Houston, We Have a Literacy Problem… Bold Leadership Moves that Transform Student Outcomes

Fox Reading Conference Keynote
By
Dr. Tracy White Weeden, President & CEO
Neuhaus Education Center
NAEP Reading Average Scores for the Nation (public) Grades 4 and 8 Comparing 2017-2019

2019 NAEP Scores - Nationwide

How Did Students Perform in Reading?

In 2019, average reading scores were lower for both fourth- and eighth-grade students compared to 2017: scores were lower by 1 point at fourth grade and lower by 3 points at eighth grade. Average scores were higher at both grades compared to the first reading assessment in 1992.

GRADE 4

SCALE SCORE

217* 215* 221 222* 220


GRADE 8

SCALE SCORE

250* 263 264 267 263


* Significantly different (p < .05) from 2019.

Source: RIF.org | Literacy Network
TENNESSEE: Fourth Grade Students’ NAEP 2017-2019
Comparison of Reading Average Scores

Cut Scores: Gr 4
- NAEP Advanced: 268
- NAEP Proficient: 238
- NAEP Basic: 208
TENNESSEE: NSLP Non-Eligible and Eligible Fourth Grade Students’ 2017-2019 Comparison of Reading Average Scores

Cut Scores: Gr 4
- NAEP Advanced: 268
- NAEP Proficient: 238
- NAEP Basic: 208

Source: https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading/states/groups
TENNESSEE: Fourth Grade Students *without disabilities* and *with disabilities* 2017-2019 Comparison of Reading Average Scores

Source: https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading/states/groups
TENNESSEE: Eighth Grade Students’ NAEP 2017-2019
Comparison of Reading Average Scores

Gr 8 White Students

Gr 8 Black Students

Gr 8 Hispanic Students

Cut Scores: Gr 8
• NAEP Advanced: 323
• NAEP Proficient: 281
• NAEP Basic: 243

Source: https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading/states/groups
TENNESSEE: NSLP *Non-Eligible* and *Eligible* Eighth Grade Students’ 2017-2019 Comparison of Reading Average Scores

**Gr 8 NSLP Non-Eligible**

Cut Scores: Gr 8
- NAEP Advanced: 323
- NAEP Proficient: 281
- NAEP Basic: 243

**Gr 8 NSLP Eligible**

Source: https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading/states/groups
TENNESSEE: Eighth Grade Students without disabilities and with disabilities 2017-2019 Comparison of Reading Average Scores

Gr 8 Students without Disabilities

Gr 8 Students with Disabilities

Cut Scores: Gr 8
• NAEP Advanced: 323
• NAEP Proficient: 281
• NAEP Basic: 243

Source: https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading/states/groups
If adults in our country were able to move up to the equivalent of a 6th grade reading level, the national benefit economically is estimated to be:

$2.2 \text{ Trillion Annually}$

Assessing the Economic Gains of Eradicating Illiteracy Nationally and Regionally in the United States. Gallup, September 8, 2020
Canary in the Mine
“By 2050, all of America will look like Houston does today...It is a safe statement to make that if Houston’s Latino and Black young people are unprepared to succeed in the global knowledge economy of the 21st century, it is difficult, it not impossible to envision a prosperous vision for Houston.”

The source of wealth for Houston in the 21st century will have to do with attracting the best and brightest people in America, working on the cutting edge of knowledge.

The resource of the knowledge economy is housed between the ears of the best and brightest people in America who can live anywhere.”
Lexile Text Demands
Interquartile RangesShown (25th to 75th Percentile)
Whiskers Extend to 5th and 95th Percentile

Lexile Measure

High School Textbooks
SAT I, ACT, & AP Exam Texts
Military
Citizenship
Workplace
Community College
University (13-14)
Graduate Record Exam
The stakes are incredibly high...
A moral imperative...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Incarceration Rate per 100,000 Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>102</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“A life sentence in intervention deeply influences the likelihood of a lifetime in prison.”

DR. TRACY WEEDEN, ED.D
The First Step Act
This point gets at the heart of a barrier standing in the way of parent advocates and the research community establishing common ground. Collectively, we must acknowledge that the most fundamental problem we face is not dyslexia. The most fundamental problem is one that we all share—the majority of children in the U.S. are not proficient readers, and the vast majority of these children struggle with basic reading skills (Wang et al., 2019).
Family Support
Support for Families of Struggling Readers

Adult Learners
Literacy Classes for Adult Learners

Educators
Professional Development and Certification Pathways Aligned with the Science of Reading
The most dangerous phrase in the language is, “We’ve always done it this way.”

Admiral Grace Hopper
5 Essentials
University of Chicago Consortium on School Research

- **Effective Leaders** – The principal works with teachers to implement a clear and strategic vision for school success.

- **Collaborative Teachers** – The staff is committed to the school, receives strong professional development, and works together to improve the school.

- **Involved Families** - The entire school staff builds strong relationships with families and communities to support learning.

- **Supportive Environment** – The school is safe and orderly. Teachers have high expectations for students. Students are supported by their teachers and peers.

- **Ambitious Instruction** – Classes are demanding and engaging and student engage students by focusing on application of knowledge
“It is not just about doing work, it is about doing THE RIGHT WORK.”
Initiative Overload!
Our silo mentality may be getting out of hand.
Overcoming the Silo Effect
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Components</th>
<th>Knowledge % of teachers who understand concept</th>
<th>Skill Implementation % of teachers who apply concept</th>
<th>Classroom Application % of teachers who adopt concept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theory</strong> presenter explains concept</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plus Demonstration</strong> presenter models the concept</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plus Practice</strong> participants practice the concept during the training</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plus Peer Coaching</strong> participants receive ongoing feedback about their practices of the concept in a real setting</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Non-Structured Literacy Approaches

- Guided Reading (Burkins & Croft, 2010)
- Reader’s Workshop (Calkins, 2000)
- Balanced Literacy, Four Bloks Literacy (Cunningham, Hall, & Sigmon, 1999)
- Reading Recovery (Clay, 1994)
- Leveled Literacy Intervention (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009)
Dr. Karen Mapp

- Connect family engagement to learning and development
- Engage families as co-creators
- Honor family funds of knowledge
- Create welcoming cultures

Dual Capacity Framework – Version 2
Closing the Perception Gap?

WE SURVEYS
“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”
— Frederick Douglass
Our Common Enemy

Know your Enemy
Figure 3: Likelihood of Being Ready for School at Age Five, by Poverty Status at Birth and Selected Child and Family Characteristics

Source and Notes: Brookings tabulations of data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort (ECLS-B). Poor at birth is defined as household income less than 100 percent of poverty and moderate or high income is defined as household income at or above 185 percent of poverty. School readiness of near-poor children (incomes 100-185 percent) is not shown but generally lies between the two other groups.
“The greater danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high, and we miss it, but that it is too low, and we reach it.”

- Michelangelo
LET’S CONNECT.

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