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Role of Reading Strategies in the Holistic Development of Students

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ABSTRACT: Reading bestows enjoyment and enlightenment. It unlocks the unknown. It is a complex cognitive activity that is indispensable for the kind of knowledge society. So the students of today's world must know how to learn from reading and to enter the present literate society. One who reads can lead others to light. People who read can be free because reading banishes ignorance and superstition. Reading has the power to revolutionize everyone's ways of thinking and living. It makes everyone think critically and creatively. Teachers must emphasize all kinds of reading, especially critical reading which is not just reading on the lines but it deals with reading between and beyond the lines. A critical reader challenges the author's assumptions, inferences, and conclusions, and judges the accuracy, reliability, quality and value of what he reads on the basis of sound criteria or standards developed through previous experiences. This kind of reading paves clear path for students to acquire better comprehensive ability through SQ3R techniques, computer multimedia and other activities such as skimming and scanning. Although there are ways and means to acquire reading skill, there are a few factors which affect it severely. Teachers must be careful in avoiding these hindrances and make their wards' reading easy, effective and successful. Teachers are the prime source for students in cultivating their reading habit. Their advice and encouragement will help the students move a step further in developing their attitude towards reading. Teachers can teach phonetics to readers of initial stage and help them pronounce the sounds of letters and words properly. They should also emphasize writing task in the primary grade as it is directly associated with reading programme. They can teach them syllabication to recognize new words. Special assistance may be given to students with regard to the selection of materials for reading based on their age, time and capacity and determine their reading levels. They must realize that they have to play major role in encouraging and engaging the students to become voracious readers.

KEYWORDS: reading, holistic, students, strategies, role, voracious, phonetics

I. INTRODUCTION

One can never run out of sources, especially books, to gather knowledge. Apart from the importance of reading, the habit of reading has numerous advantages of which, the important ones are mentioned below:

- Improves / Enhances concentration: Reading books boosts a child's concentration level which helps them in the long run by making their minds sharp.[1,2,3]
- Improves Memory: Continuous reading habit helps children to improve their memory and help them retain the information and details of the story for a longer period.
- Brain Exercise: The more they read books regularly, the more their brain exercises and therefore, better the learning
- Promotes Critical Thinking Skills: Reading stories, especially those which revolve around the mystery or thriller genre helps them visualize and critically analyze the character's situation.
- Prosper Empathy: While reading books, children tend to create a bond with the characters which develops a feeling of empathy for those characters in them.

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- Develops and Expands Language Skills: Books help children to develop critical language and enunciation skills which further not only enhances their vocabulary but also their ability to speak clearly and more accurately.
- A Good Source of Entertainment: Reading books are a good source of entertainment as they let children enter into a world of their creativity and imagination wherein, they can visualize scenarios the way they want.
- Develops a Good Self-image: Reading books initially boosts self-confidence which later helps children to develop a good self-image in front of their parents, teachers, and peers.
- Helps to Discover the Other Parts of the World: Reading a variety of stories belonging to different genres exposes children to a world composed of numerous cultures and ethnicities.

While it is important to keep children intact with their reading habits, it is equally important to assess whether a child is an active reader or a passive reader.

What is passive reading? When a child has technically because they have to but do not absorb anything from the read text. He/she tends to just re-read the same passage multiple times with no intention of understanding it or making sense of it. Primary reasons for passive reading could be lack of interest or concentration.

What is active reading? When a child reads the story with concentration and interest, they are not only able to understand the concept of the story but also summarise it in their own words. With an open and discerning mind, they read with a more critical outlook, and they take more time to consider the meaning of the things they read. [5,7,8]

In today's world, every educated individual knows and understands the importance of reading for students. The knowledge acquired from reading books makes a student intelligent as well as smarter.

The knowledge gained tends to stick in their minds for a long period when they read books with immense excitement. In addition to this, reading stories has social benefits too as it helps children to form friendships through shared interests by discussing these stories.

Reading is the foundation of all academic subjects, such as History, Mathematics, and Science, and without reading and comprehension skills, children struggle to achieve academic success. Not only this, with reading comes the experience and habit of elocution of stories.

Apart from these, the benefits of reading books for students include improvement in their speaking skills which promotes interaction among students.

Children from an early stage of their life have the habit of listening to their parents. Therefore, when parents encourage their children to read, the child tends to progress at a much faster pace. In schools, teachers promote good reading habits in students through introducing creative ways to do the same.

For example, instead of the teacher reading the story out loud, they tend to allocate roles to children and then ask them to perform a role play which not only engages children in the story but also improves their enunciation skills.

In schools nowadays, teachers tend to give comprehensive passages to students in their exams to analyse their comprehensive skills. Children who are not exposed to comprehension sessions at the early stages of their life find it difficult to understand written material at the subsequent stages, let alone answer questions related to it.

As a result, kids lag when guardians fail to understand the importance of reading comprehension. Therefore, parents and teachers must introduce the concept of comprehension to the children by giving them small passages to read and then asking questions related to it.

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The ability to read fluently is also an important part of reading comprehension, as readers who spend too much time decoding words often lose their understanding of what they are reading. By teaching them these basics, students can develop a strong foundation in comprehension. Apart from this, there are a lot of other benefits of reading comprehension for students.

II. DISCUSSION

A holistic approach is based on the principle of perceiving meaningful wholes, utilizes the child's immediate environment and experiences, encourages the integrative, cross-subject approach to the curriculum and seeks to cultivate reading with flow and comprehension from day 1, and teaches decoding skills through meaning text. The only problem with holistic approach is that it is a slower start with slower decoding speed of unknown or nonsense words and gives unchecked guessing. But I would make sure that these problems do not occur.

It's undeniable that a child's reading skills are important to their success in school, work, and life in general. And it is very possible to help ensure your child's success by reading to them starting at a very early age. Continue reading to learn more about the top benefits of reading to children and how reading can support them for the future.[9,10,11]

7 Benefits of Reading to Children

Whether you're reading a classic novel or fairy tales before bed, reading aloud to children can significantly benefit your child's life. Some benefits reading to children include:

- Supported cognitive development
- Improved language skills
- Preparation for academic success
- Developing a special bond with your child
- Increased concentration and discipline
- Improved imagination and creativity
- Cultivating a lifelong love of reading

Reading to young children is proven to improve cognitive skills and help along the process of cognitive development. Cognitive development is the emergence of the ability to think and understand; it's "the construction of thought processes, including remembering, problem solving, and decision-making, from childhood through adolescence to adulthood" (HealthofChildren.com). It refers to how a person perceives and thinks about his or her world through areas such as information processing, intelligence, reasoning, language development, attention span, and memory.

When you begin reading aloud to your child, it essentially provides them with background knowledge on their young world, which helps them make sense of what they see, hear, and read. According to the IRA/NAEYC position statement (1998) "It is the talk that surrounds the reading that gives it power, helping children to bridge what is in the story and their own lives," rather than just the vocalization of the words. Introducing reading into your young child's life, and the conversations that it will prompt, helps them to make sense of their own lives, especially at a young age.[12,13,15]

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This study of early brain development explains “In the first few years of life, more than 1 million new neural connections are formed every second.” Consider this citation from a study on toddlers’ cognitive development as a result of being read aloud to: “A child care provider reads to a toddler. And in a matter of seconds, thousands of cells in these children’s growing brains respond. Some brain cells are ‘turned on,’ triggered by this particular experience. Many existing connections among brain cells are strengthened. At the same time, new brain cells are formed, adding a bit more definition and complexity to the intricate circuitry that will remain largely in place for the rest of these children’s lives.”

Therefore, the more adults read aloud to their children, the larger their vocabularies will grow and the more they will know and understand about the world and their place in it, assisting their cognitive development and perception.

Improved language skills

Reading daily to young children, starting in infancy, can help with language acquisition, communication skills, social skills, and literacy skills. This is because reading to your children in the earliest months stimulates the part of the brain that allows them to understand the meaning of language and helps build key language, literacy and social skills.

In fact, a recent brain scan study found that “reading at home with children from an early age was strongly correlated with brain activation in areas connected with visual imagery and understanding the meaning of language” (TIME.com) These cognitive skills and critical thinking skills are especially important when you consider that, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, more than one in three American children start kindergarten without the skills they need to learn to read. About two-thirds of children can’t read proficiently by the end of the third grade.

Furthermore, while a child will be able to latch onto vocabulary and language he or she hears around him or her, introducing reading into their auditory learning provides another benefit: it introduces the language of books, which differs from language heard in daily life. Whether it’s a children’s book or classic novel, book language is more descriptive, and tends to use more formal grammatical structures.

Prepare for academic success

Early reading with your child is a true one-on-one opportunity for children to communicate with their parents and parents to communicate with their children. It allows children to grow their vocabulary skills with exposure to new words and listening skills they develop from hearing someone read to them that become vital to their academic success.

Studies have shown that “the more words that are in a child’s language world, the more words they will learn, and the stronger their language skills are when they reach kindergarten, the more prepared they are to be able to read, and the better they read, the more likely they will graduate from high school” (PBS.org).

Numerous studies have shown that students who are exposed to reading before preschool are more likely to do well when they reach their period of formal education. According to a study completed by the University of Michigan, there are five early reading skills that are essential for development. They are:

1. Phonemic awareness – Being able to hear, identify, and play with individual sounds in spoken words.
2. Phonics – Being able to connect the letters of written language with the sounds of spoken language.
3. Vocabulary – The words kids need to know to communicate effectively.
4. Reading comprehension – Being able to understand and get meaning from what has been read.
5. Fluency (oral reading) – Being able to read text accurately and quickly.

While children will encounter these literacy skills and language development once they reach elementary school and beyond, you can help jumpstart their reading success by reading to them during infancy and their early toddler years.[17,18,19]

While they won’t be able to practice fluency or phonics at that stage, they will get an earlier introduction to phonetic awareness, vocabulary and reading comprehension, all of which will set them up for success as they grow and interact with the world around them.

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III. RESULTS

Developing a special bond with your child

It goes without saying that reading to your young child on a regular basis can help you forge a stronger relationship with them. When it comes to children, one of the most important things you can do to positively influence their development is spend time with them. Reading to your children provides a great opportunity to set up a regular, shared event where you can look forward to spending time together. With shared reading, your child will trust and expect that you will be there for them. The importance of trust to small children cannot be overstated.

Reading a favorite book to your children not only helps you bond with them, but also gives your children a sense of intimacy and well-being. This feeling of intimacy helps your child feel close to you, and the feelings of love and attention encourage positive growth and development.[20,21,22]

With babies specifically, although they may not be able to understand what you're saying when you read to them, reading aloud provides a level of invaluable nurturing and reassurance. Very young babies love to hear familiar voices, and reading is the perfect outlet to create this connection.

At a broader, more scientific level, it's the parent-child relationship, nurturing relationships between caregivers and children that set a positive life course. If you are able to read aloud with your child at a predictable, scheduled time that fits with the daily routines of home and school, you'll be able to provide something constant that they can expect and likely even look forward to.[25,27,28]

Reading aloud together and having a shared activity gives you and your child something to talk about, which in turn supports the development of reading and writing skills (per the vocabulary and reading comprehension areas of development mentioned above). And down the road, reading together can be used to discuss real-life experiences and issues. A children's book can provide springboards to meaningful discussions about many different topics which can further develop a child's critical thinking skills.

At its core, literature is one of the best ways to help kids understand something without necessarily having to experience it for themselves. Reading to your child helps to expose them to all types of subjects and concepts, building our children's understanding of humanity and the world around them (ReadBrightly.com).

Increased concentration and discipline

Introducing regular reading time into your child's schedule has another benefit outside of creating shared time together: increased discipline and concentration. Very young children rarely sit still for long, and it's oftentimes difficult to get them to focus. But when you introduce regular reading to your children, you may start to observe a change in behavior. Toddlers may initially squirm and become distracted during story time, but eventually they'll learn to stay put for the duration of the book.

According to EarlyMoments.com, along with reading comprehension comes "a stronger self-discipline, longer attention span, and better memory retention, all of which will serve your child well when she enters school."

Improved imagination and creativity

Young children naturally have a capacity to dream big and use their imaginations. Reading aloud to your child helps them use their imaginations to explore people, places, times, and events beyond their own experiences. Reading as an imaginative activity can open doors to all kinds of new worlds for your child. By widening your child's imagination, your child is more likely to dream bigger and act creatively which can benefit they school, work, and life in the future.

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Cultivating a lifelong love of reading

According to Jim Trelease, author of the best-seller, *The Read-Aloud Handbook*: “Every time we read to a child, we’re sending a ‘pleasure’ message to the child’s brain... You could even call it a commercial, conditioning the child to associate books and print with pleasure” (ReadAloud.org)

This connection between reading and “pleasure” is crucial for success later in life. As personal development coach and speaker Brian Tracy says, your ability to expand your mind and strive for lifelong learning is critical to your success — “Learning is the minimum requirement for success in any field.”

Reading is the key for lifelong learning, and if you can instill a love of reading at an early age, then a commitment to lifelong learning is sure to follow. Reading aloud presents books as sources of pleasant, valuable, and exciting experiences. Children who value books are motivated to read on their own, and will likely continue to practice independent reading throughout the rest of their lives.

When it comes to reading to your children, the benefits to your child’s life range far beyond the development of a close bond with them, although that’s certainly one of them. Reading aloud to children is truly the single-most important activity for building these understanding and skills essential for reading success that your child will carry with them all throughout their life.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

A holistic approach to education has so many benefits for students. But how do you support that type of learning in your classroom?

Most young children aren’t made for sitting still and reciting facts. More importantly, each child has a unique mix of interests, skills, and talents, and their needs aren’t quite the same when it comes to growing and developing in areas they haven’t yet mastered.

At its core, the holistic approach to education considers all aspects of a student’s well-being, including the physical, psychological, social, and emotional components of childrens’ inner worlds. Holistic learning methods don’t focus on heavy structure and inflexible, one-size-fits-all strategies.[29,30]

Instead, holistic education takes the whole child into consideration when lesson plans are created. Learners are given leeway to explore new skills and master existing ones in a manner that blends their natural curiosity with engaging activities. This can be achieved through the following best practices:

- Experiential learning
- Self-guided study
- Focus on community
- Integrated lessons

At first, transforming traditional lessons into opportunities for holistic learning may feel like a challenge for educators. After all, as a teacher, your to-do lists are already quite long. However, once implemented, you’ll find that these techniques don’t cost you as much time. Let’s take a look at some ways to develop these processes to help transform your curriculum and classroom.

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Four ways to develop a holistic learning and development process

Even the most talented teachers face obstacles when it comes to building a holistic learning environment for students. Differentiated education requires a deep understanding of multiple teaching methods, as well as how to apply them one-on-one in a classroom full of learners.

Introducing additional components that support physical, psychological, social, and emotional growth and development can be an overwhelming task. These four best practices make the process easier.

1. Emphasize experiential learning

Hands-on experience is an effective way to encourage exploration in learners of all ages. Instead of talking through a skill or concept, create opportunities for students to engage all five senses. For example, trips to zoos, farms, museums, and historic sites can be more effective than classroom discussions. [28,29,30]

However, in-person visits to local destinations are just one approach to experiential objectives. There are many options that can be completed on-site when off-site outings aren't practical or possible. Examples include growing gardens, experiential learning software applications, building models, peer-to-peer teaching, and bringing in speakers—for example, subject matter experts who can provide deeper insight into areas of study

It is interesting to note that an educator who creates opportunities for experiential learning tends to have more success in meeting the needs of individual students. Participation in the experiential learning process offers more complete insight into students' skills, abilities, and personal characteristics. Often, those characteristics are invisible under traditional teaching methods.

2. Self-guided study ensures differentiation

When students are allowed to move at their own pace and incorporate their own style into the learning process, they are far more likely to be engaged in the task at hand. Instead of formal instruction, a teacher can facilitate learning activities, moving from student to student or group to group to answer questions and provide support.

The introduction of digital learning platforms offers new ways to promote self-guided study that is both engaging and meaningful. High-quality software caters to students' personal interests while delivering lessons that are just difficult enough to encourage growth without being so difficult that they lead to frustration.

3. Create community in the classroom

A sense of community and personal connection is critical to all areas of a child's development, including academic success, physical health, social skills, psychological well-being, and emotional health. This begins with the relationship between teachers and students and the relationships students build with each other, but that's not where it ends.

Holistic learning requires connections with an entire community, from teachers and administrators to parents and volunteers from outside the school. Encourage family members to participate in the learning process, and bring in key community figures such as lawmakers, first responders, and professionals to forge bonds with the children.

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As a bonus, these community members offer experiential learning opportunities to further enhance the achievement of holistic education goals.

4. Integrate lessons for enhanced learning outcomes

No skill or concept exists in a vacuum, and holistic learning methods recognize that fact. Instead of a unit on reading, a unit on science, and a unit on social studies, combine learning outcomes into one master lesson. Practice reading and writing through the study of historical figures. Integrate art and music into the examination of world cultures. Chemistry and mathematics can be taught through baking, and there are endless ways to connect biology with art, reading, and writing.[29]

Holistic education creates lifelong learners

The benefits of holistic learning have been proven again and again. Research shows that when students receive individualized education that considers their physical, psychological, and emotional needs, they have more curiosity, better social skills, and superior communication skills. They become self-motivated, and they build an identity that promotes life-long learning.[30]

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