

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING TO READ**

**by Brennan Cruse**

Imagine what it would be like not knowing how to read?

Just imagine being a math whiz, but not even being able to read the instructions on your math test!

Imagine going into the grocery store and not even being able to read the brands of cookies or candy!

You could never even get your driver's license in life cause you wouldn't be able to read the signs or read the test!

Books would be useless!! Maps would be good for nothing! Computers would be worthless.

Imagine not even being able to read what your friends write to you on MSN. In fact, if you couldn't read you wouldn't even be able to write back to them. You couldn't even sign into your account because you wouldn't be able to read the instructions on the screen!

Judges, teachers and students, I would like to talk to you today about how lucky we are in Canada, in Ontario, in Barrie, at Pope John Paul II School - that we all have the opportunity to learn how to read.

Learning to read is something that most of us take for granted, but in many places in the world kids never get the chance that we do. But at Pope John Paul II School, ALL kids get to learn how to read.

For some kids, learning to read is really easy. Maybe their parents already taught them before they came to school, or maybe they taught themselves, or maybe they just figured it out really easily.

But for MOST kids, we needed to be TAUGHT by good teachers how to read. Again, for some this came easy. And for others of us, this was harder. That's where Reading Recovery comes in.

When I was littler, my Mom read to me every night. In fact, she still reads to me often. I remember asking her for another story and another story and never wanting to go to sleep because I just loved being read to.

And then I came to school and one of my favourite parts of the day in Kindergarten was when the teacher read us a story.

But in Grade One, I was mortified when the teacher told me that now I had to learn how to read. I had NO interest in learning to read - my Mom was still reading me bedtime stories - and I really saw no reason why I had to learn to read. But the teacher persisted (and I resisted!) and I soon found myself falling behind in Grade One.

My Mom flipped into panic-mode!! She started calling all over the place - she wanted to put me in some kind of tutoring program like Sylvan or something like that. But then - Mrs. Brooks stepped in and said, "Wait, he's going to make it into Reading Recovery!" I had no idea what Reading Recovery was at the time (now I know so much about it I could

probably teach it, but that's a story for another day!) - anyway, all I know is the news that I was getting in sure calmed my Mom down.

I soon discovered that being in Reading Recovery meant I got to be one of those lucky kids that got out of class for a 1/2 hour each day to go and read with the Reading Teacher. Already it was sounding pretty good.

And I soon learned that Reading Recovery was actually a lot of fun. At first I resisted of course because, like I said, I had no interest in learning how to read. But then I realized that Mrs. Brooks was not going to settle for that. She continued to insist on me learning. So when I finally decided to join in and help her out, I quickly learned to read in just 13 weeks. By the end of Grade One I was reading at the same level as all the rest of the kids in my class, and had finally learned that reading to myself could actually be a lot of fun.

I can't even begin to imagine what it would be like if I hadn't had the chance to learn to read back in Grade One. Now I LOVE to read. I love to read Goosebumps novels and books about animals, especially cats. I love to go on the internet and search for coins on ebay for my coin collection. I love to read magazines. And one of my favourite things to do is talk to my friends on MSN.

We are SO lucky at Pope John Paul II School that we have teachers and a principal who care and want to help us learn how to read and how to become better readers - teachers that notice when we are having trouble. I'm SO glad MY Grade One teacher noticed back then!

And one more thing about learning how to read - when I was in Reading Recovery my Mom came in to see a lesson and loved it so much that she decided to become a Reading Recovery teacher too. I feel really proud that she loves her job so much and a lot of that is because of me.

**READING ROCKS!!**