

Opinion

Schools must teach the love of reading

By [Eva Moskowitz](#)

PUBLISHED: July 1, 2026 at 5:00 AM EDT



The writing is on the wall. Our children can't read it.

America is trapped in the [severe, compounding collapse of reading](#), and has been for more than a decade.

Yet, instead of treating this like the five-alarm fire it is, the educational establishment has responded to the stream of [alarming reports](#) with a collective shrug, blaming external factors or doubling down on broken methodologies.

The answer here isn't merely technical. It's emotional. To reverse this crippling reading gap, we must cultivate a love of reading in our children. While foundational

reading instruction is critical, children will never become readers if they never want to pick up a book on their own.

So the question should not only be: Can children read? It must also be: Do they choose to read? Do they see themselves as readers?

At Success Academy, reading has always been core to our mission, and our results show what is possible when schools take reading instruction seriously: in 2025, [Success Academy ranked No. 2 in Reading/ELA](#) out of more than 700 school districts in New York State.

We instill this love in our students by creating a pervasive reading culture in our schools, rooted in three core principles: sparking passion for reading, instilling reading habits, and shaping reading identity.

To spark passion, we flood our classrooms with captivating literature; our classroom libraries average 1,000 books each. Scholars are free to choose the titles that excite them, and have a dedicated time every week just for “book shopping.” Reading celebrations and student-led book talks ensure students view reading as a joyful activity, not just a school assignment.

To cement daily reading as a habit, we carve out 30 minutes a day just for free, independent reading. Outside the classroom, until 3rd grade, a scholar’s primary homework is to read, and we set clear goals for annual consumption — 100 books for kindergarteners, 50 for third graders, 30 for fifth through eighth graders, and 12 for high schoolers.

Finally, we help our students’ cultivate their unique reading identity. This means knowing authors, genres, and series they love. To do this, teachers must understand their students’ reading tastes to make meaningful recommendations, and are given a budget to supplement classroom libraries with preferred titles . Students keep a reader’s notebook where they not only reflect on their current readings, but maintain a running list of the books they plan to tackle next. At this point, they read because reading has become a core part of who they are.

Crucial to all of this is accountability — not just for the students, but the adults. We expect our teachers to practice what they preach and be active readers themselves. Teachers routinely share highlights from their own reading lives and specific recommendations with their students. Our schools are regularly assessed to ensure this focus on reading culture remains paramount.

The goal here is simple: to create a school environment that palpably communicates that reading matters — that books are pleasurable, important, and worthy of time; that adults love reading; and that children are celebrated not only for completing assignments, but for becoming readers.

The results speak for themselves. This year alone, our K-8 students read a collective 1.2 million books.

This is the level of specificity, intention, and focus that is required to build a tangible, compelling culture of reading — the only way reading will have a fighting chance in the competition for children's attention.

The forces pulling children away from reading are relentless. Our response has to be just as deliberate, just as urgent, and just as powerful.

Moskowitz is the founder & CEO of [Success Academy](#).