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## **5 Great Reasons to Read with Your Children**

*Courtney Trafford, RECE*

Parents look forward to the bedtime routine; cozying up with their child to read their favourite stories. This nightly ritual can provide an opportunity to calm children down after a busy day, soothe them to sleep, and serves as a time for parents to relax and connect with their child. Little do they know, this nightly ritual is not only good for mom or dad – finally some quiet time! – it also benefits child development in many ways. Below are five great reasons to read with your child.

### 1. Reading builds a child's imagination

Reading books on different topics, storylines, and graphics can help to enhance children's imagination in other aspects of their lives. Having you by their side, encouraging them to think outside the box and connect their reading to their daily lives will deepen their knowledge and thinking skills on a variety of topics which will transfer into other areas of play and learning.

### 2. Reading helps children learn about the world

First, children will have the opportunity to expand their knowledge on many topics outside of their usual living and learning environment by reading books and stories with parents. Children can introduce children to familiar events that might occur in their life – playing at the playground; going to school – or something they haven't encountered quite yet – getting a new pet or travelling. The number of topics available in books are endless, including both fiction and non-fiction, and can serve as a means to expose children to the range of events going on in the world. New upcoming experiences, such as a visit to the eye doctor, can become less worrisome if a child has been exposed to them through literature. Books can also help to answer the many questions they may have about the world around them, from how a crayon is made, to how fish sleep.

3. Reading strengthens the bond between parents and their child

Reading with your child can be thought of as a bonding experience. The routine of choosing their favourite story and cuddling up can give you a chance to connect with your child through stories, asking questions, sharing jokes and expressing their thoughts and feelings. Reading together, as part of your daily routine and spontaneously, will strengthen the relationship between communication and information sharing in all capacities. These moments may also provide opportunities for your child to work through difficult situations and emotions, or simply remind them to share some information about their day.

4. Reading helps to develop basic speech, language and communication skills

Reading contributes to children's expanding vocabulary, as well as gaining a better grasp of the fundamentals of language and literacy. Language and enunciation skills will also develop with the continued routine of reading. Children will often express opinions on parts of the story, articulate thoughts, and share ideas more eagerly when reading alongside a parent. Taking turns to make up your own stories can also be a fun way to enjoy time together while promoting language development, imagination, memory, and literacy skills.

5. Reading with your child helps to instill positive attitudes towards reading as they get older

Beginning reading early on in life will help children to view books as an enjoyable activity rather than a chore, especially when parents engage with them and ask questions. Reading with your child from a young age will encourage them to appreciate reading as they get older. Children who have been exposed to reading may also be more likely to choose the world of books over TV, video games and other electronic forms of entertainment.

As children age and begin to read independently it is easy to fall out of the habit of reading together, but more than worthwhile to continue. Children enjoy hearing stories that are beyond their reading skills,

however within their comprehension, and having these books read to them will help to foster a desire to read and continue to provide those intimate, shared moments between you and your child.

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