



Young People's Reading: The Importance of the home environment and family support

Executive summary

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Transforming Lives

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Executive summary

This paper presents additional information from our 2009 survey of young people's reading and writing; for more information see the full report *Young People's Reading and Writing Today*, to be published July 2010. This paper explores the types of resources young people have at home that support literacy and how this differs according to demographic background, and how home resources relate to reading enjoyment, attitudes and behaviour as well as reading attainment.

It also explores who in their family encourages young people to read, who in their family is seen reading and how frequently young people talk with their family about what they are reading. It also outlines how these differ according to demographic background, and how each of these relate to reading enjoyment, attitudes and behaviour as well as reading attainment.

Since we asked similar questions about resources in the home and parental involvement in reading in a 2005 survey of over 8,500 primary and secondary pupils, we also wanted to investigate how findings from 2009 compare with findings from 2005.

17,089 pupils aged 8 to 16 from 112 schools in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales participated in our online survey on young people's attitudes towards reading and writing in November and December 2009. Attainment data were available for 4,503 of participating young people for reading.

Resources in the home

- 85% of young people say that they own a mobile phone or have access to one at home, while 84% also either own a computer or have access to one at home. 77% have a desk of their own, while 73% have books of their own. 64% of young people have access to a newspaper at home, while 67% have access to magazines.
 - Book ownership in particular is related to enjoyment of reading, attitudes towards reading and reading frequency. Twice as many young people who have books of their own compared with those who do not have their own books enjoy reading either very much or quite a lot. Twice as many young people who have their own books also said that they read everyday compared with young people who do not have their own books.
 - Nearly twice as many young people who do not have their own books at home, compared with those who do, agree with the statements that reading is more for girls than boys, that reading is hard, that they cannot find anything to read that interests them, that they only read when they have to and that they do not read as well as other pupils in their class. Also, they were three times more likely to agree with the statement that reading is boring and that they only read in class.
 - Reading attainment was related to having a computer, having a desk of one's own, having books of one's own and having access to newspapers and magazines. In particular, those who struggled with reading were less likely to have books of their own at home or to have a desk of their own. They were also less likely to have access to newspapers and magazines.

Parental encouragement to read

- 8 in 10 young people said they get at least some encouragement to read from their mother. By contrast, only 7 in 10 said that their father encourages them to read to some degree.
 - Young people who get a lot of encouragement to read from their mother or father are more likely to enjoy reading, to read frequently, to have positive attitudes towards reading and to believe that reading is important to succeed in life than young people who do not get any encouragement to read from their mother or father.
 - Half of young people who read above the expected level for their age say that their mother encourages them a lot. Only a third of young people who read below their expected level also say that their mother encourages them to read a lot. A similar relationship exists between reading attainment and encouragement to read by their father.
 - Levels of encouragement to read by the mother have remained remarkably similar between 2005 and 2009. By contrast, there was a small decrease in the percentage of young people who say that their father encourages them to read (from 28.7% in 2005 to 25.9% in 2009).

Parents being seen reading

- Over twice as many fathers as mothers were not seen to be reading by young people (26% vs. 12% respectively).
 - Parents being seen reading is related to their children's enjoyment of reading, reading attitudes and reading frequency. Young people who see their mother and father read a lot are more likely to enjoy reading, to read frequently, to have positive attitudes towards reading and to believe that reading is important to succeed in life than are young people who do not see their mother or father read at all.
 - Half of young people who read above the expected level for their age say that their mother reads a lot. In comparison, just over a third of young people who read below their expected level say that their mother reads a lot. Though less clear-cut, a similar relationship exists between reading attainment and the father being seen reading, with a third of young people who read above the expected level for their age saying that their father reads a lot compared with only two-fifths of young people who read below their expected level.
 - There has been a slight increase in the proportion of mothers who were seen to be reading a lot between 2005 and 2009 (increasing from 39% in 2005 to 43% in 2009). The increase in fathers being seen to be reading a lot was less pronounced, increasing 2.1% (from 26% in 2005 to 28% in 2009).

Talking about reading as a family

- Almost one in six young people talk about reading with their family every day. Most talk about reading with their family at least once a week (27%). However, nearly a quarter rarely talk with their family about reading, while nearly a fifth did not talk with their family about reading at all.
 - Young people who talk with their family about what they are reading every day are more likely to enjoy reading, to read frequently, to hold positive attitudes towards reading and to believe that reading is important to succeed in life than young people who never talk with their family about what they are reading.
 - Young people who read below the expected level are nearly three times more likely to never talk with their family about reading than they are to

talk about reading every day. Conversely, young people who read above the expected level for their age are twice as likely to talk about what they are reading every day than they are to never talk with their family about what they are reading.

- Slightly more young people said that they talk with their family about what they are reading every day in 2009 compared with 2005. Conversely, fewer young people talked with their family about reading on a monthly basis in 2009 compared with 2005, while a greater proportion said that they rarely or never talk about reading with their family in 2009 than in 2005.