



Did You Know?

For children to enter kindergarten with an average-sized vocabulary of 5,000 base words, they must learn roughly 3.5 words every day from age one to age five.¹

Children from professional families start kindergarten having heard 45 million words; children from low-income families enter having heard just 13 million words. That's a staggering 32-million-word gap, almost 300 words every hour.²

For low-income infants, differences in word learning and development appear by 16 to 18 months of age, and patterns suggest widening gaps between them and better-resourced peers are established by age 3.¹

The absence of books in the home significantly contributes to this disparity.

Research indicates 61% of low-income households do not have children's books of their own.³

One study found that within middle class neighborhoods there are about thirteen children's book titles available for each child, while poor neighborhoods have as few as one children's book title for every 300 children.⁴

The School Library Journal places the average cost to the public for a children's book in 2014 at \$6.09 (paperback) and \$17.99 (hardcover). The cost of board books suitable for infants and toddlers is similarly high.⁵

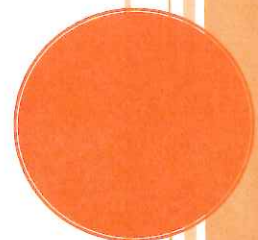
Getting books into limited-resource homes works.

A study spanning 27 countries over 20 years found the number of books in the home to be the most powerful factor driving educational achievement, with children who grow up in book-less homes completing an average 3.2 years less schooling than children who grow up in homes with 500 or more books, regardless of their parents education, occupation or class.⁶

This same study found that children from poor families with little scholarly culture benefited most from the addition of each book. Among the least educated, the addition of just 25 books correlated to an increase of two more years of successful schooling.⁶

The only behavior measure that correlates significantly with reading scores is the number of books in the home. A study of nearly 100,000 US school children found access to printed materials is the "critical variable affecting reading acquisition."⁷

A meta-analysis looking at 108 studies of programs which give books to low-income children found that providing children with print material leads to more frequent reading, for longer lengths of time, produces improved attitudes towards reading and learning, allows children to develop basic reading skills, and improves their reading performance.⁸



References:

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