

Simple tip to boost prep literacy

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Susan Sim's research has found questioning and engaging with prep-year children while reading to them gives their literacy a boost.

A three-year Queensland University of Technology (QUT) study has found that a prep-year child's literacy was boosted when parents or carers asked children simple questions about a book while reading it to them.

The study, conducted by Faculty of Education [PhD student](#) Susan Sim Ms Sim, involved 80 [parents](#) of prep-year children from three schools.

"The parents were split into three groups," she said.

"One group of parents was taught to interact simply with their child while reading a picture book. For example asking their child: 'What is happening in this picture?' or 'Who do you see in this picture?'

"A second group was taught to build on this interaction by putting some emphasis on letters of the alphabet and sounds, for example, by pointing to each word as it was read aloud, commenting on letters of the alphabet that were repeated, and by drawing attention to rhyme."

Ms Sim said a third 'control' group was not given any intervention strategies in relation to reading but provided with a 'match the numbers' game instead.

She said parents in the first two groups were given one story book per week for eight weeks, and asked to read each new book with their child at least three times per week," she said.

"We tested the children both before and after the reading intervention and found that the students in the first two groups showed significant advancement in their use of language and understanding of rhyme as well as print.

"Even though they couldn't actually read, students in the second group who were taught more about printed letters of the alphabet could tell if texts were presented upside down, if full stops were missing, knew text read from left to right and also that books read from front to back covers.

"Significantly, we revisited the groups after a period of three months and found their skill levels in these areas remained high while the skill levels of the [control group](#) did not improve."

Ms Sim said the skills assessed by the study, receptive and expressive

vocabulary, rhyme, word completion, alphabet knowledge and concepts about print were critical to the development of early [literacy](#).

She said the study demonstrated that parents could be trained to [read](#) with their children in a way that would give their children a good start to literacy before formal schooling began.

[Children](#) involved in the study were preparatory year age which is from just under five years of age to just over six.

Ms Sim said it was most important though that parents had fun with their child while reading and gave their child praise and encouragement.

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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