

Comment from June 13, 2023 Camp Newsletter...

Three brief articles on the importance of reading.

- 1) Director's Rant**
- 2) Dr. Michael White, Creator of most of Juku's English curriculum**
- 3) ChatGPT on reading...if it's AI, it must be true?**

Director's Comments

Pre-Camp Rant: Raising Real Readers.

I used to offer a free lecture on how to raise academically focused children. Pre-covid I always had groups of parents who I knew from the tutoring centre take the time to attend. Now, parents aren't as interested. I figured I've seen over 10 000 children go through my tutoring centre and camps and have seen many become successful adults. Anecdotally, I've seen what traits successful children have. I can almost tell who in grade 2 will be successful.

I do a lot of renovations, washrooms, ensuites, kitchens, and decks, for my own house or my son's place. Once I learn how to complete one, I think now I can do ten similar renos in 25% of the time. But, I don't. It's a one-time thing. Same with bringing up kids. Once you've got the knowledge, there is no one to practice on. I want to share what I have learned. This is a sample of my rant about, the importance of reading. It is #4 on my top ten list.

Everyone knows that reading is important, but do they actively take control of their child's reading development? You can't force them to read, then it will be like eating broccoli. You have to create an environment that encourages reading as a fun and interesting activity. When your child is 1-4 years old, you have to read to them. You have to read with energy and excitement. You have to be entertaining to your child. Dr. Seuss's books are a must. When they are 4-8 years old, they can pick out 20 books from the library. Libraries are free. Never buy a book. Let the child pick out the books. Who cares if it is 20 similar books. The goal is page flipping.

Of course, you have to continually read to them. I literally, used to read Brothers Grimm in its abridged form to my boys. We laughed at all the ghastly, gruesome parts. We also watched a lot of movies that were related to the books they read. Pretty much every Disney movie has a book adaptation. By the time children are 9 years old, they will have developed their reading interests. For my boys, it was Percy Jackson, Lemony Snicket's, Harry Potter, the Hobbit, and Homer's Odyssey.

My older son, Max, was a natural reader who would read advanced books in his free time. My younger son, Spencer, was more of a video gamer kid, but he would read all the age-appropriate Manga cartoon books. I was just happy he was "flipping pages", but now I know that manga's use of words and pictures encourages multimodal thinking that allows your brain to process images faster and with more accuracy. It certainly helped him with his Dental Admissions Test (DAT). He scored really high and almost perfect in the reading section.

Usually, I would continue to rant about the importance of reading...but, I've been replaced by ChatGpt. Artificial intelligence will be another rant in my summer class. Man vs Machine. I've attached a link to the result of ChatGPT to my question about the importance of reading. For comparison, I've attached an article my English teacher, who wrote most of the English Curriculum when I started the learning centre, wrote about the same topic.

Check it out. Very interesting how ChatGPT will change the way students learn.

Paul Tazumi, BA, MBA usually starts his class off with a random rant. Each rant has an educational, ethical, moral, practical, or comical purpose.



Comments From a Lifelong Reader

As a lifelong reader, and now as an educator, I would like to share some thoughts on the value and importance of reading with TazTech parents.

First, it is well known that the ability to read well is an absolutely indispensable component of academic success. Importantly, reading is not a skill which is narrowly applicable to English and other language subjects, but is the base from which every subject builds. There is a popular misconception that science-oriented fields do not involve reading. As a person who has completed university level science courses, I know that subjects like math and chemistry require the student to read and understand substantial amounts of written text. Many highly gifted math students have found themselves at a significant disadvantage due to an undeveloped reading ability. When approaching a math or physics textbook, they are much like high powered automobiles without steering wheels.

Another popular myth is that technology will make reading obsolete. Common sense and experience tell us that this isn't the case. Consider that the Internet, the most recent technological revolution, is primarily a language-based medium. It is also true that the people who are at the vanguard of computer technology are highly literate, creative individuals.

Yet despite its fundamental importance, it is a sad fact that our culture does not value reading. Many, perhaps most, young people are not brought up reading in the home, and our schools do not foreground reading skills nearly to the extent that they should. (Incidentally, it should be no surprise that reading is shuffled into the background when so many of the teachers who work in the public school system are not themselves passionate readers). It is a terrible injustice when students are graduated from high school with barely an ability to read. The future for such people is sadly quite bleak.

However reading is much more than the proverbial key to success, whether academic or professional. It is also, and perhaps most importantly, the best way people have yet developed to fire their imaginations and to expand their knowledge of the world. Reading enriches our lives by offering access into infinite realms of knowledge and experience. As a child, I have vivid memories of being captivated by books, and this love of reading has been carried over into my adult life.



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This leads me into my last point, which is to consider the well-known “ill-effects” of reading. First, reading is a habit forming activity. Those who are passionate readers as children almost always continue to make reading an important part of their lives as adults. Second, reading is highly infectious. Children who observe friends and family members reading will usually catch the bug. It is simply a part of their world, just as children who are exposed to parents who watch many hours of television are themselves destined to become TV junkies.

It is my hope that the newly introduced TazTech’s Reading Incentive Programme will give our students the initial impetus to read. This is, of course, the first step toward helping them become life-long readers. We encourage parents to monitor their child’s progress, to make reading suggestions, and to report back to us with any comments or suggestions they may have.

Sincerely,

Michael White, BA, MA (English)
TazTech Education Centres
May 1997

Postscript:

- Michael White (M.A. English, McGill University) was a Teacher, Manager and Curriculum Developer for four years at Juku. He is a member of Juku’s “Hall of Fame”.
- Michael White is now “Dr. Michael White”. He has completed his PhD in English and is currently working as a Professor of English at the University of Utah, USA.
- TazTech Education Centres is now known as Juku Learning Centres.

Next: Computer Generated Response from ChatGPT...

If you haven't been exposed to AI, you will be blown away by its power and potential if used properly.

I asked for a short article on the topic: The importance of reading in childhood

ChatGPT gave me this...

Title: The Significance of Reading in Childhood: Nurturing Minds, Expanding Horizons

Introduction:

Childhood is a period of rapid development and immense curiosity. It is during these formative years that the foundation for lifelong learning and intellectual growth is laid. Reading plays a pivotal role in shaping a child's cognitive, emotional, and social development. Beyond the simple act of decoding words, reading in childhood unlocks a world of possibilities, fostering imagination, empathy, and a thirst for knowledge. In this article, we delve into the profound importance of reading in childhood and explore how it sets the stage for a lifetime of learning.

1. Language and Literacy Development:

Reading is the cornerstone of language acquisition and literacy skills. Exposing children to books from an early age introduces them to new vocabulary, sentence structures, and linguistic patterns. It enhances their listening and speaking abilities, laying the groundwork for effective communication. Reading aloud to children helps develop phonemic awareness, decoding skills, and fluency, which are essential components of reading proficiency. A strong foundation in language and literacy empowers children to become confident readers and writers as they progress through their education.

2. Imagination and Creativity:

Children possess boundless imagination, and reading fuels their creativity. When immersed in stories, they embark on magical adventures, encounter fantastical creatures, and explore imaginary worlds. Books act as portals to unlimited possibilities, nurturing their imaginative thinking and igniting a sense of wonder. By engaging with diverse narratives, children learn to think beyond the constraints of reality, fostering creativity and innovation that will serve them in all aspects of life.

3. Cognitive Development:

Reading stimulates cognitive development by exercising various mental processes. As children read, their brains process information, make connections, and analyze narratives. They develop critical thinking skills as they evaluate characters' actions, predict outcomes, and draw conclusions. Reading also enhances memory and concentration, as children need to retain details and follow complex storylines. Moreover, it improves problem-solving abilities as they encounter challenges and obstacles within the text, encouraging them to find solutions.

4. Emotional Intelligence and Empathy:

Books are powerful tools for developing emotional intelligence and empathy in children. Characters in stories grapple with a range of emotions, allowing young readers to understand and empathize with different feelings and experiences. As children relate to and connect with characters, they develop a deeper understanding of their own emotions and learn to recognize and empathize with the emotions of others. Reading encourages emotional growth, nurturing compassion and kindness, and promoting healthy social interactions.

5. Knowledge Acquisition and Lifelong Learning:

Reading in childhood lays the foundation for a lifelong love of learning. It sparks curiosity and exposes children to a vast array of topics, from science and history to literature and culture. By exploring different genres and subjects, children expand their knowledge and broaden their horizons. Reading also instills a thirst for discovery, encouraging independent research and exploration beyond the pages of a book. The habit of reading in childhood sets the stage for a lifetime of intellectual growth and continuous learning.

Conclusion:

The importance of reading in childhood cannot be overstated. It is a gateway to language development, cognitive growth, and emotional intelligence. Through books, children embark on exciting adventures, develop empathy, and acquire knowledge that will shape their lives. As parents, educators, and society as a whole, we must nurture a love of reading in children, providing them with access to a diverse range of books and creating environments that encourage exploration and engagement with the written word. By investing in reading during childhood, we pave the way for a future generation of curious, compassionate, and intellectually empowered individuals.