

NEA BIG READ: WICHITA

Why should our workforce read?

Reading is important. People in the workforce can't successfully do their job without reading. In 2019, with technology and media distractions consuming a huge part of our daily lives, traditional reading seems to be going by the wayside. Here are some statistics from the American Library Association:

Employers now rank reading and writing as top deficiencies in new hires.

- 38% of employers find high school graduates "deficient" in reading comprehension, while 63% rate this basic skill "very important."
- "Written communications" tops the list of applied skills found lacking in high school and college graduates alike.
- One in five U.S. workers read at a lower skill level than their job requires.

On the flip side, people who spend time outside of work reading for pleasure, or reading to stay current on world topics, have a far higher reading comprehension retention and are more likely to be culturally and civically engaged citizens. Here are some statistics from the American Library Association:

Good readers generally have more financially rewarding jobs.

- More than 60% of employed proficient readers have jobs in management, or in the business, financial, professional and related sectors.
- Proficient readers are 2.5 times as likely as Basic readers to be earning \$850 or more a week.

Good readers play a crucial role in enriching our cultural and civic life.

- Literary readers are more than 3 times as likely as non-readers to visit museums, attend plays or concerts and create artwork of their own.
- They are also more likely to play sports, attend sporting events or do outdoor activities.
- 18- to 34-year-olds, whose reading rates are the lowest for any adult age group under 65, show declines in cultural and civic participation.
- Literary readers are more than twice as likely as non-readers to volunteer or do charity work.

Busy work schedules, family life, extracurricular obligations — these and many more things contribute to a decline in a regular reading schedule. The NEA Big Read: Wichita is here to help. Not only is this program a great way for workers to participate in an event with a growing list of community engagement opportunities, it's a perfect fit for members of the workforce looking to find a way to add reading to their schedule.