

Parents' CLIPBOARD

SECONDARY LEVEL


BY THE PARENTS & READING COMMITTEE OF THE COLORADO COUNCIL, INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION

Read Everywhere

This past August, 2004, the National Endowment for the Arts released a survey called "Reading at Risk" which describes an alarming trend in book consumption by Americans. Among its findings are that "fewer than half of Americans over 18 now read novels, short stories, plays or poetry; that the consumer pool for books of all kinds has diminished; and that the pace at which the nation is losing readers, especially young readers, is quickening. In addition, it finds that the downward trend holds in virtually all demographic areas." Dana Giola, the chairman of the Endowment says that "reading is on the decline among all groups, in every region, at every educational level and within every ethnic group" and calls the survey results deeply alarming. (www.NYTimes.com, *Survey Finds Fewer Noses Stuck in Books in America*)

Alarming because we live in an age when people need to read more in the work place than at any other time in our history. **Alarming** because it is estimated that information is doubling every two weeks. **Alarming** because democracy is dependent on people who can read and think. Why then are people reading less?

TIME seems to be one of the culprits.



"Books are the carriers of civilization. Without books, history is silent, literature dumb, science crippled, thought and speculation at a standstill. They are the engine of change, windows on the world, lighthouses erected in the sea of time."

*Barbara W. Tuchman,
American historian*

Reading Stations

Parents may want to encourage their students to create reading stations where it is really quite easy to catch up on 15 minutes of reading each day by transforming waiting time into reading time. Professor James I. Brown, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, suggests that students keep a book

- in the car while waiting at the fast food window or the driveup window at the bank;
- in their backpack as a portable reading station when waiting for friends, the doctor, a haircut, the car;
- by the telephone when waiting on hold;
- on their bedroom nightstand for 15 minutes of reading before going to sleep.

While 15 minutes a day may not seem like much time, at 250 wpm, which is the average reading rate of an adult, it means 2,750 words a day, 26,250 a week, 112,500 a month, and 1,360,750 a year. This adds up to about 18 average sized books in a year.

President Kennedy transformed waiting time into reading time. An office visitor noticed the President buried in a magazine for the few seconds it took him to walk from the door to his desk. Then Kennedy jumped up and came around to greet him.

Potency of Reading

- Reading can provide new insights, perspectives and ideas for shaping future thinking.
- Reading can give our young people a better understanding of word choice and syntax so the right words form into desired patterns when they speak and write.
- Reading can provide a distinct advantage when taking standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT because the more students read the more they broaden their vocabulary, learn how to interact with text, and retrieve content.
- Reading can be a valuable tool for discovering and constructing knowledge, clarifying thinking, and extending meaning in given disciplines.