



Ziptales: In Support of All Students

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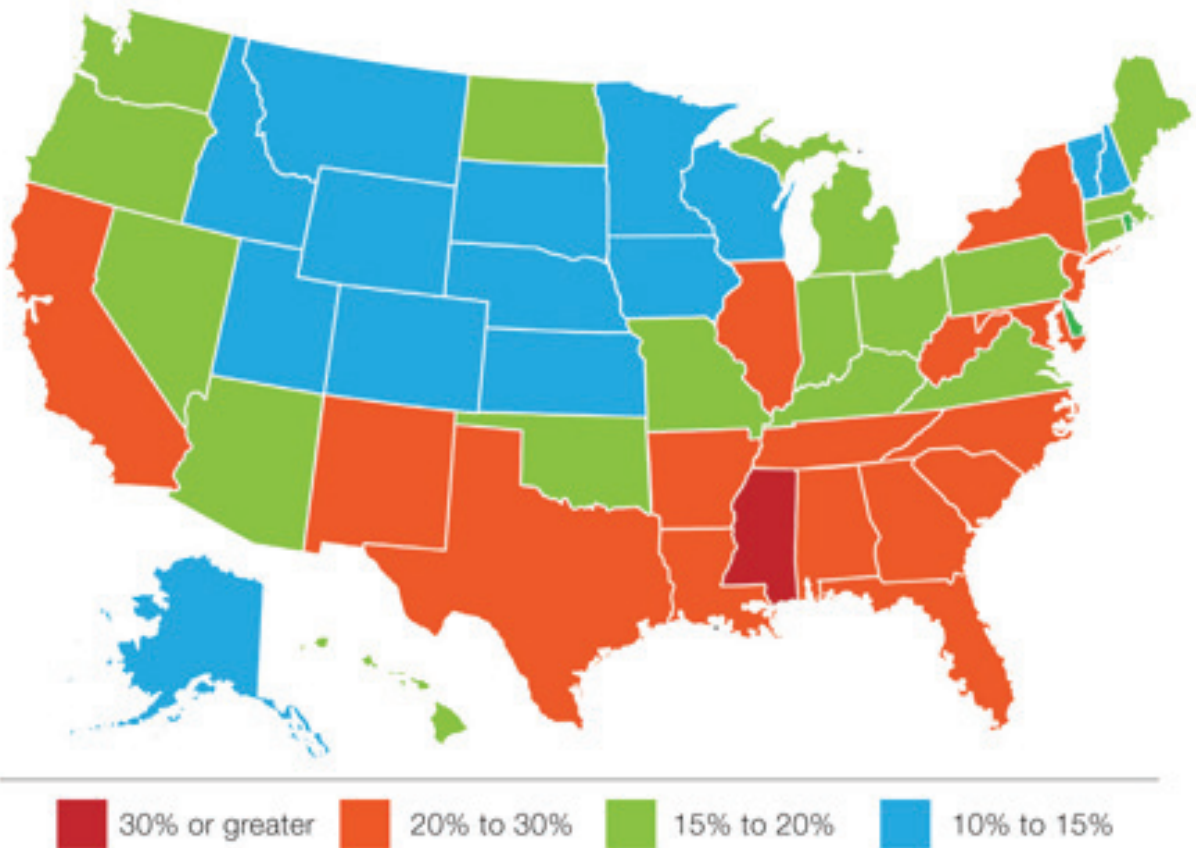
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Laid bare by these real-world statistics, deficient reading skills create a clear and unambiguous need to address the underlying issues. There is abundant evidence that low literacy is simultaneously a social justice issue, an economic issue and a public health issue. These issues are universal and impact every US State and every part of the economy. As this knowledge becomes more widespread there is growing collaboration between schools, libraries, non-profits and for-profit organizations to support those with low literacy in a myriad of ways.

U.S. READING LITERACY

PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION OF EACH STATE THAT HAS BELOW A FIFTH GRADE LEVEL OF LITERACY



SOURCE: NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS: NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF ADULT LITERACY



The ability to read, write, and comprehend in the information age is a basic and critically important determinant of quality of life. The current deficit in literacy skills in the United States, as defined by the U.S. Department of Education, is notable for both the quantity of individuals impacted and level of impact. In 2020, the Department reported 54% of U.S. adults 16-74 years old - about 130 million people - lack proficiency in literacy, reading below the equivalent of a sixth-grade level.

At a glance, low literacy in the United States results in the following:

- 85% of juveniles who come into contact with the juvenile court system are functionally illiterate. (National Assessment of Adult Literacy 2002/2003)
- Bringing all adults to the equivalent of a sixth grade reading level would generate an additional \$2.2 trillion – or 10% of GDP – in annual income for the country. (Gallup/BBFFL, 2020)
- The nation’s largest metropolitan areas – including New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago and Dallas – would all stand to gain at or just above 10% of their GDP by bringing all adults to a sixth grade reading level. (Gallup/BBFFL, 2020)
- The American Journal of Public Health reports that the inability to read and understand health information accounts for \$232 billion spent in health care costs each year. (Library Journal, April 2020)
- Two-thirds of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of 4th Grade will end up in prison or on welfare. (National Assessment of Adult Literacy 2002/2003)
- 10% or 5 million, students come from a household where English is not the primary language and are considered English Language Learners. (NCES, 2018)
- Nearly 20% of all individuals have a language-based learning disability interfering with their ability to read standard print. This accounts for 80-90% of all diagnosed disabilities in schools. (Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity)
- 60% of all prison inmates are functionally illiterate. (National Assessment of Adult Literacy 2002/2003)
- 61% of low-income children have no children’s books at home and children from low-income families typically recognize only 9 letters of the alphabet by age 5 compared to 22 letters for a child from a middle-class family. (Campaign for Grade Level Reading)
- Research shows that learning begins long before a child enters kindergarten. Children, even infants soak up words, rhymes, songs, and images. Vocabulary development is particularly important. By age 2, poor children are already behind their peers in listening, counting, and other skills essential to literacy. (Campaign for Grade Level Reading)

Ziptales: Part of the Solution

Libraries' Opportunity for Pre-Literacy Support

Much like the National Campaign for Grade Level Reading, Ziptales identified the need to build a foundation for literacy even before many children are engaged in formal, academic schooling. This is why Ziptales was selected as a 2021 Bright Spot award winner for the Summer Learning Adventure through the Philadelphia Public Library. Ziptales provided the librarians with an opportunity to provide literacy supports to all children based on the science of reading at a time when many children, particularly those from low-income families need additional support in this area of skill development.

Ziptales recognizes that hesitant or reluctant readers may need a bit more persuasion to start engaging with early reading skills. Accordingly, Ziptales introduces them to games or activities that are visual, multi-sensory, fun and touch on key phonics and spelling elements. A digital library full of engaging stories accompanied by visual and fun exercises, like those in Ziptales, will encourage a pre-reader or reluctant reader to start developing their literacy skills. Our pre-k program specifically focuses on fun lessons and activities for emerging readers that are visually as well as academically engaging, creating the perfect environment for your child to learn.

Through the simple, user-friendly interface and direct access through the library portal, all children, regardless of their socio-economic status can access a robust digital library of more than 500 stories, poems, puzzles and lessons anywhere they have internet access. Through the use of animations, on-screen text and human narration, children are given the model for oral language development and the bridge to phonics, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary building that are essential to literacy.





Universal Design in Support of All Students

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A recent literature review conducted by WestEd (White Paper on Audiobooks and Achievement) for the national Non-Profit Learning Ally found:

For struggling readers, audiobooks can be an important component of a comprehensive reading program. For example, Serafini (2004) explained that a great deal of research validates the importance of reading aloud to students, and posits that the act of reading aloud introduces new vocabulary and concepts, provides a fluent model, and allows students access to literature that they are unable to read independently. This is particularly important for upper elementary, middle school, and high school students. Additionally, Moats (2001) points to the challenges that upper elementary students with reading difficulties face in accessing grade-appropriate text, which continues into middle and high school. When students cannot read, they do not want to undertake the labored and unsatisfying experience of reading, and thus struggle with vocabulary, sentence structure, text organization, and formal textbook language. Accordingly, audiobooks provide a critical support for repairing and growing their relationship with reading and learning by allowing readers to enjoy and experience literature regardless of their reading ability.

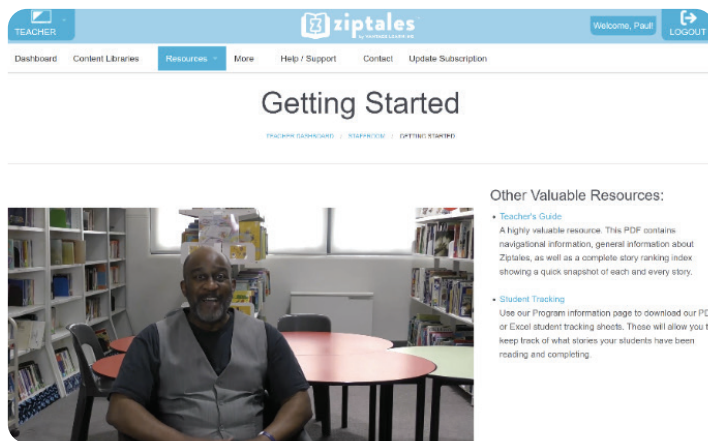
Thus, the universally designed and developmentally appropriate texts in Ziptales supporting pre-literacy through upper elementary provides a continuum of growth for the reader, allowing them to develop the skills and progress within the same collection.

Culturally Inclusive



The last few years have shone a bright light on the importance for all learning materials to be culturally inclusive. Developing readers will engage with material that includes characters and voices that the learner can connect with. Throughout the Ziptales collection the human

characters represent a wide range of individuals and the voices used for the narration include not only male and female voices but a variety of readers who represent a wide spectrum. In a 2020 Research Report The National Literacy Trust report on audiobooks emphasized “hearing narration in the voices of authors that share a heritage with the content/characters of the books can be an enriching experience.”



The Teacher Staff Room is similarly designed to support a wide range of educators and librarians who are using Ziptales with students of all backgrounds.



Creating a Lifelong Reader with Ziptales

We all know that encouraging literacy in our children is important. Reading is a vital developmental steppingstone for every student. By learning how to read your child is empowered with the tools for advanced comprehension among other skills.

Long-term reading has advantages. Lifelong readers are more likely to be more creative, think critically in all situations, and are able to better prioritize their time.

Tip #1: Start Them Early

Your student reader will not magically learn to love reading because you will it to be so. Skills like phonics and phonemic awareness as well as habits like ensuring availability of reading material and time to read take time to develop. Ziptales can start them on the right path to develop a love of reading.

Start out by reading to your children often when they are young or let Ziptales read to them. This way they develop a taste for storytelling and will be more eager and engaged when it comes time to learning how to read on their own.

Tip #2: Give Them Choices

When picking out books from your local library or your home library, let your child pick what books they want to read. Keeping a child engaged in a story is vital to keep them reading. If they show interest in a book you should jump on the opportunity to let them read it. With more than 500 books accessible through the Ziptales site, available anywhere you have an internet connection, you will be carrying a library with you wherever you go.

If the book is beyond their literacy level, Ziptales presents a great opportunity for you to read and listen with your child and turn each story, poem or puzzle into a learning session. This is all about taking the time to explain definitions and meanings to your student reader in a way that feels less like school and more like fun facts about a topic that interests them!



Tip #3: Supplement The Reading

If a child is reluctant in their pursuit of reading, you may need to supplement what they read with a fun activity or game. That can be difficult for a parent with a lot on their plate. Ziptales can help with that!

Ziptales is an online language arts website offering teaching and learning tools for students and teachers at all levels of the elementary school. Ziptales was created by teachers to enhance children's reading and writing skills.

When children can read, the key task is to keep them motivated and excited by the desire to read. Ziptales is proven to make reading an enjoyable experience, and to raise skill levels! To learn more about what we do, visit www.ziptalesusa.com.

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