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Teaching Adolescents to Read & How to Teach Reading in Middle & High School

"What reading programs and/or strategies do you recommend for high school students who are reading at 3rd grade level?"

Reid Lyon Answers

You asked a critical question that is on the minds of many teachers and parents. Learning to read at age 6 or age 16 requires that students master all fundamental building blocks critical to reading comprehension.

Fluency

Students must be able to access print off the page accurately and rapidly so they do not get bogged down in the print and forget what they read (fluency) or get discouraged.

Vocabulary

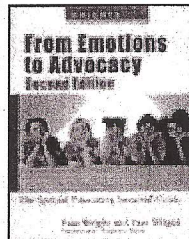
We have to make sure that our older students (as well as our younger ones) **develop the necessary vocabulary** so they can relate what they read to what they know. You and I can read the words in Einstein's theory of relativity, but we may not understand the meanings of these words. Our kids must develop background knowledge and world knowledge when they try to negotiate content because so much information goes beyond just knowing what the words mean.

Comprehension

Finally, older students with reading difficulties sometimes focus on one aspect of the reading

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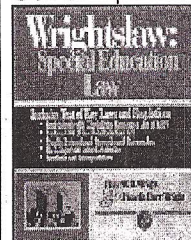
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process (e.g., word recognition) and forget that the **goal is that they understand what they read**. We have to teach them comprehension strategies and make sure they learn how to actively organize what they read and relate it to what they know in a systematic fashion.

At the NICHD, we are in our second year of research on adolescent literacy. Teaching older kids to read is very complex, particularly since their motivation has often waned after years of reading failure.

Some instructional programs show promise for older kids. Jane Fell Greene's [LANGUAGE program](#) integrates word level instruction with higher level language instruction to develop semantic and syntactical abilities and comprehension activities.

Take a look at Sally Shaywitz's book, [Overcoming Dyslexia: A New and Complete Science-Based Program for Overcoming Reading Problems at Any Level](#) for more suggestions.

Teaching Reading in Middle School & High School

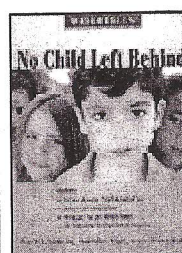
"How do we transfer the enthusiasm & focus that exists in elementary school reading programs to middle school and high school?"

Reid Lyon Answers. Teaching reading in middle and high school requires the same knowledge and skill that is required to teach kids in elementary school.

We have to make sure that ALL teachers are READING TEACHERS.

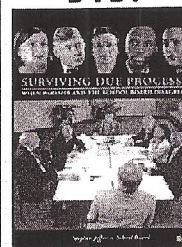
Teachers need to understand that learning content is related to reading words accurately and fluently, having the necessary vocabulary to comprehend, and having the necessary critical thinking skills to understand content information at higher levels of complexity.

Teacher preparation and ongoing professional development for teachers is essential. All teachers must be prepared to close gaps in vocabulary and critical thinking skills at all levels.



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Resources

When Older Students Can't Read by Louisa C. Moats, Ed.D. Students and educators become frustrated when students beyond 3rd grade have reading difficulties. This article describes the principles of research based instruction to close the gap between poor readers and their grade-level peers.

Reading Disabilities: Why Do Some Children Have Difficulty Learning to Read? What Can Be Done About It? by G. Reid Lyon, Ph.D.

Database of Evidence-Based Research on Reading Instruction - Research has identified the instructional techniques that lead to observable, replicable, positive results as children become fluent, motivated readers. This searchable database from the Partnership for Reading is an initiative of the National Institute for Literacy, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and the U.S. Department of Education.

Recommended Books: Research-Based Reading Instruction

We asked attorneys, educators, evaluators, and advocates to recommend their favorite books for our Advocacy Bookstore. Here are some recommended books about reading, dyslexia and learning disabilities:

Straight Talk About Reading: How Parents Can Make a Difference During the Early Years by Susan Hall, Louisa Moats, and Reid Lyon

Parenting a Struggling Reader by Susan Hall and Louisa Moats

Overcoming Dyslexia: A New and Complete Science-Based Program for Overcoming Reading Problems at Any Level by Sally Shaywitz, MD

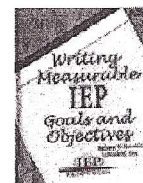
Speech to Print: Language Essentials for Teachers by Louisa Cook Moats

Dyslexia: Theory & Practice of

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Remedial Instruction by Diana
Brewster Clark and Johanna Kellogg
Uhry

The Dyslexic Scholar by Kathleen
Nosek.

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