

Good Afternoon Mr. Lee,

I just wanted to send an email (which I am more than happy to be reposted) to explain to parents and carers that, during this time of Academy closure, reading is the most fundamentally transformative thing they could be doing to help their child's learning, support their development, and secure their futures. Reading gives so much - when done, regularly, it has more of an impact on children's progress than almost anything. Conversely, a lack of reading leads to slower progress, and a faster rate of falling behind. Reading either helps you move forward faster, or (not) reading pushes you further back down the line.

In education, there is a concept spoken about called the 'Matthew Effect'. Basically, it says that children who read regularly, have words explained to them, and use those words in their own language, tend to make really great progress. It also states that the progress of those who do not read is much slower, and gap widens and widens. The scariest thing about this, which has been proven, is that the gap starts to develop at the age of THREE. By the time our children reach secondary school, the gap might be absolutely enormous. Though it might seem unbridgeable, this gap can be closed. It just takes one simple step - reading. Every day.

Whilst the Academy is closed, and parents work from home, I urge them to try their best to help their children bridge these gaps. Children should read, with no screens, or distractions, for at least an hour, uninterrupted, each day. Parents and carers can play an active part too! I am aware that some might not be the most confident readers, might have a thousand other things to do, or might not even enjoy reading, so you do not HAVE to sit with your child whilst they read. Stop them periodically, and ask them what is happening (whilst you scan to catch up). Point out a tricky word - ask them what it means, or ask them to use it in another sentence. If they are coming across difficult words, get them to note them down, and at the end of a chapter, look them up (Google is fine here), before scanning back in the chapter - ask them if it changes their understanding of the book!

I completely appreciate that parents and carers might not have access to books during this time, so I have collated some links that might prove useful:

<https://www.gutenberg.org/> - The Gutenberg Project has thousands of eBooks of Classics - for the more confident reader.

<http://en.childrenslibrary.org/> - The International Children's Library - thousands of books for children to read.

<https://openlibrary.org/> - The Open Library - kind of like Wikipedia for books - you will need to sign up, but it contains some of the most known books (Harry Potter etc.) which can be 'borrowed' and read online!

Amazon Prime members will also be able to access free books through Kindle Unlimited, Apple Books are offering free online books, and there are many places that are publishing free audiobooks online (including Audible).

Hopefully, this provides some rationale as to why the most important thing that children could be doing at the moment is reading books, and doing so as much as possible. Missing their teaching, and Learning Consultants is bad enough - we don't want the gap to increase when children come back to the Academy!

Happy Reading!

Mr Dawes