The RELATIONSHIP between Social-Emotional Health, Well-Being, and Learning to Read

Learning to read sets children up for a lifetime of opportunity.

Unfortunately, by the 4th grade, 66% of children in the U.S. are unable to read proficiently.

A child’s path to success both in life and with reading can be filled with barriers; our job is to find ways to offer necessary supports.

There are a variety of supports that correlate with reading proficiency and that can mediate barriers to success; when these are in place, children thrive both in learning to read and leading productive lives.

BIOLOGICAL FACTORS

2 in 100 children under the age of 18 are affected to some degree by hearing loss.

Barrier
Learning to read can be difficult when the response of a child’s brain to sound is compromised (e.g., children who are deaf, hard of hearing, have an auditory processing disorder, or experience recurrent ear infections).

Support
Learning to read is much easier when children have the ability to process the sounds in noise, particularly consonants and vowels.

2-7% of children have an auditory processing disorder.

1) Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014  2) C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital  3) Bamiou, Musiek, & Luxon, 2001
**HOME AND SOCIETAL FACTORS**

**Barrier**

Learning to read is hampered when the environment is limited in terms of oral language models, exposure to print, and read alouds.

**Support**

Learning to read is supported when exposure, practice, and feedback related to oral and written language skills are routinely provided.

By adolescence, there is an **85% achievement gap** between children from families that have the lowest levels of education vs. the highest levels of education.

The amount of adult verbal input predicts the rate of vocabulary growth in young children.

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**Barrier**

Learning to read and academic success, along with mental health, general health, and nutrition, are negatively impacted by poverty.

**Support**

Learning to read is much easier when parental warmth, responsiveness, and the ability to provide cognitive stimulation, proper nutrition, and access to healthcare exists; this is often only possible when there is familial financial stability, through a combination of increased family time and resources.

**Only 1/5 of low-income 4th graders** can read proficiently, while more than half of 4th from high-income families are proficient.

The effects of poverty impact school readiness far more than other confounding and contributing factors such as family structure, race/ethnicity, mother’s age at child’s birth, and immigrant status.

**Barrier**

Learning to read is harder for children experiencing chronic stress, trauma, and who lack instruction or models of impulse control.

**Support**

Learning to read is more successful when instruction and support for learning self-regulations skills is provided across home, school, and community contexts; financial and familial stability impacts the ability of families to provide such support. "Sensitive, consistent, and responsive parenting in the first 5 years of life are among the strongest predictors of children’s social and behavioral well-being, especially for children exposed to high levels of stress."

**Two-thirds** of children age 16 or younger have experienced a traumatic event at some point in their lives.

**Children are almost 3x as likely to experience behavior challenges, be diagnosed with a behavior-related disorder, or be held back at least one grade when they experience two or more traumatic events.**

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Learning to read is compromised when the start of formal reading instruction is designed to “speed up” learning of isolated literacy skills

Barrier
Learning to read is a challenge when educational priorities include an emphasis on testing, test scores, and setting arbitrary benchmarks of child success and progress

Support
Learning to read is more successful when educational priorities include fostering strong adult-child relationships as a component of early care and education

71% of school districts reduced time in at least one subject in order to expand the time allotted for the tested subjects of reading and math

Children need literacy and language opportunities across subjects and settings in order to be literate by 4th grade

4.4 million U.S. public school students are English language learners

SCHOOL AND POLITICAL FACTORS

“...children who participate in high-quality preschool programs have better health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes than those who do not participate”

Teachers can effectively implement social-emotional learning programs; when they do, children across age groups, geographic location, and background net an average 11% gain in academic performance, including literacy

More than 15 states and the District of Columbia require 3rd grade students to pass state-specific reading benchmarks or face retention.

Grade retention has been shown to increase the risk of dropping out by 20–50%...and nationally, retention costs taxpayers over $18 billion each year.

References