathers and mothers who participated in more frequent home literacy involvement (e.g. shared book reading) had children with better reading, math and social emotional outcomes (i.e. sustained attention and fewer negative behaviours) in preschool,” (p. 193).


**USA, study**

The study presented in this article assesses the impact home-based literacy activities, such as shared book reading, have on the social-emotional development of African American children. Findings indicated that mothers who participated in more frequent home learning stimulation had children with better self-control and interpersonal skills.

“A substantive body of research has shown that parents who engage in home-based teaching and scaffolding practices, such as shared book reading, visiting the library, telling stories, and providing educational opportunities in the home have children with better cognitive and social-emotional skills,” (p. 724).

“Researchers in the area of social-emotional development have long emphasized the role of parents in promoting healthy-social-emotional skills prior to kindergarten,” (p. 722).
“Data from this study supported a priori hypotheses that maternal home learning stimulation would be positively related to children’s social-emotional functioning,” (p. 730).

“...the present study linked home learning stimulation to more positive outcomes in all of the aforementioned social-emotional domains [approaches to learning, self-control, interpersonal skills and externalizing behaviours],” (p. 732).


USA, study
The study presented in this article examines the strengths of the relationship between beginning reading skills and social adjustment. In general, findings indicated that early literacy skills were significantly (small to moderately) and positively associated with measures of social skills, and early literacy skills were negatively associated with measures of problem behaviours.

“Early literacy skills and skills of auditory comprehension were significantly and positively associated with measures of social skills and academic competence. In addition, early literacy skills and vocabulary were negatively associated with measures of problem behaviours,” (p. 250).

“Researchers have found that the majority of children with social adjustment problems experience beginning reading skills deficits,” (p. 251).

“Aggressive children, for example, use less verbal communication and more direct physical actions to solve interpersonal problems due to limited auditory comprehension and general language skills” (p. 261).

“The results of this study indicate that beginning reading skills are significantly correlated with and predictive of the social skill, academic competence and problem behaviour dimensions of the social adjustment of elementary aged public school children,” (p. 262).


USA, study
The study presented in this article examines the research on the prevalence of language deficits in children formally identified with emotional and behavioural disorders (EBD). Findings suggest that the majority of children with EBD experience clinically significant language deficits.
“After applying inclusionary and exclusionary criteria, we reviewed 26 studies. Approximately three out of four children (71%) formally identified with EBD experienced clinically significant language deficits,” (p.43).

“...most of the intricacies of what children must learn with respect to complex social behaviours (e.g. cooperation and self-control), emotional regulation and language are acquired through reciprocal interactions with their caregiver by age 5,” (Kaiser et al, in Benner et al, p. 53).


USA, study
The study presented in this article investigates the effect of story time and reading stories on the development of toddler social and emotional skills between 24 and 36 months of age. A sample of 10 toddlers randomly selected was used for the study and findings indicated that story time in a toddler’s daily routine had a positive and significant effect on their socio-emotional development.

“Hearing stories read aloud is a powerful motivational method for toddlers to begin to learn social situations [...] Moreover, listening to stories introduced toddlers to patterns of different social behaviours,” (p. 595).

“The benefits of early book experiences for toddlers include: stimulating the imagination, reinforcing basic concepts and establishing physical closeness that are critical for a toddler’s social and emotional development. The sharing of a book is also one of the many ways toddlers may form social bonds, closeness and the necessary attachment. In this intertwining of social and emotional dimensions of behaviour, toddlers begin to find ways to communicate with adults and become involved in the social process,” (p. 595).

“Results from the data presented indicated that social and emotional skills for toddlers have improved positively [following story time],” (p. 594).

“The impact of story time and reading stories on the mean scores of social skills was also significant. In the view of Hassanzadeh Kalate, social skills of toddlers improved when using the method of reading stories to introduce young children to different social situations,” (p. 599).


USA, study
The study presented in this article looks at the academic and social-emotional effects of children in enriched learning classroom environments.
“These skills [language skills and social-emotional competencies] are intertwined developmentally. Language skills enhance the child’s capacity to regulate emotions and promote effective social interaction...,” (p. 1812).


**USA, professional analysis**
This article examines the potential impact of children’s literature on young children’s psychosocial development.

“Making friends, a task essential to the transition to school at the end of early childhood, seems highly plausible when seen through Jim’s experience in *Will I Have a Friend?*” (p. 316).


**USA, study**
The study presented in this journal article assesses the connection between social-emotional growth and academic learning. The study was conducted in two elementary schools and findings indicated that integrating social-emotional learning and literacy instruction is a viable strategy for promoting self-regulation in the service of positive social and academic outcomes for children at risk.

“Social-emotional growth and academic learning do not occur on parallel tracks but are inextricably connected,” (p. 43).

“Storybook reading is a frequently occurring kindergarten activity that provides a socially interactive context within which children can learn and apply verbal and conceptual skills and participate in increasingly sophisticated conceptual conversations,” (p. 45).


**USA, overview of current research**
This article assesses the literature surrounding early literacy and highlights the importance of books in infant development, in both an academic and social sense.


“Stories are an essential prerequisite for learning to read as well as a necessity for the confirmed growth of the young reader—enabling him to relate what he sees or hears to personal
experiences and feelings and influencing imagination, language, the thinking process and enjoyment, is a vital part of the child’s early development,” (p. 46).

“Reading aloud and talking about what they’re reading sharpens children’s brains. It helps develop their ability to concentrate at length, to solve problems logically, and to express themselves more easily and clearly. The stories they hear provide them with witty phrases, new sentences, and words of subtle meaning,” (p. 50).

USA, overview of current research
This article discusses the importance of emotional development in the early childhood years and the role books can play in the social-emotional development of children. The article also suggests actions (such as asking questions about the characters) that can be taken to enhance the read aloud session.

“A larger vocabulary allows for more refined thinking and deeper understanding. For instance, the more vocabulary a child knows to describe emotions and the stronger their reasoning skills are, the better they will be at communicating their emotions and understanding those of others [...] An excellent way to teach new vocabulary is by reading storybooks aloud,” (p. 354).

USA, article
This article examines the importance of fostering emotional development in early childhood education and suggests a number of books that can be used to enhance the emotional development of children.

“Read aloud sessions with a well-chosen picture book and a sensitive, encouraging early childhood educator can help children understand and cope with their emotions. This is important because social, emotional and literacy development go hand-in-hand,” (p. 274).

“...demonstrate how a caring adult and well-chosen picture book can help young children learn how to recognize, label and regulate their emotions in socially appropriate ways,” (p. 274).

USA, article
The study presented in this article illustrates the significant difference in words that low-income children and their middle/upper-class counterparts hear in the first three years of their lives. The main finding
from this study is that children from low-income families hear 30 million fewer words than their middle/upper-class counterparts.

“Eighty-six percent to ninety-eight percent of the words recorded in each child’s vocabulary consisted of words also recorded in their parents’ vocabularies,” (p. 6).

This policy brief provides statistics relating to early literacy and offers policy recommendations to increase literacy skills and reduce the early achievement gap that is common in children. The brief relies on previous research to support their recommendations.

“Recommendation 1: Emphasize family engagement, particularly the role of parents in emergent literacy and the importance of reaching all at-risk infants and toddlers,” (p.2).

USA, study
The study presented in this article examines the associations between parental book reading and social-emotional outcomes for children in a foster program in the United States. Findings indicated that parental book reading was positively associated with children’s social-emotional scores and aggressive behaviours were significantly lower when parents read books aloud more frequently.

“One major parenting factor found to affect children’s developmental outcomes is the level of parental book reading to children. Numerous studies have identified associations between parent involvement activities and children’s academic and social-emotional outcomes,” (p. 409).

“Bradley found that parents who were low income are only half as likely to read to their children several times a week. This can be attributed to the lower access to books that families who are financially burdened may experience. When families have difficulty providing for the most basic needs of their children, books are not seen as necessities...,” (Bradley, 2001 in Lee & Lee, 2016, p. 415).

“Parental book reading to children enhanced children’s social-emotional outcomes. Children whose parents read books more frequently tend to have more positive child-parent relationships, lower hyperactive scores, and more positive social skills and approach to learning skills,” (p. 416).

USA, abstract
This abstract (full article unavailable) suggests that literacy opportunities that arise in the home foster social-emotional growth.

“As children experience more sophisticated forms of language and literacy, such as using longer sentences and a larger and diverse vocabulary, they build increasingly complex communication skills and use them to express needs, feelings, and ideas and to interact with others,” (p. 88).


USA, study
The study presented in this article examines the social-emotional correlates of emergent literacy skills of 61 preschool children. Findings indicated that emergent literacy and social-emotional behaviour are closely related to one another.

“Oral language, both expressive and receptive, was negatively related to aggression, attention problems, hostility, and non-compliant acts in these studies,” (p. 1511 & 1524).


USA, article
This article examines the importance of books in supporting emotional development in early childhood. A list of recommended books for emotional development are offered.

“Books, stories and literature-related activities aid young children’s development in understanding social and emotional development by extending the link between feeling and thinking; recognizing the existence and expression of emotions in self and others; supporting the recognition of development and emotional ties; and forming a healthy sense of self,” (p. 111).

**Early Literacy and Poverty**


USA, study
The study presented in this article seeks to identify the ‘average’ home environment in the United States. It is found that parents from low-income homes are only half as likely to read to their children as parents who are not in low-income homes.
United Kingdom, overview of current research
This article assesses the literature surrounding early literacy and highlights the importance of books in the development of infants, in both an academic and social sense. Following her own observation of parents, grandparents, toddlers and babies and analysis of other researchers’ work, the author concluded that the impact of a child’s early years on their development is underestimated.

USA, article
The study presented in this article illustrates the significant difference in words that low-income children and their middle/upper-class counterparts hear in the first three years of their lives. The main finding from this study is that children from low-income families hear 30 million fewer words than their middle/upper-class counterparts.

“Eighty-six percent to ninety-eight percent of the words recorded in each child’s vocabulary consisted of words also recorded in their parents’ vocabularies,” (p. 6).

United Kingdom, study
The study presented in this article examines the relationship between parents’ socio-economic factors and home learning at ages three and five, and their impact on child language/literacy and socio-emotional competence at the end of Gr. 1. Findings indicated that children with educated parents were read to more frequently and as a result, had better literacy skills and were on average, six months ahead in language/literacy compared to their peers whose parents did not have educational qualifications.

“The amount of money parents spend on children (e.g. purchasing books, toys) and the time they spend with them in joint activities (e.g. reading books) are considered investments that have potential to enhance children’s cognitive skills and language and emergent literacy,” (p.894).

“Literacy-rich environments where pre-school children have access to books and other print materials and parents engage with them in age-appropriate learning opportunities contribute positively to child literacy and language,” (p. 894).

“Children with educated parents (degree level of vocational equivalent) were on average about six months ahead in language/literacy compared to their peers whose parents did not have any educational qualifications,” (p. 907).
“Differences in the frequency of book reading showed that, compared to well-off families, a lower percentage of mothers with no educational qualifications and mothers living below the poverty line read to their children frequently, having a negative effect on their literacy,” (p. 908).


USA, study

The study presented in this article examines the role early literacy plays in literacy levels later in life. Study participants included students from 15 high-poverty Boston schools and found that early literacy development had positive effects on later levels of literacy. The importance of the skills children bring with them to the start of formal literacy instruction is highlighted.

“Although parent-child interaction patterns vary considerably within social groups, parents of young low-income children are less likely than middle-class parents to engage in the kinds of focused conversational and book-reading routines that promote school-relevant language and literacy skills,” (427).


USA, study

The study presented in this article examines the relative contributions of the quality of early parent-child communication and the quantity of language input in 60 low income families. Findings indicated that there was a wide variation in quality of interactions (both verbal and non-verbal) at 24 months. Findings suggest that the indicators of quality were more potent predictors of language ability than was the quantity of language input.

“Within our low-income sample, ratings of the quality of dyadic communication during a 15-minute semi-naturalistic play session proved to be a much stronger predictor of children’s expressive language 1 year later than either a tally of mothers’ words,” (p. 1081).

“When words are introduced within parent-supported shared activities, a child can learn their meaning and practice their use,” (p. 1081).


USA, study
The study presented in this article examines the associations between parental book reading and social-emotional outcomes for children in a foster program in the United States. Findings indicated that parental book reading was positively associated with children's social-emotional scores and aggressive behaviours were significantly lower when parents read books aloud more frequently.

"...found that parents who were low income are only half as likely to read to their children several times a week. This can be attributed to the lower access to books that families who are financially burdened may experience. When families have difficulty providing for the most basic needs of their children, books are not seen as necessities...,” (Bradley et al, 2001 in Lee & Lee, p. 415).

“Parental book reading to children enhanced children’s social-emotional outcomes. Children whose parents read books more frequently tend to have more positive child-parent relationships, lower hyperactive scores and more positive social skills and approach to learning skills,” (p. 416).


This article assesses the important role that early literacy plays in the development of children and the role that physicians can play in encouraging early literacy development.

“If a child is a poor reader at the end of the third grade, it is more likely that he or she will not graduate from high school... Illiteracy as an adult has been found to correlate with negative outcomes such as lower pay, less consistent work and being incarcerated,” (Snow et al, 1998, in Ogg et al, 2012, p. 112).

“Pediatric early literacy intervention also reaches a population that has traditionally been difficult to engage before school entry [...] the intervention has been used to successfully reach low-income populations, a group documented to be at-risk for poorer literacy outcomes,” (124).

**Physician’s Role in Early Literacy**


A policy statement by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) issuing recommendations on the role of physicians in promoting early literacy.
“The AAP recommends that pediatric providers promote early literacy development for children beginning in infancy and continuing at least until the age of kindergarten entry by advising all parents that reading aloud with young children can enhance parent-child relationships and prepare young minds to learn language and early literacy skills [and by] providing developmentally appropriate books given at health supervision visits for all high-risk, low-income children,” (p. 404).

Canada, report
This report summarizes the findings of an enhanced 18-month Well-Baby visit pilot program that was implemented by Niagara Region Public Health and Garden City Family Health Team. All but one parent said they remembered receiving a book at the Well-Baby visit and every parent who received a book at the visit later indicated that they had read that book to their child.

Canada, presentation
Developed by the OCFP, in partnership with St. Michael’s and Speech Services Niagara, this PowerPoint presentation describes the need for family medicine doctors to deliver early literacy programs and proposes a plan to achieve this.

Canada, position statement
This article examines the important role that physicians can have in promoting literacy amongst their young patients.

“Of all parent-child activities, the richest language exposure occurs during reading, especially when dialogic reading occurs,” (Hoff-Ginsberg, 1991 in Shaw, 2006, p. 603).

“Parents often place more importance on reading to their children when a book is given by a paediatrician. The distribution of books enhances the effectiveness of literacy intervention beyond what is achieved by anticipatory guidance alone,” (p. 603).

USA, article
This article assesses the important role that early literacy plays in the development of children and the role that physicians can play in encouraging early literacy development.

“...several studies have found that whether the family has discussed reading with the child’s paediatrician significantly predicted the likelihood that parents read to their child daily,” (112).

“Pediatricians are poised to assist with prevention-oriented literacy efforts for young children, as almost all children see their healthcare providers regularly for well-child visits before the formal start of school,” (p. 113).

Environmental Scans


USA, study [focus on developing countries]

Using data from the MICS3, the authors evaluate cognitive and socio-emotional caregiving in families across 28 developing countries. Findings indicated that less than a third of the mothers in the study read books and told stories to their children.


Canada, report card

This report card, developed by Campaign 2000, analyzes the environment of poverty within Ontario. It is reported that over 1.3 million children in Canada and over 550,000 in Ontario live in poverty and child poverty is worse in 2014 than it was in 1989 at both the national and the provincial level. Graphics, including charts and graphs, are available on the website.


Canada, report

This news article discusses the report released by the Canadian Council on Learning regarding low levels of literacy in Canada. The report suggested that by 2031, more than 15 million Canadian adults—3 million more than today—will have low literacy levels. The report concludes that the cities of Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal will experience the greatest rises in illiteracy, with rises of 80%, 64%, 64% and 20% respectively.


Canada, report
This report prepared by the City of Toronto provides insight into the poverty landscape within the city. Poverty is on the rise in Toronto; between 1970 and 2005, the number of low-income neighbourhoods grew from 19% to 53% and middle-income neighbourhoods decreased from 66% to 29%. Other figures include:

- 46% of recent immigrants live in poverty
- 37% of lone parents live in poverty
- 33% of people in racialized groups live in poverty
- 30% of people with disabilities live in poverty


This government research publication draws upon data retrieved by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Statistics Canada in 2003 and has a national focus. The OECD and Statistics Canada have identified five literacy levels:

- Level 1: The individual is unable to read a drug label in order to correctly determine the appropriate dose
- Level 2: The individual has difficulty learning new occupational skills
- Level 3: The individual is able to meet the demands of everyday life and perform work-related tasks (often associated with earning a secondary school diploma)
- Level 4 and 5: The individual is able to process and analyze complex information (often associated with earning a bachelor’s or graduate degree)

Among Canadians aged 16 and older, 48% or 12 million do not reach Level 3 literacy. Graphics, including maps and graphs, are available on the website.


This document provides an illustration of the social determinants of health in Canada. Data on income and income distribution, unemployment, education and early child development is offered.


This newspaper article discusses Toronto’s child poverty rate of 28.6%. Toronto leads the nation in terms of prevalence in child poverty with more than one in four, or 144,000 children, living in households with incomes below Statistic Canada’s after-tax low-income measure. This figure was unchanged between 2014 and 2015. Of Toronto’s 140 neighbourhoods, 18 have child poverty rates.
above 40%.


This strategy outlines the Government of Ontario’s strategy in reducing poverty and offers figures surrounding poverty in Ontario. Key figures include: 1.57 million people live in poverty in Ontario and 13.6 per cent of children live in poverty, as of 2011.

Pivik, J. (2012). *Environmental Scan of School Readiness for Health: Definitions, Determinants, Indicators and Interventions*. Human Early Learning Partnership with the National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health

This environmental scan explores school readiness from a health perspective. Flow charts and tables are used to depict key concepts, and support for arguments is pulled from previous research findings.

“Living in poverty is one of the greatest predictors of poor school readiness,” (p. 5).

“Families have the greatest influence on a child’s school readiness,” (p. 5).


This article examines the important role that physicians can have in promoting literacy amongst their young patients.

“There is a crisis of low literacy in Canada. Alarmingly, 42% of Canadians 16 to 65 years of age do not have the minimum literacy skills for coping with everyday life and work in a knowledge-based economy and society (the skill level typically required for high school completion in Canada). Among that 42%, 15% struggle with any printed material. The results among certain groups are even more troubling. Low literacy skills are found among 80% of prison inmates, 60% of immigrants (compared with 37% of native-born Canadians) and 18% to 38% (depending on the region of the country) of youth aged 16 to 25 years. Among Aboriginal people 15 to 49 years of age, 17% have less than a grade 9 education,” (602).


This report from Statistics Canada reports that 4.8 million Canadians (14.9%) lived in households with income below the after-tax Low Income Measure in 2010, according to the 2011 National Household Survey. Graphs illustrating the levels of low-income individuals who are living in low-income
neighbourhoods, as of 2010, are included.


Canada, data
Maps of the percentage of the population below after-tax low-income measure in 2010, by geographic region and census tract, can be found on this website.


Canada, data
Thematic maps show the distribution of the population aged 25-64 by highest level of educational attainment in 2011, by 2011 census division.