



ADOLESCENT LITERACY



A Guide

Produced and distributed by K12 Coalition
Authored by Joan Sedita



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“In an ever-evolving world, literacy stands as a cornerstone of personal and academic success, particularly during the critical adolescent years. It is critical that we continue to address literacy as a high priority issue, even as students reach the secondary grades.”

~ Dr. Sharon Vaughn & Dr. Jade Wexler, from the forward to *Essentials of Adolescent Literacy*, Sedita, 2026

“To acquire the skills they need, students must work hard to refine and build upon their initial reading skills, and teachers in upper elementary grades and in middle and high school classes should help students acquire more advanced skills once they understand the demands that content area tasks actually present, especially to students who struggle with reading.”

~ *Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices*, Kamil et al., 2008

“Effective writing is a vital component of students’ literacy achievement, and writing is a critical communication tool for students to convey thoughts and opinions, describe ideas and events, and analyze information. Indeed, writing is a life-long skill that plays a key role in postsecondary success across academic and vocational disciplines.”

~ *Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively*, Graham et al., 2016

Foreword



Literacy skills are essential for success in school, in postsecondary education, and the workforce, as well as for effective communication in our personal lives.

Adolescents must learn from texts which, compared to texts in earlier grades, are significantly longer and more complex at the word, sentence, and structural levels. These texts present greater conceptual challenges and demand a much higher level of information synthesis. As students move into middle school, it is often assumed that writing skills have already been mastered, and students are expected to use writing to support learning and to complete sophisticated writing tasks, some of which are specific to disciplines.

However, many students leave elementary grades without grade-level reading and writing skills. Literacy difficulties that emerge in the elementary years may persist into later grades or, in some cases, first appear during adolescence. Students who lack grade-level reading and writing skills are at a disadvantage for academic achievement.

It is therefore critical for educators who work with adolescent learners to understand how reading and writing abilities develop across upper elementary and secondary grades, as well as the instructional concepts, practices, and challenges that are especially relevant for Grades 5-12. This includes the use of research-based strategies to teach the content and disciplinary literacy skills students need to read, write, and engage in discussion across all subject areas.

In addition, given the large number of secondary students who do not demonstrate grade-level literacy skills, educators must understand the needs of struggling readers and writers and what effective intervention instruction entails. This also requires an understanding of multi-tiered systems of support, in which instruction is delivered at varying levels of intensity and informed by data from effective secondary literacy assessment models.

Keys to Literacy has more than twenty years of experience providing professional learning and consulting services to secondary educators and is recognized as a leader in the field of adolescent literacy. The purpose of this guide is to share what we have learned by introducing key concepts in adolescent literacy and offering resources to support educators in this work.

Joan Sedita
Founder of Keys to Literacy,
Author of *Essentials of Adolescent Literacy*

A handwritten signature of Joan Sedita in black ink, written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned to the right of a vertical line that separates it from the printed text.

What Is Adolescent Literacy?

The term **adolescent literacy** is used differently among experts in the literacy field. Some say it begins in Grade 4, based on the axiom that through Grade 3 students are learning to read, but beginning in Grade 4 they shift to reading to learn (Chall, 1983). Others use the term to describe literacy instruction that takes place in middle and high school grades, also referred to as **secondary literacy**. Most states have English language arts standards that are organized into an elementary band (kindergarten to Grade 5) and a secondary band (Grades 6-12) that includes a focus on literacy in the content areas. We recognize the transition as happening during 5th grade.

Why Teach Literacy to Adolescents?

In many ways, literacy is the gatekeeper to learning in every subject. As students progress from upper elementary into middle and high school, the emphasis on independent learning increases. Students are expected to acquire, process, and remember information through reading and writing, listening to teachers and peers, and actively participating in discussions.

Many students enter Grade 5 without grade-level reading and writing skills. Even those who do meet grade-level expectations must continue to develop these skills to keep pace with the increasing academic demands of secondary grades. National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data indicate that a significant number of adolescents perform below grade level in literacy (U.S. Department of Education, 2012, 2025). These struggling students in particular benefit from effective, evidence-based literacy instruction.

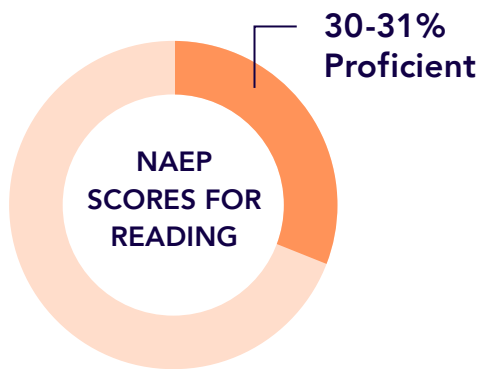


Reading:

The percentage of Grade 4 students in the nation who performed at or above the NAEP Proficient level was 31% in 2024, and for Grade 8 students it was 30%.

2024 PROFICIENCY

Grade 4: 30% | Grade 8: 31%

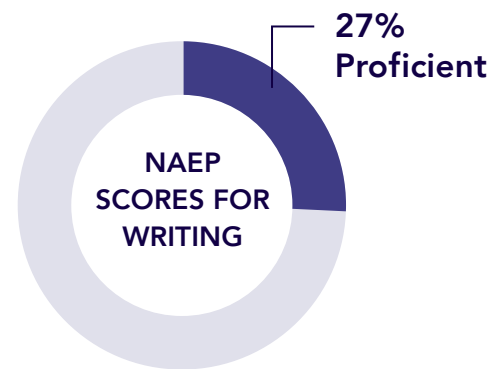


Writing:

The most recent NAEP writing scores from 2011 showed that only 27% of students in Grades 8 and 12 wrote at or above the NAEP Proficiency level.

2011 PROFICIENCY

Grade 4 & 12: 27%



Levels of Adolescent Literacy Instruction

Adolescent literacy instruction must include content reading and writing skills as well as the specialized literacy skills that are unique to specific subject areas (i.e., disciplinary literacy). Teachers should provide this instruction to all students. In addition, intervention instruction for nonproficient readers and writers should target any skills that are not at grade level. For reading, this may include phonics and fluency instruction, and for writing, this may include teaching sentence skills and basic paragraph skills.

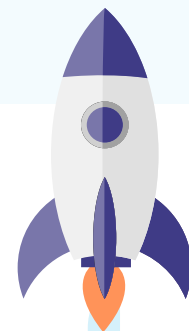
The chart below organizes adolescent literacy instruction into three levels (Sedita, 2026).

LEVELS OF ADOLESCENT LITERACY INSTRUCTION

Disciplinary Literacy	Advanced reading and writing to learn: specialized strategies unique to subject areas	Tier 1 Instruction: provides accommodations, modifications, and scaffolds that ensure struggling readers and writers can access the same content knowledge as their peers
Content Literacy	Reading and writing to learn: vocabulary, comprehension, writing strategies used across all subjects	
Basic Literacy	Learning to read and write: intervention for basic skills, including phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, basic writing skills	Tiers 2 and 3 Instruction: remediate to develop basic skills

LEARN MORE:

[Components of Adolescent Literacy Instruction in an MTSS Model](#)



More About Content and Disciplinary Literacy

As students advance into middle and high school grades, literacy demands increase because each content area requires distinct reading and writing strategies. Students must understand the language of school texts which becomes increasingly complex and specialized across disciplines. They benefit from explicit instruction and guided practice in vocabulary, comprehension, and writing skills used across subjects, an approach referred to as **content literacy** instruction. Students also benefit from learning the specialized literacy practices that are unique to each subject area, commonly referred to as **disciplinary literacy**.

Content Literacy: Content literacy includes skills, strategies, and routines related to reading, writing, discussion, word learning, and language use that can be applied across subject areas. These are sometimes referred to as generic skills and study skills (CEEDAR Center; Faggella-Luby et al, 2012; Shanahan, 2017). Decades of research support the use of general reading and writing strategies integrated into content-area classrooms (Brozo et al., 2013; Hwang et al., 2021).

Disciplinary Literacy: Disciplinary literacy refers to how experts within a discipline (i.e., science, history, mathematics, literature, and other fields) use specialized knowledge and abilities to read, write, think, and communicate (Goldman et al., 2016; Jetton & Shanahan, 2012; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012). This approach emphasizes that students must be taught highly specialized skills that vary by subject, as the literacy practices of one discipline are not necessarily transferable to another. (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).

Generic reading strategies and study skills “promote the use of purpose setting and predicting, along with a rich collection of reading processes or strategies (e.g., visualization, summarization, clarification, questioning), and the use of particular study or teaching devices (e.g., Cornell notetaking, three-level guides, advance organizers).”

~ Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012

LEARN MORE:

[Disciplinary Literacy: Integrating Literacy Instruction in All Subjects, Grades 6-12](#)

[The Key Comprehension Routine](#)
[The Key Vocabulary Routine](#)
[Keys to Content Writing](#)

A Secondary Reading Instruction Model

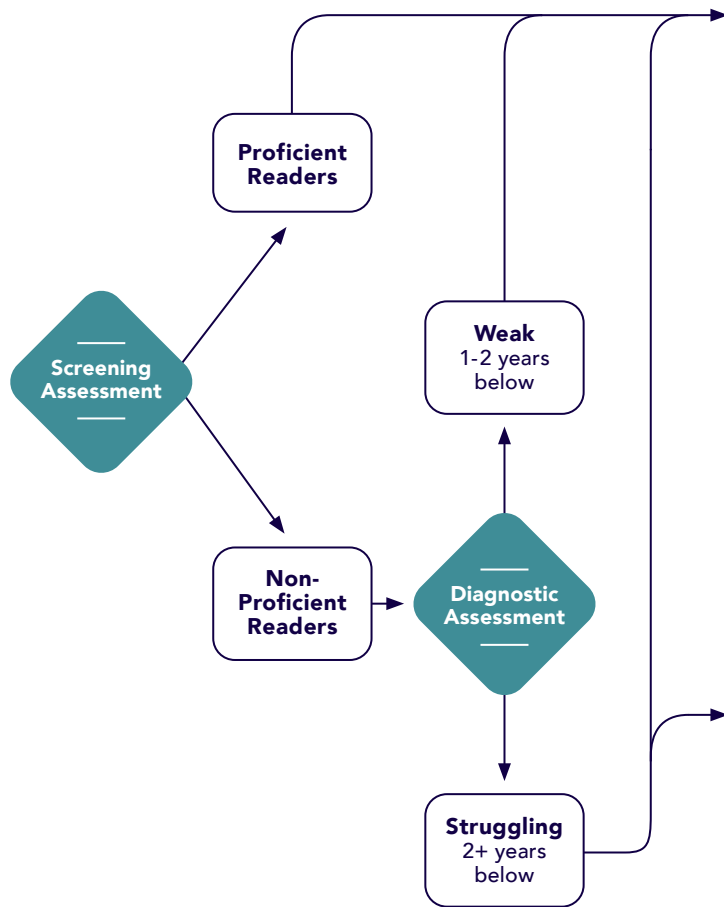
The figure on the following page illustrates common learning paths for proficient and non-proficient readers (Sedita, 2026). The model uses assessment to determine students' instructional needs and appropriate pathways.



A universal reading screening assessment is administered to all students to identify those who are not proficient readers. Based on the screening results, students who demonstrate the ability to read and comprehend grade-level texts are identified as proficient readers. These students require instruction that continues to develop academic vocabulary, applies knowledge of text structure and comprehension strategies, and uses writing to support learning. This instruction takes place in regular education classrooms and is delivered by subject-area teachers.

Students identified as non-proficient readers require additional diagnostic reading assessments to determine the nature and severity of their reading difficulties, as well as the specific components of reading that need supplemental instruction. Based on diagnostic assessment results, non-proficient readers will typically fall into two sub-categories: **weak** and **struggling**, whose instructional paths differ slightly.

- **Weak Reader Path:** These students have reading skills that are one to two years below grade level and typically have writing skills that are at least as low as their reading skills. Given the potentially large number of non-proficient readers in a school and the limited resources available to provide intensive pull-out interventions, weak readers often have access only to Tier 2 supplemental support. This support is typically provided within regular classrooms that include differentiated instruction and scaffolding.
- **Struggling Reader Path:** These students have reading skills that are two or more years below grade level. Reading and writing are especially challenging for these students. Among non-proficient readers, they are the most likely to receive Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention in pull-out settings.



Common Learning Paths for Proficient & Non-proficient Readers

Tier 1 Reading Instruction: All Students

Components Addressed

- Academic Vocabulary
- Comprehension
- Reading/Writing Connection

Setting

- Regular Education Classrooms

Teachers

- Content Teachers
- Inclusion Specialists

Components Addressed

- Content & Disciplinary Literacy Instruction
- Differentiation & Scaffolding
- Some Tier 2 Supplemental Support

Tier 2 Supplemental & Tier 3 Intensive Intervention Instruction

Components Addressed

- Phonics, Advanced Word Study
- Fluency Vocabulary
- Comprehension
- Reading/Writing Connection

Setting

- Pull-out
- Individual and small groups

Teachers

- Reading Specialists
- Special Educators
- Title I, Paraprofessionals

Components Addressed

- Intervention Reading Programs
- Differentiation & Scaffolding

Adolescent Literacy Research

The art of teaching is informed by shared, practical experience. However, as in the medical profession, it is important for educators to consider research on effective literacy instruction so that their decisions are guided by more than personal theories about teaching literacy. A substantial body of research provides guidance on evidence-based literacy instruction for Grades 5-12.

Findings from meta-analyses are particularly valuable because they are based on consistent results across multiple studies. The following seminal research reports and guides offer evidence-based recommendations for teaching literacy to adolescents.



**Improving Adolescent Literacy:
Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices**
(Kamil et al., 2008)



**Writing to Read: Evidence for How Writing
Can Improve Reading**
(Graham & Hebert, 2010)



Reading Next
(Biancarosa & Snow, 2006)



Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively
(Graham et al., 2016)



Writing Next
(Graham & Perin, 2007)



Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4-9
(Vaughn et al., 2022)

EVIDENCE-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Reading

The first report listed on the prior page is an Institute of Education Sciences (IES) practice guide published in 2008 that summarizes a large-scale meta-analysis of adolescent literacy research, with a primary focus on reading instruction. Subsequent studies have confirmed the recommendations from this guide, which include:

- 1 Provide explicit vocabulary instruction.
- 2 Provide direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction.
- 3 Provide opportunities for extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation.
- 4 Increase student motivation and engagement in literacy learning.
- 5 Make available intensive and individualized interventions for struggling readers that can be provided by trained specialist.

Writing

The second report on the prior page is another IES practice guide focused on writing instruction. Its recommendations include:

- 1 Explicitly teach appropriate writing strategies using a Model-Practice-Reflect instructional cycle.
- 2 Integrate writing and reading to emphasize key writing features.
- 3 Use assessments of students' writing to inform instruction and feedback.

Intervention

The last report on the list is also an IES practice guide and focuses on reading interventions. Its recommendations include:

- 1 Build students' decoding skills so they can read complex multisyllabic words.
- 2 Provide purposeful fluency-building activities to help students read effortlessly.
- 3 Routinely use a set of comprehension-building practices to help students make sense of the text.
 - a. Build students' world and word knowledge so they can make sense of the text.
 - b. Consistently provide students with opportunities to ask and answer questions to better understand the text they read.
 - c. Teach students a routine for determining the gist of a short section of text.
 - d. Teach students to monitor their comprehension as they read.
- 4 Provide students with opportunities to practice making sense of stretch text (i.e., challenging text) that will expose them to complex ideas and information).

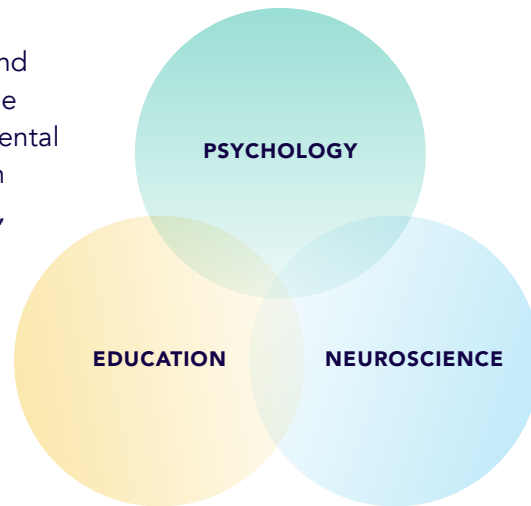
"It is important for educators who work with adolescent learners to become familiar with foundational research in adolescent literacy research and to understand how this research can inform instruction to meet the needs of both proficient readers and those who struggle with reading and writing."

~ *Essentials of Adolescent Literacy*, Sedita, 2026

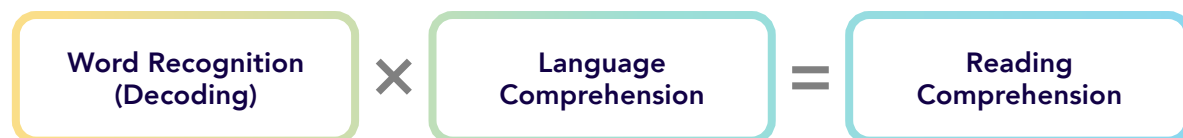


The Science of Reading and Adolescent Learners

The Science of Reading refers to a comprehensive and evolving body of scientific knowledge drawn from the fields of education, cognitive psychology, developmental psychology, and neuroscience. Although research on effective reading instruction has existed for decades, the term Science of Reading, used to describe this body of research, has gained prominence in recent years. This research, including studies focused on adolescent literacy, explains how individuals learn to read, why some learners struggle, and how reading can be taught most effectively. Research related to writing is also included within the Science of Reading.



Several instructional frameworks contribute to our understanding of the competencies and skills students need to become proficient readers and writers. These frameworks are described as follows.



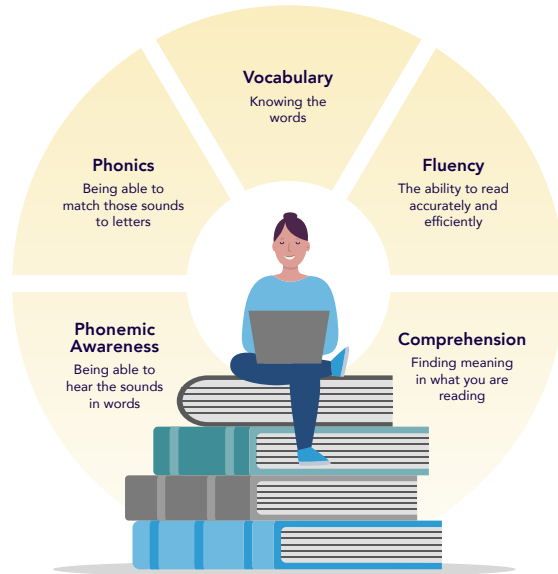
Simple View of Reading

The Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) proposes that reading comprehension occurs only when students are proficient in both word recognition skills and language comprehension. Automatic word recognition, also described as decoding, leads to fluent reading. Language comprehension includes sufficient vocabulary knowledge and syntactic awareness (an understanding of English grammar) to comprehend spoken language.

If adolescent learners have not developed adequate word recognition skills and language processes by Grade 5, they are likely to experience difficulty making meaning from text.

The Five Components of Reading

The National Reading Panel (2000) identified five essential components of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. As students progress from kindergarten through Grade 12, the instruction for these components shifts. Instruction for the foundational skills of phonemic awareness and phonics is emphasized in the early grades, with phonics instruction transitioning to advanced word study in Grades 4 and 5 as students learn to read and spell multisyllabic words derived from Latin and Greek.

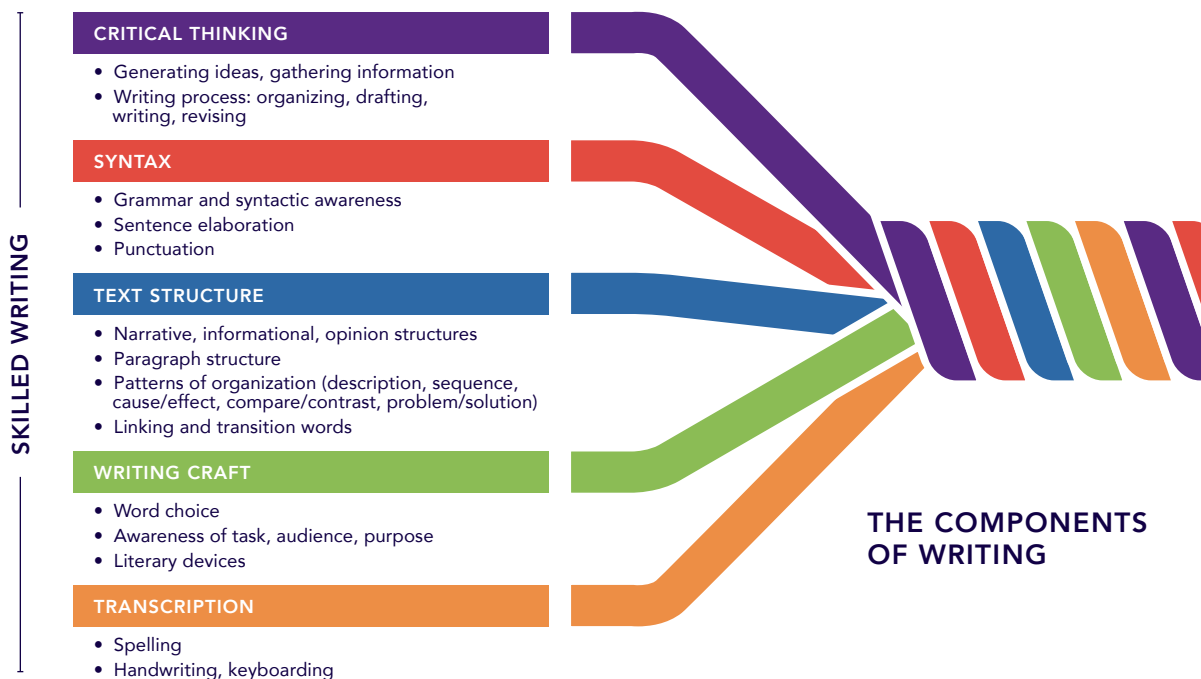


Students continue to develop text reading fluency throughout the elementary grades, with a goal of reading at least 150 words correct per minute with at least 95% accuracy after Grade 6. Vocabulary development and the ability to apply comprehension strategies to increasingly complex text should remain a focus across all grade levels. For adolescent learners, instruction in Grades 5-12 is organized into content literacy for all students, addressing vocabulary and comprehension across subjects, and targeted intervention for struggling readers to address gaps in any component of reading.



The Components of Writing

The Writing Rope (Sedita, 2019, 2023) is an instructional framework designed to support writing development across all grades. The framework identifies five essential components of writing skills and strategies that students must master to become proficient writers. These components, represented as strands in a rope, include Critical Thinking, Syntax, Text Structure, Writing Craft, and Transcription.



During the elementary grades, students learn a wide range of skills within each strand. Beginning in Grade 5 and beyond, students increasingly integrate these skills to produce writing that clearly and effectively communicates their ideas, much like weaving together strands in a rope. Proficient adolescent writers continue to require instruction in advanced writing skills represented in the first four strands, including skills required specific to disciplinary writing. Adolescent struggling writers may require targeted intervention to address gaps in any components of writing, including transcription skills.

Learn More: [What Is Comprehension? The Five Components of Reading](#)

Learn More: [The Strands That Are Woven Into Skilled Writing](#)

Learn More: [The Writing Rope: A Framework for Evidence-Based Writing Instruction](#)

Learn More: [Reading Universe Timely Talk Video "Teaching Children to Write Well"](#)



The Reading and Writing Connection



There are significant benefits to teaching adolescents reading and writing in a connected way. They are built on the same foundation of oral language and share cognitive processes. Although reading is a receptive use of language and writing a generative use, they are closely aligned and tap into similar knowledge, skills, and strategies.

Too often, curricula address reading and writing instruction separately, taught in different lessons, but students benefit from instruction that integrates the two. Given the overlap in skills and strategies that support both reading comprehension and writing, teaching them together is more efficient and supports content learning.

“Despite the many contributions of science to the study of literacy, I contend that the sciences of reading and writing are too narrowly focused on how to teach either reading or writing and not focused enough on how these two skills can be used to support each other.”

~ Steve Graham, 2020

“Students engage in critical thinking as they use writing to communicate ideas and information, especially when that writing is based on sources. When students write about what they are reading and learning, they are *thinking on paper*. Writing helps them organize, clarify, and understand what they are reading. It also helps them engage with the information by extending their thinking and building relationships between the information and their background knowledge.”

~ Sedita, 2020

LEARN MORE:

[Connecting the Ropes: Integrating Reading & Writing Instruction](#)

[Instructional Suggestions for Writing About Reading](#)

Core Literacy Instruction Grades 5-12

Core literacy instruction refers to the curricula and programs used to teach reading and writing to all students, ensuring they reach literacy levels that meet or exceed grade-level standards. It is described as Tier I instruction in a multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) framework.

In the elementary grades, students are taught all five components of reading along with foundational writing skills. In Grade 5 and beyond, the focus of core instruction shifts to “literacy skills for learning”—the skills required to access and engage with content across all subject areas. These skills include vocabulary development, the use of comprehension strategies, knowledge of text structure, writing skills, and the speaking and listening skills necessary for effective participation in discussions. Often, these skills are taught and applied in combination using content-area texts and practices.



LEARN MORE:

- [Principles of Effective Literacy Instruction](#)
- [Explicit Vocabulary Instruction in Middle and High School](#)
- [Embedding Vocabulary and Comprehension in All Subjects 4-12](#)
- [In Support of Main Idea and Comprehension Strategy Instruction](#)
- [Teaching Text Structure to Support Writing and Comprehension](#)
- [Discussion to Support Learning: Part 1](#) [Part 2](#) [Part 3](#)
- [Text Driven Comprehension and Close Reading Instruction](#)

Key practices for core literacy instruction across all subjects include:

- ✿ Teachers use an explicit approach to teaching literacy skills and strategies, including guided practice with content-area texts.
- ✿ Students are taught the meanings of several new words each day, and teachers preview unfamiliar vocabulary.
- ✿ Students are encouraged to apply strategies to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words (e.g., identifying meaningful word parts or using context clues).
- ✿ Students' background knowledge is built through exposure to high-quality texts and multimedia formats.
- ✿ Students learn and practice comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading.
- ✿ Teachers incorporate text-based discussions and explicitly teach the skills needed for effective participation.
- ✿ Students learn strategies for analyzing texts and develop close reading skills.
- ✿ Teachers teach multiple components of writing and provide guided practice through ongoing opportunities for students to write about what they are reading and learning.
- ✿ Teachers integrate reading and writing instruction across all content areas.
- ✿ Students' literacy abilities are monitored periodically to inform instructional decisions.

Source: Meadows Center, 2016; Sedita, 2026

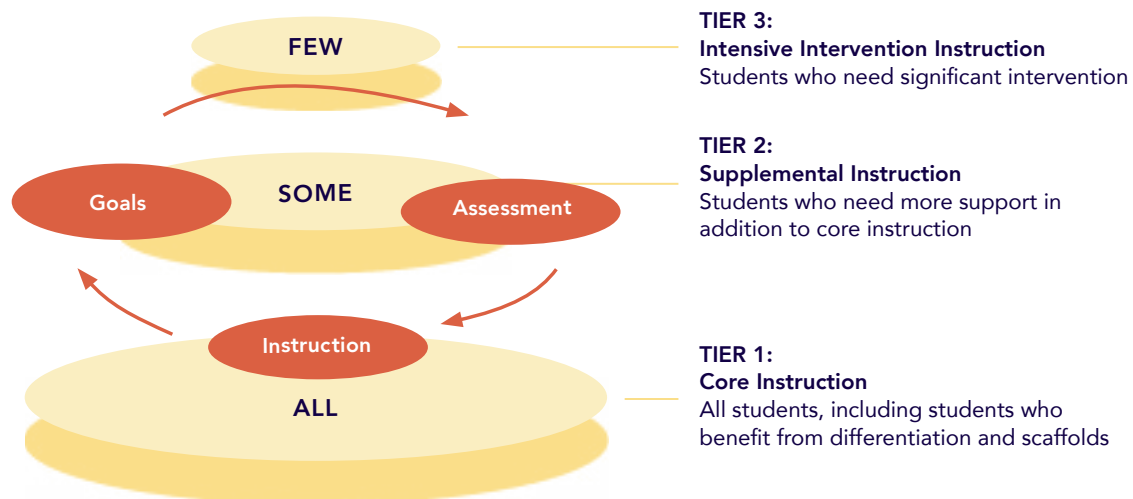


Intervention Support for Struggling Adolescents

There are many reasons why adolescents struggle with literacy skills, and the severity of reading and writing difficulties varies widely across Grade 5-12. A one-size-fits-all approach to intervention is ineffective because there is substantial variation in which components of reading and writing require support.

The goal of intervention instruction is to accelerate literacy development so that students can make meaningful progress toward building grade-level reading and writing skills. Placement in intervention begins with assessment to identify and diagnose students' strengths and areas of need. Interventions may target any component of reading and writing, depending on individual student profiles.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support: Grades 5-12



A multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) is an instructional framework designed to promote literacy achievement by providing varying levels of instructional support. Tier 1 consists of universal instruction delivered to all students in general education classrooms. Tier 2 provides supplemental instruction in addition to Tier 1 for students who are not meeting grade-level literacy expectations. Tier 3 offers more intensive intervention for students who have not responded adequately to Tier 2 support. In middle and high school settings, students who are two or more years below grade-level in reading and writing often require Tier 3 intervention.

Characteristics of Effective Interventions

To achieve the level of progress needed for struggling adolescents to substantially improve their reading and writing skills, intensive intervention is essential. Research has identified the following characteristics of effective interventions (Kamil et al., 2008; Vaughn et al., 2012; Wanzek et al., 2013; Vaughn et al., 2022):

- Smaller instructional group sizes
- Increased intervention time, including greater frequency and duration and longer instructional sessions
- Individualized intervention aligned to each student's specific needs
- Explicit and systematic instruction with opportunities for guided practice and teacher feedback
- Use of evidence-based practices and intervention programs
- Access to grade-level curriculum content to support participation alongside peers
- Extension of intervention instruction into content-area classrooms

"Students who are unable to meet grade-level standards in literacy often require supplemental, intensive, and individualized reading intervention to improve their skills. Such interventions are most often provided by reading specialists or teachers who have undergone thorough training to help them understand the program or approach they will use and to deepen their understanding of adolescent struggling readers."

~ Kamil et al., 2008

LEARN MORE:

- [Reading Intervention for Older Students](#)
- [Matching Students to Interventions](#)
- [Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4-9](#)
- [Multi-Tiered System of Supports for Grades 6-12](#)
- [Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory: Secondary-Level Edition](#)

Reading Assessment, Grades 5-12

Screening and Diagnostic Assessment

Screening and diagnostic assessment for adolescents differs from assessment in the elementary grades. In elementary school, students are learning skills associated with all five components of reading. Screening assessments are therefore used to determine whether students have reached grade-level benchmarks in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Once students reach grade 5 and are able to read and comprehend grade-level texts, it can generally be assumed that they have adequate phonics skills, grade-level fluency and vocabulary knowledge, and foundational comprehension strategies. As a result, reading screening assessments at this level should focus primarily on identifying which students can comprehend text and which cannot.



Students who demonstrate adequate comprehension of grade-level text through screening assessments do not require further evaluation. Students who experience difficulty with reading comprehension, however, should receive additional diagnostic assessments to identify which specific reading components require targeted intervention.

Sedita (2011, 2024) developed the *Reading Assessment Plan for Grades 5-12*, which incorporates both screening and diagnostic assessments. The graphic at right illustrates this assessment plan.

READING ASSESSMENT PLAN FOR GRADES 5-12

Sedita, 2011, 2024

An assessment model for Grades 5-12 is different from elementary assessment.

Step 1

Administer a reading comprehension assessment to determine which students are not able to comprehend grade-level text. If possible, use more than one assessment source (e.g., state reading assessment combined with a norm-referenced reading comprehension subtest). Also consider informal, formative assessment data and input from teachers about students. Students who are not having difficulty benefit from Tier I content literacy instruction in all subjects.

Step 2

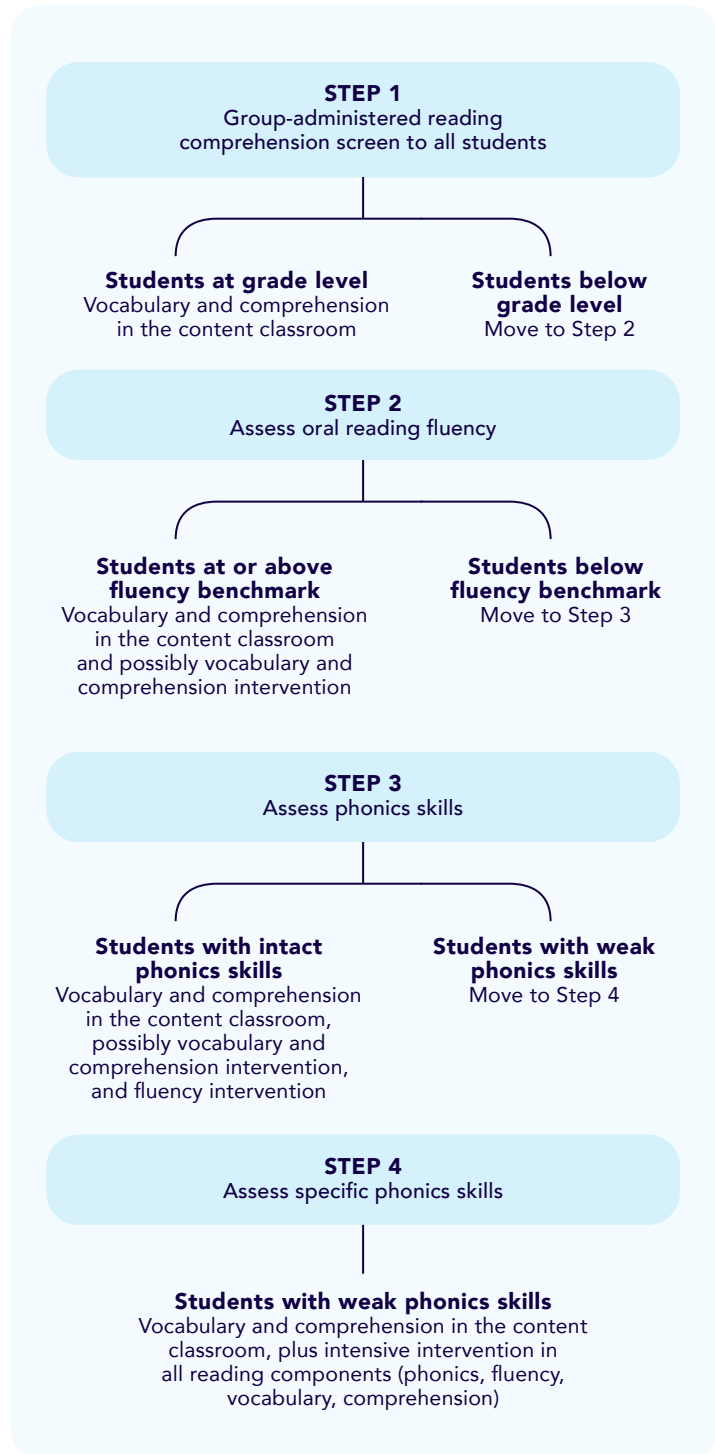
For those students not reading at grade level, assess oral reading fluency. An individual, quick, curriculum-based measurement that measures words correct per minute, or a more formal oral reading assessment can be used. Students who are fluent will most likely benefit from an intervention that focuses on vocabulary and comprehension (in addition to Tier I content literacy instruction).

Step 3

For those students not reading fluently, assess phonics skills. A quick, informal phonics screen can be used. Students who have solid phonics skills will most likely benefit from an intervention that focuses on fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (in addition to Tier I content literacy instruction).

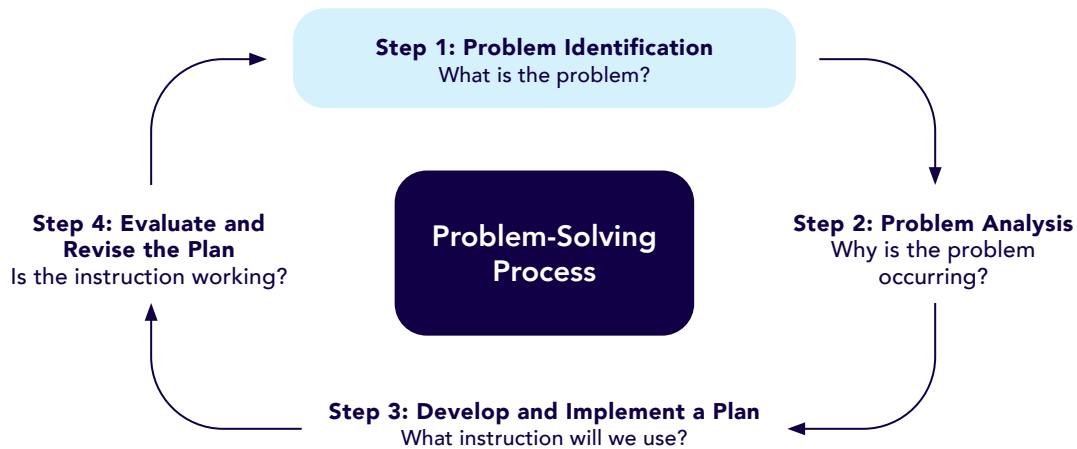
Step 4

Those students who have phonics difficulties will most likely benefit from an intervention that focuses on phonics and advanced word study, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. A quality phonics intervention program will most likely include more in-depth phonics assessments



Progress Monitoring

Once students with reading difficulties have been identified and intervention support is in place, progress monitoring assessments are used throughout the school year to determine whether instruction is effective or whether the instructional plan needs adjustment. A problem-solving process can be used to analyze data from these assessments, as shown in the graphic below.



LEARN MORE:

- [Identifying Student Needs Through Assessment](#)
- [Reading Assessment Model, Grades 5-12](#)
- [Progress Monitoring](#)





Adolescent Literacy Leadership

An effective adolescent literacy initiative starts with strong leadership. Principals, Assistant Principals, and Department Heads are literacy leaders who play a critical role in supporting adolescent literacy achievement. They take the lead in developing long-term literacy plans that address the systems and structures needed to increase literacy achievement for all students, including universal instruction, comprehensive assessment, intervention, data-based decision making, ongoing professional development, and collaborative teams.

Systems, structures, and the science of reading are key ingredients in high-performing schools.



Systems: Strong systems ensure effective collaboration and give teachers the data they need to measure progress and performance.

Structures: Successful schools have structures in place that ensure days are learning-focused and maximize instructional time.

Science of Reading: High-performing schools know and use instructional strategies based on the Science of Reading to achieve exceptionally high outcomes for students.

Literacy leaders support the collaborative implementation of literacy plans, including the school-wide systems and structures. They also are instructional leaders, providing coaching and feedback to teachers about literacy instruction that is based on research and aligned to the school's literacy vision.

"High-quality principals... are vital to the effectiveness of our nation's public schools, especially those serving the children with the fewest advantages in life."

~ Grissom, J. A., Egalite, A. J., & Lindsay, C. A. (2021)

"The reading gains from replacing a below-average principal with an above-average one, would be larger than approximately 50% of the effects on reading achievement of various educational interventions in 747 studies."

~ Kraft, M. A. (2020).

LEARN MORE:

- [NY BOCES Power Hour of Learning: Leaning Into Adolescent Literacy & Leadership](#)
- [The 6 Systems Every School Needs to Improve Literacy Outcomes](#)
- [Middle and High School: School-Wide Literacy Planning](#)
- [Literacy Planning for Grades 4-12](#)



Featured Book Resource:

"It's Possible"

By: Pati Montgomery, Angela Hanlin

Motivating and Engaging Adolescent Learners

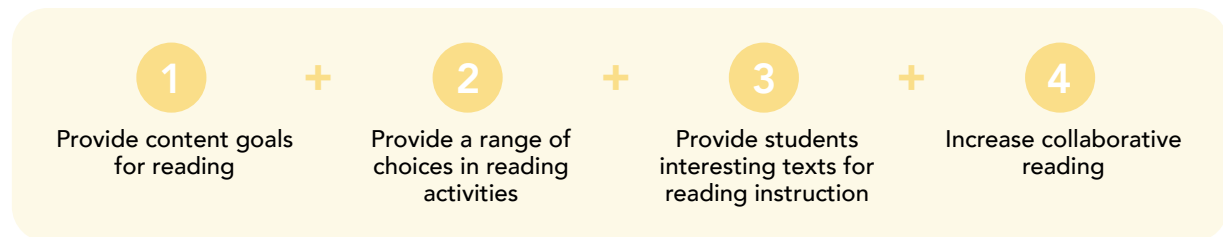
Motivation contributes significantly to reading engagement, and engaged readers tend to enjoy reading and read more often. Motivated adolescent readers are typically self-determined (i.e., they feel a sense of control over their reading), self-regulated (i.e., they recognize whether they are on task and employ strategies to achieve their goals), and actively engaged in the reading process. Multiple factors influence adolescents' motivation, including their beliefs, values, and goals related to school, as well as, for struggling students, the effects of grading and grouping practices.



There is strong evidence that students' motivation and interest in reading school-related texts declines as they transition from elementary to middle school. This decline is particularly pronounced among students who have difficulty learning to read (Ho & Guthrie, 2013; Kamil et al., 2008; Murray et al., 2010). Consequently, identifying ways to motivate and engage students in reading is an essential component of adolescent literacy instruction.



Although the body of research on effective instructional practices for motivating adolescent readers, especially those with reading difficulties, is limited, there is some consensus around four instructional practices that demonstrate significant effect sizes (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Kamil et al., 2008):

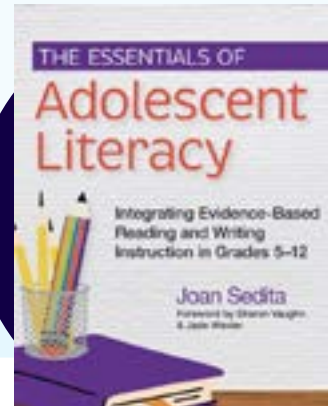


Learn More: [Motivating and Engaging Adolescents to Read](#)

Learn More: [Question 3: Motivation](#)



ADOLESCENT LITERACY: YOUR NEXT STEPS



Learn More from Keys to Literacy:

Course:	Keys to Adolescent Literacy
Book:	Essentials of Adolescent Literacy
Link:	KTL Secondary Literacy Leadership Services
Webinar:	Essentials of Adolescent Literacy - Reading and Writing Instruction in Grades 5-12

Use the links throughout this guide, as well as the those listed below, to access additional resources on adolescent literacy:

- [Georgia Department of Education: EdTalk of Adolescent Literacy by Joan Sedita](#) (coming soon)
- [Ohio Department of Education and Workforce: Grades 6-12 Focus Area](#)
- [Nevada Adolescent Literacy Network, University of Nevada](#)
- [Arizona Department of Education: Secondary Literacy \(Middle and High School\)](#)
- [The Reading League Compass: Adolescent Literacy](#)
- Tools to support school and district adolescent literacy initiatives:
 - [Adolescent Literacy Walk-Through for Principals](#) (Center on Instruction)
 - [Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory: Secondary-Level Edition](#) (Michigan's Multi-Tiered System of Supports)
 - [Self-Study Guide for Implementing Academic Interventions in Grades 3-8](#) (REL Southeast)
 - [Self-Study Guide for Implementing High School Academic Interventions](#) (REL Southeast)

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