

LXD Teen Voice Survey Summary

Study Title: How Did You Learn to Read?

Introduction

Too often, conversations about reading instruction focus on programs, policies, and performance metrics without hearing directly from students themselves. To bridge that gap, LXD Research launched a Teen Voice survey to explore how teens experienced learning to read. By asking them to reflect on what worked, what didn't, and what they would change, this study offers meaningful insight into the experiences and instructional factors that shaped their early literacy development. Their reflections highlight opportunities to make reading instruction more personal, relevant, and supportive.

Goal of the Study

To better understand how early reading instruction impacts later success, LXD Research conducted a Teen Voice survey of 50 youth in Spring 2025. We asked teenagers to reflect on their reading experiences, providing insight into what helped them succeed—and what left them struggling.

Respondent Demographics



Total Respondents: 50



Age Range: 13–18 years old



Gender Identity: Majority identified as male or female; a small number did not disclose or identified outside the binary.



Geographic Spread: Participants represented various U.S. states including Maryland, New York, Georgia, Texas and California.

Survey Questions

To explore how early reading instruction shapes later experiences, LXD Research designed a survey that asked teens to reflect on their reading journeys. The survey included five main questions—both multiple choice and open-ended—to gather a wide range of insights from students who have already moved through early literacy instruction. Each question was crafted to illuminate different aspects of their experience with reading instruction and support. The questions included in the survey are as follows:

■ Question 1: Which three emotions do you most associate with learning to read?

This open-ended question asked students to name three emotions tied to their reading experience, helping researchers understand the emotional context of early literacy—whether joyful, frustrating, empowering, or something else.

■ Question 2: How effectively do you feel your school taught you how to read?

A single-select question with scaled responses ranging from “Extremely effectively” to “Not effectively at all,” this item measured students’ perceptions of how well their schools supported reading development.

■ Question 3: Did you receive any of the following reading supports in school?

This multi-select question allowed students to choose all applicable supports they had access to.

■ Question 4: Who helped teach you how to read outside of school?

Another multi-select question, this item explored the role of family, friends, and self-directed learning by offering various options.

■ Question 5: If you had a magic wand and could change one thing about how reading is taught, what would it be?

This final open-ended question gave students the chance to reflect critically and creatively on their experiences, offering insight into what they believe would improve literacy instruction for future learners.



Key Findings

➤ Emotional Associations with Learning to Read

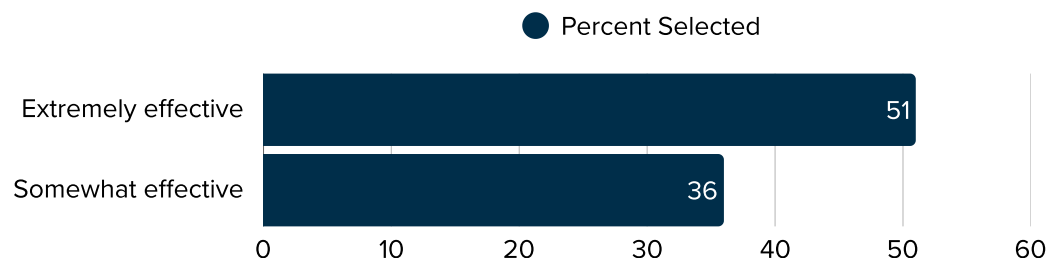
When asked to name three emotions they associate with learning to read:

- The most common positive emotions included **joy, pride, and curiosity**.
- Negative emotions such as **frustration** and **boredom** also emerged, particularly from those who reported less effective instruction or support.

➤ Perceived Effectiveness of School-Based Reading Instruction

- **51%** of respondents said their school taught reading “**Extremely effectively**.”
- **36%** said “**Somewhat effectively**.”
- A small portion indicated less effective instruction, suggesting gaps in meeting diverse learning needs.

Effectiveness of School-Based Reading Instruction



➤ Reading Supports Received

Respondents reported receiving a range of reading supports:

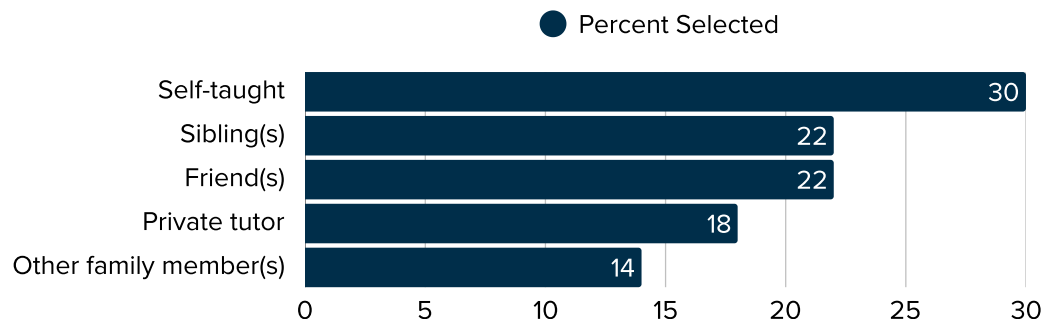
- **66%** experienced **regular classroom reading instruction**.
- **32%** received **1-on-1 tutoring** or **small group instruction**.
- **Less common** supports included **pull-out services, summer programs, or online tools**.
- **Several students** noted they **did not receive any formal support beyond the classroom**, highlighting the importance of differentiated instruction within the classroom setting.

> Outside Support in Learning to Read

When asked who helped them learn to read outside of school:

- **34%** named **siblings** or **other family members**.
- **18%** said they were **self-taught to some degree**.
- A **handful** mentioned **private tutors, friends, or grandparents**.
- About **12%** indicated they had **no outside support**.

How Students Learn To Read Outside the Classroom



> Student Recommendations for Change

In an open-ended prompt about what they would change about how reading is taught:

- Students called for **more engaging** and **practical reading materials**.
- Several wished **reading had been treated as a natural, fun activity** rather than a task.
- Others wanted **more help with pronunciation** and **individualized support**.
- Some expressed a desire for **less pressure and testing**, favoring exploration and choice in reading.

Conclusion

The Teen Voice Survey reminds us that learning to read is both personal and relational. While many students felt their schools taught reading effectively, their reflections highlight the importance of emotion, connection, and support—both in and out of the classroom. Some students credited siblings or self-learning for their success, while others struggled due to a lack of individualized attention.

Students are asking for reading instruction that feels engaging, relevant, and supportive. They want less pressure, more choice, and reading that feels like discovery, not a chore.

As educators and program designers, we have an opportunity to listen and respond. Let's build literacy experiences that reflect students' needs, interests, and voices. Their stories point the way forward.