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**Kristi Yamaguchi** Olympic Gold-Medalist, Author, Philanthropist and Mother

What's not to love about reading to a child?

I've visited many schools as part of my Always Dream Foundation's focus on childhood literacy. My favorite part bar none is getting the chance to read to the students.

With National Reading Month now upon us, it's a terrific time for us adults to pay attention to some crucial statistics -- nearly half of our kindergartners start school unprepared, for example -- and take up a challenge to read to our young children for just 20 minutes a day.

Kids who are read to at least three times a week by someone in the family -- a parent, grandparent, even a sibling -- are almost **twice as likely to score in the top 25 percent in reading** compared to children who were read to less often. Yet only **about half of all 3- to 5-year olds** are read to on a daily basis by a family member. Let's change that.

When my daughters were only a few months old, our pediatrician said: Start reading to them now. And it's true. Even a baby can cuddle on your lap, look at a book and hear your voice. The long-term benefits are truly magical.

For me, the two most important pieces of advice are to read to your kids early on -- and make reading together a household routine.

My Always Dream Foundation is now focused on building awareness around the importance of reading. Every year, we support thousands of underserved children and their parents by providing resources and tools to encourage reading in school and at home.

Reading is a fundamental building block to success in school, which translates to success in life. Let's pick up a book and get them started.

