

As part of my job as the teacher in the library, I read to kids all day, every day! What surprises most people is that the students that seem to love it the most (and request it the most) are in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades. Once our kids become fluent readers, we often stop reading to them. However, it is just as important now as it was when they were younger. Take a moment to read an article that was recently shared with me that reiterates this point...

The Importance of Reading Aloud to Big Kids by Melissa Taylor

Only 17% of parents of kids ages 9–11 read aloud to their children. Yet 83% of kids ages 6–17 say being read to is something they either loved or liked a lot.

For many kids, being read to by their parents is a cherished ritual. But it's also much more than that. Reading aloud to kids helps expand their literacy skills, love of reading, worldview, and more. Here are some key reasons it's important to read aloud to your older kids:

Lets Them Experience the Joy of Story

The goal is to love the story. That's the point of reading, unless you're reading for meaning. When my oldest daughter didn't "take" to reading as I'd hoped, I let her listen to hours of audiobooks and read aloud to her multiple times a day. I wanted her to get hooked on the stories in the chapter books, without the frustration of reading them. Like her, all readers — and especially struggling readers — learn to love stories by hearing stories.

Models Fluent Reading

When you read to kids, you're modeling how to read language. You pause at commas and periods. Your voice inflection changes when you read questions or exclamations. And you can show what you, a fluent reader, do when you come to a word you don't know. (Even if you're faking that you don't know it.)

Helps Expand Their Vocabulary

Kids' auditory comprehension is higher than their reading comprehension. When you pick a challenging book that your kids can't read on their own, you are exposing them to a wealth of new vocabulary words. This stretches a child's language development, particularly if you stop to talk about the meaning of these harder words.

Exposes Kids to New Authors, Texts, and Genres

Reading aloud can get kids hooked on a new author or series of books. Once a child falls in love with the story or author, it's hard to hold them back from reading it on their own. Plus, reading aloud gives kids a chance to explore genres and texts they wouldn't normally select.

Builds Awareness and Empathy

Literature is one of the best ways to help kids understand something without experiencing it for themselves. And books do this with all sorts of subjects and concepts, building our children's understanding of humanity and the world around them.

Improves Kids' Long-Term Reading Success

Finally, you probably know that decades of research shows that reading aloud to a child daily is one of the most important activities for her reading success. That goes for older kids, too. Kids who are read to have good vocabularies, write well, and do well overall in school (Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985 U. S. Department of Education meta-study of 10,000 studies). They're also more likely to keep reading on their own.