Adolescent Literacy: Issues and Opportunities

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Presented by
Students of
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Critical Issues Surrounding the Neglect of Adolescent Literacy

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The Keys to Literacy Success

Motivation
• Cluster of personal goals, values and beliefs an individual possess regarding reading (Guthrie and Wigfield, 2000)
• An underlying factor that leads students to read or not
• One of THE determiners of adolescent literacy success

Engagement
• Increased by strategy instruction, choice, and diverse text
• Engaged students are more motivated to read outside of class and when the reading includes multiple literacies (Alverman et al., 2002)
Fluency

- The ability to read quickly, accurately and with appropriate expression
- NAEP found 44% of 4th graders to be non-fluent readers (Pinnell et al., 1995)
- 1 out of every 10 adolescents has serious difficulties in identifying words (Curtis and Longo, 1999)
- NRP reports 2 effective interventions in fluency
  - Repeated reading
  - Guided reading practice
- Good comprehenders are good readers (RAND, 2002)
Comprehension

- NAEP reports 8\textsuperscript{th} and 12\textsuperscript{th} grade students are unable to perform higher order learning tasks after reading (Kamil, 2002)
- Reading scores of high school students have NOT improved over the last 30 years
- ¼ of adolescents cannot read well enough to identify the main idea
- It is often assumed that students who are at risk have prior knowledge deficits- different is not a deficit
- Students can decode without comprehending
- Strategies need to be taught explicitly and modeled across all content areas
- Research supports vocabulary development and discussion based approaches
Vocabulary

• Good readers read approximately 1 million words per year (Nagy and Anderson, 1984)

• Students from a low SES background are exposed to 1/3 - 1/2 less words than students from a high SES background (Hart and Risley, 1995)

• Increase vocabulary through
  – Repetition
  – Restructuring tasks
  – Active engagement
English Language Learners

- Poor vocabulary in L2 can negatively impact test performance (Garcia, 1991)
- A link has been found between oral storytelling and reading comprehension in adolescent Latinos (Goldstein et al., 1993)
- L1 does not directly effect reading comprehension in L2 (Hanson, 1989; Kennedy and Park 1994, Buriel and Cardoza, 1988)
- Teaching English reading comprehension strategies in L1 improves comprehension in English (Hernandez, 1991)
Critical Thinking

- Students CAN be taught to think about their own thinking- Metacognition

- Many 8-12 grade students do not have the capacity to perform the higher order cognitive work for deep learning of content through reading
Technology

• Significant increases in standardized reading comprehension are found when using computer assisted instruction (Weller, Carpenter and Holmes, 1998)

• Technology instruction must include a reading component in order to be effective in increasing literacy achievement among adolescents (Kinzer and Loofbourow, 1989)

• The opportunity to collaborate through technology centered instruction increases motivation
Assessment

- Essential to teaching
- Many forms—formal, informal and ongoing formative
- Provides insights into student learning
  (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995)
- Fewer than 5% in NAEP assessed could expand or elaborate
Teacher Professional Development

- Should be incorporated into the regular school schedule
- The most promising form is literacy coaching
- Must involve a commitment of all stakeholders
- Must be high quality and need driven
- Targeted areas should be comprehension, motivation and critical thinking
Teacher Quality

- Many content area teachers describe themselves as not prepared to teach literacy (Phillips, 2002)
- Academic achievement are higher for students taught by quality teachers (US Department of Education, 2003)
- Need time to implement professional in the classroom to evaluate effectiveness and continue to improve quality
Funds

• Research indicates that every $500 directed towards professional development results in greater student gains on the SAT (Greenwald et al., 1996)

• The adolescent literacy initiative does not allot money for middle or high school (Joftus, 2002)
Background to IRA’s Position Statement on Adolescent Literacy

• Most literacy attention has been focused on the elementary level.

• The IRA position statement says more focus on adolescent literacy is needed at the middle and high school level to prepare our students for the future.

• They are calling on administration, governmental leaders, parents, and teachers to make necessary changes to support adolescent readers.
To what kinds of literacy should adolescents be exposed?
Adolescents need:

• **Access**
  – to a wide variety of reading material that they *can* and *want* to read.

• **Support**
  • Give them time to read
  • Give them choice in material
  • Support them with conversations and real world connections
Strategies Adolescents Need

• Synthesize information
• Identify key vocabulary
• Evaluate author’s ideas
• Examine text structure
Good adolescent assessments should

• Be an extension of the regular classroom
• Provide feedback
• Guide instruction
• Showcase mastery of objective
• Allow collaboration between teachers and students
Expert Teachers Need To

• Help students get to the next level of strategy development
• Model their thinking process
• Gradually release responsibility to the students
Literacy Specialists are Key

- They provide a link from literacy to the students’ life, and they assure continued growth in literacy.
- Plus most middle school teachers need additional support teaching reading in the content areas.
What is the best way to engage diverse learners in the literacy classroom?

- Promoting respect and the free exchange of ideas among peers
- Providing individualized instruction
- Avoid use of a one-size-fits-all approach
What else do adolescents need?

• Adolescents need family and community support.
• Schools that do not exist as an island.
• A community that is supportive and encourages students to take the necessary risks to grow.
• Effective programs
Key Elements of Effective Adolescent Literacy Programs

Angela Salgado
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Beth Waufle
Gaile Dry-Burton
Instructional Elements:
Direct, Explicit Comprehension Instruction

• Possible instructional approaches include:
  – Comprehension strategies instruction
  – Comprehension monitoring and metacognition instruction
  – Teacher modeling
  – Scaffolding instruction
  – Apprenticeship models
Effective Instructional Principles Embedded in Content

- Language arts teachers should use content-area texts.
- Content-area teachers should provide instruction in reading and writing skills specific to their subject area.
Motivation and Self-Directed Learning

• Student choice of reading materials and topics based on interests
• Ensure that topics are relevant to students’ lives
Text-Based Collaborative Learning

• Students work in small groups to discuss a topic.
• Discussion helps keep students engaged in the reading.
• Should be implemented not only in language arts classes, but also in content area courses.
Strategic Tutoring

• Intense, individualized instruction
• Could be used for decoding and fluency
• Could also be used for short term focused help
• Goal is to empower students to complete tasks independently in the future.
• “If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach a man to fish, you feed him for life.”
Diverse Text

• Multiple ability levels (critical for increasing reading skills of struggling readers, in addition to the engagement of all students)
• Connect to students’ background experiences
Intensive Writing

• Writing instruction also improves reading comprehension.

• Skills such as grammar and spelling reinforce reading skills. However, traditional explicit grammar instruction is *not* effective and may be harmful to writing development.
Technology Component

• Tool to help struggling readers (instructional reinforcement and opportunities for guided practice)

• “As a topic, technology is changing the reading and writing demands of modern society” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).
Ongoing Formative Assessment of Students

• Should inform instruction to determine effective practice

• Should occur on a frequent basis so teachers can make adjustments to ensure that students reach mastery targets
Infrastructure Elements

• Extended Time for Literacy
• Professional Development
• Ongoing Summative Assessment of Students and Programs
• Teacher Teams
• Leadership
• A Comprehensive and Coordinated Literacy Program
“No single intervention or program will ever meet the needs of all struggling readers and writers” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).
Literacy Coaches in Secondary Schools

Erin Donovan
Adriana L. Medina, PhD
Job Description: What is a Secondary Literacy Coach?

– Specialist Degree
– Master Teacher
– Leader
– Academic Strategy Guide
– Supervisor
– Liaison
– Regarded as expert teacher
– Collaborator
– Literacy Strategy Expert
– Model
– Advocate
Pathways to Employment

• Education
  – University and college
    • Masters or Certificate Programs with an emphasis on secondary school literacy coaching
  – State or Regional Licensing Center
  – Accreditation Agency
Program Goals

– Multi-layered partnerships
– High quality, seasoned teachers
– Teacher retention process
– High quality, standards-based curriculum
– Research, assessment, and evaluation cycle
– Bridge between content and literacy

– Long-Term Goal: Lasting School Change
Examples

– State-wide
  • The Alabama Reading Initiative

– District-wide
  • Stafford County Public Schools, Virginia
  • Boston Public Schools
  • Chicago High Schools

– Center
  • Reading Success Network, Southern California
“It will take approximately 10,000 literacy coaches to help the 9 million 4\textsuperscript{th} - 12\textsuperscript{th} graders who struggle with reading” (Sturtevant, 2003).
Send Questions and Comments to:
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