

Visual Attention to Print in Children with Rett Syndrome (RTT) Study

Appalachian State University and the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies at the University of North Carolina announce a new collaborative study of visual attention to print during storybook reading by parents and their children with Rett syndrome. The study is designed to: (1) identify what children look at on digital book “pages” during parent-child interactions involving familiar and unfamiliar storybooks; (2) explore the impact of features of digital children’s books on what children look at; and (3) determine how specific types of parent interactions might increase children’s attention to print on the page. We believe that this study may lead to a clinically-useful indicator of emerging literacy knowledge and skills in children with RTT.

Children, ages 36-96 months (3-8 years), with Rett syndrome and their parents are being recruited to participate in this study. The entire study is to be conducted online from each participant’s home and will involve three steps:

1. An online assessment will be conducted of (a) children’s communication and beginning reading skills and understandings, and (b) parents’ views of both reading and parent-child reading.
2. Families will be provided with a PC laptop, preconfigured with communications and data collection software, along with a Tobii eye-tracking device, and digital reading materials. Parents will be asked to read familiar and new storybooks on eleven occasions with their child as data is gathered about the reading interaction and their child’s eye movements onscreen.
3. Parents will be taught a specific storybook reading strategy and coached in its uses via computer video conferencing, and then the parents and child recorded again as they implement the strategy in eleven more readings of familiar and new storybooks. Total family time commitment is anticipated to be 8-10 hours for the assessments, computer and Tobii set-up, training, and recorded readings.

Families will mail all equipment back to the research team in postage-paid protective cases.

If you are interested in participating, please contact either the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies by email (clds@unc.edu) or telephone (919-966-8566), or Dr. David Koppenhaver at Appalachian State University by email (koppenhaverd@appstate.edu), Skype (dave.litdis), or telephone (828-262-6074). Please provide your contact details and indicate that you are interested in participating in the “Rett Syndrome Storybook Study.” We look forward to working with you and your child!