Research Brief
Reading in High School

Question: What are some generic reading strategies to use in most content areas at the high school level?

Summary of Findings:

Online Resources**:**   The workers of the 21st Century will be expected to do more reading and writing than has been done in the past. In order to be successful, one author, Langer, stated that students need to possess "high literacy." He defined this as, "It is reflected in the student's ability to engage in thoughtful reading and writing about context in the classroom, to put their knowledge and skills to use in new situations and to perform well on reading and writing assessments, including high stakes testing" (Adolescent Literacy Strategies, p. 12). According to the literature, it is evident when reading is truly a priority and supported by all stakeholders because there are high interactions between students and teachers and students and students, regular use of technology for projects, use of electronic bulletin boards, and classrooms where a large variety of reading materials are available and where presentations, audience critiques, and meaningful feedback are an integral part of the curriculum.

Major Findings and Conclusions:
<u>Some Major Issues:</u>
- According to research, the majority of secondary students do not have sufficient literacy skills to be successful in this, the "Information Age."
- ` There is an assumption that students should own the requisite reading skills by the time they leave elementary and middle schools. However, at that time in their lives, they are seldom ready for the higher level reading and processing skills needed in high school.
- High school teachers have a great deal of content to cover, especially in this era of high stakes testing, so adding the responsibility of teaching reading for which most do not have the background or training, is done minimally, if at all. On-going and regular staff development could assist in this area.
- Reading is not truly owned by any department, so it is often assumed that it should be in the realm of the English department.
- Monies and support for the advance and growth of adolescent literacy development is almost non-existent.
- If there is a reading program, it is usually for the purpose of remediation.
- Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are often unfamiliar with content, context, and conventions of the dominant culture.

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- In this era of technological information and communication, many teachers are not technologically literate and/or many schools are not technologically well-equipped.

Generic Strategies:
- Connect reading to real life.
- State purpose for the assigned reading, such as class discussion, small group presentation, etc.
- Model appropriate reading strategies that will provide the skills for students to begin thinking like a mathematician, historian, writer, scientist, etc.
- Provide opportunities for stimulating student collaboration and discussion.
- Supply a variety and choice of reading materials, such as trade books, texts, journals, electronic media, etc.
- Teach the structure and vocabulary of the content.

Specific Strategies:
This is a brief selection of many available strategies.
- Personal reading history: It could include their characteristics as a reader, their view of themselves as a reader, reading strategies they use and do not use, what they find rewarding and pleasurable and their response to reading in general and in specific content areas.
- Pre-reading: Introduce specific vocabulary they will encounter, purpose of the reading, KWL chart (What the student knows, wants to know, and at the conclusion, what they learned), concept mapping, graphic organizers, and anticipation guides.
- Vocabulary: Alert-take no more than nine vocabulary words the students will encounter, find out what they know about the word, describe it in context, after reading it, discuss the word and students' understanding of the word; Vocabulary Box-Divide a box into four squares and in the center draw a box and put the vocabulary word in that box. In the first square-title it Critical Attributes, write down a personal definition of the word. In the second square-title it Synonyms, write down similar words to the word. In the third square-title it Analogy, develop an analogy that could deal with opposites, specific to general, or whole to part. In the fourth box, title it Visualization, illustrate the word through a drawing, symbol, emblem, etc.
- 2 column note-taking: In one column write down the factual information, vocabulary, etc. from the reading. In the second column, write down personal response and thoughts about the information in the first column.
- Rehearsal: Repeat passages aloud, paraphrase passages, state or write thoughts about given passages, and orally model problem solving.
- Book talks: After students have read different books, information, etc. provide guidelines for them to give a 5 minute talk to the class that covers the main idea(s), response to the material, and application of the information to the class. This could be done on a rotational basis so that all students do it once or twice during the semester.

Online Resources:

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- Adolescent Literacy Resources: Linking Research and Practice
  An extensive review and synopsis of books written on reading and writing on the
  secondary level is presented. Numerous suggestions to help students develop "high
  literacy" levels are given.
  Access from full text PDF
  http://www.reading.org/resources/issues/positions_adolescent.html

- High School Reading
  A description and citation of a successful high school reading program and its
  elements as proposed by the Wisconsin State Reading Association is provided in this
  article.
  http://www.wsra.org/highschool.html

- High School Reading Task Force
  This is a description from a high school task force on reading from Madison,
  Wisconsin. It includes goals, roles, and expectations of all stakeholders.
  http://www.madison.k12.wi.us/tnl/langarts/hsread.htm

- No Child Left Behind: What it means for U.S. adolescents and what we can do about
  it.
  A brief summary of what NCLB says about adolescent literacy along with an
  emphasis on what it does not say, is given in this article.
  http://www.reading.org/publications/journals/jaal/v48/i1/abstracts/JAAL-48-1-
  Conley.html

- Reviews: Classroom materials
  The basic tenets for the components of a strong reading program at the secondary
  level is given. It also includes an extensive bibliography along with an annotated list
  of specific resources in the field.
  http://www.reading.org/Library/Retrieve.cfm?D=10.1598/JAAL.48.1.9&F=JAAL-
  48-1-McGlinn.html

- Supporting Adolescent Literacy across the Content Areas
  A definition of and the components for the Comprehensive School Reform
  Demonstration Project along with specific examples of literacy strategies in the 4
  CORE academic subjects is provided. It also suggests the type of culture that needs to
  be in place in order for adolescent literacy to fully bloom.
  http://www.alliance.brown.edu/

- Using comprehension strategies as a springboard for student talk
  This is a brief abstract that provides a few suggestions for helping students develop
  deeper reading skills.

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http://www.reading.org/publications/journals/jaal/v48/i2/abstracts/JAAL-48-2-Lloyd.html

Books:

• Armstrong, T. (2003). The multiple intelligences of reading and writing. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development: Alexandria, VA.
  This book provides an overview of literacy, the brain, and multiple intelligences. Then it gives specific literacy development strategies in each of the eight intelligences.

• Silver, H. F., Strong, R. W., & Perini, M. J. (2001). Tools for promoting active, in-depth learning. Thoughtful Education Press, LLC: Ho-Ho-Kus, NJ.
  A wealth of specific strategies for generating ideas, activating prior knowledge, note-taking, vocabulary development, questioning, and assessments are provided in this book.

• Stephens, E. C. & Brown, J. E. (2000). A handbook of content literacy strategies: 75 practical reading and writing ideas. Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.: Norwood, MA.
  An abundant number of specific strategies to help students develop literacy skills across the content are given in this resource book.

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