



When Literacy Is Non-Negotiable

Based on Reading Isn't Optional:

Fulfilling the Promise of Literacy for Secondary Students

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EA Literacy and Learning

Purpose

To help secondary educators and leaders understand that improving literacy outcomes requires more than classroom strategies—it requires alignment between the science of reading, implementation science, leadership systems, and evidence-based instructional practice.

Key Understanding

Reading Isn't Optional establishes that adolescent literacy improvement must be grounded in three interconnected areas:

1. The Sciences of Reading

The book clarifies the research base behind reading development and addresses common misconceptions about secondary literacy. It emphasizes that understanding the science of reading must be paired with implementation science—how schools move from research to consistent, sustainable practice.

Strong literacy systems require more than knowledge of reading components; they require intentional structures that ensure those components are consistently applied.

2. The Foundation of Literacy Transformation

Sustainable literacy improvement depends on:

- Leadership actions (not just leadership titles)
- A well-structured Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)
- Student-focused coaching that strengthens instructional practice

Without these foundations, even strong instructional strategies remain isolated and inconsistent.

3. Evidence-Based Classroom Practices

The final section moves into research-to-practice application, including:

- Fluency (accuracy, rate, expression)
- Construction of meaning
- Content-area and disciplinary comprehension

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- Intentional vocabulary instruction
- Scaffolds for grade-level text access
- Writing instruction
- Oral language development
- Foundational literacy support for multilingual learners

When these practices are embedded across content areas, students are better able to access rigorous coursework and demonstrate understanding.

Teacher Reflection Questions

- Do I understand how the science of reading applies to secondary students?
- Are literacy practices in our building implemented consistently or individually?
- How does our MTSS structure support adolescent literacy specifically?
- What role does coaching play in strengthening classroom literacy instruction?
- Which evidence-based literacy routines are visible in daily instruction?

What to Look for in Instruction

- Clear alignment between research and classroom practice
- Leadership structures that support literacy implementation
- MTSS systems centered on reading development
- Coaching cycles focused on student outcomes
- Explicit literacy instruction embedded in content classes
- Strategic supports for multilingual learners without reducing rigor

What to Look for in Students

- Increased ability to access and engage with complex texts
- Stronger academic vocabulary and oral language
- Improved comprehension across disciplines
- Greater independence in writing and discussion
- Measurable growth supported by tiered systems



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