

“Kids learn better on paper, not screens”

GPT-4 summary of article (18 January 2024) of **John R MacArthur**, “[A groundbreaking study shows kids learn better on paper, not screens. Now what?](#)”, **The Guardian**, 17 January 2024

A recent study has brought to light a significant issue in American education: the decline in reading skills among youth. The Department of Education's survey in June revealed a worrying trend, with a **notable** decrease in text **comprehension** skills among 13-year-olds compared to previous years, with the worst-performing students falling below the reading levels recorded in 1971.

While many have attributed this decline to the pandemic and the shift to remote learning, a new study from Columbia University's Teachers College suggests a different **underlying** cause. This study, involving 59 children aged 10 to 12, used **advanced techniques** to analyze brain responses while reading texts in both digital and paper formats. The findings showed a clear advantage for **deeper** reading and comprehension when texts were read on paper, as opposed to screens where shallow reading was more common.

This age group, around the fourth grade, is **crucial** in reading development as it marks the **transition** from 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn'. The study's researchers, while **cautious** in their conclusions, emphasize the importance of not discarding printed books in educational settings. Their findings **align** with over a decade of social scientific research, including the work of Anne Mangen, which consistently shows better comprehension and retention when reading from paper.

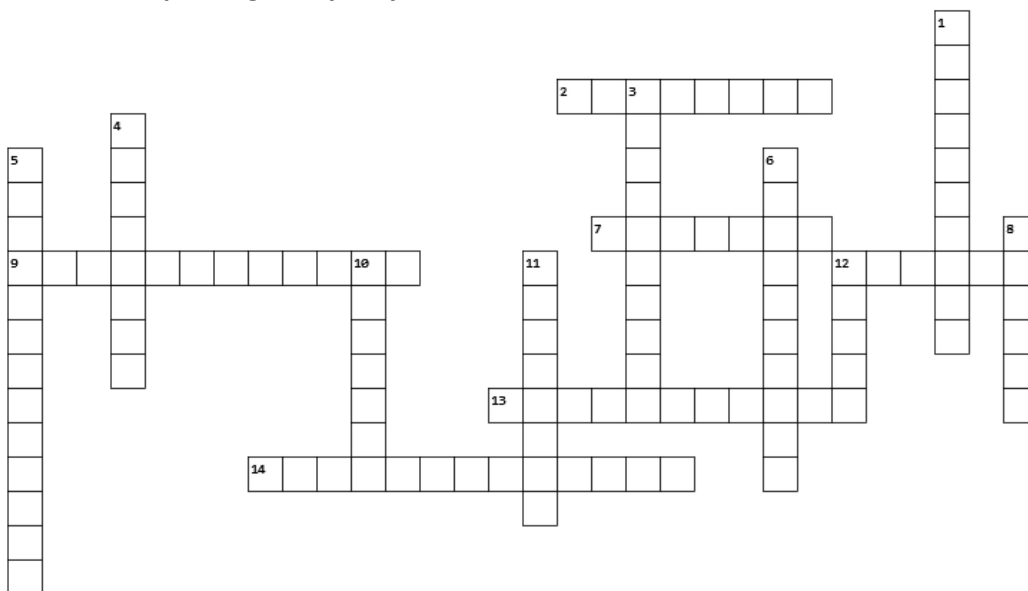
Despite this, many school districts, **enamored** by the **allure** of the digital revolution, continue to phase out printed books and libraries in favor of digital teaching programs and devices like Google Chromebooks. This trend persists even as scientific research increasingly supports the superiority of traditional paper-based reading methods.

The pandemic, while disruptive, was seen by some as an opportunity to advance digital **integration** in schools. However, experts like MIT neuroscientist John Gabrieli question the **effectiveness** of educational technology in improving reading outcomes or addressing equity issues. Gabrieli emphasizes the need to evaluate and promote technology that truly aids learning, rather than simply **prioritizing** profit.

In conclusion, the decline in reading skills among American youth is a complex issue with multiple contributing factors. However, the recent study from Teachers College highlights the significant role of the medium of reading - paper versus screen - in affecting reading comprehension and learning. As the debate continues, it's important to consider these findings in shaping educational practices and policies.

(John R MacArthur is the publisher of Harper's Magazine and author of several books. He participated in the fundraising necessary for Karen Froud's research study.)

The crossword puzzle gives synonyms for the words in bold.



Across

- 2. Careful, Prudent, Circumspect
- 7. Essential, Vital, Critical
- 9. Favoring, Preferring, Emphasizing
- 12. Attraction, Charm, Appeal
- 13. Combination, Incorporation, Merging
- 14. Efficacy, Efficiency, Productiveness

Down

- 1. Methods, Approaches, Strategies
- 3. Fundamental, Basic, Inherent
- 4. Infatuated, Besotted, Captivated
- 5. Understanding, Grasp, Perception
- 6. Changeover, Shift, Transformation
- 8. Profound, Intense, Extensive
- 10. Remarkable, Significant, Prominent
- 11. Sophisticated, Progressive, Cutting-edge
- 12. Correspond, Match, Conform