



# Tips For Evaluating Treatment Programs For the Prevention and Treatment of Reading Disabilities

The following questions should be asked when considering any specific intervention:

- **Has the intervention been rigorously evaluated with scientifically designed studies, reported in reputable journals? Do these studies use standardized reading assessments?**

These are reported with Standard Scores, which compare performance to a large population of children with your child's age or, in your child's grade.

- **What are the short- and long-term gains (in reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension) of the interventions delivered by the therapist you are considering?**

TMC's methods target the likely cause of the learning difficulties and do NOT teach compensatory skills for working around weaker skills/abilities. As a result, students build solid foundations for their education rather than relying on a crutch.

- **Do the therapists use standardized assessments to measure baseline performance and post-treatment outcome?**

Ask for the Standard Scores (SS). Grade equivalents and percentiles are of interest, but cannot be used to measure the significance of the improvement. You are trying to close the SS gap between your child's abilities in other areas and the lagging language abilities – oral and /or written language.

- **Is therapy administered intensively?**

Learning occurs best with **frequent repetitions** close together. For example, 30 minutes 4 times/week is more productive than 60 minutes 2 times/week. Daily therapy, at least 4 times/week, is essential for closing the gap. Gains can be made quickly over weeks and not years. And, they result in fewer therapy hours with greater gains in the long run. The older the child, the longer the daily sessions can be, to maximize the repetition factor.

- **Is there support following the intensive treatment to ensure that the child practices and maintains gains?**

Children with learning difficulties find it hard to take what they learned in one setting and apply it to another.



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- **What are the training requirements to become a proficient therapist?**

Some language/reading therapies have certification requirements; others do not. Those that do not are not necessarily less effective; it just makes consumers need to ask more questions such as: **How were you trained – how long did it take, who did it, were you able to work with experienced therapists while you were first practicing the therapy? How long have you been doing it? What do you do if therapy is not progressing?**

- **Is it a cost-effective solution?**

You should have the information about expected outcome at this point. The treatment should address the root of the problem and result in the child's being able to progress in reading at his expected level and work more independently in the future. Compare its cost with that of years of depending on tutoring/support to try to maintain school progress. Self-esteem cannot be measured monetarily, but should also be considered in the equation.

- **How can I find answers to some of these questions?**

Parents and professionals can find reviews of reading programs offered in the schools by going to The Florida Center for Reading Research Website <[www.fcrr.org](http://www.fcrr.org)>. Remember; look for those that have **standardized assessment (SS) as evidence** for their effectiveness. The site also offers the presentations made by their professionals on current research in reading, a very helpful source of information.