



The Teaching of Reading: It Is Imperative To Get It Right

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Consequences of Not Teaching Reading Correctly

- Damage to cognitive and emotional health and development: ***incalculable***
- Consequences of being ashamed of one's mind and learning abilities: ***incalculable***
- Reduced ability to think critically and self-reflexively: ***incalculable***
- Loss of self-esteem: ***incalculable***
- Diminished academic opportunity: ***incalculable***
- Lost income opportunity: ***hundreds of billions annually***

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Consequences of Not Teaching Reading Correctly

- Educational costs to the taxpayers: ***hundreds of billions annually***
- Perpetuation of racial and ethnic **inequities**: ***incalculable***
- Correlated justice and welfare system costs to the taxpayers: ***hundreds of billions annually***
- Loss of such a significant percentage of the population contributing to--instead of draining--the economy: ***incalculable***
- Loss of such a significant percentage of the population participating in our political process: ***incalculable***
- Loss in international economic competitiveness: ***incalculable***

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Teaching Reading

"Some people there are who, being grown; forget the horrible task of learning to read. It is perhaps the greatest single effort that the human undertakes, and he must do it as a child."

- John Steinbeck, 1962 Nobel Prize Winner for Literature

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Teaching Reading

"No other skill taught in school and learned by school children is more important than reading. It is the gateway to all other knowledge. Teaching students to read by the end of third grade is the single most important task assigned to elementary schools. Those who learn to read with ease in the early grades have a foundation on which to build new knowledge. Those who do not are doomed to repeated cycles of frustration and failure."

- American Federation of Teachers

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"Reading is absolutely fundamental. It's almost trite to say that. But in our society, the inability to be fluent consigns children to failure in school and consigns adults to the lowest strata of job and life opportunities."

- Dr. Grover Whitehurst, Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Education - Director, Institute of Education Sciences ([Children of the Code interview](#))

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"No question that the price tag is hundreds of billions of dollars." Both to support the normal acquisition of reading and certainly to deal with the consequences of reading failure."

- **Dr. Grover Whitehurst, Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Education - Director, Institute of Education Sciences** ([Children of the Code interview](#))

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"You know if you look at where we are today, the bottom line is for a country like America to be **leaving behind about 38-40% of its youngsters in terms of not learning to read is unconscionable.** What makes it equally or doubly unconscionable is if you disaggregate those data: **70% approximately of young African Americans kids can't read. 70%! If you look at Hispanic kids, 65-70%! The** fact of the matter is when we do our studies and we identify kids at risk for reading failure, we know that the majority of those kids who are at risk and who will hit the wall as they learn to read are kids from poverty. "

- **Dr. G. Reid Lyon, Branch Chief, National Institute for Child Health and Human Development** ([Children of the Code interview](#))

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"Poor reading produces a perception of stupidity and dumbness to peers and clearly to the youngster who is struggling. That is the shame. **They feel like they're failures; they tell us that.** And sadly, when we talk with these kids, adolescents, and adults who've had a tough time, that shame of not learning to read is further exacerbated by the fact that they can't compete occupationally and vocationally--they don't do well in school. **Clearly the adolescents show us a level of pain that this society doesn't even see."**

- **Dr. G. Reid Lyon, Branch Chief, National Institute for Child Health and Human Development** ([Children of the Code interview](#))

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"First reading itself, and then the whole education process, becomes **so imbued with, stuffed with, amplified, magnified by shame** that children can develop an aversion to everything that is education."

- **Donald L. Nathanson, M.D., author of *Shame and Pride*, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry and Human Behavior at Jefferson Medical College, Executive Director of the Silvan S. Tomkins Institute** ([Children of the Code interview](#))

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"There are actually states in the United States that build prisons based on how many people are illiterate."

- Dr. Lesley Morrow, President, International Reading Association
- (9-8-03 Children of the Code interview)

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"The link between academic failure and delinquency, violence and crime is welded to reading failure."

U.S. Department of Justice

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“70% of the inmates in America’s prisons can’t read above the 4th grade level.”

Proliteracy

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“43% of Americans with the lowest literacy skills live in poverty and 70% have no job or a part-time job. Only 5% of Americans with strong literacy skills live in poverty.”

National Institute for Literacy

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"75% of unemployed adults have reading or writing difficulties."

National Institute for Literacy

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"The challenge for the next ten years is exactly what you have laid out; the challenge is to bridge this enormous divide (between brain-based learning science and the general public-ed)."

- James Wendorf, Executive Director, National Center for Learning Disabilities

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“When we look at the kids who are having a tough time learning to read and we went through the statistics, 38% nationally, disaggregate that, 70% kids from poverty and so forth hit the wall. **95% of those kids are instructional casualties. 95% of the kids hitting the wall in learning to read are what we call NBT: Never Been Taught.**”

Dr. Reid Lyon interviewed for “**Children of the Code**”

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“What I’m saying is that time after time our president, much of our leadership downtown, the secretary of education, the secretary of health and human services, they all know these data. **They all have taken very close looks at the fact that we have a national shame in terms of teaching our kids to read.** They all know it doesn’t have to be that way. They all know that **when we do things right, based upon evidence, not philosophy, not belief, not untested assumptions, but on what continues to grind out of the scientific mill, we reduce that shame, that 70% of many kids who cannot learn to read to about 2-6%.**”

Reid Lyon, “**Children of the Code Interview**”

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The resistance in the educational community, particularly at the higher education level where teachers are trained, is enormous, almost unbelievable. When you show people objective information, non-philosophically driven research that for these kids, these interactions work very productively such that where a youngster was at the 10th percentile in reading before, and is now at the 60th percentile in reading, and you can show that time after time, but you still see substantial resistance from the educational community, it begins to tell us that many of these issues are way beyond the kid issues, these are adult issues. They are fascinating adult issues where human beings are latching on to their beliefs, their assumptions, their egos and their careers rather than looking very clearly at what works, what doesn't, making sure people know what works, measuring it and getting the kids up to snuff.

Reid Lyon, "Children of the Code Interview"

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If a child with a reading difficulty is not identified and proper forms of intervention provided by the start of third grade, there is only a 25% chance that that student will ever read at grade level in his public school career.

National Institutes of Health, 2005

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The Great Reading Debate:

Whole Language vs. Phonics


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The reading wars have raged for the past two and a half decades. In response to these disputes, congress convened a National Reading Panel in 1998. The panel was charged with reviewing research-based experiments to determine what practices work best.

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Five Strands of Reading Determined important by the findings of the National Reading Panel (2000):

- Phonemic Awareness
- Phonics
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension

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Phonemic Awareness:

It is essential that students who are learning to read have adequate phonemic awareness. That is he can hear, segment, and manipulate the sounds found within words.

Ex: "What is /tick/ with out the /t/?"

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Phonemic Awareness:

It is essential to understand that speech sounds differ from our orthographic (spelling) system. Unless teachers can distinguish speech sounds and teach them both in isolation and when co-articulated, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to convey this understanding to students.

(phoneme worksheet)

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How do you teach phonemic awareness?

- Rhyming games
- Say /cowboy/ without the /boy/
- Colored blocks to represent sounds

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Phonics:

Phonics is the symbol-sound structure of our language. It is essential for students to have a foundational knowledge of phonics in order to read and spell.

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Phonics example:

We teach c, /cat/, /k/. The students practice reading word lists that follow this pattern. What happens when they reach the word, "city"?

"city" becomes "kitty." Why should "city" be "sity" instead of "kitty?" Because "c" followed by "i," "e," or "y" says /s/ as in "city," "cycle," and "cent."

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It is very important that we teach reading and spelling together so that they reinforce each other.

For example, as the student learns that "c" before "i," "e," or "y" says /s/, they **read and spell** this pattern of the rule using controlled word lists.

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Fluency:

Fluency is comprised of reading accuracy and reading rate. If a reader is not accurate or does not read at a sufficient rate, there is not enough mental energy available for the true purpose of reading, comprehension. Fluency is a critical piece of the reading process and must be modeled and practiced consciously and consistently.

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Vocabulary:

Background information, including familiarity with the vocabulary of a given topic, is an important predictor of comprehension. Like all strands of reading, vocabulary instruction should be direct and systematic. Vocabulary is also learned through reading. Students who struggle to read will also lag in vocabulary development.

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- **Vocabulary:**

When teaching vocabulary, it is critical to teach morphology. Morphology is the study of word meaning. By having an explicit awareness of morphemes, the smallest unit of meaning in a language, teachers can better teach vocabulary and help students become more efficient readers by helping them “chunk” word parts.

Morpheme Worksheet

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Comprehension:

Comprehension is obviously the goal of reading, but it is wrong to assume that if the student can read the material, he can have a full understanding of what he has read. Comprehension also needs to be taught directly and systematically.

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Comprehension Strands:

- Main Idea
- Detail
- Cause-Effect
- Inferential
- Interpretive

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Teaching of Comprehension:

- Story Grammar
- Paragraph Structure for expository text
- Reciprocal Reading
- Text Mapping using graphic organizers
- S.Q.3R: Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review

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Some Fun:

What do the three words in each of these sets of spelling errors have in common? What phonological processing errors might they represent?

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Set one:

Jele for chili:
Garash for garage:
Sbent for spent:

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Set Two:

Poit for point:
Kinchen for kitchen:
Frut for front:

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Set Three:

Speas for spears:
Colol for color:
Tee for tree:


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What was this child trying to spell and why did he make the error?

"Chrane"

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What was this child trying to spell and why did he make the error?

"Gress"

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From a research perspective, characteristics of good reading instruction:

- Direct and Explicit
- Sequential and Systematic
- Multi-sensory
- Developmentally-Appropriate Meta Aspect

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Teaching Reading: Policy

The resistance in the educational community, particularly at the higher education level where teachers are trained, is enormous, almost unbelievable. When you show people objective information, non-philosophically driven research that for these kids, these interactions work very productively such that where a youngster was at the 10th percentile in reading before, and is now at the 60th percentile in reading, and you can show that time after time, but you still see substantial resistance from the educational community, it begins to tell us that many of these issues are way beyond the kid issues, these are adult issues. They are fascinating adult issues where human beings are latching on to their beliefs, their assumptions, their egos and their careers rather than looking very clearly at what works, what doesn't, making sure people know what works, measuring it and getting the kids up to snuff.

Reid Lyon, "**Children of the Code Interview**"

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Teaching Reading: Policy

Because of declining test scores and a widening gap between students who have learned to read and those who have not, President Bush and his administration adopted No Child Left Behind in 2002.

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Teaching Reading: Policy

An outcome of NCLB was "Reading First," a research-based program teaching teachers about the five strands identified by the NRP. First implemented in 2002, this is a federally-funded program designed to improve literacy skills of the most disadvantaged students. It has been very effective.

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Teaching Reading: Policy

Minnesota has also responded to falling test scores. In January, 2007, a state reading task force was created. There are fifteen members on the committee including: seven college/university professors; two from the Minnesota Department of Education; two from the Minnesota Board of Teaching; three representing independent organizations involved in reading; and one parent advocate.

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Teaching Reading: Policy

Reading Task Force Mandate:

Minnesota is a standards-based state, not a credit-hours-based state. The standards are not precise and do not reflect the necessary knowledge to teach reading. Our task force has been charged with creating standards and competencies for teachers who teach reading.

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Teaching Reading: Policy

Reading Task Force Challenges:

There is very little time devoted to reading courses in undergraduate programs that certify elementary school teachers.

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Teaching Reading: Policy

Reading Task Force Challenges:

The accountability factor in terms of the current standards is weak and does not match what research demonstrates in the teaching of reading.

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Teaching Reading: Policy

Reading Task Force Challenges:

Participants on the reading task force have a wide range of beliefs and values when it comes to preparing teachers.

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Teaching Reading: Policy

There are currently five standards and fifty-six different competencies, one of which focuses on the five strands identified by the NRP as being the most critical elements of reading instruction. Despite what scientific research demonstrates, the task force is unwilling to prioritize standards or competencies.

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Teaching Reading: Policy

The majority of task force members view creating an engaging classroom or creating a motivating environment to be equal to the importance of having teachers have a knowledge of the five strands that can be applied in the classroom.

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Teaching Reading: Policy

As long as we cannot agree that there are more important aspects in the preparation of teachers, I do not believe that there will be fundamental changes in the way teachers are prepared to teach reading and, more importantly, too many Minnesota children will unnecessarily experience the pain and frustration of not being taught how to read.

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Teaching Reading: Policy

While we are not optimistic that we will make the needed changes through the reading task force, we have another avenue:

State legislature

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Reading Resources

- Sally Shaywitz's, Overcoming Dyslexia
- Anthony Pedrjana, Leaving Johnny Behind: Overcoming Barriers to Literacy and Reclaiming At-Risk Readers
- International Dyslexia Association (IDA) 410.296.0232
www.interdys.org
- Louisa Moats, "The Missing Foundation in Teacher Education"
- Children of the Code <http://www.childrenofthecode.org/>
- National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/default.htm>
- National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read
www.nationalreadingpanel.org
- Groves Academy (952.920.6377) info@grovesacademy.org;
www.grovesacademy.org
- Upper Midwest Branch of the International Dyslexia Association (UMBIDA) 651.450.7589
- Orton Gillingham of Minnesota (OG-M) 763.951.2379
www.ortongillingham-mn.org
- Lindamood-Bell of the Twin Cities: 952.835.0700
www.readingrockets.org