

A BUYER'S GUIDE



How to Choose the Most Effective Adolescent Reading Program

Readers who struggle in middle and high school face unique challenges that can ultimately impact the likelihood of graduation and success in college or career. The best reading programs specifically developed for adolescent readers target foundational skills while engaging students in high-interest, age-appropriate topics.

Does your reading program do this?

This buyer's guide provides valuable information to help you determine the best adolescent reading program for your district.

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Introduction

Our educational system is simply not adequately preparing struggling students for success in the global knowledge economy.¹ Even with improved literacy instruction in the early grades, many students do not develop the complex reading skills required to be successful in intermediate grades, middle school, and high school. Adolescent readers must learn to master deeper reading skills in order to be ready for college and career. If they do not successfully transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn,” they are more likely to find themselves in unskilled jobs with limited opportunities.

Reasons to focus with urgency on adolescent reading development include:

- Students who enter high school two or more years behind grade level in literacy have only a 50/50 chance of on-time promotion to the tenth grade.
- Ninth-grade retention is a major risk factor for dropping out of high school.
- Sixth graders who fail English have a one-in-eight chance of making it to the twelfth grade on time.²
- English-language learners need to develop grade-level reading skills in order to learn the curriculum.

According to researchers, a majority of struggling adolescent readers are most challenged by vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Compton, Miller, Elleman, & Steacy, 2014). At a foundational level, phonological skills are critical to making the connection between spoken and written language. While students may learn how to segment sounds, they often do not understand how those sounds are translated into print for reading or spelling, which leaves them at a disadvantage.

However, there is a significant body of evidence that suggests that adolescent literacy shortcomings can be remedied with direct, explicit, and systematic word recognition, vocabulary, and comprehension instruction, and that computer-assisted instructional approaches are also yielding promising results.³

This guide will illustrate the important aspects of adolescent reading programs to provide guidance as you select the best intervention program for your students. A review of one particular adolescent reading program based on best practices follows these general guidelines.

Understanding Adolescent Reading Intervention

Reading experts Dr. Louisa Moats, Dr. Beverly Weiser, and Dr. Janet Macpherson suggest that focusing on the fundamentals of reading until students achieve minimum reading proficiency allows students to close gaps in their foundational skills before they tackle increased fluency and comprehension challenges.

Dr. Moats and her colleagues report that most researchers agree on the guiding principles of effective instruction for adolescent readers who are at basic or below-basic proficiency. They advocate explicit instruction in literacy-related foundational skills driven by continuous formative assessments and progress monitoring data. Direct, systematic instruction is key. Lessons should

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follow a robust scope and sequence that teaches the structure and functions of language and provides frequent opportunities for extended discussion of texts.

While instruction is carefully scaffolded to help students become more independent, the most effective lessons incorporate age-appropriate, high-interest topics. At the same time, the lessons promote engagement and provide motivating opportunities for students to build fluency through practice.

Other important components of effective adolescent reading programs include:

- Teaching word-analysis techniques that include segmenting and blending words by phoneme-grapheme correspondences, syllable patterns, common roots and affixes, and other morpho-syntactic representations.
- Directly pre-teaching critical vocabulary that is essential to reading new texts.
- Explicitly teaching comprehension monitoring strategies.
- Providing choices for students to increase motivation and active engagement and to instill student accountability.
- Involving students in peer-mediated learning.
- Building in robust writing instruction and practice.

The following chart is a handy checklist of questions to help your district incorporate these recommended guidelines into your decision-making about an adolescent reading program.

INTERVENTION PROGRAM CRITERIA CHECKLIST	YES	NO
Do the reading and writing components include both instruction and practice?		
Does the blended learning model include face-to-face instruction and online learning?		
Does the program allow for personalized instruction?		
Are there daily opportunities for differentiated instruction?		
Is there ongoing rigorous assessment and progress monitoring?		
Does the program include sufficient scaffolding to meet higher ELA standards?		
Does the technology engage students and help them direct their own learning?		
Do students have access to a motivating social media platform for peer-to-peer learning?		
Does the program support teachers in basic and advanced phonics instruction?		
Is there a robust selection of age-appropriate and engaging grade-level texts on topics of interest to middle- and high-school students?		
Are there multiple text genres that inform and engage middle- and high-school students?		

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About **LANGUAGE! Live**

LANGUAGE! Live is a comprehensive and research-based English Language Arts curriculum for struggling adolescent readers and writers. *LANGUAGE! Live* blends engaging online instruction (Word Training) with teacher-directed instruction (Text Training) to help learners close the reading and writing gap and accelerate their skill development as they move toward grade-level achievement.



LANGUAGE! Live

***LANGUAGE! Live* is specifically designed to inspire adolescent students to take ownership of their own learning.**

Teachers help students achieve their academic goals through targeted intervention and advanced instruction of reading and writing skills in an effective blended learning model. The student-directed technology focuses on foundational skills in an online platform that motivates students with personal avatars, rewards, and a social media platform for peer-to-peer engagement. The curriculum is paired with teacher-directed small- and large-group instruction for comprehensive learning in reading and writing skill development.

LANGUAGE! Live is specifically designed to inspire adolescent students to take ownership of their own learning. The program features high-interest topics that students care about. It also incorporates peer-to-peer learning in an online environment with peer tutors who introduce reading, language, and spelling concepts in fun, engaging videos. Students perceive these peer tutors as “kids they can hang out with,” which aids their social and emotional development.

Online social learning is important to today’s students. According to the annual *2015 Speak Up* report, today’s students are using a wide range of different social media tools to explore their world, to communicate and share with friends and family, and to engage with topics of interest to them. Students surveyed in the *Speak Up* report believe that “they will be able to use these tools in order to have a more hands-on education at their own pace.” They will also be able to connect with peers more easily “and work on their critical thinking skills.”⁴ *LANGUAGE! Live* incorporates these kinds of online social media tools that teachers and students can use to communicate and collaborate.

Students using *LANGUAGE! Live* also have access to *ReadingScape*, an online, interactive library of literary and informational texts that encourages supplemental reading. *ReadingScape* provides access to a variety of genres, which standards require that middle- and high-school students are expected to read. The multimedia elements increase student engagement and build vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

Ongoing assessments support progress monitoring and provide teachers with regular, actionable data to help drive instruction and learning. Online support and real-time feedback are critical information loops that keep students focused on the most effective learning path.

The Addition of Writing Instruction

Writing instruction is also embedded in the *LANGUAGE! Live* lessons, and each level includes eight major writing projects. This robust project-based writing component helps to develop an often-neglected aspect of literacy—writing skills. The writing projects are an important addition to literacy education because not only do they improve student proficiency in writing, but the projects also increase student proficiency in the speaking and listening skills required by new learning standards. In addition to composition skills, the program includes handwriting instruction and practice.

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A Flexible Implementation Model

LANGUAGE! Live is built with flexibility to meet different schedules and classroom configurations. A block of 90 minutes each day, with access to desktops, laptops, or tablets in the classroom or computer lab, is recommended. This preferred model is the most efficient and will yield the best results. To accommodate a 90-minute plan, many schools schedule two periods a day for *LANGUAGE! Live*, although the periods may not be back to back. A second option is a daily 45-minute period. This option typically consists of alternating days for teacher-led instruction and online instruction.

New Integrated Learning Platform Supports Teachers

The program includes a new embedded, integrated learning platform that serves as a portal for ongoing, high-quality professional learning and support for teaching *LANGUAGE! Live*.

The platform helps teachers to extend their own learning. Teachers can dig deeper into core concepts, explore specific areas of the program, and learn how to achieve specific program targets. A rank and badge model nurtures teachers through their professional learning journey and provides them with opportunities for growth and recognition as well as feedback on their progress.

ONE SOLUTION. GUARANTEED RESULTS.

LANGUAGE! Live offers more features in one comprehensive solution—without restrictive purchasing options or costly add-ons.

FEATURES	LANGUAGE! LIVE
Blended online/teacher model	✓
Fast results/gains	✓
Teacher support (data-driven)	✓
Personalized and self-paced online instruction	✓
Research-based; latest research	✓
2 years' growth in one year	✓
Comprehensive writing instruction	✓
Current social media environment for engagement	✓
Easy implementation	✓
Teacher support, training, and professional development included	✓
Teaches foundational skills	✓
Robust language development/grammar strands	✓
Affordable, straightforward pricing	✓
High-interest and age-appropriate content	✓

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Teachers are introduced to the integrated learning platform through face-to-face or webinar-facilitated training. The training can also be accessed as a self-paced experience, providing teachers with instructional guidelines as they use *LANGUAGE! Live* with their students.

ALMOST 2 YEARS' GROWTH IN ONE YEAR!

With *LANGUAGE! Live*, a good implementation equals good results. Students exceed typical gains and close the gap faster than with any other literacy product. For example, with a 45-minute implementation, it is common for teachers to facilitate classrooms in which students have completed 6 to 7 units in **Word Training** and **Text Training**. Research shows that a well-balanced program leads to great results.*

Students
gained almost
TWO YEARS
(1.9) in one
academic year

* Annual growth based on Scammacca, N. K., Fall, A., & Roberts, G. (2015). Benchmarks for expected annual academic growth for students in the bottom quartile of the normative distribution. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 8, 366–379.

Conclusion

One of the reasons *LANGUAGE! Live* is successful is that it is aspirational for both students and teachers. Teachers aspire to help struggling students realize their potential and believe in themselves. Students aspire to be seen as more than just struggling students. *LANGUAGE! Live* provides the tools, the platform, and the support for students to improve their reading and writing abilities so that they can become confident enough to direct their own futures.

It's important to keep all of these criteria, and results, in mind as your district considers which intervention program will be most effective in supporting your teachers and developing critical literacy skills in your middle- and high-school students. ■

1. Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy (2010). Time to Act: An Agenda for Advancing Adolescent Literacy for College and Career Success. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York. https://www.carnegie.org/media/filer_public/8c/8d/8c8dfd82-b5fc-4bb9-8bd1-bb262175eaf4/ccny_report_2010_tta_agenda.pdf
2. Moats, Macpherson, Weiser. Literacy Intervention (2014). LANGUAGE! Live Research Foundation. <http://www.voyagersopris.com/info/language-live/downloads/LIL-ResBase.pdf>
3. Ibid.
4. Speak Up Survey Data 2015. Project Tomorrow. <http://www.tomorrow.org/speakup/>