

**Study Title:** *The power of children's learning in their reading*

Dear parent/guardian,

We invite your child aged 4.5, 5, or 6 to take part in an exciting study! The study is being conducted by Dr. Hélène Deacon and her team in the Language & Literacy Lab at Dalhousie University. This research is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and has been approved by the Dalhousie Research Ethics Board.

### **What is the Purpose of Our Study?**

Reading is central to children's academic and life outcomes; even in elementary school, teachers expect children to be able to learn from what they read. We are investigating whether children in pre-primary and primary can learn the spellings and meanings of new words during shared book reading. We are also investigating how these abilities are related to early word reading skills. We are working with a wide range of learners, to understand the skills that different children use. This knowledge will inform curriculum design, including how to support all children in reaching literacy success.

### **Who Can Take Part in Our Study?**

All children aged 4.5, 5, or 6 who are enrolled in English instruction are invited to participate. Participation is completely voluntary. We will only work with your child if you agree by signing the consent form, and if your child agrees to take part when you visit the lab.

### **Who Will Work With Your Child, Where, and When?**

Trained researchers from the Language and Literacy lab will conduct the study in the Language and Literacy Lab at Dalhousie University. All research assistants have cleared Criminal Record, Vulnerable Sector, and Child Abuse Registry checks and have years of experience working with children. We will arrange a time that is convenient for you.

### **What Will Your Child Be Asked To Do?**

Your child will be asked to complete a variety of language and reading activities designed to be fun and age-appropriate. Children will engage in shared book reading with our research assistants as well as complete several language-based activities – for example, they would be asked to name some letters of the alphabet and attempt to read some simple words. Some activities are audio-recorded. In total, these activities will take 30 to 45 minutes.

We make it clear to the children that we are interested in *how* they do these activities rather than whether they get things right. Based on our experience, children find these

activities fun and engaging, and enjoy working one-on-one. We thank children for their participation with prizes, such as colourful pencils, erasers, and stickers, as well as a certificate.

### **What Do We Do With the Information We Collect?**

The information gathered from this project is for research purposes. The findings from your child's participation will help us better understand how children learn from what they read. Findings from your child's participation will only be shared based on results of all the participants together; these group-results will be shared with the research team. We may present our findings, based on results of all the participants together, in academic journals and education conferences; we may also share them with the centre for education and department. We may also contrast these group results to other groups, such as adults. Relevant materials to this research project and an anonymized data file may be uploaded to an online data repository.

As a parent/guardian, you have the option of receiving a letter explaining our findings for this part of the study for the group as a whole. You also have the option to receive your child's reading level based on a standardized test of letter identification. This feedback will indicate whether your child's performance is appropriate for their age-level. Please note that these results cannot be used for diagnostic purposes. Please indicate on the bottom of the consent page whether you would like to receive this feedback.

### **What are the Possible Risks and Benefits of Taking Part?**

We hope our results from the overall study will be useful for future teacher education and curriculum development. Individual children are unlikely to benefit greatly from the study, although they do tend to enjoy participating in our research. As a token of our thanks, participating children will receive a small prize, a \$10 Amazon gift card, and a certificate of participation. We do not anticipate any risks associated with participation in this study.

### **How do we Protect Your Child's Information?**

We take multiple steps to protect the privacy of children who participate in our studies. Data files are stored with only coded ID numbers, and not names. All audio files and de-identified data are stored securely (e.g., password-protect network, locked data storage room) and kept indefinitely. Consent forms and any identifying information are destroyed 5 years after publication of the research. Data use and storage is reviewed and approved by Dalhousie University's Research Ethics Board. Combined results for groups of children, never individuals, are reported in our publications and presentations. The only individual data shared with you and/or with your child's school will be your child's reading level and **only** with your permission.

### **To participate and for more information**

We are happy to answer any questions about this study! You can contact the Research Coordinator at 902-494-3229, or [langlab@dal.ca](mailto:langlab@dal.ca); she will be coordinating the testing at your child's school. You are also welcome to call the Lab Director, Dr. H el ene Deacon, at 494-2538.

If you have any difficulties with, or wish to voice concern about, any aspect of your child's participation in this study, you may contact Catherine Connors, the Director of Dalhousie University's Office of Human Research Ethics: Catherine.Connors@dal.ca or 902-494-1462.

**In summary**

We are very excited about this research study and would love the opportunity to work with your child! With your consent, we will work with your child as they complete a series of enjoyable language and reading activities. We are motivated to understand how children understand what they read and look forward to sharing our findings with you!

We thank you for considering your child's participation in this study!

Dr. Hélène Deacon, Professor  
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Dalhousie University  
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**[Research Coordinator ]**

*Find out more about us!*

*Visit our website:*

<http://langlitlab.psychology.dal.ca/>

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I have read the explanation about this study. I understand that participation is voluntary and that my child is free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Do you give permission for your child to participate in this study? Please check one of the boxes below.

Yes, I **give permission** for my child to participate in this study

No, I **do not** want my child to participate in this study

**Signature of parent/guardian:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**If you give permission for your child to participate, please provide the following information:**

Child's first name: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's last name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian first name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian last name: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's date of birth (YYYY/MM/DD)\*: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

*\*We collect date of birth so that we can appreciate what is age appropriate for your child.*

What is the first language that your child learned to speak:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Does your child speak any other languages? If yes,  
list: \_\_\_\_\_

**To receive follow-up information:** Parents/guardians of all participating children will receive the general results of this study. **You also have the option of receiving information about your child's individual results by answering the questions below.** If you select 'yes', we will send this information to you via email.

1. Would you like to receive information on your child's reading ability (based on a standardized test)? **YES** **NO**

*This information will provide you with a snapshot of your child's reading ability, to be considered in relation to other sources of information. The results cannot be used for diagnostic purposes.*

2. Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to be contacted with opportunities to participate in other studies? **YES** **NO**

1. If yes, how would you prefer to be contacted? **BY EMAIL** **BY PHONE**

2. If yes, please provide your email address (if not provided above) or phone number:

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