



**SCHOOL LEADERS' GUIDE:**  
**45 WAYS TO SUPPORT**  
**STRUGGLING**  
**READERS**

 **WE are TEACHERS**

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**Learning Ally**   
TOGETHER IT'S POSSIBLE





# Why a **School-Wide** Approach Benefits Everyone

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**T**he statistics are staggering. More than 10 million American students struggle to read, but only 2.3 million receive special help. Forty-one percent of students with learning disabilities like dyslexia won't graduate from high school. As school leaders, we need to bridge that gap by creating a culture of reading when reading is a barrier.

Filling these achievement gaps shouldn't be a new challenge every year. We need to empower and support educators with school-

wide programs that embrace different learning styles and prioritize continuity from one grade to the next, year after year. Implementing effective intervention tools and techniques is essential and will give all students an equal opportunity to learn.

When you put an emphasis on reading and uncover strategies that work, big things happen. Students will achieve better outcomes not only in their English class, but across all subjects.

Your struggling readers will gain confidence and independence as their reading progress soars.

This guide was created especially for school leaders with practical, actionable ideas and tips you can use to create a culture of reading in your school or district. Try out a few ideas to start, and add more as your students find success and develop a true love of reading. Save this guide to reference throughout this school year and beyond.

COVER PHOTO CREDITS: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) ISTOCK.COM/SHIRONOSOV; ISTOCK.COM/VM; ISTOCK.COM/SHIRONOSOV; ISTOCK.COM/CHRISTOPHER FUTCHER; ISTOCK.COM/CATHY YEULET

# Dyslexia Defined

Dyslexia is the term associated with specific learning disabilities (LD) in reading. Although indicators of LD in reading vary from person to person, common characteristics include:

- ▶ difficulty with phonemic awareness (the ability to notice, think about and work with individual sounds in words)
- ▶ phonological processing (detecting and discriminating differences in phonemes or speech sounds)
- ▶ difficulties with word decoding, fluency, rate of reading, rhyming, spelling, vocabulary, comprehension and written expression

## Numbers to Know

**10 million** American students struggle to read but only 2.3 million students are identified and receive special help.

**80%** of students with learning disabilities are dyslexic, and half of these students perform three or more grade levels below peers on key skills.

**41%** of students with learning disabilities like dyslexia will not graduate from high school.

**2/3** of those diagnosed with dyslexia are boys even though equal numbers of boys and girls share the most common characteristic of learning disabilities—difficulty with reading.



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# Set Your School Up for Success

Inside this guide, you'll find 45 ideas to try with your teachers, students, parents and the community. Start with one or two and build on your success. When you find the right mix of strategies for your school or district, struggling readers (all readers!) will gain the skills and confidence to achieve personal success. And that's what it's all about.



PHOTO CREDIT: ISTOCK.COM/WIMVERTIGO

## 1. Create a Consistent Reading Program

"The most successful elementary schools ensure that all students have a reading-enriched curriculum, beginning in the first grade, where there is a strong emphasis on phonetics," explains Dr. Karen Carlson, executive director of the Academic Accountability Council who is also a former Chicago Public Schools principal. And consistency is key—especially when you have a large population of struggling readers. Some urban schools in Chicago with students who face the challenges of poverty and English as a second language have implemented [13 common strategies](#) that have shown dramatic improvements in reading. The first strategy is "Create a consistent reading program," which explains the importance of making sure your reading program flows seamlessly from classroom to classroom and grade to grade on a daily basis.

## 2. Put Your Money Where Your Books Are

Making sure students have lots of choices to find books that fit their interests is important—and a huge motivator—so keep your library up to date and filled with quality reading material in many

formats, like regular books and audiobooks, that allow students to access the same titles in different ways. You'll want to invest in training your library staff in the latest media and techniques in accommodating all different kinds of learners. If keeping these resources current at your school is taxing your budget, consider applying for the many grants available to school libraries and their staffs. Grants are available from the [U.S. Department of Education](#), especially for schools that serve families with incomes below the poverty line.

## 3. Make Sure Your School Is a "Comfortable" Place to Read

Struggling readers are inherently less comfortable with the act of reading than their more fluent peers. What better way to ease some of the discomfort than with some plush reading chairs, easy lighting and inviting backgrounds? Creating comfortable, dedicated reading



spaces throughout your school will invite students to relax and read or listen to an audiobook. Sometimes all it takes are some brightly colored carpet squares or pillows in a corner surrounded by books. Here are more ways to make [reader-friendly environments](#). Also check out these [11 Classroom Reading Nooks We Love](#).

## 4. Provide Time for Uninterrupted Reading Instruction

Making changes to the school-day schedule can be a tough transition for students and staff, but small shifts in time blocks can help create adequate and uninterrupted time for reading instruction. Too often,

schools allocate enough total time, but allow it to be broken up, which is not effective. Encourage teachers to schedule their day so their daily reading instruction can happen in the same block of time rather than split up throughout the day.

“Creating comfortable, dedicated reading spaces throughout your school will invite students to relax and read or listen to an audiobook.”

# 5. It Only Takes 20 Minutes

Research has shown that reading 20 minutes each day can raise students' performance on assessments to the 90th percentile. Try blocking off a period after recess or lunch to devote to reading. Squeeze in a few extra minutes by having students in every classroom read while they are waiting to be dismissed at the end of the day and anytime they've finished their class work ahead of their peers. In short, more time reading = more words read = better reading performance.

## 20 Minutes of Daily Reading Helps Performance on Assessment Tests

| Percentile Rank | Minutes of Reading Per Day | Baseline - Words Read Per Year |
|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 98              | 65                         | 4,358,000                      |
| 90              | 21                         | 1,823,000                      |
| 80              | 14                         | 1,146,000                      |
| 70              | 9                          | 622,000                        |
| 60              | 7                          | 432,000                        |
| 50              | 5                          | 282,000                        |
| 40              | 3                          | 200,000                        |
| 30              | 2                          | 106,000                        |
| 20              | 1                          | 21,000                         |
| 10              | less than 1                | 8,000                          |

*\*Statistics taken from Scientific Learning Corporation*



## 6. Schedule "Power Up Time"

One way to make sure students with learning disabilities aren't singled out for extra time or pulled out of regular classes to receive needed extra support is to build in an elective block where each student goes to some sort of enrichment class. Your best math students may choose to try a robotics session. Someone in the band may slot in a practice session with the music teacher. And dyslexic students can head off for a multi-sensory language intervention. One elementary school has labeled this flexible block of the day "Power Up Time" because it gives each student time to focus on a particular area of need or interest to power up their learning.

PHOTO CREDIT: ISTOCK.COM/ALDO MURILLO

## 7. Know When to Step In

All indicators point to the fact that identifying struggling readers early is key. Set up a system that applauds teachers for proactive interventions rather than taking a wait-and-see approach. That means giving extra instructional time to the students who are at risk of falling behind—and more time for their teachers too.

## 8. It's Not the Stuff, It's the Service

If your school has a long list of resources, programs and tools to help struggling readers, make sure your teachers get the training they need to use them. All of the resources in the world won't help students if they aren't being used correctly—or used at all. When teachers get the right professional development, they'll be confident and excited to effectively help struggling readers use the resources and devices you have put in place for them.



## 9. Ask the Right Questions

Sometimes all it takes to set up your school for reading success is to ask yourself a few questions to get you thinking about where you are excelling and where you may need to put in some extra effort. Here are some questions to help grease your wheels:

- Does your school/district have a culture that supports struggling readers?
- Do your generalists know how to identify students early?
- Does your school/district have a trained team of educators to identify students?
- Have you researched assessment tools?

## 10. Don't Reinvent the Wheel

Make sure your teachers know about Open Educational Resources ([oercommons.org](https://oercommons.org)), which are freely accessible, openly licensed documents and media that are useful for teaching, learning and assessing. Does one of your students need supplemental information on the solar system or the Civil War to help her comprehend the classroom lessons? OER may have just the thing. Do you know teachers who have created an exceptional lesson that helped a struggling reader make the grade? Encourage them to share it on OER.



# Be a Reading Cheerleader

Any reading achievement—big or small—at your school deserves to be celebrated. It's time for the bells, whistles and confetti, whether you pull off a school-wide reading event or simply share a reading milestone with a reluctant learner. Make a big deal out of every effort to raise the reading bar for your students and make sure you are the number one fan of fresh ideas to get kids reading more.



PHOTO CREDIT: ISTOCK.COM/BRAUNS

## 11. Promote a "Principal's Pick"

Follow the lead of Houston Elementary's principal and start a [book-of-the-month program](#) for your school. Every few weeks, each classroom at the school receives the same book to read together. Principal's Picks are carefully selected to help build community, a positive culture and positive character traits. Houston Elementary aptly started its school year with *Oh, the Places You'll Go* by Dr. Seuss. Just think of all the places your book-of-the-month program can take your school community.

### 12. Participate in a “Read More Pages” Contest

Invite everyone in your school or district to log the number of pages they read during a specific time frame. Then celebrate individual achievements or a specific group’s success reaching a goal. A group of struggling readers at Louise A. Spencer Elementary School in Newark, New Jersey received a lot of publicity from the local newspapers and radio stations for their reading accomplishments in the [Great Reading Games](#), an annual reading incentive program for schools with memberships to Learning Ally, a non-profit that provides audiobooks to students. Students who participate in the Great Reading Games can win prizes like Chromebooks, gift cards, headphones and student prize packs.

### 13. Take a Stroll Through Your School

Take note of places in your school where books and reading are celebrated and where you could boost the reading references to promote a school-wide love of books and learning. Are there pictures of books and people reading on bulletin boards? Are you posting notices for the library events? Are there quotes about books and reading on your digital display? Does the principal’s office have reading material for anyone waiting to speak with him or her? Check out [this site](#) for more great ideas and opportunities to promote a reading culture.

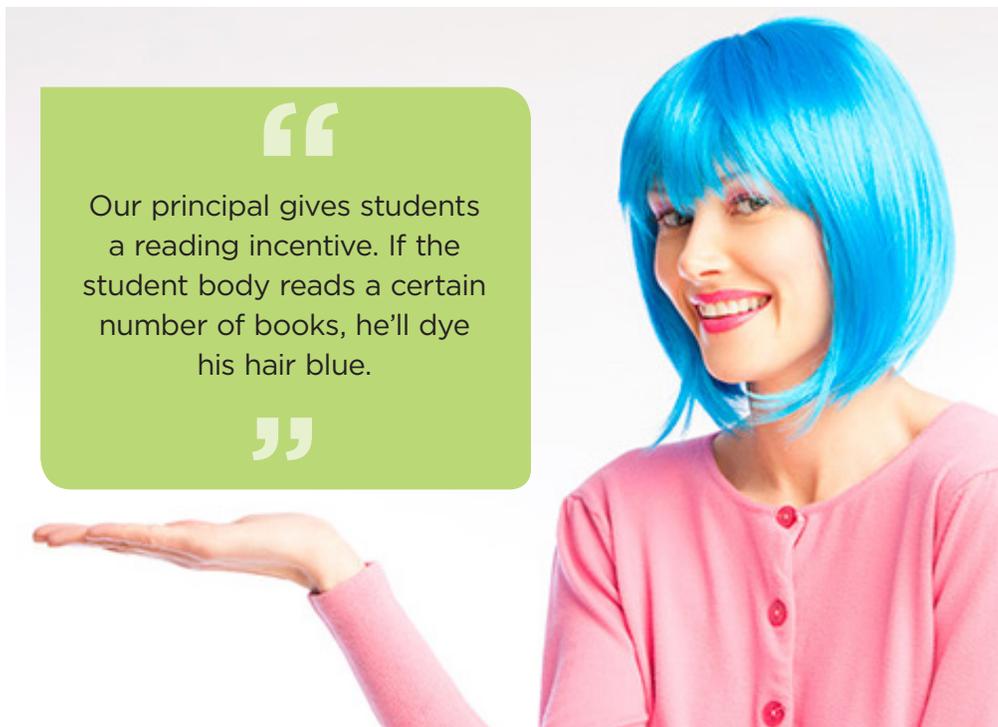


PHOTO CREDIT: ISTOCK.COM/SOLSTOCK

### 14. Pledge to Do Something Totally Shocking

Sometimes it’s OK for school leaders to let loose—when learning is involved. Teacher Adriana Gonzalez says, “Our principal gives students a reading incentive. If the student body reads a certain number of books, he’ll dye his hair blue.” Talk about a motivator for students and faculty!

## LEARNING ALLY'S NATIONAL READING CONTEST

★ ★ ★

★ ★ ★

Motivate your struggling readers to increase their reading activity. Join Learning Ally to get in the games!

[LearningAlly.org/](#)  
[GreatReadingGames](#)

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# 15. Get Social!

Invite all readers in your school and community to post photos on Instagram of their favorite reading spot and give prizes for the best posts. The U.S. Department of Education did this with their #ReadWhereYouAre campaign over the summer. Learning Ally sponsored a similar [Instagram challenge](#) called Summer Reading Together where readers posted photos of themselves reading in fun and wacky places—like in the pool or taking a walk. Start your challenge off with a post of you in your favorite book nook.



**Summer Reading Together Instagram Challenge**

**How does it work?**

- Runs July 1 - 31, 2016
- Post a pic of WHERE you are reading that day
- Use #SRT16
- Follow @Learning\_Ally & tag us

It's that simple! You may be reading in the car, outside, on a chair, etc.

A prize will be given for the MOST pictures posted.

If needed, a tie breaker will go to most creative post.

**#SRT16**

# Inspire and Engage Teachers

As a school leader, one of your most important roles is to promote a culture of learning at your school. Not only are the students there to learn and grow, but so are the faculty, staff and administrators. When everyone at school approaches challenges with a growth mindset, real progress happens. Here are a few ways to draw in your professional team and involve them in the movement toward positive change. Feel free to toss in an offer of free coffee, chocolates and books too!



PHOTO CREDIT: ISTOCK.COM/GRADYREESE

**16. Brush Up on Your Reading** There are several books that can help you and your teachers do a better job of not only accommodating students with reading difficulty but inspiring all learners to get the most out of reading. Here are a few to add to your reading list:

**[How to Adapt Text for Struggling Readers](#)** helps teachers address the special needs of students who struggle with reading textbooks and other written materials. The guide by Pro-Ed offers specific steps in how to modify materials, assignments and tests for individual student achievement.

**[Readicide: How Schools Are Killing Reading and What You Can Do](#)**

**[About It](#)** by Kelly Gallagher is a look at the things teachers do in the classroom that take the fun out of reading and offers specific tools and strategies for reviving the joy.

**[The Read-Aloud Handbook: 7th Edition](#)** by Jim Trelease is a great book to share with new teachers. Along with providing useful advice and inspiration to encourage reading aloud to students, it also includes an annotated list of great read-alouds.

**[The Book Whisperer: Awakening the Inner Reader in Every Child](#)** by Donalyn Miller outlines her simple techniques: affirm the reader in every student, allow students to choose their own books, carve out extra reading time, model authentic reading behaviors, discard timeworn reading assignments such as book reports and comprehension worksheets, and develop a classroom library filled with high-interest books.

### **Protocol for Accommodations**

**in Reading** is a free resource from donjohnston.com that helps teachers evaluate their students' reading level and how to assess which supports may be most effective. It is an excellent resource to share with teachers so they can determine if a struggling reader would benefit from text-to-speech support, human-read text, or other strategies and supports.

### **17. Teach the Teachers**

Not all teachers are trained to identify learning or reading challenges in students, yet those issues may be impacting a student's success in classrooms other than those in the language arts hallway. Set aside time for a mini-workshop or lunchtime learning session about [what to look for](#) and [accommodations](#) to provide. Don't forget to include more than just your English language arts teachers, since students with learning disabilities need support in all of their classes.

### **18. Connect With Your Librarian**

Creating positive reading experiences for students often boils down to making sure you can match them with that one book that will ignite a love of reading. Your library system may have records of what each of your students has borrowed, which can illuminate trends and interests over time. You and your school librarian can generate and post a "top ten" list by grade to promote your students' interest in books.

### **19. Give Rave Reviews**

Invite teachers and their students to write short reviews of books they love reading. Reviews can include student quotes/comments, star ratings or ways to extend the book topic beyond the pages. If possible, list all the formats the class used to access the text: printed book, e-book, audiobook, movie based on the book, etc. Have the librarian post the reviews in a prominent spot to give visitors ideas for their free-choice reading time.

### **20. Let Kids "Catch" You Reading**

It's important for students to see the adults in their lives reading. The positive role model of adult readers helps to create a school-wide reading culture that inspires students to read on their own. At Loxford School in Essex, England, every adult is invited to take part in their ["Caught Reading"](#) campaign. Everyone, including the principal, office staff, teachers, faculty, students and visitors, has posters made as they are "caught reading." They find it's a great way to engage staff and students and get kids excited about their teachers' reading experience.

### **21. We Are All in This Together**

Remind your faculty that *all* teachers are teachers of reading, not just elementary classroom teachers and English teachers. Reading can be incorporated in all subjects—even phys ed! This lesson combines the ever-popular [parachute gym activity](#) with a poetry reading.

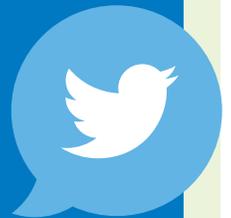
### **22. Join a Conversation About Struggling Readers**

One of the best ways to connect with experts and other professionals who have a special interest in supporting struggling readers is to start or join in a conversation—either in person or on social media. You can join a professional learning community (PLC) that regularly reads and discusses the latest literacy books. For educators looking for an ongoing way to connect with peers, many are turning to Facebook and Twitter to stay current with the latest tips and tools of the trade. Join private Facebook groups like [Learning Ally's Teacher2Teacher](#), which provides support to educators working with struggling readers. On Twitter, you can search for #Dyslexia and #ReadingSupport, among other hashtags. There's even a live chat every Wednesday for LD professionals at #LDCHAT. You can follow #SchoolLeaders and #EdWeb to join other school administrators in a variety of online discussions. Once you get the hang of it, you can start your own hashtag to engage the whole school in conversations around reading.

### #Hashtag #Hangouts

Here are a few online communities on Twitter that are especially helpful to educators and administrators supporting struggling readers.

#LDCHAT  
#EdWeb  
#EdWebChat  
#Read4All  
#StrugglingReader  
#Dyslexia  
#ReadingSupport  
#SchoolLeaders  
#ATchat



# Spark Your Students' Love of Reading

Students who struggle to read can grow more and more frustrated and discouraged when they spend too much time without the proper support. Finding innovative ways to motivate readers who are on the verge of giving up, and offering effective accommodations and assistive technology can turn reluctant readers into eager and more confident ones. Here are some ideas that are easy to implement and won't test your tight school budget.

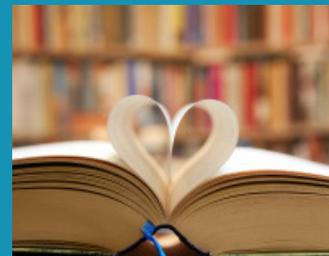


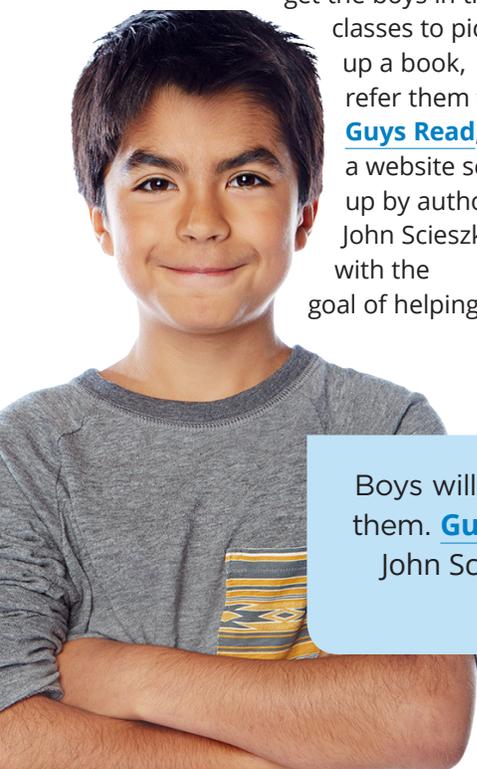
PHOTO CREDIT: ISTOCK.COM/YUELAN

## 23. Use Easy-to-Read Novels

Encourage your teachers to suggest easy-to-read novels for struggling readers. Books with short chapters, larger font and increased spacing between words are good choices. The *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series meets these criteria and is also a student favorite.

## 24. Encourage Your Boys to Read

If your teachers are struggling to get the boys in their classes to pick up a book, refer them to [Guys Read](#), a website set up by author John Scieszka with the goal of helping



Boys will read if they find books that interest them. [Guys Read](#) is a website set up by author John Scieszka with the goal of helping boys become lifelong readers.

PHOTO CREDIT: ISTOCK.COM/GRADYREESE

boys become lifelong readers. The good news? Boys will read if they find books that interest them. The site also features book recommendations by other popular authors like Jack Gantos, Jeff Kinney and Walter Dean Myers.

## 25. Look Out for Your Underserved Girls

Although two-thirds of students identified with LD are male, [research studies show](#) that equal numbers of boys and girls share the most common characteristic of LD—difficulty with reading. Consequently, many girls with learning difficulties may go unidentified and unserved by special education. Dyslexia is often referred to as [hiding in plain sight](#)—especially in girls who are less likely to act out or draw attention to their struggles. Encourage your teachers to be on the lookout.

## 26. Go on a Blind Date With a Book

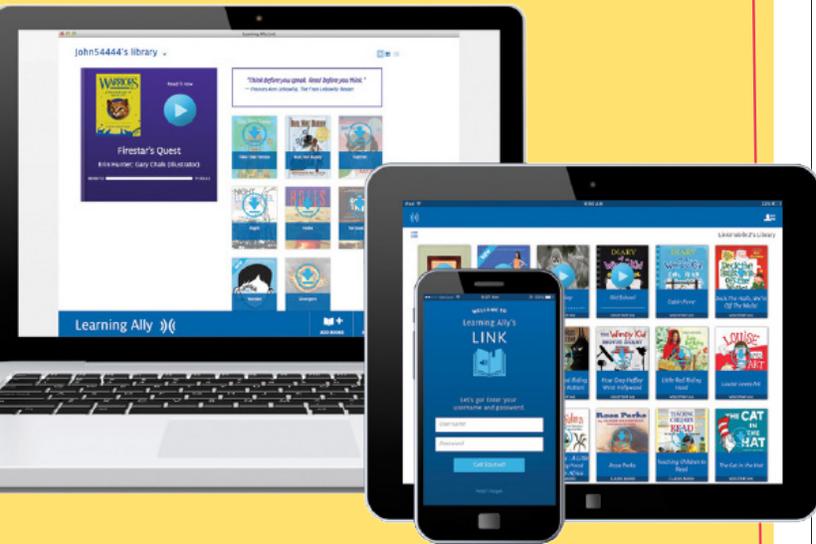
Here's a low-tech and age-appropriate way for middle schoolers to go on a blind date with a book. Teacher Annie Silver says, "My sixth graders did a 'blind date with a book.' They wrote a short review for the book including difficulty, suggested age, genre, and a couple of clues. Then they wrapped it up in brown paper and stuck the clue sheet on the front. The rest of the school loved opening a mystery book and trying something different!"

## 27. One Million Minutes, and Counting

Educator Meghan Loitz's school did a One Million Minutes Challenge. "Our school library gave out bookmarks (just strips of colorful paper) for readers to record their minutes of reading. Kids hand them in, and we add the bookmarks as 'legs' to our big Marvin the Millipede on the walls that went all through our hallways by the end of the challenge. Community, parents, students, and staff were all encouraged to hand in bookmarks. Everyone loved seeing our millipede grow over the challenge, and we had a school-wide dance party when we reached our goal!"

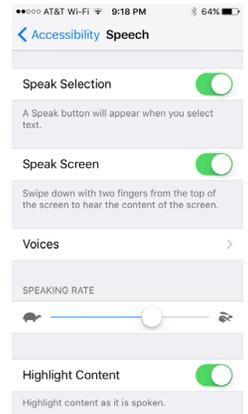
**28. Get Your Reading Game On!** Reinforce the core principle of written language—that letters have sounds, sounds make words, and words make meaning—with games and puzzles that the whole school can play. Broadcast clues over your PA system or digital screen display if you have one. If not, just post the puzzle outside your door or some other high traffic area in your school. Here’s an idea for a Phoneme of the Day: What word rhymes with “cake” but turns wet and glassy when you replace one letter? Answer: “lake.” Have an answer collection box and draw a winner among the correct responses to announce the next day before offering a new challenge.

**29. Level the Playing Field With Audiobooks** With the right kind of support, inspiration, teachers and technology, struggling readers can overcome any challenge. Audiobooks let kids read with their ears. Technology like [Learning Ally](#) gives students more than 80,000 human-narrated books to choose from such as textbooks, non-fiction or literature and lets them download books directly to their tablets, computers, smartphones, iPods and other devices. This gives kids the flexibility to read in school, on the go or anywhere they have a device.



**30. Use Tools You Already Have** You don’t always need to buy something new to offer the assistance that struggling readers need. Take stock of the technology you already have at your school.

**Apple:** Any Apple device, for example, has the ability to speak what is on the screen or to speak and highlight the words of any selection you choose. To enable the feature, just go to Settings> General> Accessibility> Speech and turn on the Speak Screen and Speak Selection options. You can even adjust the voice and rate at which the text is read aloud. Asking Siri questions can help with online research for students who find wading through search engine results challenging. “Hey, Siri! What is dyslexia?” She’ll even read the results for you aloud.



**Chrome:** Chrome users can install extensions, such as [Snap&Read](#) Universal, which



reads aloud any text on a website or in a .pdf. Students can click a button to level the text by changing words to simpler choices. This allows readers to pull meaning from the text at a more accessible level, facilitating independent reading, building comprehension, helping with vocabulary and giving students the confidence to attack reading matter that they might not have been able to before.

## Technology Options

Certified Assistive Technology Professional Mike Marotta offers a [long list of assistive technology](#) supports for Chrome on his website and says, “In the past, students who needed specialized supports needed to use a specific computer that would have the software installed...Now with Chrome, since all the customized supports are connected to your user profile, any supports I need are automatically attached to any computer I sit down to use. This is a seismic shift for struggling students. Now they don’t have to feel different because they are using the exact devices as their friends and classmates.”

### 31. More Tools, Extensions and Resources

Remind your teachers that the tools are not a magic “fix,” but finding the right tool or resource for a specific student’s needs *can* make a big difference. Here are a few tools to check out:

<https://udltechtoolkit.wikispaces.com> has a broad range of LD tools.

**Readability** minimizes distractions by stripping out all of the visual clutter on webpages.

**Callscotland.org.uk** has a downloadable chart to help find the best apps for specific learning disabilities.

### 32. Enlist Student Buddies

Creating a peer buddy program for struggling readers is one of the best ways to build self-advocacy and reading confidence. Cindy Kanuch from Calhan School District in Colorado pairs younger students with dyslexia with older, more experienced students who have persevered through their own struggles with reading and can share their words of wisdom and hope. High school tenth-grader Lily says, “I think it is so important to have someone to look up to and show you that you’re going to get out of the hard struggles.” Ninth-grader Sam Donlin adds, “You just have to get through the words, get through the challenges, and those challenges will make you stronger.”

### 33. Score with Sports Superheroes

College and professional athletes who can relate to students’ struggles with reading can be a major motivator. When athletes



share their personal stories and cheer students on, it can give them the extra boost they need to succeed. “I know how it feels to struggle with reading,” says NFL rookie wide receiver for the New England Patriots, Malcolm Mitchell. “When I was a kid, it was all academic reading in school. Reading wasn’t fun.” Mitchell is on a mission to help other struggling readers find joy in reading. He founded **Read with Malcolm**, a youth literacy initiative supported by the Malcolm Mitchell Share the Magic Foundation, a nonprofit organization. He even wrote a children’s book, *The Magician’s Hat*, that is accompanied by a free teacher’s guide on his website. Mitchell then teamed up with Learning Ally to volunteer his time to record the book in his own voice, so it could be added to Learning Ally’s list of audiobooks narrated by celebrities.

### 34. Let Students Make Their Own Choices

Some children don’t have a diagnosed reading disability, yet they still struggle with reading assignments and lack the motivation to read. **Reading Rockets** suggests offering these students specific instruction in choosing books that are both engaging and appropriate. Giving students a specific reason to read (for example, to get information on a particular topic or to research how to do a task from a “how-to” book), and letting students choose their own reading material is extremely important. Peer group book discussions and hands-on or experiential learning activities that incorporate reading can also help motivate reluctant readers.

## Partner with Parents



When struggling readers go home for the day, guess what? They are *still* struggling readers. And oftentimes, their parents are also struggling—feeling unsure of how to help. According to “**The State of Learning Disabilities**” report, one in three parents (35 percent) are deeply struggling with their attitude toward and ability to cope with their child’s learning and attention issues. Inviting parents to join the reading effort is a win-win by keeping reading frustration at bay and extending or even accelerating the progress students are making in the classroom.

### 35. Host a Listen Up! Event

Your school may have tried movie nights or book clubs, so why not try hosting an audiobook night where families can come and listen to a classic together? Set up in your school cafeteria—or under the stars if the weather is nice—and invite families to bring their own blanket or chairs. Popcorn and Skittles optional!

### 36. Have a Pajama Party

Teacher Lori Saboe Sevon's school hosts a PJ Book Night. She explains, "Teachers stay after school. We choose our favorite children's book to read. The students and their families come back in pajamas and bring pillows and blankets. The families sit in a classroom, and the teachers rotate between the rooms reading to the families."

### 37. Read Under the Sun, Moon and Stars

Teacher Adriana Gonzalez and her school have an event called "Reading Under the Stars." She says, "We invite families to come and set up tents in the field on campus, bring snacks and books to read. The book fair is also open during that time because we do it during literacy week." If you'd rather host a daytime event, try "Reading Under the Sun," which is the same concept but earlier in the day.

### 38. Encourage Reading Aloud and Audiobook Use at Home

Help your parents understand that everyone reads in different ways. Feature Read-Alouds and Audiobooks in your next parent newsletter, and suggest family read-aloud choices and audiobooks to encourage reading at home. KC Edventures shares this list of [50 Memorable Read-Alouds](#). Some parents may need you to reassure them that listening to audiobooks, for example, or reading a book aloud to your child is not cheating.

### 39. Read a Book Together as a School or District

Educator Christina Michelle says, "My school does 'One School, One Book' where the Parent Teacher

## Audiobook Fast Facts

Call out these facts to encourage families to listen to books at home:

Eye reading is one kind of reading; ear reading is another.

Listening to human-read audio texts (ear reading) can be a powerful way to improve a child's reading comprehension.

Audiobooks give students a taste of how fluent readers experience text.

The reader's voice cues help students identify important moments in the text and teach them to use context to decipher unfamiliar words.

Children who qualify can have access to more than 80,000 books from Learning Ally.

Want to learn more about audiobooks? Check out this infographic, [Why Audiobooks Work!](#)



Organization purchases a copy of a book for each family. We then read a chapter every night and have trivia questions daily—one question for K-2, one for 3-5, and one for staff. We also have a kickoff assembly and a closing activity. Last year we

read *The Lemonade War*, and several of the district elementary schools chose the same book. This provided us opportunities to blog with students from other schools about the book."

### 40. Invite Guest Readers to School

During Read Across America Week, Teacher Angela Glazar's school invites parents, community business owners, school board members and other district administrators to come into classes and read to the students. Not only does it get the kids excited about reading, but the adults have a blast, too. If you can't get live readers, try a virtual guest reader. Here's one you can [get on-demand](#) with Jeff Kinney, author of the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series.

### 41. Parents Have Great Ideas, Too!

Set up a forum (with snacks!) where parents can share what works to help their children read. This can be as simple as a parent coffee chat or a time and place set aside during open houses and curriculum nights. Also consider setting up a simple one-question SurveyMonkey questionnaire where parents can share ideas and suggestions about supporting reluctant or struggling readers. You can compile and share the results in your next administrator's newsletter.

The majority of educators (66 percent) consider that a lack of support from parents in helping their children learn is a [major challenge](#) confronting schools working with children with LD.

# Connect With the Community

Think beyond your school walls by drawing on the resources of your community to help support and extend your school's reading efforts. You know your community best, but here are a few ideas to get you started.



PHOTO CREDIT: ISTOCK.COM/GLOBALP

## 42. Enlist Tail-Wagging Tutors

Inviting four-legged friends to special reading sessions with students might just make you the most popular principal ever! Plus, struggling readers can practice reading aloud to their furry companions who will have nothing but adoration for the attention. [Therapy Dogs International](#) is just one well-established organization to check out.

## 43. Set Up Reading Lunch Dates

Guest readers from the community are a great way to set up 1:1 reading support. Consider inviting local business people to come in during their lunch break. Kids think it's cool to get to spend their lunch period with an adult, and it makes volunteers feel great to be doing community service.

## 44. Sponsor a Career Day

Community professionals are a fantastic resource for inspiring students. Ask local police or a fire chief to talk about protecting the community. Find an artist or musician to give students a closer look at their craft. Students practice their listening skills, which aids in reading comprehension.

## 45. Give Library Lessons

Not all libraries are set up the same way as your school stacks, so field trips to your nearby public library is a great way to help students become familiar with different bookshelf organizational models. They'll also gain practice finding what they're looking for among thousands of volumes.

Online  
Conference  
for Educators  
and Parents

Learning Ally's  
Spotlight on **DYSLEXIA**

Learn from leading experts on key insights and practical strategies to support students with learning disabilities. Register today and use this event as PD!

[LearningAlly.org/  
Dyslexia-Conference](https://LearningAlly.org/Dyslexia-Conference)

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TOGETHER IT'S POSSIBLE



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# Resources for Educators of Struggling Readers

## On-Demand Webinar

### Assistive Technology for Struggling Readers

From apps to software to cloud-based cross-platform supports, this [free webinar](#) explores tools that can aid struggling readers.

## Grants

### School Library Grants

Grants for school libraries are available from the [U.S. Department of Education](#), especially for schools that serve families with incomes below the poverty line.

## Apps

### Literacy Apps for Struggling Readers

This large [list of apps](#) is sorted by price and indicates the target students for which each app is ideal (e.g., pre-readers, beginning readers and catch-up readers).

## Article

### 7 Ways to Get Your Struggling Readers to Read

These [creative strategies](#) for struggling readers include graphic organizers, audiobooks and more.

## Printable

### Common Accommodations for Students With Dyslexia

Give this [accommodation list](#) to the teachers in your school as a quick reference guide to determine the interventions and support they can provide to students with dyslexia.

## Educator's Guide

### 7 Common Signs of Dyslexia in the Classroom

Dyslexia is often described as being "[hidden in plain sight](#)." This downloadable guide helps educators identify the most common signs of dyslexia and offers tools and tips for helping these students.

## Infographic

### Why Audiobooks Work!

Not sure about using audiobooks in your school? Check out this [infographic](#) with audiobook myth busters.

## Checklist

### Potential Indicators of Dyslexia

Check off the [dyslexia warning signs](#) that apply to students to determine if a reading screening may be needed.

## Technology

### Human-Narrated Audiobooks

[Learning Ally](#) has 80,000 audiobooks, including test prep, popular fiction, classic literature, textbooks and study aids. Students can listen on computers, tablets or smartphones. Call 1-800-221-1098 or visit [LearningAlly.org/Educators](#) to learn how to bring this technology into your classrooms.

# CHANGING THE LIVES OF STRUGGLING READERS



“Learning Ally opens up a new world of literature and knowledge to kids, who due to their disability, would otherwise be left in the dark.”

—Leandra Trevino, 504/Dyslexia Compliance Specialist

## SCHOOL DISTRICT PROFILE

### Austin Independent School District

Location: **Austin, Texas**

Total Schools: **130**

Total Student Population: **84,000**

Hispanic Student Population: **50,000**

Economically Disadvantaged Student Population: **48,000**

#### Austin ISD Learning Ally Program Growth

|      |                         |
|------|-------------------------|
| 2013 | 272 Students Enrolled   |
| 2015 | 2,700 Students Enrolled |

## CASE STUDY

# AUDIOBOOKS OPEN A WORLD OF KNOWLEDGE FOR STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA

Continually reinventing the urban school experience, Austin ISD is a champion for every child. As a leader in providing specialized instruction to students with special needs, they have recognized the need to help those who struggle with reading and have been identified with a print-based reading disability. The most common form of this type of learning disability is dyslexia.

### The Road to Student Success

To help students with dyslexia succeed in school and capitalize on their strengths, Austin ISD uses audiobook technology from Learning Ally, a nonprofit organization that supports students who read and learn differently due to dyslexia, blindness, visual impairment and other disabilities. The Learning Ally program is offered at no cost through a partnership with the Texas Education Agency.

### All About Audiobooks

Learning Ally has a collection of 80,000+ human-narrated audio textbooks and literature titles, all of which can be downloaded by students and teachers, and read using computers, smartphones and tablets. Many of the most popular audiobook titles feature VOICeText, allowing students to follow along with the audio as they read synchronized highlighted text on their devices. In addition, Learning Ally’s technology allows students to read outside of the classroom on a computer or any iOS or Android device.

### Igniting a Reading Movement

Now students who struggled to read can’t get enough of their favorite books and are keeping up with assigned class texts at the same time. While becoming avid readers in class for the first time in their lives, students are excited and motivated to read, both at school and at home with their computers and devices.



I like that Learning Ally shows me the words, so my brain does not get mixed up.”

— Josie, Student,  
Kiker Elementary School



My son quickly went from having daily meltdowns about reading and homework to racing home after school to ‘ear read’ yet another book! Not only did it boost his confidence in reading (and in school overall), he was able to read what his peers were reading, and most importantly, he started loving school again.”

— Heather Hardeman,  
Parent, Doss Elementary  
School and Co-Founder,  
Dyslexia Parent Network