

POLL SAYS MOST TEENS VALUE *READING*

Librarians and other educators who care passionately about kids' *reading* can breathe a collective sigh of relief. According to an independent poll conducted for the National Educational Association, 12-through 18-year-old students rate *reading* as the most important skill a person needs in order to be successful in later life. Librarians also have another reason to be happy: 49 percent of those polled say that libraries--not bookstores, not online vendors, not even family and friends--are their number-one source for obtaining books.

A national poll of 509 middle- and *high-school* students, conducted early this year by Peter D. Hart Research Associates, a Washington, DC, public opinion pollster, indicated that kids rate *reading*, math, and writing--in that order--as the most important academic skills. And most students--56 percent--say they typically read more than 10 books a year. (Apparently young kids are outreading their secondary *school* elders: 70 percent of middle schoolers, compared to 49 percent of *high* schoolers, read at least 10 books a year.)

The poll also pointed out some cultural differences. Although half of those polled said that they enjoyed *reading*, students of color tend to derive more enjoyment from *reading* than their white peers. For example, 51 percent of African-American children and 56 percent of Hispanic youth indicated that they enjoyed *reading*, as compared to just 47 percent of white youth. And parents have a significant impact on their children's *reading* habits. Sixty-three percent of kids who were encouraged to read by their folks read 10 books or more each year, while only 51 percent of those kids whose parents left it up to them to read consumed the same amount of books. Finally, whoever says that kids think that *reading* is a yawner is wrong: slightly more than two out of three teens thought that *reading* was not boring or old-fashioned.

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