

Another factor increasing the need for teaching reading in the content areas is the influx of immigrants from countries throughout the world. While English as a Second Language instruction is given to these students, it cannot be focused on the content-specific language of the core subjects. Teachers in the core content areas must include vocabulary development and content specific skills in their daily instruction. For instance, not only must a social studies teacher provide instruction on what a primary document is, but on where to locate a primary document and how to read a primary document. Mathematics and science have many technical terms and processes that cannot be taught in reading classes. They must be taught in the content areas.

Because the middle school and high school years progressively depend on the written word, a.k.a. textbooks, as the major conveyor of information, a poor reader or nonreader becomes a likely dropout. If no child is to be left behind, content teachers must incorporate into their daily instruction skills and techniques to help the struggling reader.

The issue is how to train subject area teachers in reading so they have the skills to assist students and how to integrate reading into the daily teaching of the core subjects. Content teachers already feel they have too much content and not enough time.

Some suggestions appear in the literature that can be done without formal training. Content teachers can strengthen poor reading skills by using reading strategies before, during, and after reading assignments. Before beginning a reading assignment, students can be asked to brainstorm, predict, skim, preview headings, and learn essential vocabulary. During reading students can be asked to reread, infer, question, support predictions, and summarize. After reading they can be asked to confirm predictions, summarize, synthesize, reflect, question. (glencoe.com/sec/teachingtoday). Click on Teaching Today, Subject –Specific Resources.; J. A. Langer. *Guidelines for Teaching Middle and High School Students to Read and Write Well: Six Features of Effective Instruction*, National Research Center for English Learning and Achievement, May 2000. cela.albany.edu/publication/guidebook.htm).

Issue: Phonics, Whole Language or Balanced Reading

There has been considerable debate over the past 50 years of the importance of systematic instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics (phonics) and developing a student’s reading skills by immersing him/her in rich literature using his/her social-cultural and life experiences as a guide (whole language). Some feel that there has been more moderation in the debate as more researchers and practitioners have come to agree on a more balanced approach to teaching reading. A balanced reading approach indicates that students receive instruction in phonemic awareness—awareness of individual sounds—and in cueing strategies which are necessary for decoding and comprehension. In an effort to reach a compromise, Sherman (1998), states “Research strongly supports the idea that phonics and whole language can coexist when blended skillfully by talented teachers.” (L. Sherman, “Seeking Common Ground,” Northwest Regional Laboratory, Fall, 1998; www.nwrel.org/nwedu/fall_98/article_2.html). The debate has not completely subsided. The report, *Whole Language Lives On-The Illusion of “Balanced” Reading Instruction*, states “What’s going on in many places in the name of ‘balance’ or ‘consensus’ is that the worst practices of whole language are persisting, continuing to inflict boundless harm on young children who need to learn to read. How and why that is happening—and how and why such practices are misguided and harmful—are what this report is about.” (L. C. Moats, *Whole Language Lives On-The Illusion of “Balanced” Reading Instruction*. Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, October, 2000; www.usu.edu/teachall/text/reading/Wholelang.htm).

Issue: Teaching Reading Comprehension

The ultimate goal in reading is for students to understand what they are reading and to apply it to past, present and future learning. NAEP data indicate students do not have the skills needed to work or to maneuver successfully through the complex world in which they live. Of particular concern is middle and high school students who do not continue to improve their reading as they progress through the grade levels.

Using the NAEP scores, Wenglinsky states that students perform better on NAEP comprehension questions when they have (1) experienced instruction in metacognition skills, (2) been

exposed to books and stories rather than short passages in basal readers, and (3) read literature accompanied by a writing activity. (H. Wenglinsky, “Facts or Critical Thinking Skills,” *Educational Leadership*, 62 (1) 2004, p. 32) Acknowledging that students need to learn basic reading skills in phonics and decoding, he emphasizes the need to move toward reasoning and comprehension as fluency develops. In its report, the National Reading Panel states, “Teachers must understand that systematic phonics instruction is only one component—albeit a necessary component— of a total reading program; systematic phonics instruction should be integrated with other reading instruction in phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension strategies to create a complete reading program.” (National Reading Panel, *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidenced-Based Assessment of the Scientifically Researched Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction*, National Institute of Health, NIH Pub. 00-4769, April 2000; www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/nrp/smallbook.htm).

The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) in a report funded by the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) states that text comprehension can be improved by using strategies such as having students monitor their own awareness of understanding; using graphic and semantic organizers that show relationships between words, topics, charts; answering and generating questions; and summarizing and recognizing the sequence, context, and content of the story or event. (B.B. Armbruster, F. Lehr, and J. Osborn, *Put Reading First: the Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children Reading(2nd Ed.)*, Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement, June 2003; www.nationalreadingpanel.org), click on Publications, scroll to Put Reading First.

Issue: Literacy

Some reading researchers argue that reading should be subsumed under the broader category of literacy, particularly adolescent literacy, especially when referring to students in middle and high school. Adolescent literacy is broader in scope than secondary reading and is more inclusive of what adolescents count as texts (e.g. textbooks, internet documents, e-mails, chat rooms, television, and magazines). Often referred to as the Net Generation, these adolescents develop multiple literacies to survive in the world in which they have been born and will be expected to perform.

Alvermann in a position paper for the National Reading Conference (NRC) states that academic literacy—the reading and writing expected in the typical classroom—is important, but is not enough to sustain academic achievement. The NRC has five position statements that extend beyond secondary reading to multiple literacies. They are:

- Adolescents’ perceptions of their personal competencies as readers and writers generally affect their motivation to learn in their subject area classes; thus academic literacy must be concerned with self-efficacy and engagement.
- Adolescents respond to the literacy demands of their subject area classes when they have the necessary skills and background knowledge for reading a variety of texts. Effective instruction results in students being able to discuss, study and write using multiple forms of texts when used in concert with their skills as everyday users of language and literacy.
- Adolescents struggling to read in subject area classrooms must have instruction that is developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate to their needs. The instruction must be embedded in the regular curriculum and address the skills possessed by the student in reading, writing and communicating orally as strengths. Lack of skills should be viewed as an opportunity for learning rather than a deficiency.
- Adolescent interest in the internet, chat rooms, and other forms of media requires that students must be taught to look critically at the information presented, the manner in which it is presented and learn to evaluate the origin of the material as well as its content.
- Adolescents must be continually involved in higher thinking skills and engaged in learning through cooperative learning as well as individual projects or independent studies.

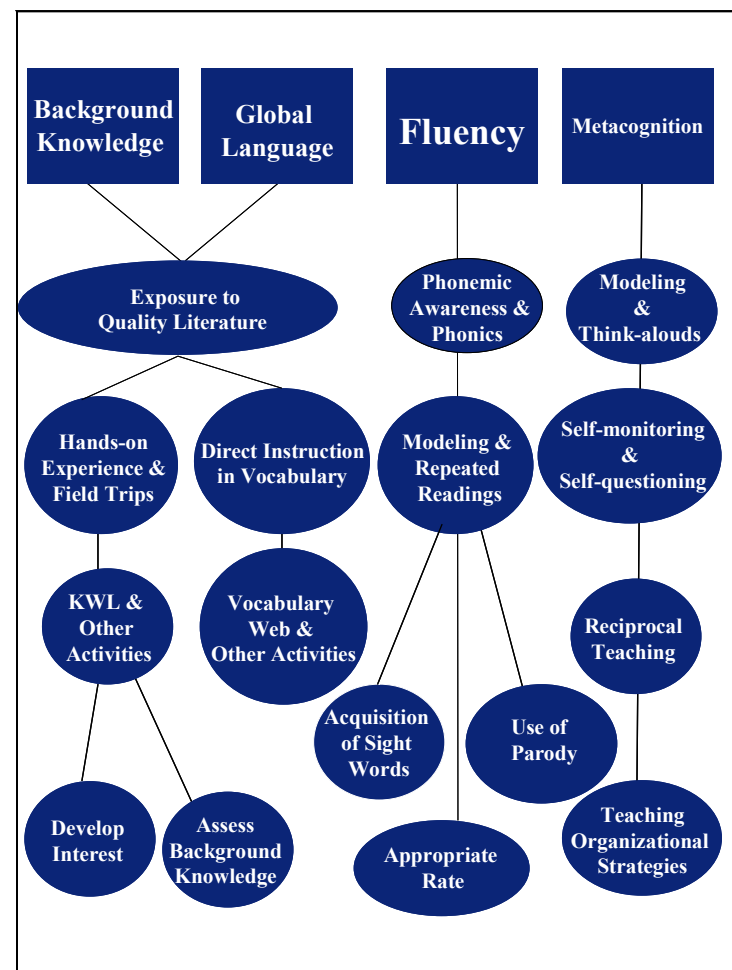
Alverman states that “ the Net Generation will find their own reasons for becoming literate—reasons that go beyond reading to acquire school knowledge or mastery of academic texts—so it is important that teachers create sufficient opportunity for students to engage actively in meaningful subject matter projects that both extend and elaborate on the literacy practices they already own and value.” (D. E. Alvermann, *Effective Literacy Instruction for Adolescents*, Executive Summary and Paper Commissioned by the National Reading Conference. Chicago. IL; National Reading Conference, 2001; www.nrconline.org/publications/alverwhite2.doc).

The Reading Program in Georgia

Georgia's reading program is entitled Reading First. It is concerned with training teachers to recognize and eliminate the barriers students face in learning to read in grades K-3. The goal is to have every child reading at or above grade level by the end of third grade.

Reading First seeks to engage parents during the early childhood years to ensure that children learn to read as soon as they are ready. In accordance with the federal mandate, No Child Left Behind, Georgia will develop a professional learning system based on scientifically based research principles to assist teachers in the delivery of instructional practices designed to maximize reading gains for all students.

Components of the Reading First Program



To access this graphic and have a more complete understanding of each component, complete the following steps: (1) go to doe.k12.ga.us; (2) click on programs; (3) click on list of programs; (4) click on subject areas; (5) scroll to subject areas; (6) click on language arts; (7) click on Reading First Index and (8) click on Redelivery Manual, Introduction. Each component is presented in a PowerPoint format.

Raising Student Achievement

Most often a student's poor performance is viewed as a lack of knowledge or cognitive ability. While this may be a factor, a more likely explanation is that the reading level of the test or text exceeds the student's mastery level. Another dimension of this problem is that generally speaking students do not get formal instruction in reading after third grade, and most middle and high school teachers do not get training to assist students who need continued help in reading. If schools are to continue to raise student achievement levels and if no child is to be left behind, then both teachers and students must get help. Teachers must be trained in strategies to help students learn and apply reading strategies to their textbooks and other print materials, and students must be engaged continuously and systemically in reading instruction in every content area. To engage students will also mean that the literature, the selected readings, and the textbooks must be somewhat related to the diversity of the student population and encompass the digital and technological media of 21st Century students. ■

Issue Brief

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The Challenges of Teaching Reading

The most fundamental skill that a student must learn in school is to learn to read. This fundamental skill is so complex that teachers and researchers still disagree about the best method(s) and emphasis for teaching reading. In recent decades, mainly through the work of sociolinguists and cultural anthropologists, the argument has been made that students must know more than how to read. They must have literacy. What is known is that students will read and write more in the 21st Century than any other time in history and that advanced skills will be required in the workplace, in social settings, and in responding to the economic, social and political issues that will confront the generations of this century.

The Present Situation

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data from 1992 to 2003 show little change in reading scores. While there has been reduction in the percentage of students reading at the Below Basic Level, most notably in grade 8, the data At Proficient Level and At Advanced Level have not changed significantly.

	Below Basic	At Basic	At Proficient	At Advanced
Grade 4 1992	38	34	22	6
Grade 4 2003	37	32	24	8*
Grade 8 1992	31	40	26	3
Grade 8 2003	26	42	29	3

*Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding. www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading. Click on 2003 Reading Results, then click on Achievement Level Results.

The NAEP assessment in reading will be administered in schools from January 24 to March 4, 2005. Grades 4 and 8 will be tested in each state and grade 12 will be assessed nationally. The federal law, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), requires in 2005-2006 that every student be tested annually in grades 3-8 in

reading and mathematics; science and high school testing of mathematics, reading and science will begin in 2007-08.

Reading Issues

There are many issues that surround reading and literacy. At a time in which reading is more important than ever and reading scores are status quo, there needs to be a serious look at the issues.

Issue: Teaching Reading in the Content Areas

Many earlier studies and points of view hold to the practice that students should be taught the basics from phonics to fluency in the earlier grades. Generally formal instruction in reading ends at third grade with the result that students who have not learned to read continue to be non-readers or at best reluctant readers. There is no doubt that lack of or poor reading skills are a major reason for retention in schools.

Several factors have impacted this issue causing a new emphasis on teaching reading in the content areas. The NAEP results (referenced earlier) clearly indicate that there is little reading improvement after fourth grade. Most students stay at the below basic and basic levels; therefore, there is a need for students to continue be involved in formal reading activities.

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