

Meeting the Challenge of Improving Adolescent Literacy

It Takes a Whole School

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The goal of a K–12 school experience

To graduate
LITERATE
ADOLESCENTS
who have the
capacity to be
COMPETENT,
INDEPENDENT,
LIFELONG
LEARNERS



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CRM's definition of "adolescent literacy"

Adolescents who are fully literate
KNOW and USE
reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking
strategies to learn across all content areas
and
CAN DEMONSTRATE/COMMUNICATE
that learning to others who need to know
and
CAN TRANSFER their learning to new situations.

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IF we think this is a reasonable goal...

AND we know that:

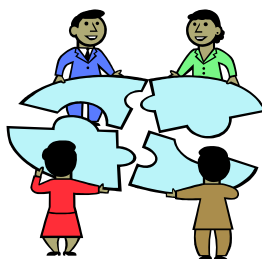
- Some students **struggle with reading and/or writing**
- Students have **different learning styles**
- **ALL students will need assistance** to meet the goal of being **FULLY LITERATE**

THEN it follows that ...

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A systemic school-wide literacy improvement effort is required...



IF we want to reach
our **GOAL**.

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Who needs literacy support?

- Non readers
- Struggling readers and writers
- Reluctant readers and writers
- Average readers and writers
- Excellent readers and writers
- English language learners who may be any of the above

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Why does the whole school need to get involved?

Can't the English teachers take care of it?

Can't students just take a reading class?

Why didn't they learn to read in elementary school?

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Think-Pair-Share

- What were you like as a reader/writer in high school?



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The BIG question...

Do you want your students to be a reader/writer like you were?????

- ✓ If the answer is **YES** – a collective concerted effort is required.
- ✓ If the answer is **NO** – a collective concerted effort is required.

Either way, working together on this is how to make it happen!!!!

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Why focus on literacy?

- Talk to employers
- Talk to colleges and universities
- Look at voting records
- Look on the Internet
- Look at the prison population



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What happens if we don't do anything different from what we are currently doing?

WILL IT REALLY MATTER????!!!

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Some facts...

- More than six million students in middle and high schools struggle with reading.
- Literacy demands in the 21st century are higher than they have ever been.
- Literacy and academic success go hand in hand.
- Literacy and workplace success go hand in hand.

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Addressing the right problem

The problem is not the students.
The problem is not the teachers.
The problem is not the parents.



The problem is that we have to get rid of Swiss cheese!!!!

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Getting rid of Swiss cheese

A school-wide literacy improvement effort ensures that all students get literacy support and development in all of their classes.



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Systems thinking

- Really good teachers working on their own can make *some* difference.
- Really good teachers working collectively can make ALL the difference!

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Do more than/less than 50% of your students regularly use all of the 7 strategies of highly effective readers?*

- Activating
- Inferring
- Monitoring-clarifying
- Questioning
- Searching-selecting
- Summarizing
- Visualizing-organizing



* Based on the research of Elaine McEwan

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Question:
What can we do if many/most students *don't, won't, or can't*?!?

Answer:
Fully implement the *Leadership Model for Improving Adolescent Literacy*.

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In case after case...

The MOST CRITICAL ELEMENT of a successful literacy improvement effort is

knowledgeable, committed leadership

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A Leadership Model for Improving Adolescent Literacy



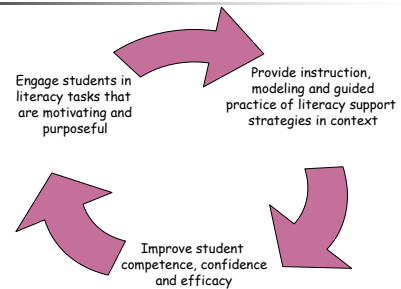
Three Goal Areas

- **Bull's Eye: Student Motivation, Engagement, and Achievement**
- **Band 1: Integrating Literacy and Learning**
 - Across the Content Areas (Content Literacy)
 - Literacy Interventions (Basic Literacy)
- **Band 2: Sustaining Literacy Improvement**
 - Environment/culture, structures, and policies
 - Parents/community
 - District

Bull's Eye: Student Motivation, Engagement, and Achievement

- MOTIVATE students to
- ENGAGE in reading/writing/critical thinking; then,
- Provide INSTRUCTION in CONTEXT and this will
- Result in IMPROVED ACADEMIC LITERACY HABITS AND SKILLS and CONTENT LEARNING

The Literacy Engagement–Instruction Cycle



A Leadership Model for Improving Adolescent Literacy



Band 1: Integrating Literacy and Learning

- Across the Content Areas (Content Literacy)
- Literacy Interventions (Basic Literacy)

Content Literacy

- How, why, and what you READ and WRITE in a particular content area
- How and why you SPEAK/PRESENT in a given content area
- Types of THINKING required by a specific discipline
- Applicable vocabulary, formats/text structures, and discourse elements

Content literacy* development includes...

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking/Presenting
- Critical and Creative Thinking
- Listening/Viewing
- Research/Inquiry
- Language and Vocabulary Development

ALL involve *texts, communication, awareness of discourse, and questioning/problem solving.*

**also called academic literacy*

What does this mean in grades 6–8?

- Word work/vocabulary development
- Strategy instruction
- Modeling
- Guided and independent practice
- Writing/inquiry
- Speaking/presenting
- Focus on critical thinking

What does this mean in grades 9–12?

- Vocabulary development
- Strategy instruction
- Writing to learn
- Writing to communicate
- Modeling
- Guided and independent practice
- Focus on critical thinking

In the middle and high school, we have to ask the right question...

Not

“Every teacher a reading teacher?!!”

but

“How will a student become a better reader, writer, speaker, and thinker about math/social studies/science/health/English... as a result of spending time in my class?!!”

Reading, writing, and learning as *processes*

- *Before* reading, writing, or learning
- *During* reading, writing, or learning
- *After* reading, writing, or learning

What do good readers do?

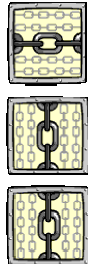
- Have a purpose for reading
- Activate prior knowledge
- Infer
- Question
- Monitor comprehension
- Summarize
- Analyze
- Respond thoughtfully to text

What are literacy support strategies?

When integrated into content area instruction, *literacy support strategies* can help struggling readers learn the habits and skills of strong readers, writers, and thinkers.

Linking literacy support strategies

Strategies need to be linked in ways that help students do all three parts of the process to support content area reading.



Strategic interventions

- Supports put into place to *accelerate* the progress of struggling readers and writers can be offered in a variety of formats
- One size does not fit all

Types of interventions

- Reading or writing programs
- Strategy instruction
- Literacy-focused instructional services

Eight ways to be a struggling reader

- I can read it, but I don't "get it."
- If the answer is "right there," I'm okay.
- I never see pictures when I read.
- I have trouble sounding out the words.
- I read very slowly.
- I don't know a lot of the words.
- I like real stuff, not Shakespeare.
- I like stories, not textbooks.

A Leadership Model for Improving Adolescent Literacy



Band 2: Sustaining Literacy Improvement

- Environment/culture, structures, and policies
- Parents/community
- District

Creating a vision

If our literacy improvement effort was successful, how would our school be different?

*What would **students** be doing?*

*What would **teachers** be doing?*

*What would the **environment** be like?*

What do successful school-wide literacy improvement efforts look like?

A Leadership Model for Improving Adolescent Literacy



Five Action Points

- Implement a **Literacy Action Plan**
- Support **teachers**
- Use **data**
- Build **capacity**
- Allocate **resources**

How can you build a stronger "culture of literacy" at your school?

How can you get reluctant staff on board? How can you provide appropriate and adequate professional development and support?

Getting Everyone on Board

How do we get everyone engaged with creating a school-wide focus on literacy?



Getting Everyone on Board

- Understanding why some teachers resist
- Working to bring everyone on board
 - Strategies to support teachers
 - Accountability

Why is there reluctance?

- Fear
- Overwhelm
- The comfort of the familiar
- "This, too, shall pass"
- History
- Belief systems
- Lack of support
- Lack of understanding
- Time
- Miscommunication
- Lack of resources
- Unclear expectations

Support teachers to improve instruction

Key support and teacher development strategies

- Professional learning communities
- Making the work public
- Literacy coaching
- Teacher professional development

Support teachers to improve instruction

Key monitoring and improvement strategies

- Classroom observations
- Literacy walk-throughs
- Teacher evaluation
- New teacher induction

Teacher professional development

What works at YOUR school

Getting Everyone on Board

- What is something new that you have learned in the past few years?
- What helped you to “keep at it” and develop your expertise?

Applying the Four Es to Literacy Improvement

- *Environment*
- *Engagement*
- *Expectations*
- *Encouragement/Support*

Next Steps – Personal and Building-Level Action Planning

What will you put in place in time for the start of the 2007-2008 school year?

A Leadership Model for Improving Adolescent Literacy



By learning and working together...

YOU CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN!





Key message

*Literacy is not something
extra on the plate.*

Literacy IS the plate.