Annotated Guide for Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4–9

Purpose

This document was developed by the Agency of Education (AOE) to support supervisory unions and districts (SU/SDs), educators, and the Advisory Council on Literacy in performing their duties as defined in Act 28 of 2021. What follows is an annotated summary of [Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4-9](#) from What Works Clearinghouse (WWC). This practice guide, as summarized below, is designed to help classroom teachers and specialists improve reading ability of students in grades 4-9 and contains recommendations of strategies to build students' decoding skills, fluency, and comprehension.

Background

On page 1 of the guide, WWC states:

> *Virtually every teacher works with at least some and sometimes many, students who struggle to read on grade level. The 2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reported that over a third of fourth-grade students and a quarter of eighth-grade students read at a level below NAEP Basic. Low reading scores in these grade levels are particularly troublesome when considering that so much of the curriculum in grades 4–9 (and beyond) requires the ability to read and understand increasingly complex texts. To understand the content taught in subject-area classes, students need to engage with and gain information from complex texts.*

Recommendations

The three recommendations that have the strongest evidence include:

- *Build students' decoding skills so they can read complex multisyllabic words;*
- *Provide purposeful fluency-building activities to help students read effortlessly; and*
- *Routinely use a set of comprehension-building practices to help students make sense of the text.* (3)

The recommendation with "moderate" evidence is:

- *Provide students with opportunities to practice making sense of stretch text (i.e., challenging text) that will expose them to complex ideas and information.* (3)

More information about these recommendations can be found below. See pages 2-3 of the guide for more information about what the levels of evidence mean and how they are calculated.

Contact Information:

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Recommendation 1: Build Students' Decoding Skills So They Can Read Complex Multisyllabic Words (pages 4-11)

As students progress in school, words that appear in grade-level texts become more difficult to read. In early-elementary grades, texts often include monosyllabic words, such as bat and ball, as well as simpler multisyllabic words, such as outside and under. By upper-elementary and middle school grades, texts include more complex multisyllabic words, such as disorganization and equilibrium. Many of these difficult multisyllabic words are essential for understanding the meaning of the texts. For that reason, adequate word-reading skills are essential for understanding the more complex texts that appear in these higher grade levels. (4)

How to carry out the recommendation:

- "Identify the level of students' word-reading skills and teach vowel and consonant letter-sounds and combinations, as necessary" (4-6).
- "Teach students a routine they can use to decode multisyllabic words" (6-9).
- "Embed spelling instruction in the lesson" (9-10).
- "Engage students in a wide array of activities that allow them to practice reading multisyllabic words accurately and with increasing automaticity" (10).

Potential obstacles and solutions can be found on page 11, including student issues with vocabulary and comprehension.

Recommendation 2: Provide Purposeful Fluency-Building Activities to Help Students Read Effortlessly (pages 12-19)

"Fluency is the ability to read text accurately, with ease, expression, and appropriate pacing…When students read fluently, they can turn their attention from sounding out the individual words to making sense of what they are reading" (12).

How to carry out the recommendation:

- "Provide a purpose for each repeated reading" (12-15).
- "Focus some instructional time on reading with prosody" (15-16).
- "Regularly provide opportunities for students to read a wide range of texts" (16).

Potential obstacles and solutions can be found on pages 17-19, including unproductive partner reading and students rushing through timed readings.

Recommendation 3: Routinely Use a Set of Comprehension-Building Practices to Help Students Make Sense of the Text (pages 20-67)

By the time students are in upper-elementary grades, reading material in all subject areas conveys information and ideas that students are expected to learn and understand. When students are unable to understand these texts, they miss crucial opportunities to learn grade-level content. The goal of this recommendation is to provide teachers with ways to support students as they learn and practice routines and develop reading habits that enable students to understand what they are reading. (20)

Recommendation 3, Part A: Build Students' world and Word Knowledge So They Can Make Sense of the Text (pages 22-36)

How to carry out Part A of the recommendation:

- "Develop world knowledge that is relevant for making sense of the passage" (22-24).
- "Teach the meaning of a few words that are essential for understanding the passage" (24-26).
- "Teach students how to derive meanings of unknown words using context" (26-28).
- "Teach prefixes and suffixes to help students derive meanings of words" (29-33).
- "Teach the meaning of Latin and Greek roots" (34-35).

Potential obstacles and solutions can be found on page 36, including the concern that word study will take too much time.

Recommendation 3, Part B: Consistently Provide Students with Opportunities to Ask and Answer Questions to Better Understand the Text They Read (pages 37-46)

How to carry out Part B of the recommendation:

- "Explicitly teach students how to find and justify answers to different types of questions" (37-41).
- "Provide ample opportunities for students to collaboratively answer questions" (41-44).
- "Teach students to ask questions about the text while reading" (44-45).

Potential obstacles and solutions can be found on pages 45-46, including students struggling to come up with questions as they read.

Recommendation 3, Part C: Teach Students a Routine for Determining the Gist of a Short Section of Text (pages 47-58)

How to carry out Part C of the recommendation:

- "Model how to use a routine to generate gist statements" (47-50).
- "Teach students how to use text structures to generate gist statements" (51-54).
- "Work collaboratively with students to generate gist statements" (54-57).

Potential obstacles and solutions can be found on pages 57-58, including the choosing the best texts.

Recommendation 3, Part D: Teach Students to Monitor Their Comprehension as They Read (pages 59-64)

How to carry out Part D of the recommendation:

- "Help students determine when they do not understand the text" (59-60).
- "Teach students to ask themselves questions as they read to check their understanding and figure out what the text is about" (60-62).
- "Provide opportunities for students to reflect on what they have learned" (62-63).

Potential obstacles and solutions can be found on pages 63-64, including students who do not want to share what they do not understand.

Recommendation 3, Summary: Putting Together the Comprehension-Building Practices in Parts A-D (pages 65-67)

This section provides a sample lesson that show Parts A-D of Recommendation 3 being put together.

Recommendation 4: Provide Students with Opportunities to Practice Making Sense of Stretch Text (i.e., Challenging Text) that Will Expose Them to Complex Ideas and Information (pages 68-76)

Stretch texts can provide students with exposure to sophisticated vocabulary, more intricate sentence structures, and complex ideas. Exposure to these higher-level vocabulary words, sentences, and ideas can help students develop confidence, deeper knowledge, and richer perspectives on the texts they read in the future. (68)

How to carry out the recommendation:

- "Prepare for the lesson by carefully selecting appropriate stretch texts, choosing points to stop for discussion and clarification, and identifying words to teach" (69-71).
- "Provide significant support as the group works through a stretch text together" (71-74).
- "After students demonstrate comfort with reading stretch texts with the group, provide students with electronic supports to use when independently reading stretch text to assist with pronunciation of difficult words and word meanings" (75).

Potential obstacles and solutions can be found on pages 75-76, including what to do when students would prefer to read literary text instead of informational.

Resources

[Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices](#) (WWC)

[Studies Reviewed for Providing Reading Interventions Practice Guide](#) (WWC)

[Webinars about the Providing Reading Interventions Practice Guide and Recommendations](#) (WWC)

Citation

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