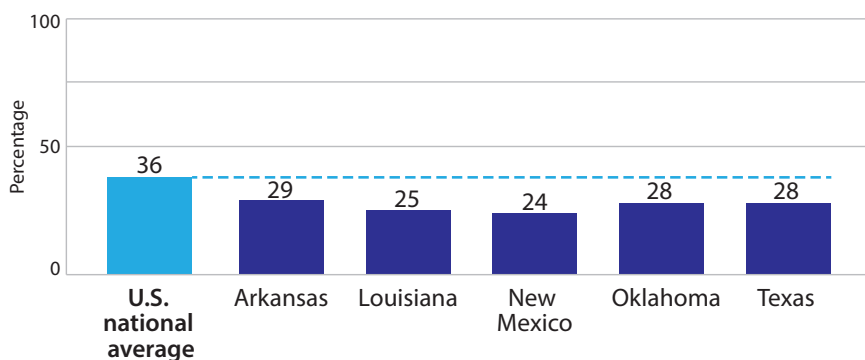









Literacy development is crucial throughout a student's school years. While many reading interventions focus on the early grades, there is still room for improvement as students move from middle school into high school. In the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southwest region, reading proficiency among students entering high school lags behind the national average.¹

Percentage of grade 8 students scoring at or above "Proficient" on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) composite reading scale, 2017¹



The National Reading Panel identifies five key components of reading development^{2,3}:

-  Phonemic awareness
-  Phonics
-  Fluency
-  Vocabulary
-  Comprehension

The demands for middle and secondary school students shift from learning to read to reading to learn. This means that addressing reading difficulties for these students is critical. Below are some research-based recommendations for educators to help secondary school students develop and strengthen these key components.

Recommendations



- ▶ **Provide students with multiple, interrelated strategies for recognizing and understanding new words.** Reading interventions like the Strategic Adolescent Reading Intervention (STARI) include specific emphasis on identifying base words, suffixes, prefixes, and morphemes. Research shows that instructional strategies like STARI can positively impact older students' reading comprehension.⁴



- ▶ **Make the most of everyday opportunities for reading, like video subtitles.** Same-Language-Subtitling (SLS) is a reading intervention that combines karaoke-like subtitles with music, poetry, and other popular or historical recordings.⁵ One study shows that high school students with learning disabilities who participated in SLS for a 12-week period demonstrated increased reading comprehension.⁵



- ▶ **Participate in professional development that supports all five key components of reading development by building capacity to support the whole student.** Many factors affect a student's ability to focus on reading and succeed. To help students develop their reading skills, teachers must understand and address the broader factors that affect students' development. Professional development programs like Reading Apprenticeship Improving Secondary Education (RAISE) impacted teachers' use of practices that support students' social, personal, cognitive, and academic needs.⁶

Ask A REL Responses

Want to learn more about strategies to improve literacy among secondary students? Check out the full Ask A REL reference desk response from REL Southwest: [Effective Reading Interventions for Secondary Students](#).

If you have questions about education research, [submit them](#) to the REL program's Ask A REL reference desk! You can also [browse archived REL Southwest responses](#) by topic to see what the research says.

Additional Resources

For more information about helping secondary school students develop reading and writing skills, please check out these resources from the REL network:

- ▶ Archived webinar from REL Northeast & Islands: [Developing Culturally Responsive College and Career Readiness Literacy Skills](#)
- ▶ Report from REL Southeast: [Summary of 20 Years of Research on the Effectiveness of Adolescent Literacy Programs and Practices](#)
- ▶ Tool from REL Southeast: [Implementing Evidence-Based Literacy Practices](#)
 - o Also, check out this related [video](#) on using the roadmap tool.

In addition, check out these [What Works Clearinghouse](#) Practice Guides:

- ▶ [Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices](#)
- ▶ [Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively](#)

References

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- ³ Konza, D. (2014). Teaching reading: Why the "Fab Five" should be the "Big Six". *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 39(12), article 10. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1047077>
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- ⁵ What Works Clearinghouse. (2013). *WWC review of the report: Same-Language-Subtitling (SLS): Using subtitled music video for reading growth*. Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED538460>
- ⁶ Fancsali, C., Abe, Y., & Pyatigorsky, M. (2016). *Developing content-area academic literacy: A randomized control trial of the Reading Apprenticeship Improving Secondary Education (RAISE) project*. Washington, DC: Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED566986>