

Your Toronto / Schools**EQAO finds reading for pleasure boosts test results**

The EQAO, Ontario's testing body, reports that kids who read for pleasure do better in reading and writing tests. For math, it's the attitude that counts.



Kids who read for pleasure, just one hour a week, do better in reading and writing tests, reports Ontario's Education Quality and Accountability Office.

By: Kristin Rushowy Education Reporter, Published on Wed Feb 19 2014

Even just one hour a week of reading for pleasure boosts test results — but when it comes to math, it's kids' attitudes that count, says a new tracking report by the province's standardized testing body.

"Students who met the standard in reading in Grades 3 and 6 and were successful in Grade 10 were two and a half times more likely to be engaged in reading outside of school," said Debra Rantz, chief assessment officer for Ontario's Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO).

"This is not homework — it's reading outside of school for enjoyment. That's quite telling."

What kids read does not matter — anything from novels to graphic novels to poetry — "as long as you read ... it's something for enjoyment that makes a difference at school."

In its tracking of students from Grades 3 to Grade 10 on tests in reading, writing and math, the [EQAO](#) found that kids who have trouble early will continue to struggle.

Reading appears to be a common factor for students who don't do well on the reading portion of the test, as well as for those who do excel, says the report, which tracked a cohort of roughly 65,000 students from Grade 3 to Grade 10.

About 80 per cent of students who met reading levels in Grade 3 and Grade 6 and who went on to pass the Grade 10 literacy test — which is required to graduate from high school — were reading for fun for more than an hour.

Of those, 46 per cent who made the grade were reading three hours or more.

For students who were not at the expected level in reading in grades 3 and 6 and who failed the literacy test in high school, they were more than two times likely to be spending less than one hour a week that those who passed.

While there is also a correlation between writing scores on the tests and reading outside of school, it is not as strong as reading, Rantz added.

While the importance of reading is well-known, it comes at a time when fewer children report actually liking to read, says Annie Kidder of research and advocacy group People for Education.

“Liking to read has an impact on the amount that kids read, and it has an impact on their success in school and in life,” she said.

“Our suggestion has been that we need to focus more on the love of reading and the joy of reading, and be less focused on the mechanics of reading or a focus on reading for marks or more clinical reasons” which may turn kids off.

“We’re not saying that one has caused the other, but in the time that we’ve focused so hard on getting test scores in reading to increase, we’ve seen **quite a significant decline in kids who say they like to read**. This is a worldwide issue and it’s really important, and it really is something to focus on.”

The EQAO report, to be released Wednesday, also found that in literacy and numeracy, positive attitudes can make a huge difference.

Two-thirds of kids who met provincial standards in Grade 3 agreed with the statement “I am good at math.”

Schools need to teach math in an engaging way, at home families need to embrace numbers, Rantz added.

“We have insulted ourselves, saying we are not good at math, or my child is not good at math. We tend not to say ‘I’m not a good reader’ ... There needs to be a **positive attitude around math** and literacy around the home.”