

## Grant sets five-year goal to overcome U.S. reading comprehension crisis

“Our national reading crisis persists despite many attempts to mitigate it: U.S students continue to lag behind those from many countries in their ability to understand what they read—including Hungary and Bulgaria.

Much of the nation's research agenda has been focused on improving word reading skills, but this has not translated into higher reading comprehension test scores,” said Hugh Catts, professor and chair of KU's top-rated Speech-Language-Hearing: Sciences and Disorders Department.



But now Catts and 129 other scientists from several academic fields across the country are beginning a monumental five-year \$120 million Reading for Understanding initiative funded by the federal Institute of Education Sciences. Reading for Understanding is a multi-university undertaking to overhaul how reading is taught to U.S. children by 2015.

“Reading for Understanding is an attempt to dramatically increase our knowledge about what is involved in skilled reading comprehension and how this may be taught in the classroom,” Catts asserted.

Likened to a NASA space mission by *Education Week*, the Reading for Understanding initiative accelerates the research process through the simultaneous funding of several related projects and a network of 160 researchers. What's more, the researchers hope to have prototypes of programs to teach reading comprehension to children through the twelfth grade based on the six multidisciplinary teams' research at the end of five years.

Further reflecting the translational sci-

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### Tips for Teaching Kids to Enjoy Reading

- 1. The key to reading is words: hearing them, saying them, seeing them, and connecting them to everyday life.** Simply talking—in the grocery store, on the way to school, before bed—guarantees a richer vocabulary for your child.
- 2. Set aside a special time each day to read together.** Find a quiet place where you can focus on the book. Pretty soon, your child will make the connection between the pleasure of undivided attention and the pleasure of reading.
- 3. Expect disasters.** Sometimes reading

just isn't in the cards. Don't push it. The last thing you want is to turn it into a battle. But be prepared to grab unexpected opportunities. Always have a book with you—in your bag, in the car, at the pool: waiting is a lot easier on everyone if there's a story to share.

- 4. Read books you like.** Your enjoyment will be infectious. Read books your children pick themselves ... and praise their choices.
- 5. Stop occasionally to ask your child questions about the pictures or about what they just heard.** Try to ask questions that require more than a yes or no an-

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 ence model of community and practitioner participation, participating schools' teacher representatives will be members of the research team and help with the development and implementation of instructional packages. One of the partner schools for the project is Lee's Summit (Mo.) R-7 School District.

"Reading comprehension is an active process in which the reader uses his or her language knowledge, background knowledge and reasoning skills to construct an understanding of the text," Catts explains. "In this project, we plan to provide students with the language knowledge and skills, background knowledge and motivation to be successful in this process."

Catts is collaborating with 14 other re-

searchers from five universities in the United States and the United Kingdom in a team led by Professor Laura Justice, a speech-language pathologist at Ohio State University. Other team members include Diane Nielsen, KU professor of education, Mindy Bridges, LSI research associate, and Tiffany Hogan, a KU speech-language-hearing graduate, now assistant professor of special education and communication disorders at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, who will head the Nebraska team. This team will focus on children from 4-8 years of age.

By Karen Henry (2010), Assistant Director for Communications, The Life Span Institute from LSI News [lsi.ku.edu/news/](http://lsi.ku.edu/news/) and KU News Release 10/28/10 [news.ku.edu/](http://news.ku.edu/)

## BNCD INVESTIGATOR HIGHLIGHT

Dr. Jungwon Janet Choy joined the KU Life Span Institute and Department of Speech-Language-Hearing in August 2010. Her research focuses primarily on language deficits in aphasia. Aphasia is a language disorder as the result of damage to the brain. In the case of Broca's Aphasia, such damage can result from a stroke or injury to the left inferior frontal region. People with Broca's Aphasia have difficulty comprehending and producing words and sentences. Their sentence comprehension pattern is particularly striking in that simple sentences are unaffected but more complicated sentences such as passive sentences are affected. Choy plans to study the disorder at the word-level and sentence-level.

Through the use of an eye-tracking device—a fairly new

method in language processing research—Choy will study how a person's gaze moves between two pictures of a cat or dog, for example, when hearing the words in a sentence like, "It was the cat who was chased by the dog." Eye movement indicates what word the individual is processing and for a person with Broca's there is a delay in looking at the pictures corresponding to the words. By



Jungwon Janet Choy, Ph.D.

addressing the impairment pattern and the deficit underlying comprehension impairment in aphasic individuals, Choy's work ultimately seeks to provide a basis for new aphasia treatments.

Excerpt from LSI Annual Report 2009-2010

## Research Participation Opportunities

### Input Sources of Grammatical Deficits in Specific Language Impairment (SLI)

This NIH-sponsored study tests whether the grammatical errors made by preschoolers with SLI (e.g., *him running*) are partially caused by these children's *mis*understanding that *parts* of adult sentences (e.g., *I see him running*) are grammatical when they are used as sentences all by themselves.

**Participants:** 4- and 5-year-olds with SLI

**Time commitment:** Four 1-hour testing sessions and ten 15-minute experimental sessions. These can occur at KUMC or in your home.

**Benefits:** free language evaluation; \$9 per visit to KUMC.

**Contact:** Marc Fey, Ph.D. (913) 588-5937 [mfey@kumc.edu](mailto:mfey@kumc.edu)

Shelley Bredin-Oja (913) 588-0574 [sbredin-oja@kumc.edu](mailto:sbredin-oja@kumc.edu)

### Do you have trouble understanding your child's speech?

### Does your child have difficulty learning new words?

The purpose of this research project is to examine word learning by preschool children with language or speech sound delays. We want to determine how the organization of words and sounds affects children's ability to learn new words and to develop effective vocabulary teaching strategies.

**Ages:** 4-5 year old children with (1) language delays or (2) speech sound delays

**Time commitment:** 5 weekly sessions lasting 45- to 60-minutes. Sessions will be scheduled at your convenience in a suitable location (e.g., your home, nearby library, KU campus)

**Benefits:** free speech-language evaluation with report; small prizes for your child; compensation for travel expenses

**Contact:** Word & Sound Learning Lab; 785-864-4873; [wrdrng@mail.ku.edu](mailto:wrdrng@mail.ku.edu)

Website: [www.ku.edu/~wrdrng](http://www.ku.edu/~wrdrng)

## Upcoming Events for Parents and Kids!

### Third Annual Candy Cane Hunt

Bring a flashlight, the candy cane hunt will be outdoors. Enjoy hot cocoa, popcorn and loads of fun and games in the gym and game room.

When: 12/18/2010

Time: 6-8 p.m.

Where: Crestview Community Center, 4801 SW Shunga Dr., Topeka, KS

For more information: 785-368-2448

### Under the Sea Adventure Exhibit

Families walk into an enchanted world of whimsical creatures as they find themselves under the sea. The exhibit includes an array of aquatic children's books...in a water-proof reading area, of course!



When: 2/5 - 5/1/2011

Time: Open during shopping hours

Where: Crown Center Shops, Level 1

### Showplace

For more information: 816-274-8444

### 14th Annual Kaw Valley Eagles Day

Celebrate the return of bald eagles to the area. There will also be opportunities to view eagles in the wild.

When: 1/23/2011

Time: 9 a.m.—3 p.m.

Where: Free State High School, 4700 Overland Drive, Lawrence, KS

For more information: 785-843-7665

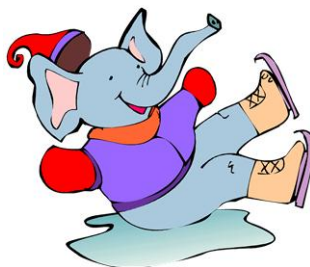
### Folly Kids Series Presents: Berenstain Bears

A fun-filled musical that weaves together three of Stan and Jan Berenstain's most popular books.

When: 1/18/2011

Time: 9:30 a.m. & 11:30 a.m.

Where: Folly Theatre, 300 W. 12th St., Kansas City, MO



For more information: 816-474-4444 or visit [follytheater.com](http://follytheater.com)

### Crown Center Ice Terrace

When: 11/5/2010 - 3/13/2011

Time: Open Daily 10 a.m. - 9 p.m.

Where: Crown Center, 2450 Grand Blvd., Kansas City, MO

For more information: 816-274-8411 or visit [crowncenter.com](http://crowncenter.com)

### Disney Live: Mickey's Magic Show

Mickey, Minnie, and a host of Disney friends come together with

world-class musicians to perform magic from legendary Disney films.

When: 1/28/2011

Where: Kansas Expocentre, One Expocentre Drive, Topeka, KS

For more information: 785-235-1986 or visit [ksexpo.com](http://ksexpo.com)

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swer. "What do you think is going to happen next?" "Who do you like best in this story?"

**6. Connect stories to things that happen in your daily life.** If you just read a story about a dog, point out all the dogs you see and talk about them: How big? What color? Who do you think they belong to? Make up a new story together about the dog ... then find someone else to tell it to.

**7. Stop occasionally and point out an interesting word with your finger.** Say it and have your child repeat it. Pre-readers don't need to learn it ... yet ... but this reinforces the

idea that those funny black lines on the page actually contain the magic of meaning.

**8. Capitalize on your child's interests.** If he or she likes bugs, find all the



bug books you can. Read fiction and fact books. If they ask you a question, go

together to a book to look for the answer—even if you know the answer already.

**9. Watch television together and talk about it.** Compare what you see on the tube to real life and to real books. Ask questions. Make connections. Find books about things you've seen and read them as a follow-up.

**10. Visit the library.** You don't have to be rich to have a house full of books. Attend story times. Ask the librarian for books suggestions. And check out a book for yourself. You're the best advertisement for reading there is!

By Kristi Jemtegaard - Parents-Choise.org

**Return Service Requested**



**About this Newsletter:**

The BNCND newsletter is designed to keep you informed about the ongoing research projects that are being conducted by BNCND researchers at the University of Kansas. Participants who have been part of recent research projects conducted by BNCND researchers, parents who have expressed interest in participating in future research, and individuals from organizations such as schools and daycare centers that have an interest in BNCND studies will receive this newsletter from time to time to keep them up-to-date about the research activities at the BNCND. If you do not wish to receive future newsletters, please call or e-mail the BNCND to have your name removed from our list. Research at the BNCND is supported in part by grant number 5 P30 DC05803 from the National Institute on Deafness and other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) at the University of Kansas.

**Winter Word Search**



Q S Q W U F D H Z S R F Y A S  
S Y C Y U O R R N A K R R D P  
M I T T E N S O A W Z A E C U  
F M K W I J W F Z Z C C P K D  
X Z V X A F Y T E E Z S P P Q  
P X Y C L N R P S H N I I N P  
E Q K A L L A B W O N S L L J  
T E K O Z Z I N V K R D S B X  
T E F B B W A K K Q O F I E X  
Y Q Z Q S M Y O S S C O U W L  
P W K T W W J O L L L W V V W  
Z Q O O F Q F I E B N L D I C  
A O N X Z R A C I B L W F V W  
B S E L C I C I G G C I J C U  
X D X O G F J E H R D D L M I

WORD LIST

- BLIZZARD
- BOOTS
- FROST
- FROZEN
- ICICLE
- JACKET
- MITTENS
- SCARF
- SLEIGH
- SLIPPERY
- SNOWBALL
- SNOWFLAKE
- SNOWMAN