

# Literacy in the Middle Grades

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## RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS AND MIDDLE-LEVEL LITERACY PROVIDERS

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### **From the U.S. Department of Education**

(current as of: Nov. 17, 2008)

[www.ed.gov/programs/strivingreaders/resources.html](http://www.ed.gov/programs/strivingreaders/resources.html)

The Institute of Education Sciences, What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) provides resources on identifying, implementing, and evaluating research-based education programs, including:

Identifying and Implementing Educational Practices Supported by Rigorous Evidence: A User Friendly Guide (December 2003)

*The following Web sites include research, reports, articles, and information on reading and adolescent literacy:*

### **Adolescent Literacy Research Network**

[www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/hs/adollit.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/hs/adollit.html)

A partnership between the U.S. Department of Education and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development provides funding for multidisciplinary research projects and the development of an Adolescent Literacy Research Network. The research examines cognitive, perceptual, behavioral, and other mechanisms that influence the development of reading and writing abilities during adolescence, as well as the extent to which interventions may narrow or close literacy gaps for adolescents.

### **The Partnership for Reading**

[www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/](http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/)

The Partnership for Reading is a national reading research dissemination project authorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

The Partnership for Reading’s mission is to make scientifically based reading research more accessible to educators, parents, policymakers, and other interested individuals. The National Institute for Literacy is responsible for carrying out this effort.

### **National Institute for Literacy**

[www.nifl.gov/](http://www.nifl.gov/)

The National Institute for Literacy’s activities to strengthen literacy are authorized under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act in the Workforce Investment Act and the No Child Left Behind Act. The AEFLA directs the institute to provide national leadership regarding literacy, coordinate literacy services and policy, and serve as a national resource for adult education and literacy programs. The NCLB law directs the institute to disseminate information on scientifically based reading research pertaining to children, youth, and adults as well as information about development and implementation of classroom reading programs based on the research.

### **National Assessment of Educational Progress**

<http://www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>

Often called “The Nation’s Report Card,” the National Assessment of Educational Progress is the only nationally representative, continuing assessment of what America’s students know and can do in various subject areas, including reading. As a congressionally mandated project of the National Center for Education Statistics within the U.S. Department

of Education, NAEP provides a comprehensive measure of students’ learning at critical junctures in their school experience.

### **Alliance for Excellent Education**

[www.all4ed.org/](http://www.all4ed.org/)

The Alliance for Excellent Education is a national policy, research and advocacy organization acting on behalf of at-risk, low-performing secondary school students. The Alliance’s Adolescent Literacy Initiative Web site includes news articles, research reports, and other recent information on adolescent literacy. The Alliance’s Reading Next Report outlines a vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy.

### **National Governors Association**

[www.nga.org/portal/site/nga/menuitem.b14a675ba7f89cf9e8ebb856a11010a0](http://www.nga.org/portal/site/nga/menuitem.b14a675ba7f89cf9e8ebb856a11010a0)

The National Governors Association’s *Reading to Achieve: A Governor’s Guide to Adolescent Literacy Report* (2005) examines the literacy crisis facing America. The guide highlights several state-based programs to improve reading achievement, raise high school graduation rates, increase the value of the high school diploma, and close the achievement gap.

### **National Association of State Boards of Education**

[www.nasbe.org/](http://www.nasbe.org/)

NASBE’s *Reading at Risk: How States Can Respond to the Crisis in Adolescent Literacy* (2006) provides ideas and strategies to help states develop more effective and comprehensive adolescent-literacy policies.

## **Lists of Favorite Books for Children**

Since 1989, the Teachers’ Choices project of the International Reading Association has developed an annual annotated reading list of new books that will encourage young people to read. These are books that kids will enjoy and that contribute to learning across the curriculum. The reading list is available at [www.reading.org/resources/tools/choices\\_teachers.html](http://www.reading.org/resources/tools/choices_teachers.html)

## **Children’s Choices List of Titles**

This is a booklist with a twist! Children themselves evaluate the books, and provide reviews of their favorites. Since 1974, Children’s Choices have been a trusted source of book recommendations used by teachers, librarians, parents — and children themselves.

[www.reading.org/resources/tools/choices\\_childrens.html](http://www.reading.org/resources/tools/choices_childrens.html)

## Resources

### National Association of Secondary School Principals

[www.principals.org/s\\_nassp/index.asp?CID=1138&DID=54609](http://www.principals.org/s_nassp/index.asp?CID=1138&DID=54609)

NASSP's report, *Creating a Culture of Literacy: A Guide for Middle and High School Principals* (2005), is designed to help school leaders use research on best literacy practices to create a well-defined intervention plan that will improve the literacy and long-range academic success of students.

### New York State Education Department

[www.nysed.gov](http://www.nysed.gov)

*READING NEXT: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy*

Reading Next is a cutting-edge report to the Carnegie Corporation of New York and published by the Alliance for Excellent Education. It combines the best research currently available with well-crafted strategies for turning that research into practice. Reading Next charts an immediate route to improving adolescent literacy, including suggestions for instructional and infrastructure improvements.

The authors outline 15 key elements of an effective literacy intervention, and call on public and private stakeholders to invest in the literacy of middle level and high school students today, while simultaneously building the knowledge base. To read the full Carnegie report, please visit [www.carnegie.org/literacy/why.html?gclid=C7forqzFw5cCFQt4Hgod41e5TQ](http://www.carnegie.org/literacy/why.html?gclid=C7forqzFw5cCFQt4Hgod41e5TQ)  
Or [www.all4ed.org/publications/ReadingNext/](http://www.all4ed.org/publications/ReadingNext/)

### WRITING NEXT Report

The Alliance for Excellent Education has published a new report, *Writing Next*, that “trumpets writing as an important component to literacy instruction ... a predictor of academic success ... and a basic requirement for participation in civic life and the global economy.” The report includes an analysis of Eleven Elements of Effective Adolescent Writing Instruction, including writing strategies, summarization, collaborative writing, inquiry activities, specific product goals, prewriting, process writing approach, and writing for content learning. The full report is available at [www.all4ed.org/publications/WritingNext/index.html](http://www.all4ed.org/publications/WritingNext/index.html)

## UNION RESOURCES

### American Federation of Teachers

[www.aft.org/topics/reading/index.htm](http://www.aft.org/topics/reading/index.htm)

*Where We Stand: K-12 Literacy AFT Resolution 2007*

### National Education Association

NEA Resources

[www.nea.org/reading/index.html](http://www.nea.org/reading/index.html)

Search middle level literacy  
[www.nea.org/app/search/performSearch.do](http://www.nea.org/app/search/performSearch.do)

Search adolescent literacy  
[www.nea.org/app/search/performSearch.do](http://www.nea.org/app/search/performSearch.do)

## **U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

### **National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance**

#### **Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices August 2008**

This report is in the public domain. While permission to reprint this publication is not necessary, the citation should be: Kamil, M. L., Borman, G. D., Dole, J., Kral, C. C., Salinger, T., and Torgesen, J. (2008).

*Improving adolescent literacy: Effective classroom and intervention practices: A Practice Guide* (NCEE #2008-4027). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from [www.ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc](http://www.ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc).

This report is available on the IES Web site at [www.ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc](http://www.ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc).

This practice guide provides five recommendations for increasing the reading ability of adolescents. The first three recommendations are strategies that classroom teachers can incorporate into their instruction to help students gain more from their reading tasks in content-area classes. The fourth recommendation offers teachers strategies for

improving students' motivation for and engagement with learning. Together, the recommendations offer a coherent statement: specific strategies are available for classroom teachers and specialists to address the literacy needs of all adolescent learners. The fifth recommendation refers specifically to adolescent struggling readers, those students whose poor literacy skills weaken their ability to make sense of written material. Although not an exhaustive list, the recommendations are representative of panel members' thinking about methods that have the strongest research support and those that are appropriate for use with adolescents. The first four recommendations can be implemented easily by classroom teachers within their regular instruction, regardless of the content areas they teach.

Recommendations for teaching students about the discourse patterns of specific subjects that adolescents study (for example, different ways of presenting information, creating arguments, or evaluating evidence in science compared with history) are not included in this guide because the formal evidence base for these methods is not yet sufficiently developed. The fifth recommendation refers to reading interventions that in many cases must be provided by reading specialists or specially trained teachers.

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## Resources

In offering these recommendations, we remind the reader that adolescent literacy is complex. There are many reasons why adolescents have difficulty making sense of texts, and there are many manifestations of these difficulties. Addressing students' needs often requires coordinated efforts from teachers and specialists. Readers should also note that appropriate professional development in reading has been shown to produce higher achievement in students. Providing professional development to content-area teachers focused on instructional techniques they can use to meet the literacy needs of all their students, including those who struggle, is highly recommended in this practice guide. Professional development also needs to address the specific literacy demands of different disciplines. One attempt at specifying these demands describes specific skills in mathematics, science, social studies, and English. Focusing on these skills would be an ideal starting point for professional development for content-area teachers who want to incorporate elements of literacy instruction in their content area instruction.

### **Recommendation 1.**

Provide explicit vocabulary instruction.

### **Recommendation 2.**

Provide direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction.

### **Recommendation 3.**

Provide opportunities for extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation.

### **Recommendation 4.**

Increase student motivation and engagement in literacy learning.

### **Recommendation 5.**

Make available intensive and individualized interventions