

Education and reading are circular – the more a person has of one, the better the development of the other (Chall, 1996)

Becoming a lifetime reader is predicated on developing a love of reading (Sanacore, 2002).

Although reading for pleasure has not been a research priority, there is growing evidence that emphasises the importance of reading for pleasure for both educational as well as personal development.

Studies show that promoting reading can have a major impact on children/young people and adults and their future. For example, research with children has shown that reading for pleasure is positively linked with the following literacy-related benefits:

- reading attainment and writing ability - both in school and out of school
- text comprehension and grammar, even after a variety of health, wealth and school factors were statistically controlled for;
- breadth of vocabulary, even after other relevant abilities such as IQ or text-decoding skills are controlled for;
- positive reading attitudes which are linked to achievement in reading;
- greater self-confidence as a reader;
- pleasure reading in later life. The above relationships hold for first and second language acquisition, and for children and adults.

There is also evidence that reading for pleasure not only impacts on reading achievement but also increases:

- general knowledge;
- a better understanding of other cultures;
- community participation;
- a greater insight into human nature and decision-making.

Programmes and activities focusing on reading for pleasure can also promote or enhance social skills in children. It has also been shown to combat feelings of loneliness in adults. Overall, when individuals read for pleasure frequently, “they experience the value of reading as efferent and aesthetic processes. Thus, they are more likely to read with a sense of purpose, which further supports their developing reading habit” (Sanacore, 2002, p. 68).