

Research Compendium Executive Summary

Reading provides a cognitive workout that is without equal. "Reading volume" (time logged inside text plus number of words read) exercises and expands the mind. And reading fiction expands the heart as well. Not only does reading make us smarter, it also makes us more empathic.

Highlights

Reading Makes Us Smart

- The more that students read, the better their comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency—and the more likely they are to build a robust knowledge of the world. In general, the more students read, the better they read.
- Strong readers tend to be strong writers—they know how to spell, punctuate, and structure a sentence, paragraph, and essay. Every time students enter a text, they get a lesson on effective writing.

READERS: Early; Adolescent; Boy Readers; ELL/Diverse Learners; and Reluctant Readers.

- Engagement with print from birth on helps guarantee academic success. Children exposed to lots of print during their early childhood will have an easier time learning to read than those who are not. This includes exposure to print in the environment, read-aloud routines, and talk about books and print throughout the day.
- Students who learn to read in their first language achieve higher levels of reading in English in comparison to students who learn to read exclusively in their target or second language. Extensive reading in both languages builds robust vocabulary and the background knowledge needed for deep comprehension.
- Students, even those who find reading challenging, thrive in classrooms that are filled with books at different levels with extended opportunities throughout the day to read and discuss books with the teacher and peers. A rich classroom reading culture supports *all* students.

READING: Volume, Stamina, and Independent Reading; Comprehension; Background Knowledge; Vocabulary; and Fluency.

- The more we read, the more we know. Volume of reading is critical in the development of reading proficiency, and avid reading is a widely recognized precursor to better skills acquisition, superior grades, and a desirable life.

A GROWTH MINDSET: Reading Engagement and Confidence; Reading Choice, Time, and Pleasure.

- Children who read for pleasure are likely to do significantly better at school than their peers who rarely read.

- Avid readers quickly develop reading confidence or a growth mindset for reading; they think of themselves as competent, capable readers who can read their way out of any reading challenge.
- Self-selected reading is twice as powerful as teacher-selected reading in developing motivation to read and high quality comprehension.

TEXT: Access to Books; Summer Slide; Classroom Libraries; Home Libraries; Genre, Format and Structure; Text Complexity; Nonfiction; and Fiction.

- Placing books in the hands of children fundamentally influences their chances for both personal and academic success. The most successful way to improve the reading achievement of children in low-income communities is to increase their access to print.
- Being read to, reading for yourself, and discussing what you’ve read create an upward, positive spiral that leads to greater academic achievement years down the line.
- When classrooms in high poverty, challenged neighborhoods are flooded with books, striving readers and readers new to English make significant gains in reading proficiency.

TEACHING: Interactive Read-Aloud; Guided Reading; Book Clubs; and Reading and Writing Connections.

- Readers benefit from smart, sensitive instruction that shows them what proficient reading looks like, sounds like, and feels like.
- The interactive read-aloud and facilitated student book clubs support both reading and writing development and foster a love of reading.
- Guided reading supports *all* readers and provides an accelerated path to independent reading.
- Writing about text engages deep, reflective thinking, helps students draw on their own knowledge and experiences, and challenges them to consolidate, organize and integrate their ideas.

FAMILY LITERACY: Oral Language; Dual-Languages; Home Reading Culture; Read-aloud Plus Talk.

- Parents’ interactive strategies influence their children’s language and cognitive development—children who enjoy frequent read-alouds and lots of talk with family members throughout the day develop robust vocabularies and “book awareness.” What’s more, we can attribute children’s academic successes at ages nine and ten to the amount of talk they hear from birth to age three.

Citation:

Bridges, L. (2014). *The Joy and Power of Reading: A Summary of Research and Expert Opinion*. New York: Scholastic.