Is Your Child Struggling to Read?

A Guide to Getting Your Child What They Need to Read

1

Spot the Problem

If you believe your child is struggling with reading, trust your instincts. You know your child best and can get them the help they need. Is the problem related to their learning style, how they're being taught, or both? The sooner you act, the better!

Here are some things to consider:

- Does anyone in your family struggle with reading or spelling? This may run in the family.
- Save samples of schoolwork that show reading or spelling problems. These can help when you talk with teachers.
- Learn about key reading skills like phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Knowing these will help you understand what your child might be missing. A great resource is the National Reading Panel Report.

2

Talk to the Teacher

After gathering information, set up a meeting with your child's teacher to come up with a plan.

Here is what to discuss:

- **Ask the teacher what they've noticed about your child's reading struggles.** What is being done to help them, and what else can be done?
- **Ask to review any informal benchmark test results together.** Do they show problems with handwriting or spelling? Did your child receive any help to finish the test?

- **How does your child's performance compare to their classmates?** Are they meeting grade-level expectations? What reading group level are they in?
- **Bring your child's work samples to share your concerns.** How do your concerns compare with the teacher's observations and tests?
- **Review results** from standardized tests that compare your child to other kids nationwide.
- Keep a folder, by grade, with all your child's school records, test results, school reports, and work samples.

3 Get More Help at School

If progress remains slow, seek additional support from the principal.

Find out about:

- **What reading program is used in class (Tier 1)?** Is it an evidence-based program approved by the State Board of Education? Is the teacher trained to teach it?
- **Are there extra small-group lessons available (Tier 2)?** These early support services are designed to improve phonological awareness and phonics skills.
- **If your child has dyslexia, ask about special programs that use the Orton-Gillingham approach (Tier 3)**, which provides step-by-step multisensory reading instruction. Program success depends on teacher training, the amount of daily and weekly time commitment and consistent reading expectations across all subjects.
- Act quickly. Don't wait too long – early help makes a big difference and prevents long-term learning struggles.

4 Request a Formal Evaluation

Ask the school to do a comprehensive evaluation.

What to do:

- **Write a letter to the school** requesting a comprehensive evaluation.

- **Ask for a full assessment by a team of experts** (like the school psychologists, speech-language pathologists, and occupational therapists).
- **Test your child's vision and hearing** to rule out physical issues.

5 Explore Special Education Services

If your child is found to have a learning disability like dyslexia, they may qualify for extra help through special education.

What this could include:

- Developing a personalized plan called an IEP (Individualized Education Program) with goals and services, such as small group lessons, tutoring, summer programs, assistive technology, and classroom accommodations.
- If your child doesn't qualify for special education, you can ask about a 504 plan, get private tutoring and further evaluations, or even look into schools that offer specialized programs.

Final Thoughts

Not all schools have what your child may need. If the school can't meet their needs, look into other options, like outside programs or different schools. Stick with it—your support is key to your child's success!