

The logo for CTL (Center for Text Literacy) is displayed in a large, white, serif font on a black, tilted rectangular background.The text "ON THE CUTTING EDGE" is written in a white, serif font on a black rectangular background.

The Literate Adolescents (LA) Intervention Project

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The purpose of the Literate Adolescents (LA) Intervention Project is to establish, replicate, and disseminate an intervention program designed to improve the literacy of students with disabilities in high-need, urban high schools. The project, in its fourth and final year, has been implemented in three LAUSD schools.

Secondary students need to develop literacy skills that prepare them for life after high school where they will need to read, interpret, evaluate, and use written information. Unfortunately, these skills elude more than 60% of secondary students with disabilities, who with low reading skills are more likely to drop out of school and experience poor adult outcomes. Despite the compelling need to do so, few effective programs are implemented in high school settings, due, in part, to the following reasons:

- ◆ **Content instruction versus skill remediation:** Curriculum focused on content rather than skills, such as reading and writing
- ◆ **Graduation requirements:** A-G requirements making scheduling intervention classes difficult
- ◆ **Lack of novel materials:** Interventions focused on elementary word level skills that are not age appropriate
- ◆ **Motivation:** Readers, with years of poor school success, who are disengaged and unable to self-direct their learning, resulting in learned helplessness.

The LA Intervention Project addresses these challenges through a two-year model program. Year 1 provides intensive small-group intervention in reading skills. Year 2 focuses on incorporating interventions in content classrooms and small group settings, and moving students into general education classes.

All ninth-grade students eligible for the intensive intervention program are enrolled in one period of comprehension instruction, *English 9*, which satisfies A-G high school graduation requirements. The curriculum is designed to help students master a set of comprehension strategies that they can then apply independently in other classes. Students are also explicitly taught a series of core academic vocabulary words, as well as high-frequency morphemes.

Students identified as struggling to recognize words below the fourth grade level are also enrolled in a decoding class, *Strategic Literacy*, where students are taught basic decoding skills within the context of grade level appropriate words. For example, instead of learning to decode cat, the students would practice the c-v-c pattern of cat within the word catastrophe. As students gain proficiency in identifying word parts, they use a tablet-based app created by the LA Intervention team to practice decoding and encoding increasingly difficult multiple syllable words.

Preliminary evaluation findings suggest that students in the intervention program make reading gains comparable to their peers without disabilities, and greater gains than those found in other similar studies.

The LA Intervention Project website contains materials for both special education English-Language Arts teachers, and general and special education content teachers. To learn more, please explore our website at <https://www.lainterventionproject.com>

Professors Goodwin, Sears, Spencer, Friedman, and Burstein work in the Department of Special Education at CSUN and are passionate advocates for literacy for students with special needs. The LAIP grant is supported by the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education, through a Model Demonstration Grant.

Literate Adolescents (LA) Intervention Project Recommended Resources

- Boardman, A. G., Roberts, G., Vaughn, S., Wexler, J., Murray, C. S., & Kosanovich, M. (2008). *Effective instruction for adolescent struggling readers: A practice brief*. Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction.
- Kim, J. S., Hemphill, L., Troyer, M., Thomson, J. M., Jones, S. M., LaRusso, M. D., & Donovan, S. (2017). Engaging struggling adolescent readers to improve reading skills. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 52(3), 357-382.
- National Center for Education. (2015). *The nation's report card: Mathematics and reading assessments*. Retrieved from https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2015/
- Scammacca, N., Roberts, G., Vaughn, S., Edmonds, M. S., Wexler, J., Reutebuch, C. K., & Torgesen, J. K. (2007). *Interventions for adolescent struggling readers: A meta-analysis with implications for practice*. Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation. Center on Instruction.

For Further Reading...

Effective instruction for adolescent struggling readers: A practice brief.

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED521836.pdf>

Interventions for adolescent struggling readers: A meta-analysis with implications for practice.

https://rti4success.org/sites/default/files/coi_struggling_readers.pdf

Building reading proficiency at the secondary level.

<https://www.wilsonlanguage.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/buildingreadingproficiencysecondary.pdf>

Interested in Learning More About the Literate Adolescents (LA) Intervention Project?

<https://www.lainterventionproject.com/>



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