



Mission

Every learning-capable third-grade student achieves reading proficiency.
All students perform at grade level or above.

Need

Based upon the 2017 Nation’s Report Card from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) by the US Department of Education, 2/3 of students in the US are not proficient in reading by 4th grade. When disaggregated by race, 4/5 of children of color are not proficient.

Fourth Grade Reading Achievement Levels

Location	Achievement Level	Data Type	2002	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017
United States	Below basic	Percent	38%	38%	38%	34%	34%	34%	33%	32%	33%
	At or above basic	Percent	62%	62%	62%	66%	66%	66%	67%	68%	67%
	Below proficient	Percent	70%	70%	70%	68%	68%	68%	66%	65%	65%
	At or above proficient	Percent	30%	30%	30%	32%	32%	32%	34%	35%	35%

Fourth graders who scored below proficient reading level by race

Location	Race	Data Type	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017
United States	American Indian	Percent	81%	81%	80%	81%	78%	78%	79%
	Asian or Pacific Islander	Percent	60%	51%	55%	51%	49%	47%	44%
	Black or African American	Percent	88%	84%	86%	84%	83%	82%	81%
	Hispanic or Latino	Percent	85%	82%	83%	82%	81%	79%	78%
	Two or more races	Percent	68%	63%	68%	63%	61%	62%	60%
	White	Percent	61%	58%	58%	58%	55%	54%	54%

Source: <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#USA/1/8/10,11,12,13,15,14,2719>

Why does this matter?

1. 2/3 of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of 4th grade will end up in jail or on welfare. Over 70% of America’s inmates cannot read above a 4th grade level.
2. 1 in 4 children in America grow up without learning how to read.
3. Nearly 85% of the juveniles who face trial in the juvenile court system are functionally illiterate, proving that there is a close relationship between illiteracy and crime. More than 60% of all inmates are functionally illiterate.

<https://www.dosomething.org/facts/11-facts-about-literacy-america>

Why does this problem persist?

Based upon the long-standing results that show both an overall crisis in reading scores and a significant achievement gap between ethnic groups, it must be clear that the current approach is failing most students. Why?

Possible explanations include:

- Inadequate instruction
- Inadequate curriculum
- Learning-skill deficit
 - Learned skills
 - Mindset skills
 - Processing skills
- Situational influences that impact a student negatively
 - Home life situation
 - Child abuse
 - Hunger/nutrition
 - Bullying
 - Conflict with teacher(s) or other students
 - Illness or medical condition

Most students who struggle entered school behind in the foundational skills that empower reading success and never caught up—The Skill Gap.

(Annual Growth for All Students—Catch-Up Growth for Those Who Are Behind, Lynn Fielding, Nancy Kerr, and Paul Rosier, 2007)

Most schools do not have the resources to provide the individual instruction, attention, support, and training students who are behind need to catch up. The successful solution outlined in the book noted above at Kennewick School District was challenging to implement and expensive.

However, other schools have developed more affordable approaches to closing the Skill Gap in grades K-2. This approach is often referred to as flooding or immersion. In this model K-2 classes are separated by skill level for the reading period. Students with skill deficits receive more individual and small-group training either by paraprofessionals or volunteers. One Title school in Colorado Springs, CO has had notable success with this model, Soaring Eagles Elementary (SEE). In 2018, 60% of students statewide failed the Colorado 3rd grade English Language Arts Assessment. However, 77% of 3rd grade students at SEE passed the State ELA Assessment. They do not use any special reading program. Their success comes from the immersion process and quality of instruction. They maintain high standards and have a very supportive learning environment.

The Skill Gap

Prevention of learning problems is better than remediation. Prevention is less costly than remediation, generally easier to accomplish and preserves student self-esteem. Therefore, the

obvious first solution is to empower families to engage and support their children from womb-to-classroom and ensure more children enter school better prepared.

The next step is for all elementary schools to implement some form of a comprehensive immersion program in grades K-2 to close the Skill Gap for most students. The SEE model offers an excellent option.

For students past 3rd grade who still struggle, the same principles of immersion can still be used to close the Skill Gap and catch up. However, the older the student, the more difficult it can be to overcome learned compensation strategies and mindset.

Most traditional reading programs in use today are phonics-based. They seem to work adequately for students who have sufficient foundational skills. But, they don't work as well for students who lack key foundational skills—the Skill Gap. The primary reason for this is because traditional reading programs generally do not provide adequate training for all of the skills required for effective learning and reading success. Most schools do not provide enough individual support for students who are behind. If a student does not enter school with the foundational skills to learn effectively, the current instructional approach is not working to catch them up in most cases. It is not closing the Skill Gap.

There are three major skill categories that impact reading success: 1) learned skills such as print awareness and basic vocabulary, 2) mindset, self-esteem and social emotional skills, and 3) cognitive processing skills such as memory, visual processing, and auditory processing.

Traditional early-reading instruction focuses on learned skills related to reading, mostly phonics-based concepts. Some auditory processing skills may be trained. Several key non-phonics reading skills are often missed or not fully addressed. This includes sequencing, the proper understanding of non-content words, visual memory, writing/letter formation, naming, syntax, semantics, and comprehension.

Students who were often read aloud to in early years and developed better oral skills likely have all or most of the reading skills noted above such that traditional instruction works for them. If they don't have all of these skills, then the traditional instruction is often not sufficient.

Further, students who struggle often have a mindset, home life, or processing skill deficit which can cause learning to be harder and less effective. This is especially true for working memory and visual processing deficits. Most schools do not evaluate and address these other skill areas.

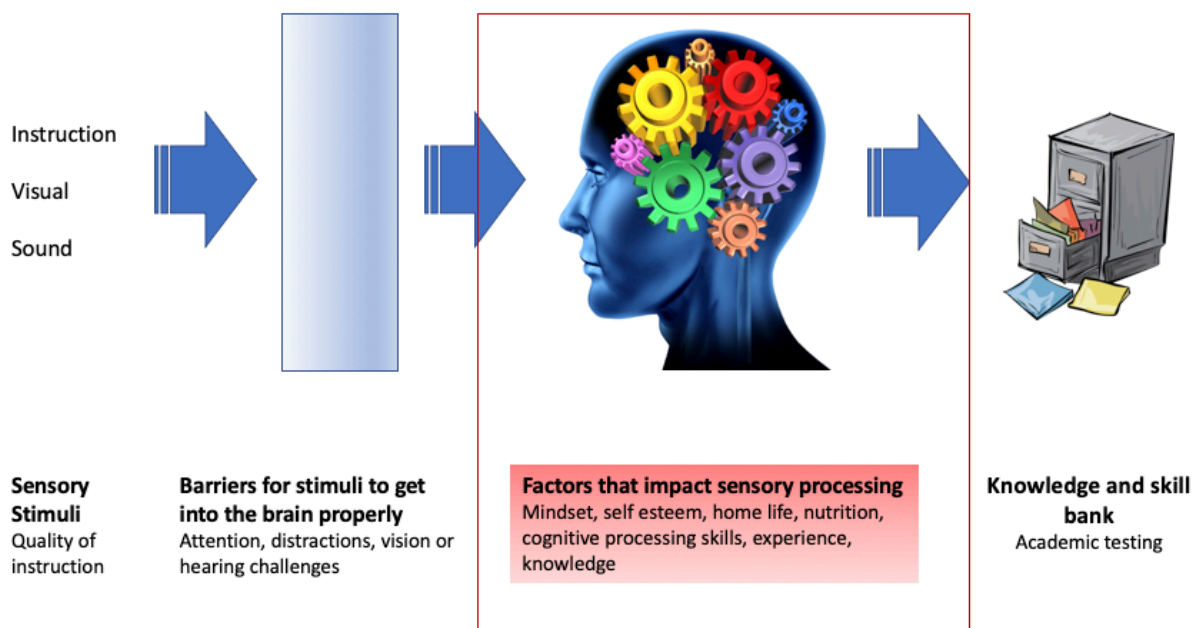
Learning is a process

Effective instruction is important but not sufficient for learning. Students must process the sensory inputs of instruction, make sense of the inputs and commit the important elements to memory in an orderly and logical manner. Much like a car has many components that must work properly in order for the car to run, our brains have many components that must work properly in order for us to learn.

Sensory inputs must first get into the brain and then be directed to the proper location of the brain for processing. Information can be lost, missed, or distorted just getting into the brain and being directed to the right part of the brain. Once the information has been received, the sensory inputs may or may not be processed effectively. Key processing skills such as memory and attention impact whether the sensory inputs are received and can be processed properly. Each hemisphere of the brain handles different processes, but the two hemispheres have to work together in order to accomplish most tasks. Sometimes the two hemispheres may not be in sync and communication may be impaired.

Factors that impact learning effectiveness

Education System focuses on instruction and testing.
Key to improving learning success is to evaluate and improve sensory processing.



Closing the Skill Gap

Is it possible to identify and understand what skills may be causing the Skill Gap? Once identified, is it possible to strengthen these skills?

Most schools already do adequate academic testing to identify learned-skill deficits. Examples are letter sounds, simple and complex sound codes, decoding, spelling, vocabulary, and basic grammar. However, there is a significant difference between the type of phonics-based testing done in grades K-2 and state English Language Arts Assessments done in third grade and above. Testing in grades K-2 is mostly about the mechanics of phonics and limited reading fluency. Starting in grade three, the tests are much more complex and deal with comprehension. It is common for students in grades K-2 to test proficient in the mechanics of phonics but fail state tests in grades 3 and above.

The goal is thereby to prepare students to automatically recognize words using visual memory skills, build vocabulary, and build comprehension skills. Given the complexity of the tests, students must also be taught how to take tests of this nature. Granted it is important for a student to be able to sound out new words, so phonology is an important skill. But, automatic pattern recognition (of words), vocabulary and comprehension are the real goals of reading proficiency.

Inherent in achieving reading fluency is the ability to process sensory inputs. There are at least 70 individual cognitive processing skills that have been identified, but these are grouped into major skill categories. Common groupings include attention, visual processing, auditory processing, memory, processing speed, and logic and reasoning. Most categories can be broken down further into sub-categories. For example, memory consists of short-term and long-term memory, working memory, auditory memory and visual memory.

Cognitive processing skill assessments are commonly used to help determine if a student qualifies for special education. However, this testing is used sparingly because of cost and resource requirements. Even once a student is identified as having any weak cognitive skills, little is done to strengthen these skills. Historically, only compensation strategies have been used in conjunction with more instruction. Few students who enter special education ever catch up fully.

Online cognitive skill screening is now available that is affordable and easy to administer so all students can be assessed. Various training techniques have been developed that often can strengthen weak processing skills. But, it requires sustained, individual attention to help students improve. Many online tools have been developed to make the training easier and more affordable. Ideally, families can be engaged to provide additional support at home.

Below is a summary of the tools and training approach.

<https://www.cornerstonemovement.org/reading-success.html>

1. Mindset

Mindset can have a strong negative or positive influence on learning. Mindset is generally defined as a person's core set of beliefs that determine a person's response to situations. Mindset can hold a student back from succeeding, or it can help a student overcome failure and go on to higher levels of success.

People tend to view their interactions with the world through their belief system or mindset. A person's mindset can impact self-esteem and performance. A student who has low self-esteem and does not believe they can succeed often will not succeed when they potentially could succeed. They may avoid trying new things because they fear failure will cause others to think poorly of them and define their intelligence as being low.

One of the more popular bodies of research on the topic defines two types of mindset: 1) growth mindset or 2) fixed mindset. Professor Carol Dweck is one of the leading researchers in

this field.

The following link provides a detailed summary about the topic. [Summary on Mindset and related topics](https://www.cornerstonemovement.org/mindset.html) (<https://www.cornerstonemovement.org/mindset.html>)

This topic area also covers motivation, persistence, perseverance, and expectations.

It is important for us to set higher expectations rather than to continue to accept failure.

It's not your fault

Our education system tends to label students. If a student is behind they are often placed into a remedial group. Parents may be called by the teacher with concerns about the student being behind. Most students view this negatively and believe they may have done something wrong-- they may think it is their fault.

We do need to know when a student is behind so the appropriate corrective measures can be taken. Somehow, we have to communicate with the student that it is not their fault. They have not done anything wrong. Participating in this Program is not a punishment.

Working consistently in the program can catch up a student to grade level or above so they no longer have to feel the same of being behind.

Actions

1. Review the summary on Mindset and related topics.
2. Evaluate whether the student has a fixed or growth mindset. ([Online Quiz](http://www.londonacademyofit.co.uk/learning-blog/learning/interactive-quiz-fixed-vs-growth-mindset/)) (<http://www.londonacademyofit.co.uk/learning-blog/learning/interactive-quiz-fixed-vs-growth-mindset/>)
3. If a student has a fixed mindset, identify strategies and actions you can take to help build a growth mindset.

2. Visual Processing

First, please make sure each student has had an eye exam to ensure there is no problem with vision.

There are three elements to vision: 1) the vision system receives visual sensory inputs (the optical system), 2) sensory inputs get into the brain and are directed to the proper part of the brain for processing, and 3) the brain quickly and accurately processes the sensory inputs to make sense of them.

If vision is blurry, that likely is the optical system and must be addressed by an eye doctor. However, reading difficulties can also be caused because the sensory information is not getting into the brain properly or the brain is not processing the information quickly and accurately. The assessments below can help to determine if visual processing skills may be an issue. Several of the assessments can also be used as exercises to strengthen visual processing skills.

There are three steps:

Step 1--Irlen Screening

10-12% of the population has Irlen Syndrome, which can make reading difficult. The light coming from the computer screen or bouncing off print on white paper overwhelms the visual processing system. It is similar in nature to driving into a sunrise or sunset and feeling overwhelmed by the bright light. This issue can make the letters move for some, or create headaches, or cause a reader to have difficulty focusing.

Screening for Irlen is fast, easy and free. If indeed a person has Irlen, usually a color overlay can lessen the issue. <https://www.cornerstonemovement.org/irlen-project.html>

Step 2--Evaluate fixation, tracking, saccades, and rapid automatic naming

Visit the Eye Can Learn website

This website has many free eye/vision development exercises.

<http://eyecanlearn.com>

We use one exercise in particular to test for fixation, tracking, saccades and rapid automatic naming. It only takes a few moments to evaluate if either of these visual processing elements is a potential issue. The same assessment can be used as an exercise to build these visual processing elements.

- Go to <http://eyecanlearn.com/tracking/saccades/>, scroll down to the number saccades exercise.
- Start with the slow speed and work up to the fast speed. Ask students to call out the numbers as they appear on the screen. This exercise also tests and trains Rapid Automatic Naming (<http://www.balancedreading.com/doubledeficit.html>).
- If a student struggles to do this, ask them to practice this exercise 5-10 minutes daily until it becomes easier for them.

Step 3--Evaluate Rapid Pattern Recognition and Visual Processing Speed

The alphabet is a series of symbols that represent sounds. The symbols or letters have to be learned and associated with the proper sounds of language. Each language has a unique set of letters and sounds that represent that language. In order to learn how to read proficiently, the brain has to learn how to quickly recognize each combination of letters that represent words and associate them with the proper sounds and meaning. This involves pattern recognition. Identifying anything requires the brain to recognize patterns. Playing with blocks of different sizes, shapes and colors is actually teaching a child pattern recognition skills and is preparing their brain for reading.

If the brain was not trained sufficiently from womb to classroom in rapid pattern recognition, reading may be difficult or slow. The following link provides access to an exercise that can be used to assess and train pattern recognition.

<http://cogread.org/PRE/>

Start with one number per group, which is the default setting. Identify and click on the pair of

numbers in each row as quickly as possible. Practice until it can be done easily and quickly without thinking.

Click on the options button on the main page to set the format for letters and up to four characters per group. Keep practicing until the exercise can be done with at least three letters/numbers per group.

3. Auditory Processing

Once the sounds of language are heard, the brain has to process these sounds and make sense of them. Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, process, identify and manipulate the sounds of language. It is considered a cognitive skill. Phonics are the specific letter codes associated with the sounds of language. Each language has its own unique set of phonics rules. Phonics is a learned skill.

Knowing the letter sounds of the alphabet is the first step. There are 26 letters in the English alphabet and one sound associated with each letter. These represent the simple codes; one sound per letter. In the English language, there are additional codes made up of letter combinations that represent the rest of the sounds of the language. These include the long vowels sounds and combinations such as "th" and "ough".

We have a series of exercises that can strengthen phonemic awareness and phonics skills as needed for each student. Your Family Ambassador will set up an account in the CogRead system to provide access to these exercises. These exercises would be done in conjunction with Reading Kingdom.

There are numerous websites that provide free information and training on phonics. One good site is <http://www.theschoolhouse.us>.

Another good site is <https://www.starfall.com>. They have some free tools and a paid plan that is affordable. They also have mobile applications.

4. Reading Kingdom

Our original program centered on assessing and strengthening cognitive processing skills. We noticed different levels of success depending upon how well reading was taught at a given school. We found it necessary to add a supplemental reading program to ensure our overall program was comprehensive to address all of the skill areas. Some reading programs we evaluated were not affordable.

None of the traditional programs addressed all of the reading skills needed to catch up students who lacked many of the foundational skills. We found one program in particular that was both affordable and more comprehensive. Reading Kingdom was developed based upon over 50 years of research by Dr. Marion Blank. Dr. Blank specialized in teaching students who had challenging situations. She is internationally known for her work teaching non-verbal children how to read, especially children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum disorder. This background also serves any student who is behind on any foundational skills that empower reading success.



Reading Kingdom is an award-winning online early-reading program. It teaches reading proficiency to a third-grade level. We generally recommend starting the program the second semester of kindergarten and really focus on the training during the summer before first grade. This will help each student enter first grade better prepared to succeed. We also use the program for students in grades 1-3, and older students who are below a third-grade level.

Lately, we have had several families begin the program at the start of kindergarten. The children did well and became the top readers in the class by the end of kindergarten. So, we are open to having children begin at the start of kindergarten if the parents feel the students are ready.

The Program normally cost \$200 per year. We have secured a source of scholarships, so Members pay only \$25 per student per year.

The Family Ambassador assigned to each family will create an account for each registered student and provide basic instructions to help students get started. They will also connect with families weekly to answer questions and encourage students to train consistently.

Students need to train consistently at least 15 minutes daily, five days per week.

<http://readingkingdom.com>, main program website

Please review the website for more information about the program.

Login to do the program at this website.

Especially, please watch the introduction video.

Reading Kingdom has a version for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

<http://asreading.com>

The program can also be set to a version for older students who are beginning to learn how to read. The program can also be set for English Language Learners.

5. Cognitive Processing Skills

Cognitive skills explain how the brain processes information. These skills include processing speed, visual processing, auditory processing, memory, attention, logic and reasoning. These skills enable a person to process sensory inputs and then perform tasks such as reading, learning, paying attention, planning, remembering, understanding, and solving problems.

In the past, these skills were thought to be fixed once a child reached a certain age. A wealth of new science and research has proved that the mature mind can still make new neural connections and improve cognitive skills through the proper training.

Cognitive skills can be assessed with the proper instruments. Historically, this required a trained professional to do the assessment one-on-one. This is expensive and time-consuming, thereby limiting the number of students who can be assessed.

Gibson Test of brain skills

We have access to an online cognitive skill screening tool based upon a proven clinical model, the Gibson Test. If a student struggles with any aspect of learning, cognitive skill screening can identify causes. The Gibson Test is a nationally validated/normed online tool that measures key cognitive skill functioning. The 45-minute screening includes nine different mental tasks organized like puzzles and games on a computer. By scoring the individual processing skills, the Gibson Test helps identify weak areas that may be contributing to learning struggles. Even high-performing students may be compensating and working harder than necessary because of one or more weak processing skills.

Why Test Cognitive Skill Summary

(https://www.cornerstonemovement.org/uploads/2/4/5/6/24568646/the_value_of_screening_cognitive_processing_skills.pdf)

Brain training

One of the best general Internet resources on the field of brain training is Sharp Brains.
<http://sharpbrains.com>

We have developed an online brain training program in collaboration with one of the leading clinical brain training companies. They have centers worldwide.

Students train 25-30 minutes daily, 4-5 days per week; more up to an hour daily if it is important to improve skills faster. Most students need to train for 6-12 months. The length of time depends upon the need and consistency of training.

Your Family Ambassador will work with you to set up your student(s) for the Gibson Test and Brain Training once the Reading Kingdom Program has been completed or if we are working with an older student.

Additional brain development information and tools

The brain and how effectively it processes inputs defines how easily and well a student can learn. The following links provide additional resources to consider to help students who struggle improve their brain processing.

Brain Integration Therapy

- Dianne Craft, <http://www.diannecraft.org>
- Do a Google search and locate a variety of videos on the topic.

Brain Balance

- Dr. Robert Melillo, *Disconnected Kids* (Do a search to find the book)
- Website, <https://www.brainbalancecenters.com>

Primitive reflex training

Pyramid of Potential, <http://www.pyramidofpotential.com>

The Skills of Reading Success

Skills	Status	Current Reading Program	Reading Kingdom Plus
Social Emotional			
Mindset			
Persistence			
Delayed gratification			
Discipline			
Basic learned skills			
Print awareness			
Letter recognition			
Letter sounds			
Basic vocabulary			
Key Reading Skills			
Sequencing			
Letter creation			
Phonology			
Semantics (meaning)			
Syntax (grammar)			
Non-content words (spelling + meaning)			
Vocabulary			
Rapid automatic naming			
Comprehension			
Processing Skills			
Attention			
Visual Processing			
Tracking, fixation, saccades			
Visual Memory			
Working Memory			
Short/Long-term memory			
Auditory Memory			
Processing speed			
Logic and reasoning			
Home life/family support			

Skills Required for Reading Success

In this model, all of the required skills are developed and in alignment.

This student has access to the skills that empower learning.

This student is proficient in reading.

Sensory input

Visual processing

Visual memory

Working memory

LT/ST memory

Auditory processing

Auditory memory

Processing speed

Mindset/SE

Persistence

Delayed gratification

Home life

Print awareness

Letter recognition

Letter sounds

Basic vocabulary

Sequencing

Letter creation

Phonology

Syntax

Semantics

Non-content words

Comprehension

Vocabulary

Rapid Naming

Skills Required for Reading Success

