

the High Cost of Low Literacy

why 3rd grade reading matters

the problem

Students who cannot read by the end of third grade struggle to learn through text as they progress through life, leading to a myriad of personal and societal consequences.

Massachusetts has

THE BEST

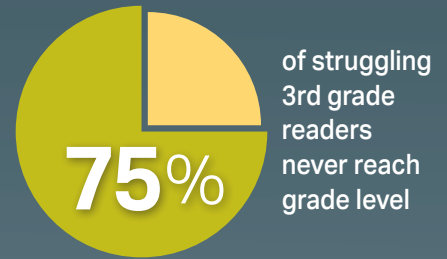
overall English Language Arts scores

...and the

2ND WORST

achievement gap between Hispanic and White students

educational consequences



Students who do not read proficiently by the end of 3rd grade are

4x LESS LIKELY

to graduate from high school
(compared to proficient peers)

The effects of struggling to read have a profound impact on individual and community wellbeing.

Adults with low literacy experience higher rates of:



SOURCES

U.S. Department of Education, MA Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Annie E. Casey Foundation, New England Journal of Medicine, Northeastern University, Teachers College at Columbia University, Strategies for Children, Journal of Health Communication, National Bureau of Economic Research.



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The cascading effects of third grade reading, including widening academic achievement gaps and social-emotional challenges, extend into adulthood.



HEALTH PROBLEMS

Low literacy is a significant public health issue, affecting individuals' physical and mental wellbeing. Poor readers struggle to navigate the healthcare system and face long-term health problems.



LOWER: preventive care, exercise, overall health



HIGHER: rate of smoking, likelihood of being overweight, health costs

The cost of low health literacy on the nation's economy is over

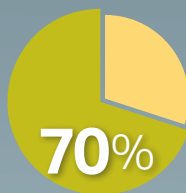
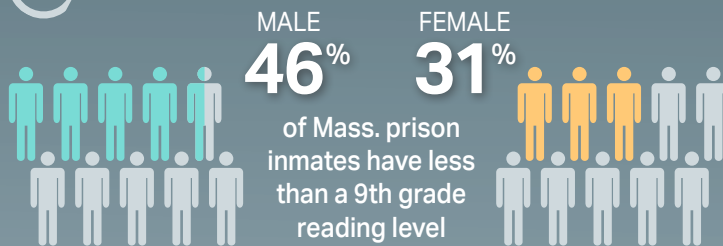
\$1B PER YEAR



CRIME

The connection between literacy, aggressive behavior, and mental health challenges emerges at a young age.

As challenges persist, those with low literacy experience high rates of incarceration and mental illness.



of prison inmates in the United States do not have a high school diploma



FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

Struggling to read has a significant impact on economic wellbeing, regardless of whether students graduate from high school.

Those who don't graduate earn

37¢

for every dollar earned by a graduate



Each Massachusetts high school dropout costs taxpayers

\$349,000

in decreased tax revenue and increased public assistance costs



Nationwide, this results in lost tax revenue of

\$50B PER YEAR

There is a narrow window of time to put struggling readers on the path to success. With effective prevention and intervention before third grade, 85-90% of struggling readers can reach grade level.