



To find out if there is any association between parents' attitudes towards reading and their children's reading proficiency, PISA asked parents whether they consider reading a hobby or a waste of time, whether they spend time reading at home for pleasure, and whether they enjoy going to a library or bookstore.

Children whose parents are more inclined to read and hold positive attitudes towards reading are better at reading than children whose parents do not share those positive attitudes. In all countries and economies assessed, the children whose parents do not think reading is a waste of time or who spend more time reading at home for enjoyment have significantly higher scores in reading. For example, in Hungary, Italy, New Zealand, Panama, Portugal and Qatar, children whose parents think that reading is a waste of time score more than 50 points – or more than one full school year – lower in reading than children whose parents do not think reading is a waste of time. Similarly, in these countries, children whose parents spend time reading for enjoyment at home score more than 30 points – the equivalent of nearly a full school year – higher in reading than children whose parents do not.

Socio-economically advantaged parents are more likely than other parents to hold these kinds of positive attitudes towards books and reading. Yet even when families of similar socio-economic backgrounds are considered, there is still a strong link between parents' habits and attitudes towards reading and student reading performance. That means that the relationship is not dependent on the socio-economic background of the family.

Not surprisingly, in all countries and economies surveyed, children whose parents consider reading a hobby, enjoy going to the library or bookstore, and spend time reading for enjoyment at home are more likely to enjoy reading themselves. This is true even when comparing children from similar socio-economic backgrounds, which indicates that children are more likely to enjoy reading when their home environment is conducive to reading. This relationship is found to be particularly strong in Hungary, Italy, Lithuania and Qatar.

Box 5.1 **United States: Cool Culture**

Cool Culture, a non-profit organisation in New York City, offers low-income families with young children **free access to cultural institutions**. The initiative, launched in 1999, is rooted in the belief that exposure to cultural activities helps to develop language proficiency in children as they express their observations and opinions about what they experience in museums, gardens and zoos.

Families with a child enrolled in one of the member early-childhood programmes receive a personalised "Cool Culture Family Pass" that grants them free entry, for up to five family members, to 91 cultural institutions in the city. Cool Culture also develops "Culture Hunt Cards", available in **several languages**, that prompt families to find particular objects in the cultural institutions they visit – and to discuss both the objects and the institutions before, during and after the visits.

Cool Culture is two-thirds funded by private donations and one-third funded by public institutions. All publicly funded early childhood education centres in New York City that serve low-income families are invited to enrol in the programme. The organisation now works with over 400 Head Start, child care and universal pre-kindergarten programmes in the city. In 2010-11, some 180 000 adults and children visited cultural institutions using a Cool Culture Family Pass.

www.coolculture.org