

READING IS A GREAT BRAIN STIMULANT

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Creative little minds are developed through entering the world of make-belief. Always have been...always will be. Reading is the passkey into that world. We have just celebrated World Reading Day. Isn't it fantastic when we read and we create those little videos in our head? The sad thing is that experienced teachers are telling me that the children coming through their classes now seem to be displaying less and less innovation and creativity. They also say that their students' focus and attention span has diminished.

This report appears to coincide with children reading less and watching more passive media. It has been proven that children who have been read to at home from an early age do better at school. Brain growth is dependent on the senses being stimulated and the earlier the better. Brain development is stimulated by sight, touch, sound, taste and smell. Reading often stimulates at least three of these and the nurturing touch of being read to in a parent's arms is very bonding and says to the child, "This is an important activity."

Penny Voigt, in an article on Fostering Reading, says that in this media age reading is shuffled a long way down the list of important activities. She suggests 10 things parents should do to assist their children maximize their love of reading.

- 1) Set a special time. Set aside a special time for reading to your child or have them read to you. Be consistent.
- 2) Make it interactive. Make it fun. Use different voices, modulation and locations if you can. Be excited about it and this will ensure your child really looks forward to the reading sessions. In summer you could go outside and sit under a tree or on a swing to read and in winter cuddle up in front of a fire with hot chocolate to do so. Involve them in the story as you go.
- 3) Walk down Memory Lane. Find some books that you loved when you were young and share those happy memories with your child. This might inspire and encourage them to experience what you did when you were their age.
- 4) Read them three books a day. Penny Voigt suggests you read to your children while they are still babies, even before they start using words. Research shows that by simply reading three picture books a week a child's vocabulary increases by up to 40%. Just think how much better it would be if you read three short books a day! Ms. Voigt says, "Make books, not TV, the primary source of entertainment in your home."
- 5) Don't just look, listen. Audio books that come with CDs can be taken out of libraries and are ideal for young children. The kids follow along in the book while listening to the audio and appear to 'read' by themselves.
- 6) Explore the options. When your children are older they can read joke books and comics in addition to novels and storybooks to help stimulate

- their love of reading. It's OK to do this. It's still reading, but avoid these being the sole source of the written word.
- 7) Stock your library. Build up a variety of books on different subjects and add fun trips to the Library to bring home more. Sometimes libraries have story hours for children and these can be something to look forward to. When your children see you excited and personally reading for your own pleasure, this modeling can be very reinforcing.
 - 8) Get the whole family involved. Don't let mom be the sole reader. Ensure that dad or grandparents get involved in reading to your children. They read differently to you and this variety is stimulating to your child.
 - 9) Take books on holidays (vacations), too. Plan ahead with a variety of books and possibly read to them about the places you may be going to. Books are an excellent way of keeping your children occupied while traveling, in the hotel room or by the pool.
 - 10) Talk about what you're reading. Discuss with your child the books that you are reading to them. Check their memory of the story plot or their understanding. Who was their favorite character or what was their favorite part in the story? Never be surprised if they want you to read the story over and over.

Join the revolution to maintain reading as more important than passive media watching. You will do your child, their school and yourself a huge favor.
READING IS FUN!

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