

Kentucky Summative Assessments



Grade 7 Reading Released Items 2026



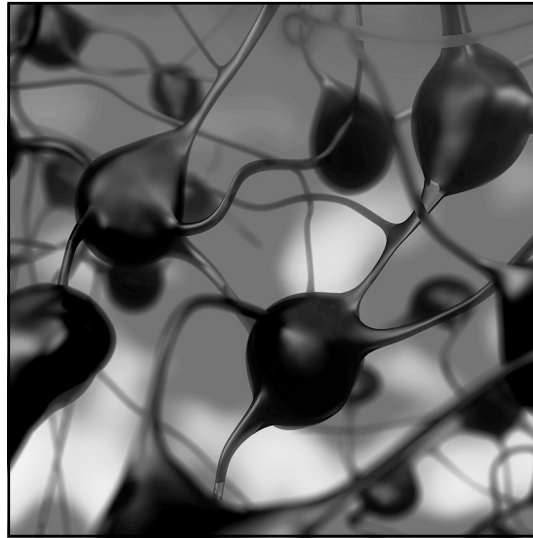
RE910544856

Directions: Read the passage “Use It or Lose It: A Good Brain Pruning.” Then answer the questions.

Use It or Lose It: A Good Brain Pruning

by Laura K. Zimmermann

Originally published in Odyssey, March 2015



Cultura Creative (RF) / Alamy Stock Photo

3D illustration of neurons
in the brain

- 1 **WARNING!** As you read this, parts of your brain are disappearing. On the plus side, other parts of your brain, like the ones you are using to read this, are getting stronger. It’s a competition for survival, and the main players are neurons. Neurons are brain cells that process information by communicating with other neurons. Many have branches like a tree, with shorter “tree-top” branches that receive messages and a long branch, the “tree trunk,” that sends them. Whenever you experience something, neurons start sending messages to each other. Different experiences activate connections between different neurons, creating networks. And it is these networks that are responsible for what we sense, think, feel, and do. Or more precisely, networks whose connections survive are responsible. Other connections disappear.

BRUTAL BUT NECESSARY

- 2 When we are young we have way more connections between our neurons than we need. These extra connections are there, ready to be used to build networks for the things we experience. And



if you experience the same things over and over, like when you practice doing math problems, playing an instrument, or your backhand swing in tennis, the stronger the networks related to these skills become. Over time the connections between the neurons we use more frequently are kept and the others are pruned away, much like the pruning of a tree. It's a dog-eat-dog world up there in your brain—you use it or you lose it.

- 3 But brutal though it may be, the pruning process is important too, because pruning allows your brain to become increasingly more specialized so that you are better at the skills and information you use. Look at it this way: Is it more important to be able to distinguish the sounds of every language in the world, or to learn the language your family and friends use? Because as a newborn you actually could perceive all of the world's language sounds, but that ability was pruned away long ago when you began to specialize in the languages used by the people around you.

PRUNING THE TEEN BRAIN

- 4 Researchers used to think the pruning process slowed down after early childhood. They were wrong. Extra connections continue forming in different parts of the brain through the early teen years, with a second major pruning of these connections in later adolescence. So what does this mean for the teen brain? It is likely that, as in childhood, the extra connections set the stage for the pruning process that helps our brain become more efficient at processing the information we take in. But there are still many questions. For example, does having extra connections available help teens pick up new information and skills more easily? Are there times in adolescence when some things are easier to learn than others? There is still much to discover about what a good brain pruning in the teen years can do.

"Use It or Lose It: A Good Brain Pruning" by Laura K. Zimmermann, from *Odyssey*, March 2015. © 2015 Cricket Media.



1

RE924159387_2

How does the illustration help the reader understand the information in the passage?

- A** By showing why the author compares brain neurons to “tree-top” branches
- B** By showing why the word “network” is used to describe the brain
- C** By showing that neurons are connected in interesting ways
- D** By showing the size and shape of neurons in the teen brain



Released Item Performance

Kentucky Summative Assessments

Spring 2026

Grade 7

Reading

Item: RE924159387

Book Question Number: 1

Standard: RI.7, RI.7.7

Item Type: MC

Key: B

Student Group	Number of Students	Percent Correct	Average Item Score	Item Breakout Statistics - Answer Choice Options			
				A (%)	B (%)	C (%)	D (%)
All Students	46,972	25%	0.25	28%	25%	37%	9%
Gender							
Female	22,765	22%	0.22	29%	22%	40%	10%
Male	24,207	28%	0.28	28%	28%	35%	8%
Ethnicity							
African American	5,036	23%	0.23	29%	23%	38%	10%
American Indian or Alaska Native	59	24%	0.24	25%	24%	37%	14%
Asian	1,087	27%	0.27	35%	27%	31%	7%
Hispanic or Latino	4,886	24%	0.24	30%	24%	36%	9%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	79	24%	0.24	27%	24%	44%	5%
White (non-Hispanic)	33,256	26%	0.26	28%	26%	37%	9%
Two or more races	2,569	25%	0.25	28%	25%	38%	9%
Migrant							
Migrant	230	21%	0.21	34%	21%	36%	10%
English Learner							
English Learner	2,868	24%	0.24	33%	24%	33%	10%
Economically Disadvantaged							
Economically Disadvantaged	27,808	24%	0.24	28%	24%	38%	10%
Students with Disabilities							
Students with Disabilities	6,492	27%	0.27	27%	27%	34%	12%



2

RE924156646_2

How does the phrase “It’s a dog-eat-dog world” in paragraph 2 contribute to meaning in the passage?

- A** It reinforces the significance of the pruning process.
- B** It emphasizes that only some neural connections survive.
- C** It supports the comparison between the brain and a tree.
- D** It explains how different experiences trigger neurons to create networks.



Released Item Performance

Kentucky Summative Assessments

Spring 2026

Grade 7

Reading

Item: RE924156646

Book Question Number: 2

Standard: RI.7, RI.7.4

Item Type: MC

Key: B

Student Group	Number of Students	Percent Correct	Average Item Score	Item Breakout Statistics - Answer Choice Options			
				A (%)	B (%)	C (%)	D (%)
All Students	46,972	45%	0.45	20%	45%	8%	27%
Gender							
Female	22,765	44%	0.44	20%	44%	8%	28%
Male	24,207	46%	0.46	19%	46%	8%	26%
Ethnicity							
African American	5,037	37%	0.37	18%	37%	13%	32%
American Indian or Alaska Native	59	51%	0.51	15%	51%	8%	25%
Asian	1,087	47%	0.47	25%	47%	6%	22%
Hispanic or Latino	4,887	37%	0.37	21%	37%	10%	32%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	79	35%	0.35	23%	35%	11%	30%
White (non-Hispanic)	33,254	47%	0.47	20%	47%	7%	26%
Two or more races	2,569	44%	0.44	21%	44%	8%	27%
Migrant							
Migrant	230	33%	0.33	16%	33%	15%	36%
English Learner							
English Learner	2,870	27%	0.27	15%	27%	15%	43%
Economically Disadvantaged							
Economically Disadvantaged	27,810	41%	0.41	19%	41%	10%	30%
Students with Disabilities							
Students with Disabilities	6,490	36%	0.36	16%	36%	14%	33%



3

RE924155249_4,5

Which details from the passage **best** support the inference that the way the brain changes can result in developing a person's special talents? Select **two** correct answers.

- A** "It's a competition for survival, and the main players are neurons."
(paragraph 1)
- B** "Whenever you experience something, neurons start sending messages to each other."
(paragraph 1)
- C** "When we are young we have way more connections between our neurons than we need."
(paragraph 2)
- D** "... pruning allows your brain to become increasingly more specialized so that you are better at the skills and information you use."
(paragraph 3)
- E** "... the extra connections set the stage for the pruning process that helps our brain become more efficient at processing the information we take in."
(paragraph 4)



Released Item Performance

Kentucky Summative Assessments

Spring 2026

Grade 7

Reading

Item: RE924155249

Book Question Number: 3

Standard: RI.7, RI.7.1

Item Type: MS

Key: D.E

Student Group	Number of Students	Percent Correct	Average Item Score	Item Breakout Statistics - Score Percentages		
				Score 0 (%)	Score 1 (%)	Score 2 (%)
All Students	46,890	71.6%	1.43	8%	41%	51%
Gender						
Female	22,726	73.6%	1.47	6%	40%	54%
Male	24,164	69.7%	1.39	9%	42%	49%
Ethnicity						
African American	5,023	64.1%	1.28	12%	47%	40%
American Indian or Alaska Native	59	71.2%	1.42	7%	44%	49%
Asian	1,087	82.1%	1.64	3%	29%	68%
Hispanic or Latino	4,866	69.2%	1.38	9%	44%	47%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	79	72.8%	1.46	5%	44%	51%
White (non-Hispanic)	33,212	72.8%	1.46	7%	40%	53%
Two or more races	2,564	70.7%	1.41	8%	42%	50%
Migrant						
Migrant	226	60.8%	1.22	12%	54%	34%
English Learner						
English Learner	2,844	58.1%	1.16	14%	55%	31%
Economically Disadvantaged						
Economically Disadvantaged	27,755	67.9%	1.36	10%	45%	45%
Students with Disabilities						
Students with Disabilities	6,466	55.9%	1.12	17%	55%	29%



RE910548558

Directions: Read the excerpt from “Brains May Need Flexible Networks to Learn Well.” Then answer the questions.

from “Brains May Need Flexible Networks to Learn Well”

by Laura Sanders

Originally published on www.sciencenewsforstudents.org, September 12, 2017

The brain’s ability to shift connections might boost learning

- 1 Look inside the brain of someone learning. You just might be lucky enough to spy a new bridge between two nerve cells pop into existence. Called a synapse, this bridge cements new knowledge into the brain. As new information arrives, some synapses form and strengthen. At the same time, others weaken. But that’s okay. This makes way for more new connections.
- 2 You might see more subtle changes, too. These could include changes in the levels of signaling molecules. You might even glimpse slight boosts in the activity of nerve cells, also known as neurons.
- 3 Over the last few decades, scientists have zoomed in on these microscopic changes that happen as brains learn. That detailed scrutiny has revealed a lot about the synapses that wire our brains. But it isn’t enough. Brain scientists still lack a complete picture of how brains learn.
- 4 Some scientists now think that maybe they have just been looking too closely. When it comes to the science of learning, zeroing in on synapse action risks missing the forest for the trees.
- 5 A new, zoomed-out approach attempts to make sense of large-scale brain changes that underlie learning. By studying the shifting interactions between many different brain areas over time, scientists are beginning to grasp how the brain takes in new information—and holds onto it.
- 6 Such studies rely on powerful math. Brain scientists are turning to approaches developed in other network-based sciences. They also are borrowing tools that reveal in precise, numerical terms the shape and function of the brain-signaling pathways that shift as people learn.
- 7 Danielle Bassett is one of these network neuroscientists. She works at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. “When you’re learning, it doesn’t just require a change in activity in a single region,” she notes. “It really requires many different regions to be involved.” Her whole-brain approach asks: “What’s actually happening in your brain while you’re learning?” Bassett is charging ahead to both define this new field of “network neuroscience” and to push its boundaries.



- 8 Such work “is very promising,” says Olaf Sporns. He’s a neuroscientist at Indiana University in Bloomington. Bassett’s research, he says, holds the potential to bridge gaps between what brain-imaging studies show and what scientists understand about how learning occurs. “I think she’s very much on the right track.”
- 9 Already, Bassett and others have found hints that the brains that learn best have flexible networks. By that she means that they are able to rewire connections on the fly. This allows new knowledge in. Some brain regions almost always communicate with the same neural partners. Others show great flexibility. They can quickly swap who they’re talking to. Think of them like people who can send a holiday-party invite to neighbors and friends on their e-mail lists, then moments later shoot off a memo to colleagues at work.
- 10 In a few studies, researchers have witnessed this flexibility in action. They put volunteers into brain scanners and then taught them something new. As the scan recorded their brain activity, the scientists could watch networks rewire themselves. Such network flexibility may aid in several types of learning. Too much flexibility, however, could signal certain types of brain disease, other studies suggest.
- 11 Not surprisingly, some researchers are rushing to apply this new information. They are testing ways to boost brain flexibility for those of us who may be too rigid in our neural (nerve cell) connections.
- 12 “These are pretty new ideas,” says Raphael Gerraty. He’s a cognitive neuroscientist at Columbia University in New York City. The math and computer tools required for this type of research didn’t exist until recently, he notes. So people hadn’t been thinking about learning from such a network-scale perspective. There was simply a technological roadblock, he says. But the road at last is clear and “people can now explore.”

From “Brains May Need Flexible Networks to Learn Well” by Laura Sanders, from *Science News for Students*, Sept. 12, 2017. © 2017 Society for Science & the Public.



4

RE924160789_4,5

Which sentences **best** state central ideas of the passage? Select **two** correct answers.

- A** Scientists borrowed tools from other fields to conduct their studies.
- B** Scientists have discovered microscopic changes in the learning brain.
- C** Scientists used brain scanners with volunteers to record their brain activity.
- D** Scientists have discovered that brains with flexible networks are best at learning.
- E** Scientists recently began to study the brain as a whole instead of as individual synapses.



Released Item Performance

Kentucky Summative Assessments

Spring 2026

Grade 7

Reading

Item: RE924160789

Book Question Number: 4

Standard: RI.7, RI.7.2

Item Type: MS

Key: D.E

Student Group	Number of Students	Percent Correct	Average Item Score	Item Breakout Statistics - Score Percentages		
				Score 0 (%)	Score 1 (%)	Score 2 (%)
All Students	25,220	51.5%	1.03	12%	72%	16%
Gender						
Female	12,096	52.6%	1.05	11%	73%	16%
Male	13,124	50.6%	1.01	14%	71%	15%
Ethnicity						
African American	2,836	48.0%	0.96	16%	72%	12%
American Indian or Alaska Native	29	41.4%	0.83	21%	76%	3%
Asian	572	55.9%	1.12	9%	71%	20%
Hispanic or Latino	2,809	51.0%	1.02	14%	70%	16%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	44	45.5%	0.91	18%	73%	9%
White (non-Hispanic)	17,509	52.1%	1.04	12%	72%	16%
Two or more races	1,421	51.6%	1.03	12%	73%	15%
Migrant						
Migrant	136	46.0%	0.92	19%	70%	11%
English Learner						
English Learner	1,955	47.3%	0.95	18%	69%	13%
Economically Disadvantaged						
Economically Disadvantaged	15,263	50.0%	1.00	14%	71%	14%
Students with Disabilities						
Students with Disabilities	4,754	43.9%	0.88	22%	68%	10%



5

RE924160117_2,5

Which ideas from the passage **best** support the inference that neuroscientists need the help of computer scientists? Select **two** correct answers.

- A** “. . . scientists have zoomed in on these microscopic changes that happen as brains learn.” (paragraph 3)
- B** “They also are borrowing tools that reveal in precise, numerical terms the shape and function of the brain-signaling pathways. . . .” (paragraph 6)
- C** “. . . have found hints that the brains that learn best have flexible networks.” (paragraph 9)
- D** “Not surprisingly, some researchers are rushing to apply this new information.” (paragraph 11)
- E** “. . . tools required for this type of research didn’t exist until recently. . . .” (paragraph 12)



Released Item Performance

Kentucky Summative Assessments

Spring 2026

Grade 7

Reading

Item: RE924160117

Book Question Number: 5

Standard: RI.7, RI.7.1

Item Type: MS

Key: B,E

Student Group	Number of Students	Percent Correct	Average Item Score	Item Breakout Statistics - Score Percentages		
				Score 0 (%)	Score 1 (%)	Score 2 (%)
All Students	46,872	59.4%	1.19	15%	52%	34%
Gender						
Female	22,718	60.1%	1.20	13%	53%	34%
Male	24,154	58.7%	1.17	16%	50%	34%
Ethnicity						
African American	5,021	51.0%	1.02	21%	56%	23%
American Indian or Alaska Native	59	53.4%	1.07	14%	66%	20%
Asian	1,087	70.8%	1.42	8%	43%	49%
Hispanic or Latino	4,860	54.6%	1.09	17%	57%	26%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	78	55.8%	1.12	13%	63%	24%
White (non-Hispanic)	33,205	61.1%	1.22	14%	50%	36%
Two or more races	2,562	58.1%	1.16	16%	53%	32%
Migrant						
Migrant	227	50.9%	1.02	21%	56%	23%
English Learner						
English Learner	2,840	45.3%	0.91	23%	64%	13%
Economically Disadvantaged						
Economically Disadvantaged	27,744	55.3%	1.11	17%	55%	28%
Students with Disabilities						
Students with Disabilities	6,457	46.4%	0.93	26%	56%	18%



Directions: Select all the correct answers.

Complete the table by identifying whether the information appears in “Use It or Lose It: A Good Brain Pruning,” in the excerpt from “Brains May Need Flexible Networks to Learn Well,” or in **both** passages.

Information	Use It or Lose It: A Good Brain Pruning	from “Brains May Need Flexible Networks to Learn Well”	Both Passages
Brains are made up of a network of connecting neurons.			
Scientists are using powerful math as a tool to study how the brain works.			
People are born with more neuron connections than needed.			
There is still a lot to discover about how the brain works.			



Released Item Performance

Kentucky Summative Assessments

Spring 2026

Grade 7

Reading

Item: RE924163473

Book Question Number: 6

Standard: RI.7, RI.7.9

Item Type: TE

Key: see below

Student Group	Number of Students	Percent Correct	Average Item Score	Item Breakout Statistics - Score Percentages		
				Score 0 (%)	Score 1 (%)	Score 2 (%)
All Students	21,674	52.7%	1.05	24%	47%	29%
Gender						
Female	10,629	53.7%	1.07	22%	48%	30%
Male	11,045	51.7%	1.03	26%	45%	29%
Ethnicity						
African American	2,192	39.3%	0.79	36%	48%	15%
American Indian or Alaska Native	30	58.3%	1.17	23%	37%	40%
Asian	514	62.2%	1.24	15%	45%	39%
Hispanic or Latino	2,054	47.2%	0.94	29%	48%	23%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	34	39.7%	0.79	32%	56%	12%
White (non-Hispanic)	15,705	55.1%	1.10	22%	46%	32%
Two or more races	1,145	50.2%	1.00	26%	47%	27%
Migrant						
Migrant	90	40.6%	0.81	36%	48%	17%
English Learner						
English Learner	887	32.7%	0.65	44%	46%	10%
Economically Disadvantaged						
Economically Disadvantaged	12,489	47.6%	0.95	29%	48%	24%
Students with Disabilities						
Students with Disabilities	1,705	41.1%	0.82	37%	44%	19%

Key: The first row is the third column choice, the second row is the second column choice, the third row is the first column choice, the fourth row is the third column choice.



Investing in Kentucky's Future, One Student at a Time