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A Guide to Reading at Erasmus Darwin Academy

READING

is to the

MIND

what

exercise

is to the **BODY.**

Sir Richard Steele



Why is reading important?

Reading for pleasure is the most important activity your child can do to improve their achievement in school. Reading is the best way to improve vocabulary, which is essential for success in every subject. By reading, students are exposed to a wide range of words.

Reading also has social and emotional benefits: it increases self-esteem and studies show that students who read are more empathetic. Growing up can be difficult and reading can help young people explore complex problems from the world of books.

Reading at Erasmus Darwin Academy:

- A reading book forms part of a student's daily equipment. They should have one with them at all times. This can be a book from home or the Library. The use of Kindles and eReaders is acceptable for home reading, however these should not be brought into school.
- The Library at Erasmus Darwin Academy is fully stocked with a range of books for a variety of different abilities and interests. Mrs Dickinson, our dedicated Librarian, will support students when choosing a book. Students will be able to visit the Library at break times and lunch times, before school (8:00-8:30) and after school (15:10-16:00 Mon-Thurs, 15:10-15:30pm Fri).
- In order to keep our school Library stocked, if students fail to return a book back to the Library after two reminders, or if they return the book and it is damaged, they will be charged £6 to replace the book via WisePay. Alternatively, students can replace the book like-for-like.
- All students will read as part of their tutor programme.
- Students will read at the start of each period five lesson. Additionally, most English lessons start with five minutes of silent reading.
- Year 7 and 8 have a lesson in the Library once a fortnight. This is a lesson dedicated to reading. Students will read their own books silently, partake in class reading activities, discuss the book they are reading and complete quizzes on Accelerated Reader using the Library computers.
- All students in Year 7 and 8 are required to read for at least 30 minutes per day. This is their English homework and therefore is not optional. You must sign your child's reading log each fortnight to verify that they have read the amount they say they have (we recommend you do this at the same time as the signing of their planner). Students in these year groups need to read a minimum of one book per month and take a quiz on Accelerated Reader.
- Students are rewarded when they read a million words (logged via their Accelerated Reader quiz pass rate) or improve their reading age by a significant amount. Student successes will be celebrated in their Library lessons and they will receive a certificate along with commendation from the Head Teacher.
- At EDA, we also like to make reading competitive. This year, the number of words read and/or quizzes passed will contribute to the House Cup. Tutors are also keeping track of the books students are reading to ensure they are suitable and making a record of how many are read each half-term by each student. This will also contribute towards the House Cup.
- Reading interventions are given to students whose reading ages are significantly below their chronological age. This is conducted in small groups with Mrs Dickinson,

by our SEN support team and through whole-class reading activities within the Library lessons.

- Students with low reading ages are supported further by undertaking additional screening to help us diagnose their reading need. Students are then grouped into interventions based on their need: phonics, comprehension or fluency.
- Recommended reads for each year group are available on our website.

Accelerated Reader (Year 7 and 8):

- Students complete a 'STAR Reading Test' three times a year. This gives each child a reading age that can be compared to their chronological age. This is a computer adaptive reading test that gives general information about a child's reading level. The test comprises of a series of sentences with key words missing; students are given a range of options and need to select which one would logically fit into the gap. The sentences and options get more difficult as the test progresses.
- Once a month, students need to complete one quiz on a book they have read (they can of course complete more than this). This helps to monitor comprehension and track the amount of books and words students are reading.
- Students should complete their quizzes in their own time – this can be done either at school or at home. The 'Accelerated Reader Book Finder' has a powerful search engine you can use from home to check if a book is on Accelerated Reader prior to reading - <https://www.arbookfind.co.uk/>
- These quizzes also helps teachers to monitor progress and to see where your child might need further support in their reading.

Literacy Assessment Online (Year 9 and 10):

- Similar to 'Accelerated Reader', this is a computer programme that we use for Year 9 and Year 10 to track students' reading ages.
- This helps teachers to monitor progress and also highlights students' misconceptions at word level in order for teachers to identify which students need extra support.
- Students in Years 9 and 10 will complete this test at least twice a year and results will be sent home as part of your child's progress report.

How to support your child with reading:

- Get your child to make predictions about the book they are about to read. This will help with their inference skills. They could do this by looking at the front cover, reading the first sentence or using chapter titles.
- Encourage your child to summarise what they have read. This can be done verbally or they can reduce what they have read by writing down three ideas or words.
- Ensure your child can explain what they have read. For example, encourage them to reread sections they do not understand, focus on key words and even look words up that they have not come across before.
- Ask your child questions about what they are reading. This will help with their comprehension and their ability to verbalise their ideas. For example, 'did you enjoy that book? Why? Why not? Was there any part you didn't like? What happened in the section you have just read?'

- If you have younger children, ask your older child to read aloud to them or children can also read to pets. This will help build their confidence. Michael Morpurgo is a particularly good shared read as his books have something for everyone.
- Continue to read aloud to your child (even if he/she is a fluent reader).
- Continue to model reading at home. Studies have shown that students with access to physical books at home (these can be Library books) perform better academically than those who don't!

Phonics

- Nationally, many students are joining secondary school without the basic literacy skills needed to successfully access the Key Stage 3 curriculum. This crisis has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic that caused gaps in children's education. At EDA, we are in the process of implementing a recognised Phonics programme designed to help the readers who struggle the most with their reading to make rapid, regular progress. The programme that the Academy will use is Abigail Steel KS3 Phonics. Abigail Steel is a DfE approved phonics training provider. For some students, this has been built into their timetables; for others, this intervention will take place within the tutor programme.

Further Screening

- In order for us to give students with low reading ages the best possible intervention, we will further screen them using the NGRT (New Group Reading Test) by GL. This is a widely used test which helps schools ascertain where a child is struggling (whether this be comprehension, phonic decoding etc.). Moving forward, this key information will be collated into a centralised database that our staff can utilise to help support your child within lessons.

Tips to help encourage your child to read for pleasure:

- Use the 'Recommended Reads' list for their year group (available on our website).
- Find books with a connection to something they love. For example, if they are football fans try the *Ultimate Football Heroes* series by Matt & Tom Oldfield.
- Try Barrington Stoke books (we have several of these in our Library): these are produced with tinted pages, special fonts and spacing, thicker paper and editing to reduce comprehension barriers and/or issues resulting from dyslexia:
<https://www.barringtonstoke.co.uk/>
- Try "Technology-Free Time" for an hour per day and use this time to encourage your child to read.
- Build reading into part of your daily routines. Find a regular time for reading in your child's day so they can begin to expect it as part of their routine. This can be any time of day – before bed, after dinner, in the morning before breakfast or as soon as they get home from school.
- Be enthusiastic about what they are reading. Ask them to describe a character or to read aloud an exciting bit. You might read a teen/ young adult book yourself; the plot-driven nature of many of these books means they are relatively easy reads and our very relatable to the majority of students.
- Let your child see you reading for pleasure and talk about what you read, what you enjoy and how you choose books.

- Find the book version of a movie: *Stormbreaker*, *Harry Potter*, *The Book Thief*, *The Princess Diaries*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent*, *Maze Runner*, *Fault in Our Stars* and *Wonder* are all films based on children/young adult fiction. Both of you could read the book, watch the film together, then discuss the differences.
- Visit a bookstore or Library together and allow your child to select a book of their choice. The visually appealing marketing and layout of best-selling books can attract even reluctant readers.
- Try biographies/autobiographies that interest your child e.g. *I Am Malala*. Non-fiction books linked to a child's interests are also a great way to spark a desire to read. For example, *Good Night Stories For Rebel Girls* or *Stories for Boys Who Dare to be Different*.
- If your child has autistic traits or an ASC diagnosis, graphic novels might be a good starting point as they attach meaning to words visually.
- Encourage your child to reread an old favourite book to improve their sight-reading skills.
- Encourage them to read a wide range of texts. If they're currently reading a fantasy series, perhaps suggest a factual book on one of their hobbies.

If you would like any more information, please contact Mrs Wilson (*Reading Leader*) on k.wilson@eda.staffs.sch.uk or Mrs H Dickinson (Librarian) on h.dickinson@eda.staffs.sch.uk