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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from Teaching Foundational Skills to Adolescent Readers.

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Teaching Foundational Skills to Adolescent Readers: Study Guide

This book addresses a significant trend the nation is seeing in secondary education: the need to strengthen the reading skills of adolescent readers. As educators, we are inundated with so many content demands that teaching students how to read or engaging in practices that students should already know seems like yet another thing. However, it's never too late for students to learn how to read well. Our hope is that this text empowers you with practical, research-driven strategies to build literacy skills students need in school and beyond.

The battery model we've developed describes six components needed to strengthen adolescent readers: self-efficacy, background knowledge, word recognition, word knowledge, sentence analysis, and verbal reasoning. Together, these components power up readers so that students can increasingly bear the cognitive weight of and increase their independence in learning disciplinary content. While Chapter 7 deals explicitly with intervention and Tier 3 supports, this book is designed to provide teachers with strategies to use with all learners in Tier 1 instruction without having to step outside their core curricula.

Each chapter contains several features:

- Plug Into the Research: Research to support the component
- Increase Your Battery Life: Tips to maximize impact
- Power Up Classroom Practice: Strategies you can use to strengthen reading skills
- Voices From the Field: Videos and artifacts from teachers enacting strategies with middle and high school students
- Take Charge: Summary of the big ideas of the chapter and reflection questions

Whether you're reading on your own or with colleagues, we hope this text sparks *aha!* moments, adds to your repertoire of knowledge and skills, reinforces familiar practices, and helps you navigate the terrain of adolescent reading skills with ease. Ultimately, we want to help you enact practices that positively impact students' reading comprehension to deepen learning.

Thanks for joining us on this journey to strengthen readers.

Doug, Nancy, Sarah, Kierstan, and Aida

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Introduction. *Who Are Adolescent Readers?*

Big Ideas

- Reading struggles in adolescence are not rare; they’re often just hidden in plain sight.
- National and international data suggest a strong need to build and reinforce reading skills of adolescent readers.
- Foundational reading instruction doesn’t stop in elementary school. It must be adapted, not abandoned, for older students.

SPOTLIGHT FEATURE	
Overview of Chapters and Framework	This section gives a high-level overview of each part of the battery model to explain what it is and describe its function in reading.

Discussion Questions

- What trends do you notice in your student data regarding reading, and how does this affect you in learning your content?
- What parts of the battery are drained in your students?
- How might the strengthening of adolescent reading skills enhance students’ academic learning in your classroom or school?

3-2-1 Reflection

3: What are *three* things you learned from the text?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

2: What are *two* things you found interesting or exciting from the reading?

1. _____
2. _____

1: What is *one* question you still have about the reading?

1. _____

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Chapter 2. Background Knowledge: From the Known to the New

Big Ideas

- What students already know affects how well they understand a text.
- Effective readers consciously and unconsciously activate prior knowledge as they read.
- Background knowledge is not necessarily a matter of exposure; teachers must be intentional and strategic about the knowledge they build for adolescent readers.

SPOTLIGHT FEATURE	
Plug Into the Research	This research section establishes background knowledge as necessary for adolescent readers in making sense of texts. It grounds the chapter in evidence that paying attention to and intentionally building background knowledge has far-reaching impact on comprehension and content learning.

Discussion Questions

- What role does background knowledge play in your content and grade level?
- What are the implications of background knowledge gaps on reading comprehension?
- What tools or strategies support students in building background knowledge collaboratively and independently?

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Chapter 3. Word Recognition: Free Up Cognitive Space, One Word at a Time

Big Ideas

- Fluent reading frees up space in the brain for deeper thinking and comprehension.
- Adolescents benefit from fluency instruction that respects their age and text complexity.
- Poor word recognition isn't always visible in readers, but it's always a barrier to comprehension.

SPOTLIGHT FEATURE	
Plug Into the Research	Examining how word recognition and fluency impacts reading comprehension provides secondary educators with confirmatory evidence about what's happening with readers when they see words. It also builds knowledge about orthographic mapping, an important, yet lesser-known concept in secondary education.

Discussion Questions

- How does fluency connect to comprehension?
- Why might adolescent students resist word recognition instruction, and how can teachers address this?
- What role do multisyllabic word strategies play in content-area reading? How can you incorporate these strategies in your classroom?

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Chapter 4. Word Knowledge: The More You Know, the More You Can Learn

Big Ideas

- Words are the gateway to content learning when students own them.
- Morphology is a powerful and underused tool to help readers make sense of texts.
- Academic language development must be intentionally crafted through comprehensive vocabulary instruction.

SPOTLIGHT FEATURE	
Increase Your Battery Life	Secondary educators often know the importance of academic vocabulary acquisition, but there are some strong misconceptions about word learning. This feature unpacks common vocabulary practices and builds knowledge on how to maximize their impact on reading and retention.

Discussion Questions

- What are your current methods for teaching vocabulary, and what do you notice about students’ vocabulary acquisition?
- What make vocabulary “sticky” (memorable) for adolescent readers?
- In what ways can you embed morphological awareness into content instruction (e.g., science, language arts, history)?

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Chapter 5. Sentence Analysis: Unlocking the Structure of Language

Big Ideas

- Because sentences are increasingly complex at the secondary level, analysis of syntax helps readers make sense of texts.
- Understanding structure leads to better comprehension of meaning by helping students see the logic of language.

SPOTLIGHT FEATURE	
Power Up Classroom Practice	Sentence analysis is often neglected in many classrooms at the secondary level. However, this feature explains several effective strategies for sentence analysis that you can implement in your classroom without lengthy preparation.

Discussion Questions

- What are some common sentence-level structures that confuse adolescent readers?
- How can analyzing sentence structure improve students’ reading and writing in your content?
- What scaffolds can you use to help students unpack complex academic sentences?

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Chapter 6. Verbal Reasoning: Thinking With Words Across Texts

Big Ideas

- Reading deeply means thinking beyond the words. Readers must connect, infer, and evaluate as texts get increasingly more complex.
- Verbal reasoning is the bridge from simply decoding words to thinking critically about them.
- Building verbal reasoning prepares students for life in and beyond school.

SPOTLIGHT FEATURE	
Videos	Videos 6.1 through 6.5 show real classroom teachers engaging students in a range of comprehension and metacognitive skills to increase the depth of the students' verbal reasoning. These videos show teachers and students moving beyond comprehension strategies and into sensemaking that enhances how to begin to make sense of and deepen their knowledge of texts in different content areas.

Discussion Questions

- In what ways does verbal reasoning show up in your content and curricula?
- How can you explicitly teach inference making to students who struggle to make connections?
- What are the cognitive demands of verbal reasoning? How do they compare to other foundational skills?
- How can you structure group discussions to strengthen verbal reasoning in your learners?

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Chapter 7. Intervention: Supporting Readers to Develop Automaticity in Word Recognition

Big Ideas

- Some students need more than Tier 1 instruction. They need strong intervention that is intentional.
- Intervention is most powerful when it builds on students’ strengths rather than just focusing on deficits.
- High-quality intervention is a coordinated and informed effort that targets our most vulnerable adolescent readers so that they can be successful.

SPOTLIGHT FEATURE	
Power Up Classroom Practice	This section provides tools, strategies, and concrete steps for Tier 3 support of students who have not yet learned how to read. Table 7.2: Reference List of Assessment Terms provides common words and their definitions to support teachers in understanding the basics of phonics and phonemic awareness.

Discussion Questions

- What are signs that a student needs more than just Tier 1 instruction to support their reading?
- How might you balance whole class content reading with the needs of students who require more targeted interventions to support their reading?
- Which strategies seem most doable? What questions do you still have?

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