



LEADING _____

with

READING

in

_____ **GRADES 7 – 12**



International Center for Leadership in Education

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CONTENTS



Preface vi
 How to Use this Resource Kit vii

I. The Reading Requirement

1. **Changing Reading Requirements** 1

2. **The Lexile Framework** 11
 Readability and Reading Levels 12
 Using a Common Framework 18
 Text Measure Error Associated with the Lexile Framework 42
 The Spanish Lexile Framework for Reading 45
 Conclusion 46

3. **Reading Requirements for Life, for Work, and for Graduation** 47
 Reading Skills for Adult Life 47
 Reading Skills in the Workplace 62
 School Reading Skills, Standards, and Assessments 72

II. Teaching Reading: A Status Report

4. **Why Johnny, Jane, Jamal, and José Can't Read in the Content Areas** 83
 The Osmosis Assumption 83
 The Matching Assumption 83

5. **Reading Skills and Current Instructional Practices** 87
 What Schools Demand and How They Do It 87
 What Teachers Teach and How 91
 K-6 vs. Secondary Education and Beyond 102
 Reading Specialist vs. Content Specialist 112
 Reading at Home: The Parental Role 122
 Learning in School 124
 Educational Needs at the Secondary Level 126
 What Best Practices Might Apply? 133
 Current Thinking on Reading and Best Practices 138
 Study Skills 144
 Summary 145

III. Solutions for Success

6.	Using the Lexile Framework in Schools	147
	Differentiated Instruction	149
	Assessment	155
	Standard Setting	158
	Improve Communication	159
	Conclusion	161
7.	A Strategic Reading Instructional Program	163
	Strategic Reading: What is It?	163
	Before, During, and After Approach to Reading	166
	Sample Lesson Plans	172
	Additional Best Practices	179
	Teaching Reading in the Content Areas	180
	Applying the Before-During-After Approach to Content Area Reading	182
	Teaching Reading and Test-Taking: Low Proficiency or Poor Reading?	192
	Teaching Reading and Information Gathering	195
	Strategic Reading and Study Skills for Special Needs Students	202
	Summary	207

IV. Next Steps

8.	Planning to Implement Strategic Reading	209
	Preparing for Change	209
	Effective Organizations in Change	210
	Essential Factors for Change	213
	Worksheets	215
9.	Working with Teachers: Strategies for Change	219
	Top-Down/Bottom-Up Strategies	219
	Creating Learning Organizations	219
	Start with a School Review	221
	Action Plan for Improvement	223
	Leadership and Training	225
	School Culture	227
	Models for Staff Training	229
	Finding Time for Staff Development	230
10.	Communicating with Parents, Students, and Other Stakeholders.....	233
	Identifying the Concerns of “Outside” Stakeholders	233
	Crafting the Common Message	238

11.	Working with Administrators: Managing Up and Down	243
	Effective Staff Development	242
	Problem-solving Procedure	245
	Collaborative Culture	247
	Principal’s Involvement	248
	Superintendent Support for the Principal in Expanding Customer Service	250
	Summary	251
12.	Implementing Strategic Reading Through Staff Development	253
	Setting Goals and a Climate for Training	253
	Capturing Teacher Concerns	255
	Effective School Learning Projects	257
	Managing a Leading with Reading Initiative	258
	Concerns-based Adoption Model	260
13.	Selecting and Using Textbooks	263
	Setting the Stage for Textbook Selection	264
	Criteria for Textbook Selection	268
	Student Use of Textbooks	273
	Text and Textbook Readability	279
	Summary	281

Appendix

Glossary	283
References	291
Lexile Library	300

How to Use this Resource Kit

Although this staff development tool provides numerous examples of best practices and current theory in content area reading instruction, *Leading with Reading in Grades 7-12* is not a reading skills handbook or reading theory text. Many such excellent resources are available to education leaders who want to understand content area reading instruction.

Instead, *Leading with Reading* is a call-to-action survival tool and framework for educators who, consistent with the key messages in the 2002 No Child Left Behind federal legislation, are committed to school improvement and student progress across all groups. *Leading with Reading*'s driving premise is simply this:

There is no more rewarding investment of time and resources that a school or district could make than to enhance the informational reading skills and content area reading strategies of students in grades 7-12.

Leading with Reading advocates the initiation or expansion of a vigorous instructional focus on strategic reading – the reading skills and strategies that promote information literacy across all subjects and across such functional areas as study skills, test taking, and literacy for the world beyond school. Strategic reading empowers students to draw upon a repertoire of skills and strategies, which will help them succeed in the many academic, assessment, and adult-world tasks that assume reading skill as a prerequisite.

There are few academic, career, or citizenship tasks that do not involve reading efficiently and effectively for information. Many tasks also require the ability to distinguish fact from opinion or to follow written directions. Yet, no other “critical” skill is so neglected after elementary school as content area and “functional” reading (as opposed to reading for literary appreciation). And perhaps no other measure of task difficulty is as overlooked as readability. What may be viewed as a student’s lack of knowledge or lack of proficiency in a content area or on a test may, in fact, be a question of readability requirements that exceed the reader’s mastery level.

Leading with Reading assists education leaders to understand the need for consciously placing greater emphasis on strategic reading instruction at the middle and high school levels, defined here as grades 7-12. It provides a leadership handbook for sharing that understanding with staff, students, administrators, parents, and other stakeholders.

Leading with Reading speaks to a one stratagem for closing achievement gaps within a school or district by empowering students with the single most important, and yet often neglected, skill they need to succeed — the ability to process information effectively. *Leading with Reading* is not a remedial reading or reading recovery initiative. It proposes a change in strategy that will serve the vast majority of students by incorporating reading skills instruction in the curriculum.

- **Section I - The Reading Requirement** describes what “reading” means today. Chapters 1 and 3 introduce and expand upon the issue of changing reading requirements needed for tomorrow’s world and contrast those real-world standards with Americans’ literacy rates and school performance. Chapter 2 examines the utility of matching the reader with the readability level of text and introduces the Lexile Framework as a system to measure the reading difficulty of many kinds of reading materials.
- **Section II - Teaching Reading: A Status Report**, comprised of Chapters 4 and 5, investigates current assumptions, standards, and instructional practices surrounding reading and information literacy skills in America’s schools.
- **Section III - Solutions for Success** presents curricular and instructional exemplars that could be used as key building blocks for a leadership initiative in strategic reading. Chapter 6 describes the usefulness of a standardized readability framework for providing students with challenging but not intimidating reading material. Chapter 7 looks at instructional best practices in content area reading.

- In **Section IV - Next Steps**, *Leading with Reading* speaks to the school’s education leaders as change agents and champions of the notion of enhanced achievement for every child. Chapter 8 examines change-management leadership strategies. Chapters 9, 10, and 11 provide guidance on how education leadership can inspire and leverage the support of the teaching staff and other school professionals, parents, students, and business and community stakeholders. Chapters 12 and 13 discuss two logistical realities of a Leading with Reading initiative: staff development and textbook selection.

- Several other resources are included in this kit. A 44-minute videotape features Dr. Willard R. Daggett, President of the International Center, discussing the literacy requirements of the 21st century. The Appendix contains a Lexile Library of selected fiction and nonfiction titles that may be appropriate for readers in grades 7-12. The Lexile Map, located in the back cover inside pocket, gives a broad overview of the Lexile Framework.

Leading with Reading is a guide to change – practical and practicable opportunities for measurable academic growth by focusing on enhancing students’ reading skills in grades 7-12. Now is the time to commit to student success through an expanded reading initiative. We hope you agree.

Chapter 3

Reading Requirements for Life, for Work, and for Graduation

Reading Skills for Adult Life

The content reading and literacy skill demands of the English classroom, the workplace, and the world of academic standards and assessments are not necessarily in sync with one another. What *exactly* do we need to be teaching students to read – and why?

To begin to answer these questions, we need to look at these separate aspects of the world of reading – adult reading in consumer, citizenship, and parenting roles; workplace reading; and reading as defined and measured by state standards and assessments.

The Changing Nature of Reading Proficiency

Despite the frantic pace of our everyday adult lives and the variety of information comes to us in ways that do not involve our reading competencies, American adults still read a surprisingly large variety of text/information sources. Furthermore, they engage in reading tasks with a surprisingly high rate of frequency.

Off the job, adults could potentially “read” from a broad cross-section of information sources in one normal 24-hour period. Compared to the sources of information and reading material that our grandparents might have had access to, today’s possibilities are staggering. We are overloaded with reading content.

Even though the amount of time that people spend in reading books may be reduced by such infotainment alternatives as cable TV, VHS and DVD home videos, the local multiplex cinema, the home computer, the Internet, portable CD-players, “surround sound” home music systems, and so on, reading still plays a major role in the nonworking lives of many adults. Moreover, the types of reading materials and the array of informational forms and formats have never been so diverse. Adults must be conversant with a complex assortment of reading formats and informational genres.

One way or another, daily reading tasks as a consumer, citizen, parent, and lifelong learner make up a significant part of what we must do each day.

Leading with Reading in Grades 7 - 12

Adults as Readers

The “average” American adult covers a wide swath. For example, consider the following from the National Institute for Literacy’s (NIFL) 1999 National Household Education Survey (NHES):

- Parents reading to their child three or more days per week was 10 times more likely among parents engaged in adult education programs than for parents in a comparable socioeconomic group who were not.
- The likelihood that mothers who were college graduates read to their children aged 3 to 5 three or more times per week was 91% compared to 61% for mothers with less than a high school diploma or equivalent.
- Only 25% of Medicare beneficiaries with 9-11 years of schooling were able to find all of the Medicare information they needed in materials provided.
- 54.3% of community-dwelling enrollees with an inadequate health literacy level in a national managed care organization in 1997 did not know how to take medication on an empty stomach; 100% did not understand the rights and responsibilities section of a Medical application.
- Only 50.2% of the over-25 age population in general read a newspaper at least once a week, read one or more magazines regularly, and had read a book in the previous six months. This was only slightly lower than the 53.7% of the employed segment of that same group who do so. By further comparison, only 30.5% of those with household incomes under \$15,000, compared to 65.8% with a household income above \$75,000, read the same types of content in the same periods.

Chapter 7

A Strategic Reading Instructional Program

Strategic Reading: What is It?

Using the Lexile Framework will bring consistency and continuity to a school or district’s reading skill challenges by matching readers with level-appropriate reading sources. But matching readers to reading levels is not sufficient by itself to address today’s reading proficiency demands — both in terms of academic success and in preparing students for adult roles. The other essential element that needs to be introduced into middle and high schools is a concerted program of strategic reading.

Strategic reading can be described as an “in-the-head” process of constructing meaning from material being read or viewed. Strategic readers effectively use a variety of strategies. Research notes that reading strategies can be categorized into two types: “fix-up” and learning strategies.

- “Fix-up” strategies relate to using strategies to resolve failures in comprehending, such as activating prior knowledge, predicting, searching to identify unknown words, rereading, adjusting the rate of reading, self-monitoring, inferring, interacting with unfamiliar forms and formats, and forming mental images.
- Learning strategies affect the processing of text, enhancing the ability of the reader to retrieve, remember, and use the material. Examples of learning strategies include outlining, note-taking, highlighting, underlining, summarizing and questioning. Readers select the appropriate strategy (or strategies) to employ for each different kind of reading task they encounter. Selecting the appropriate strategy is the goal for all independent readers to accomplish.

Not every reading task can or should be approached in the same way. Each task needs to be tackled with knowledge of:

- the type of reading material being encountered
- the purpose of the reading task
- the demands of that type of content
- strategies that are available for the reader to use.

Leading with Reading in Grades 7 - 12

Using a history textbook requires a reader to employ different strategies from what would be used when reading an owner's manual for a DVD player. Not even taking into consideration the formats and formatting conventions of each form of print communication, the tasks required are different. The history book requires the reader to understand cause and effect, for example, rather than to follow a step-by-step procedure found in the owner's manual. The reader of the history book selects appropriate comprehension and study strategies to understand and retain the information while reading. Finding out how to operate the DVD player requires a different set of skills: selecting, understanding, and using directions. Different purposes for reading require different skill sets. Equally different are the tasks involved in reading mathematics, science, test forms, applications, school newspapers, online reference sources, and student handbooks, to name just a few.

Different purposes for reading require different skill sets.

Whatever label we choose to attach to this undeveloped (and largely untaught) set of reading competencies and whatever the specific skills, strategies, and forms or tasks involved, strategic reading can be collectively described as an interactive process between the reader and the text.

Strategic reading is an interactive process between the reader and the text.

The reader:

- engages with what is being read so that strategies can be applied "on the run."
- recognizes the purpose of the reading task, whether or not she or he is familiar with the content, the context, or the format.
- has a toolbox of skills and strategies upon which to draw.
- monitors and controls the use of the strategies.

Chapter 7 A Strategic Reading Instructional Program

Readers who do not automatically activate and employ strategies struggle with reading tasks throughout their lives. It is the job of educators to teach all students how to acquire and apply a wide variety of strategies across a wide variety of forms, genres, and types of reading content to insure that they become independent, competent readers.

Research suggests that even teachers who *do* teach reading believe they are teaching comprehension or construction of meaning. However, in reality, many are not teaching students *what* a strategy is, or *how* to comprehend material read or viewed. Students also need to be taught *when* to use certain strategies, *where* to apply them, and *why* they are using them. Teachers should be modeling how to select and apply strategies successfully. Teachers need to demonstrate, for example, how the information from a chapter title in the history book, combined with an illustration and its caption, enables the reader to predict what information the chapter will contain. Students then practice the same strategy with the teacher, followed by continued practice independently while reading the text. Discussion and modeling includes “thinking aloud” by the teacher to demonstrate why and how the strategy will improve understanding.

Students need to be taught when to use certain strategies, where to apply them, and why they are using them.

Strategy teaching should not be confused with instructional techniques or instructional strategies used by teachers to convey information or direct student learning. Rather, through explicit instruction in strategies to “fix” comprehension or improve studying results, readers learn *how* they learn and become independent and in control of reading material, whether it is narrative or transactional.

In order to foster reading development, teachers need to assist students in learning how to use strategies *intuitively*, so students can move from unaware, barely proficient, and frustrated novices to unconsciously competent readers. There are many elements that should weigh into such a strategic reading program and curriculum. This resource will not attempt to provide a complete curriculum in strategic reading. And, in fact, there is no prescriptive set of approaches that will suffice for every context.

Leading with Reading in Grades 7 - 12

Rather, education leaders who want to implement a strategic reading initiative can draw upon a wealth of existing specialists, ideas, successful practices, how-to books, and other sources. The Before, During, and After Approach is one example of a successful practice.

Following a framework of before, during, and after reading strategies helps teachers to plan purposefully and to give students a clear idea of what they need to accomplish in order to become successful lifelong readers.

Before, During, and After Approach to Reading

The Before, During and After Approach to Reading contains the following strategic elements:

Before Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Activating background knowledge• Investigating text structure• Setting a purpose for reading• Predicting text content• Reviewing and clarifying vocabulary
During Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establishing the purpose for each part of the reading• Self-monitoring• Visualizing• Summarizing• Confirming/rejecting predictions• Identifying and clarifying key ideas• Questioning self
After Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessing if the purpose for reading was met• Paraphrasing important information• Identifying the main idea and details• Making comparisons• Connecting• Drawing conclusions• Summarizing• Analyzing