

Importance of Reading by Third Grade

The third grade is one of the most important years in a child's education because it is a critical time for developing foundational reading and literacy skills. Reading proficiently by the end of third grade is such a significant milestone in a student's educational trajectory because it marks the time when the focus on reading changes from LEARNING TO READ to READING TO LEARN.

This is the time in children's education when they are graduating from simply mastering the basics of phonics, vocabulary, and other building blocks of literacy to grasping how to read in order to process complex information, think critically, solve problems, and apply concepts they read about to real world situations.

Reading to learn is a critical skill for students to master, as it lays the foundation for a child's academic and overall future success. Without adequate reading and literacy skills, students are less likely to understand what they are being taught at higher grade levels and likely to find more-advanced level academic concepts more challenging to grasp. Substantial evidence indicates that unless children establish basic reading skills by third grade, the rest of their education will be an uphill struggle.

There's no denying that low reading proficiency in the third grade has long-term negative effects on a child's future. National statistics show 23 percent of below-basic readers fail to finish high school, compared to 9 percent of basic-scoring readers and 4 percent of proficient readers.

But teachers cannot do it alone. According to a past U.S. Department of Education study, the substantial relationship between parent involvement with school and reading comprehension levels of fourth-grade classrooms is obvious. Where parental involvement is low, the classroom mean average (reading score) is 46 points below the national average. Where involvement is high, classrooms score 28 points above the national average - a gap of 74 points.

One of the main areas of advocacy focus of the South Carolina Reading Project is to encourage parents to encourage their children to voluntarily read for pleasure, especially during summer vacation. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the more children read for fun on their own time, the higher their reading scores.