Student:

Samantha

Topic:

How important is reading to children's language and cognitive development?

What is your name?

My name’s Sam.

What was your research question?

My Research Project was ‘How important is reading to children’s learning and cognitive development?’

How did you decide that would be your question?

I decided to do my question because I’ve always had an interest in my learning aptitude at the current, like my current learning aptitude. I thought back to my childhood days where Mum and me would sit on the couch and she would read, like, 15 books at a time to me and I thought well, look, maybe that has resulted in me enjoying English and Humanities and writing well. So I preliminary researched into childhood development and reading and then saw a cross reference in there so that’s how I got my topic, basically, was seeing that, was hoping that reading did have a link to development and then I eventually found, proved that yes my hypothesis, say if you will, answered that.

How did you plan to answer your question?

I did a lot of refining which I found was quite important to the end product. So my preliminary research would help with that, just having a basic understanding of the topic and then that helped me understand it so much that I could ask smaller questions, so like, focus questions that than would build me up into my major question. It was quite intense documenting all my information because I felt, like keeping a journal entry for nearly everything I found was a good idea. So that kept me on par with everything as well as keeping me organized. It was kind of like an outlet into my ideas. So like putting things that I’d read into my own words, so say I read a really sophisticated and academic journal then putting it into my own words in my journal would help me understand it.

Where did your information mainly come from?

I got my information from, like, a range of sources. I did about 3 interviews with professionals, like teachers and even a Waldorf educator, so that was looking at alternative perspectives, also other primary sources and secondary, so blogs and then, like, academic journals, so more sophisticated kind of information sources. In Psychology at the time, in Year 11 Psychology, we were talking about observational learning, so I could kind of infer from that, from what I’ve just observed separate to the actual Research Project itself, you know childhood reading and my own experiences as well.

How did you present your research outcome?

I did a report style which was directed at educators and children as well as parents, namely early parents or you know parents thinking about starting a family to educate them on the importance of reading and I guess, mainly, it would also be directed to parents who really hold their children’s educational success as a high importance, kind of thing. I chose to do the report style because my research was very, you know, English literacy based, so I thought, you know, writing would suit, you know, a literacy based subject. Also the report style obviously it can be directed at, you know, parents and educators, like, they can physically pick it up and read it instead of, you know, doing a poster, I just thought it was the most accessible source for parents and educators.

What challenges came up whilst undertaking the Research Project?

You have to be organized a lot of the time to be able to do it. So that was always being on top of my journals which I didn’t do all the time, so doing that and also finding people to interview. Sometimes people didn’t reply back but in the end that was okay because I just persevered on and, you know, eventually found people and then within the interviews it was always hard keeping towards a time frame because you wanted to ask so many questions. But, you know, you just have to quickly ask a question and then they will reply back and that kind of thing. So they were probably my main challenges as well as probably, in the initial stages just understanding academic language and that kind of thing but you know that came naturally because I was so exposed to it, kind of thing. Things that went swimmingly was finding sources which was very handy. So I think from early days at St Peters’, you know, we’ve been taught key word searches and, like, selecting and annotating. So all those processes were easy with the topic because choosing a good topic, a topic that’s not too broad, not too narrow, it allows you to find successful sources.

What would you say to students about to start their Research Project?

How did your Research Project prepare you for what you are doing now?

Doing the Research Project a year prior to Year 12 has definitely helped me with my Year 12 studies. I mean for kids who do it in Year 12 I can definitely see the changeover into university being made smoother sailing, I would say, because with my Year 12 subjects, namely Business and Enterprise and Psychology, with research tasks you have to imbed quotes, like you’re expected to know how to imbed quotes, to do a bibliography, Harvard referencing, selecting…the basic ability to select appropriate sources, are all very important to getting, you know, the high range subjects. So the Research Project definitely exposed me to those things, honed in my abilities and then I can just transfer them into my Year 12 subjects.