

**Survey on
the Reading Habits
of Students
in
Hong Kong**

Education Department

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Abstract

‘Reading to learn’ is an essential tool for life-long learning. Promoting a reading culture among students is therefore one of the key tasks in the curriculum reform with the aim to strengthen students’ learning capabilities. To understand the current situation of the reading culture of students, the Education Department conducted a survey in February 2001. The objective is to investigate the reading habits of Primary 1 to Secondary 5 students relating to books, newspapers and electronic information. Their interests in reading as well as reading conditions at home and school were also surveyed.

Major findings

The major findings on students’ reading habits, their relation with students’ reading conditions at home and at school were as follows:

- After school or at leisure, the activities that students do most are “Watching television, videos, VCDs, etc.”, “Playing computer/electronic games”. Among secondary school students, “Listening to music, songs, radio, etc.” or “Chatting with friends” are also popular activities.
- The results on the percentages of students spending 2 hours or more per week on reading books, newspapers and electronic information show that more students read books at lower levels whilst at higher levels, more students read electronic information.
- The topics that students read most in newspapers and on the computer are similar, namely “Entertainment”, “Daily living” and “Computer, information technology”. The types of books that students read most are “Stories”, “Jokes/humours”, “Fairy tales” and “Comics”. It is apparent that the types of books that students favour are for entertainment and leisure, rather than for intellectual enhancement.
- For both secondary and primary students, most students read at home and during weekends.
- For primary students, the main purpose of reading is “to enrich knowledge” whilst for secondary students, it is “for leisure”.
- The percentage of students spending 2 hours or more per week on reading books is higher if their parents:
 - go to the public libraries with them “every week or every month” compared with “less than once a month or never”
 - listen to them reading stories/articles “every week or every day” compared with “less than once a week or never”, especially at primary school levels

- read stories/articles to their children at primary schools “every week or every day” compared with “less than once a week or never”
- have reading habits themselves
- Students possessing books at home usually spend more time on reading books compared with those with few or none.
- The results on the percentages of students borrowing books once every 2 weeks or more frequently from the school or public libraries show that a higher percentage of students borrow books from the school libraries than public libraries though the latter provide more books for them to choose from.
- In primary schools, students appear to spend more time on reading in those schools which offer awards to encourage reading.

Conclusion

- Parents’ active participation would promote students’ interest in reading. On the contrary, if parents participate less in their children’s reading activities, students tend to spend less time on reading.
- Easy access to reading materials is one of the important factors in cultivating reading habits in students.
- Students would spend more time on reading if reading activities are actively promoted and a reading atmosphere created in schools.