

## Let's Talk About Reading Comprehension

These days, politicians all across America are talking reading, reading, and reading. President Clinton has vowed to spend billions of dollars nationwide to ensure that children read well by the end of 3rd grade. California Governor Gray Davis recently has launched a campaign to teach all children to read fluently by age 9.

*Why the recent interest in Reading?* Politicians are responding to studies like the National Institute of Education's recent report suggesting that nearly 13% of high schools graduating seniors are functionally illiterate, unable to comprehend what they read. Although they may be able to sight read some words, they're unable to complete real life tasks such as filling out job applications. Other studies indicate that learning to read fluently by age 9 (approx.3rd grade level), is an extremely important milestone for our children. Children not reading at grade level by then are much more likely later on in life to get involved with delinquency and drop out of high school.

Our Reading crisis cuts across all social-economic lines; no one can afford to ignore the situation. Politicians may plan to spend billions, but no amount of government money will have as much impact as what we do with our children at home. Teaching children to love books takes active parental involvement. From the time children are young, the mere act of holding a book and turning the pages helps them learn the basic pre-literacy skills long before school begins.

Once children learn to read, parents must reinforce the habit of daily reading in order to keep their reading fluent and at grade level or above. This is where Kumon's reading program and its list of suggested books to be read at each level can be helpful. The program is sequential, allowing reading to develop naturally. Though not exactly parallel, its 5 main "building blocks" are similar to the 4 stages of reading development recognized by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP).

Kumon's Levels and Blocks	4 Stages of Reading Development
7A – 2A Word building	Pre-reading Understanding words
A1 – CII Sentence Building	Beginning Reading Understand & discuss
D – F Paragraph Building	Basic Reading: Silent comprehension
G – J Summary and Critique	Applied Reading: Analyze & critique

Every day I administer standardized tests to children in their schools, and am constantly amazed that reading is the subject where I see the greatest differences in abilities between children of the same age. Those children who achieve the greatest success are the ones who have the most parental involvement in reading at home. The home is the key. *Early intervention can prevent later remediation, and the most successful programs are the ones, like Kumon, that promote daily reading.* Because competency in reading is the most reliable predictor of one's success or failure in life, I urge parents to continue to play an active role in the development of their child's reading.

Note from the editor:

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