

# WHY PRINT?

## A Short Guide to the Power of Printed Texts for Educators and Parents

Reading printed texts isn't just an old-school, romanticized practice; when it comes to learning, research shows it's often uniquely powerful when compared to electronic texts.

### When students read a printed text vs. an electronic text, research shows they often:

- comprehend and retain more information
- engage in deeper and more fluid reading
- are more likely to enjoy reading and be above-average readers
- test higher
- focus better

### Added common-sense benefits:

- less device-based distraction
- students can learn the importance of being tech-intentional
- less screen time, which at its basic level can disrupt sleep, cause eye problems, and decrease cardiovascular fitness

## HOW?

### Teachers Can...

Although some texts are only available digitally, teachers can plan lessons and assign homework that embrace printed texts when possible. Teachers can also continue to fill their classroom libraries with print books and share the research on the unique, research-based advantages of printed texts vs. electronic ones with parents, administrators, and other teachers.

### Parents Can...

Help their child read print when possible at home and seek out printed texts via libraries and affordable sources like [paperbackswap.com](http://paperbackswap.com). Parents can also speak to their child's teacher or Principal about the power of printed texts (share this document!) and request that their child read print when possible in school.

## TO SUM IT ALL UP...

Digital texts can surely be useful to many classrooms and households, and they may someday be designed in ways that overcome their science-based shortcomings. Nonetheless, it's empowering for parents, caregivers,

and educators to know what the research shows again and again: **PRINT IS POWERFUL!**\*

*\*PRINT IS POWERFUL is a global awareness campaign launched by [EverySchool.org](http://EverySchool.org) to raise awareness and build excitement about reading printed texts. Learn more about how you can get involved in this effort at [www.everyschool.org/printispowerful](http://www.everyschool.org/printispowerful). Who is [EverySchool.org](http://EverySchool.org)? We're a nonprofit whose mission is happier, healthier, smarter school communities through digital wellness and research-based classroom tech use. We believe schools can lead the digital wellness revolution, and we want to help!*

## **WANT TO LEARN MORE? READ ON!**

### **"The Reading Brain in the Digital Age: The Science of Paper Versus Screens," by Ferris Jabr**

This article summarizes the research on reading paper vs. screens and explains how our brains may interpret the physicality of books so that we comprehend and retain information in them better.

### **"Screen Time Up as Reading Scores Drop. Is There a Link?" by Sarah D. Sparks**

This EdWeek article shares specific data on the link between screen time in class and lower literacy scores on the 2019 Nation's Report Card.

### **"Reading Across Mediums: Effects of Reading Digital and Print Texts on Comprehension and Calibration," by Laura M. Singer and Patricia A. Alexander**

This 2016 scholarly article summarizes a research study conducted on 90 college students who read texts in both print and digital formats; those who read print "recalled key points linked to the main idea and other relevant information better."

### **"The Case Against E-readers: Why Reading Paper Books is Better for Your Mind," by Naomi S. Baron**

This article, written by a linguistics professor, researcher, and author, gives a conversational look at why print is uniquely powerful for learning. One stand out stat: over 92 percent of the readers the author studied said they, "concentrate best when reading a hard copy."

### **"Don't Throw Away Your Printed Books: A Meta-Analysis on the Effects of Reading Media on Reading Comprehension," by Pablo Delgado, et al.**

This scholarly analysis finds that "paper-based reading yields better comprehension outcomes than digital-based reading." It also concludes that, "Although the current results suggest that paper-based reading should be favoured over digital-based reading, it is unrealistic to recommend avoiding digital devices. Nevertheless, ignoring the evidence of a robust screen inferiority effect may mislead political and educational decisions, and even worse, it could prevent readers from fully benefiting from their reading comprehension abilities and keep children from developing these skills in the first place."

**"As Kids' On-Screen Reading Overtakes Print, Outcome is Worrisome," by Dennis Abrams**

This article summarizes research from the National Literacy Trust, which “confirms that technology is playing a central role in young people’s literacy development and reading choice. While we welcome the positive impact which technology has on bringing further reading opportunities to young people, it’s crucial that reading in print is not cast aside. We are concerned by our finding that children who only read on-screen are significantly less likely to enjoy reading and less likely to be strong readers.”

**Reader, Come Home: The Reading Brain in the Digital Age, by Maryann Wolf**

This thick and thoughtful book explains the cultural shift away from a literacy-based society to a digital one, and how the circuitry in our brains is affected by what and how we read. If modern humans spend large amounts of time skimming through text, impatiently clicking through to the next thing or scanning for the gist and moving on, those are the brain circuits we reinforce, often at the cost of deep reading skills.