



How Can I Help My Child?

Educate yourself about why some kids struggle with reading and other language-based skills such as spelling and writing. Teach yourself about “phonemic awareness” and learn your “phonograms.”

The articles listed on the Read On website offer a broad spectrum of information--more than enough to get you started. Also see the Read On Resource Guide.

Have your child evaluated by an independent neuropsychologist.

This evaluation can be very expensive, but it provides an invaluable, broad-spectrum “picture” of your child’s strengths and weaknesses and can determine whether or not your child’s reading and other learning issues stem from dyslexia and related language-based neurological differences, or from other issues.

If a comprehensive neuropsychological evaluation is not an option, seek other means for evaluating your child’s phonemic awareness.

Ask your child’s teacher or your school’s reading specialist if he or she can evaluate your child’s “phonemic awareness.” If there is no one in your school with the means to evaluate your child for phonemic awareness, then it is up to you to find a qualified education specialist who can. Again, see the Read On Resource Guide and check with your local chapter of the International Dyslexia Association (www.interdys.org).



DO NOT accept the label “developmental delay” or “asynchronic development.”

If your child is not reading at grade level or above, or if your child’s reading ability seems incongruent with his or her cognitive abilities, there is very likely a problem that can be addressed with the correct teaching intervention. The sooner your child gets the right help the better. Early intervention is critical. But if your child is older and has been struggling for years it is *never* too late to get help.

Seek specialized tutoring by a trained professional.

If your child is struggling with reading, he or she needs help now. Don’t assume that your school has the right tutoring available. Make sure that your tutor (whether provided by the school or an independent professional) is certified to teach a methodology rooted in phonemic awareness that is “evidence-based” (scientifically proven). It is also key that he or she use “systematic and explicit instruction” in phonemic awareness. Studies have demonstrated that your tutor *cannot* have a “grab bag” of strategies, but must teach one proven method and follow it systematically with your child.

Make sure that your tutor regularly evaluates your child’s progress to ensure that his or her method is working for your child.

You should see reasonable results! If taught correctly, your child will improve over time. If regular evaluation does not demonstrate improvement, then your child needs a different method of intervention. Above all, don’t give up.

Remember, your child is working very hard and is undoubtedly feeling frustrated, confused and possibly depressed by his or her struggle with reading.

Give your child all the love, support and encouragement you can. Talk with your child about how he or she *will* become a proficient reader with the right help and some hard work.



How Can I Help My School?

If your school does not have the proper interventions in place for your child, your school needs help! Research has demonstrated that 20% of all kids struggle to learn to read. Your child is not the only student at your school who is struggling.

Here's how you can help.

Share your story and your knowledge

Share your story and your knowledge with the professionals at your school, especially your child's teacher and your principal.

It may help you and them if you share your story and knowledge in writing, as well as in conversation. Most educators, including reading specialists, are not aware of the current research on how struggling readers *can* learn. Remember, they are your partners in educating your child and all the kids in your school. You don't want to alienate them, you want to raise their awareness about the serious lack of intervention and how they can become empowered to address the needs of their students.

At our school, the parents who created Read On first worked with our principal, showing him the scientific evidence. He was open and willing to examine the data and, once he had, he could not deny that our school was failing to meet the needs of struggling readers. With our principal's approval we then created a "teacher packet" for every teacher in our school. The packet was non-confrontational. In fact, we gave each teacher a small box of chocolates to invite them into our presentation. The packet included a welcoming introductory letter, the Read On Resource Guide and about five carefully chosen, short articles (all available on the Read On Website) that we felt drove the story home. We were especially mindful not to assign blame, but to open their eyes to the possibilities.



Share your story and your knowledge with other parents.

You will be amazed at how many other families have been struggling with this issue silently. Sit down together and talk as a group about your experiences. Having a support group is a tremendous help and together you can create strategies for raising awareness at your school, like creating a teacher packet, or helping your school organize an awareness presentation for professional development. Encourage other parents to share their story with the principal and their teachers.

Share your story and your knowledge with the officials in your school district.

Remember that your principal cannot dictate policy at your school. He or she needs the support and approval from your school district. Write or email the Office of the Superintendent and your school board representatives. Just like most teachers, most administrators are not aware of the new research.

In Seattle, Washington:

Superintendent, Maria Goodloe-Johnson, Ph.D.
superintendent@seattleschools.org

Dan Coles, K-12 Literacy Program Manager
djcoles@seattleschools.org

Find your school board representative
www.seattleschools.org/area/board/index.dxml



Share your story and your knowledge with your state education officials and with your state and federal legislative representatives.

Washington State has no legislative mandate to address the needs of struggling readers. Let them know that our state needs evidence-based, comprehensive evaluation and teaching methodologies rooted in phonemic awareness in order to help our kids become proficient readers and students. If you can't read well it affects every aspect of learning.

Governor Christine Gregoire
www.governor.wa.gov/contact/

OSPI (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction)
Randy Dorn
Superintendent
Old Capitol Building
P.O. Box 47200
Olympia, WA 98504-7200

Find Your Washington State Congressional Representatives
apps.leg.wa.gov/DistrictFinder/

Contact Your United States Senators and Representative

U.S. Senator
Maria Cantwell
cantwell.senate.gov/

U.S. Senator
Patty Murray
murray.senate.gov

U.S. Representative, 7th Congressional District, Seattle
Jim McDermott
www.house.gov/mcdermott/