

How *Jamestown Reading Navigator*<sup>TM</sup>  
Supports Research-Based Instruction  
for Struggling Adolescent Readers

# Strategic Tutoring

*Prepared for*

*Glencoe/McGraw-Hill*

*by*

*Interactive Educational Systems Design, Inc.*

*New York, NY*



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## About This Paper

This paper presents research-supported best practices related to instruction of struggling adolescent readers—that is, students in grades 6–12 who are reading at least two levels below grade level—and describes how *Jamestown Reading Navigator*<sup>™</sup> supports those practices.

### What Is *Jamestown Reading Navigator*?

*Jamestown Reading Navigator* is a reading intervention program designed specifically for students in grades 6–12 who are reading two or more reading levels below their grade in school. The program provides direct, explicit instruction and modeling of good reading practices, together with opportunities for students to practice and apply these reading strategies.

*Jamestown Reading Navigator* combines online activities featuring interactive multimedia for students to complete; engaging and appropriate online and print texts for students to read; an audio component for further guided or independent study; student writing in response to reading; student recording of fluency passages; an assessment program to monitor students' progress; an independent measure of progress monitoring; and teacher support materials, including professional development, lesson plans, instructional recommendations, and reteaching skills support. Major areas of focus for *Jamestown Reading Navigator* include

- Comprehension skills and strategies, designed for application to content-area reading
- Vocabulary
- Writing
- Fluency
- Decoding/phonics (for students with a particular need in this area)

The *Jamestown Reading Navigator* Learner Management System helps teachers manage individual student learning and provides ongoing, up-to-the-minute information on how students are performing. Online professional development modules and on-site professional development sessions offered by Jamestown Education help educators—teachers, administrators, literacy specialists, and others—learn how to implement *Jamestown Reading Navigator* more effectively. These sessions also provide information and suggestions to help educators develop effective strategies for working with struggling adolescent readers.

*Jamestown Reading Navigator* has been developed based on the most up-to-date research and expert thinking in adolescent literacy, drawing on more than 30 years of experience in reaching adolescent readers with the popular Jamestown Education print series. This paper describes the match between *Jamestown Reading Navigator* and the best available instructional thinking in a variety of specific areas that are important to the success of struggling adolescent readers, as described below.

## Introduction

### A Critical Need to Support Struggling Adolescent Readers

Problems with literacy have serious and long-lasting consequences. A lack of literacy skills is “one of the most commonly cited reasons” for students to drop out of school (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006, p. 7). A resource guide on adolescent literacy prepared for the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory described the problem as follows:

For secondary-level students . . . the social and economic consequences of not reading well can be cumulative and profound: the failure to attain a high school diploma, a barrier to higher education, underemployment or unemployment, and difficulty in managing personal and family life. Years of failing at what is deemed a hallmark of intelligence and worth can also leave struggling readers with emotional consequences, such as anxiety and low self-esteem, that affect personality and interpersonal relationships. These effects within and beyond the classroom walls show that by the secondary grades educators can no longer defer solutions to future development or instruction. (Peterson et al., 2000, p. 6)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Peterson et al. (2000) is laid out in a paginated PDF format, but the format does not include page numbers. Page references for quotes from Peterson et al. (2000) that are given in this paper have therefore been calculated on the basis of page numbers shown in the document table of contents.

Numerous sources attest to the scope of the challenge. *Reading Next* cited both results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the opinions of experts in adolescent literacy that “as many as 70 percent of students struggle with reading in some manner” that requires instruction differentiated for their specific needs (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006, p. 8, citing Loomis & Bourque, 2001; NCES, 1999, 2006; Olson, 2006).

Adolescents struggle with literacy for a variety of reasons. For some, English may not be their first language. Others may have mild learning disabilities. In many cases, students may simply lack experience and skill with reading. Unfortunately, difficulties in reading don’t cure themselves, but instead tend to get worse as students get older—a phenomenon reading experts refer to as the “Matthew Effect” (Stanovich, 1986). These students need literacy instruction that addresses the specific challenges they face, using the best available research-based methods and principles, in order to improve their chances of succeeding both during school and afterward.

### The State of Research on Struggling Adolescent Readers

Over the last two decades, attempts to improve student literacy on the national level have focused largely on elementary instruction, and particularly on early literacy—that is, literacy at the primary grades. For example, the focus of the Reading First initiative was on improving literacy at the primary levels. Recently, however, a number of efforts—including research summaries for a variety of sources, publication of the *Reading Next* report and other documents from the Alliance for Excellent Education, and position statements from organizations such as the National Reading Conference and the International Reading Association—have helped create a higher profile for instructional issues related to adolescent readers, and particularly the large proportion of adolescents who struggle with reading.

Initiatives such as the No Child Left Behind Act have raised expectations for instruction. Instruction is expected to be backed with solid research that concludes it is likely to result in the desired impact on student learning. Unfortunately, research on what constitutes effective literacy instruction for adolescents is still limited. According to the editors of a volume intended to “compile from the best researchers in the field a summary and synthesis of adolescent literacy research and practice,”

As of 2003, there is not a body of research to tell us appropriate interventions that will help struggling middle and secondary school readers who can barely read. As of 2003, we still do not have a body of research to provide us with appropriate interventions to help high school readers who can read fluently but remain 3 or 4 years below grade level in reading. (Jetton & Dole, 2004, p. 6)

Although research on what constitutes effective literacy instruction for adolescents is limited in significant ways, there is substantial support in research and expert opinion for a variety of specific instructional recommendations. The state of knowledge with regard to effective instruction for struggling adolescent readers fits the description of *best available evidence* as characterized by U.S. Department of Education Assistant Secretary Grover J. Whitehurst: that is, “the integration of professional wisdom with the best available empirical evidence in making decisions about how to deliver instruction” (Whitehurst, 2002).

### The Reading Next Report

A critical milestone in recent efforts to highlight the challenges related to adolescent literacy was the publication of *Reading Next*, a report to Carnegie Corporation of New York focusing on the needs of adolescent readers (defined in the report as those in grades 4–12), with a special emphasis on the needs of struggling readers. Preparation of this report included the following steps.

- A panel of five nationally known and respected educational researchers was convened in spring 2004, together with representatives of Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Alliance for Excellent Education.
- These panelists drew up a set of recommendations for how to meet the needs of struggling readers, including 15 specific elements of effective adolescent literacy programs that had “a substantial base in research and/or professional opinion” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006, p. 12). These included both elements with an instructional focus and recommended infrastructure elements to improve adolescent literacy.

- The resulting paper was reviewed and augmented at the 2004 meeting of the Adolescent Literacy Funders Forum (ALFF).
- An Appendix was compiled of literature supporting each of the report’s main recommendations.
- In 2006, a second edition of the report was published.

The *Reading Next* recommendations thus represented a synthesis of research-informed expert opinion that serves as an important touchstone for much of what is known about effective adolescent literacy instruction. Several caveats, however, are in order with regard to using the recommendations as a yardstick for measuring instructional programs in general, and *Jamestown Reading Navigator* in particular.

- While all 15 elements identified by *Reading Next* are characterized as having “a substantial base in research and/or professional opinion” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006, p. 12), the report nonetheless cautions that “the optimal mix of these factors has yet to be determined. . . . Nor does the remediation of adolescent literacy difficulties involve indiscriminately layering on all fifteen key elements. Choices should be matched to school and student needs” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006, p. 29). The expectation is not that each literacy program should necessarily include all 15 elements, but that developers and adopters of such programs should select those elements that seem best matched to their specific circumstances.
- The focus of *Reading Next* is explicitly on “the large population of struggling students who already decode accurately but still struggle with reading and writing after third grade” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006, p. 11). The report thus does not include recommendations related to areas such as decoding and fluency that may be important for readers who are struggling at a more basic level.
- Several of the elements of *Reading Next* relate to how infrastructure impacts adolescent literacy learning. The most that any purchased instructional program can do in these areas is to provide support to schools and districts as they implement these elements.

#### Development of This Paper

Development of this research-based white paper included the following steps.

- A top-level review of *Reading Next* was conducted to identify claims and recommended practices, including both those that are associated with the 15 key elements of adolescent literacy identified in the report and those that appear elsewhere in the report. As part of this review, information was collected about the sources in the Appendix to *Reading Next*, which listed literature supporting each of the 15 key elements.
- Well-known experts in the field of adolescent literacy were consulted to identify key, current, and reputable sources related to instruction for struggling adolescent readers. These included both experts who had been consulted during the development of *Jamestown Reading Navigator* and an independent expert not previously associated with the program.<sup>2</sup>
- Key documents were identified for review, with priority given to two types of documents:
  - *Broad policy-oriented research reviews and surveys of expert opinion, developed by reputable institutions and authors, with a goal of identifying key elements in effective adolescent literacy programs*
  - *More focused research syntheses and meta-analyses from reputable sources, describing the state of research and/or theory related to a specific relevant topic in adolescent literacy (e.g., comprehension, writing, formative assessment)*

<sup>2</sup> Key contributors included Dr. Thomas W. Bean, professor in literacy/reading and coordinator of doctoral studies in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Nevada at Las Vegas; Dr. William G. Brozo, professor of literacy, Graduate School of Education, George Mason University; and Dr. Douglas Fisher, professor of language and literacy education, San Diego State University. Drs. Brozo and Fisher had previously consulted with the development team for *Jamestown Reading Navigator*. These experts provided input into interpretation of the research literature, as well as recommendations of sources to review, but are not responsible for writing the summaries of the literature or for developing the correlations of the instructional recommendations to *Jamestown Reading Navigator*.

In addition to these two types of documents, some specific research reports were also identified for review, in the case of studies that were particularly germane to topics under investigation.

- Sources were reviewed and summarized, with special reference to
  - *Specific instructional recommendations*
  - *The nature of the evidence supporting each recommendation*
- Instructional recommendations were consolidated from multiple sources.
- Cross-comparison of the research-based recommendations and *Jamestown Reading Navigator* verified that *Jamestown Reading Navigator* supports each research-based recommendation listed in this paper.

In the final paper as presented here, each section spells out specific instructional recommendations that are supported by a mix of research and expert opinion. A table then provides information on how *Jamestown Reading Navigator* aligns with each recommendation.

Key policy-oriented documents and research syntheses that were reviewed for this paper are listed in the References section of the complete White Paper.

## STRATEGIC TUTORING

“Adolescents deserve reading specialists who assist individual students having difficulty learning how to read.”—Position statement from the International Reading Association’s Commission on Adolescent Literacy (Moore et al., 1999, p. 7)

### Does Tutoring Help Struggling Adolescent Readers?

Strategic tutoring, defined as “provid[ing] students with intense individualized reading, writing, and content instruction as needed” (p. 4), has been identified by *Reading Next* as one of 15 “promising elements of effective adolescent literacy programs . . . that had a substantial base in research and/or professional opinion” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006, p. 12).

According to researchers at the University of Texas at San Antonio, “Support for one-on-one tutoring is both ubiquitous and intuitive—no one disputes the value of individualized and personalized instructional help for struggling learners from the primary grades through graduate school” (Harmon et al., 2004, p. 48). They stated further:

The success and support for one-on-one tutoring for academic learning is well documented (Bloom, 1981; Hock, Pulvers, Deshler, & Schumaker, 2001). In particular, research on reading tutoring has found substantial positive effects (Lyons, Pinnell, & Deford, 1993; Ross, Smith, Casey, & Slavin, 1995; Wasik & Slavin, 1993). (p. 48)

Similarly, Allington (2006) stated, “[W]e have good evidence that intensive, expert reading interventions can accelerate the reading development of adolescent struggling readers” (p. 178, citing Davidson & Koppenhaver, 1993; Morris et al., 1996; Showers et al., 1998). Allington described the advantage of tutoring in terms of the research showing benefits from intensive instruction:

I think of intensity primarily in terms of teacher-pupil ratio, scheduling, and pacing. On the first feature, tutoring tops the intensity scale. . . . The evidence available indicates that both tutoring and very small-group instructional support is more commonly effective than the traditional larger-group (four to seven students) remediation. (p. 151, citing Allington, 2004a; Camilli & Wolfe, 2004; Shanahan, 1998; Wasik & Slavin, 1993)

**What Is “Strategic” Tutoring?**

In describing the value of tutoring for selected students, *Reading Next* emphasizes that such instruction is targeted toward key content and skills:

Tutoring is referred to as strategic in this element to emphasize that while students may need tutorial help to acquire critical curriculum knowledge, they also need to be taught “how to learn” curriculum information. Hence, within strategic tutoring sessions, tutors teach learning strategies while helping students complete their content assignments. The goal of strategic tutoring is to empower adolescents to complete similar tasks independently in the future. (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006, p. 18)

**Instructional Recommendations**

- **Focus on students who will benefit.** According to the authors of *Reading Next*, “Some students require or would benefit from intense, individualized instruction. This is particularly true of the student who struggles with decoding and fluency, but is also true of students requiring short-term, focused help” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006, p. 18). Similarly, Allington (2006) argued, “The more needy the readers, the more benefits that accrue from providing expert, intensive instruction” (p. 152, citing Wasik, 1998; Wasik & Slavin, 1993).
- **Focus on transferable learning strategies.** As described above, “[W]ithin strategic tutoring sessions, tutors teach learning strategies while helping students complete their content assignments. The goal of strategic tutoring is to empower adolescents to complete similar tasks independently in the future” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006, p. 18). In the case of tutoring that occurs within a literacy program (such as *Jamestown Reading Navigator*), this suggests that the focus of the tutoring should be on skills that will transfer to future content-area learning.
- **Expertise of tutors.** According to Allington (2006), “[T]he research demonstrates that as the expertise of the teacher/tutor increases, so does the likelihood that the intervention will accelerate reading development” (p. 152).

**How Jamestown Reading Navigator Supports Strategic Tutoring**

The following table describes how *Jamestown Reading Navigator* supports practices of effective strategic tutoring described above.

Summary of Strategic Tutoring Recommendations	Application Through <i>Jamestown Reading Navigator</i>
Tutoring should be provided for students who require or would benefit from intense, individualized instruction.	<p>Teachers are encouraged to use one-on-one tutoring as a component of <i>Jamestown Reading Navigator</i> program implementation. For example, the scheduling model provided in the <i>Teacher Resource Guide</i> includes time for independent/collaborative reading and/or strategic tutoring.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers can use the Learner Management System reports to identify students who are having difficulties in specific skills areas.</li> <li>• <i>Reteaching Skills Support</i> resources provide reteaching activity suggestions, reading passages, and blackline masters that tutors can use to reteach specific skills.</li> </ul>

Continued ➡

Summary of Strategic Tutoring Recommendations	Application Through <i>Jamestown Reading Navigator</i>
<p>Tutoring should be provided for students who struggle with decoding and fluency.</p>	<p>Tutoring is recommended within <i>Jamestown Reading Navigator</i> and/or in the <i>Jamestown Reading Navigator</i> professional development for students who are experiencing difficulties with decoding and fluency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Sight Words Intervention Report and the Word Families Intervention Report can be used to identify students who are having specific difficulties related to decoding in Trek 1 (i.e., level 1).</li> <li>• <i>Reteaching Skills Support</i> resources for Trek 1 include activities that tutors can use to reteach and reinforce the phonics and language structure skills covered in each online journey (lesson). These resources can be used either for students with decoding difficulties in specific areas or across the board as a general reinforcement for students throughout Trek 1.</li> <li>• Teachers are encouraged to consider tutoring in the on-site <i>Jamestown Reading Navigator</i> implementation training if students show difficulties in their submitted oral fluency recordings.</li> <li>• Recommended tutoring activities for improving fluency include repeated readings, shared reading, choral reading, phrase-cued text practice, and self-directed reading.</li> <li>• In the on-site training, teachers are encouraged to conduct a miscue analysis once per quest (unit) in Treks 2–4 based on students’ oral reading. This helps them determine whether students may have underlying difficulties related to word recognition that might require remediation for skills covered in Trek 1.</li> </ul>
<p>Tutoring should be provided for students who need short-term, focused help.</p>	<p>Tutoring is recommended within <i>Jamestown Reading Navigator</i> as a possible strategy for students who are experiencing difficulties with specific skill areas and thus may benefit from focused, short-term help.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Class Scores Report, the Student Scores Report, and other Learner Management System reports can be used to identify students who may need help.</li> <li>• The Reading Skills Intervention Report and the Vocabulary Intervention Report can be used to identify students who are having difficulties with specific reading skills or vocabulary from a specific online journey in Treks 2–4.</li> <li>• <i>Reteaching Skills Support</i> resources for Treks 2–4 provide comprehensive support for tutoring specific skills where students may be experiencing difficulties, including suggestions for teacher modeling, student practice, scaffolding the skill, addressing multiple learning styles, and working with English language learning (ELL) students.</li> </ul>
<p>Tutoring should focus on strategies that can transfer to content-area learning.</p>	<p>All of the reading strategies taught in <i>Jamestown Reading Navigator</i> are designed to be transferred to curriculum content that students will face in the future. By focusing tutoring instruction on helping students learn these strategies, teachers help prepare them for future content-area learning.</p> <p>For more information, see the Support for Content-Area Literacy section earlier in this paper.</p>

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Summary of Strategic Tutoring Recommendations	Application Through <i>Jamestown Reading Navigator</i>
<p>Tutoring should be conducted by personnel with reading expertise.</p>	<p><i>Jamestown Reading Navigator</i> provides professional development resources to help teachers improve their expertise as reading instructors and strategic tutors in a broad range of areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggestions, modeling, and training related to strategic tutoring are included as part of the online professional development modules and as part of the follow-up on-site training, and also in connection with other specific topics for optional professional development sessions. Teachers are encouraged to use the gradual release of responsibility model to provide a structure for tutoring. (For more information about the gradual release of responsibility model, see the Comprehension section earlier in this paper.)</li> <li>• Activity and teaching suggestions in the <i>Reteaching Skills Support</i> resources help reinforce the expertise of tutors as they work with specific skill areas.</li> </ul> <p>For more information about resources to help teachers develop their instructional expertise, see the Professional Development section later in this paper.</p>

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