

Why You Shouldn't Worry if Your Child Can't Read by Age Eight

Not long ago, comedian Crystal Lowery posted a [Facebook status](#) about her personal life. The post had to do with decisions she and her husband had made regarding their young son, and began as follows:

"I'm not teaching my 5-year-old how to read.

Don't get me wrong, we read him books all the time. We've imagined ourselves in Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory, and we're 170 pages into Harry Potter's Chamber of Secrets. We're teaching him to enjoy stories, to get lost in characters.

But we're not teaching him how to read. Not just yet. He's too busy learning other things."

As the *Huffington Post* [explains](#), Lowery's motivation for the status update was the realization that she, along with many other parents, was pushing her child toward early schooling and accomplishments simply for bragging rights. Thus, Lowery decided that she wanted her child to enjoy his youth and do things which were not necessarily taught in a classroom.

But what Lowery may not realize, however, is that the decision to not push her son toward reading is grounded in sound research. According to reading and childhood experts Raymond and Dorothy Moore, research conducted at Stanford, the University of Colorado Medical School, and other places shows that children really don't need to be pushed toward formal learning before age 11.

[According to the Moores](#), such a hands-off approach to education will not only allow children the time they need to

develop, but will also foster greater enthusiasm for learning, particularly if parents expose them to plenty of books through family-read-aloud time:

“Read, sing and play with your children from birth. Read to them several times a day, and they will learn to read in their own time-as early as 3 or 4, but usually later, some as late as 14. Late readers are no more likely to be retarded or disabled than early ones. They often become the best readers of all-with undamaged vision and acute hearing, more adult-like reasoning (cognition) levels, mature brain structure less blocking of creative interests. Yet late readers are often falsely thought to be in need of remedial help.”

The Moores go on to say:

“The ‘antennae’ sprouting from the brains of most students are blocked by mass-education’s cookie-cutter substitutes for life that destroy creativity. Kids come out uniform-sized cookies or sausages.”

We worry a lot today about kids falling behind in school and becoming one of the [60-some percent](#) of American students who can’t read proficiently, or one of the many American adults who can’t read above an [eighth grade level](#). These are genuine concerns that we should work to overcome.

But what if we’ve been trying to overcome these difficulties in the wrong way? What if in our desperate efforts to give kids a head start in reading, we’re actually squelching their natural abilities to learn? Is it possible the forceful, cookie-cutter education system is actually the giant hurdle to having a highly literate society?