



# Learning Times

## Can You Read to Learn if You Haven't Learned to Read?

According to *Best Practices in Literacy Instruction*, a balanced literacy model includes a four-block structure that incorporates the major methods of reading instruction. Within the classroom, equal time is spent on the four areas consisting of: Guided Reading, Self-Selected Reading, Writing, and Working with Words.

The Guided Reading block exposes children to a variety of

books and literature while teaching comprehension and the skills to tackle more difficult reading material. Guided reading starts with a group discussion reviewing information that may be necessary before reading the material. Students then spend time reading individually, with a partner, or in a small group. When reading is completed, the class gathers as a group to discuss what was read and practice strategies. Examples include: "reading workshops", assignments where students discuss reading with peers, and writing personal

*What is balanced reading instruction and is it effective for a child with a reading difficulty?*

The Self-Selected Reading block provides an opportunity for children to choose what they would like to read. Students are also encouraged to respond to what they have read and share their thoughts with the teacher in individual conferences. Self-Selected Reading starts with the teacher reading aloud to all of the students, then students choose something to read on their own from a variety of levels and types of books, while children individually meet with the teacher to discuss what they have read. One example of Self-Selected Reading being used in Minnesota schools is the accelerated reading program.

The Writing Block, or Writer's Workshop, starts with the teacher modeling the writing process; including thinking aloud about choosing a topic, using a word wall for spelling help, and making mistakes and fixing them. Students are asked to help in the editing process by going over an established checklist. Then, the children write on their own while the teacher conferences with those students ready to publish their writing. The block ends with time for student authors to share their completed work or a work in progress.

The Words block helps children learn to read and spell. It involves focusing on high frequency words and strategies for reading and spelling. For the first few minutes of the block, students work on activities relating to the words on the word wall. The remainder of the block is spent on reading and spelling activities.

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Building learning success  
for children, families,  
schools & communities

4301 Highway 7, Suite 160 ■ Minneapolis, MN 55416  
(952) 922-8374 ■ [www.ldaminnesota.org](http://www.ldaminnesota.org)  
Learning Disabilities Association of Minnesota

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# Basic Reading Skill Instruction

## Five Building Blocks of an Effective “Learning to Read” Reading Program

- Phonemic Awareness
- Phonics
- Vocabulary
- Fluency
- Comprehension

Research has shown that the most effective foundational reading programs contain the following components: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. When students gain the basic skills necessary in *learning to read*, they become much more successful in *reading to learn*, which is the ultimate goal of reading.

**Phonemic awareness** involves being able to hear and identify sounds in different positions within a word, as well as being able to take apart words into individual sounds and put them back together.

**Phonetic** approaches to language learning deal with the relationship between written letters and their sounds. Material is introduced sequentially and gradually, beginning with individual letters and their sounds, progressing to combinations of letters and their sounds, then to whole words. A phonics program breaks down the

language into its smallest parts and shows how to put the parts together to form words. It also covers the application of rules and generalizations of our language.

**Fluency** practice strengthens the student’s ability to read with accuracy and ease.

Good reading instruction includes building **vocabulary** so that students broaden their knowledge of the world around them, which, in turn, impacts their comprehension.

**Comprehension** strategy training gives students tools to help them better understand and remember what they read.

# LDA's Parenting Corner

## Is My Child at Risk for Reading Difficulties?

By observing and listening to your young child, you can discover whether she/he may have trouble learning to read. Be aware and alert for:

- Delay in speaking
- Difficulties with pronunciation; leaving out sounds in a word, or mixing up the sounds in a word
- Difficulty with rhyming
- Difficulty discriminating between sounds and confusing words that sound alike
- Difficulty breaking words apart into units of sound
- Difficulty putting sounds together to make words
- Difficulty learning the alphabet (by age 3), the letter names (by age 4-5) and the sounds of the letters (by age 5-6)
- Avoidance of print and reading aloud
- Avoidance of writing and difficulty spelling
- Difficulty expressing or conveying what they want to say, trouble retrieving words from memory
- Family history, family members with reading difficulties

Noticing that a child reverses letters is not in itself an indicator of reading or language difficulty. Letter reversals are fairly normal through the second grade. Take care not to single out just one difficulty and claim that there is a language deficit, rather look at all of the clues when observing a child.

## How do I Help My Child with Reading?

Reading with your child is one of the most important things you can do for your child in preparing them for success in school. Besides providing a wonderful opportunity for building relationships and communication, reading together can introduce your child to new concepts and information. Reading with your child also helps to develop their listening skills and vocabulary.

- Find time to read with your child everyday
- Teach them about our printed language (with books, signs, labels etc.)
- Help them to develop sound awareness (rhyming songs, books, games, alphabet games)
- Help your child understand the relationship of letters, sounds and words
- Have your child write out letters while saying the sound the letter makes at the same time
- While reading, occasionally point out the sounds in a word one at a time, showing them the parts that make up the whole of the word
- Choose easy to read, enjoyable stories and point out words you know your child can read on their own
- Introduce your child to the patterns within our language; e.g., “make and take” or “path and bath”
- Talk about what you have read together
- Remember to keep reading time with your child as an enjoyable time; it need not be more than fifteen minutes at a time

# How Well is My Child Reading?

Good reading instruction should result in a child making progress toward academic milestones.

It is helpful to know what skills or benchmarks should be achieved at age or grade levels to determine whether a student is having developmental language difficulties. Following are some of the general skills children should be able to master at grade levels pre-K through 4.

## *Pre-school to Kindergarten*

Rhyme, compare sounds, pull sounds apart, put sounds together and identify the order or placement of sounds in a word, begin to identify some letters.

## *Kindergarten*

Learn letters and their sounds and the linkage between the two, write own name, and write most letters. Continue to rhyme, break words apart and put them back together (spoken words), identify sound placement (i.e. which sounds come first, in the middle, or last), begin to read some easier words.

## *First Grade*

Sound out one syllable words, know word families, i.e. words that have similar parts or endings like /at/ or /op/ or /ick/, spell short words, and understand simple books or first grade texts, read basic instructions.

## *Second Grade*

Sound out words with more than one syllable, begin to read more smoothly and with expression, read second grade texts.

## *Third Grade*

Read with fluency and understand third grade level texts, use prefixes, suffixes and roots of words to help understand what is read, summarize main ideas of a story, use a dictionary.

## *Fourth Grade*

Read fourth grade texts, focus shifts to reading to learn, basic reading skills are in place.

## Where Can I Learn More?

Early Signs of Learning Disabilities. (1997). Retrieved 2/18/00, from Web Site: [www.ldonline.org/ld\\_indepth/general\\_info/ccldearly\\_warning.html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/general_info/ccldearly_warning.html)

Lyon, G. Reid, Ph.D. Learning to Read: A Call from Research to Action. 1999 *Resource Directory, Southern California Consortium, 40-46.*

Report of the National Reading Panel. (2000). *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction.* Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service. [www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/nrppubskey.cfm](http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/nrppubskey.cfm)

Shaywitz, Sally, M.D. (2003). *Overcoming Dyslexia.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

# LDA's Learning Connections Program

*Keshawna grew up in an unstable home and had poor attendance during her first few years of schooling. After moving in with her grandmother, Keshawna enrolled in one of LDA's partner schools in Minneapolis and was referred to LDA's Learning Connections program as a fifth grader reading at the 2nd grade level, three years behind grade placement. In 7 short months, Keshawna gained 2 years in reading achievement. That is the goal of our Learning Connections program – to accelerate learning to close the achievement gap. Success breeds success. What is even more amazing is that not only does Keshawna apply the skills she has learned, but also teaches those skills to her struggling classmates. Keshawna scored the highest possible scores on her Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement tests in each area of reading, math, social studies, and writing. Can you imagine Keshawna's pride? One of the school personnel noted that LDA's teacher showed great compassion and was one of the few caring adults in Keshawna's life. It's troubling to think about what could have been Keshawna's fate without LDA's help.*

The Learning Connections Program is a collaborative partnership with Minneapolis communities and elementary schools with the shared goal of promoting literacy and learning success for children at-risk for reading failure. Working together with parents, teachers and volunteers for over 9 years, LDA has successfully replicated this model program with a total of 18 partners.

The Learning Connections Program provides three unique services:

- *Intensive Reading Instruction*: an intensive, individualized and hands-on approach to reading instruction for children with low reading skills and reading disabilities
- *Parents as Partners*: parent education and involvement
- *Capacity Building*: teacher and volunteer training and consultation to build their capacity to improve reading instruction and behavior management for children with low reading skills and reading disabilities.

LDA's Learning Connections instructors provided service to a total of 217 students across all six partner sites during the 2003-2004 school year. Overall, of the participants who were in the program long enough to pre-test and post-test, 95% made gains equal to or greater than the time period in which they were served. Of the students we served 94 of 185 are within or above grade level. This is a significant achievement for students who were at significant risk of reading failure. Additionally, classroom teachers overwhelmingly report that reading skills have improved. Of the 23 teachers who responded to our survey, 91-100% reported seeing improvement across the areas of fluency, decoding, comprehension, and vocabulary skills.

LDA is grateful to the many supporters of this program, especially The Cargill Foundation and Greater Twin Cities United Way, two major contributors. LDA has a solid record of partnering with elementary schools in the Minneapolis district that serve some of the largest percentage of students with high poverty rates, lowest achievement of reading performance standards, and diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds. Schools include:

- Andersen Elementary
- Four Winds
- Jefferson
- Northstar
- Risen Christ, parochial
- Andersen Open
- Powderhorn
- Bryn Mawr
- Sullivan
- Southside Family School
- YouthLink, nonprofit

**LDA can work with your school district or organization to set up a comprehensive package of services to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities and learning difficulties in your community.**

**If you would like to learn more about LDA's Learning Connections Program for your school or district, please call Vicki Weinberg, Program Director at 952-922-8374 ext. 106.**

## Learning to Read *continued from page 1*

Exposure to the many facets of language and literacy is essential for reading success. All students can benefit from this balance; however, when a student continues to struggle or flounder within this holistic program, they require more intensive, structured and explicit instruction that will be directed to their area of need. This does not mean that a balanced approach is not necessary, but, rather, that **both** scenarios (balanced and explicit) best serve students having difficulty with reading.

Students who have difficulty with reading usually need more time to practice in order to master information. They require a different rate of movement through the scope and sequence of language instruction.



Intensive, explicit reading and spelling instruction involves working from the smallest units of sound in our language to more complex combinations of sounds (phonics), mastering the rules and generalizations that apply to those sounds and letters, using a specific sequence of material, monitoring pacing to ensure success, while using all pathways of learning: seeing, hearing, speaking, and writing at the same time (multi-sensory). This kind of intensive method helps a student break down our language to the smallest parts, connect sounds and letter patterns, learn rules that apply to letter combinations, and put the parts back together again and successfully read and spell. A phonetic, sequential, multi-sensory approach to language learning is often the key to success for the student who struggles with reading or spelling.

## LDA is Seeking Volunteers

LDA is looking for passionate volunteers to assist the agency in its public awareness efforts at conferences and community exhibits. Knowledge of learning disabilities is helpful. Parents of children with learning disabilities are strongly encouraged to volunteer.

Do you have an interest in helping LDA raise supporters to expand our services? Consider becoming a “Friends of LDA” volunteer committee member. “Friends” will guide and assist LDA in raising funds to expand and grow LDA’s vital services.

For more information or to volunteer, please contact Martha Moriarty, Development/Marketing Director at 952-922-8374.

# Bright Futures Tour visits LDA of Minnesota

## Tour made stop in Minneapolis in September!

Paul Sanchez, a recent graduate of Santa Barbara City College, is cycling the perimeter of the United States in a record breaking effort to raise funds for the State Chapters of the Learning Disabilities Association of America and the educational programs for low income/at risk children with dyslexia at the Dyslexia Awareness and Resource Center in Santa Barbara. 100% of donations will go to the Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA) and the Dyslexia Awareness and Resource Center (DARC). The following will show how the donations will be distributed:

- 50% to the LDA State Chapters that Paul travels through on the bike tour.
- 25% to all other LDA State Chapters.
- 25% will also go to DARC.

While attending college, Paul was diagnosed with learning disabilities. "I always had trouble in school. I would turn letters around when I spelled. It was frustrating not to be able to communicate my thoughts on paper." Paul talks about how he personally struggled with his own dyslexia in shame and in silence for many years. Paul says that "Years of living with my undiagnosed learning disorder left me both frustrated and with very little hope."

The motivating force compelling Paul to undertake his arduous journey is to increase community awareness of the devastating effects that undiagnosed learning disabilities have on children living in our communities. Paul hopes that his journey across the United States will motivate and encourage the educational community to both improve and employ their early intervention strategies for children with learning disabilities.

Cycling along the perimeter of the United States, Sanchez will cover 12,000 miles and pass through 1,050 cities. Paul will meet and film interviews with children in 14 major cities with learning disabilities. He hopes to produce a documentary to raise awareness and give hope to the growing number of children who suffer from dyslexia.

Paul began his tour at 8am on Wednesday, July 7, 2004, at a Kick-off celebration sponsored by the Four Seasons Biltmore in Montecito, California. Paul says he has been planning this ride ever since 1998 when he was inspired by a friend who cycled from San Jose to Atlanta. Paul will be attempting to break a world record by cycling the perimeter of the United States in under 180 days. Some of the cities Paul will pass through will be San Francisco, Sacramento, Portland, Seattle, Chicago, Cleveland, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Washington D.C., Jacksonville, Austin, Phoenix, San Diego, and Los Angeles. The perimeter tour will end back in Santa Barbara.

Paul arrived in Minneapolis on Wednesday, September 15th and visited a local client of LDA of Minnesota. Paul also had a chance to speak on KSNB Sports radio and was covered on Jeff McKinney's morning show on WCCO radio.

Learn more about Paul's Bright Future Tour, donate, and track Paul's progress at [www.perimeter.us](http://www.perimeter.us).

LDA of Minnesota  
Learning Disabilities Association, Inc.  
4301 Highway 7, Suite 160  
Minneapolis, MN 55416  
952-922-8374

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## Become a member of LDA!

LDA of Minnesota is the state affiliate of LDA of America. As a member of LDA, you will receive:

- Access to the latest information and research on learning disabilities
- Complimentary subscriptions to LDA's local and national newsletters
- A chance to connect with others who have similar interests

### Member information:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City / State / Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

### I am interested in:

- Individual Membership \$30  
 Journal Subscription (members only) \$30  
 Journal Subscription (non-members) \$60  
**Subtotal \$\_\_\_\_\_**

*LDA relies on the generosity of our members and the community to provide information and services that advance our mission.*

I want to help LDA, I have enclosed a contribution to support LDA's mission \$\_\_\_\_\_

**Total \$\_\_\_\_\_**

### Method of payment:

- Check (payable to LDA)  
 Visa  Mastercard

Card number \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

### Contributions to LDA are tax deductible

So that we may better serve you, please consider providing us the following OPTIONAL information.

I am a:

- Person with Learning Disabilities  
 Professional  Family member  Other

*Please mail completed application along with payment to:*

**LDA of Minnesota**  
**4301 Highway 7, Suite 160**  
**Minneapolis, MN 55416**  
**ph: 952-922-8374 [www.ldaminnesota.org](http://www.ldaminnesota.org)**

LDA is a private, non-profit, educational agency that specializes in helping children, youth, and adults with learning disabilities or other learning difficulties maximize their potential so that they and their families may lead more productive and fulfilled lives.

