The Reading Center

Statistics on Literacy in America

- 1 in 4 children in America grow up without learning how to read.¹
- 50 percent of American adults are unable to read an eighth grade level book.²
- Nearly half of America’s adults are poor readers, or “functionally illiterate.” They can’t carry out simple tasks like balancing check books, reading drug labels or writing essays for a job.³
- 21 million Americans can’t read at all, 45 million are marginally illiterate and one-fifth of high school graduates can’t read their diplomas.⁴
- 2/3 of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of 4th grade will end up in jail or on welfare. Over 70% of America’s inmates cannot read above a 4th grade level.⁵
- The educational careers of 25 to 40 percent of American children are imperiled because they don’t read well enough, quickly enough, or easily enough.⁶


What MPC’s Reading Center Is Doing about It

At the Reading Center at Monterey Peninsula College we work directly with students to improve their reading ability and overall academic success. At the Reading Center, tutors work with students one-on-one or in small groups, focusing on the specific need of each individual student. We offer the elective courses of ENGL 351: Phonemic Awareness for Improved Reading, Writing and Speech and ENGL 352: Comprehension and Critical Thinking Skills. We also offer the Reading Strategies Lab for students enrolled in ENGL 322 and 302, which focuses on building the skills necessary to become confident and effective readers.

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STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

“Every part of this program has broadened my thinking and improved my reading skills.”

“I am in debt to a lifesaving (or maybe future saving is a better word) program.”

“My tutor was a big help to making me a more confident reader... I am so happy that I am not afraid to read anymore. Thank you so much!”
What We Do

There are three areas of skill that allow us to understand what we read: phonemic awareness, visual memory and the use of context. At MPC’s Reading Center we work on strengthening all three areas, promoting overall reading comprehension and academic success.

**Phonemic awareness** is the ability to break down words based on the individual sounds in the word. A word like “BAT” can be sounded out and broken down based on the sounds of each letter. Research has shown that the ability to understand and manipulate the sounds in a word has a strong correlation with reading success through the 12th grade. However, phonemic awareness is often an automatic and unconscious process which does not come naturally for some students. For these students, phonemic awareness can be increased through various exercises which link motor feedback (i.e. feeling the way one’s mouth forms various sounds) with auditory processing (hearing the sounds).

**Visual memory** helps us to recognize words that are not phonetic but must be memorized. For example “EIGHT” cannot be broken down by the sounds of each letter. It is our visual memory that allows us to read the word. Visual memory of words is improved through various exercises such as recognizing word patterns (common endings like “-tion”) and air writing (visualizing letters written in the air, holding them in one’s visual memory and then making various changes to those words).

**Context** is what gives meaning to a word once the word has been read. We understand the word based on its relationship with the other words in the sentence. Through context, what we read can begin to come alive. Exercises such as building vocabulary and understanding context clues helps strengthen this ability.

The exercises we use at the Reading Center to build these three areas of skill are dynamic and engaging, benefiting visual, auditory and kinesthetic learners alike. The goal of the program is to give tools and techniques for self-checking, building the student’s confidence in themselves as readers and students, thus helping to promote their overall academic success.

What’s New at the Reading Center?

**Changes to English 111**

In Fall 2016, ENGL 111 courses at MPC will be revised from 3 to 4 units and will incorporate in-depth reading instruction.

The emphasis at this level is on critical academic reading, including analyzing essays for the author’s purpose, audience, and tone; identifying an author’s central argument and supporting ideas; and analyzing for logical fallacies.

Because of the increased reading requirements in the course, students may find they need additional support. The Reading Center can help. Students can enroll in ENGL 351 or 352 and receive one-to-one assistance to improve overall reading skills, and a portion of the instruction can be designated to support coursework in ENGL 111.

Contact Paula Norton in the Reading Center for more information.

**Knox Foundation**

The Reading Center has received a grant from the Knox Foundation facilitating an additional 500 hours of student contact hours a semester.
Visualize While You Read!

Research shows that many successful readers make pictures in their head as they read, storing the information into long-term memory. At the Reading Center, we teach this skill through a program that works both to make pictures of what you are reading as well as to put those pictures into words. Building this ability helps readers stay focused as they read as well as retain the information being read. To get a feel for the program, make a picture in your head for the following passage: “The bald eagle is known to make very large nests. One nest found in Ohio was twelve feet deep. It was over eight feet across. The nest weighed as much as an automobile.” (Boning, Getting the Main Idea, Specific Skills Series) This skill can be applied to textbooks, newspapers, books—the sky is the limit!

“The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.”
Dr. Seuss, I Can Read With My Eyes Shut!

Sensitivity Questionnaire
Do you skip words or lines when reading?
Do you re-read lines or lose your place?
Do you get easily distracted while reading?
Do you get headaches when you read?
Do you have problems with comprehension or remembering what you read?
Do your eyes get red or watery?
Does reading make you tired?
Do you use your finger or other marker?
Are you bothered by bright or florescent light?
Do you feel strain, fatigue or tired when reading, computer use or other activities?

Answer yes to several questions? Consider making an appointment for Scotopic Sensitivity testing.

Get Headaches When You Read?

Often a reader will shade their eyes to block out a glare, become fatigued from fluorescent lighting, or re-read an entire page without retaining the information. Many times the individual does not realize that the difficulty they are experiencing is a symptom of Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome.

Scotopic Sensitivity is sensitivity to light. It can present itself in many different ways, such as general discomfort, fatigue, and headaches while reading. More specific signs may include: re-reading lines, pulling words from sentences above or below, misreading words, and not understanding or remembering what is read.

Scotopic Sensitivity is not uncommon. Forty-six percent of individuals that suffer from Dyslexia, Attention Deficit Disorder, or other learning difficulties also suffer from Scotopic Sensitivity. The solution for many of these learning difficulties can be found in a colored overlay. This overlay serves as an aid for the individual. The color of the overlay is different for each person. The various colors help to filter out unpleasant light, glares, shadows, etc.

The Reading Center is fortunate to provide a screening and treatment process that results in large growth for a person’s reading development. Students can contact the Reading Center to arrange a free screening.
Kid's Corner - Air Writing

Air writing is an activity that is used to build visual memory for words and is a great way to support your child in acquiring skills in reading and spelling. It can be fun, educational and done anywhere, even in the car!
The activity is like this...

Have your child imagine they have a small chalkboard that they can write on with their finger. Have them place the chalkboard to the upper left side of their vision (this has been shown to help access visual memory). Give them a word to write on the board and then make a change to one of the letters, have them read you the new word. You can also have them make it say a new word and tell you what change they would need to make for that. Here is an example...

Parent: Write the letters for TOP on the board.
Child: T-O-P
Parent: Erase the T and make it a P, what does that say?
Child: POP
Parent: Make it say “POPS.”
Child: Add an S after the last P...

These words and changes can be made more or less challenging based on the reading and spelling ability of your child.

“There is more treasure in books than in all the pirate’s loot on Treasure Island.” ~ Walt Disney

Reading Self-Evaluation

If you check even one box, come and see us!
I need help with:
- spelling
- remembering what I read
- reading short words
- reading long words
- reading short sentences
- reading faster
- understanding meaning of words in newspapers, college textbooks, stories, and directions
- knowing sounds of letters
- remembering lectures/directions
- paying attention while I’m reading
- picking out what to remember when I read
- critiquing what I’ve read

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