

The Benefits of Reading Aloud

Anyone who knew me when I was a classroom teacher at Lincoln Elementary School won't be surprised to hear that I am a big proponent of reading aloud to children. I would read aloud to my class each day. Even though they were fifth-graders, my students were not too old to hear a story read aloud. They often begged me to continue the story if I stopped at a particularly thrilling part. It wasn't unusual for them to remind me the next day that we had to continue with the story!

What those eleven-year-olds didn't realize was just how much they were learning as they listened to a story read aloud. I made sure that the books were about children their age, but perhaps living in a different time in history or who were confronted with a particular challenge. Many interesting discussions were started with a question about the story. We would connect our art projects, writing exercises, and Social Studies lessons to the books I read aloud.

According to many experts, every child, from young toddlers to adolescents, will benefit in a variety of ways from someone reading to them.

When you read to a preschooler, he or she will pick up on important book smarts like how to hold a book, which direction to turn the pages, what an author is and where to find the title. These skills are called "concepts about print," and they help kids prepare for success as independent readers. The child will improve his or her ability to understand word meanings. Having a good vocabulary and hearing appropriate sentence structure and grammar are the building blocks to success in reading and writing.

Reading aloud to a child, no matter their age, builds important skills such as understanding sequencing, plot structure, character motivation, and cause and effect. It strengthens the part of their brain associated with visual imagery. Comprehension of a story leads to better skills in comprehending other subject matter, such as science or math.

Parents can help their child choose a free children's book at one of many Big Red Bookshelf locations in Yankton, or check out books at the Yankton Community Library, a treasure trove of great books for kids!

We all want the best for children. Reading aloud to their child each day is one of the best things a parent can do.