

# DOINGWHATWORKS



## Presentation

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

### Interventions for Struggling Readers

June 2009

Topic: Adolescent Literacy

Practice: Intensive Intervention

#### Highlights

- Schools should use reliable screening instruments followed by diagnostic assessments, monitor student progress on a regular basis, and provide intensive intervention at varying levels for struggling readers.
- Students who need more support to increase their literacy skills than provided in regular classrooms should be screened, identified and offered appropriate interventions by qualified specialists.
- It is critical to select an intervention that provides an explicit instructional focus to meet each student's identified learning needs.
- The intensiveness of interventions must match student needs: the greater the instructional need, the more intensive the intervention.

## Full Transcript

### Slide 1: Welcome

Welcome to the overview on Interventions for Struggling Readers.

### Slide 2: Feeling the need

Mr. Coomer, a history teacher at Middleview High School, is concerned about students who are struggling to keep up with the required reading in his courses. Their skills just aren't adequate, and he's not quite sure what to do.

While Principal Takai has heard concerns like Mr. Coomer's from other teachers as well, he's been unable to offer a feasible solution with current staffing. He hopes to hire a high school reading specialist next year to work directly with struggling students, but he expects a lot of resistance from the board about adding another faculty member.

### Slide 3: Roots of issues

Students who have experienced reading difficulties in elementary school often have continued issues in content areas when they reach high school. Even students who perform well in earlier grades, however, may find themselves struggling with comprehending increasingly complex texts in courses like history and science.

### Slide 4: Disturbing numbers

In middle and high school, the inability to read at grade level impacts performance in all content areas. In fact, the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress reading assessment revealed that 69 percent of eighth graders are not proficient in comprehending texts at their grade level.

### Slide 5: Root causes

While many content teachers realize students are struggling with literacy, they have difficulty pinpointing the root causes. A student may have poor decoding or word analysis skills, limited vocabulary, or inefficient comprehension strategies. These reading issues will interfere with students' learning in science, history, mathematics, and literature.

### Slide 6: Meeting needs

Some of these students will need intensive, supplemental reading interventions provided individually or in small groups by teachers with specialist credentials. Even though these students' needs cannot be fully met within the regular classroom, content teachers do play a critical role by coordinating with reading specialists and using instructional strategies to assist struggling readers as they learn how to read content text.

### Slide 7: Screening and assessments

Content teachers' recommendations are important for initiating reading interventions. Combined with the expertise of a reading specialist to screen students for reading problems, diagnose specific issues, and provide intensive instruction, students can be given a better chance to learn the necessary reading skills.

It's too easy to overlook some students who need additional help with their reading skills, so the use of a reliable screening assessment is recommended as a first step toward determining the need for intervention.

### Slide 8: Match

Once a student's specific literacy needs have been identified, the reading specialist can select an intervention targeted to those needs.

The intensity of the intervention and length of time dedicated to additional instruction is designed to match the needs of individual students.

### Slide 9: Specific issues

Students who are reading more than two levels below their grade may need help with basic phonemic, decoding, and word analysis skills. Students who are one or two levels behind may need to focus on building vocabulary and practicing reading comprehension strategies.

As the specialist works with students, the primary goal is for students to learn to use all of the strategies independently.

### Slide 10: Content teachers

In many schools, the reading specialist has another important role -- coaching content teachers in instructional strategies such as questioning techniques, and providing them with text comprehension learning aids, such as graphic organizers.

With such support, content course teachers can adjust classroom methods to enhance learning for all

students, including those struggling in reading.

### Slide 11: Schoolwide commitment

School leaders also play a key role in supporting struggling readers. By providing a clear and consistent message about student literacy development, administrators reinforce the understanding that all teachers, not just reading specialists, play a role in the school's larger literacy program. It makes a difference when all content teachers are conscious of their responsibilities in helping students learn to read and comprehend text material.

### Slide 12: Positive results

Principal Takai successfully built his case for a reading specialist. He had the strong support of most faculty members, including Mr. Coomer, who has already recommended ten students from his history courses for reading interventions. He has been working closely with the reading specialist, teaching his students to recognize the organizational structure of history texts and to use graphic organizers to keep track of what they are learning. He is finding that all his students are more engaged and having greater success.

### Slide 13: Learn more

To learn more about Interventions for Struggling Readers, see the additional materials on the Doing What Works website.