

Resources on Adolescent Literacy

This document compiles research reports, organizations, general resources and REL-NEI reference desk responses on adolescent literacy.

Research Reports

Publications on adolescent literacy from the various centers of the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES).

What Works Clearinghouse (WWC)

- **Adolescent Literacy: A Practice Guide**

Prepared by: Michael Kamil (Stanford University), Geoffrey Borman (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Janice Dale (University of Utah), Cathleen Kral (Boston Public Schools), Terry Salinger (American Institutes for Research), and Joseph Torgeson (Florida State University)
http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/adlit_pg_082608.pdf

Publication Date: August 2008

Description: According to the WWC abstract, this guide presents strategies that classroom teachers and specialists can use to increase the reading ability of adolescent students. The recommendations aim to help students gain more from their reading tasks, improve their motivation for and engagement in the learning process, and assist struggling readers who may need intensive and individualized attention.

- **Intervention Report: Adolescent Literacy**

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/Topic.aspx?tid=15>

Publication Date: Various

Description: The WWC offers a range of publications that evaluate adolescent literacy interventions and instructional strategies for students in grades 4-12. These interventions and strategies are intended to increase skills in alphabets, reading fluency, comprehension, and general literacy achievement. Among the interventions evaluated are:

- **Read 180**

http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/adolescent_literacy/read180/

This program is designed for students in elementary through high school whose reading achievement is below the proficient level. The goal of *READ 180* is to address gaps in students' skills through the use of a computer program, literature, and direct instruction in reading skills.

- **SuccessMaker**

http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/adolescent_literacy/successmaker/index.asp

This supplemental reading program uses a set of computer-based courses integrating adaptive lessons to improve phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and concepts of print.

Regional Educational Laboratories

- REL-Northeast & Islands: **A Description of Foundation Skills Interventions for Struggling Middle-Grade Readers in Four Urban Northeast and Islands Region School Districts**

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectId=38&productID=19>

Prepared by: Judith Zorfass and Carole Urbano (EDC).

Publication Date: February 2008

Description: This study describes how four midsize urban school districts in the Northeast and Islands Region were providing foundation skills assessments and programs to struggling middle-grade readers. Researchers found variations, but also some similarities, in the districts' use of tests and programs.

- REL-Northeast & Islands: **Five States' Efforts to Improve Adolescent Literacy**

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?ProjectID=121>

Prepared by: Lauren Bates, Nicole Breslow, and Naomi Hupert (EDC).

Publication Date: April 2009

Description: This report describes efforts by five states—Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, New Jersey, and Rhode Island—to improve adolescent literacy. Highlighting common challenges and lessons, the report examines how each state has engaged key stakeholders, set rigorous goals and standards, aligned resources to support adolescent literacy goals, built educator capacity, and used data to measure progress.

- REL-Central: **Using Strategy Instruction to Help Struggling High Schoolers Understand What They Read**

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?ProjectID=14>

Prepared by Helen Apthorp and Tedra Clark (MCREL).

Publication Date: October 2007

Description: The evidence indicates that peer-assisted learning can have a substantively important positive effect on struggling high school students' reading comprehension. But reservations remain about attributing improved comprehension to peer-assisted learning because the students were not randomly assigned to the intervention in the one study that met evidence standards.

- REL-Southeast: **Evidence-Based Decisionmaking: Assessing Reading Across the Curriculum Interventions**

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?ProjectID=65>

Prepared by Karla Lewis, Wendy McColskey, Kim Anderson, Treana Bowling, Kathleen Dufford-Melendez, and Lucy Wynn (SERVE Center)

Publication Date: June 2007

Description: When selecting reading across the curriculum interventions, educators should consider the extent of the evidence base on intervention effectiveness and the fit with the school or district context, whether they are purchasing a product from vendors or developing it internally. This report provides guidance in the decisionmaking.

- REL-Northeast & Islands: **Impact of the Thinking Reader Software Program on Grade 6 Reading Comprehension, Vocabulary, Strategies, and Motivation**

http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/rct_46.asp

Principal Investigator: Teresa Duncan, American Institutes for Research

Publication Date: In process

Description: The study is a multisite cluster randomized controlled trial that randomly assigned grade 6 teachers to intervention or control groups within schools. A total of 92 teachers in 32 elementary and middle schools in 16 districts in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island were randomly assigned into the study conditions in August and September 2008. From October 2008 to May 2009 intervention classrooms used the school's typical curriculum while also reading three Thinking Reader novels.

- REL-Midwest: **Improving Adolescent Literacy Across the Curriculum in High Schools (Content Literacy Continuum, CLC)**

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectID=34>

Principal Investigator: William Corrin, MDRC

Publication Date: In process

Description: The study is a multisite cluster randomized controlled trial to measure the impact of the Content Literacy Continuum (CLC), a school-wide literacy-across the curriculum program, on secondary teachers' instruction and students' achievement across content areas. The CLC intervention is presented in the form of guidebooks that contain all of the instructional protocols and support materials that are required for teachers to effectively implement the intervention. A team of three to four professional developers works with all administrators and teachers in a high school on a sustained basis (three to five years) to implement comprehensive change in literacy instruction across the curriculum.

- REL-Midwest: **The Effects of the Content Literacy Continuum on Adolescent Students' Reading Comprehension and Academic Achievement**

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectID=244>

Principal Investigator: William Corrin, MDRC

Publication Date: In process

Description: The two-year (2008–10) cluster randomized trial randomly assigned high schools to either implement the CLC framework or to continue with their current literacy approach. The intervention is being phased in beginning with grade 9 in year 1 (2008/09) and adding grade 9 and 10 in year 2 (2009/10). With 33 high schools agreeing to participate, the study has sufficient power to detect effects equivalent to three to nine months of reading growth. The primary outcomes are student reading skills and achievement across core subject areas. Program impact will be assessed using student performance on the Group Reading Assessment Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE) and on achievement tests, course grades, and course-taking patterns. A secondary outcome is increased literacy-focused instruction in the classroom. A classroom observation tool will be used to record reading-related activities to determine whether teachers in intervention schools provide more literacy-focused instruction.

Organizations

- **The Center on Instruction**

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

Provides a collection of scientifically based research and information on K-12 instruction in reading, math, science, special education, and English language learning, including topic-based material, syntheses or recent research, and exemplars of best practices. The Center's website includes a tab specifically focused on reading for grades 4-12.

http://www.centeroninstruction.org/resources.cfm?category=reading&subcategory=&grade_start=4&grade_end=12

- **Doing What Works - Adolescent Literacy**

http://dww.ed.gov/topic/?T_ID=23

Using *Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices* as the foundation for its content, DWW has compiled a number of interviews, case studies, tools and materials aligned with the Practice Guide recommendations. For each recommendation, there is a practice summary, an expert interview, a series of interviews from schools implementing the practice and finally some questions and answers about implementing specific aspects of the practice.

- **National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition & Language Instruction Educational Programs**

[\(http://www.ncele.gwu.edu/\)](http://www.ncele.gwu.edu/)

"The National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition collects, coordinates and conveys a broad range of research and resources in support of an inclusive approach to high quality education for ELLs...In addition to SEA coordinators, NCELA serves other stakeholders involved in ELL education, including teachers and other practitioners, parents, university faculty, administrators and federal policymakers."

- **The National High School Center**

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

This organization identifies research-supported improvement programs and tools, offers user-friendly products, and provides technical assistance services to improve secondary education. Offers research and resources for High School Literacy at the following link:

<http://www.betterhighschools.org/topics/Literacy.asp>

Reference Desk Responses

The following references, organizations, and general resources are from selected responses on adolescent literacy produced by the REL-NEI reference desk. The responses were created following an established REL-NEI Reference Desk research protocol, in which researchers conducted a search for research reports as well as descriptive and policy-oriented briefs and articles in this area. The sources included federally funded organizations, additional research institutions, several educational research databases, and a general Internet search using Google and other search engines. Researchers also searched for appropriate organizations that may act as resources on this issue. We have not done an evaluation of these organizations or the resources themselves, but offer this list for your information only.

1. What are effective strategies for teaching struggling readers in the middle grades/high school?

- **Meeting the Needs of Significantly Struggling Learners in High School: A Look at Approaches to Tiered Intervention**

Duffy, H.; 2008; National High School Center; 14 pages.

Source: Center on Instruction

(<http://www.centeroninstruction.org/files/Meeting%20the%20Needs.pdf>)

This 2007 brief developed by the National High School Center describes issues related to the implementation of RTI at the high school level. It provides an overview of RTI, describes current research on RTI and secondary education, and provides an example, the Long Beach, CA school district, that implemented RTI so successfully at the high school level that they are applying it to their middle schools.

- **Reading to Achieve: A Governor's Guide to Adolescent Literacy**

National Governors Association; 2005; 48 pages.

Source: General internet search using Google

(<http://www.nga.org/portal/site/nga/menuitem.9123e83a1f6786440ddcbeeb501010a0/?vgnextoid=8f09ab8f0caf6010VgnVCM1000001a01010aRCRD>)

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices - Adolescent Literacy Advisory Panel identified five strategies for governors and state leaders to establish a framework and policies to support improvement of adolescent student literacy. This 41-page document provides a description of the work of the Advisory Panel including thorough discussion of each strategy and appendices with additional resources, contacts and examples of how the strategies have been implemented.

- **Academic Literacy Instruction for Adolescents: A Guidance Document from the Center on Instruction**

Torgensen, J.K., Houston, D.D., Rissman, L.M., Decker, S.M., Roberts, G., Vaughn, S., Wexler, J., Francis, D.J., Rivera, M.O., Lesaux, N.; 2007; Center on Instruction; 180 pages

Source: Center on Instruction

(<http://www.centeroninstruction.org/files/Academic%20Literacy.pdf>)

This document, developed by the Center on Instruction's Reading, Special Education and ELL Strands, makes recommendations for improving literacy-related instruction in the content areas or across the entire school day, interventions for students reading below grade level, and recommendations for supporting literacy development in adolescent

English language learners. Also included are comments from experts in response to questions about methods for improving academic literacy in adolescents and examples of state activities in support of improved adolescent literacy in California, Florida, Rhode Island, and Washington.

- **Adolescent Literacy Resources: An Annotated Bibliography**

Center on Instruction; 2009; 25 pages.

Source: Center on Instruction

(<http://www.centeroninstruction.org/files/Annotated%20Biblio%20Second%20Edition%2009.pdf>)

This annotated bibliography, updated from a 2007 edition, is intended as a resource for technical assistance providers as they work with states on adolescent literacy. This revision includes current research and documents of practical use in guiding improvements in grades 4-12 reading instruction in the content areas and in interventions for struggling readers. It is organized into four categories aligned with information provided in adolescent literacy guidance documents previously developed by the Center on Instruction: Policy and Leadership, Assessment for Instruction, Academic Literacy in the Content Areas, and Interventions for Struggling Readers.

- **Interventions for Adolescent Struggling Readers: A Meta-Analysis with Implications for Practice**

Scammacca, N., Roberts, G., Vaughn, S., Edmonds, M., Wexler, J., Reutebuch, C.K., Torgesen, J.K.; 2007; Center on Instruction; 42 pages.

Source: Center on Instruction

(<http://www.centeroninstruction.org/files/COI%20Struggling%20Readers.pdf>)

Results of this meta-analysis provide guidance for intervening with adolescent struggling readers, outlining major implications for practice. The report focuses on interventions designed to improve students' use of reading comprehension strategies. It also considers the impact of interventions that target improved reading vocabulary, accurate decoding of unfamiliar words in text, and increased reading fluency.

- **The Secondary Literacy Instruction and Intervention Guide**

McPeak, L., Trygg, L.; 2007; Stupski Foundation; 63 pages.

Source: General internet search using Google

(http://www.stupski.org/documents/Secondary_Literacy_Instruction_Intervention_Guide.pdf)

This 2007 guide developed by the Stupski Foundation provides an overview of the Content Literacy Continuum (CLC), a replicable district-level model of instruction to meet the differentiated needs of struggling adolescents.

- **Effective Instruction for Adolescent Struggling Readers**

2009; Center on Instruction.

Source: Center on Instruction

(http://www.centeroninstruction.org/resources.cfm?category=reading&grade_start=4&grade_end=12&subcategory=materials#153)

This suite of resources is designed to guide instruction for adolescent struggling readers, particularly secondary interventions within the general education context. Its purpose is to advance the knowledge of technical assistance providers working with state departments of education and local education agencies concerning reading-related issues for students with

reading difficulties and learning disabilities. The collection enhances understanding of selected research-based instructional practices associated with positive effects for adolescent struggling readers and provides a professional development tool to train facilitators on how to implement these research-based practices.

- The meta-analysis (Interventions for Adolescent Struggling Readers: A Meta-Analysis with Implications for Practice) summarizes aspects of recent research on reading instruction for adolescent struggling readers, synthesizing research findings to determine the relative effectiveness of interventions, and outlines the implications of these findings for practice. It focuses on interventions designed to improve students' use of reading comprehension strategies, reading vocabulary, accurate decoding of unfamiliar words in text, and increased reading fluency. It is also listed separately in this section of the website.
- The practice brief (Effective Instruction for Adolescent Struggling Readers: A Practice Brief) takes the meta-analysis a step further and focuses on the implications of this research for educators and decision-makers working in the field. It addresses the five reading components (word study, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and motivation), provides comparisons of successful and struggling readers behaviors, and describes effective school-based instructional practices. This resource is also listed separately in this section of the website.
- Finally, the professional development module includes a PowerPoint presentation and a Facilitator's Guide that explains options for delivering the module in a one-day (appropriate for teachers, administrators, and district or state staff with advanced knowledge of reading in the upper grades) or two-day format (appropriate for those with some or little knowledge of effective reading instruction for adolescents and limited exposure to research in the field), individually or in collaboration with other facilitators.

2. How does gender affect writing in high school students? I am interested in strategies for teaching writing to high school boys.

- **Teaching the Male Brain: How Boys Think, Feel, and Learn in School.**

James, A. N.; March 22, 2007; Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Corwin Press; 285 pp.

Source: General Internet search using Google

Available for purchase at:

<http://www.corwinpress.com/booksProdDesc.nav?prodId=Book228085>

“This practical guide to teaching boys combines classic and cutting-edge research to show you why males learn differently and, more important, how you can differentiate teaching strategies to help them succeed in the classroom.”

On page 200, under the chapter “Content-Specific suggestion”, “boy approach the writing process in a different way than girls. One suggestion is to think about writing as driving the narrative (Thomas, 1997). Car themes appeal to many boys, and they understand that you need a vehicle (the plot), a road map (the outline), and a place to go (the conclusion). Along the way, you need to look at the scenery (tell about the location and what is going on) and perhaps take a detour or two to make the story more interesting. Boys are interested less in character development and more in what happens.”

- **Boys and Writing: Reluctance? Reticence? Or Rebellion?**

Hansen, S.; 2001; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Education Research Work; 24 pages; ERIC Number: ED456449

Source: ERIC

http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/19/30/ca.pdf

“This study investigated gender differences in students' writing self-efficacy beliefs, writing attitudes, writing preferences, and gendered perceptions about writing in the New Zealand School Certificate English classroom (year 11)...The results indicated a gender difference in writing attitudes, with boys reporting a higher level of negative writing satisfaction, and less writing enjoyment in the English classroom. No significant gender differences were reported in students' self-efficacy beliefs or predicted confidence judgments to perform specific writing competencies. No significant gender differences were reported in students' perceptions about writing as an inherently gender-biased activity, and students did not perceive writing to be an inherently feminine or masculine activity. However, they did indicate an awareness of differential outcomes for boys' and girls' writing in the way in which their respective discourses were regarded and valued by others. An examination of qualitative data and frequency of response to individual target questions indicates that students expect the writing of boys and girls to be differentially valued in the English classroom and in School Certificate. Finally, the need to examine if boys' writing dissatisfactions and negative attitudes in English are connected with the way writing elements and activities have been pedagogically and ideologically constructed, is considered.”

On page 8, “Boys and girls reported distinct differences for their first and second preferred writing options. Boys' favorite writing activity was writing a narrative adventure story, and second preference was writing a science fiction/fantasy story. Girls reported that writing a poem was their favorite writing activity, and recalling and writing a childhood memory was their second option.”

- **Misreading Masculinity: Speculations on the Great Gender Gap in Writing.**

Thomas, N.; March 2002; Language Arts, Volume 77, Number 4, Page 294-300; ERIC #: EJ603233.

Source: ERIC

<http://www.eric.ed.gov/>; abstract only available

<http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Journals/LA/0774march00/LA0774Misreading.pdf>

Note: This resource requires a registration to access.

This paper “summarizes research on gender differences in writing, and challenges readers to reconsider how these are understood. It argues that “rather than seeing these differences as deficits, the cultural materials boys bring to the classroom should be acknowledged and engaged.”

On page 295, “In a study of first-year college students, women wrote autobiographical essays that were judged better than those of their male counterparts (Peterson, 1991). In analyzing the differences, she found that males tended to write about times when they acted individually, often in physical challenge that built confidence. Women tended to write about a crisis in a relationship (boyfriend, family, or an encounter with culturally different persons). In

terms of writing qualities, males showed no deficit at rendering detail; their lower scores were due to a perceived difficulty in rendering “significance,” in the capacity to reflect on the meaning of the experience.”

On the same page, “Boys’ preferences in reading and writing narratives are more closely aligned with visually mediated storytelling—film, TV, video games, computer graphics. They also rank humor higher than girls do. Millard (1997) suggests that the traditional literature based curriculum may ignore the more visually mediated narratives that boys prefer.”

- **Gender Differences in Writing Motivation and Achievement of Middle School Students: A Function of Gender Orientation?**

Pajares, F. & Valiante, G.; July 2001; Contemporary Educational Psychology, Volume 26, Issue 3, Page 366-381.

Source: General Internet search using Google

Note: This resource requires a registration to access.

(http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=MIimg&_imagekey=B6WD1-45BBWMN-J-1&_cdi=6753&_user=145269&_orig=search&_coverDate=07%2F31%2F2001&_sk=999739996&_view=c&_wchp=dGLzVlz-zSkWA&_md5=e21b8d9fe57914a7b47fd56055c579dc&_ie=/sdarticle.pdf)

“The aim of this study was to determine whether gender differences in the writing motivation and achievement of middle school students ($N = 497$) are a function of gender-stereotypic beliefs rather than of gender. Girls reported stronger writing self-efficacy, writing self-concept, self-efficacy for self-regulation, value of writing, and task goals, and they received higher grades in language arts. Boys reported stronger performance-approach goals. All gender differences favoring girls in writing motivation and achievement were rendered nonsignificant when feminine orientation beliefs were controlled. Findings suggest that a feminine orientation is adaptive in the area of writing, whereas a masculine orientation is beneficial when escorted by a feminine orientation.”

- **Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve Writing of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools—a Report to the Carnegie Corporation of New York.**

Graham, S., & Perin, D.; 2007; Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education; 77 pages.

Source: The National High School Center

(<http://www.all4ed.org/files/WritingNext.pdf>)

On page 12, “This report identifies 11 elements of current writing instruction found to be effective for helping adolescent students learn to write well and to use writing as a tool for learning. It is important to note that all of the elements are supported by rigorous research, but that even when used together, they do not constitute a full writing curriculum.

- **Best Practices for Teaching Writing: What Award-Winning Classroom Teachers Do.**

Stone, R.; March 2008; Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Corwin Press; 99 pages.

Source: General Internet search using Google

(<http://www.corwinpress.com/booksProdDesc.nav?prodId=Book228085>)

“Linked to companion volumes for teaching mathematics and science, and presenting insightful methods for building student comprehension and confidence, this book:

- Models techniques for improving achievement in literacy, vocabulary, student writing, and language arts

- Demonstrates turning a classroom into a reading and writing oasis, teaching students to blend descriptive and narrative writing, and helping learners create persuasive cover letters
- Illustrates techniques that utilize annotated bibliographies, "Punny Valentines," "Five Circles/Five Paragraphs," and much more
- Packed with creative ideas and lessons that produce results, this resource will be used again and again by new and veteran teachers to expand their instructional repertoires and enrich students' writing experiences."