



EARLY LITERACY
TOOLKIT:

A FAMILY PRIMER

*We need no more studies telling us that involving parents
in home reading is a useful strategy.¹*

Compiled by

NYLINKA
SCHOOL SOLUTIONS

INTRODUCTION

Literacy is the educational issue of the 21st century.

Schools have seen an extreme changes in how reading is taught. Districts across the United States are moving toward the Science of Reading (SoR). In layman's terms, the Science of Reading is a body of research that advocates for using brain-based research and the latest research to teach reading. SoR suggest that students have structured literacy that teaches, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, phonological awareness, and phonics to children. What does this mean for parents?

It means that reading in the home and helping young readers (0-9) is of extreme importance. Nylinka School Solutions is on the cutting edge of supporting schools and disenfranchised groups in obtaining literacy. In urban areas we see teachers getting younger and younger. More teachers are leaving the profession which ultimately means that teachers are younger and less experienced. This can have dire consequences if parents are not up to speed on what is happening in school, particularly in reading.



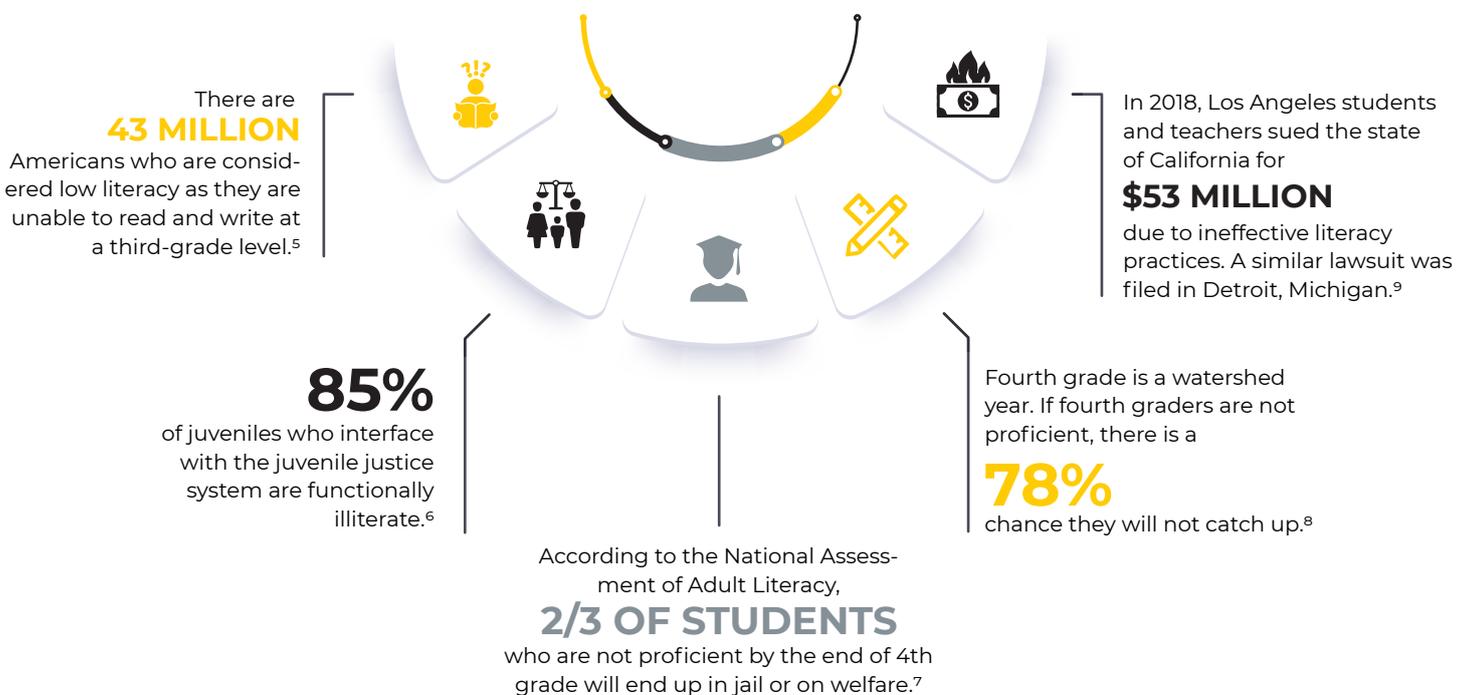
“Parents have to be up to speed on reading.”

WHAT THE DATA SAYS

Our classrooms have dedicated teachers. However, reading data in the US has been stagnant and unsatisfactory over the past 20 years. According to NAEP, a test used to measure school progress given every two years, America's children are not reading and comprehending at an acceptable rate. As of 2019, 35% of 4th graders are proficient in reading.²

Proficient means the ability to read and comprehend on grade level. Only 34% of eighth graders were proficient in reading.³ Those numbers have been relatively stable since the late 1990's. When disaggregating the data by race and gender, the numbers become even more staggering. In 2019, only 18% of African Americans were proficient in reading.⁴

This is at the school level. The consequences after K-12 for those of low literacy is ominously grim. Life outcomes are severely compromised and diminished without the ability to read and write at a 12th grade level upon graduation. Consider the following:



Below are suggestions to prepare your child before and during their schooling. Reading data and statistics are important, but so are positive reading attitudes and other qualitative variables. One of the most important things families can do to promote reading is to read together as a family.

“Thirty jurisdictions saw declines in reading scores on NAEP in 2022.”



READ TO YOUR CHILDREN EVERY DAY

The research says we should read to children every day. This has profound effects even when children are in utero. Reading with children and even toddlers has profound effects. It allows them to hear the language, access vocabulary, grapple with word meaning and learn complex sentence variation and syntax. There are profound social effects to reading with youngsters as well. Pro-social skill such as two-way communication, listening, waiting turns, sharing answers and responses are all by-products of children reading with parents and adults.

Parents are busy. We advocate for children and siblings reading to each other if not to and with adults. Six-year-olds can read to five and four-year-olds, but they can also read to older siblings. There is no substitute for human interaction. Brain research tells us that being read to and listening to adults read is more beneficial to children than listening to audio versions of text or even listening/watching books that are read on YouTube. Read to your child for 25-30 minutes per night or three and a half hours per week.

Routine is key. Read in the same room every day at the same time if possible. If families skip a day, they can add that time to the next several days. If that seems like a heavy lift, consider the consequences. Below are the results of a seminal 1987 study by Nagy, Anderson, and Herman.¹⁰ See below:

	Student A	Student B	Student C
Minutes read per day	20 minutes of reading per day	10 minutes of reading per day	5 minutes of reading per day
Minutes per year	3600 minutes per year	1800 minutes per year	900 minutes per year
Equivalent in school days	10 school days of reading	5 school days of reading	2.5 school days of reading
Words per year	1.8 Million words per year	900,000*	282,000 words per year

*This is an estimate, and not a perfect ratio. The minutes of reading compounds over time.

Notice the compounding effects of reading for 20 minutes versus 10 versus five minutes per day. These reading habits are important, as the average adult only reads for 16 minutes per day outside of work. That number is down from 22 minutes in 2005!¹¹ This could be attributed to social media, screen time and the fact that we live in an age of distractibility. Fostering such habits is critical for school and life outcomes. To help reach 25 minutes per day, try the following hacks:

- Read to your children as you commute on the train, bus or Uber.
- If you are driving, have your child read to you in the car.
- Parents with multiple children can have siblings read to each other.
- Any of the above can be done in the morning, evening or both.
- Use the weekend as a make up for any time missed during the week.
- Institute 30 minutes of quiet time on Saturdays and Sundays devoted to reading. This will can make up for lost time during the week as well.

READING ALOUD IS ONLY PART OF THE BATTLE

When reading to your child, stop and ask her/him questions about the reading. Comprehension is one of the pillars of reading instruction. Do not be afraid to ask your children questions that challenge them. Helping kids understand vocabulary is also important. This is not difficult. Simply define words as you come across them by giving children a kid-friendly definition that does not require much explanation. Pausing to help children understand words, phrases, idioms, and expressions are always welcome. Remember the goal of reading is to help children comprehend! If you only read to them for part of the 25 minutes and spend the balance of time discussing the text, that is ok. It gives your child something to look forward to the next day.

There is a myriad of questions you could ask your child about the text. For the sake of simplicity, we break questions into two categories LOTs (lower order thinking) and HOTs. (higher order thinking) questions.



LOTs are basic questions in which the answer is found in the text. These questions usually involve who, what, when, and where as sentence starters. They ask children to name things that happen in the reading.

HOTs challenge children more, forcing them to think about the connections between ideas, characters, and events by analyzing and evaluating information.

Some examples of HOTs are below:

01

DOES THIS REMIND YOU OF ANOTHER STORY ?

04

HOW DOES THE AUTHOR CONVEY HER/HIS FEELINGS TOWARD _____?



02

WHY DID THIS CHARACTER ACT THAT WAY ?

03

EXPLAIN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TWO ENTITIES ?

05

IF YOU HAD TO CHANGE THE ENDING, HOW WOULD YOU DO SO? WHAT WOULD BE DIFFERENT ?

PRACTICE WORKING WITH SOUNDS

The National Reading Panel and other research studies reveal that children must have phonemic awareness. Phonological awareness is knowledge of sounds. This involves making rhyming words, recognizing alliteration, counting syllables and breaking words into syllables. Phonemic awareness falls under the umbrella of phonological awareness. It is the ability to manipulate sounds including substituting sounds, hearing initial and ending consonant sounds, reversing initial and ending consonant sounds within words. Research reveals that phonemic awareness is a prerequisite skill and predictor of early literacy skill and reading proficiency.

Below are a few activities to practice with 4-7 year-olds:



STOCKING YOUR HOME LIBRARY

Unfortunately, some families live in book deserts. Even families who are well-resourced complain about book prices at brick-and-mortar stores. Here are a few suggestions:



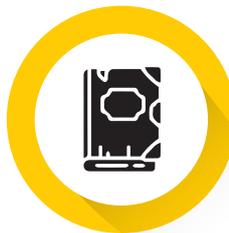
Sacrifice! Purchase one new book per month for your household. Even if the book is not for any one child. Children love new things, and this keeps their enthusiasm for books percolating. Over five years that will be 60 books!

Apply for a library card. Borrowing books from the library is old school, but that is ok. The library is a great place to hear the written word, find new titles, and check out books that keep children engaged.



Borrow books from your school's library. If you lack the resources to build a home library, do not be afraid to ask teachers in your school to borrow from their classroom libraries.

Embrace the power of used books stores and thrift stores. There is no shame in buying books from used bookstores, eBay or Craig's List. Check your local library. They often have book giveaways around spring break or the end of the school year. The books they do not sell or are often given to Goodwill and other second-hand vendors.



Read household items: cereal boxes, recipes, magazines, close caption on TV shows, and sales papers are all literature!

TECHNOLOGY

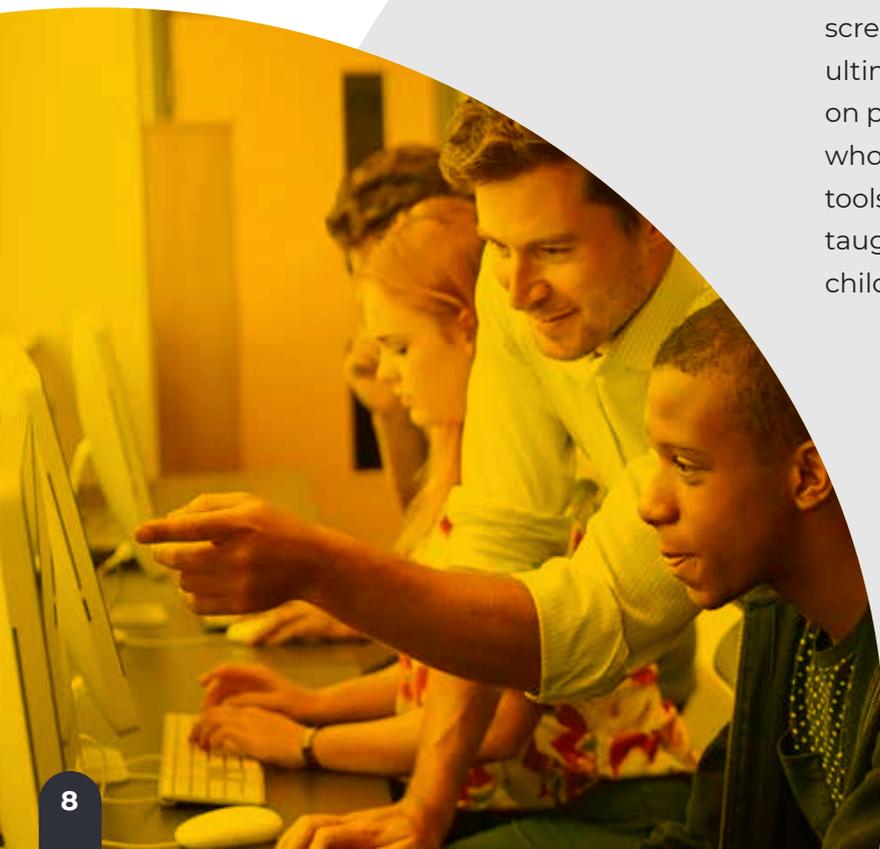
Technology has enhanced our lives and made the world smaller and more accessible. However, parents must be weary technology integration into the lives of children, particularly younger children whose brains are still developing. Research by the Centers for Disease Control reveals the average 8–10 year-old has six hours of screen time per day!¹² What does this mean? It means that children are living in an age of distraction and dependency of smart devices. “Short term dopamine cycles have ruined how our society works” says Chamath Palihapitiya, former Vice President of User Growth at Facebook.¹³ Our phones, devices and technology are the main culprits. Psychologists know now that children who spend more time on their devices have more difficulty focusing in school than those from families who limit screen time. Recent data has shown that social media has addictive qualities. Particularly social media sites that provide feedback i.e., Instagram, Tik Tok, Twitter, and Facebook.

When likes, retweets, or mentions are enacted they provides a dopamine release going back to Palihapitiya's point. The dopamine release encourages the user to re-enter the dopamine cycle by posting and waiting for more responses. What does this mean for parents?



If your child is enjoying dopamine releases from phones and social media it becomes more difficult to get them to concentrate on school related content, basic socializing, and reading. This is partly because their brains are wired for quick, short-lived, steady streams of information. Focus is also compromised because there is no immediate dopamine release, and no biochemical reward.

There are many great websites, You Tube channels, and apps that help young children academically. However, parents must be cautious in managing scree time and access to technology. They ultimately can be a gateway to interdependence on phones, devices, and social media. Also, families who use social media and internet as teaching tools should be forewarned: brain science has taught us there is no substitute for reading to children.



READING BEHAVIOR & OUTCOMES

Besides being effective readers and proficient writers, we want our children to articulate their thoughts about texts they read and answer questions about text and how they related to real life experiences. Below are a few more outcomes children should garner from home literacy support:

Children have their own budding personal libraries

Children have a favorite author

Children have a favorite genre (mystery, non-fiction, poetry, fiction, etc.)

Children have a favorite book (preferably a book they have read and reread)

A positive and stable reading attitude

Your child should be comfortable following a character over a series of texts

- ▶ Junie B. Jones
- ▶ Pete the Cat
- ▶ The Hardy Boys
- ▶ Kid Caramel
- ▶ Ziggy & The Black Dinosaurs
- ▶ Sherrie Winston's Briana Justice
- ▶ Harry Potter etc.



Reading attitudes are critical. All children can be disenfranchised and turned off from reading depending on skill, quality instruction and text selection. We must give children time to read books and material that interest them, even at school. Some of the material we ask children to read in school is very uninspiring. Over time, this can result in poor reading attitudes and an unwillingness to engage the written word. Poor reading attitudes is one of the chief indicators of low literacy. Parents should expose children to a variety of authors, texts, genres early and often. This mitigates children having poor reading attitudes because of boredom or unfamiliarity. Reading attitudes are bolstered by watching parents read also. Children in many ways imitate what they see adults do. If you have a positive attitude toward reading, there is a strong chance your children will too.

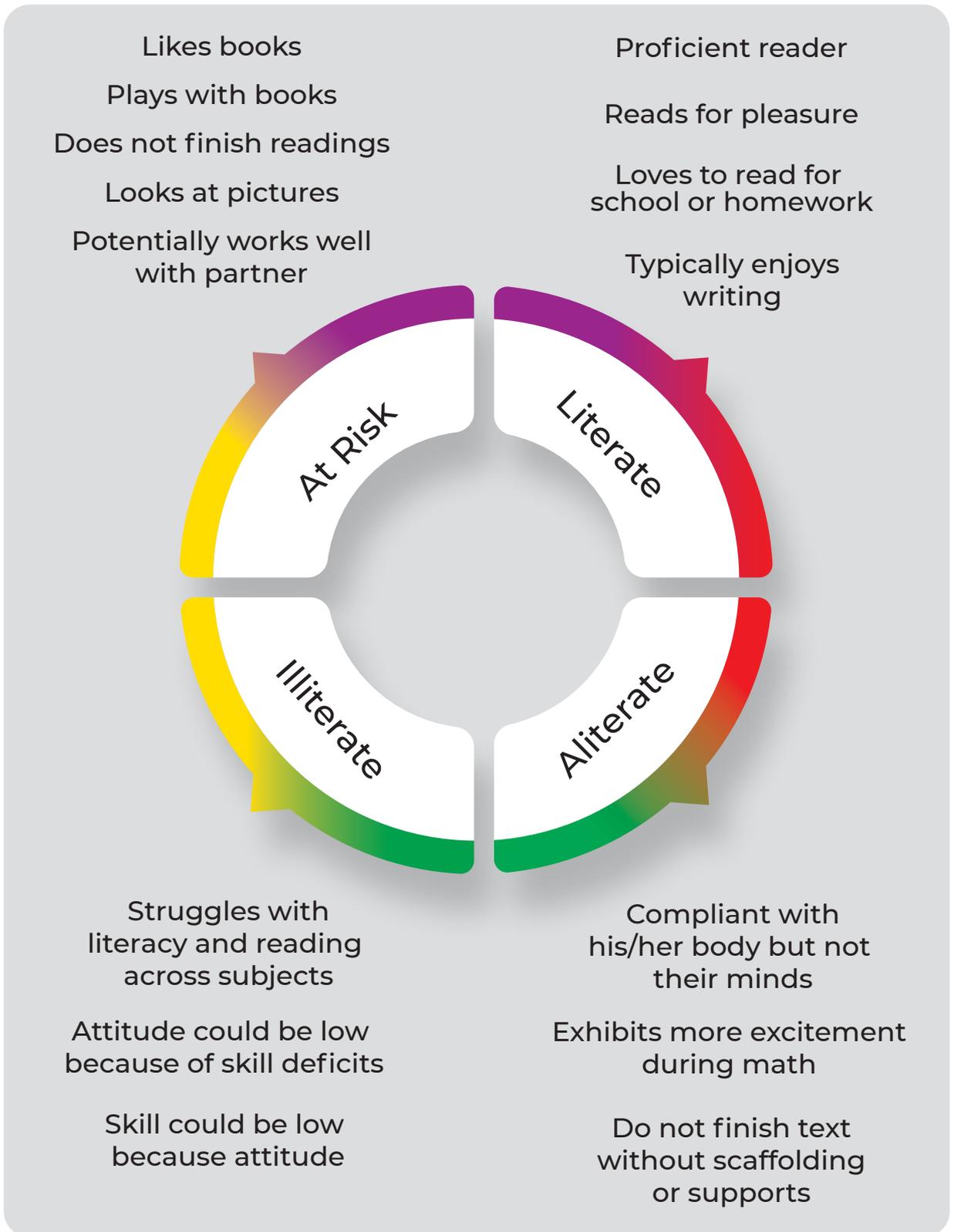
The chart below is a handy tool for thinking about your child's performance in reading outside of grades. Children should be in the top right-hand quadrant. These children have high literacy skills and positive reading attitudes. The columns on the left must be addressed by both parents and schools. Children who have positive reading attitudes and low skills must have their skills bolstered. Children falling in the bottom left-hand corner, depending on their age/grade are potentially illiterate. Moving children out of this quadrant requires explicit strategies and interventions. During interventions parents should continue to read with and to their children to grow positive reading attitudes.

SKILL & ATTITUDE MATRIX

Positive

a
t
t
i
t
u
d
e

Negative



Low

Skill

High

CONCLUSION

Reading is critical to our way of living. The struggle to prepare children for school is as important now as it has ever been. However, parents must stay engaged in helping their children navigate the maze that is literacy education in today's schools. It should not be expected for parents to give full-fledged reading lessons to their children, but parents must have a strong sense of what is happening in schools and how they can best support children once they have started school.

One of the most efficient things to do is to read with and to children and to engage in other activities that foster positive reading behaviors.



REFERENCES

- 1 Toomey, D.M. How Parental Participation and Involvement in Schools can Increase Educational Inequality. Melbourne: A.A.R.E Conference paper.
- 2 National Center for Education Statistics, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, US Department of Education. 2022.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 ProLiteracy. National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week Toolkit. September, 2022. <https://www.proliteracy.org/Portals/0/pdf/Programs/AEFL%20Week/2022-07-PRG-AEFL-Toolkit-1993.pdf>
- 6 Early Literacy Connection to Incarceration. The Governor's Early Literacy Foundation. Nashville, TN 2017. <https://governorsfoundation.org/gelf-articles/early-literacy-connection-to-incarceration/>
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Literacy Statistics, Beginning to Read Website.2022 <https://www.begintoread.com/research/literacystatistics.html>
- 9 California Students Sued Because They Were Such Poor Readers. Kohli, Sonali & Lee Iris. Los Angeles Times. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-02-20/california-literacy-lawsuit-settlement-53-million>. February 2022.
- 10 Nagy, W.E, Anderson, R.C., & Herman, P.A. (1987) Learning Word Meanings from Context During Normal Reading. American Educational Research Journal, 24(2), 237-270. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1162893>
- 11 Here's How Much Time People are Actually Reading Each Day. Thibodeaux, Amanda. Inc. Takingdictation.com. <https://www.inc.com/wanda-thibodeaux/heres-how-much-time-people-actually-spend-reading-each-day.html>
- 12 Kids Screen Time: How Much Time is too Much? OSF, OSEFheath.org <https://www.osfhealthcare.org/blog/kids-screen-time-how-much-is-too-much/>
- 13 Haynes, Trevor. Dopamine, Smartphones, and You: A Battle for Your Time. Science in the News. May 2018. <https://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/2018/dopamine-smartphones-battle-time/>

GLOSSARY

Dopamine-A neurotransmitter released in the brain, known as a feel-good hormone. As part of the human body's reward system, when released it gives the body a sense of pleasure and the motivation to repeat actions again.

Literacy-The capacity to extract and make meaning from text.

Phonological awareness-The awareness of and ability to work with sounds within a language.

Phonemic Awareness-The awareness of and the ability to manipulate individual sounds within a language. This includes the ability to manipulate the smallest unit of sound within language, phonemes.

Screen time-The amount of time individuals spend on phones, computers, tablets or any technological device. This could also include video games and gaming on handheld devices, TVs, computers, tablets etc.





Please visit

www.Nylinka.org | info@Nylinka.org



202-258-3349

© Copyright 2022 Nylinka School Solutions, LLC