

# How to Choose the Most Effective Adolescent Reading Program

## A BUYER'S GUIDE



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 most successful 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.**

## Introduction

Our educational system is not adequately preparing struggling students for success in the global knowledge economy.<sup>1</sup> 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 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 10th grade.
- Ninth grade retention is a major risk factor for dropping out of high school.
- Sixth grade students who fail English have a one-in-eight chance of making it to the 12th grade on time.<sup>2</sup>
- English language learners need to develop grade-level reading skills 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.<sup>3</sup>

This guide illustrates 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

Research suggests 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 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.

## The most 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.

This chart can 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 about topics of interest to middle and high school students?		
Are there multiple text genres that inform and engage middle and high school students?		

\* Moats, Weiser, & Macpherson, *Research Foundation*, [https://www.voyagersopris.com/docs/default-source/literacy/language-live/ll-research-foundation-2017-web5876d91eb06844abb813504de516a7c4.pdf?Status=Master&sfvrsn=893aaa16\\_2](https://www.voyagersopris.com/docs/default-source/literacy/language-live/ll-research-foundation-2017-web5876d91eb06844abb813504de516a7c4.pdf?Status=Master&sfvrsn=893aaa16_2)

## About *LANGUAGE! Live*

*LANGUAGE! Live*® is a comprehensive and research-based English Language Arts curriculum for struggling adolescent readers and writers. *LANGUAGE! Live* weaves together foundational skills creating pathways for automatic word and text reading while it simultaneously and strategically develops advanced literacy skills to gain meaning from text,

understand text structure, and build critical skills for writing. The blended-learning model of direct teacher-led instruction (Text Training) and online instruction for Word Training and Text Training practice helps learners close the reading and writing gap and accelerate their skill development as they move toward grade-level achievement.

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 advanced skills in an online platform that motivates students with personal avatars, rewards, and a social media platform for peer-to-peer engagement and includes practice, support, and differentiation for teacher-led instruction. *LANGUAGE! Live* enhances the power of the teacher with a strategically crafted scope and sequence and strategies that deliver direct, explicit instruction for comprehensive learning in reading and writing skill development.

*LANGUAGE! Live* features high-interest topics 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.

## Online social learning is important to today's students

According to the annual 2015 Speak Up report, today's students are using a 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 "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."<sup>4</sup>

*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.



## Activate the Reading Brain

Students at least two years behind in their reading skills lack foundational literacy and have difficulty accessing grade-level text.

### Teaching students to read is science.

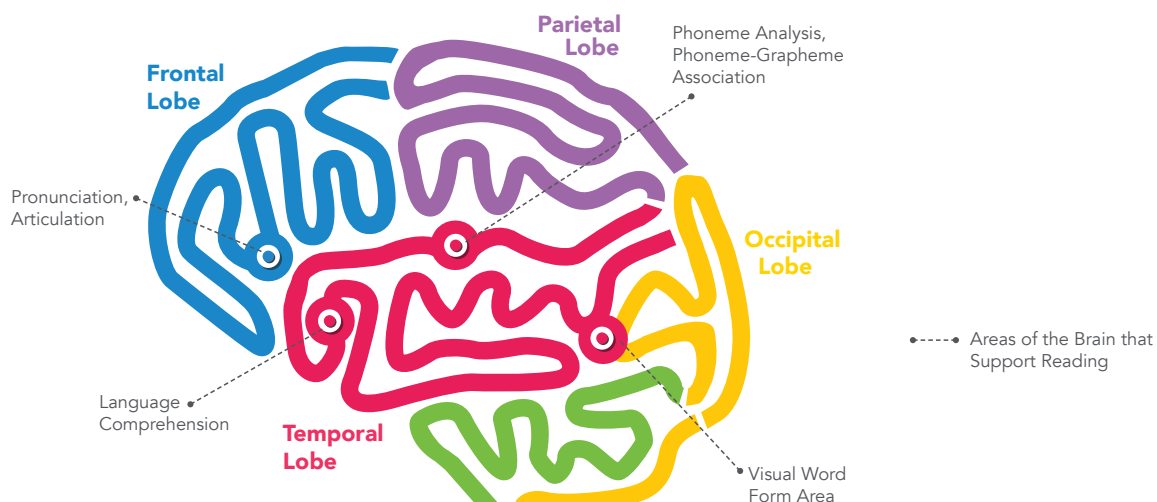
*LANGUAGE! Live* supports secondary teachers with the science to teach reading effectively, everything from phonics and grammar to comprehension and writing.



Reading experts have agreed on the most important elements of adolescent literacy instruction. A successful program must:

- Be driven by continuous formative assessments and progress-monitoring data
- Provide explicit instruction in literacy-related foundational skills
- Honor the students' entering skill levels without insulting their age or interests
- Include a focus on higher-level thinking to promote engagement
- Teach the structure and functions of language and provide opportunities for extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation
- Use direct, systematic lessons organized by a logical scope and sequence
- Teach word-analysis techniques
- Provide opportunities for students to build fluency through practice and repeated readings
- Directly pre-teach critical vocabulary that is essential to reading new text
- Explicitly teach comprehension-monitoring techniques
- Carefully scaffold instruction to help the student become more independent
- Provide choice to students to increase motivation and active engagement, and to instill student accountability
- Involve students in peer-mediated learning

(Moats, Macpherson & Weiser, 2014).



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 and provide a variety of opportunities for differentiation.

## The Addition of Writing Instruction

Writing instruction is also embedded in the *LANGUAGE! Live* lessons to build writing skills. Each curriculum level includes eight major writing projects. The ongoing and robust project-based writing component helps to develop an often-neglected aspect of literacy—writing skills. The ongoing writing lessons introduces strategies and builds writing skills across every unit of instruction. 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.

## Dedicated Time and Target Instruction

*LANGUAGE! Live* is built to meet the needs of students. 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. A 45-minute model will not yield optimal results but can be put in place with expectations for scheduling adjustments the following school year. A 90-minute implementation is highly recommended. Research demonstrates students with significant reading gaps need more instructional time.\*

### Integrated Learning Platform Supports Teachers

The program includes online training and 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.

Teachers are introduced to online training 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.

\* <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3975734>, A Meta-Analysis of Interventions for Struggling Readers in Grades 4–12: 1980–2011, Scammacca, et al.

## 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	✓
Results/gains	✓
Teacher support (data-driven)	✓
Personalized and private online instruction	✓
Research-based; latest research IDA Accreditation	✓
Two years' growth in one year (90-minute model)	✓
Comprehensive writing instruction	✓
Current social media environment for engagement	✓
Supportive 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	✓

### **LANGUAGE! Live Student Profile**

*LANGUAGE! Live* is a solution for adolescent learners reading below grade level and exhibiting gaps in their reading ability. A student who would benefit from *LANGUAGE! Live* may exhibit literacy characteristics similar to the following:

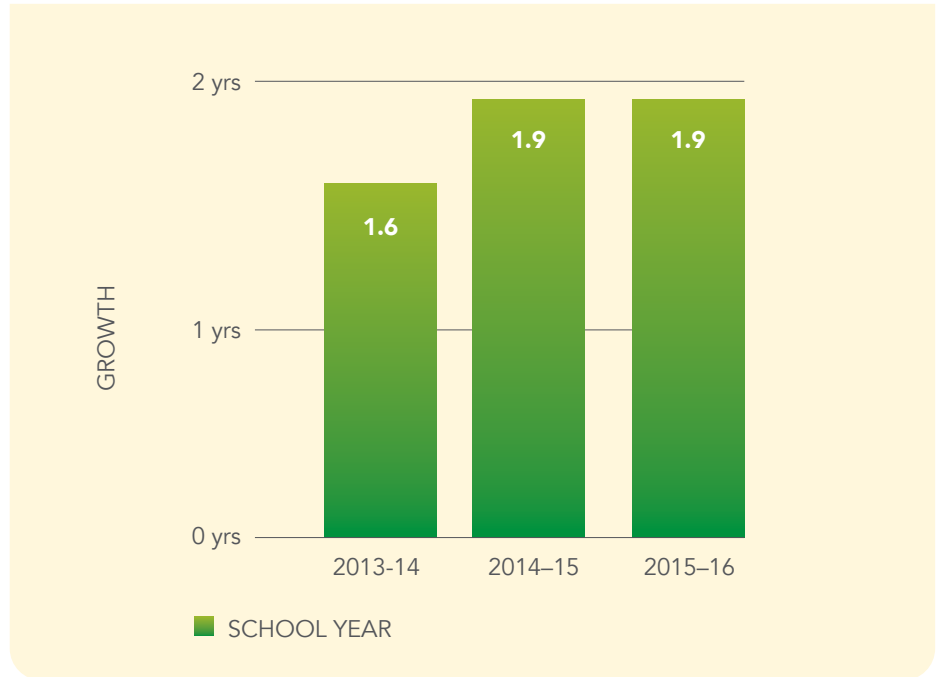
- Recognizes letter-sound connections more than at the phoneme-grapheme level
- Performs well on comprehension measures when reading is not required
- Has automatic recognition of 300+ sight words
- Has difficulty reading vocabulary words by sight
- Struggles with decoding
- Has poor spelling
- Appears to have comprehension problems on a reading test
- Misinterprets figurative language
- Often confuses academic direction words
- Is interested and motivated by topics of those similar to age-level peers

## Sustained Growth After Three Years of using *LANGUAGE! Live*

Students at Los Lunas Schools in New Mexico are gaining substantial growth since implementation of *LANGUAGE! Live*.

### Los Lunas Schools, New Mexico

Year	Schools	Students	Classes	Days/Time Per	Population
<b>2013-14</b>	14	322	54	5 days 45 min	SPED
<b>2014-15</b>	15	448	56	5 days 30-45 min	SPED
<b>2015-16</b>	14	430	33	5 days 30-45 min	SPED



## 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. [carnegie.org/publications/time-to-act-an-agenda-for-advancing-adolescent-literacy-for-college-and-career-success/](http://carnegie.org/publications/time-to-act-an-agenda-for-advancing-adolescent-literacy-for-college-and-career-success/) 2. Moats, Macpherson, Weiser. Literacy Intervention (2014). *LANGUAGE! Live* Research Foundation. [voyagersopris.com/docs/default-source/literacy/language-live/ll-researchfound-072015-web.pdf?sfvrsn=bfa7bf24\\_10](http://voyagersopris.com/docs/default-source/literacy/language-live/ll-researchfound-072015-web.pdf?sfvrsn=bfa7bf24_10) 3. Ibid. 4. Speak Up Survey Data 2015. Project Tomorrow. [tomorrow.org/speakup/](http://tomorrow.org/speakup/)





# READING IS KEY TO COLLEGE & CAREER SUCCESS

## POOR READING SKILLS HAVE CONSEQUENCES

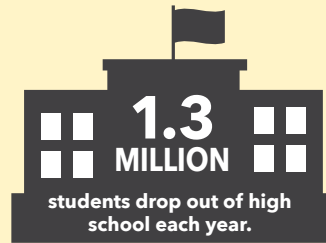
Struggling adolescent readers are in danger of dropping out of high school, being unprepared for college and putting their future lifetime earnings at risk.



**70%** of high school dropouts have poor reading skills.

**60%** of middle and high school students read below a proficient level.

**37%** of high school seniors are ready for college-level work.



## READING ABILITY IS DIRECTLY RELATED TO EARNINGS POTENTIAL

Projected annual salaries:

**\$24,492** HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT

**\$33,904** HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE

**\$55,432** COLLEGE GRADUATE

## AGE-APPROPRIATE LITERACY INSTRUCTION LEADS TO BETTER ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

Intervention can achieve

**2X**



Improved reading skills leads to



**HIGHER GRADUATION RATES.**

**LANGUAGE! Live** closes the gap in adolescent reading skills faster than any other literacy program.

**LANGUAGE! Live** is a comprehensive literacy solution for struggling adolescents, which inspires a new level of confidence and drive in students struggling to read. It merges leading-edge research and data-driven assessment in a proven program that is effective because it fosters foundational and advanced learning. It meets students where they are and gets them to where they need to be.

LEARN HOW TO IMPROVE ADOLESCENT LITERACY IN YOUR SCHOOLS AT  
[voyagersopris.com/languagelive](http://voyagersopris.com/languagelive)



“This program is life changing, and it’s generational. It affects that child, then their children, then their children’s children. It’s all about breaking that cycle... so they can advance in their careers and have the lives that they deserve.”

—Antavia Hamilton-Ochs,  
Teacher, Anchorage, AK



Try **LANGUAGE! Live** today.  
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