

Reading

A GUIDEBOOK

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Curated and edited by Landmark School and Landmark Outreach
Illustrations by Olivia Malloy



What is Reading?

What the science tells us about best practices for teaching reading.





A teenager is on the school bus on their way home. They pull out their smartphone and start scrolling through their favorite social media sites—skimming and reading an unending ribbon of pictures, videos, and text. They catch the meaning of each post quickly, then move on. It looks easy, relaxed, even automatic.

Reading is anything but. According to renowned literacy expert Maryanne Wolf, “We were never born to read. Reading is a human invention that reflects how the brain rearranges itself to learn something new.”¹

“The most fundamental definition of reading is being able to interpret written symbols and understand printed material.”² But being able to read is fruitless unless there is comprehension. To achieve this level of proficiency, a variety of knowledge and skills must come together to create meaning from the text. This is known as the Simple View of Reading, a research-based reading development model.

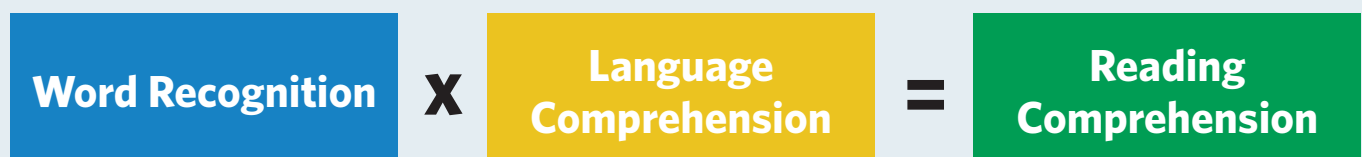


We were never born to read.

Reading is a human invention that reflects how the brain rearranges itself to learn something new.”¹

—MARYANNE WOLF

The Simple View of Reading³



SCARBOROUGH'S READING ROPE (2001)⁴

Language Comprehension

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE
(facts, concepts, etc.)

VOCABULARY
(breadth, precision, links, etc.)

LANGUAGE STRUCTURE
(syntax, semantics, etc.)

VERBAL REASONING
(inference, metaphor, etc.)

LITERACY KNOWLEDGE
(print concepts, genres, etc.)

Word Recognition

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS
(syllables, phonemes, etc.)

DECODING
(alphabetic principle,
spelling—sound correspondences)

SIGHT RECOGNITION
(of familiar words)

The Many
Strands
Woven into
Skilled
Reading

INCREASINGLY STRATEGIC

INCREASINGLY AUTOMATIC

**SKILLED
READING**

Fluent execution
and coordination of
word recognition
and language
comprehension.

Scarborough's Reading Rope helps to show the many reading skills that must be woven together across the two broad areas of Word Recognition and Language Comprehension.

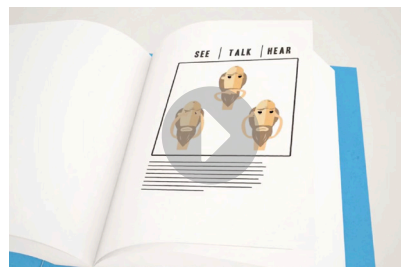
WHY THIS MATTERS

Nationally, only

35%

of public school students were **at or above Proficient in grade 4 reading.**⁶

LEARN MORE



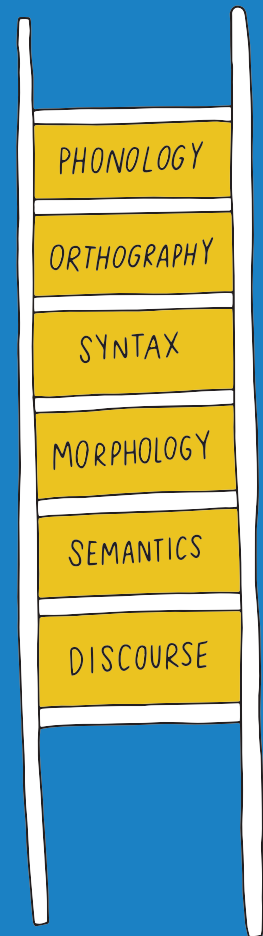
**The Miracle of
Reading**
Produced by
Bodine School




STRUCTURED LITERACY

"Studies from education, literacy, developmental psychology, educational psychology, cognitive science, and neuroscience fields continue to provide evidence about how the brain learns to read, and what is needed to effectively teach reading. What has evolved is more than just phonics instruction. In 2000, a National Reading Panel determined that effective reading instruction requires five key components: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension."⁵ (For an explanation of these concepts, see *Landmark's Approach*, pg. 22)

In recent years, the International Dyslexia Association defined a systematic approach to reading instruction, known as Structured Literacy, "a comprehensive approach that teaches the Structure of language (phonology, orthography, morphology, semantics, syntax, and discourse) in an explicit, systematic, cumulative, and diagnostic way."⁵ But despite all of the scientific evidence, there is still debate in many schools and districts across the country that haven't subscribed to this evidence-based best practice.



 In 2000, a National Reading Panel determined that effective reading instruction requires five key concepts: **phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.**"



WHY THIS MATTERS

20%

of Americans **CANNOT READ** well enough to make a living wage.⁷

Myths Vs. Facts About Reading

The following myths and facts about reading were excerpted from a Reading Rockets article, *Ten Myths About Learning to Read*.⁸



MYTH: Learning to read is a natural process.

FACT: Learning to understand speech is indeed a natural process, but reading is a skill that is quite unnatural and very difficult to learn. Reading and writing simply have not existed long enough to be described as a “natural” phenomenon.

MYTH: Children will eventually learn to read if given enough time.

FACT: If literacy instruction needs are not met early, then the gap widens between proficient and struggling readers. Research has shown that if a child is not reading grade-appropriate materials by the time they are in the fourth grade, the odds of that child ever developing good reading skills are very slim.

MYTH: Reading programs are “successful”.

FACT: There are a few programs that, if properly implemented, could help a school move in the right direction with reading instruction, but nothing could ever take the place of a knowledgeable and talented teacher.

MYTH: We used to do a better job of teaching children to read.

FACT: Based on statistics from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), we have evidence that this is not true.⁹ Other investigations have found that literacy rates have not changed in this country since World War II, and some studies suggest that literacy rates were worse before the

war. Literacy is an indispensable prerequisite for success now and in the future.

MYTH: Phonemic awareness is a consequence of reading acquisition.

FACT: The most compelling evidence for the importance of phonemic awareness (thinking about and working with the individual sounds [phonemes] in spoken words) stems from the research that has shown that when children are taught to develop phonemic awareness, they are more likely to develop good word decoding skills faster and earlier than children who are not taught to be aware of phonemes in spoken words.

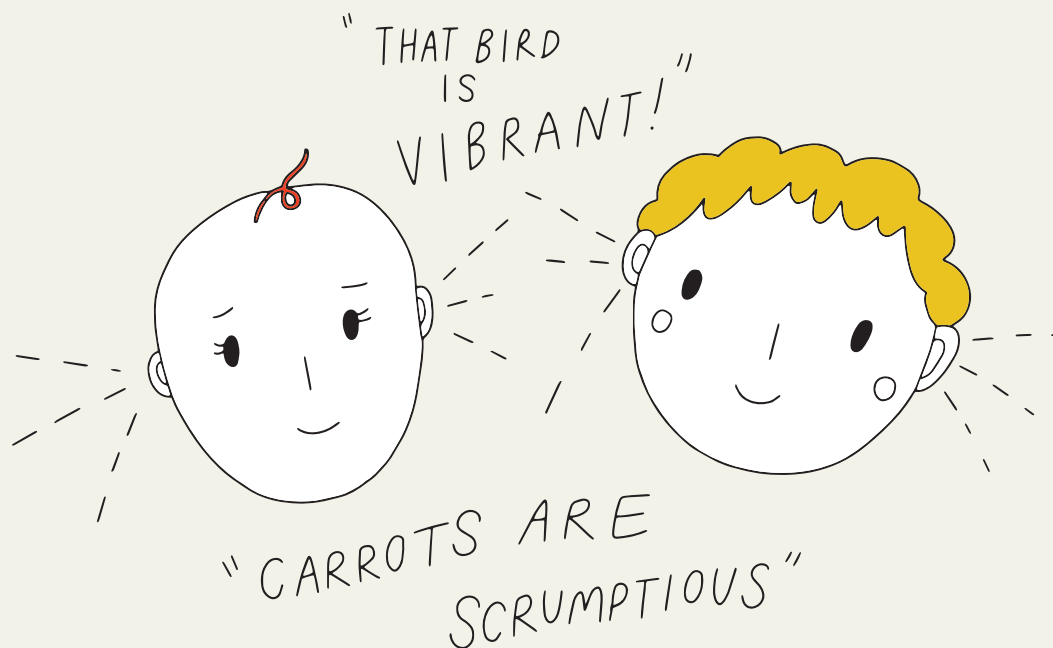
MYTH: Short-term tutoring for struggling readers can get them caught up with their peers, and the gains will be sustained.

FACT: Such gains made by children in these programs (and even those gains are questionable) are not sustained for very long once they leave the program. Studies of these pull-out tutoring programs have shown that children who are not thriving like their peers in the classroom continue to fail to thrive when they are placed back in that classroom full-time.

Developing Eager Readers

Skill isn't the only driver for developing eager readers. Motivation plays a key role too.





A parent, other relative—even a babysitter—is reading to a young child. There’s something warm and inviting about this scene. But there’s also something miraculous going on in the brain of the child who’s being read to. Neurons are firing, connections are being made, and language is getting solidified.

IT STARTS EARLIER THAN YOU THINK

With reading proficiency hovering near the mid-30th percentile nationally, it’s imperative that we better support our children to become more eager and capable readers. This can and should begin at home with our youngest children. There is vast scientific evidence that proves that the more language children are exposed to, the more they have a chance of becoming strong readers.

Infants absorb language in utero. They hear verbal conversation, pick up patterns, and learn words, phrases, tone, and meaning innately. The more children of any age hear and see language, the better.

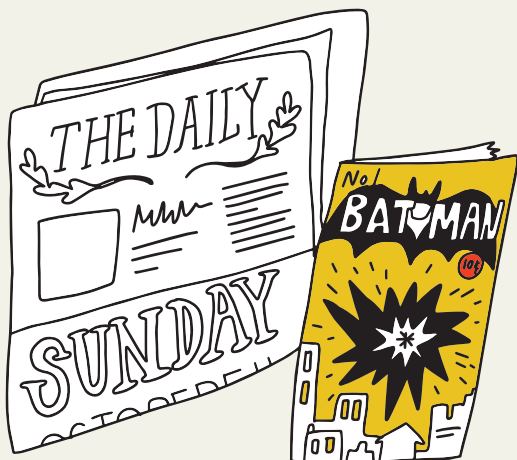
TALK MATTERS

The most important aspects of parent talk are amount and quality. And the more precise and descriptive it is with a higher number of unique words, the better. Children’s academic successes at ages 9 and 10 can be attributed to the amount of talk they hear from birth through age 3. Young children who are exposed to early language and literacy experiences are also more likely to be good readers later on in life.



Children who are read to at least three times a week by a family member are almost **twice as likely to score in the top 25% in reading** compared to children who are read to less than three times a week.¹⁰

Tips for Fostering Positive Reading Habits with Your Child

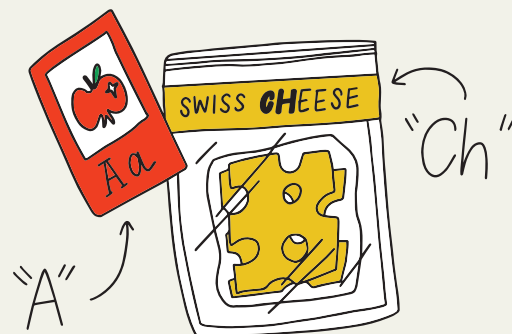


- Make reading material plentiful in your home from newspapers and books to magazines—even comic books.



- Follow the text with your finger while reading and talk about the content of a story with your child. Or use a “read-to-me” function in an app like Epic, which highlights the words as the story is read.

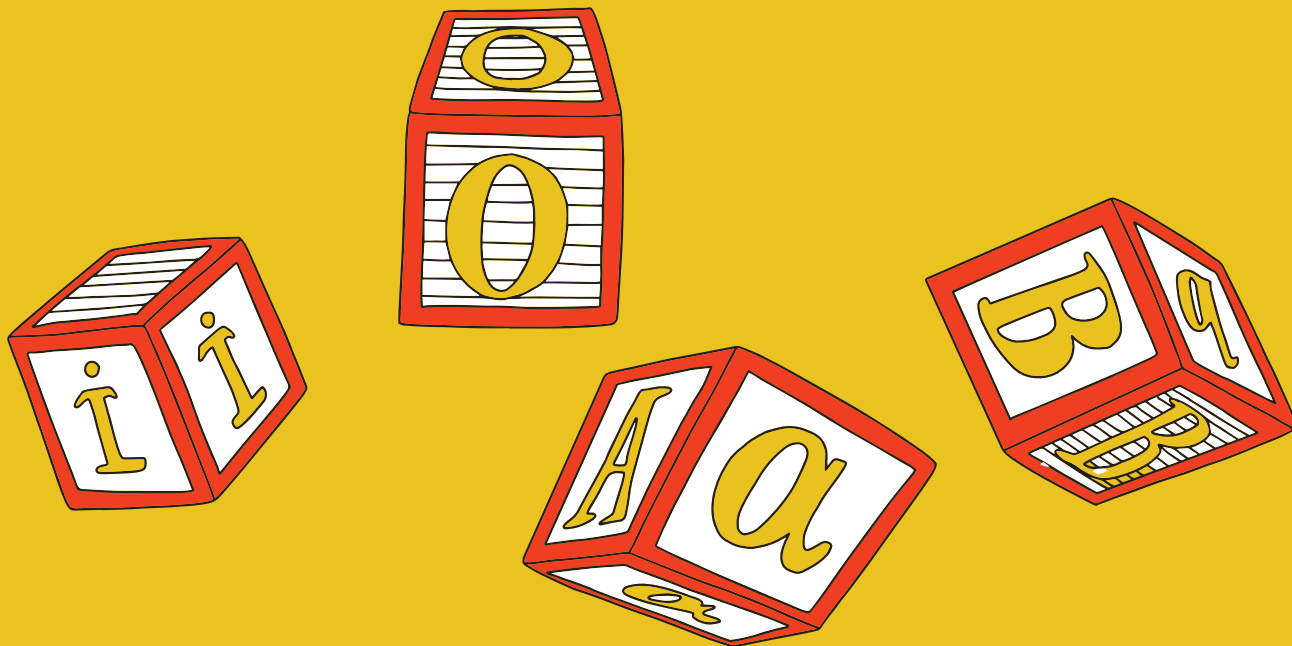
- Make reading together a priority and build daily habits like reading at bedtime or during breakfast.
- Have your child read to you without your criticism or judgment to understand how their reading is progressing.
- Read material to your child that is of inherent interest to them and for which they have background knowledge. Give graphic novels a try.
- Point out written words in everyday life. This can include signs in grocery stores, subway stations, along roadways—virtually anywhere.



- Point out letters, individual letter sounds, and vowel teams like “oa”, “ie”, and “au”, and consonant sounds like “ch”, “sh”, and “th”—as well as others.
- Use Artificial Intelligence to help you write stories that would interest your child.
- Talk with your child about what they’re reading and what they like or dislike about it.



- If your child is struggling with reading, encourage them to talk about what’s challenging them.



FINDING THE RIGHT LEVEL OF READING CHALLENGE FOR YOUR CHILD

Ask your child's school for their Lexile score if they administer a Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)—most public schools do. You can then search using many online tools. Here is just one: Please bear in mind that scores are based on averages and

are just one measure of a child's abilities.



DETERMINING IF YOUR CHILD IS STRUGGLING TO READ:

There are a host of reasons why some people struggle to read. Here are two helpful resources that give you red flags to look for:

Dyslexia: A Primer,
Landmark360




Early Signs of a Reading Difficulty,
Reading Rockets



THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY INTERVENTION

If your child is struggling in school, the earlier you bring this to the attention of their teachers and key administrators, the better. Early intervention is the single most effective method of helping them get back on track. Waiting is never a good option.

"Once children fall behind in the growth of critical word reading skills, it may require very intensive interventions to bring them back up to adequate levels of reading accuracy (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1994; Vaughn & Schumm, 1996), and reading fluency may be even more difficult to restore because of the large amounts of reading practice that is lost by children each month and year that they remain poor readers (Rashotte, Torgesen, & Wagner, 1997)."¹¹

 The great challenge is for teachers of reading to find ways to make the **science of reading come to life** in artful, authentic, engaging, and effective ways."¹²

—TIMOTHY RASINSKI

LEARN MORE



Tips for Parents Who Suspect Their Child Has a Learning Disability, Landmark360

Landmark's Approach

At Landmark, we design a program specifically for each student to focus on their strengths and interests while bolstering their areas of need.



While there have been countless reading programs built over the years, the literacy profiles of students lie along a wide spectrum of development, and no single approach meets the needs of all students.⁸

For this reason, Landmark School does not prescribe to one set reading paradigm but artfully draws from many research-based practices to find what works best for each individual student.



To achieve success for all children, teachers need to become extremely sophisticated and diagnostic in their approach to reading instruction.”⁸

—SEBASTIAN WREN,
LITERACY FIRST

Key Components of Reading

Landmark’s approach to literacy aligns with scientific research and includes instruction in the following areas: ^{13, 14}

Phonemic Awareness: Students working on phonemic and phonological awareness skills get intensive training of sounds and their corresponding oral-motor feedback.



Phonics: Phonics knowledge is the understanding that letters correspond to certain sounds and is explicitly taught to enhance decoding and encoding (spelling).



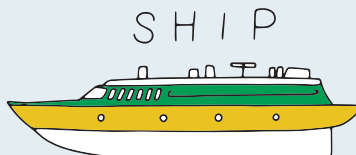
Spelling: Spelling instruction, part of phonics, follows an ordered progression of patterns closely paralleling oral reading. As the decoding-encoding link is reinforced, students utilize knowledge of common expectancies and syllabication to improve their spelling in isolation and in context.



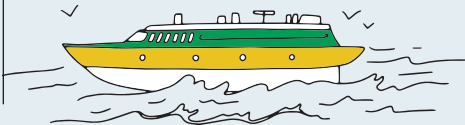
Oral Reading Fluency: Through interactive fluency practice, students develop rate, accuracy, and expression in oral reading.



Vocabulary: Vocabulary is built through explicit instruction in defining words, understanding meaningful parts of words (morphology), and accurate use of target words both orally and in writing.



Comprehension: Reading comprehension is developed concurrently with oral reading and is stressed regardless of a student’s reading level. A variety of materials are used to engage learners and enhance background knowledge.

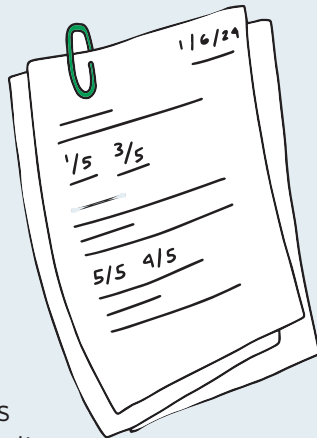


Creating Reading Support for Each Student Across the Curriculum

Reading is a complex process with many layers. When a student is struggling to read, drawing from research-based practices to artfully implement the right supports has many elements. While individualized literacy instruction, like a language-arts tutorial, is important, there needs to be consistent reading and writing instruction across the curriculum by expert teachers. Here is a snapshot of Landmark's diagnostic-prescriptive and artful approach to creating a program that helps struggling readers thrive. ^{17, 18, 19, 20}

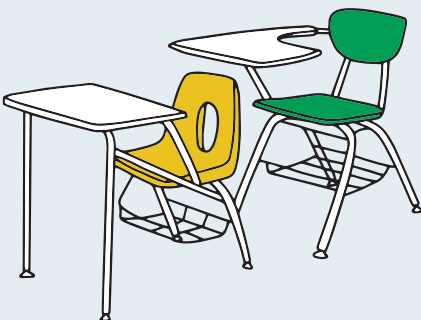
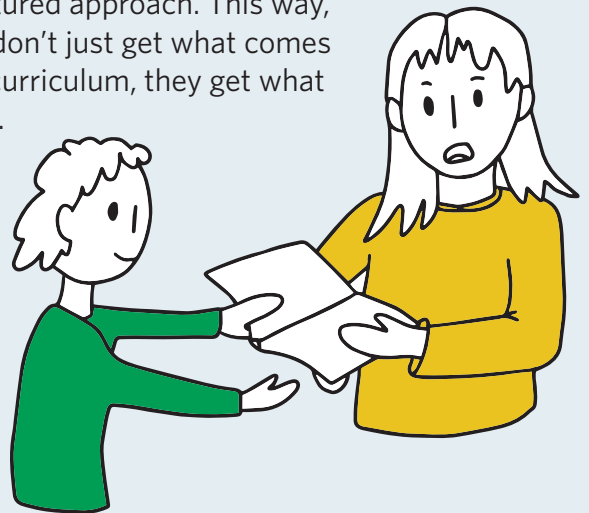
Diagnostic:

Formal neuropsychological assessments from outside Landmark, combined with ongoing internal assessments, give us a strong picture of student skills. This allows us to individualize both in literacy instruction and content areas for each student. Throughout the year, teachers give students daily informal assessments to constantly gauge student progress and optimize instruction.



One-to-one Language Arts Tutorial:

No one literacy curriculum works for all students.¹¹ Using diagnostic testing, Landmark faculty pull from a battery of research-based methods to find what works best for each student. All tutorials use a systematic, sequential, and structured approach. This way, students don't just get what comes next in a curriculum, they get what they need.



Small Classes:

Small classes allow teachers to create more individualized instruction within content areas. They can use learning-to-read strategies while helping students to access the curriculum.

LEARN MORE



Teaching Reading:
The Diagnostic-
Prescriptive
Approach

Integrated:

Landmark School integrates the language arts tutorial within the student's academic schedule. It feels like just another class during the school day and doesn't pull students away from other activities.

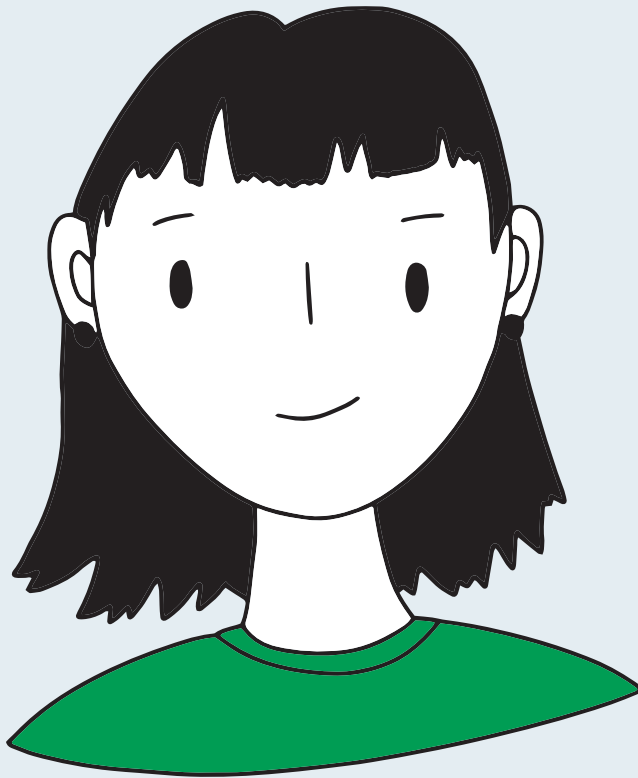
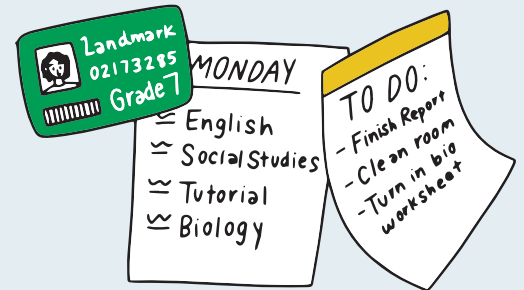
Across the Curriculum:

Reading and writing skills aren't just taught in a Language Arts Tutorial. By infusing reading instruction into all subjects, Landmark School creates an environment where students are consistently exposed to opportunities for reading practice and application.



Academic Advisor:

Each student is carefully matched with their advisor who serves as guide, communications coordinator, and advocate. They monitor the student's program across all classes to make sure it meets the needs of the student.



Research-based: Landmark methodologies are based on the recommendations of the National Reading Panel¹⁵, and current research informs any updates and additions to our programming. Our methodologies are based on a speech-to-print format¹⁶, which begins by teaching phonology (speech sounds) and connecting sounds to printed text, as opposed to print-to-speech (phonics) that begins with learning graphemes.



Specifically Trained Educators:

Teaching reading is an artful practice. It requires a lot of knowledge, but also experience. Every adult a Landmark student interacts with understands the complexities, anxieties, and gifts of learning differently.

ACTIVE Learning

Landmark's Elementary•Middle School classes practice **ACTIVE** Learning strategies for comprehension. In our elementary program, each strategy is personified by a character who visits the classrooms to share their expertise and bring each strategy to life.



A

Ask Questions

Ask questions to clarify and deepen your thinking



C

Connect

Connect new information to your background knowledge



T

Tools to Repair

Monitor for understanding and repair with fix-it tools



I

Infer

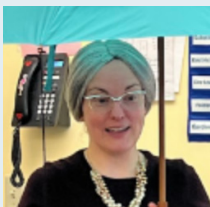
Make an educated guess based on clues and your connections



V

Visualize

Picture what you are reading or hearing



E

Explain

State the main idea in your own words

Listening vs. Reading Comprehension

Listening to spoken text is not the same as reading comprehension. Using an accommodation like an audiobook must be navigated wisely. When listening, either the actor who is performing the passage or the technology turning text into speech is in control of the "pause." *Pausing and thinking* that leads to comprehension is not inherently in the control of the reader. Wait, what? Let me read that again! Exactly. **The decision to pause, and recognize that there may have been a "clunk" in our understanding begins the metacognitive experience, which drives the strategies to make meaning of what the listener just heard.** If the goal for the student is to help them develop their *reading* comprehension, allowing them to listen to an oral presentation of the text will not provide the practice necessary to improve that skill. However, if the goal is for students to learn content and not necessarily to develop reading comprehension, then the choice to use audiobooks or other recordings may be an outstanding way to support that student's ability to learn new material.

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Metacognition and Reading Comprehension

Questions to Ask About Your Child's Reading Instruction

If your child struggles with reading, or even if they are just a new reader, here are some good questions to ask about their school's approach to reading instruction.



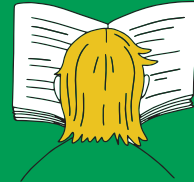
What curricula are being used to teach reading and what are their purposes (phonemic awareness, comprehension, etc.)?



Is the reading curriculum utilizing research-based approaches? Can you describe them?



How and when is my child's progress being assessed? What information will parents get about these assessments?



How will I know if my child is struggling to read? What supports are available?



How is technology integrated, if at all?

The teacher or school may use terms you are unfamiliar with. Take notes, research, and don't be afraid to ask follow-up questions.



More questions to ask about your school's reading instruction, [Understood.org](https://www.understood.org)

Explicit literacy instruction rooted in the science of reading, the decades of cognitive and neurological research into how reading is processed in the brain, is proven to **close equity gaps and achieve the goal of literacy for all.**²¹

—LEXIA

Resources



Landmark Outreach

Professional development and coaching for educators—blog and free webinars



Landmark School

For boarding and day students in grades 2-12 with dyslexia



Landmark360 Blog

A blog for parents on the art and science of learning

Experts to Follow

David Kilpatrick, *Professor of Psychology for the State University of New York College*

Tim Rasinski, *Professor of Literacy Education at Kent State University*

Maryanne Wolf, *Director of the Center for Dyslexia, Diverse Learners, and Social Justice at UCLA*



Podcast

Sold a Story,
by Emily Hanford on APM



Curriculum Assessment Tool

For educators and school committees to assess their reading curriculum

IEP Resources



Questions to Ask Before and During Your Child's IEP Meeting, Landmark360



IEP Process Guide,
Massachusetts
Department of Education



Understanding IEPs,
Understood.org



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