NDTAC | The National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center
for the Education of Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At Risk

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STRATEGY GUIDE

Meeting the Literacy Needs of Students in Juvenile Justice Facilities

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Recommendations

1. Strengthen efforts to engage and motivate students in general and in all their classes.
2. Use a comprehensive approach to assessing students on their arrival and throughout their stay at the juvenile justice facility.
3. Integrate explicit instruction into content-area teaching to strengthen students' vocabulary and comprehension skills and strategies.
4. Select materials carefully to reinforce and support student learning and provide opportunities for practice.
5. Provide infrastructural changes, teacher support, and leadership that can facilitate literacy instruction.

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About the National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At Risk

The mission of the National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk (NDTAC) is to improve educational programming for neglected and delinquent youth. NDTAC's legislative mandates are to develop a uniform evaluation model for State Education Agency (SEA) Title I, Part D, Subpart I, programs; provide technical assistance (TA) to states in order to increase their capacity for data collection and their ability to use that data to improve educational programming for neglected or delinquent (N or D) youth; and serve as a facilitator between different organizations, agencies, and interest groups that work with youth in neglected and delinquent facilities. For additional information on NDTAC, visit the Center's Web site at http://www.neglected-delinquent.org.

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Recognizing the Extent of the Problem

Like educators around the country, staff in juvenile justice facilities recognize the serious academic challenges that many of their students face because of low levels of literacy achievement. This "Adolescent Literacy Guide" will provide guidance to administrators and teachers who want to increase opportunities for students in juvenile justice facilities to improve their literacy skills. A secondary audience is Neglected and Delinquent program coordinators at the local and State level.

The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) and other sources provide educators, policymakers, and the public with data about the percentage of secondary students nationwide who cannot even read at a "basic" level.[1] Students who have low literacy skills find themselves ill-prepared for the academic work they encounter in secondary classrooms, where they are asked to read increasingly complex texts and to express and defend their ideas in well-constructed prose. Further, they are ill-prepared to take advantage of postsecondary opportunities such as college or entry-level job training programs.

A recent study estimated that, by 2018, 63 percent of the new job openings created in this country will require workers to have had some form of postsecondary education or training. Indeed, researchers forecasting the future job market state that "dropouts, high school graduates, and people with some college but no degree are on the down escalator of social mobility, falling out of the middle-income class and into the lower three deciles of family income."[2]

Educators in juvenile justice facilities, like their peers in many high schools nationwide, recognize students' need for help improving their literacy skills. The differences in academic achievement levels of students entering juvenile justice facilities can be huge, ranging from grade level or above to very poor.[3] The reasons for students' literacy challenges are varied, among them learning disabilities,[4] high rates of absenteeism through their school-going years, poor conditions for learning in schools they attended, low levels of engagement in and motivation for school, and cultural and linguistic[5] issues that have made it difficult for students to participate fully in their school experiences and personal learning.

At the same time, many of these students report high educational aspirations, even though evidence shows that the majority of them never achieve their goals. Only about 15 percent of the incarcerated students who return to school actually graduate from high school. Students who are unable to read when released from a correctional facility often confront a host of social and economic difficulties, including future unemployment and welfare dependence.[6] As the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (http://www.corestandards.org) are implemented, the challenges facing struggling adolescent students will become even more pronounced. The CCSS emphasize the knowledge and skills needed in reading and language arts (and mathematics) to be ready for life after secondary school, whether students choose to participate in entry-level college courses, job training programs, or the military.

Using This Guide

The recommendations and strategies in this guide can be applied in short-term detention facilities and in juvenile correctional or other residential facilities where students stay for 90 or fewer days. The guide contains five recommendations, each of which is explained and then followed by action-oriented strategies for implementation. All the recommendations are grounded in educational research and best practice. The guide ends with a short list of valuable resources for additional support.

Implementing these recommendations may require some changes to instruction in content-area classes and to schools' infrastructure. Together, these changes can give students immediate help, even during their relatively short time in detention. For many adolescents, incarceration presents new, positive opportunities—especially educational ones—that may make the difference in whether they recidivate. While in secure care, many adolescents find themselves in an environment in which classes are small and teachers can provide direct instruction and individualized attention. Attendance is mandatory, and adolescents who may not have attended school for years are suddenly students again.[7]

1 NAEP achievement levels for grade 12 define "basic" as being able "to identify elements of meaning and form and relate them to the overall meaning of the text. They should be able to make inferences, develop interpretations, make connections between texts, and draw conclusions; and they should be able to provide some support for each. They should be able to interpret the meaning of a word as it is used in the text." Retrieved July 15, 2009, from http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading/achieveall.asp

2 Carnavale, A. P., Smith, N., & Strohl, J. (2010). *Help wanted: Projections of jobs and education requirements through 2018*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, p. 3.

3 Foley, R. (2002). Academic characteristics of incarcerated youth and correctional educational programs: A literature review. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders,9*(4), 248–259.; Keith, J. M., & McCray, A. D. (2002). Juvenile offense with special needs: Critical issues and bleak outcomes. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 15,* 691–710.

4 Rutherford, R., Bullis, M., Anderson, C., & Griller-Clark, H. (2002). *Youth with disabilities in the correctional system: Prevalence rates and identification issues.* College Park, MD: National Center on Education, Disability and Juvenile Justice.

5 A disproportionate number of the youth detained in the correctional system are English language learners (ELLs). See Wolford, B., Purnell, B., & Brooks, C. C. (2000). *Educating youth in the juvenile justice system.* Richmond, KY: National Juvenile Detention Association.

6 Chung, H. L., Little, M., Steinberg, L., & Altschuler, D. (2005, February). Juvenile justice and the transition to adulthood. *Network on Transition to Adulthood Policy Brief, 20.*

7 Malgren, K. W., & Leone, P. (2000, August). Effects of a short-term auxiliary reading program on the reading skills of incarcerated youth. *Education and Treatment of Children, 23*(3), 239–247.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Strengthen efforts to engage and motivate students in general and in all their classes.

Motivation and engagement are essential for learning. These two words are sometimes used interchangeably, but they don't necessarily mean the same thing. **Motivation** is how much you want to do something. For students, it includes confidence in their ability to comprehend and learn, their sense of self-determination, and their perceptions that school tasks are valuable and doable. **Engagement** involves motivation, but it also refers to how thoughtfully you do something. The term refers to learners' involvement, their attention to what is happening in class, and their efforts to make connections between new learning and what they already know, both during and after class. Tasks that are too easy or too difficult work against students' motivation and engagement because students do not see their value as part of their overall learning. Easy tasks are met with "Why bother? I know this already." Conversely, students may resist tackling tasks they perceive as too difficult because they anticipate failure.

Teachers can increase their students' motivation and engagement for reading and writing through steps such as the ones that follow.

a. Get to know new students as quickly as possible and help them think of themselves as learners.

Educators in juvenile justice facilities may think that students' relatively short enrollment periods make it less important to get to know students' interests and needs than it would be in "mainstream" secondary schools. Title I, Part D, data indicate, however, that the average stay is almost 2 months in juvenile detention programs and almost 5 months in juvenile corrections facilities.

Dr. Lindy Khan, principal of Contra Costa School in California, established an "assessment center," where new students often spend their first week. Time in this center allows the facility's staff to get to know about the new students' academic histories and their interests and aspirations.

Administering a short survey or interview as part of the intake process is one way to get to know new arrivals quickly. The survey or interview might ask about interests, past reading histories (e.g., whether they had been in special reading classes previously), and general learning goals. Getting to know students' interests and past academic experiences makes it easier for teachers to choose materials that students may find engaging and "pitched" at the appropriate difficulty levels.

It is also important to review students' past academic records, which can provide important information, such as presence of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and attendance in special programs. Test records can also be valuable. For example, if students have complained during an interview that reading assignments have always been "too hard" or that reading "takes too much effort" and their records show consistently low scores on standardized reading tests, the possibility is high that the students have severe reading difficulties that need to be investigated further.

Title I, Part D, requires assessment of students entering a juvenile justice facility so that their level of academic achievement, especially in reading and mathematics, can be determined prior to the start of instruction. Ideally, the tests should align with the academic standards in the students' home states. Scores on the assessments administered at intake provide a baseline against which scores at exit can be compared—ideally to show progress that students make while in the residential facility.

Although this required testing should take place soon after entry into a facility, testing students immediately on arrival can skew the results because students are still acclimating to their new surroundings. Scheduling academic testing *after* conducting the interviews and surveys discussed in Recommendation 1 may provide far more accurate measures of what they know and are able to do. (For more information on assessments, see Recommendation 2.)

b. Establish and maintain a positive learning environment that demonstrates high expectations and encourages students to take an active role in their learning.

Some adolescents don't think of themselves as learners: they assume that they can't set meaningful learning goals or actually achieve success in school.[8] Like many of their mainstream peers, students in juvenile justice facilities may not have had opportunities to develop personal learning goals that can spur engagement and be self-motivating. They may never have had a teacher or school official help them to believe in themselves or to see the value of learning.

However, the more students realize about their own learning patterns, strengths, and weaknesses, the better able they will be to set and meet individual learning goals. Some psychologists refer to this process as helping young people to envision and express "possible selves" that link their self-concept to their motivation.[9]

Helping students begin to take control of their learning is often a three-step process. Controlling learning does not always come automatically! The first step is the interview or survey mentioned above, and the second is setting clear expectations for the kind of behavior that is expected: For example, "Students in this school work hard, respect one another, and behave appropriately." Teacher-set expectations may seem very "top down," more of the kind of learning environments students have found frustrating in the past. However, the combination of personal interviews and clear behavioral expectations communicates the value the facility places on all students as individuals who deserve an opportunity to participate with other students as a respectful community of learners.

8 Yudowitch, S., Henry, L. M., & Guthrie, J. T. (2008). Self-efficacy. Building confident readers. In J. T. Guthrie (Ed.). *Engaging adolescents in reading.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, pp. 65–82.

9 Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American Psychologist, 41,* 954–969. Retrieved May 9, 2010, from http://geoff.rey.angelfire.com/res/papers/MarkusH.pdf

Linda Kern, who has taught since 1996 at the Pathfinder School in the Lancaster County Juvenile Detention Center in Lincoln, NE, maintains that her students often struggle with belief systems that are different from their own. Thus, giving them opportunities to read and discuss writing about social justice or by multicultural authors helps them feel free to verbalize their own viewpoints.

Ms. Kern contends with the transient nature of many of her students by enlisting the help of current students. She encourages these students to "pull" new arrivals into the routines of the class. She also calls on current students to summarize discussions and information that were presented before the new students arrived.

The third step concerns the kinds of feedback that teachers provide. Many adolescents who are struggling readers assume that they will not do well in school, and many teachers reinforce this assumption through direct or indirect feedback that decreases motivation and engagement—and ultimately learning.[10] Praise for students' educational performance should focus on their learning processes and on the effort they put forth, rather than on their products. This kind of encouragement helps them see the value of effort and acknowledges that they have tried to accomplish academic goals. Comments such as "You did a great job explaining the author's perspective in this paper, so let's talk about how you can state your own ideas more persuasively" give a strong and productive message to students. This approach recognizes accomplishments and challenges them to keep getting better.

c. Make learning experiences relevant to students' expressed interests, to universal themes, or to important current events.

Relevance comes from bridging students' interests and emotions as well as their lives inside the classroom and the juvenile detention facility. Teachers can give students opportunities to express what they think is relevant and use these ideas and important "themes" to the greatest extent possible as the foundation of instruction and learning activities. Bringing current events into the classroom keeps students connected to what is happening outside their detention facility and also gives them opportunities to comment on important issues. Integrating universal thematic issues—such as social justice, the causes of poverty, adolescent health, music, or even fashion or sports—into instruction makes learning more relevant and can spur higher order thinking.

d. Structure classroom interactions so that students interact with and learn from one another.

Instructional approaches such as small-group activities, cooperative learning, paired reading, peer conferences, and discussion require students to work together. Students in juvenile justice facilities may not have had opportunities to work with others in a school setting and may struggle at first to understand expected behavioral norms. In addition, many teachers may be reluctant to permit much student interaction because they fear that they will lose control of the class. Allowing any kind of openness and discussion requires teaching skills that are quite different from those needed for lecturing or leading students in structured recitation or drills. There is strong evidence that interactive approaches can increase both engagement and reading proficiency. As discussed below, professional development on this kind of teaching skill can increase teachers' confidence in their ability to use this approach.

Teachers need to plan carefully for activities that encourage students to work and talk with one another and be patient while students learn the routines expected for each type of interaction. Planning includes determining a goal for the learning, estimating the amount of time the activity should take, and preparing a set of guiding questions or steps that can lead students through their work.[11] Advance planning ensures that the activities will stay on track and be beneficial.

e. Give students some choices regarding what they read and how they express themselves.

The book Teaching Troubled Youth: A Practical Pedagogical Approach *celebrates original writing and drawing from students in Delaware juvenile justice facilities. The students responded to evocative topics such as "Giving Students a Reason To Learn" and "Gaining Awareness of Potential."*

Travalini, B. (Ed.) (2008). Teaching troubled youth: A practical pedagogical approach. *Wilmington, DE: Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families.*

Giving students some choices regarding the books they read, their reading and writing activities, and the topics they investigate moves them toward self-directed learning. They become more autonomous and are more likely to take ownership of their engagement processes.[12] When they are responsible for making choices, students often find their personal path to learning. Allowing choice does require some balancing, however, as teachers must be mindful that students still will be held accountable for meeting external achievement goals.

Self-expression is important to adolescents, and many young people who find themselves in juvenile justice facilities may not have had many previous opportunities to express themselves proactively within a school context. Verbalizing ideas in group discussions is one important outlet, but writing can be an outlet as well. Allowing students to keep journals, either private ones or ones they share with their teacher, and giving them opportunities to write in other modes encourages reflection, thoughtfulness, and healthy self-expression—and also teaches students new ways to use writing in their

10 Graham, S., & Golan, S. (1991). Motivational influences on cognition: Task involvement, ego involvement, and depth of information processing. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 83*(2), 187–194; and Guthrie, J. T., & McCann, A. D. (1997). Characteristics of classrooms that promote motivations and strategies for learning. In J. T. Guthrie & A. Wigfield (Eds.), *Reading engagement: Motivating readers through integrated instruction* (pp. 128–148). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

11 For a good discussion of question development and processes for conducting discussions, see Beck, I. B., & McKeown, M. G. (2006). *Questioning the author.* New York: Guilford.

12 Guthrie, J. T., & McCann, A. D. (1997). Characteristics of classrooms that promote motivations and strategies for learning. In J. T. Guthrie & A. Wigfield (Eds.), *Reading engagement: Motivating readers through integrated instruction* (pp. 128–148). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

lives. Some students may prefer to express themselves through less formal modes, such as drawing or illustrating. These may be manga, cartoons, or other minimal print representations like calendars, or "zines."[13] These media may seem unconventional in school settings and more indicative of popular culture; but they can provide struggling readers and writers far more opportunities to express themselves than the more traditional written modes.

Recommendation 2: Use a comprehensive approach to assessing students on their arrival and throughout their stay at the juvenile justice facility.

One of the first steps when a young person arrives at a juvenile justice facility should be a screening and assessment process that will help to determine mental, emotional, and behavioral issues and identify academic strengths and weaknesses. The information discovered at this point can help administrators and teachers develop a plan to serve the new arrival efficiently and well during his or her stay at the facility. Regular assessments to monitor students' progress are important sources of information about how students are doing and what teachers might do to better meet students' needs.

The following strategies can help teachers and administrators develop a system for identifying and then assisting students with the most severe literacy problems.

a. Provide screening or diagnostic testing to identify and document specific reading difficulties.

When existing records or intake procedures show evidence that students need specialized help, the next step should be to administer screening or diagnostic assessments to determine the extent and nature of a reading disability. Most often these instruments are administered individually so that students can demonstrate both oral and silent reading. Oral reading helps identify weaknesses in fundamental skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics, other word analysis strategies. The assessments also may include a subtest to gauge the depth and range of students' vocabulary knowledge, and they will definitely include passages for silent reading to measure ability to comprehend texts read independently. Obtaining a full "profile" of what students are able to read is essential for planning an instructional program that addresses students' weaknesses and builds on their strengths. For some students, regular classroom instruction that incorporates the strategies in Recommendation 3 may be enough; others may need more intensive intervention, as discussed in Recommendation 5.

Many different diagnostic and screening tests are available for use, ranging from fairly simple "informal reading inventories" (IRIs) to complex clinical instruments that require specialists to administer and interpret.[14] The simplest screening measure is an oral reading task, asking students to read a succession of passages ranging in difficulty from very easy to difficult. Standardized, validated IRIs offer such passages, often accompanied by some diagnostic information. When new entrants stumble over simple words, read haltingly, or cannot answer simple literal or factual questions about the text, these students are likely disabled in reading and need specialized help.

Individually administered diagnostic reading tests provide more detailed information about exact areas of reading difficulty. These tests often require a reading specialist or psychologist to administer and interpret, but they provide data that can point to interventions that will be most beneficial—one starting with the basics of letter-sound correspondence, decoding, or fluency, or one that aims to increase vocabulary and comprehension strategies. Many facilities are not able to support a specialist on staff, but "itinerant" specialists (with reasonable case loads) should be part of the overall educational structure of the juvenile justice system.

b. Include a system of progress monitoring in all content-area classes.

Progress monitoring[15] is a process that integrates small quizzes or tests into the curriculum so that teachers can check up on and keep track of students' learning, and make instructional decisions based on real-time information about students' acquisition of knowledge and skills. These quizzes are sometimes referred to as "benchmark tests" because curriculum programs, or scopes and sequences, have to determine the specific amounts of learning, or benchmarks, that students should accomplish by specific points in a full-year curriculum. If students have not achieved these benchmarks, teachers will know that students need more instruction before deficits mount and students are left far behind. Sharing progress-monitoring results with students brings them into the learning process.

> *Explicit instruction is designed to help students acquire foundational knowledge or skills to the point of mastery. Such instruction is teacher focused in that teachers provide explanations, model skills, and give students feedback as they practice new skills.*
>
> *Explicitly teaching—pronouncing, defining, explaining—vocabulary that may be unfamiliar to students but is relevant for a science unit increases students' chances of comprehending and remembering what they read.*

Progress monitoring is important in juvenile justice facilities, even if students will not be in attendance for a full academic year. Information from a progress-monitoring test when students enter a class will tell teachers quickly where students fall on a continuum of learning in a content area, that is, what they do and do not seem to know. Maybe the teacher needs to reteach skills before students can participate in instruction, and maybe teachers need to fill in background knowledge so new information makes sense. Administering progress-monitoring tests throughout the

13 Guzzetti, B., & Gamboa, M. (2004). Zines for social justice: Adolescent girls writing on their own. *Reading Research Quarterly, 39,* 408–436; and Hargood, M. C. (2007). Linking popular culture to literacy learning and teaching in the twenty-first century. In B. Guzzetti (Ed.). *Literacy for the new millennium: Adolescent Literacy* (pp. 223–238). Westport, CT: Praeger.

14 See http://www.adlit.org/article/23373#IRIs for a discussion of IRIs and a list of those that are commercially available, with their characteristics.

15 For more information, see http://www.studentprogress.org or http://www.rti4success.org.

time students are in a class helps teachers provide the most targeted instruction they can to each student for the time he or she is in a class.

c. Ensure that students' records are complete when they leave a juvenile justice facility.

Even if a student does not stay in a detention facility long enough to receive intensive reading help (see Recommendation 5), the results of diagnostic testing should be included within the documentation that accompanies that student when he or she leaves. The information provided can make a difference when students return to a mainstream school setting or are transferred to a long-term facility.

It is also important to document interventions or other supports that students received while in detention so that, ideally, those efforts can be continued in new settings. Any tests that students take as they prepare to leave a facility also should be included with their records, to give receiving schools and counselors a picture as full as possible of the academic experiences and progress these students have made while in the facility.

Recommendation 3: Integrate explicit instruction into content-area teaching to strengthen students' vocabulary and comprehension skills and strategies.

Content-area teachers rarely provide explicit and systematic instruction of vocabulary and comprehension skills and strategies because they don't think of themselves as "reading teachers." Yet, as content experts, they are in an excellent position to present these skills and strategies to the "content novices" in their classes and to explain and model how they, as "content experts" apply these strategies. Taking a few minutes to provide direct, explicit preparation for a lesson or a reading assignment can have huge benefits.[16]

Explicit vocabulary instruction presents the meaning of new words and also strengthens students' ability to figure out jargon and unfamiliar or technical terms in what they read. Being able to recognize words quickly and understand their meaning in context makes any reading task easier.

Comprehension instruction, often through teachers' explanations and modeling, gives students insight into the strategies that "expert readers" use and expands the range of strategies students can use themselves. Having these skills helps students engage with text more readily, feel more successful as readers, and be better positioned to acquire content-area knowledge.

Explicit instruction need not take long: Five minutes at the start of each lesson and short instructional periods during otherwise ordinary instructional interactions can pay off in the short and long term. The following strategies can help teachers follow this recommendation.

a. Dedicate a portion of the regular class session to explicit vocabulary instruction.

The actual time can be very brief, just a few minutes at the beginning of a class period to preteach the new or technical words and terms, jargon, and concepts that students may find unfamiliar or challenging. Preparing for this brief instruction involves thinking about the extent to which students may already know the vocabulary and concepts.

Teachers may feel uncertain about identifying the words to target for explicit instruction, but there are some simple criteria to follow. The most important criterion is the importance of the word or term to students' understanding of subject matter content in general and their comprehension of what they need to read. One excellent source of ideas is a book called *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction* by Isabel Beck, Margaret McKeown, and Linda Kucan.[17] Teachers, as content experts, are in the best position to select vocabulary words. A second criterion is use of familiar words or terms in discipline-specific ways. For example, students may know the meaning of the word "rational" as a general term meaning "reasonable" or "sane." But these meanings will not help a student understand the meaning of "rational numbers" in a math class.

Further instruction and reinforcement come when teachers use new vocabulary as often as possible during oral explanations and discussions and encourage students to use the vocabulary as they answer and discuss content-area subjects. Repeated exposure to new words increases students' learning, but accurate use of vocabulary will not happen immediately. A quick review of vocabulary and concepts in each class session and throughout an instructional unit is beneficial, as is posting of a "Word Wall" with relevant vocabulary for each unit the class is studying.

b. Teach students to attend to the structure of their content-area texts.

One essential strategy for success in content-area reading is attention to the specific characteristics of textual material in different disciplines.[18] Material used in science instruction displays a very different structure from that which students encounter in history or social studies texts. Science most often uses a procedural approach, showing, for example, how steps in a process depend on one another. History material may be presented chronologically, often without attention to the interrelationships of one event to another. Novels, poems, essays, and plays each have their own structural patterns that are different from those in other content areas. And mathematics texts and problems have their own way of presenting information. Paying attention to these structural characteristics increases students' ability to comprehend what they read because they can recognize the patterns authors have used to introduce and develop a plot, support ideas, build arguments, and in general convey the information. Teachers attend to structural characteristics as a natural

16 Heller, R., & Greenleaf, C. L. (2007). *Literary instruction in the content areas: Getting to the core of middle and high school improvement.* Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

17 For a clear discussion of vocabulary instruction, see Beck, I. B., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2002). *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction.* New York: Guilford.

18 Gersten, R., Fuchs, L. S., Williams, J. P., & Baker, S. (2001). Teaching reading comprehension strategies to students with learning disabilities: A review of research. *Review of Educational Research, 71,* 279–320.

part of reading, but it is often only through direct instruction that students gain insight into how experts read materials related to their respective fields.

Teachers can provide explicit instruction on these structural characteristics as they introduce reading material to students. Initial explanations of these structural characteristics become meaningful to students when teachers point them out as part of their discussions of what students have read.

c. Teach other comprehension strategies explicitly as part of content-area instruction.

There are several other important comprehension strategies that teachers can teach and reinforce easily and that can show immediate improvement in students' reading. These include previewing reading material, and paraphrasing and summarizing it.[19] Learning how to assess, activate, and build on prior knowledge is also essential for all students. Part of this process is learning to ask and answer questions.

Previewing involves thinking about that students know, as in filling in the K portion of a K-W-L (Know-Want To Learn-Learned) chart and making sure vocabulary is familiar. But previewing also has some very practical aspects, such as becoming familiar with the materials that will have to be read: Do books have questions to guide the reading or helpful headings, marginal notes, definitions of new vocabulary, or a glossary? During this phase of instruction, teachers can guide students to form questions about the content to be studied so that finding answers to these questions provides specific reading goals.

Summarizing and paraphrasing are also valuable comprehension supports that teachers can explain, model, and require of students as part of instruction. A **summary** is a shortened version of the most essential ideas presented in a text or in some part of a text, such as a section in a chapter, and is written without detail, elaborations, or personal opinions. Teachers may ask students to write summaries to help them understand what they have read and for use in reviewing at a later point what has been read.

A **paraphrase** also provides the main ideas of what has been read, but it may be far longer than a summary and may express the ideas in a different order or in different ways. Paraphrases can be a helpful check on comprehension because, when students paraphrase what they have read, they must maintain and include the author's ideas but restate them in their own words. Paraphrases and summaries can be developed orally or in writing.

Many students in juvenile justice facilities are likely to have had poor school attendance, so the background knowledge they possess in any content area may be insufficient for new grade-level learning. A few minutes spent **assessing, activating, and building new knowledge** before every class session is time well spent.

Teachers often use a **K-W-L** chart to review what students know about a topic and to help them activate background knowledge and then to engage them by brainstorming what they might want to learn. This process involves **asking questions** and **answering them** as they read independently and discuss information with others. Using a K-W-L chart also involves periodically helping students to summarize what they have learned throughout a unit. Such a chart consists of the three columns but can be customized to meet teachers' and students' needs. Initially, teachers may fill charts out with class input, but eventually, students should complete them on their own to access prior knowledge, develop questions to guide their learning, and then summarize what they have learned. The following graphic is a model of a K-W-L chart.

K What I Know	W What I Would Like to Know	L What I Have Learned
Facts, information, and vocabulary about the topic—some of which may be incorrect	What students would like to know about the topic or questions they would like to have answered	A summary of what has been learned, including new vocabulary

The value of such charts is that they help students organize and keep track of their ideas. For more information about graphic organizers, see section d, below.

d. Provide students with guides and external organizers to help them improve their comprehension and memory of text.

Graphic organizers in the form of diagrams or pictorial displays can help students remember what they read, discover relationships among ideas, reinforce attention to structural differences, plan what to write, and actually demonstrate learning.[20] The K-W-L chart, discussed above, is only one example of this valuable learning support.

> *Graphic organizers—from the simple Venn diagram to far more complicated decision trees—help students organize, structure, present, and remember information. Many organizers are available online for free from sources such as http://www.eduplace.com or http://www.edhelper.com*

As with the K-W-L chart, teachers first demonstrate the interrelations of ideas and information by developing a graphic organizer[21] as part of preteaching. Doing so prepares students for instruction to follow and provides an excellent opportunity to reinforce vocabulary. Students also may use graphic organizers as a means for review. Graphic organizers may be as simple as a graphic used to help English students track the characters, setting, problem, and resolution to the problem in a short story or as complex as a diagram showing interactions of the multiple decisions that led to a historical event. As students become familiar with this approach, they should be asked

19 National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction* (NIH Publication No. 00–4769). Washington, DC: Author.

20 See National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000).

21 Many Web sites provide examples of graphic organizers for teachers in all content areas to use and adapt.

to develop their own graphic organizers as a reminder of what they have learned. In addition, a student-developed graphic organizer, such as a briefly written but accurate flow chart showing situations, actions, or decisions leading to a historical event, can give teachers far more insight into students' learning than would a multiple-choice quiz or a poorly written essay.

e. Reinforce explicit instruction to ensure that students understand and can use the vocabulary and comprehension strategies that have been explained and modeled.

Students who struggle with literacy often have a limited range of strategies with which to figure out unfamiliar words or make sense of complex text. When these students hit a word they don't recognize or a difficult passage, they cannot apply alternative strategies to help them "fix up" their comprehension and continue reading. Stronger readers often intuit the strategies they need, by reflecting on what seems to work for them, and subsequently develop a set of effective reading behaviors from which to select as they read new material.

Many struggling readers don't know how to look for —or use—resource materials such as adjunct aids, glossaries, and marginal notes in their textbooks; nor do they necessarily know how to use dictionaries or other print or electronic tools. Content-area teachers don't need to go back to basic instruction about these elements of independent vocabulary learning, but when they point these elements out, explain their value, and model their use, students gain valuable insight into behaviors used by proficient readers. Students need to understand how mastering these many skills and strategies will better prepare them for reentry into mainstream schools and for achieving their long-term educational goals. This understanding can motivate them to make the skills and strategies their own.

Cumulatively, strategies such as summarizing and paraphrasing, attending to adjunct aids like glossaries, using print and electronic references, and organizing ideas and relationships graphically amount to the "study skills" that many adolescents lack. Teaching students test-taking skills is another aspect of this instruction that can provide them with a valuable tool for future academic experiences.

f. Give students opportunities to write in order to support their reading and to build skills in a risk-free environment.

Adolescents who are struggling readers often also struggle to express themselves in writing, especially in formal, academic settings. Improving students' writing can take a long time and in many ways is beyond the purview of secondary content-area teachers, even in mainstream schools. English language arts teachers in juvenile justice facilities can provide students with encouragement and feedback on their written work, but that is only one way in which writing development can be supported. Two other important approaches that all teachers can integrate into their classes are having students write about the texts they read and increasing the amount of writing students do.[22]

Students can write about what they read in a variety of ways. As discussed above, students can write summaries and paraphrases to review what they have read; they can write briefly to track their comprehension processes in K-W-L charts and other graphics; and they can keep "learning logs" to record their questions and answers, as well as their progress. Even simple note taking gets students to write about what they read. These modes of writing are not formal and structured, but they can increase students' confidence as writers and also give them ways to review what they have been learning.

> *Teachers and administrators may wonder how they can "get all this done" in a regular block of time. Lindy Khan, principal of the Contra Costa School in California, recommends structuring the school day into 90-minute or double blocks to minimize time wasted in transition from class to class. Students attend three long classes one day and three* different *long classes the next day. This approach, which is common in many mainstream schools, gives teachers more time to get to know their students and establish trust.*

A more formal way for students to write about what they read is for teachers in content classes—and not just English language arts—to assign collaborative writing projects. It is important, of course, that teachers understand that the written products may not be as "polished" as they might want. Collaborative writing, done by pairs or small groups, can work well to encourage formal writing because it relieves each individual of the burden of producing a highly developed essay or report. Together, the group of collaborators can follow three important steps of the writing process: **prewriting**, or generating and noting ideas to be included; **drafting**; and **revising** the draft to develop a written product. As they work, they consider one another's contributions, help and correct one another, and pool their shared learning. The teacher should monitor, prompt, and praise as the work progresses.

The second approach—increasing the amount of writing students do—is also important but in different ways. This guide has already mentioned encouraging students to keep journals of their experiences and to record their thoughts and ideas. Allowing students to engage in creative writing, including creating dramatic performances, short stories, or poetry, gives them other outlets that help them reflect on their experiences—and also increases their writing skills. Practical writing, such as writing letters of application for jobs, is also important. According to a report of the National Commission on Writing, more and more employers in service- or knowledge-based industries consider letters of application in making hiring decisions.[23]

All these ideas for student writing, both informal and more formal, can be most effective when they are offered in a risk-free environment. The reality of learning to write is that it takes a long, long time, as emergent writers (of any age) learn to handle the mechanics of spelling and grammar and the more sophisticated aspects of audience awareness, tone, genre, and stylistic convention. Nevertheless, giving students opportunities to write without fear of criticism

22 Graham, S., & Perin, D. (2007). *Writing next: Effective strategies to improve writing of adolescents in middle and high schools.* New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York.

23 National Commission on Writing. (2005). *Writing: A powerful message from State Government.* Retrieved June 7, 2010, from http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/writingcom/powerful-message-from-state.pdf

primarily because of low-level mechanical errors can introduce them to a powerful means of self-expression and learning. Needless to say, composing with a computer that checks spelling and grammar can raise students' awareness of their writing strategies and make the process of writing less daunting.

Recommendation 4: Select materials carefully to reinforce and support student learning and provide opportunities for practice.

Many students find textbooks boring, often because they are written in an awkward, pedantic style and lack the kinds of learning resources or supports that can make a huge difference for students who find reading challenging. Another problem with much traditional content-area text material is that authors make incorrect assumptions about the breadth and depth of students' prior knowledge and thus do not provide enough background or supplementary information to allow students to form relationships between what they already know and new ideas or information. This is often a problem for struggling readers who attend school regularly but creates an especially large hurdle for students whose attendance has been sporadic. Students who already perceive themselves as poor learners may just push textbooks aside as more evidence that they are destined for failure, even if the content itself has some inherent interest for them.[24]

Tips for Effective Discussion

1. Start a discussion with questions that elicit students' reactions to and positions about the text.
2. Model reasoning and comprehension processes by "thinking aloud" about the text.
3. Propose counterarguments or positions and encourage students to do the same.
4. Acknowledge good reasoning and explain why it's sound.
5. Provide a summary as the discussion draws to a close or ask students to provide their own summaries.

The following strategies show how to provide more variety in the materials used for teaching and learning.

a. Identify and use content-area class materials that will supplement what standard textbooks offer.

Providing a diverse set of materials for each content class is a very sound investment. Trade publications, materials from Web-based sources, and resources such as dictionaries and encyclopedias can help to spark and maintain students' interest. Appropriate materials should meet two main criteria: First, the difficulty levels should span a wide range, from very easy to more sophisticated, so that all students have a chance to participate in current instruction. Second, the materials should cover the subject area broadly, so that students have opportunities to fill in gaps in their background knowledge while also learning new information.

b. Identify and use material that will support vocabulary and comprehension instruction.

Teachers' explicit instruction and modeling are most effective when the text used while introducing and reinforcing skills and strategies has been carefully selected. For example, it is far more difficult to demonstrate summarization in a narrative than in a text that provides information. Texts used for these purposes should be at the appropriate reading level for students, so that the value of strategies is readily apparent. If a text is too difficult, even the best modeling is ineffective; but when a text is too easy, students can't see the need for the strategy that is modeled. An important criterion for selecting the right materials is that they include textual aids, like glossaries or marginal notes; advance organizers to activate prior knowledge; graphic organizers or "maps" to summarize ideas that are presented; and questions or prompts that encourage students to create links between what they know and the new information that is presented.

c. Select text materials that stimulate discussion.

As stated previously, discussion can be a valuable component of content-area instruction, and discussion can be the means for modeling and reinforcing comprehension strategies. One kind of discussion focuses on the information needed for content learning. A second and very valuable kind develops deep understanding, can build off shared reading experiences, and may involve critically analyzing and perhaps challenging the author's conclusions through reasoning and/or applying personal experiences and knowledge. Discussions allow students to engage in sustained exchanges with others, present and defend points of view in a neutral way, use text content and background knowledge, and listen to others' points of view.

d. Provide varied materials for reading during students' free time.

In addition to actual instructional materials used in content-area classes, students in detention centers benefit from access to a broad range of leisure reading material at different levels. Newspapers and magazines continue students' connections to current events and the broader world. Some, like topical magazines—sports, cars, fashion, food, teen health, and so forth—can engage students who actually may never have considered reading a leisure activity. Informational materials, such as preparation material for drivers' license tests, disease prevention brochures, and GED preparation guides, can also be valuable.

Keeping books, magazines, and so forth in a centralized place—perhaps in an actual library or in an area of a computer lab—makes it easy to find something to read and emphasizes that spending time reading is an acceptable after-school activity. Having a separate library in a dormitory increases students' access to books and reinforces the idea that reading is a worthwhile and valued leisure pursuit.

24 For a clear discussion of the challenges many textbooks present to students, especially those who are not confident about their reading abilities, see Beck, I. B., & McKeown, M. G. (2006). *Questioning the author.* New York: Guilford.

e. Recognize the potential of electronic sources for motivation, supplemental instructional material, and students' independent learning.

It is not the purpose of this guide to defend or refute the use of the Internet or electronic media and the challenges this use can create in instructional settings. But the Internet and electronic media provide potentially powerful tools and should not be overlooked in the search for ways to reinforce and support learning. Even sites such as Wikipedia can become invaluable sources of easy-to-read supplementary information for struggling readers. Word processing, with spell and grammar checkers, has been mentioned already as an important support for writing development and for motivation.

Recommendation 5: Provide infrastructural changes, teacher support, and leadership that can facilitate literacy instruction.

Teaching and administrative staff who work in juvenile detention programs face many challenges—some similar to those in mainstream secondary education settings and some unique to their programs. Common challenges include staff knowledge of the literacy needs of students and capacity to change instruction; financial resources; and high turnover of both staff and students.

The following strategies can be the start of a planning process to make infrastructural changes within a facility to address chronic problems of adolescents who are struggling readers.

a. Establish a literacy-focused culture that demonstrates to teachers and students the importance of reading and writing.

Many of the strategies mentioned in this guide contribute to establishing a literacy-focused culture: asking new arrivals about their "reading histories," including vocabulary and comprehension instruction in content-area classes, making a wide range of print and electronic material available so that students have opportunities to use reading for learning and for leisure, and offering specialized interventions.

Such a culture demonstrates that all staff, administrators and teachers alike, value literacy and expect that even the students who struggle most will engage in some literacy pursuits. A focus on increasing students' literacy skills reinforces the message that the juvenile justice facility is a place for learning, where rehabilitation and skill development are both important goals. Such an atmosphere bridges the high rate of teacher turnover in many juvenile justice centers and is quickly apparent to new entrants.

b. Reallocate funding, as needed, to support changes in instructional practice.

Administrators in detention facilities can play a leadership role in demonstrating the value they place on carrying out the recommendations in this guide by reallocating funding toward professional development for teachers, provision of classroom materials at various reading levels, books and other print materials for students' independent reading, use of technology as a resource, and availability of screening or diagnostic testing and reading interventions for the neediest students. Establishing a school or dorm library contributes to the literacy-focused culture discussed in the previous strategy.

c. Provide intensive interventions to address specific areas of weakness and build areas of strength.

Some adolescents who struggle academically have such severe literacy deficits they need intensive, specialized instruction to accelerate literacy development by reinforcing areas of strength and by focusing on the critical elements of knowledge and skill that are weak. Even the most thoughtfully planned classroom instruction cannot provide such specialized instruction and learning opportunities. According to Title I, Part D, data and empirical research, targeted reading interventions can be successful for incarcerated students.[25]

Models for intervention include intensive individual or small-group instruction that supplements or replaces regular instruction. For example, students with the severest needs may be pulled out for specialized help, rather than participating in regular English language arts instruction. Sometimes interventions are offered after regular instruction ends, in an after-school setting. The key is that the instruction is intensive, ideally offered every day for an extended period of time, and that it targets students' identified needs.

Detention facilities may face two challenges in providing intensive interventions to their most needy students. The first is that commercial intervention programs can be costly, and the second is that intervention teachers need to be trained to implement the program appropriately. Overcoming these challenges is important enough to make administrators consider reallocation of funds from Title I, Part D, or other supplemental State and local funding sources.

Even a fairly small amount of time in an intensive intervention class can make a difference for students, especially when their content-area instruction features the strategies included in Recommendations 1, 2, and 3—and even more when students returning to mainstream school settings continue to receive this help.[26]

d. Provide professional development opportunities to strengthen teachers' strategies for teaching comprehension within their content areas, for classroom management, and for enhancing motivation and engagement.

Very few secondary administrators and content-area teachers have been trained to consider the literacy needs of their students, especially those who struggle to make sense of text and to express themselves in writing. The first four recommendations in this guide suggest relatively simple changes that teachers can make to their classrooms, their teaching, and the materials they use. Professional development can help teachers understand these changes. Teachers, even those who teach language arts, can also benefit from

25 National Commission on Writing. (2005). *Writing: A powerful message from State Government*. Retrieved June 7, 2010, from http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/writingcom/powerful-message-from-state.pdf

26 See Houchins, D. E., et al. (2008).

An excellent source of information about interventions is Deshler, D. D., Palinscar, A. S., Biancarosa, G., & Nair, N. (2007). Informed choices for struggling readers. *Newark, DE: International Reading Association.*

professional development that offers clear models for instructional shifts such as identifying vocabulary to highlight or posing the kinds of questions that engage students in discussions. These professional development sessions need to encourage teachers to practice new strategies, such as verbalizing their comprehension processes as they think aloud about a piece of text. Professional development on using assessment data to guide instruction and developing progress-monitoring tools is also essential.

Another important area of professional development is classroom management. No matter where they teach, secondary teachers often prefer a lecture or transmission style of teaching: teacher control is tight, and students are not encouraged to participate other than to receive what teachers say. Such an environment rarely engages or motivates students, so Recommendation 1 advises teachers to "open up" their classrooms in ways that will welcome and involve students and help them think of themselves as learners. Teachers need clear directions for making such a shift, and they need support as they try out the strategies that can bring it about.

If teachers are to make any shifts in their classroom management styles, they need to deepen their understanding of the interpersonal aspects of teaching and learning; the result can be greater student engagement and motivation. Components of this understanding include cultural competency[27] and the ability to handle the routine pressures of classroom life. Opening the classroom for more discussion, peer interaction, individualized attention, and self-directed learning increases motivation and engagement but can also give students opportunities to "push their teacher's buttons." Teachers need to learn that a key to classroom management is staying calm under stress.

If detention facilities can't offer professional development on site, administrators and teachers should be encouraged—and given release time—to attend relevant professional development sessions provided in nearby school districts. Although training for staff in juvenile justice facilities should in most cases be specialized, sessions that focus on "literacy across the content areas" are fairly common for mainstream educators. Such sessions can offer practical information that teachers in facilities can make their own as they apply the information.

e. Encourage teachers to learn from one another about successful strategies to provide vocabulary and comprehension instruction and support student learning.

Every educator knows the old saying about teachers' closing their classroom doors and doing their own thing. Such an environment discourages teachers from talking with and learning from one another. Behavioral shifts like the ones in Recommendations 1, 2, and 3 are easier to make when teachers share successes and frustrations as well as support one another through the change process.

Lindy Khan wanted to make positive changes when she became principal at Contra Costa and knew that her leadership alone would not improve the school. She believes that what brought teachers together to improve the school was that some teachers themselves became leaders in the change process. They thought about and implemented changes in curriculum and in instruction in their content areas, as recommended in this Guide, and formed a learning community to support each other and their students.

Teachers, even in relatively small schools or facilities, may not automatically form "professional learning communities," at least not without structures that encourage and allow them to do so. Teachers benefit when they have common time for planning or regular team meetings that give them opportunities to discuss student performance, their own teaching, and learning in general. These opportunities should not be underestimated. Teachers need to spend time together if they are going to learn from one another.

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27 Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Selected Resources for Teachers and Administrators

Valuable Books for Reference and Discussion

Beck, I. B., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2002). *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction.* New York: Guilford.

Beck, I. B., & McKeown, M. G. (2006). *Questioning the author.* New York: Guilford.

These two books provide excellent discussions of changes teachers can make in their instruction to benefit all students, not just those who struggle most with literacy.

Deshler, D. D., Palinscar, A. S., Biancarosa, G., & Nair, N. (2007). *Informed choices for struggling readers.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

In addition to providing information about specific literacy interventions and a discussion of their costs, this book provides background on practices that teachers and administrators can use to help struggling readers improve.

Guthrie, J. T. (Ed.) (2008). *Engaging adolescents in reading.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Guthrie, J.T., & Wigfield, A. (Eds.) (1997). *Reading engagement: Motivating readers through integrated instruction.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

The first of these books provides research about students' self-efficacy during adolescence, along with evidence-based strategies for engaging them more fully in reading. The second book presents numerous ideas for building engagement and creating classrooms that motivate students to take more control over their own learning.

Valuable Reports and Guides With Research-Based Practice Suggestions for Teachers And Administrators

Biancarosa, G., & Snow, C. E. (2004). *Reading next: A vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy* (A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York). Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

This report provides evidence-based but commonsense principles that any educational facility—mainstream or within a juvenile justice facility—can use to ensure that all of the facility's instruction supports students' literacy learning. Retrieved July 20, 2010 from http://www.all4ed.org/files/ReadingNext.pdf

Graham, S., & Perin, D. (2007). *Writing next: Effective strategies to improve writing for adolescents in middle and high schools* (A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York). Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

The primary purpose of this report is to provide a meta-analysis of research on 11 writing strategies. Evidence supports these strategies as having an effect when integrated into instruction. The underlying assumption is education in mainstream schools, but the strategies—especially writing in content learning—can be effective even when students are in attendance for less time. Retrieved July 20, 2010 from http://www.all4ed.org/files/WritingNext.pdf

Heller, R., & Greenleaf, C. L. (2007). *Literacy instruction in the content areas: Getting to the core of middle and high school improvement.* Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

In addition to explaining the importance of literacy instruction in the content area, this report provides detailed and very clear examples of the kinds of planning that teachers in different content areas must do to adopt this approach. Retrieved July 20, 2010 from http://www.all4ed.org/files/LitCon.pdf

Kamil, M. L., Borman, G. D., Dole, J., Kral, C. C., Salinger, T., & Torgesen, J. (2008). *Improving adolescent literacy: Effective classroom and intervention practices: An IES practice guide* (NCEE # 2008-4027). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

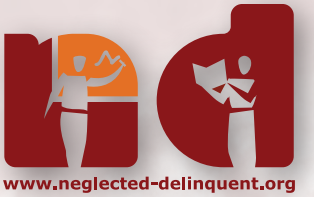
This practice guide provides recommendations for teachers at the secondary level, along with a discussion of the "roadblocks" to implementing the recommendations and strategies for overcoming these obstacles. All the recommendations are grounded in research on students' reading, and the relative strength of the research base is also discussed. The focus of the practice guide is on mainstream secondary schools. Retrieved July 20, 2010 from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc

Short, D. K., & Fitzsimmons, S. (2007). *Double the work: Challenges and solutions to acquiring language and academic literacy for adolescent English language learners* (A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York). Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

As the title suggests, this report discusses challenges teachers and students face when adolescents are trying to learn both English and the content-area material they need to know to be successful in secondary school. Retrieved July 20, 2010 from http://www.all4ed.org/files/DoubleWork.pdf

Torgesen, J. K., Houston, D. D., Rissman, L. M., Decker, S. M., Roberts, G., Wexler, J., et al. (2007). *Academic literacy instruction for adolescents: A guidance document from the Center on Instruction.* Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction.

This is another valuable set of research-based recommendations on adolescent literacy, focused on teachers in mainstream secondary schools. Retrieved July 20, 2010 from http://www.centeroninstruction.org/files/Academic%20Literacy.pdf



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