

## Learning To Read

Have you ever heard reading referred to as the “power skill”? It is sometimes called that because it is the threshold or gateway to accomplishment. Being a good reader opens doors and paves the way to success. Not being able to read well often fills a person with shame and humiliation, and clutters their path with obstacles at every turn. As youngsters, learning to read, (which as adults we now take for granted), was a skill that came naturally for most of us. But for others, it was an unbearably difficult and tedious task.

Let’s look at why some children have difficulty learning how to read. It might be the result of problems such as those related to hearing, vision, memory or auditory processing, or it might be related to a specific learning disability such as dyslexia or ADD. However, experts tell us that only 5% of the children who cannot read at their grade level have learning disorders. What about the other 95%, who have the capacity to learn to read, but are poor readers? One of the biggest factors which impacts reading ability is the reading curriculum that is taught in your child’s school. Do you know which reading curriculum is taught in your child’s school?

Like everyone else, educators learn from their mistakes, and one of the biggest lessons learned in education today resulted from the selection of the method of teaching children how to read in California. In 1987, that state adopted as its reading curriculum, the Whole Language philosophy of teaching reading and dramatically downplayed the teaching of phonics. After this change in curriculum, reading test scores plummeted until California ranked 50th among the 50 states. These results are among the most dramatic that we have seen in the nation.

With the spotlight on this enormous problem from NY to CA, an outcry by the public for a reversal of this tragedy, and a commitment to literacy for all, great efforts now are being made by the states and the schools to remedy this situation. Educators now agree that the curriculum that works best for most children is one that combines phonics (learning the sounds of the letters and the blending of sounds) and whole language (building a sight word vocabulary). *This is exactly the approach offered by Kumon Reading.* The early levels 7A and 6A offer children the advantages of a whole language approach, while the levels immediately following that offer a phonics approach. Both are necessary ingredients in learning how to read well. And throughout levels 2A and beyond, Kumon students are immersed in rich literature both in the worksheets and in the recommended reading list of books.

It will take time, patience and persistence in order for the politicians and educators to reverse the reading crisis in America, but they are trying. What’s key is that children who are having difficulty learning to read, are identified at an early age. This is critical because they do not outgrow reading problems. Professionals suggest that it takes only 30 minutes a day to bring a kindergartner who is struggling to learn to read up to par, but it requires an hour and a half per day to do the same for a 3rd grader in the same predicament. Experts further contend that an individualized approach, tailored to meeting the particular needs of each child, will correct most reading problems. It sounds to me like Kumon Reading is part of the cure. Perhaps someday the Kumon Reading program might be referred to as the Kumon “power skill” program!

Note from the editor:

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