



Skill Gap Model

- Black Youth achieve equity in education
- Black Youth become the highest performing group on national and state academic tests
- All Black Youth achieve their full potential



Skill Gap Theory

- Learning how to read proficiently requires the development of a specific set of skills
- Students who enter school with a strong foundational skill set learn how to read with most any valid reading program
- Students who enter school with any weakness in foundational skills struggle to learn with the current curricula and most never catch up
- Students who struggle with reading have a **Skill Gap**



What skills empower reading

There are four types of skills:

- Mindset and social emotional skills
- Basic reading skills
- Advanced reading skills
- Cognitive processing skills

All skill development is also impacted by homelife

The Skills for Basic Reading Success

3rd-grade reading proficiency milestone

Social emotional skills

- Mindset
- Persistence
- Delayed gratification
- Self-esteem

Basic phonological skills

- Letters/sounds
- Print awareness
- Phonemic awareness
- Phonics/rules
- Basic vocabulary, often limited to fit decoding rules

Additional reading skills

- Letter creation/writing
- Sequencing
- Sound combinations, complex codes without rules
- Syntax
- Semantics
- Hidden abilities
- Non-content words
- Spelling
- Comprehension
- Broader vocabulary, sooner

Cognitive processing skills

- Sensory input, accuracy
- Visual processing
- Visual memory
- Rapid automatic naming
- Auditory processing
- Auditory memory
- Working memory
- LT/ST memory
- Processing speed
- Attention



Mindset skills

- What a student believes about their abilities impacts self-esteem and academic outcomes
- If a student believes they will fail, they likely will
- If a student has been failing, most are often labeled as behind or slow and have test anxiety
- Many believe their struggles are their own fault
- Social emotional skills such as persistence, patience, self-management, relationships, self-awareness, and decision-making also play a key role in success
- It is important to understand and build these skills first to empower a growth mindset, focus and persistence to overcome the struggle and close the Skill Gap



Basic reading skills

- Basic reading skills
 - Print awareness
 - Phonics/phonemic awareness
 - Letters/sounds
 - Basic vocabulary
 - Often limited to decoding rules
- Stories are often limited to fit simple decoding rules
 - As a result, the stories often don't make sense relative to the oral language skills of early readers
- Current curricula spends too much time on this area and does not build fluency and comprehension skills adequately



Advanced reading skills

- Letter creation, writing
- Sequencing
- How to handle complex codes
 - Multiple letters which represent one sound
 - Multiple ways to spell one sound
- Syntax and semantics
- Non-content words
- Spelling
- Comprehension
- Broader vocabulary, sooner in the training
- More complex stories with words that do not follow simple decoding



Cognitive processing skills

- Sensory input, accuracy
- Visual processing
- Visual memory
- Rapid automatic naming
- Auditory processing
- Auditory memory
- Working memory
- LT/ST memory
- Processing speed
- Attention



Homelife

- Quality of life and degree of stress impacts brain development and ability to learn in young children
 - Housing security
 - Food security, nutrition
 - Relationship security
 - Financial security
 - Quality of sleep
 - Educational support at home
- Adverse childhood experiences can also impact learning
 - Physical and emotional stress, death, divorce, other traumas
- It is difficult to change these stressors for students, but it is important to recognize when they exist and work to resolve them to help students improve learning



Summary

- Any one of the skills listed could be impacting reading success for a given student
- The current paradigm focuses on a narrow set of skills
- The current paradigm is not closing the Skill Gap for most students which explains why so many students continue to fail.
- The solution is to be aware of the broader set of skills, evaluate the full set, and provide the training necessary to close the Skill Gap.