

Literacy Tips for Parents of Adolescents



Based on the common instructional elements from the REL Southeast [Summary of 20 years of research on the effectiveness of adolescent literacy programs and practices](#) (Herrera, Truckenmiller, & Foorman, 2016), there are activities that parents can initiate at home to help ensure successful literacy outcomes for their adolescent students. The activities include:¹

Increasing vocabulary²



Engage in activities and provide explanations that illustrate the meaning of individual words.

- Work on crossword puzzles together and play word games like Scrabble and Boggle.
- Point out interesting or unfamiliar words you or your adolescent encounter while reading or playing word games and talk about their meaning.
- Discuss the meaning of important terms from the news, parents' careers, family finances, etc.

Fluency building³

Engage in activities to help your adolescent read text at an appropriate pace and with expression when reading orally.

- Establish a regular reading schedule in the evenings and/or on weekends and during breaks.
- Encourage your child to read a wide variety of texts including fiction and non-fiction.
- Help adolescents find magazines or books that relate to their interests in libraries, bookstores, and online.
- Listen carefully to your adolescents read orally to ensure they are reading at an appropriate pace and with expression.
- Help your adolescents pronounce challenging words correctly.



Improving reading comprehension⁴



Engage in activities to help adolescents understand what they are reading.

- Ask questions like, "What do you think this story will be about?" before reading, questions like "What do you think will happen next?" during reading, and "Why do you think the author ended the story the way he did?" after reading.
- Encourage adolescents to write down questions they may have as they read the text such as, "I wonder why the two characters saw the same situation so differently?"
- Talk about high interest topics (career exploration, job applications, driver's exam, job interviews, etc.) with your adolescent, help them find texts that address these topics, and show them the types of writing they will need to do in the future.
- Read the same book as your adolescent and discuss what happened after each chapter.
- Connect reading and writing at home to topics that are being addressed at school.
- Take time to discuss texts that adolescents find interesting or important.

Partner with your adolescent's school⁵

Keep in touch with your adolescent's teachers to ensure they are working on grade level.

- If you think your adolescent needs extra help, speak with school counselors, administrators, and/or teachers to determine the best intervention materials and instruction to meet their needs.
- Ask content area teachers and interventionists how you can support literacy development at home.



1 Barnard, W. M. (2004). Parent involvement and educational attainment. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 26(1), 39-62.

2 Englund, M. M., Luckner, A. E., Whaley, G. J., & Egeland, B. (2004). Children's achievement in elementary school: Longitudinal effects of parental involvement, expectations, and quality of assistance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 96(4), 723.

3 Herrera, S., Truckenmiller, A. J., and Foorman, B. R. (2016). *Summary of 20 years of research on the effectiveness of adolescent literacy programs and practices* (REL 2016-178). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>.

4 Jaynes, W. H. (2005). A meta-analysis of the relation of parental involvement to urban elementary school student academic achievement. *Urban Education*, 40(3), 237-269.

5 National Center for Educational Statistics (2019). The nation's report card: Reading 2019. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading/>