

Winthrop School

**LEARNING
MADE
RELEVANT**

*A Closer Look at Today's Learning
Experiences*

FOCUS ON:

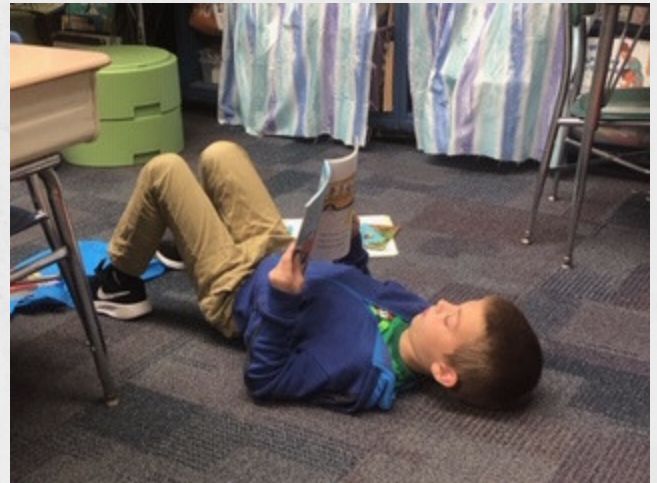
Reading and Screen Time

Print or Screen?

THE LOW-DOWN

MRS. WELCH, Reading Specialist shares...

With recent reports from National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the recent "60 Minutes" segment, regarding screen time and its impact on the developing brain, it seems rather timely to enter in to the print versus digital conversation. Today's students, called digital natives, are the first generation to grow up in our technology-infused world. Without doubt, it can be a dizzying experience to watch the speed with which digital natives navigate smartphones, computers, tablets, or e-readers. And, it is equally amazing to realize that with one simple swipe, push, or tap they are instantly connected, informed, and entertained. Clearly, technology is a powerful medium, thus it warrants our continual consideration, reflection, and discussion.



At Winthrop, teachers face the daily balance of teaching the "bi-lateral" brain. Neuroscience has proven that different parts of the brain are utilized when reading from a screen than from a paper. Screen reading involves more skimming of the text and "darting" of the eyes across the page. It is a "non-linear" type of reading that involves clicking tabs and hyperlinks, and generally requires a different style of interaction with the content. Whereas, a book requires a deeper focus, a "deep reading" of the text. Obviously, in today's world, both skills are necessary, and students need practice with both mediums. In order to cultivate "bi-literacy," online and print, experience with both types of reading is necessary. Armed with this knowledge, teachers must continually must ask themselves: "What is the purpose?" If the purpose of the activity or assignment is to promote deeper thinking, then science has proven that print is the ideal medium.



A LITTLE

Research Please

MaryAnne Wolf

Director of the Center for Reading and Language at Tufts University



According to Maryanne Wolf, director of the Center for Reading and Language at Tufts University, “Deep reading is always about connection: connecting what we know to what we read, what we read to what we feel, what we feel to what we think, and how we think to how we live out our lives in a connected world.” Yet, with the increase dependence on the the screen, Wolf worries that readers will not use “...our most precious acquired deep reading processes...” She argues that without the appropriate balance of print reading and screen use, the art of deep reading is compromised. She advocates that readers, both young and old, set aside time to experience “linear reading, [that is] devoid of digital distractions and stimulation.”

In the classroom



According to Mrs. Lacolla, first grade teacher, readers flock to their classroom library and huddle together over their favorite books. From the very first day of school, all students are viewed as readers and their personal connections to stories are celebrated as they share their “forever books.” This shared love of the printed word and oral storytelling help establish a community of readers, who are ready to take on the difficult task of learning to read. Print takes precedence for Mrs. Lacolla’s growing readers. Yet in her classroom, there is also time for readers to experience digital reading, too. From their work on Lexia to reading or listening to a book on Epic, digital technology enhances students’ learning and connects, even Winthrop’s youngest readers, beyond their four walls.

The Children Say

**"I like holding a book in my hand."
~ Loretta, Gr 1**



**"I like tangible books because they are more
real." ~Matteo, Gr 3**

William agreed and added,
"But I love doing Epic
because I can pick a lot of
different things to read."



**Elizabeth, Gr1~ "Books are the
best thing in the world! I like
turning the page and saying
'oohh!'"**

"It's comfortable to hold a book on my knees" ~ Jason, Gr. 3

*Interestingly, many third graders stated that it is easier to read a book
because the print is more clear.*

*Perhaps, Finn captured it best when he said, "I have a bunch of Diary of a Wimpy Kids
books that I can read when I'm going to bed because I can't have electronics at night
but if I didn't have the books or if I couldn't go to the library, I could always get them on
a tablet and read them whenever and wherever I wanted."*

*No doubt, parents face the nightly tug, asking themselves: How much is too much screen time? In
an effort to provide parents with the resources to make informed decisions, the American Academy
of Pediatrics recommends families create a "family media plan" which balances technology with
other daily activities, like reading books. With a goal of ensuring physical, social, and emotional
health, it launched a quick online tool that is easy to navigate:*

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/media/Pages/default.aspx>

*Ultimately, teachers and parents, alike, have the awesome responsibility: teaching children to
embrace the power of technology while honoring the powerful experience of holding a book and
turning its pages. Happy Reading!*