

## Keeping Kids Reading



### **New study shows drop after age 8, but parents can help**

The time kids spend reading for fun declines sharply after age 8 and continues to drop off through the teen years, according to a study released in June by Yankelovich, a leader in consumer trends tracking, and by publishing giant Scholastic.

While 40% of kids between the ages of 5-8 years old are high-frequency readers (reading for fun every day), only 29% of kids ages 9-11 years old are high-frequency readers, and the percentage continues to decline through age 17. The "Kids and Family Reading Report," a national survey of children ages 5-17 and their parents, also found that parents can have a direct impact on their kids' reading attitudes and behaviors, especially by reading more frequently themselves and by helping kids find books they like.

Almost three-quarters of parents surveyed (74%) say they valued reading as the most important skill for a child to develop—followed by critical thinking (49%), math (46%), social (46%), and computer (27%) skills. While two-thirds of parents agree that strong reading skills are critical to future success and 80% said it is very important for kids to read books for fun outside of school, only 21% of parents identify themselves as high-frequency readers (reading every day).

The importance of parents as reading role models is shown by the fact that children of high-frequency readers are far more likely to read for fun every day than children whose parents are not high-frequency readers. Even if parents are not high-frequency readers, they can still have a positive impact on their kids' reading habits. Kids who are high-frequency readers are more than twice as likely as low-frequency readers to cite their parents as a top source of ideas for good books to read (21% vs. 8%). Kids who are low-frequency readers are more inclined to rely on their teachers, friends, librarians, and television to help them find books to read than on their parents.

### Other key findings

- Kids perceive reading as enjoyable and important—92% of kids enjoy reading books for fun, and 90% say reading books for fun is important.
- Nearly two-thirds of kids surveyed agree that they have to be a strong reader to get into a good college (64%) and that being a strong reader will help them get a good job when they are older (63%).
- Almost half of the 15-17 year olds surveyed say they are low-frequency readers compared to 14% of kids ages 5-8.
- Although nearly all kids consider reading for fun somewhat important, 65% of younger kids ages 5-8 think reading for fun is very important compared to 40% of teens ages 15-17.
- Boys are less likely than girls to have positive attitudes about reading. Three times as many boys think that reading for fun is “not at all” important. Fewer boys than girls say they enjoy reading for fun and read on a regular basis.
- More than three quarters (78%) of kids who report reading more books for fun during the summer “agree a lot” that reading during the summer helps them do better in school, compared to 35% of other kids.

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