

Our culture's emphasis on the importance of reading to children creates the impression that it plays the same role in learning to read as speaking to children plays in their learning to talk. That's not correct.

Whereas talking with children guarantees that they will learn to speak (in the absence of pathological interference), reading to children does not guarantee that they will learn to read. In short, reading to children is not the same as teaching children to read. I emphasize this point because the mantra about reading to children makes it seem that this is all that is required. A child who has difficulty learning to read therefore has not been read to enough. Among the first questions that will be asked of the parents of a child who is struggling is whether they read to the child and if there are books in the home. Reading to children is important but not sufficient; children benefit from it, some quite a lot, but it neither obviates the role of instruction nor vaccinates against dyslexia. Children who are read to until the cow jumps over the moon can still have difficulty becoming readers.

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