

## Secondary Struggling Readers

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## The Voices of Secondary Struggling Readers:

*“They always raise their hands to read. They are able to pronounce the words and answer the teacher’s questions about the reading assignments. Poor readers are like me. I tell the teacher I don’t want to read because I feel embarrassed and think that they’ll laugh at me too.”*

McCray, Vaughn, & Neal , 2001

## The Voices of Secondary Struggling Readers:

*“I’m not that good at reading. It takes me a while and when I am reading a book, it takes me more than six times and then I still forget what I’ve read. It’s very hard to keep focused and remember where I was. Even when I remember, I read so slow that I never finish my work. There are still lost of words I cannot pronounce. I can’t remember how to sound out the words.”*

McCray, Vaughn, & Neal , 2001

## Overview

- How are secondary readers doing?
- Causes of reading difficulties
- Characteristics of secondary struggling readers
- *WHAT* to teach
- *HOW* to teach
- School-wide model

## The Larger Context

- Only 32% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders are proficient readers (NCSE, 2003)
- Nationally, 21-23% of all adults “demonstrated skills in the lowest level of proficiency” (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education)
- More than 8 million students in grades 4-12 are struggling readers (U.S. DOE, 2003)
- Every school day, more than 3,000 students drop out of high school (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003)

## “Just the Facts Mam”

- 25% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders Below Basics in reading
- 26% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders Below Basics in reading
- 2002 International Comparisons place American 11<sup>th</sup> graders very close to the bottom in reading
- 8.7 million 4<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders are unable to read and comprehend textbooks

## “Just the Facts Mam” cont.

- Annual salary expectations?
  - High school dropout - \$19,000
  - High school graduate - \$26,500
  - Associate’s degree - \$33,400
  - Bachelor’s degree - \$42,200
  - Master’s degree - \$52,300

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce

## The Larger Context

- Only 70% of high school students graduate on time with a regular diploma, and fewer than 60% of African-American and Hispanic students do so (Greene, 2002)
- High school students in the lowest 25% of their class are 20 times more likely to drop out than the highest-performing students (Carnevale, 2001)
- Approximately 53% of high school graduates enroll in remedial courses in postsecondary education (NCES, 2001)

## Causes of Poor Reading

Students may

- ❑ have a learning disability such as dyslexia
- ❑ have entered school with very poor preparation for learning to read
- ❑ not have valued literacy
- ❑ have attended school sporadically
- ❑ have generally low learning ability

AND

have received *insufficiently powerful instruction*—  
gotten off to a very poor start and never recovered

## As “Every Child a Graduate” Notes

- ❑ “Research shows...that students who receive intensive, focused literacy instruction and tutoring will graduate from high school and attend college in significantly greater numbers than those not receiving such attention.”
- ❑ Is this happening in your school?

## Characteristics of Older Struggling Readers

Percentile Rank	Number of Words Read In and Out of School in One Year
10 <sup>th</sup>	60,000
50 <sup>th</sup>	900,000
90 <sup>th</sup>	4.1 million
98 <sup>th</sup>	9 million

*During the 5<sup>th</sup> grade year, the average student (50<sup>th</sup> percentile) gets about 15 times as much reading practice as the student reading at the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile!*

Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998

## Characteristics of Older Struggling Readers

Many of the poor and minority students who currently perform below the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile in reading skills entered school with academic vocabularies already only half the size of their middle-class counterparts.

Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002.

## Characteristics of Older Struggling Readers

Struggling readers have fewer opportunities to acquire the kinds of active reading comprehension strategies that become increasingly important as text becomes longer and more complex after third grade.

Torgesen, 2005

Older struggling readers performing at different reading levels will require different types of instruction

Torgesen, 2005

## Our Lowest Performing Readers

- ❑ Cannot decode novel words accurately because they have weak phonics skills, and cannot read fluently because their “sight vocabulary” is restricted.
- ❑ Have relatively weak vocabularies because they have not been able to read widely during previous school years (broad knowledge deficits)
- ❑ Have not practiced comprehension strategies because of limited reading experience, and because of their struggle with words
- ❑ May have given up on the idea of ever becoming a good reader

## Mid Level Readers (two or more grades behind)

- ❑ Can usually “sound out” short novel words with reasonable accuracy--frequently stumble on multi-syllable words
- ❑ Are relatively dysfluent because they have not had enough reading practice
- ❑ Vocabularies are relatively weak because of lack of broad/deep reading
- ❑ Comprehension strategies are inadequate because of lack of instruction and practice
- ❑ Often say they “don’t like to read” because reading is still relatively difficult for them

## **Below Grade Level (less than two grades behind)**

- Often have a somewhat restricted sight vocabulary which leads to mild lack of fluency in reading
- Often fail to apply active comprehension strategies during reading. Haven't learned to monitor their comprehension or engage in productive thinking while reading.

Torgesen, 2004

## **WHAT should we teach older struggling readers?**

### **What must we teach students if we want them to become good readers?**

1. The knowledge and skills required to read unknown words in text
2. How to accurately recognize many thousands of words "at a single glance"
3. How to understand the meanings of the words they will be encountering in their reading material
4. How to "think about meaning" as they are reading the words, so they can comprehend

### **Do adolescents really need to learn to read in the same way that young children do?**

*Our best answer to the question at present is:*

**YES**

**Do we need to teach phonemic awareness as an oral language skill to adolescents to prepare them for “phonics”?**

**Probably Not**

**What are some of the Big Ideas from research on adolescent literacy?**

1. Word attack and recognition plateau at about the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade level for many
2. Comprehension plateaus at about the 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade level for many more
3. Attention to vocabulary and background knowledge is needed
4. Students must be able to use literacy to solve problems and meet demands across settings if they are to become motivated to develop literacy skills

**What are the most serious challenges faced by adolescents who have not yet acquired good reading skills?**

1. Difficulties decoding
2. Slow and labored reading
3. Lack of background knowledge and limited vocabulary

**Reading with Accuracy**

- If they are extremely weak in phonics, we need to identify what they don't know and teach it to them
- If they have 3<sup>rd</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> grade skills, we need to teach them how to attack multisyllable words and apply word analysis in context

## What Teachers Can Do

- 📖 **Word analysis** skills: Instruction in morphemic analysis, word relationships, and word origins to make the connection between decoding and comprehension
- 📖 **Word recognition** skills: Instruction in orthographic processing (letter patterns in words and corresponding sound units)

## What Teachers Can Do: Word Analysis

- 📖 Teach students to identify affixes, what they mean, and how to interpret the meaning of words that use common affixes. (Ex. re, un, ly, ment...)
- 📖 Teach students to look for words they know within larger words. (ex. re-submit)

## What Teachers Can Do: Word Recognition

- 📖 Teach the syllable types (consonant-vowel-consonant, consonant-vowel, vowel-consonant-*e*, *r*-controlled, double vowel, and consonant-*le*) to decode words.
- 📖 Ex: lo-cate: open and closed syllable

## What Teachers Can Do

- 📖 Practice, practice, practice: Provide continuous and extensive opportunities to read target words in connected text

## Reading with Fluency

*Learning to read lots of words "at a single glance"  
= automaticity*

- ☒ Focused practice with words from the 1,000 most frequent – "Teacher's Book of Lists"
- ☒ Focused practice with words from the kind of texts they will be reading
- ☒ Repeated, timed reading of phrases and paragraphs from the texts they will be reading

## What Teachers Can Do: Repeated Reading

- ☒ Incorporate a previewing/modeling procedure: Adult, partner, or audiotape
- ☒ Corrective feedback
- ☒ Set number or re-reads: 3-4 times
- ☒ Set a criteria (100wcpm)

## What Teachers Can Do: Non-Repetitive Wide Reading

- ☒ Provides students with exposure to different text structures, a variety of content, and more vocabulary
- ☒ More motivational or interesting

## What Teachers Can Do: Other Factors to Consider

- ☒ Make sure to combine fluency instruction with comprehension strategy instruction and word study instruction
- ☒ Use expository text for practice



## Increasing Vocabulary

- Beginning in about third grade, individual differences in vocabulary have a powerful impact on reading comprehension
- Research has discovered much more powerful ways of teaching vocabulary than are typically used in classrooms
- A “robust” approach to vocabulary instruction involves directly explaining the meanings of words along with thought-provoking, playful, interactive follow-up.

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## Core STRIVE Practices

1. Previewing
2. Prioritizing and explicitly teaching vocabulary
3. Using context clues to learn the meaning of unknown words
4. Answering and generating questions
5. Get the Gist
6. Maintaining a focus on vocabulary through vocabulary walls.
7. After reading discussions

## 2. Vocabulary Maps


### Components

1. Word Recognition
2. Definitions
3. Illustrations
4. Context
5. Vocabulary Associations
6. Vocabulary Building
7. Application



## Vocabulary Map for the Indian Wars

**2. Definition:** Underline the key words.  
A disagreement.

**3. Illustration**  
1. 

**4. Context:** Circle the correct sentence.  
The **conflict** between the two tribes started when both tribes wanted to settle in the same area by the lake.  
The **conflict** broke out of prison last night after the guards went to sleep.

**5. Word Associations:** Choose two related words.  
A. Disagreement  
B. Thump  
C. Skip  
D. Argument

**6. Word Building:** Choose a real word and then write another word.  
A. Conflicting  
B. Conflictment

**7. Provide:** an example phrase, sentence, or definition.

**Conflict**

Definition	Synonym
The word is defined in the sentence.  Ex: A <b>plateau</b> is a high, level stretch of land.	A word with the same meaning is used in the sentence.  Ex: More than 1,200 years ago, Mound Builders <b>migrated</b> , or moved, south into the Piney Woods region to the site of the Caddoan Mounds.
General	
The meaning of the word is implied in the sentences around the word.  Ex: The Constitution also contained a <b>Bill of Rights</b> . This bill stated that certain rights belonged to all Texans.	

## Example: Conquistador


In 1519, A **Spaniard** named Hernando Cortés arrived in what is now Mexico. Cortés was a conquistador, which means “conqueror”.

So... a conquistador is a Spanish Conqueror.

## STRIVE Strategy

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## What Teachers Can Do

- 📖 Pre-teach words
- 📖 Provide repeated exposure to new words and instruction in content area vocabulary
- 📖 Teach individual words directly
- 📖 Teach morphemic and contextual analysis

## Working on Comprehension

- 📖 Understanding vs. learning from text  
(Kintsch 1994,2004)
- 📖 Teach before, during, and after reading strategies

## Question Cards

Question Types		How do I write a good question?
<b>Who?</b>	A person or group	Identify the Important Idea or event in the passage and write a question about that Important Idea.  <i>Why was there a conflict between the Plains Indians and the settlers in Texas?</i>  Use a variety of question stems ( <i>who, what, when, where, why, and how</i> ).  <i>Who was the leader of the Mexican Army?</i> <i>Where was oil first discovered in Texas?</i> <i>Why did cattle drives end in towns near railroads?</i>
<b>What?</b>	A description or an effect	
<b>When?</b>	Related to time	
<b>Where?</b>	A place or location	
<b>Why?</b>	A reason or cause	
<b>How?</b>	A process or characteristic	

## What about students that have acquired reasonably good skills in word level reading, but still really struggle with comprehension in content areas?

Along with a lack of fluency, the most likely culprits are:

- 📖 Underdeveloped academic vocabulary
- 📖 Low levels of content--specific background knowledge
- 📖 A lack of active thinking and working to create meaning from what is read

If fluency is not a large issue, the biggest short-term impact on reading comprehension is likely to come from instructional procedures that teach strategies and stimulate more active thinking while reading

## Meta-analysis Results

Point estimates for the effect of reading intervention on comprehension

$d = .89^*$  (95% CI = .54, 1.24)

By intervention type

$d_{.1} = .49$  (word study,  $n=3$ )

$d_{.2} = -.03$  (fluency,  $n=1$ )

$d_{.3} = 1.61$  (comprehension,  $n=5$ )

$d_{.4} = .63$  (multi-component,  $n=4$ )

\* Pooled estimate of effect calculated using a mixed effects model with intervention type as the predictor. Intervention type is a significant predictor of variation in effects ( $\chi^2_{(3)} = 12.20$ )

## Characteristics of interventions in many remedial settings that limit their effectiveness

1. Insufficient intensity
2. Weak instruction in word study skills
3. Little or no direct instruction in comprehension strategies

## Findings (cont.)

Multi-component and comprehension interventions yield moderate and high effects on students' comprehension, respectively

Fluency interventions yield small to no effects on comprehension

## *HOW* should we teach older struggling readers?

The very best teachers of students who  
struggle in learning to read are

## Relentless

As students become accurate and independent readers, encourage, cajole, lead, beg, support, demand, reward them for reading as broadly and deeply as possible

Torgesen, 2004

### Features of Effective Instruction

#### Explicit

- Thinking processes made visible through modeling
- Nothing is left to chance; all skills are taught directly
- Multiple opportunities to maintain and transfer skills
- Opportunities for student responses with corrective feedback
- Background information provided before new knowledge is introduced
- Pre-teaching key vocabulary and concept

### Features of Effective Instruction

#### Systematic

- Instruction is purposeful and sequential
- Always involves using a scope and sequence of instruction that is well organized and hierarchical
- Students are well prepared for each new task they are asked to do

## Features of Effective Instruction

### Use of Scaffolding

- Teacher/Peer Scaffolding
- Content Scaffolding
- Task Scaffolding
- Material Scaffolding

## Features of Effective Instruction

### Intensity

- The most direct way to increase learning rate is by
  - increasing the number of positive, or successful, instructional interactions per school day.
- Content Intensity
  - decreasing group size (3-5)
  - Increasing the amount of time in instruction
  - Making instruction more explicit

## Features of Effective Instruction

### Time on Task

- Provide opportunities for students to read
- Increase time spent on meaningful activities
- Minimize time spent on transitions
- Behavior management

## Features of Effective Instruction

### Flexible Grouping

### Ongoing Progress Monitoring

### Supportive Instruction

## Motivation

Detailed studies of effective teachers document that they are powerful motivators:

*“Basically, we found that engaging teachers do something every minute of every hour of every school day to motivate their students, using every conceivable motivational mechanism to do so ...*

Pressley, 2004

## Motivation

*“Less engaging teachers actually do much to undermine student motivation, including, for example, establishing a negative tone in the class, placing great emphasis on extrinsic rewards, calling attention to weak performances by students, providing ineffective or unclear feedback, and fostering competition among students. Engaging teachers never teach in ways that undermine students’ motivation.*

Pressley, 2004

## Top Five Myths about Reading Interventions

1. If a child is a “visual” learner, they should be taught to read using a visual, not an auditory strategy
2. If a child has not learned “phonics” by the end of first grade, they need to be taught to read in some other way
3. Children who struggle with phonemic awareness, vocabulary, or phonics in kindergarten and first grade will frequently “catch up” if given time.
4. We should take guidance from theories of “multiple intelligences” or “learning styles” to help us adapt our reading instruction for different children
5. A little quality time with an enthusiastic volunteer tutor can solve most children’s reading problems

## Characteristics of interventions in many remedial settings that limit their effectiveness

1. Insufficient intensity
2. Weak instruction in word study skills
3. Little or no direct instruction in comprehension strategies

What we know about the effectiveness of most remedial interventions provided in public schools for students who are still struggling to master basic reading skills

**We know that it tends to stabilize the relative deficit in reading skill rather than remediate it.**

## **A Concluding Thought....**

There is no question that improving literacy skills in adolescent struggling readers is a significant challenge...

It will involve intensive professional development for teachers, school reorganization, and a relentless focus on the individual needs of every child...

“Poor readers **CAN** be taught if the program has all necessary components, the teacher is well prepared and supported, and the students are given time, sufficiently intensive instruction, and incentives to overcome their reading and language challenges. Given the right approach, students will buy in. In fact, they’ll ask why they were allowed to go so far without being taught to read”

Moats, 2001

# **Thank You!**