



ROAR, developed at Stanford University, helps to identify struggling readers much more quickly | Photo source Pixabay

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## A TOOL IDENTIFIES STRUGGLING READERS SOONER



### An online tool slashes the time it takes to identify children who need additional help when learning to read

**Spotted:** Early intervention is key when it comes to struggling readers. The sooner a child is identified as struggling, the sooner they can be given the necessary support to help them succeed. However, identifying those who struggle with reading takes time and incurs expense. Now, a new online tool developed by Stanford researchers is changing that. The Rapid Online Assessment of Reading (ROAR), developed by the Brain Development & Education Lab, helps schools spot struggling readers in a fraction of the time of existing methods.

ROAR is an online assessment of reading skills that can be administered on any web browser. The tool also gives teachers useful insight into the challenges a particular student faces.

The test is designed to feel like a computer game, with a cartoon-like interface that is engaging for students. The ROAR measures students' ability to quickly recognise words, a foundational skill for reading fluency and comprehension. The test takes just minutes to administer, and scores generated by the ROAR correlate strongly with those from standardised in-person screenings, including the Woodcock-Johnson assessment of basic reading skills.

“Because the tool is tied to research that’s ongoing, it gives us data that can answer a lot of questions about the mechanisms of reading development – data that can help us understand why some kids struggle and others don’t,” adds Jason Yeatman, who directs the Brain Development and Education Lab at Stanford.

As children return to school after the pandemic, ROAR reflects a growing trend to find more effective ways of supporting young learners. For example, Springwise has recently spotted a

platform for students with learning differences, which offers tailored programmes, and connects students with educators who can provide individualised support. Springwise has also spotted further tools tailored to students facing particular challenges, such as a [voice-based learning app for children with reading and writing difficulties](#).

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## Takeaway:

In 2019, the National Assessment of Educational Progress estimated that **32 per cent of fourth-graders and 24 per cent of eighth-graders** in America struggle with reading. This figure is likely to be even higher in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, as many children have missed out on vital educational resources and support. Early intervention is crucial for struggling readers, as it can help to prevent them from falling behind their peers.