

Study Title: *Leaps and bounds: From reading words to understanding texts*

Dear parent/guardian,

We invite your child in Grades 4 and 5 to take part in an exciting study! The study is being conducted by Dr. Hélène Deacon and her students in the Language & Literacy Lab at Dalhousie University. This research is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Purpose of the study

Reading is one of the most important skills that children learn. Our multi-year study examines how children harness their language skills to support their learning to read from Grades 1 to 6. 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. Currently, we are looking for children to help us by testing out our activities that are designed for measuring reading and language skills – your child’s participation would help ensure we develop the best possible activities for the multi-year study.

Who can participate in the study

All children in Grades 4 and 5 are invited to participate. Participation is completely voluntary. We will only work with your child if you agree by signing the attached consent form, and if your child agrees to take part.

Who will conduct the research and when

Trained researchers from the Language and Literacy lab will conduct the study. 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 convenient time with you.

What your child will be asked to do

Your child will be asked to complete a variety of language and reading activities. For example, children will be asked to rearrange muddled sentences or choose meanings for words. Most activities are done individually, and others might be done in small groups. 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 we will do with the information

The information gathered from this project is for research purposes, to help us achieve the best most reliable, age-appropriate and fun activities possible. The findings from your child’s participation will inform the activities we will use in our multi-year study. 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.

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 word reading. 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 your preference on the attached Signature Page and return it to the researcher.

Possible Risks and Benefits

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.

How we will protect your data

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 will be your child's reading level and **only** with your permission.

For More Information

We are happy to answer any questions about this study! For questions or more information about the study you can contact the Language and Literacy Lab Manager, Stef Hartlin at langlab@dal.ca or 902-494-3229 or call the Lab Director, Dr. Hélène 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 and cite study REB# 2018-4599.

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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Please complete this signature page and return to the researcher.

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: _____

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

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

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

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

If yes, please provide your email address: _____

If your child will be participating, please also provide the following:

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:
