

## Parent-child shared reading between the ages of 7 and 12: patterns, barriers and enablers

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### Abstract

While the positive impact of sharing stories with preschool children on language and literacy development is well recognised, we know surprisingly little about how parent-child shared reading changes across childhood. There is evidence of continued benefits of sharing books with older children e.g. sharing reading with children of 8-9 years old predicts later reading comprehension in children at-risk of reading difficulties (Torppa et al., 2022). Furthermore, shared reading has positive impacts on intrinsic reading motivation (Demir-Lira et al., 2018). Despite this, parent-child shared reading becomes much less frequent after the preschool years.

This study aimed to identify key patterns in parent-child shared reading practices across middle childhood. An online survey was completed by 218 parents of children aged 7-12, asking parents about how they share books with their children. Preliminary data analyses suggest that children and parents read together less frequently than during the preschool years and that the frequency declines steadily across this age range. However, the amount of time spent sharing reading is not correlated with the time children spend reading independently ( $r=-.03$ ), suggesting that this decline is not simply a function of independent reading replacing shared reading. Parents reported that children's enjoyment of shared reading remains high across the age range and 75% of parents felt that sharing reading continues to be important with their older children. However, 38% of parents reported that they were not spending enough time sharing reading.

To explore barriers and facilitators to shared reading with children aged 7-12, 20 survey respondents participated in online semi-structured interviews. Interviews were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Key barriers identified by parents were time constraints, children's hobbies and preferences, and associating reading with homework. Key enablers were access to appropriate books and children's enjoyment of reading more generally. Implications for considering ways to support parents to share reading more often with their older children will be discussed.