



How Ebooks Can Increase Student Reading Time and Positively Impact Achievement

Level of engagement, frequency, and time on task are the most important factors in reading skill development

SPONSORED BY:

OverDrive
Education®
a Rakuten company

A PARTNER OF:

TECH&LEARNING

DEDICATED TIME ON TASK IS ESSENTIAL TO DEVELOPING READING PROFICIENCY

The research is clear about how time spent reading positively impacts reading proficiency and ultimately student achievement. To read well, students must dedicate time and effort to practicing this critical skill (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988; Ericsson, Charness, Feltovich, & Hoffman, 2006). Researchers agree that increasing a student's exposure to words is critical to developing vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, writing, and higher-order thinking skills (e.g., Anderson et al., 1988; Baker, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1995; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998).¹

However, it is just as important that students are engaged in what they read and that they spend enough time on task to improve their reading abilities. Studies by Biancarosa and Snow (2006) and Gersten et al. (2008) noted that while high-quality instruction and other factors are essential for struggling students, ensuring they spend enough time engaged with appropriately challenging text is key in getting them back on track.²

In 2013, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) issued *The nation's report card: Trends in academic progress 2012*, in which they compared students' reading scores with their reading habits. NCES found a direct correlation between students' frequency of reading for fun and their average reading scores. The more frequently they read, the higher the students' reading scores.

Researchers agree that increasing a student's exposure to words is critical to developing vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, writing, and higher-order thinking skills.¹



¹ http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/high_school_and_beyond/What%20Kids%20Are%20Reading%202017_Final.pdf

² http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/high_school_and_beyond/What%20Kids%20Are%20Reading%202017_Final.pdf

STUDENTS ARE MOTIVATED BY DIGITAL READING

Researchers Troy Jones and Carol Brown found that children are more likely to read if they have access to books through home and school/public libraries and they witness adults engaged in reading (Jewell, Phelps, & Kuhnen, 1998). By providing lots of opportunities for students to practice independent reading to build fluency, teachers promote an increased level of confidence in student readers (Kasten & Wilfong, 2007).³

The research literature suggests that reading motivation and engagement are enhanced when students have choice in reading materials. It is unsurprising then that a wide selection of ebooks is motivational for students. Another finding suggested that the opportunity to select their own books from a wide range of choices impacts students' reading engagement and ultimately their reading comprehension.

THE BENEFITS OF DIGITAL READING

Kids enjoy digital reading, and they read when they are engaged with the material. Digital reading is more interactive, and an app's diverse titles, achievement badges, and avatars make digital reading fun and inviting. These capabilities empower students to guide their own learning and increase their motivation to read when using a reading app like Sora from OverDrive.

Digital also provides equitable access to resources across schools and districts, and students without wifi at home can download titles for offline use. Digital reading is more private—important for students whose reading level does not match their grade level. The differentiation they are receiving is not apparent to others, reducing potential embarrassment.

Digital titles can never be lost, damaged, or stolen, and content can be filtered and organized to meet any student's interest or need for intervention. Giving students access to reading on devices also encourages recreational reading, which increases the likelihood they will become pleasure readers for life.

SCHOOLS ARE USING SORA TO BUILD A CULTURE OF READING

"We use the same process to build our digital collection as we do our print collection," said Jim Moon, director of instructional media for the Alpine School District in Utah. "We look at what's trending and popular in fiction and then in narrative nonfiction, we look for STEM titles, biographies, and general interest topics."

Kids enjoy digital reading, and they read when they are engaged with the material. Digital reading is more interactive, and an app's diverse titles, achievement badges, and avatars make digital reading fun and inviting.

³ https://members.aect.org/pdf/Proceedings/proceedings10/2010/10_17.pdf



When the district decided to add ebooks to its collection, district librarians reviewed all available platforms and titles. The district was familiar with OverDrive from the public library and felt like it would be a good fit for them. After using OverDrive for five years in grades 7-12, Alpine added the elementary grades at the beginning of the 2018–2019 school year.

“This year our librarians are working closely with teachers to use more ebooks as curriculum support materials,” said Moon. “We’re putting classroom sets together and working with instructional coaches to make learning more engaging for our students.”

As ebooks, audiobooks, and Read-Alongs are still new for many elementary teachers, Moon reports they are making an internal push to identify more teachers willing to test out ebooks as curriculum support. The district is targeting English language arts classrooms, but they also want to build usage for math, science, and social studies to build readership. In addition, district librarians are encouraging students to read more for pleasure.

Initial adoption of the Sora reading app in the elementary grades has been strong, with 2018-2019 circulation doubling the previous year’s. Even though the district is not 1:1, students can access Sora on a computer through a browser or on mobile devices through the app. Students use school equipment during the school day and log on from home using their school user name and password.

“All schools in the district have access to a shared collection,” said Moon. “And then individual schools can add specific titles over and above the district’s collection.”

Titles can be organized and assigned by topic and reading levels. Students are more interested in reading content that aligns with their interests, and Sora has an intuitive interface that invites additional reading time.

“OverDrive is terrific about sharing training materials with us and we plan to expand usage through more professional development so that we can build student readership by helping teachers integrate Sora ebooks and resources into their curriculum,” said Moon. “When students are engaged, they read more.”

DISTRICT INCREASES READERSHIP THREEFOLD IN ONE YEAR

“In a rural community like ours, not everyone has access to a public library or a bookstore, so the district’s digital library is a way to provide students and families access to content,” says Ellie Killishek, district librarian for the Medford (OR) School District 549C.

When Killishek arrived in the district in 2017, her predecessor had already reviewed all available digital books platforms and chose OverDrive. One of their reasons for choosing OverDrive was that the district wanted to provide as much reading content and support to students as possible. And in a mobile device-driven world, students and families have devices that allow them easy access to the district-wide library. Every student has access to every book in the collection.

Killishek reported that in April 2018, Medford had just under 2,000 items checked out for the month to students and staff. In March 2019, the district had almost 6,000 items checked out—a threefold increase.

Killishek believes that the root of the increases has been the Sora reading app. Librarians and media specialists have partnered with teachers across the district to bring digital books into the classroom both in support of the curriculum and for pleasure reading. Teachers have been using ebooks and audiobooks through Sora to differentiate instruction and personalize learning for their students.

“Sora has a user-friendly interface and engages students with interactive components,” said Killishek. “I believe the easy-to-use search function has led directly to our increased circulation.”

District librarians were concerned that the digital library might decrease the circulation of print materials, but that has not been the case. “Our digital library is actually spurring kids to read more,” said Killishek.

“OverDrive is terrific about sharing training materials with us and we plan to expand usage through more professional development so that we can build student readership by helping teachers integrate Sora ebooks and resources into their curriculum.”

Jim Moon, director of instructional media, Alpine School District, UT

The district has seen growth in literacy and technology skills, including at Title I schools and with struggling readers. “Sora is a key component of the supports and resources we have for students to grow their reading ability,” said Killishek. “Time spent in text makes kids better readers, and we can say that because of our partnership with OverDrive, our kids are spending more time in text.”

HOW THE SORA READING APP SUPPORTS PERSONALIZED LEARNING

One of the benefits technology brings to the classroom is that it provides opportunities to personalize and differentiate learning according to students’ needs. Sora allows easy access to titles that teachers can use to engage students. The ability to support students with ebooks in their area of interest or a particular topic opens learning possibilities that were not previously available to teachers and students.

Access to an online digital library means that teachers can tailor instruction to their specific curricula and individual students’ needs efficiently. Sora makes it easy for teachers to assign supplemental reading materials to provide deeper insight into historical events, people, or ideas.

To ensure that students have access to the largest selection possible, Sora includes access to the local public library’s digital collection. With this feature, students can also borrow ebooks and audiobooks from their public library in addition to their school collection. Sora lists age-appropriate titles from the public library so that students’ choices are both broad and relevant. This creates even more opportunities to customize reading for individual students.

Essential metrics, such as time spent reading, number of individual reading sessions, number of consecutive days reading, and the number of titles borrowed from the public library all provide educators with real information to make informed decisions about how best to guide their students. Digital titles are accessible on all major mobile devices through Sora, so students can choose the devices that best serve their needs.

English Language Learners (ELL) across the country struggle to learn English quickly enough. This can result in them falling behind in their basic subjects. Digital reading with access to embedded learning tools, along with formats such as audiobooks and Read-Alongs, expands ELLs’ reading opportunities to support their language acquisition.

“Sora has a user-friendly interface and engages students with interactive components.”

Ellie Killishek, district librarian, Medford (OR) School District 549C

Sora offers a dyslexic font designed to have extra distance between letters to combat reversal and flipping of letters. Capital letters are bolder to help readers identify new sentences and each letter is bottom-weighted. The ability to change type size and background color allow additional personalization for visually challenged readers. Audiobooks are a reading solution that students with visual, language, and processing challenges can all enjoy.

CONCLUSION

Reading research clearly connects the amount of time spent reading to the level of reading proficiency, and this leads to improved student achievement. There is also evidence that the book format is not as important as the reader's engagement in what is being read. Access to a large selection of titles increases students' motivation, and they find digital reading particularly engaging.

Kids enjoy reading ebooks. And the more time they spend reading, the better readers they become. OverDrive's student reading app, Sora, not only helps teachers support their curriculum but it encourages students to read more often. Districts are using Sora to create a culture of readers. Good readers have better academic outcomes and are more likely to develop a lifelong pleasure in reading. Sora also provides teachers resources to differentiate instruction and to create more impactful learning outcomes. In addition to a wealth of content resources and teaching tools, Sora produces critical data to help educators personalize instruction and learning.



ABOUT SORA



- Access to the largest collection of ebooks and audiobooks available to schools and the ability to browse and borrow digital titles from the local public library
- Easy onboarding and simple one-tap step to borrow and start reading
- Unified experience across devices and operating systems
- Personalization through achievements, assignments, and avatars
- Reading activity enhancements including notes, highlights, and definitions
- IEP support —audiobooks, dyslexic font, enlarged text, Read-Alongs, and more
- Automatic syncing of loans, holds, highlights, defined words, activity, and achievements across multiple devices

Take Sora for a test drive

Educators can sign up for a 60-day free trial that provides access to 100+ juvenile and young adult titles. Discover the range of titles and opportunities to customize students' reading experiences [here](#).



ABOUT OVERDRIVE EDUCATION— A DIVISION OF OVERDRIVE, INC.

OverDrive Education is the leading global digital reading platform for K-12, offering the industry's largest catalog of ebooks, audiobooks and streaming video. As a 100% digital company serving 43,000 libraries and schools worldwide, OverDrive combines technology with content to support learning and reading in the classroom, library and home. With an easy-to-use central platform, students get the right titles at the right time, online or offline, on all major devices.

Learn more:

www.overdrive.com/schools

Arnold, T., Beals, M., Numeroff, L. (2016). "What Kids are Reading and How They Grow." Renaissance Annual Report. Retrieved from http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/high_school_and_beyond/What%20Kids%20Are%20Reading%202017_Final.pdf

Jones, T., Brown, C. (2010). "Reading Engagement: A Comparison Between Ebooks and Traditional Print Books in an Elementary Classroom. International Journal of Instruction, 4(2), 5-22. Retrieved from https://members.aect.org/pdf/Proceedings/proceedings10/2010/10_17.pdf