The importance of reading 20 minutes a day

There are several powerful benefits of reading 20 minutes a day:

Early reading skills can affect children's academic success

Reading 20 minutes a day exposes children to a vast quantity of words (1.8 million in each school year, actually!). And this exposure makes children more likely to score in the 90th percentile on standardized tests.

If you compare this to children who read just 5 minutes per day — and are therefore more likely to score in the 50th percentile — it's easy to see how reading time translates to academic success.

Meanwhile, a separate study involving almost 10 million students showed only those reading at least 15 minutes a day achieved accelerated reading gains. And those reading less were at risk of falling behind their peers.

If you've been unsure of the benefits of reading 20 minutes a day, these statistics should help clear any confusion up!

Reading often helps to improve writing skills

Following on from our previous point, if there's vocabulary benefits associated with reading 20 minutes a day, then writing benefits are there for the taking, too.

Essentially, the more words your child reads, the wider their vocabulary is likely to be. And a wide vocabulary makes a child's writing more interesting and impressive.

They'll discover new ways to convey meaning, articulate their thoughts, persuade people, use figurative language, and engage readers' emotions. This can help them become stronger writers, whether working on a short story age 10, an essay age 13, or a college application letter age 17.

Children who rarely read are less likely to expand their linguistic know-how in the same way. And that could hold their writing back significantly.

Reading stimulates and enhances children's imaginations

Recent research shows that the imagination may be more powerful than believed previously — scientists now believe that creative imaging can 'rewrite' certain memories to be less traumatic, and can even enhance certain physical connections within the body.

For example, imagining playing a piano could "boost neuronal connections in regions related to the fingers". So developing a strong imagination could help people to exercise greater control over their thoughts, memories, and more.

What's this got to do with your child, you ask?

Well, reading daily can help to strengthen a child's imagination, introducing them to concepts, cultures, and possibilities beyond their own life experience. They can learn about the world, stimulate their curiosity, and give them a better understanding of other people's lives.

And with the imagination being such a powerful force, there's a lot to gain from that!

Fiction stimulates creativity in children

So from imagination to creativity — two related, but still quite different strengths for kids who read 20 minutes a day.

Getting lost in a fictional world helps children to expand their own creativity, as they'll experience situations, worlds, characters, thoughts, and feeling that they may not have come across in their own lives just yet.

What's more, by reading they'll realize that people can make a living from writing books, magazines, and newspapers. This may inspire them to explore their own creativity and inform their career choices in the future.

A good book encourages children to relax at bedtime

Children, no matter their age, have a lot going on. They're constantly learning, and changes like the transition from primary school to high school can be stressful for some.

The good news is, either reading with your child — or allowing them to read independently at bedtime — can help them to relax and wind down from their day.

Research by the UK National Literacy Trust (NLT) found that 90% of children feel "happiest" when reading and writing, as opposed to playing games or watching favorite cartoons. That might sound a little unbelievable if your child is more often glued to their screen, than with their nose in a book, but maybe a little nudge in the right direction is all they need!

Regularly reading helps children develop empathy

Studies show that reading can help children to develop empathy, by challenging them to consider how other people (the characters) may think or feel.

You can give them a casual boost at school or home, too. Parents, carers and teachers can help support this empathy development by asking:

"Why do you think Harry Potter did what he did on this page?"

"What could you say to make the BFG feel better about himself?"

"How would you feel if you were far from home, like Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz?"

Learning to approach situations and consider the feelings of others could help children of all ages to be more compassionate in life.

So why read for 20 minutes a day? Now you know!

Young children, pre-teens, and teens can all reap a number of benefits from reading 20 minutes a day — whether that's helping them learn about the world around them, increasing their academic performance, discovering their own untapped creative potential, or just hanging out and enjoying a great book!

So what are you waiting for? Why not head down to the library or bookstore together, pick out a few new titles, and get to work on setting a new, family habit — together.

Chances are, you've got a lot to gain from reading a little more too!

(Source Kidsconnect)