

Literacy is Crucial to Success in Life

Literacy is defined by the American Heritage Dictionary as "The condition or quality of being literate, especially the ability to read and write." or "The condition or quality of being knowledgeable in a particular subject or field." According to California Literacy (www.caliteracy.org), 2 million native English speakers in California are "functionally illiterate," the US is 49th among "the 156 United Nation member countries in its rate of literacy," "46% of American adults cannot understand the label on their prescription medicine," "33% of children in California will not finish high school," and "24% or adults in California are at the lowest literacy level." We have an obvious problem with literacy in California, and we must try to fix that problem.

Literacy is crucial to success in life. We need it to be able to communicate; we need it to be able to get a job. We need it to support ourselves; we need it to make our community better.

Many students in the US can't read. They have tried to learn, but their teachers ignore these "invisible" students. Teachers are very important to a student's life, especially when the student is young. When a teacher ignores his or her students and doesn't help them learn how to read, the students will be negatively impacted. They will probably also blame later problems in life on their ignorant teacher.

Invisible students feel left out because no one will help them. If teachers take special notice of students that have been long ignored, the students will be forever grateful. Teaching them to read will boost their self confidence, and they will be more likely to lead a successful life.

Students look up to their teachers. They see them as a source of knowledge; someone to aspire to. A teacher's job is to teach, and when they don't properly teach a student and ignore him or her, the student's beliefs will be undermined. This may cause the student to not believe people as easily, and may cause them to distrust honest

people. A bad case of this would be where a man who wasn't properly educated as a child has an honest wife, but he doesn't trust her. He would think she was cheating on him, and this would cause problems in their relationship, which would lead to divorce.

As well as being an important source of knowledge, teachers can help improve your social skills dramatically. When teachers talk to their students, the students will have more confidence in talking to their teachers, thus building up more trust, knowledge, and communication skills. When teachers don't talk to their students, they won't build up these critical skills, which means that their voices won't be heard, which drastically affects how they operate in the real world. Take, for example, engineers. They generally aren't good with social skills, probably because they didn't like talking to their teachers when they were young.

Just Read is a program that is dedicated to the advancement of child literacy. It mainly focuses on the so-called "invisible" students. They are students that need help, but can't get it because the school ignores them. Because the school ignores them, they feel less inclined to try to get help.

Illiterate students are likely to get into a life of crime. They can't get jobs or communicate well. Thus, they can't support themselves, especially if neither parent works or if their parents don't make enough money to get by on. Students in this situation may take drastic measures just to survive. They fall to doing drugs, selling drugs, getting into gangs, stealing, and other crimes. If you helped them learn to read, they could finally get a job, and would have a sense of accomplishment and worth. They wouldn't need to get into illegal activities as a means of living.

People that can read and write are more able to succeed in the real world. Every job in the US today, except for farming, gardening, housecleaning, and other related jobs, require you to be literate. Even the aforementioned jobs require literacy, in terms of being able to communicate. Greater literacy leads to greater success. Some excellent examples of famous people that were very literate were writers - Langston Hughes, an

African American writer, and Mark Twain, a white southerner who was also a writer. They are both well known throughout America, due to their ability to write.

Do you want to make a difference in your community? How about in the life of someone? It is possible for anyone to make a difference, just by volunteering as a tutor for Just Read. Not only will you gain a sense of accomplishment, but you will also make someone else live a better life, and you will also improve your community as a whole. If you help illiterate students learn how to read, they won't need drugs, gangs, or other illegal activities to get by. This will reduce crime rate.