

PAID CONTENT

When Kids Fall Behind, They Stay Behind

How Early Reading Struggles Can Derail a Lifetime

Part 9/12

Waiting to ‘Catch Up’... It Probably Won’t Happen

Let’s set the stage: your child is about to finish third grade but can’t pass the reading exam. You meet with the school principal, hoping for answers. Instead, we’re told that they don’t hold children back, fearing the emotional trauma of being separated from friends. “Don’t worry,” they say, “they’ll catch up later.” But here’s the harsh truth: Most kids who can’t read by third grade never catch up.

What The Numbers Show

A study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation shows that **1 in 6** children who are not reading proficiently in third grade do not graduate from high school on time, a rate four times greater than that for proficient readers. By the time they get to high school, it doesn’t seem to get better. In part 2 of this series, I mentioned that the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies approximated that 60 million US citizens cannot read better than a 10-year-old child. These kids never caught up. We all rely on testing to tell if benchmarks are being met.

How can we expect to know if those 60 million of our children are doing well, when they can’t read the exams?

Is Reading Even That Important?

Literacy impacts access to education, wealth, and life outcomes. The Adult Literacy Trust cites that those with low literacy skills are twice as likely to be unemployed and have less access to basic services. The same group is more likely to experience low self-esteem and report poor health. **Imagine so many of our children among that group**—struggling in school, their careers, and even everyday life—all because they were never taught to read adequately.

The system that was supposed to support them is failing, and now they’re left to carry that burden for the rest of their lives.

What Can We Do

Should all states, like Indiana for example, legislate requiring that a student be held back if they cannot pass a reading exam? While that could be part of a solution, early intervention may be more important. By prioritizing the first signs of struggling readers, we can ensure that students get the attention and support they need—before it’s too late. More tutors, specialized summer sessions, individualized attention, extended weekends—all these efforts can prevent the devastating choice of promoting a child who can’t yet read.

The time to act is now. Let’s advocate for a future where our children are confident readers, capable of seizing every opportunity that comes their way. Together, we can ensure that “I can’t read that” is something our children will never have to say.

Authored & Paid For By:
Richard W. Garrett PhD,
www.elevateschools.us