

# THE CHILDREN'S VOCABULARY PROJECT

**BOYS TOWN**  
National Research  
Hospital



## WHAT WE ASKED



Do children with developmental language disorder (DLD) have difficulty learning words when they read?

If so, is it because they have problems with reading or problems using familiar words to guess new word meanings?

## WHAT WE DID

We removed nouns, verbs, and adjectives from Grade 4 reading materials and asked 4th graders with or without DLD to guess the missing word after LISTENING to or READING the texts.

We counted how many answers matched those that adults gave when completing the same task.



## HOW OTHERS HELPED

We are grateful to the 59 children who participated, their parents who generously gave of their time and trusted our mission, and the National Institutes of Health for funding this project.

## WHAT WE LEARNED

Children with DLD have more difficulty with reading than children who have typical spoken language development.

Children with DLD were less accurate at guessing the part of speech (noun, verb, or adjective) and the meaning than their peers with typical language development.

They had equal problems when listening and when reading.

Therefore, it is not reading that interferes with learning new words from text. It is a broader problem that affects spoken and written language. It is difficult for children with DLD to use the familiar words to guess new ones.

## WHY IT MATTERS

Word learning occurs throughout the lifespan and is critical to academic, social, and professional success.

To help them learn new words, children with DLD not only need help with reading but also support for understanding and using spoken language.

