



# Society for Research in Child Development

Office for Policy and Communications  
1313 L Street, NW • Washington, DC 20005  
OFFICE: (202) 289-7905 • FAX: (202) 289-4203

## PRESS RELEASE

Child Development (March/April issue)

**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE ON March 26, 2007 (12:01 AM)**

### Contact Information:

Andrea Browning  
Society for Research in Child Development  
Office for Policy and Communications  
(202) 289-7905  
abrowning@srcd.org

### **Reading Problems Are Emotionally Difficult for Disadvantaged Children**

Chronic reading problems and depression appear to be related, especially among low-income children, and the reading problems precede the depression.

A new study done by researchers at the University of Delaware and West Chester University of Pennsylvania found that low-income children who take part in reading assistance programs in fifth grade are more depressed, anxious, and withdrawn than their peers, especially when they have chronic reading problems. The study is reported in the March-April 2007 issue of the journal *Child Development*.

Children from low-income families often have difficulties in reading and math achievement in early elementary school, and these problems increase as they rise in grade level. This study sought to determine if and when reading difficulties are associated with emotional distress.

The researchers looked at 105 4- to 12-year-old children who took part in a longitudinal study of the emotional development of disadvantaged children. Mothers and teachers provided information about reading assistance when the children were in the third and fifth grades, achievement scores documented reading difficulty, teachers rated problem behaviors in school that reflect emotional distress, and the children reported about their own recent negative emotional experiences, including sadness, shame, and fear. The study took into consideration children's verbal abilities and family income.

Researchers found that fifth grade reading problems were associated with increases in emotional distress from third to fifth grade. Children in reading assistance programs in fifth grade showed more distressed behaviors than those in third grade, whether or not they were in reading programs at that time. And children who were in reading programs in both third and fifth grades were the most distressed.

These children also reported especially high levels of negative emotional experiences. The results tie the emotional distress to developmental changes in children's understanding of academic ability between 9 and 12 years of age.

"Much research documents the common academic difficulties of economically disadvantaged children," according to Brian P. Ackerman, professor of psychology at the University of Delaware and lead author of the study. "Little is known, however, about the emotional impact of these difficulties and participation in remediation programs, or whether the impact changes with age.

"Our results suggest that such difficulties have special emotional significance for preadolescent children, but perhaps not for younger children, and that attending to the emotional impact could help prevent school disengagement for disadvantaged children."

Summarized from Child Development, Vol. 78, Issue 2, *The Relation between Reading Problems and Internalizing Behavior in School for Preadolescent Children from Economically Disadvantaged Families* by Ackerman, BP, Izard, CI, Kobak, R (University of Delaware), Brown, ED (West Chester University of Pennsylvania), and Smith, C (University of Delaware). Copyright 2007 The Society for Research in Child Development, Inc. All rights reserved.