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ACCREDITOR

FEATURED

THE AWESOME BENEFITS OF COMIC BOOKS FOR KIDS

- ➔ Turn reluctant readers into ravenous readers
- ➔ Give struggling readers confidence
- ➔ Increase your child's inference
- ➔ Expand your child's bank of words

EXCLUSIVE

3 Things College Campuses Can Do to Prevent Suicide

THE REAL PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENTS IN EDUCATION

EDITOR'S NOTE

Why comic books? I have revisited this question more than once since I began my career as an educator. The answer is somewhat autobiographical: I was the kind of kid who didn't always embrace required readings at school but did read voraciously at home. Often, this reading was based on comic books and adventure stories. I would push aside "schoolish" reading when given the chance, in favor of the fiction I really wanted to explore.

There's a powerful and fascinating grammar that takes place within the frames, pages, and panels of comic books, and the illustrations working alongside the text have been an engaging element of my instruction for a wide range of students, including English language learners, middle school students, and even some students at the college level. This month IAO came across the event of Comic book day and discuss the importance of this event with IAO's avid readers.



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The hidden superpowers and positive effects of comic books and graphic novels shouldn't be overlooked.

For a long time comic books got a pretty bad rap. They were the sneaky distraction that schoolchildren disguised inside the pages of 'real books'. People saw them as a more simplified version of reading; something that couldn't offer the same complexity or developmental benefits that 'serious books' could.

Comic books and graphic novels are spread across many different genres, including comedy, drama, sci-fi and fantasy, and there is bound to be something to suit all tastes, ages and reading levels.

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A child wearing a teal cape is reading a comic book. The background is a collage of comic book panels. One panel shows a man with a speech bubble that says "МЕНЯ НЕ СУЩЕСТВУЕТ." (I don't exist.). Another panel shows a character with the sound effect "хлоп." (clap). The text "THE AWESOME BENEFITS OF COMIC BOOKS FOR KIDS" is overlaid in large white letters, with yellow horizontal lines above "THE" and below "KIDS".

THE AWESOME BENEFITS OF COMIC BOOKS FOR KIDS



For a long time comic books got a pretty bad rap. They were the sneaky distraction that schoolchildren disguised inside the pages of 'real books'. People saw them as a more simplified version of reading; something that couldn't offer the same complexity or developmental benefits that 'serious books' could.

But now parents and educators are beginning to see the hidden benefits of the humble comic book (or graphic novel). Professor Carol Tilley from the Department of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois says, "A lot of the criticism of comics and comic books come from people who think that kids are just looking at the pictures and not putting them together with the words."

THE HIDDEN SUPERPOWERS AND POSITIVE EFFECTS OF COMIC BOOKS AND GRAPHIC NOVELS SHOULDN'T BE OVERLOOKED.

"Some kids, yes. But you could easily make some of the same criticisms of picture books – that kids are just looking at pictures, and not at the words."

Here are just some of the awesome benefits of reading comic books:

01 THEY TURN RELUCTANT READERS INTO RAVENOUS READERS

One of the best and most obvious benefits of comic books is that they can be more fun and easier to read than regular books. This can be extremely appealing to young children who would otherwise have little interest in reading traditional forms of books. Many children who think they hate reading respond particularly well to comic books that are based on movies or television shows they enjoy, such as Scooby-Doo and Astro Boy.

02 THEY GIVE STRUGGLING READERS CONFIDENCE

Comic books don't intimidate struggling readers with an overwhelming page of text. They usually offer short and easy-to-read sentences, alongside other visual and text cues (e.g. character sighs, door slams etc.) for context. They're also helpful for children with learning difficulties; children with autism can learn a lot about identifying emotions through the images in a comic book. Children with dyslexia, who may find it frustrating to finish a page in a traditional book, often feel a sense of accomplishment when they complete a page in a comic book. And as many of us know, accomplishment plays a key role in building confident and fluent readers.





03 THEY INCREASE YOUR CHILD'S INFERENCE

Observation refers to seeing something happening. Inference refers to figuring out something based on evidence and reasoning. It's an important component of successful comprehension and a valuable life skill for all young children to develop. Comic books can increase inference in young children by encouraging them to “read between the lines” and infer meaning from the images. Children who read comics often need to infer what is not written by the narrator, which is a complex reading strategy. Comic books also help children become familiar with sequencing and understanding succinct language.

04 THEY EXPAND YOUR CHILD'S BANK OF WORDS

When many people think of comic books, they probably don't take into account the repository of words used on every page, or the opportunity they offer to strengthen vocabulary skills. Comic books give children a unique opportunity to acquire new vocabulary in combination with context cues, that is, information from pictures or from other text cues to help children decipher the meaning of unfamiliar words.

05 THEY CAN BE A VALUABLE ACCOMPANIMENT FOR OTHER LEARNING DISCIPLINES

Comic books that explore or touch on historical events, classic tales, wildlife, nature, positive relationships and more can provide a valuable supplement to other areas of learning. For example, if your child is learning about the ancient Egyptians, a comic book story set in ancient Egypt may use pictures to explain important period details, such as clothing, food, rituals, farming, construction, trade, commerce, and cultural and social traits. By taking in a combination of words and illustrations, many children obtain the big picture more easily and with more enthusiasm than they would from using textbooks alone.

06 THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT COMIC BOOK GENRES TO SUIT ALL TASTES

Comic books aren't just about superheros and villains. And they're certainly not just for boys. Comic books and graphic novels are spread across many different genres, including comedy, drama, sci-fi and fantasy, and there is bound to be something to suit all tastes, ages and reading levels. There may even be something that you might like to get into yourself, or enjoy together with your child, snuggled up before bedtime!






3 THINGS COLLEGE CAMPUSES CAN DO TO PREVENT SUICIDE

Colleges and universities can take meaningful action to support students' mental health.

The deaths of three students by suicide at New Jersey's Rowan University this semester has sparked new conversations about the importance of mental health and safety services on college campuses. Suicide is now the second leading cause of death for 15- to 24-year olds in the United States, and a recent national survey found that 2 percent of college students attempted suicide within the past year.

EDC's Bonnie Lipton, a campus suicide prevention expert with the Suicide Prevention Resource Center, says that many colleges and universities want to do more to prevent suicide.

"In practice, effective prevention is hard to do because it has to extend well beyond the campus counseling center," she says. "Residence life services, administration, campus police, and other campus groups all have to be involved."



And there's the issue of funding, too. Hiring counselors, offering mental health services, leading prevention trainings, and rolling out initiatives that promote wellness and connectedness all require financial resources.

“Health and wellness prevention staff and counselors are often stretched thin, simultaneously treating students but also training faculty staff and students on signs of suicide and how to refer students to help,” Lipton says.

How can campuses improve their prevention programs? It's all about coordination, collaboration, and planning. Here, Lipton identifies three actions that colleges and universities can take to prevent suicide on campus.



ASSESS THE NEED FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES



Surveys that ask students about their mental health needs and perceptions about counseling are foundational to providing effective services. They often provide valuable information about the incidence of students' mental health concerns, how students feel about using their campus counseling service, and who students turn to when they need help.

This information can help schools and counselors identify who is struggling, what kinds of support they need, and which campus stakeholders need to be part of the prevention conversation. That data can serve as a powerful argument for greater investment in counseling and mental health services, says Lipton.

“Surveys can help you make your case to university leadership,” she says. “You can point to the survey, and say, ‘Look, we found that this many students are struggling academically because they are experiencing anxiety or depression. We need to do more.’”

MAKE IT COMPREHENSIVE

Suicide prevention requires multiple, complementary efforts that address different aspects of the issue. For colleges and universities, comprehensive suicide prevention includes identifying students at risk for suicide, providing effective care and treatment for students with mental health challenges, and investing in “upstream” programs that promote positive life skills, wellness, and connectedness across the entire student body.





Lipton says that campuses can use a number of other strategies to help promote better mental health and well-being, including:

- Implementing bystander support campaigns that encourage students to support peers who need help and to build connections between students
- Running gatekeeper trainings that train faculty, staff, and student leaders to identify the warning signs of suicide and to know how to intervene
- Establishing a prescription drop box where students can deposit unused medications
- Making mental health services on- and off-campus more accessible and culturally appropriate

“No one thing will stop suicide,” Lipton says. “Campuses should really have multiple programs and initiatives underway in order to reach as many students as possible.”

DEVELOP CLEAR POLICIES

Finally, it is essential for colleges and universities to develop clear protocols for what to do if a student is in crisis or is hospitalized. Protocols can help counselors, medical staff, and school leadership act quickly and follow established procedures.

Lipton points to St. John’s University in New York as an example of how clear policies and collaboration with external partners can promote student health.





“St. John’s created a memorandum of understanding with nearby Northwell Hospital that when a student needs to be hospitalized for mental health concerns, the university and the hospital will work closely on the student’s treatment and care,” she says. “The university is notified when the student is about to be discharged, and then university, hospital, and student collaborate on determining the student’s treatment plan. It helps smooth that transition back to school.”

Lipton also recommends that every campus have a plan for what to do if a student dies by suicide. This includes determining ahead of time the process for notifying the community, having a clear campus policy on memorials, making resources available to students who are grieving, and working with campus and local media on safe news reporting after a suicide death.

“I always tell the campuses I work with, ‘I hope you’ll never have to deal with this, but it’s better to have a written plan and never have to use it,’” Lipton says. “Having a protocol is really important, because it helps people know what to do.”

EXCLUSIVE



THE REAL PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENTS IN EDUCATION

Assessment is a key part of today's educational system. Assessment serves as an individual evaluation system, and as a way to compare performance across a spectrum and across populations. However, with so many different kinds of assessments for so many different organizations available (and often required) these days, it can sometimes be hard to keep the real purpose of assessing in view. So, what's really at the heart of all these assessments?

The purpose of assessment is to gather relevant information about student performance or progress, or to determine student interests to make judgments about their learning process. After receiving this information, teachers can reflect on each student's level of achievement, as well as on specific inclinations of the group, to customize their teaching plans.

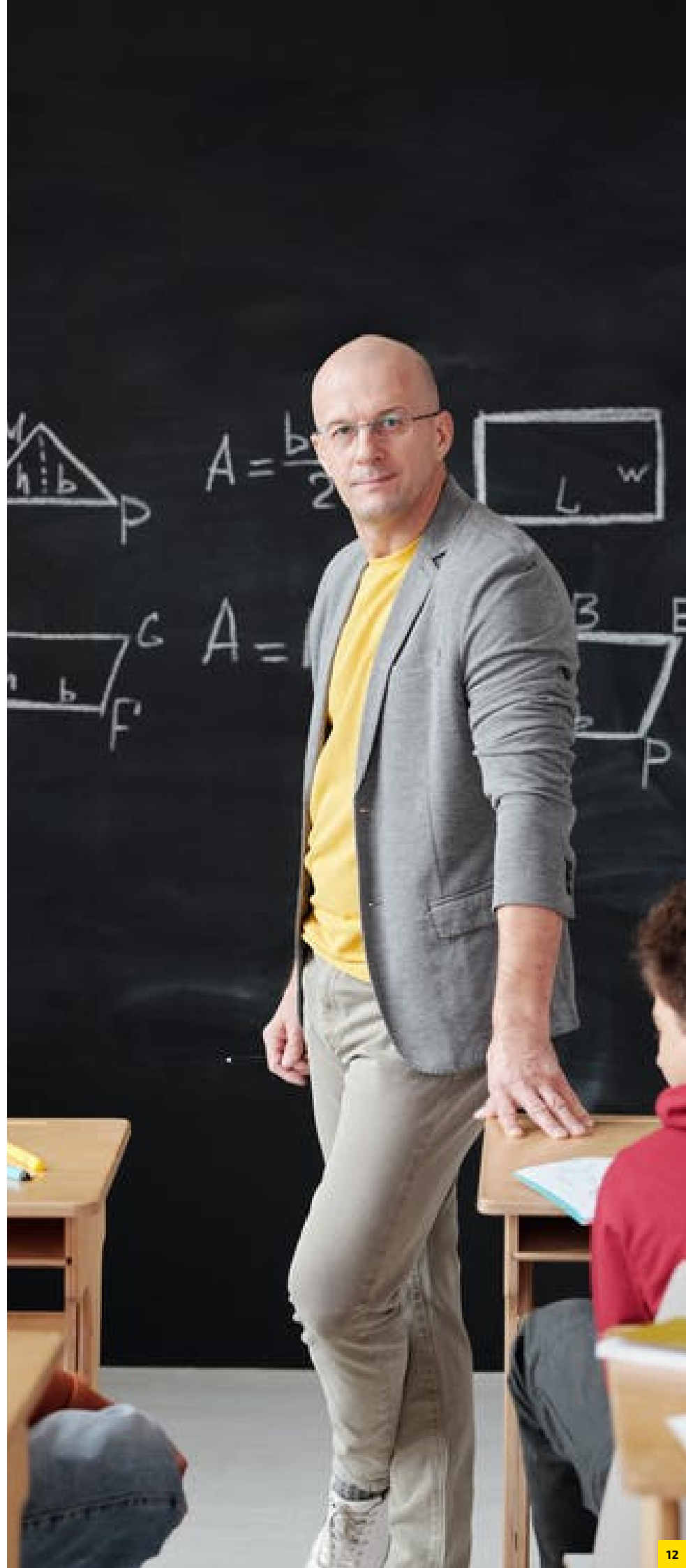


Continuous assessment provides day-to-day feedback about the learning and teaching process. Assessment can reinforce the efficacy of teaching and learning. It also encourages the understanding of teaching as a formative process that evolves over time with feedback and input from students. This creates good classroom rapport. Student assessments are necessary because:

- Throughout a lesson or unit, the teacher might want to check for understanding by using a formative assessment.
- Students who are experiencing difficulties in learning may benefit from the administration of a diagnostic test, which will be able to detect learning issues such as reading comprehension problems, an inability to remember written or spoken words, hearing or speech difficulties, and problems with hand-eye coordination.
- Students generally complete a summative assessment after completing the study of a topic. The teacher can determine their level of achievement and provide them with feedback on their strengths and weaknesses. For students who didn't master the topic or skill, teachers can use data from the assessment to create a plan for remediation.
- Teachers may also want to use informal assessment techniques. Using self-assessment, students express what they think about their learning process and what they should work on. Using peer assessment, students get information from their classmates about what areas they should revise and what areas they're good at.

Some standardized assessment procedures are designed to compare the academic achievement of students from different schools, states, nationwide or worldwide. For example:

- The Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) was administered to random samples of fourth graders in 36 countries and eighth graders in 48 countries.
- The Program for International Student Achievement (PISA) was last administered in 2012. It tests functional skills in reading, math, and science on a 3-year cycle. American students scored below the international average on the last test.
- Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) focuses on reading comprehension on a 5-year cycle. It was last administered in 2011.
- Before you administer an assessment, be sure you understand what its purpose is. What is it testing? Who is it testing? What entity will the results be reported to? Understanding the makeup of each assessment you give will help you better prepare your students to match up to it.



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