

NASET LD Report #19

Adolescent Literacy

Abstract

Adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st century will read and write more than at any other time in human history. They will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs, run their households, act as citizens, and conduct their personal lives. They will need literacy to cope with the flood of information they will find everywhere they turn. They will need literacy to feed their imaginations so they can create the world of the future. In a complex and sometimes even dangerous world, their ability to read will be crucial. Continual instruction beyond the early grades is needed. Many students reach middle school and high school without adequate literacy skills. Reasons for this may include learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, frequent school changes, limited literacy of parents, or inadequate instruction. Once a student falls behind his or her peers, development of literacy skills may be hampered by lack of access to appropriate materials and instruction and by motivational issues stemming from repeated experiences with failure. Students who are reading two or more years below grade level tend to have difficulty in content-area classes in secondary school. Often, they avoid reading and fall even further behind over time as a result. This presents a major challenge for educators and parents trying to help students succeed in the general curriculum and avoid the emotional and social consequences of repeated failure in school. This issue of **NASET's LD Report** comes from the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition and will provide resources pertaining to adolescent literacy.

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Many students reach middle school and high school without adequate literacy skills. Reasons for this may include learning disabilities, mental retardation, frequent school changes, limited literacy of parents, or inadequate instruction. Once a student falls behind his or her peers, development of literacy skills may be hampered by lack of access to appropriate materials and instruction and by motivational issues stemming from repeated experiences with failure. Students who are reading two or more years below grade level tend to have difficulty in content-area classes in secondary school. Often, they avoid reading and fall even further behind over time as a result. This presents a major challenge for educators and parents trying to help students succeed in the general curriculum and avoid the emotional and social consequences of repeated failure in school.

While most people associate literacy with the ability to read, there are other kinds of literacy as well. In the more general sense, literacy refers to the ability to understand and use symbolic information (text, formulas, codes, statistics, etc.) in order to function successfully in the world. So, in addition to reading, literacy encompasses numerical and mathematical skills (sometimes called numeracy), writing skills, computer skills, and other technology-related skills. Other new literacies include areas such as economic literacy, critical literacy, and media literacy.

Literacy includes those skills needed to access, understand, and make use of school texts, but it also includes many skills that have important applications outside the classroom, such as understanding a wilderness trail guide or interpreting a weather map on the Web.

Starting in the upper elementary grades, students are expected to be able to use reading as a tool to access texts for many purposes. Students are expected to read longer works of fiction and be able to discuss plots and themes. In order to read content-area materials in history, science, and mathematics, students need to understand and be able to use specialized vocabulary and symbols. They also need to be able to find, comprehend, interpret, and assess the validity of information found in the media, on the Web, and in print sources. These and other literacy skills grow in importance as students move from elementary school into middle and high school.

Resources

[Collaborative Strategic Reading \(CSR\): Improving Secondary Students' Reading Comprehension Skills](#)

NCSET Research to Practice Brief

Reading comprehension is a critical skill for secondary students with disabilities as it facilitates participation in mainstream content-area classes. Unfortunately, many secondary educators are not adequately equipped to provide such supplemental reading instruction. This brief introduces Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR), a research-based practice, developed by Janette K. Klingner and Sharon Vaughn (1998).

<http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=424>

[Enhancing Academic Achievement and Transition Outcomes Using Technology](#)

NCSET Information Brief

It is critical that innovative curricula emerge that combine standards-based academics with transition planning to facilitate access to general education, including multiple-outcome measures and learning supports. In response to this challenge, the Nisonger Center at Ohio State University (OSU) developed a standards-driven, computer-based curriculum for students with disabilities in grades 8 through 10. This brief describes the curriculum and the principles behind it.

<http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=2472>

[Improving Word Identification Skills Using Strategic Instruction Model \(SIM\) Strategies](#)

NCSET Research to Practice Brief

Students with learning disabilities often move into secondary education with elementary-level reading skills, including an inability to readily decode unfamiliar words. As a result, they have difficulty with content-area classes, such as history and science, in which grade-level reading is required. This brief focuses on the Word Identification Strategy component of the Strategic Instruction Model (SIM) (Deshler & Schumaker, 1988), and reviews research showing the effectiveness of this strategy for secondary students with disabilities.

<http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=720>

[Never Too Late: Approaches to Reading Instruction for Secondary Students with Disabilities](#)

NCSET Research to Practice Brief

Too many children, including students with learning disabilities, do not learn to read proficiently in the primary grades. This brief provides an overview of two approaches to reading instruction for secondary students with disabilities: Collaborative Strategic Reading and the Strategic Instruction Model.

<http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=274>

Teaching for Understanding

NCSET Research to Practice Brief

While traditional lectures, exercises, and drills may help students memorize facts and formulas and get the right answers on tests, this time-honored style of teaching does not help students achieve the depth of understanding they need to understand complex ideas and apply knowledge in new settings or situations. This Research to Practice Brief outlines research regarding an approach called “teaching for understanding,” which strives to engender in students a depth of understanding on academic topics that enables them to apply the knowledge in various settings. Suggestions and resources for application of this approach are also provided.

<http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=1309>

What Algebra and Biology Students Have to Say About Universal Design for Learning

NCSET Research to Practice Brief

This brief outlines the findings of a study of whether universal design for learning (UDL) improves how students with mild disabilities perform in general education. The study's findings illustrate how students perceive individual interventions anchored by three key UDL principles--multiple ways of representing course content, multiple options for student expression and control, and multiple options for engagement and motivation. These individual interventions were used in standard-track high school algebra and biology classes.

<http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=2568>

All About Adolescent Literacy: Resources for parents and educators of kids in grades 4-12

All About Adolescent Literacy is a national multimedia project offering information and resources to the parents and educators of struggling adolescent readers and writers (including resources in Spanish). It is an educational initiative of WETA, the flagship public television and radio station in the nation's capital, and is funded by Carnegie Corporation of New York and by the Ann B. and Thomas L. Friedman Family Foundation.

<http://www.adlit.org/>

Connecting to Success: Mentoring Through Technology to Promote Student Achievement

Connecting to Success is an electronic mentoring program using a combination of e-mail and face-to-face meetings to develop mentoring relationships between youth with disabilities and caring adults. The program is intended to facilitate successful transition to adult life. Program evaluations indicate that youth participants improve their reading, writing, and technology skills as they communicate with their mentors.

<http://ici.umn.edu/ementoring/>

LD Online: LD In Depth, Reading

This Web page features information about dyslexia, a learning disability linked with difficulties in reading. Articles, parent and teacher resources, and discussion opportunities on dyslexia are included in the LD Online site.

http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/reading/reading.html

National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition & Language Instruction Educational Programs (U.S. Dept. of Education)

This clearinghouse conducts research on useful educational practices for linguistically and culturally diverse (LCD) students in the United States. Publications on educating LCD learners can be found, as well as links to information on language and education. Resources for linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms can also be accessed on this Web site.

<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu>

Reading is Fundamental (RIF)

RIF is an organization that creates and implements child and family literacy programs designed to engage children in reading. One feature is Reading Planet, which presents information about books and reading activities. Several helpful articles and tips for parents of older readers are available on the Reading Planet Web page.

<http://www.rif.org/>

[Reading Online](#)

Created by the International Reading Association, Reading Online is a journal providing information on literacy research and practice applicable to ages 5 to 18. Articles, international perspectives, book reviews, and technology ideas in literacy instruction are featured. Readers are also invited to participate in discussions about literacy topics through the site.

<http://www.readingonline.org/>

[Sonoma County Office of Education \(SCOE\) Hot Topics: Reading Corner](#)

SCOE's Reading Corner offers resources and research on reading instruction. Reading seminars, programs, and teaching strategies are some of the topics featured on this Web site.

<http://www.scoe.org/pub/htdocs/reading-language-about.html>

[Young Adult Library Services Association \(YALSA\)](#)

The American Library Association's YALSA offers library services to young adults and support to those who provide service to them. This Web page includes book lists, professional development information for people who work with young adults, and links to helpful resources.

<http://www.ala.org/yalsa/>