

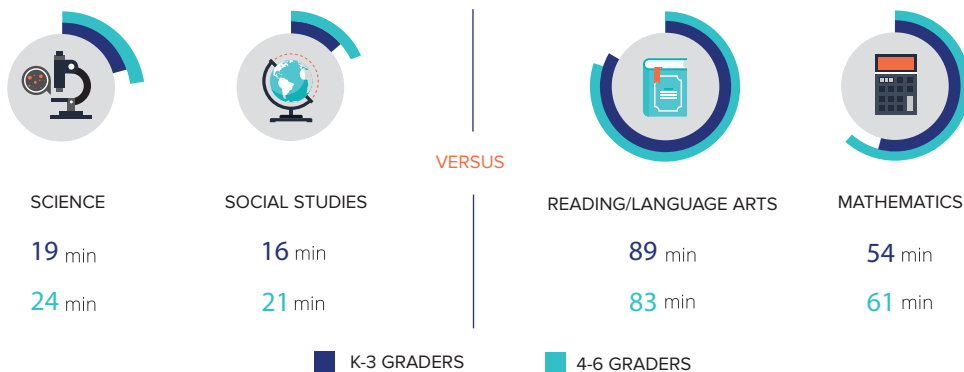
Knowledge Matters

Restoring Wonder and Excitement to the Classroom



Young children love learning about the world around them, yet the curriculum of many elementary schools has narrowed, focusing overwhelmingly on reading and math. However, the ability to read, write, listen and speak with understanding is not a “skill,” like learning to ride a bike or throwing a ball. It depends heavily on students’ vocabulary and on what they already know about a topic.

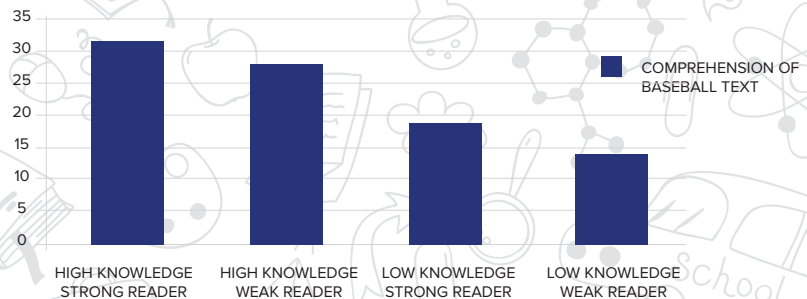
Teachers report spending far less time each day on science and social studies than on reading and math.



If we want our children to be better readers, we must ensure they are taught history, science, geography, art, music, and more. This is especially true for children least likely to gain such knowledge outside school.

For comprehension, knowledge matters more than reading ability.

When tested with a text about baseball, “weak” readers in junior high school who knew a lot about baseball easily outperformed “strong” readers who knew little about the game. In other words, knowing a lot about the subject made the weak readers strong readers.



What Teachers Can Do:

- Pull together sets of books on specific topics in science, history, and the arts so that students build academic vocabulary quickly—as their knowledge of the topic grows, so will their reading comprehension!
- Introduce sophisticated topics in the early grades to build vocabulary. Come back to them in later grades to deepen understanding.
- Work with colleagues within and across grades to be sure students are building knowledge in a coherent, logical, cumulative manner.

Knowledge Matters

is a campaign to make building knowledge Job One for American education.

www.KnowledgeMattersCampaign.org



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