

The Dyslexia Information Series Part 2

The World of
Dyslexia –
A Deeper Dive



Welcome



Friends, welcome back to part 2!

Here we are again. As I said last time, I am greeting you as a friend because if you're here then you're a part of our large and diverse dyslexia community. Our role within this community is to be a resource, a friend, a cheerleader, a sympathetic shoulder, a listening ear, or whatever it is that we need.

We here at The Dyslexia Initiative believe that we each have a responsibility to each other to be an ally in helping others navigate the road of dyslexia within education. We are all parents and as a result we are also all parent advocates.

Our mission here at DI is to educate and empower as many people as we can so that everyone can be the best possible parent advocate they can be. Our children deserve nothing less and we hope we can help give you the information and tools you need to do just that.

The only caveat I will give is we are not attorneys, so nothing shown or discussed here is legal advice.

And with that, let's get started.

Three quick announcements!

Don't forget to check out **Dyslexia Coffee Talk**.

When scheduled it airs live on Facebook @DyslexiaInitiative, on Saturdays at 11:30 am CST. And don't forget, it's a PODCAST too, so check us out on your favorite podcast platform, or head over to YouTube and you can watch them there too.

The Parent Sessions is a free series where the science of reading is broken down for parents. Sessions 1-12 covers developing early language skills. As of the date of this recording, future sessions are underway, so please check out those too. All handouts, links, etc. may be viewed here: <https://www.thedyslexiainitiative.org/the-parent-sessions>.

And, don't forget to register on our website, www.TheDyslexiaInitiative.org, for our **free quarterly newsletter** and other announcements as they become available. We never buy or sell information, so your registration is kept strictly confidential.

Agenda

The World of Dyslexia - A Deeper Dive

- Balanced Literacy versus Structured Literacy
 - The history of the reading wars and why
 - The role our universities play and why teachers are not to blame
 - How can the science be so disconnected from education?
 - Understanding the battlefield
- Measuring Reading Gaps
 - The Matthew Effect
 - Understanding NAEP Scores
 - Understanding the GORT and KTEA
 - Accuracy, Rate, Fluency & Comprehension
 - Fidelity – Know it, Love it
- The Importance of Written Expression
 - Writing fuels comprehension
- Accommodations
 - Accommodations v Modifications – Know the Difference
 - What accommodations will best serve my child
- Assistive Technology
- It's just not working, now what?
 - The implemented plan isn't working, so what now?
What are my rights and where do we go from here?
- Resources & Helpful Links

Balanced Literacy (BL) versus Structured Literacy (OG)

The history of the Reading Wars & why

- The Opposing Sides
 - Whole Language - is a discredited philosophy of reading, originally developed for teaching literacy in English. It is based on the premise that learning to read English comes naturally to humans, especially young children, in the same way that learning to speak develops naturally. The method became a major model for education in the United States, Canada, New Zealand, and Great Britain in the 1980s and 1990s despite there being no scientific support for the method's effectiveness.
 - Whole Language holds that learning to read and write English is analogous to learning to speak it -- a natural, unconscious process best fostered by unstructured immersion. In an atmosphere rich in simple printed texts and in reading aloud, small children make a wondrous associative leap from knowing the alphabet to being able to read whole words. Their minds receive print as if each word were a Chinese ideogram. If a word is unfamiliar, it can be skipped, guessed at, or picked up from context.
 - Balanced Literacy - is a theory of teaching reading and writing that arose in the 1990s and has a variety of interpretations. For some, balanced literacy strikes a balance between whole language and phonics and puts an end to the so-called reading wars. Others say balanced literacy in practice usually means the whole language approach to reading.
 - Some proponents of balanced literacy say it uses research-based elements of comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, phonemic awareness and phonics and includes instruction in a combination of the whole group, small group and 1:1 instruction in reading, writing, speaking and listening with the strongest research-based elements of each. They go on to say that the components of a balanced literacy approach include many different strategies applied during Reading Workshop and Writing Workshops.
 - On the other hand, critics say balanced literacy, like whole language, is a meaning-based approach that when implemented does not include the explicit teaching of sound-letter relationships as provided by systematic phonics.

The history of the Reading Wars & why

- The Opposing Sides Continued
 - The Science of Reading – “The Science of Reading (SoR) is a comprehensive body of research that encompasses years of scientific knowledge, spans across many languages, and shares the contributions of experts from relevant disciplines such as education, special education, literacy, psychology, neurology, and more. The Science of Reading has evolved from a wide span of research designs, experimental methods, participants, and statistical analyses. This conclusive, empirically supported research provides us with the information we need to gain a deeper understanding of how we learn to read, what skills are involved, how they work together, and which parts of the brain are responsible for reading development. From this research, we can identify an evidence-based best practice approach for teaching foundational literacy skills called Structured Literacy.”
 - “David Kilpatrick stated, “We teach reading in different ways; they [students] learn to read proficiently in only one way.” The Science of Reading (SoR) has demystified any wonder of how we learn to read and offers evidence backed by science to confirm that there is one right way to teach reading. In addition to this, the SoR offers key information to drive our approach to instruction and to reach all learners.”
 - <https://journal.imse.com/what-is-the-science-of-reading/>
- The origin of the Reading Wars
 - Failing Students or Failing Schools by Faith Borkowsky gives an amazing breakdown of the history of reading, the opposing sides and how we got where we are today.
 - The Knowledge Gap by Natalie Wexler breaks down not just the history of reading, but the various educational theories and the evolution of the schools of thought that have brought education as a whole to where it is today.
 - <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1997/11/the-reading-wars/376990/>

The History Of The Reading Wars & Why

- Is it over?
 - The short answer is no. Both sides are entrenched, and neither is giving up any time soon. Those dedicated to the pedagogy of BL will die on the hill defending it. Those of us entrenched on the side of SoR will do the same. Compromise does not exist and that's why neither side can or will budge.
 - We know how the brain learns to read, we are committed to ensuring the educational establishment understands this and at long last adopts it in every classroom across the country.
 - Later on, we will talk about NAEP, and the related scores that NAEP shows us regarding reading proficiency in this country. This data lies at the heart of the SoR argument, along with the empirical evidence regarding how the brain learns to read.

The role our universities play & why teachers are not to blame

- There is a cycle that is playing out across the educational landscape that has to be stopped. The publishing companies that put out the various balanced literacy-based reading curriculums in American schools, are the backers of various research and books that teachers engage in. These researchers and authors tend to be university educators. These educators receive funding from the publishing companies to support their work. These educators, funded by publishing companies who print the balanced literacy curriculums, are the ones teaching future educators.
- It is also difficult to break various pedagogical holds once they have taken root. That's what has happened with the universities across the country regarding the teaching colleges.
- Teachers are engrained with the various balanced literacy ideas, but their programs are devoid of the science of how the brain learns to read.
- The end result is teachers are coming out of universities every year with a certain idea of how to teach reading and then go into districts who not only embrace this idea but have the very curriculums which uphold these ideas.
- So, if one is never taught, shown or exposed to the science of reading, how then can they be responsible for ensuring your child is taught via SoR? That's why the teachers are not to blame.

How can the science be so disconnected from education?


- I can't recall where I read / heard it, it was likely in Faith Borkowsky's book *Failing Students or Failing Schools*, the notion that it is remarkable that on university campuses where the actual studies of how the brain learns to read are occurring, the teacher colleges next door seem ignorant of that science and continue spewing forth the pedagogy of balanced literacy.
- This is a great way to look at it but it does not have a simple answer. More politics than I think anyone is aware of lies at the heart of those ideals which control American education. Many ask why our education system can't be like this country or that country, but the reason why comes down to how much each government is willing to mandate what can and cannot happen regarding standards, curriculum, etc.
- This isn't a political speech or an attempt to sway you one way or the other, but to open your eyes to the realization that changing education will not be easy, but it certainly isn't impossible either. Numerous pedagogical ideals have come and gone across the last century. We just need to hold onto SoR and never quit fighting for how we know the brain learns to read.

Understanding The Battlefield

- All of the prior being said, the battlefield before you is vast.
- It is important to understand the dynamics of your own state's educational model, the work dynamic of schools, how much of a voice to individual teachers really have, who are the change makers and more.
- For some, even though they know better they won't do better.
- For some, even though they know better they can't do better because they may lose their job if they speak out.
- For some, even though they know better they will try to sneak in some helpful educational tools aligned with SoR.
- Know that training can be very expensive, is on their own time, and not paid for by their employer.
- Some parents will say who cares. We as parents have to learn on our own time at our own expense.
- Regardless, be careful, find your own path, and as I like to say, educate and empower yourself.

A few more notes...

Eagle Eye  Look at the pictures.	Lips the Fish  Get your lips ready.	Stretchy Snake  Stretch out the word.	Chunky Monkey  Chunk the word.
Skippy Frog  Skip the word & come back.	Tryin Lion  Try it again.	Flippy Dolphin  Flip the vowel sound.	Helpful Kangaroo  Ask for help.

- 
- These strategies WILL NEVER WORK. They are not based in evidence and enforce poor reading habits.
 - Never assume that the school or teacher understands how best to teach reading. If the district uses balanced literacy, nothing your child is being taught will ever help them to read. If you know the science, champion the science and never, ever give up.

A few more notes...

Here's why balanced literacy can never and will never work:

The Purple Challenge:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lxx7hs0qdKQ&t=4s>

Measuring Reading Gaps

The Matthew Effect

Sociologist Richard C. Merton and his wife, Harriet Zuckerman are credited with creating the term "Matthew Effect" in the scientific community in 1968. Later, Keith Stanovich, a psychologist who has done extensive research on reading and language disabilities, applied it to education and more specifically, reading. In the educational community, "Matthew Effect" refers to the idea that, in reading (as in other areas of life), the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

When children fail at early reading and writing, they begin to dislike reading. They read less than their classmates who are stronger readers. When children with disabilities do not receive adequate remediation, they read less – and learn less from reading - than non-disabled children.

As a consequence, they do not gain vocabulary, background knowledge, and information about how reading material is structured. In short, the word-rich get richer, while the word-poor get poorer. This is called "The Matthew Effect."

Because some IQ subtests measure information learned from reading, poor readers will score lower on these subtests. Over years, the "gap" between poor readers and good readers grows.

For children with disabilities in the primary grades, reading and writing failure is pervasive. Nearly all children who are identified as having a disability have reading and writing difficulties.

Legal Issues

The Matthew Effect was a key issue in James Brody's case.

James was found eligible for special education in 3rd grade. After three years of special education, he was re-tested. According to the new testing, his IQ dropped from 127 to 109. Two years later, James was re-tested again his IQ had dropped even further.

The experts testified that James' declining IQ test scores was an example of the Matthew Effect - and evidence that James was not receiving appropriate remediation.

The Administrative Law Judge and the Review Officer agreed and found that the school district had not provided James with an appropriate education.

Source: <https://www.wrightslaw.com/info/test.matthew.effect.htm>

The Matthew Effect

Matthew Effects in Reading: Some Consequences of Individual Differences in the Acquisition of Literacy

Stanovich, Keith E. (1986). Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 22, 360-407.

The Matthew Effect is not only about the progressive decline of slow starters, but also about the widening gap between slow starters and fast starters. In reading, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. This report presents a framework for conceptualizing development of individual differences in reading ability that emphasizes the effects of reading on cognitive development and on "bootstrapping" relationships involving reading. It uses the framework to explain some persisting problems in the literature on reading disability and to conceptualize remediation efforts in reading.

Source: https://www.psychologytoday.com/files/u81/Stanovich_1986_.pdf

The Matthew Effect

The Matthew Effect

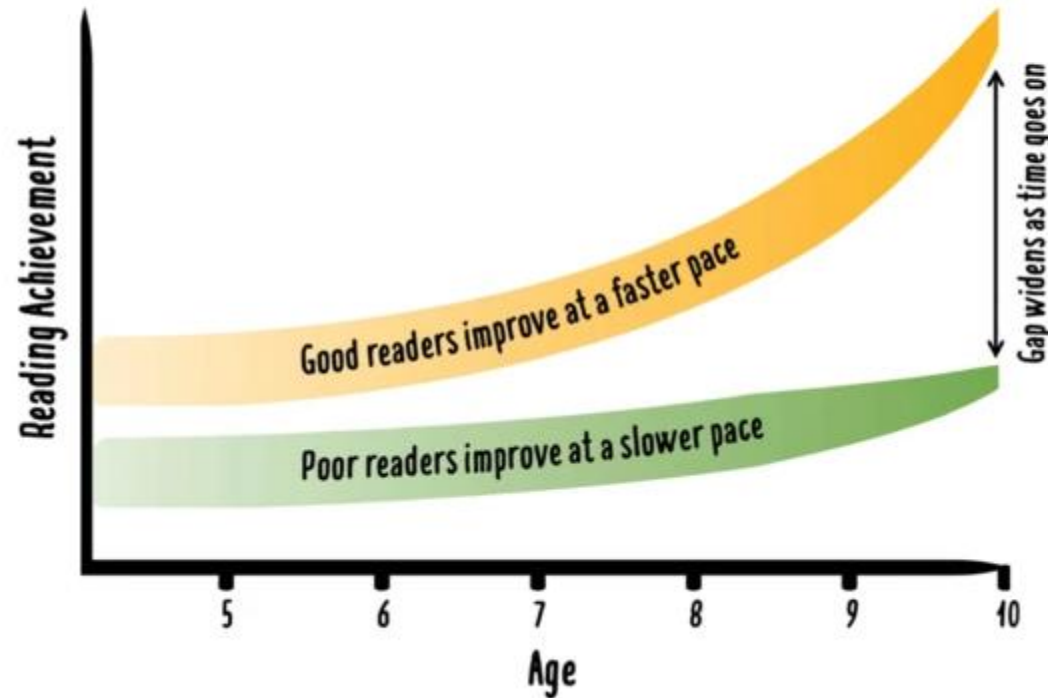


Image Source: <https://csi-literacy.nz/pages/about-csi-literacy>

Understanding NAEP

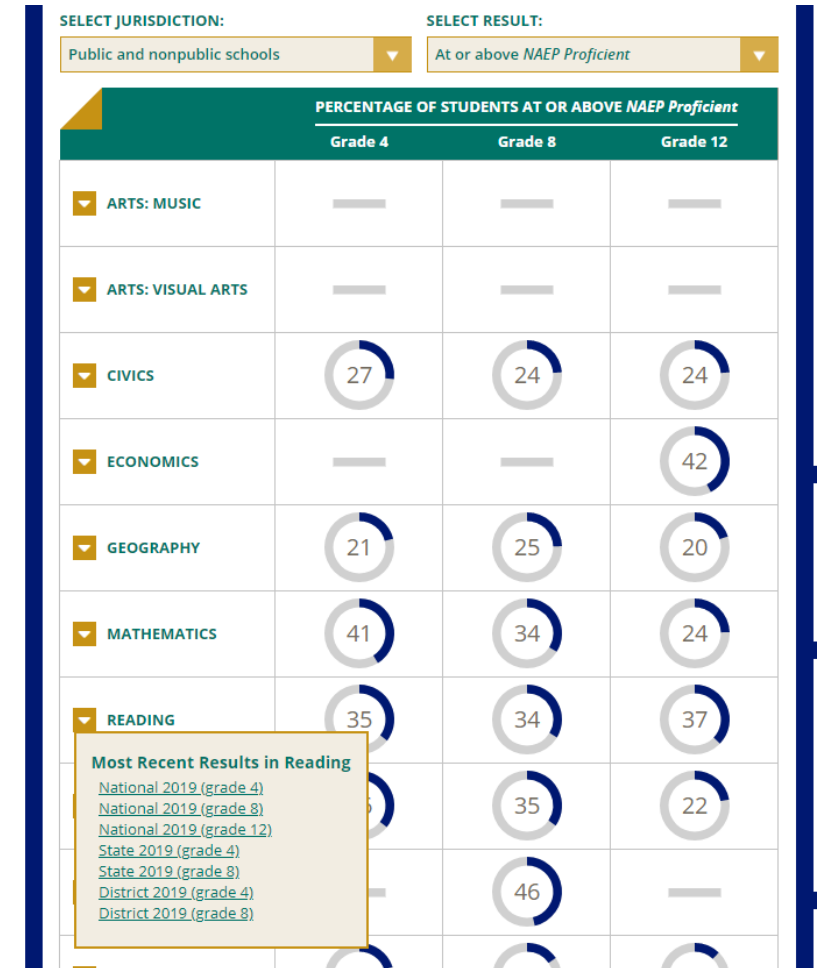
The National Assessment of Educational Progress, otherwise known as NAEP, is a report issued by the US Government every 2 years on the current state of educational achievement across various courses and grades. The primary benchmarks for Reading have been 4th and 8th, but 12th has just been added in.

NAEP is an ACCOMMODATED assessment across a random set of schools across the country.

To access the Nation's Report Card click here:

<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/>

2019 was the last benchmark year. New results were supposed to be updated in 2021, but the pandemic pushed everything back so the next results will be generated in 2022.



Source: <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/>

Understanding NAEP

NAEP Basic - This level denotes partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for performance at the NAEP Proficient level.

NAEP Proficient - This level represents solid academic performance for each NAEP assessment. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter.

NAEP Advanced - This level signifies superior performance beyond NAEP Proficient.

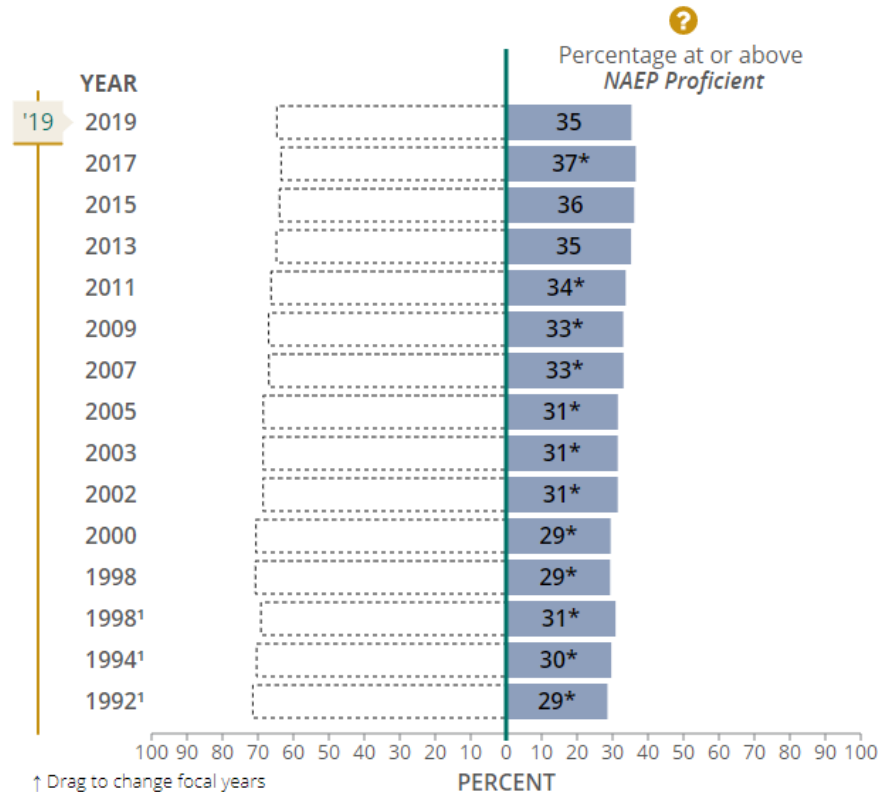
Source: <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/>

Understanding NAEP

- Thirty-five percent of fourth-graders at or above NAEP Proficient lower compared to 2017

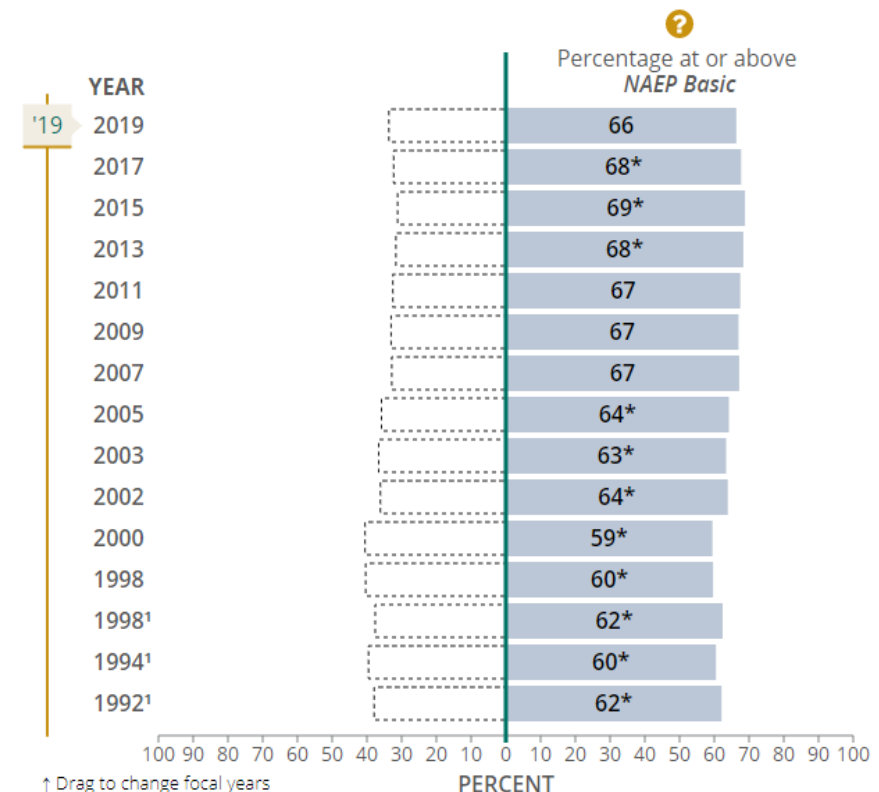
BASELINE: **NAEP PROFICIENT** [set at NAEP Basic](#)

[Show NAEP achievement-level details](#)



BASELINE: **NAEP BASIC** [set at NAEP Proficient](#)

[Show NAEP achievement-level details](#)



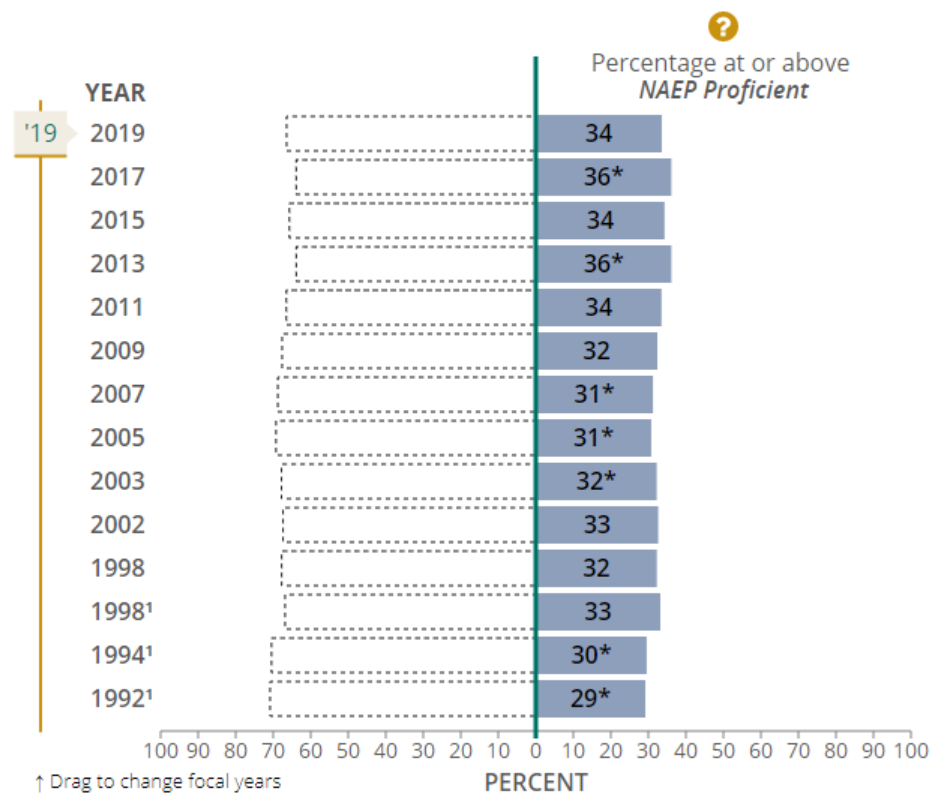
Source: <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/>

Understanding NAEP

- Thirty-four percent of eighth-graders at or above NAEP Proficient lower compared to 2017

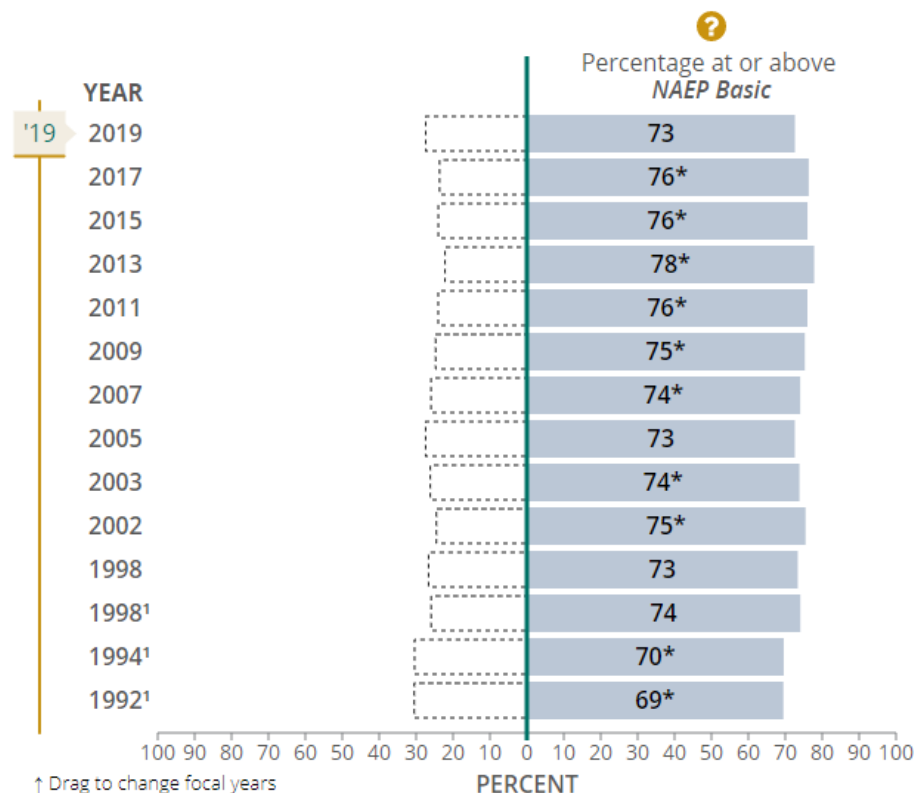
BASELINE: **NAEP PROFICIENT** [set at NAEP Basic](#)

[Show NAEP achievement-level details](#)



BASELINE: **NAEP BASIC** [set at NAEP Proficient](#)

[Show NAEP achievement-level details](#)



Source: <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/>

Understanding NAEP

From an overall literacy perspective NAEP is a powerful tool that advocates use to call out the deficiencies in American educational pedagogy on how we teach reading.

This is the American standard benchmark for how the educational establishment is failing our children.

Naturally, as with all things, there are detractors to this report, but the facts are this is the best report we have on current education across the country.

Bear in mind again that THE NAEP IS ACCOMMODATED. This means that children like ours are given accommodations when the assessment is administered, so what the actual reading scores are across the country, without the aid of accommodations, is unknown.

Just think, if the scores are this low, with accommodations in place, what then is the current state of education in this country?

Understanding the GORT & the KTEA

- The Gray Oral Reading Test (GORT) is one of the most widely used measures of oral reading fluency and comprehension in the United States.
 - Identify students who may need more intensive or explicit instruction in reading in order to make adequate progress in reading facility and/or comprehension.
 - Diagnose specific reading disabilities in children through young adults.
 - Compare intra-individual reading skills (e.g., reading rate vs. comprehension) and to help tailor interventions to the student's specific needs.
 - Evaluate students' progress in reading using pre-and post-intervention testing.
 - There are 2 forms of the GORT – one with corrections, and one without.
 - Both forms should be administered.
 - The GORT will tell you Rate, Accuracy, Fluency & Comprehension
- Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement Third Edition (KTEA) is an individually administered battery that provides in-depth assessment and evaluation of key academic skills.
 - Evaluate academic skills in reading, math, **written language**, and oral language.
 - Measure progress or response to intervention and identify learning disabilities, and adjust instruction based on performance.
 - Identify learning disabilities and achievement gaps.

Source: GORT - <https://www.pearsonassessments.com/store/usassessments/en/Store/Professional-Assessments/Speech-%26-Language/Gray-Oral-Reading-Test-%7C-Fifth-Edition/p/100000106.html?tab=product-details>; KTEA - <https://www.pearsonassessments.com/store/usassessments/en/Store/Professional-Assessments/Academic-Learning/Reading/Kaufman-Test-of-Educational-Achievement-%7C-Third-Edition/p/100000777.html?tab=product-details>

Accuracy, Fluency, Rate, Comprehension & Prosody

- Accuracy
 - Reading accuracy is consequently the automatic process of interpretation and integration of appropriate expressions or phrases during the reading process with a minimal use of required resources in the aim of communicating meaning in a text.
- Rate
 - Reading speed, otherwise known as rate, is the number of words a person can read correctly per minute. Reading speed is also called reading rate. It's part of a broader skill called reading fluency. This is the term for being able to read accurately at a good pace and with the right expression or intonation.
- Comprehension
 - Comprehension is the understanding and interpretation of what is read. To be able to accurately understand written material, children need to be able to (1) decode what they read; (2) make connections between what they read and what they already know; and (3) think deeply about what they have read.
 - One big part of comprehension is having a sufficient vocabulary, or knowing the meanings of enough words. Readers who have strong comprehension are able to draw conclusions about what they read – what is important, what is a fact, what caused an event to happen, which characters are funny. Thus comprehension involves combining reading with thinking and reasoning.
 - <https://www.readingrockets.org/helping/target/comprehension>
- Prosody
 - Prosody, the defining feature of expressive reading, comprises all of the variables of timing, phrasing, emphasis, and intonation that speakers use to help convey aspects of meaning and to make their speech lively.

Accuracy, Fluency, Rate, Comprehension & Prosody

- Fluency

- Fluency is defined as the ability to read with speed, accuracy, and proper expression. In order to understand what they read, children must be able to read fluently whether they are reading aloud or silently. When reading aloud, fluent readers read in phrases and add intonation appropriately. Their reading is smooth and has expression.
- Children who do not read with fluency sound choppy and awkward. Those students may have difficulty with decoding skills or they may just need more practice with speed and smoothness in reading. Fluency is also important for motivation; children who find reading laborious tend not to want read! As readers head into upper elementary grades, fluency becomes increasingly important. The volume of reading required in the upper elementary years escalates dramatically. Students whose reading is slow or labored will have trouble meeting the reading demands of their grade level.
- Source and a great article: <https://www.readingrockets.org/helping/target/fluency>
- More resources:
 - [Developing Fluent Readers](#)
 - [What Works in Fluency Instruction](#)
 - [Early Reading Assessment: A Guiding Tool for Instruction](#) (Access Center)
 - [Learning Disabilities and Challenging Behaviors: A Guide to Intervention and Classroom Management](#) (LD OnLine)
 - [Articles A-Z: Fluency](#)
 - [Reading 101: Fluency](#)
 - [Research & Reports: Fluency](#)
 - [Fluency Instruction](#) (Partnership for Reading)
 - [Effective Fluency Instruction and Progress Monitoring](#) (208K PDF)*
 - [The Role of the SLP in Improving Reading Fluency](#) (American Speech-Language Hearing Association)
 - [Printable Oral Ready Fluency Table](#) (Read Naturally, Inc.) (26K PDF)*

Accuracy, Fluency, Rate, Comprehension & Prosody

- Fluency

Oral Reading Fluency Is More than Speed, October 28, 2016, Shanahan on Literacy by Timothy Shanahan

“Old measures of fluency — like informal reading inventories — looked at accuracy alone, which is only adequate with beginning readers. The problem with accuracy measures is that they overrate the plodders who can slowly and laboriously get the words right (as if they were reading a meaningless list of random words).

DIBELS was an important advance over that because it included rate and accuracy — which is sufficient in the primary grades, but which overrates the hurried readers who can speed through texts without appropriate expression. Studies are showing that prosody is not particularly discriminating in the earlier grades, but as kids progress it gains in importance (probably because the syntax gets more complex and prosody or expression is an indicator of how well kids are sorting that out — rather than just decoding quickly enough to allow comprehension).”

<https://www.readingrockets.org/blogs/shanahan-literacy/oral-reading-fluency-more-speed>

DIBELS

- DIBELS[®] (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) is a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of literacy skills. They are designed to be short (one minute) fluency measures that can be used to regularly detect risk and monitor the development of early literacy and early reading skills in kindergarten through eighth grade.
- DIBELS was developed to measure recognized and empirically validated skills related to general reading outcomes. Each subtest has been thoroughly researched and demonstrated to be a reliable and valid indicator of early literacy development. When implemented as recommended, DIBELS results can be used to evaluate individual student development as well as provide grade-level feedback toward validated instructional objectives.
- The research-based subtests are predictive of later reading proficiency and contribute to a composite score that is the single best predictor of later reading development. The measures are consistent with many of the Common Core State Standards in Reading, especially those for Foundational Skills. Combined, the measures form an assessment system of early literacy development that allows educators to readily and reliably determine student progress in kindergarten through eighth grade.

Source: <https://dibels.uoregon.edu/about-dibels>

DIBELS

Kindergarten			First grade			Second grade			Third grade		
B	M	E	B	M	E	B	M	E	B	M	E
Letter Naming Fluency (LNF)											
25+	37+	42+	42+	57+	59+						
24	36	41	41	56	58						
16	31	35	32	51	53						
15	30	34	31	50	52						
0	0	0	0	0	0						
Phonemic Segmentation Fluency (PSF)											
15+	43+	53+	47+	57+	61+						
14	42	52	46	56	60						
5	29	44	31	43	45						
4	28	43	30	42	44						
1	23	37	19	34	37						
0	22	36	18	33	36						
	0	0	0	0	0						
Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) – Correct Letter Sounds (CLS)											
20+	36+	49+	47+	78+	87+	86+	103+	117+	121+	138+	141+
19	35	48	46	77	86	85	102	116	120	137	140
9	25	31	30	52	55	50	68	76	76	94	105
8	24	30	29	51	54	49	67	75	75	93	104
4	16	24	25	41	45	41	54	54	52	78	80
3	15	23	24	40	44	40	53	53	51	77	79
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) – Words Recoded Correctly (WRC)											
--	9+	13+	16+	26+	28+	25+	36+	39+	34+	46+	45+
1+	8	12	15	25	27	24	35	38	33	45	44
	3	7	5	14	15	15	20	22	24	30	31
	2	6	4	13	14	14	19	21	23	29	30
0	1	4	1	10	11	10	15	17	18	23	24
	0	3	0	9	10	9	14	16	17	22	23
--	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Word Reading Fluency (WRF)											
--	10+	18+	20+	33+	50+	50+	63+	70+	60+	65+	70+
1+	9	17	19	32	49	49	62	69	59	64	69
	4	10	12	17	25	26	36	43	40	50	55
0	3	9	11	16	24	25	35	42	39	49	54
	1	6	8	14	17	18	23	27	30	40	47
--	0	5	7	13	16	17	22	26	29	39	46
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) – Words Correct										
	35+	57+	76+	85+	117+	128+	105+	141+	136+		
	34	56	75	84	116	127	104	140	135		
	10	21	39	49	78	94	73	105	114		
	9	20	38	48	77	93	72	104	113		
	5	10	26	29	59	77	55	85	96		
	4	9	25	28	58	76	54	84	95		
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
	Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) - Accuracy										
	67+	87+	91+	92+	96+	96+	96+	96+	96+		
	66	86	90	91	95	95	95	95	95		
	41	54	85	84	91	91	91	91	91		
	40	53	84	83	90	90	90	90	90		
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
	Maze										
	11.0+	14.5+	18.0+	15.0+	20.5+	22.5+					
	10.5	14.0	17.5	14.5	20.0	22.0					
	5.0	9.0	9.5	8.0	12.0	15.5					
	4.5	8.5	9.0	7.5	11.5	15.0					
	2.5	6.5	7.0	5.0	9.5	12.0					
2.0	6.0	6.5	4.5	9.0	11.5						
0	0	0	0	0	0						

Source: <https://dibels.uoregon.edu/sites/dibels1.uoregon.edu/files/2021-06/DIBELS8thEditionGoals.pdf>

Legend

Blue goal = Core support; Negligible risk

(nearly all students in this range score at or above the 40th percentile rank on criterion measure)

Green range = Core support; Minimal risk

(about 80% of students who score at or above the 40th percentile rank on criterion measure fall in this range or above)

Yellow range = Strategic support; Some risk

(about 80% of students who score below the 40th percentile on criterion measure fall in this range or below)

Red range = Intensive support; At risk

(about 80% of students who score below the 20th percentile on criterion measure fall in this range)

Fidelity – Know it, Love it

- Educational researchers and practitioners concerned with implementing a specific curriculum, program, practice, or strategy (collectively termed interventions) frequently refer to fidelity, or how closely the implementation was aligned to the way the intervention was designed.
(<https://iowareadingresearch.org/blog/reading-intervention-fidelity>)
- At its heart fidelity is the scope, sequence, pace, teacher to student ratio by which a program should be followed in order to have the greatest chance of gain.
 - As we discussed in Part 1 of this series, some children, i.e., those for whom the program was specifically designed around, aka their target group, will thrive under fidelity. We as advocates fight for fidelity because at its heart it is the best application of any given program. What I mean by that is in my fight for fidelity, I did not want a teacher to student ratio greater than 6:, and I wanted 4 sessions a week at a bare minimum of 45 minutes per session, that, after all, was fidelity.
 - But what about those children that were not deemed the target set of children? We've been discussing the educational equation for each child. This is why individualization is important. Given the educational equation for your child, fidelity may be too fast of a pace and the child may be equally as frustrated under a program delivered to fidelity as they would be inside a classroom dedicated solely to Balanced Literacy.
 - Advocates highly encourage knowing what the fidelity statement is for the program your child is using, and fighting for it, but what we also need to be encouraging is understanding how your child fits with the program and adjusting appropriately. Do this with evidence and the necessary data to support the needs of your child.

The Importance of Written Expression

The Importance of Written Expression

- Written expression refers to a highly complex, cognitive, self-directed process. Higher order components include planning, translating (drafting), reviewing and revising. The translation process includes lower-level transcription skills (i.e., handwriting and spelling) and text generation at three different language levels—word, sentence, and text. (<https://www.literacyhow.org/written-expression/>)
- “...,reading and writing draw upon the same body of knowledge and skills. If you want to be a reader you must perceive the separable phonemes within words, recognize the most common spelling patterns, link meanings to the words in text (vocabulary), understand the grammar well enough to permit comprehension, trail cohesive links accurately, and recognize and use discourse structure (texts are organized and recognizing this in a text improves comprehension). Of course, background knowledge plays a role in reading comprehension, too, so the more readers know about their world the better they may do in reading. Yep, learning to read requires all of that.”
(<https://shanahanonliteracy.com/blog/how-can-we-take-advantage-of-reading-writing-relationships>)
- Additional resources:
 - <http://www.idonline.org/article/65647/>

Accommodations

Accommodations v. Modifications – Know the Difference

It is quite a common occurrence to hear the words Accommodations and Modifications used interchangeably in meetings, but the fact is they are two very different things. To use them together is to confusing to everyone involved, so it is necessary to have a very clear understanding of what these two words mean and what role they can play in what you advocate for regarding your child's needs.

Accommodations

Accommodations are tools that are utilized to assist your child in accessing the curriculum. This can be a wide variety of tools from a calculator to a graphic organizer to more time on an exam. Within our site we have a robust list of possible accommodations. We recommend you peruse this list and discuss them at length with your child (if they're old enough) and decide which of these tools will best assist your child in their education. Remember too that accommodations may need to change with time. Be cognizant of evolving expectations and potential new areas of need as new content is introduced.

Modifications

Modification means to modify the curriculum, for example, a math test may have 100 questions, but given the circumstances for your child, 100 questions may be too many. It may be entirely possible to measure the child's grasp of the content with 20 questions versus 100. The grading structure needs to be balanced to make the modification fair, but the point is that the curriculum is adjusted, aka modified, to make it more accessible and suitable to the child's needs.

So, you see, two very different things. We hope this explanation has helped break down the differences. If you have any questions on the explanation here, please reach out to us.

What accommodations will best serve my child?

Every child is different and the need for various accommodations may change as the years of school advance. For example, an accommodation that suits a 1st grader may not a 7th grader and vice versa. It is important that you meet your child where they are, level the playing field appropriately, and ask your child for their input.

Be aware that one of the key statements we hear from parents when schools propose eliminating certain accommodations is that the child / student isn't using them.

The biggest caveat here is to be aware that accommodations must be not just handed to the child, but the child must be taught how to use certain accommodations. For example, Speech To Text has various intrinsic software challenges. A child just can't be handed Speech to Text and be expected to use it seamlessly the next day. The same goes with graphic organizers, like being explicitly taught how to write, a child must be taught how and why a graphic organizer can be used to assist in their writing.

An accommodation given to a child without teaching the child how to use it is an accommodation in name only, and otherwise wholly worthless to the child.

Accommodation Lists

On our website we have a robust list of accommodations broken down by subject matter / area. There are fliers you can print for each section so you can have them handy in meetings. We hope you will find this to be a valuable resource.

- The Everyday Basics:
 - <https://www.thedyslexiainitiative.org/everyday-basics>
- Homework & Tests
 - <https://www.thedyslexiainitiative.org/homework-and-tests>
- Organization & Behavior
 - <https://www.thedyslexiainitiative.org/organization-and-behavior>
- Materials, Assignments, Aids....
 - <https://www.thedyslexiainitiative.org/materials-assignments-aids>
- Reading, Writing, Spelling
 - <https://www.thedyslexiainitiative.org/reading-writing-spelling>
- Math
 - <https://www.thedyslexiainitiative.org/math>
- Grades & Standardized Testing
 - <https://www.thedyslexiainitiative.org/grades-standardized-testing>

Assistive Technology (AT)

Assistive Technology

Per IDEA, "an assistive technology device is defined as "any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of a child with a disability."

This means that it can be low tech, e.g. graphic organizers, or high tech, e.g. speech to text.

The key to AT is that it must truly meet the individualized and prescriptive needs of the individual with the need. The severity of dyslexia as well as the combination of co-morbid conditions, and what those specific conditions are, make each individual unique. For the unique individual, some tools are just going to be better than others.

What we encourage our community to do is to find that tool that best suits the needs of the individual. Don't buy into the mantra, "Well, this is the tool we give everyone," because that may not be the right tool for your child, or for yourself as an adult.

Assistive Technology

For example, here is a short list of various Speech to Text tools:

- 1) Google Docs Voice to Text
- 2) Windows Dictation
- 3) Apple Dictation
- 4) Dragon Professional Individual
- 5) Braina
- 6) Speechnotes
- 7) Dictation
- 8) Speech Texter etc.

By the way, here is an article ranking Speech to Text tools, <https://www.elegantthemes.com/blog/business/speech-to-text-tools>.

Depending on the tool too, there can be a significant learning curve. Plan well and take the necessary time to find the right tool, and understand the new world you are entering.

We recommend Assistive Technology evaluations in the elementary years, prior to Middle School and High School where the required output will be enabled by the right tools.

Assistive Technology

Below are several helpful links to assist you in your AT journey.

- <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/assistive-technology/assistive-technologies-basics/video-5-myths-about-assistive-technology>
- https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/assistive-technology/assistive-technologies-basics/will-listening-to-audiobooks-make-it-harder-for-my-third-grader-to-learn-to-read?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=understoodorg
- <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/assistive-technology/assistive-technologies-basics/assistive-technology-what-it-is-and-how-it-works>
- <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/assistive-technology/assistive-technologies-basics/assistive-technology-platforms-what-you-need-to-know>
- <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/assistive-technology/finding-an-assistive-technology/free-assistive-technology-tools-on-the-web>
- <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/assistive-technology/assistive-technologies-basics/8-examples-of-assistive-technology-adaptive-tools>
- https://www.wrightslaw.com/info/atech.index.htm?fbclid=IwAR2-Z8pQgkAFS7pq4Nic65bYcTS8mn3T8ITbvj6IMJOdaRTvgLBv_xqXXoM
- <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/assistive-technology/assistive-technologies-basics/who-pays-for-assistive-technology-parents-or-schools>
- <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/assistive-technology/assistive-technologies-basics/assistive-technology-for-reading>
- <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/assistive-technology/assistive-technologies-basics/assistive-technology-for-writing>
- <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/assistive-technology/assistive-technologies-basics/assistive-technology-for-math>
- <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/assistive-technology/assistive-technologies-basics/assistive-technology-for-auditory-processing-disorder>
- <https://www.understood.org/en/tools/tech-finder>
- <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/assistive-technology/assistive-technologies-basics/2-minute-tutorial-how-to-use-home-assistant-devices-as-assistive-technology>
- <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/assistive-technology/assistive-technologies-basics/checklist-what-to-ask-colleges-about-assistive-technology>
- <https://www.noodle.com/articles/32-apps-dyslexic-students-will-love-for-everyday-learning>
- <http://www.joyzabala.com/Documents.html>

And don't forget to check out Alfabet Soop in our quarterly newsletter. The articles can also be found in the blog section of our website. Each entry is topic focused and provides helpful info on AT.

<https://www.thedyslexiainitiative.org/blog>

It's just not working, so
now what?

Now what?

- Remember you should see results relatively quickly, i.e. some progress within 6-8 weeks, if you don't then either fidelity isn't being followed, or is but that doesn't work for the child, maybe there are other SLD's or comorbid conditions complicating the educational equation for your child, maybe the program isn't the right program, maybe having SoR in remediation and balanced literacy in the classroom is confusing the child, maybe a number of details, but it is important to dive into those details and find answers.
- Answers will not always be easy to obtain. You may need to request further evaluations, protest evaluations with an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE), if you have the means bring in an advocate, or any number of possible avenues.
- Just never give up.

Recommended Reading

Recommended Reading

- The Dyslexia Initiative's Recommended Reading List:
<https://www.thedyslexiainitiative.org/recommended-reading>
- But we won't leave you without listing what we believe to be the core books:
 - What we all need to read to know for general knowledge:
 - "If only I would have known..." by Faith Borkowsky
 - Failing Students or Failing Schools by Faith Borkowsky
 - Raising a Child with Dyslexia What Every Parent Needs to Know by Don Winn
 - The Teacher Who Couldn't Read by John Corcoran
 - Overcoming Dyslexia by Dr. Sally Shaywitz
 - The Knowledge Gap by Natalie Wexler
 - Why Johnny Can't Read by Rudolf Flesch
 - Conquering Dyslexia by Dr. Jan Hasbrouck
 - Helping Students Take Control of Everyday Executive Functions by Paula Moraine

Resources & Helpful Links

General Resources

- International Dyslexia Association - www.dyslexiaida.org
 - Don't forget to look for your local area or state chapters of the IDA. They are a great resource for local information.
- The Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity - www.dyslexia.yale.edu
- Wrightslaw - www.wrightslaw.com
- National Center for Learning Disabilities - <https://www.ncld.org/>
- Understood - www.understood.org
- Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund - <https://dredf.org/>
- Parent's Resource Network - www.prntexas.org
- IEP Help - www.iephelp.com
- A Day In Our Shoes - <https://adayinourshoes.com/>
- Learning Ally - www.learningally.org
- The Dyslexia Initiative – www.TheDyslexiaInitiative.org

Helpful Links

- Dyslexia Basics
 - <https://dyslexiaida.org/dyslexia-basics/>
- The Dyslexia-Stress-Anxiety Connection
 - <https://dyslexiaida.org/the-dyslexia-stress-anxiety-connection/?fbclid=IwAR1wX3s2ZNmnvLE6UuKP3OBpYzdvathvSe2q-IWOvPNfLr1cYKCFaNkPtA>
- IDA Fact Sheets
 - <https://dyslexiaida.org/fact-sheets/>
- Printable Dyslexia Flier including one for Stealth Dyslexia
 - <https://www.thedyslexiainitiative.org/dyslexia>
- Printable Dysgraphia Flier
 - <https://www.thedyslexiainitiative.org/dysgraphia>
- Printable Dyscalculia Flier
 - <https://www.thedyslexiainitiative.org/dyscalculia>
- Link to robust accommodations lists including printable fliers by subject area
 - <https://www.thedyslexiainitiative.org/accommodations>
- IDA's "What is Structured Literacy" Infographic
 - <https://dyslexiaida.org/what-is-structured-literacy/>
- Structured Literacy: Effective Instruction for Students with Dyslexia and Related Reading Difficulties
 - <https://dyslexiaida.org/structured-literacy-effective-instruction-for-students-with-dyslexia-and-related-reading-difficulties/>
- Nancy Young's Ladder of Reading
 - <https://www.nancyyoung.ca/research-and-links>