

READINGrockets®

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Target the Problem!

Welcome to Target the Problem!, a tool to help parents and classroom teachers understand the specific problems a child may be having with reading. You'll find practical suggestions on what you (and kids themselves) can do to help students overcome or deal with their reading difficulties.



For a quick overview, try the "Target the Problem!" activity by clicking below.

- **Start the Target the Problem! activity**

For more comprehensive information, click below to learn about areas where kids often have reading difficulties:

- **Phonological and phonemic awareness**
- **Word decoding and phonics**
- **Vocabulary**
- **Fluency**
- **Comprehension**
- **Other sources of reading difficulty**

Within each of these areas you'll find:

- An explanation of the problem and how it affects a child's reading
- Information on how children experience the difficulty as well as what it may look like from a parent's or teacher's point of view
- Suggestions on what parents, teachers, and kids themselves can do to help
- Links to more information



You can also download and photocopy a handout version of "Target the Problem!" that presents this information in chart form.

- [Download the handout \(246K PDF\)*](#)

Things to be aware of

There are many reasons why reading can be hard. Target the Problem! describes the five components of reading and difficulties that kids experience within each area.

We hope this tool helps parents and teachers become aware of specific areas in which a child is having trouble and begin targeting ways to help. (In the **Other Difficulties** section, you'll also find information about other sources of reading problems, such as processing difficulties and attention issues.)

It's important to note that struggling readers will often have problems in multiple areas. For example, children who have problems with phonemic awareness almost always have problems in word decoding and phonics; children with fluency problems usually have comprehension weaknesses; and a weak vocabulary also impacts comprehension. Please read through all of the sections of Target the Problem! to understand these different factors.

The key thing is, don't hesitate when you suspect a child has a reading difficulty. Trust your judgment and consider how a child does in comparison with other students. Although reading problems are best addressed when caught at a young age, it's never too late to help a child. One thing to consider early on is whether hearing or vision loss is contributing to your child's difficulties with reading. Be sure to talk with your pediatrician about having your child's hearing and vision tested. This is particularly important for children with fluid in their ears or children with allergies.

Parents play a huge role in making sure that their child's needs are being addressed by the school. Some kids end up being diagnosed with a learning disability. There is an even larger group of students, though, who never receives a diagnosis but who nonetheless needs targeted assistance to learn and read well. Because you care the most about your child, you need to understand your child's needs and advocate for him or her.

A thorough reading evaluation can help determine a child's reading difficulties. A good evaluation should clarify, for example, whether a child's primary reading problem is poor fluency with comprehension problems secondary to it, or whether other problems that contribute to poor comprehension also exist. Please see the **Assessment Process** for information on how to get a thorough reading evaluation for your child.

We hope you'll use this information as a starting point. The best thing that can happen is for parents, teachers, and other professionals to begin talking and strategizing how they can help a child overcome or cope with his or her reading difficulties. It takes everyone working together to help a child strengthen the skills that are so crucial to learning to read.

Target the Problem! includes suggested things parents, teachers, and kids themselves can do. The idea is not to put more pressure on a child, but to offer him or her caring support and strategies that work. With a well-informed and engaged team of both parents and teachers behind him or her, your child will have the best opportunity to succeed at reading.

The fine print

Target the Problem! is not intended to replace the expertise of trained professionals such as educational diagnosticians, school psychologists, special educators, or general educators in either diagnosing or instructing children who may have reading disabilities.

Target the Problem! is also not intended to be exhaustive in scope. The topic of reading disabilities is complex and because of the uniqueness of children, families, classrooms, and home settings, there is no one strategy that will work for all children. Please use the information provided in conjunction with information you may glean from other resources and people.

Related articles

Seeking Help for a Struggling Reader: Seven Steps for Teachers

By: Joanne Meier and Karen Freck (2005)

Children come to our classrooms from so many different ability levels and backgrounds. As a teacher, it's important to recognize and know what to do to help a struggling reader.

About this information

We created Target the Problem! to provide parents and classroom teachers with a tool to help them recognize and act upon a child's reading difficulties. It aims to encourage parents and teachers to start the process of engaging people who can 1) help determine the nature or source of a child's reading problems, and 2) provide targeted instruction or intervention that will help a child overcome difficulties, build upon his or her strengths, and increase skill levels.

Our overall goal is to provide accurate, research-based information; offer suggestions that are practical and feasible; present information so it is easy to understand; bring more attention to reading disabilities; and provide a bridge to the many additional resources available from The Access Center, Reading Rockets, LD OnLine, and other organizations.

In developing this information, we decided to focus on the five components of reading. These components were articulated by the National Reading Panel in 2000, and are well supported by scientific evidence.

"Target the Problem!" is a collaborative project of Reading Rockets, The Access Center, and LD OnLine.

The Access Center and Reading Rockets are funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

The following individuals contributed to the development of this material: Dr. Kathryn Drummond, Dr. Claudia Edmondson, Dr. Joanne Meier, Dr. Kathleen Ross-Kidder, and Dr. Judy Shanley.

We are grateful to the following individuals for their careful review: Dr. Lynn Fuchs, Dr. Louisa Moats, Dr. Annemarie Palincsar, Dr. Terry Salinger, Dr. Louise Spear-Swerling, and Dr. Joanna Williams.

Please **let us know** how you are using this tool or if you have any comments or suggestions regarding it.

☞ You'll need Flash Player to do the activity. Most computers already have it installed or you can **download it** now.

* To view this file, you'll need a copy of Acrobat Reader. Most computers already have it installed, or you can **download it** now.

<http://www.readingrockets.org/helping/target?theme=print>

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