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A Collection of Middle Level Reading Interventions Categorized Based on Specific Criteria

Claire E. Alexander
Grand Valley State University

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A Collection of Middle Level Reading Interventions

Categorized Based on Specific Criteria

By

Claire Alexander

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Master's Project

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The signature of the individual below indicates that the individual has read and approved the project of *Claire Elizabeth Alexander* in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Literacy Studies.

Elizabeth Stolle 8/15/23
 Elizabeth Petroelje Stolle, Ph.D., Project Advisor Date

Accepted and approved on behalf of the
Literacy Studies Program

Elizabeth Stolle

Elizabeth Stolle, Ph.D., Graduate Program Director

8/15/23
Date

Accepted and approved on behalf of the Literacy
Educational Foundations & Technology Unit

Mary Bair

Mary Bair, Ph.D., Unit Head

8/11/2023
Date

Abstract

Students lack literacy skills while entering the middle level grades, where reading is used as a tool for learning, rather than consistently taught through explicit instruction on the components of literacy. Reading interventions give students additional support and opportunities to improve their reading skills. This project argues for those intervention programs to be chosen based on specific qualities that are shown through research to make learning during interventions more impactful. The framework for this project works with the idea that learning is a social and cultural interaction, where collaboration, word play, student interests, and learning environment will allow students to improve. The product provides helpful information on several reading intervention programs that can be used with students at the middle level, which is accessible to teachers, literacy coaches, and reading interventionists who are planning to work with striving readers.

Key words: reading interventions, middle level, literacy skills, socioculturalism, intervention programs, authentic learning

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Chapter One: Introduction

Problem Statement

Reading difficulties have a major impact on students' abilities to perform well in academic situations, especially in middle level grades (Lewis-Lancaster & Reisener, 2013). In the United States, calls for secondary students' increased educational attainment have centered on improving secondary students' literacy abilities (Cantrell et al., 2013). However, in most districts, reading skills are cemented into the elementary school curriculum, while middle school and high school curriculums use these skills to go deeper with texts (Lewis-Lancaster & Reisener, 2013). Many students are entering the middle level grades without many or most reading skills that are necessary for success in middle school (Solis et al., 2014). This achievement gap exists as it has for over 50 years for those entering the secondary level grades and leads to negative consequences (Haines et al., 2018). That is, many middle school students are striving readers who may not have decoding skills, know how to use context clues, or use comprehension strategies to make sense of what they are reading (Miciak et al., 2014). With increasing text complexity without serious attention to concomitant instructional supports, the achievement gap will broaden and exacerbate (O'Connor et al., 2018).

Importance and Rationale of the Project

As students enter higher grades, the school's curriculum will assume, and require, that students have specific reading skills that will allow them to read a text. That is, students should be able to interpret what they read, develop their vocabulary, analyze meaning, and know how to use information. For decades, schools have seen students entering the middle level grades without having cemented these reading skills, which causes them to start to fall behind, or continue to struggle to succeed in their learning processes (O'Connor et al. 2018).

A study from 2016 shows that only 28% of 8th graders in the United States in the year 1995 read at grade level and later statistics show very little improvement (Strong et al., 2016). In 2018, about 36% have reached proficient reading status by the end of 8th grade according to the National Center for Education Statistics (Martinez-Lincoln, Barnes, Clemens, 2021). While the number has increased, it is still a severely low number of students who can actually do the grade level reading that is asked of them, and the increase is happening too slowly. Without grade level proficiency, students will continue to struggle, and some will end up leaving school all together.

Fien et al. (2018) found that approximately 30 percent of students in the United States dropout of school and never graduate. The reasons for these dropouts are extensive, but many students drop out because they struggle so much in their classes. This academic struggle for students usually happens in different subject areas, and can cause them in adulthood to be met with significant barriers in their future exploration of employment and options for economic success (Benner et al., 2022). Those who struggle with education that are able to graduate might not think postsecondary education is the next step for them. When 90% of the United States' high-wage jobs are looking for college graduates, and only 50% of students are deemed "adequately prepared" for college, the economic impact will be extensive (Fien et al., 2018).

Success in school is extremely important, and one of the areas where students are struggling the most is with their reading skills. If we are able to recognize these issues as early as the middle level grades and offer specific interventions for the skills that are lacking, we might be able to move those statistics from low and threatening to something that is allowing students, and the economy, to succeed.

Background of the Project

Literacy, as shown in the previous section, plays a large role in the success of students and then the success of social mobility, the economy, and impactful citizen participation (Benner et al., 2022). Reading instruction has been an important part of school curriculums for generations, and continues to be highlighted as basic learning needs.

It took some time before work was done to show how students learn reading skills over time. In 2007, the information from a study that started in the fall of 1998 was collected and showed what reading skills about 25,000 students learned from starting kindergarten all the way to the end of 8th grade (Reardon, Valentino & Shores, 2012). Sections from this study show that “most children learn word-reading skills in the first two years of school” (p. 19) and by the end of first grade, over 90% have basic letter-recognition skills and beginning and ending sounds of words, while “three-quarters can recognize words by sight” (p. 20). “By eighth grade, 81 percent of students are able to extrapolate for inference, 64 percent are proficient in evaluation , and 37 percent are able to evaluate nonfiction. Fewer than 10 percent can evaluate complex syntax” (p. 20). The skills developed slowly over time, especially after hitting the middle level grades. While this information does show a lot about the reading skills of students, and how and when they develop over time that can be helpful in understanding how our students are learning, it does not show the dimensional nature of literacy (Reardon, Valentino & Shores, 2012).

The term “proficiency”, brought about in the time of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), started a new age of testing students to see if they have the grade-level skills that are necessary for their level (Saatcioglu, Skrtic & Kingston, 2021). Schools were judged on proficiency and were rewarded for having high test scores and high percentages of students who were able to show these skills, specifically in reading and math. This changed the goals of reading instruction

to move away from being skills focused to teaching students how to be most successful with what they would be tested on that year (Saatcioglu, Skrtic & Kingston, 2021). Many students lacked the education needed to continue to be successful with their work in each grade level, and it was quickly found out that teaching to the test was not allowing students to be competent readers. During this time, studies showed that a “staggering 70% of the adolescent reader population” needed some type of intervention or remedial instruction (Haines et al., 2018, p. 692).

While studies on early literacy skills have collected information on the lower grades for decades, it is only recently that studies are showing the extent to which middle level readers are lacking reading skills and what is being done to improve those gaps (Fien et al., 2018). Fien et al. (2018) describe “a recent quantitative synthesis of reading programs for adolescents found 33 studies published between 1970 and 2007 involving 39,000 students” (p. 3). This literacy study was done by Slavin, Cheung, Groff, and Lake in 2008, and is the first to collect the information of studies of reading interventions being done at the secondary level. These studies show a lot of information about funding of literacy in schools.

Over the past 50 years, the funding for literacy education in American schools has changed significantly (Blanchette, 2023). Around the late 1960’s into the mid-1970’s, funding increased for literacy education with programs like Title I, which provided support for low-income students (Foorman, 2016). That funding declined in the 1980’s as standards-based reforms came about and there was more focus on accountability (Foorman, 2016). The importance of literacy in schools ramped up again with the implementation of NCLB in the early 2000’s, but schools continued to address striving readers without guidance or more funding (Haines et al., 2018). In recent years, there has been a renewed emphasis on literacy education

with increased funding, like in 2010, when the Obama administration launched the Race to the Top program, which allocated around \$4.35 billion in funding to states to encourage education reforms, including increasing literacy proficiency (Fien et al., 2018). Additionally, the Every Student Succeeds Act, passed in 2015, emphasized the importance of literacy education and provided funding to support evidence-based approaches to literacy instruction in schools (Reed & Albakry, 2017).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this project is to develop a middle level reading intervention program guide that provides information about programs that target specific reading skill gaps for students entering and in the middle level grades. This project will research what we know about striving readers and what has been shown effective to allow them to be more successful. With that information, a set of programs that target the specific reading skill gaps will be reviewed and evaluated. The collection of information will then be used for those students entering or at The Greenspire Middle School in the fall with specific reading skills gaps. This project is not necessarily unique, but impactful, because it will take information that has already been collected and programs that have already been developed and use them to create targeted intervention programs that can be used right away.

This project can also be used by other middle level reading teachers and reading specialists. The program will have accessible links with information about each intervention program, how effective it is, how to use it, and which students will benefit most. The programs will be categorized by the type of student that would benefit, mode, method, and other parameters. It will be housed in an easy-to-access place for anyone working with students who are striving readers and lack specific reading skills.

Objectives of the Project

The objectives for this project are:

1. to offer meaningful and effective interventions to allow students to gain reading skills that they might lack while entering or in middle level grades
2. to have a useful collection of meaningful and effective interventions that are specified to individual students or small groups of students who are striving readers
3. to gain an understanding of what exists in the world of reading interventions for young adolescents

In order to achieve these objectives, this project will put together information about reading intervention programs, and allow teachers and specialists to easily access information to them. This will pair well with any students, including those with reading goals in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan and students on Response to Intervention (RTI) tiers 2 and 3.

Definition of Terms

Five components of literacy: n. the “five primary reading skills” as reported by the National Reading Panel in 2000 (Lewis-Lancaster & Reisener, 2013).

1. *Comprehension*: n. “the ability to construct meaning from what is read” (p. 166).
2. *Fluency*: n. “the ability to read quickly and accurately” (p. 166).
3. *Phonemic Awareness*: n. “the concept that words are made up of separate sounds that are blended together when spoken” (p. 166).
4. *Phonics*: n. “a set of rules that specifies the relationship between letters in the spelling of words” (p. 166).

5. *Vocabulary*: n. the words we know because we understand their meaning and how to use them

Literacy: n. the ability to read and write

Proficiency: n. competence or skill; “the satisfactory degree of grade-level skill acquisition by students on tested subjects” (Saatcioglu, Skrtic & Kingston, 2021).

Reading difficulties / Reading skill gaps: n. a specific area where a student struggles within the components of literacy

Reading intervention: n. a long term program to aid striving readers with reading skill gaps

Response to Intervention (RTI): pn. a three tiered program that categorizes students based on their reading skills and the risk that they might be at with any reading skill gaps

Secondary level: n. grades 6-12

Striving reader: n. a student who performs “below grade level on reading tasks”, also called struggling readers, at-risk readers, poor readers, low-achieving readers, disadvantaged readers, or marginalized readers (Haines et al., 2018, p. 691)

Scope of Project

This project will be created for implementation in a middle school setting, though the location of the school should not have an impact, because the materials can be chosen to fit different demographics of students at the school’s own discretion. The project will focus on the 6th, 7th and 8th grade-level expectations for readers.

The project will address the literacy skills that striving readers need to develop further through an intervention program. The development of these particular skills should allow these students to be more successful at reading independently in any of their classes, while encouraging them to stay in school. It will target different interests of students, funding

necessary for the resources, and timeframes that are needed. The programs will use both paper resources as well as technology resources, and will be sorted accordingly to allow users of the project to match the best options to each striving reader.

This project will not address all intervention programs that are available and will not focus on any level besides middle level, though lower and higher grades will be mentioned. This project will focus on classroom instruction. That is, there will not be resources flagged for use outside of the classroom, and this will not be intended for parent/guardian use.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

Many students struggle to meet the demands that are set in middle level reading curriculums (Kim et al., 2017). Studies show that around 70% of adolescent readers need some kind of remediation for reading difficulties (Haines et al., 2018). The following literature review will address research on striving readers and reading intervention at the middle level, specifically what literacy interventions can help improve and how programs can be chosen based on different components. The literature review will start with an explanation of a theoretical framework that is addressed in the research, based on Vygotsky's work, and will connect the theory and rationale to the research under these specific topics:

- A Teacher's Guiding Role
- What Skills To Refine
- Necessary Principles of Practice
 - Learning Environment
 - Authentic Learning
 - Inclusion of Technology

A summary and conclusion will follow, showing how the research informs the project.

Theory/Rationale

Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural framework for literacy emphasizes the importance of the social and cultural aspects of learning (Warschauer, 2017). He believed that literacy is not simply a cognitive process but is also shaped by the cultural and social context in which it occurs (Warschauer, 2017). Vygotsky's work emphasizes the role that social interaction and language play in developing literacy skills (McNaughton & Williams, 2009). By engaging in

conversations and collaborative reading and writing activities with more experienced peers or adults, learners can acquire new knowledge and skills and develop their literacy competence (Warschauer, 2017). This framework emphasizes the importance of culturally relevant instruction and the need to consider the social context in literacy learning (McNaughton & Williams, 2009). Vygotsky's framework for literacy has been influential in the field of education and has guided the development of many literacy instructional approaches (Warschauer, 2017).

Reading interventions are done with striving readers who have not fully developed the reading skills necessary to be successful independently with grade level content (Fien et al., 2018). These intervention programs are to be supported by an adult with knowledge of the program and students' needs, as Vygotsky's frame highlights the need for literacy to be developed with experienced peers and adults (McNaughton & Williams, 2009).

Interventions should include meaningful learning experiences, as the sociocultural framework deems necessary for literacy development (McNaughton & Williams, 2009). The more interaction and want students have to be in the learning process, the more they will benefit from it (Martinez-Lincoln et al., 2021). It is equally as important for the intervention to include the necessary principles of practice, as students need to feel the connection to the information and the process by which it is being taught in the specific learning environment (Kim et al., 2017).

In order to develop new skills or continue to further develop weaker skills, reading interventions can aid students in being more successful with reading independently in their grade level classes. Sociocultural theory, as it highlights the process of developing literacy skills, informs this project and this process because students need to be guided through authentic learning by someone with experience while engaged in interactive activities. This project will

find the different intervention programs that exist and will categorize them based on the sociocultural framework needs for literacy development.

Research/Evaluation

A Teacher's Guiding Role

In a reading intervention situation, the teacher takes on many roles to get the students to gain and improve literacy skills (Guthrie & Klauda, 2014). One of the teacher's main roles is to provide students with motivation to read (Naeghel et al., 2014). Naeghel et al. (2014) state that "reading motivation research indicates that teachers can play a critical role in persistently stimulating their students' intrinsic reading motivation" (p. 1548). Naeghel et al. (2014) and Guthrie and Klauda (2014) agree that motivation from the guiding entity is necessary in literacy instruction, as Vygotsky formed in his original framework (Warschauer, 2017).

Studies connected to literacy and reading interventions show a correlation between teacher efficacy and intervention program impact (Cantrell et al., 2013). According to Cantrell et al. (2013), a teacher's efficacy can have an impact on improving student reading performance, showing that the more effective the teacher, the better impact they have on student success. Haines et al. (2018) also found that the teacher's influence on the learning environment was a key variable to the success of the intervention program they studied. Given that teachers or reading interventionists are not Special Education teachers, they can focus just on the literacy skills for the instructional time (Haines et al., 2018). In a sociocultural frame, it is important for the teacher to be an effective guide for the students they are helping and for them to be educated in what might work best for each student (Warschauer, 2017). A product that shows the differences between the intervention programs might allow teachers and reading interventionists to quickly and easily select the right reading program for their group of students.

Secondary teachers are focused more on curriculums that use reading as a learning tool rather than teaching how to read, as elementary teachers usually have their focus on teaching fundamentals (Fien et al. 2018). When students come into secondary settings without some of the fundamental reading skills, their teachers might not be trained to deliver interventions. Teachers who know the reading program well, through professional development (PD) or specific trainings, tend to be more effective, based on studies done with specific intervention programs. Haines et al. (2018) reported that teachers who were trained by Scholastic when the program was implemented is said to be a factor in student achievement. Berkeley, Hock, and Washburn (2023) agree that training was a key part of their research, as the instructors followed the lead researcher to learn the intervention process. Their intensive study had instructors receiving training before the study that included “shadowing the lead researcher, reviewing steps within an instructional checklist prior to each session, and receiving retraining or clarification as needed throughout the study” (Berkeley, Hock & Washburn, 2023, p. 10). Cantrell et al. (2013) report that intervention training can be a lengthy process, in this study reporting that the participating teachers received two and a half days of training in the summer, with six additional half-day sessions throughout the school year. Teachers who use more technological-based programs say they feel comfortable with their tasks after a small amount of PD (Bippert, 2017).

What Skills to Refine

While no reading intervention can help each student with each reading skill that needs further development, some reading intervention programs focus on very specific skills, and programs should be chosen based on the needs of each student. For example, the students studied after working with the Strategic Adolescent Reading Intervention (STARI) program showed gains with reading comprehension, word recognition and morphological awareness (Kim

et al., 2017). O'Connor et al. (2015) used U.S. History reading passages to see if those easier texts that were interesting to the students could allow them to improve their decoding and vocabulary skills. Their comprehension skills improved because of the work with those skills (O'Connor et al., 2018). Each program should be understood by what skills it is meant to address.

Some programs will focus on one skill deeply in order to improve one component of literacy. For example, Ilter (2019) used an intervention focused on use of context clues as a proven way to help those who needed to further develop their vocabulary. The students who received the intervention that focused on context clue strategies were able to improve vocabulary knowledge more than the group who received the more generalized program (Ilter, 2019).

Conversely, Brown and Forbush (2016) found work with morphemic vocabulary instruction and prefixed words allowed some of the participating students to improve their word recognition and comprehension. The program that striving readers engage with should be chosen based on what skills they should improve on and should be chosen accordingly, allowing them to develop their literacy competence, which is a component of the sociocultural framework (Warschauer, 2017).

Necessary Principles of Practice

Student needs are something that any teacher and reading interventionist will have to address when coming up with the best intervention program to use for the individual or group that they are working with. Those programs should be chosen based on their ability to engage all of the students in a group regardless of their gender, race, interests, or abilities (Kim et al., 2017). The program chosen should also allow that diverse group to see the value in what they are doing and allow for authentic learning, oftentimes based on those dynamics that each student brings to

the group (Guthrie & Klauda, 2014). Adults choosing an intervention program should also consider the use of technology as an asset to the learning process (Bippert, 2019).

Learning Environment

Students who are in supportive learning environments tend to be more successful in gaining skills that are being practiced. Haines et al. (2018) focused on the teacher's ability to make a comfortable environment for students where they felt supported by the teacher and their peers and how it directly affected the students success with the program. O'Brien, Beach and Scharber (2007) saw that collaborative work gave students a better sense of a supportive community, but that the students were aware of why they were in the program, which did impact their engagement.

The base of the learning environment, like if it is individual, small group, discussion-based, etc., can also have an impact on the interventions efficacy. Pesout and Nietfeld (2021) looked at the differences between competitive, individual, and cooperative reading processes and learned that students in cooperative learning environments can comprehend what is read and discussed better than those in other learning environments. Kim et al. (2016) reported how the program's set up with student-driven, discussion-based sessions allowed students to connect in their environment and allowed them to improve their comprehension and fluency while reading. Solis et al. (2014) found evidence that students taught individually did not necessarily benefit from one-on-one instruction and that group lessons allowed for the same amount of growth in most instances, which could give instructors more time with each student overall. Vygotsky's framework highlights that the learning environment should be inclusive and allow for connections for students, so setting up the right environment is a key focus for the teacher or reading interventionist (Warschauer, 2017). These studies also show that the learning

environment has an impact on students, and the better the program is at setting up this environment, the more likely the students will succeed.

Authentic Learning

When students see the relevance of the work they are doing and know when they will be able to apply what they learn in real-world situations, they will likely be more engaged by participating in the activities, sharing willingly in discussions, and by doing the reading and writing that is asked of them, in both narrative and informational lessons (Kim et al., 2016). Student engagement is necessary for a learning environment, for it allows involvement of the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive processes, allowing more interaction with the learning itself (Martinez-Lincoln et al., 2021). According to Guthrie and Klauda (2014):

Engaged reading with informational text refers to active text interaction in which students are seeking conceptual understanding of complex topics. In this pursuit, students are energized by internal motivations such as intrinsic motivation, value, and perceived competence. They believe that reading extensively and deeply is beneficial to them in the immediate present. (p. 388)

Vygotsky notes the need for instruction to be culturally relevant, so that students will be more interested in reading about and caring about the information they are reading (McNaughton & Williams, 2009).

Student interests expand beyond anything that one class or intervention can touch on. However, it is important to allow students to connect with the program based on their interests as much as possible in an environment that also suits their needs and interests. As the sociocultural frame states, literacy learning is a social activity (McNaughton & Williams, 2009), so the focus of the reading and the environment the students are put in should be chosen with intention. The

STARI program, shown in the study done by Kim et al. (2017), allowed students to bring in their own thinking and experiences and discuss them in comparison to the reading passages; this had a positive impact on the students' reading skills. Their goal was for the focus of the program to focus on the content of the readings, allowing them to connect, stimulating more interest and motivation (Kim et al., 2017).

The role of interest in the text does play a role in success with the text, according to Pesout and Nietfeld (2021). In their study, they found that students who worked in groups and individually were more successful in comprehending the passage if they were interested in the content of it. The higher the scores that the student participants gave for interest level in the text directly correlated with higher comprehension and fluency (Pesout & Nietfeld, 2021). Bassette and Taber-Doughty (2016) highlighted that research shows that when student interest is higher, participation and the want to learn improve. Students were involved in a reading intervention that included a canine companion to read to, which proved to get more participation and willingness to learn from most of the students with fewer word errors per minute while reading aloud (Bassette & Taber-Doughty, 2016). Kim et al. (2016) included a large portion of their research to focus on engaging and accessible texts and what impact they have on improvement of reading skills. They reported that, "with themes designed to link to students' social and cultural experiences, and with frequent opportunities to express personal stances on the texts read, particularly in discussion and debate, STARI activities helped overcome disengagement" (Kim et al., 2016, p. 375). There is a shared understanding that engagement from striving readers is needed before the basics of reading skills can and will improve (Kim et al., 2017; Guthrie et al., 2013; Torgesen et al., 2007). Therefore, it will be important for teachers or literacy

interventionists to have an understanding of how a program is set up to address student interests and engagement.

It is important to notice what makes each student who they are and what needs they have with their learning. One demographic that a teacher or reading interventionist should focus on is racial diversity. Berry (2013) set up an entire chapter in his book highlighting ways teachers can connect topics of the lessons to students' school and home cultures. Kim et al. (2017) used the STARI program with subjects who were racially and linguistically diverse in order to see how the program works for different types of students. The themes of the reading passages included "Jacob Lawrence's narrative of the Great Migration, first person accounts of race riots in Northern U.S. cities as the African American population grew" and more (Kim et al., p. 366). Acosta and Duggins (2018) looked at community-based interventions with African American students that proved a culturally-significant learning environment can help students be successful in further developing their reading skills. The emphasis on the importance of having culturally relevant instruction in the sociocultural frame (McNaughton & Williams, 2009) shows in these studies and more. It is important to know how a reading intervention program can address the cultural and racial diversities of students.

Inclusion of Technology

Reading interventions, in the beginning, were book and paper based, but as newer and faster technologies have emerged, many programs have utilized tech-based formats to engage students. Some schools directly seek digital solutions that are meant to accelerate student learning and can be described as highly effective and engaging (Bippert & Harman, 2017). O'Brian et al. (2007) collected evidence that shows media-rich instruction allows students to connect to their lives, become immersed in the learning, and that they might not even recognize

how much learning is actually taking place. Fogarty et al. (2017) reported that students who were given a technology driven intervention scored better on post-assessments than the students within the same school systems who were given a standard, not-media based intervention. As students are more and more immersed with technological resources, those platforms are proving to be more impactful than those that are paper and book based (Fogarty et al., 2017).

The perceptions that teachers have on the use of technology in literacy instruction have shown to be positive overall, though there are some challenges that pair with the use of it in learning environments (Bippert, 2019). When using a sociocultural lens, adolescents should have opportunities to engage with different media-rich activities as a way to change their environment to impact their learning (O'Brien, Beach & Scharber, 2007). Knowing what the formats for the different reading intervention programs that are out there could allow a teacher or reading interventionist to find the right option for their students.

The assessments that are given to striving readers are also becoming more technology-based. Most accessible and established intervention programs use some sort of digital assessment to determine what skills the student might need to continue to develop (Berekeley, Hock & Washburn, 2023; Cantrell et al., 2013; Fien et al., 2018; Haines et al., 2018; Roberts et al., 2015). The more involved and fun these assessments are, the more motivation students have to put effort into them, and the majority of the “fun” assessments have been developed in a video-game format (Roberts et al., 2015). If students can engage with language play in their assessments, that is in line with the sociocultural frame (McNaughton & Williams, 2009) and those assessments should be part of an evaluation of the different intervention programs available for the middle level.

Summary

Reading interventions allow striving readers to be more successful with reading independently in their grade level classes by allowing them to develop new skills or continue to work on others (Fien et al., 2018). Sociocultural theory says that literacy instruction should allow students to be engaged in the relevant content, to have a teacher or peer to guide them through learning, and to focus on skills that need development (Warschauer, 2017). Vygotsky emphasized that literacy learning should develop skills through social interactions and play with focus on the social context of the materials (McNaughton & Williams, 2009). This is shown in the research done on many middle level reading interventions.

Teachers should be guides and motivators through the intervention process, as studies show that teacher efficacy can directly improve reading skills (Naeghel et al., 2014; Cantrell et al., 2013). They should spend time training for the programs they choose for their students, as the research reports (Berkeley, Hock & Washburn, 2023; Bippert, 2017; Cantrell et al., 2013; Fien et al., 2018; Haines et al., 2018). Each reading intervention has specific literacy skills that it targets for striving readers to be able to improve (Kim et al., 2017; O'Connor et al., 2018). Oftentimes, work with one or more specific skills have been shown to directly improve skills with the fundamental literacy skills (Brown & Forbush, 2016; Ilter, 2019).

Focus on some principles of practice can also allow one to choose the right reading intervention program. The program should be able to engage students of all gender, race, interests, and abilities (Kim et al., 2017). Students need to see the value in what they are doing and how it can apply to their life and learning (Guthrie & Klauda, 2014). Technology plays a large role in many intervention programs that are available today (Bippert, 2019).

The group of students that are part of the interventions should feel safe and supported in the learning environment (Haines et al., 2108; O'Brien, Beach & Scharber, 2007). It is also important to consider the nature of the lessons and whether they are set up to be supportive or if they are more on the competitive side (Pesout & Nietfeld, 2021). Interests of the students and their engagement are likely to work together in reading interventions, based on research done (Kim et al., 2016; Martinez-Lincoln et al, 2021; Guthrie & Klauda, 2014). The lessons should allow students to want to learn and to know that what they are doing will have value (Bassette & Taber-Doughty, 2016; Kim et al., 2017; Guthrie et al., 2013; Torgesen et al., 2007). That engagement can be higher if the lessons include technology, which is a large focus of the studies done on specific intervention programs (Bippert & Harman, 2017; O'Brian et al., 2007; Fogarty et al., 2017). Many of the programs are accessible for students and the instructors, including the assessments that go along with them (Berekeley, Hock & Washburn, 2023; Cantrell et al., 2013; Fien et al., 2018; Haines et al., 2018; Roberts et al., 2015).

Conclusions

Reading interventions have been proven to have a positive impact on reading skills for many students who need the additional support. With all of the different options available, it is important for any teacher or reading interventionist to know which program to use for which individual student or groups of students. The research reviewed shows the different components that can be focused on to choose the right program, and will allow the project to list and categorize many of the options that are out there now for middle level reading intervention.

Chapter Three: Project Description

Introduction

The fundamentals of literacy, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Lewis-Lancaster & Reisener, 2013), are skills that are taught as part of an elementary curriculum. When entering the middle levels, the goal is that enough skills have been developed that students can move from learning to read to reading to learn. However, only 31% of students at the 8th grade level are proficient in reading, according to the National Achievement-Level Results in 2022, and those numbers have been in the low to mid 30's for years.

Reading interventions have been used at times when striving readers need to continue to develop literacy skills. They are especially important in the secondary levels when instruction is less focused on gaining those skills and more focused on using them. There are many different reading intervention programs that have been put together to allow reading interventionists to work with students. This project collected information about different programs that are available for working with striving readers at the middle levels. The programs are all accessible, attached to studies that have been implemented to measure their effectiveness, and categorized based on information found about efficacy of intervention programs from the literature review. This chapter will close with information on how the project will be implemented and conclusions based on the research.

Project Components

The appendices of the project include pages of categorized reading intervention programs that exist in an editable and organizable spreadsheet, pictured in Appendix A. There is a page with information on all of the programs, followed by pages that address each program

individually, which are shown in Appendix B. There are links to the individual pages within the spreadsheet, as well as links to the programs themselves.

The first page of the spreadsheet, in Appendix A, lists the different programs and includes the grade levels that the program is meant to target. This is one of the first things that any teacher or reading interventionist is likely going to want to know to make sure that the program will address the reading levels of the striving students they are going to be working with. Next, there are checkboxes that tell whether the program is mainly tech-based, print-based, or if they are a combination of both. The use of technology as a tool for reading interventions has been studied a lot recently, and is shown to engage students in the program and allow them to enjoy the process (Bippert & Harman, 2017; O'Brian et al., 2007; Fogarty et al., 2017).

The next section is a small amount of information that tells how much each program focuses on two important aspects of reading intervention programs that are more impactful: the learning environment and authentic learning. There is a color-coded scale on the page to allow the user of the product to know what the numbers in the sheet mean. If the program focuses on the learning environment or the importance of authentic learning, and this is shown in the information that is provided on their websites and studies, the numbers should reflect that focus. For example, the STARI program talks about authentic learning many times on their website and in the different studies that researched the program's effectiveness, so that program scores a '3' on the scale, while Istation only mentions it as a main focus some of the time, giving that program a '2' on the scale.

The "Nature of Instruction" heading allows the user to see what each program's curriculum might look like and how it is meant to be delivered. This section also gives some information about the instructor's role, all of which are detailed more on the programs'

individual pages. Striving readers will have different literacy skill sets that the instructor is going to look for in the program that is chosen for their reading intervention. The first page includes a color-coded heading of “Skills Addressed” that connects to a key with the meaning of the letters in that section. If the Read 180 program has “C, V, F, W, A, P” listed, that means the program focuses on building comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, word recognition, phonemic awareness, and phonics skills through the instruction of the program. Some of the programs specify research that the developers did that shows that working on decoding, phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency skills can allow a striving reader to better their comprehension and vocabulary skills, as listed on the sheet for Istation.

The last section of this Appendix A provides quick answers for some questions that any user of this product might have about the programs listed, including if there are studies that have been done to show the effectiveness of this program and if there is professional development and instruction available for the instructor to make sure they understand how to use the program well enough for it to have an impact on the students. It is also important to know if there are assessments built into the program, or if the instructor is going to have to assess in another way.

Appendix B shows each individual page, where the program is laid out with the same information as on the first sheet, but with more details. Links to the programs are also on the individual pages, as well as an image from the website and a direct quote about the program. There is a basic summary of what the program’s goals are and how they are implemented. There is some information about the cost of the program, which is going to be something that will be very important to the person seeking an intervention program. There are details about the nature of instruction, the principles of practice, the instructor’s roles, and the skills that are addressed. If studies are available, they are also listed here.

All of this collected information should allow any teacher or reading interventionist to find a program that they can use to work with their striving readers in an efficient manner, rather than having to find all of this information on their own. Use of this product will save time, directing more resources to students for improving their literacy skills.

Project Evaluations

This project will be evaluated in two ways. The author will use the listed and categorized intervention programs in the Fall of 2023 to determine what program or programs will work best with her students that she will be leading interventions with. Student reading skills will be assessed three times throughout the school year with the NWEA test, where their proficiency and growth rates can be accessed. Students who are part of the reading program that is implemented will hopefully show growth through the school year, with goals set to get them closer to proficiency for their grade level. If the program that they participate in comes from this product, it will show use of it is helpful.

Appendix C shows the second form of evaluation, which is a Google Form that asks the user to report if they chose a program to use with students based on the information from the product, to show whether the collected information is helpful or not. This will need to be reported out after a period of time working with the program. This form will be used by the author and her colleagues as they set up the intervention programs for students at the beginning of each school year.

Project Conclusions

The goals of this project are to allow teachers and reading specialists an easy opportunity to access information on reading intervention programs that are targeted for the middle level. In this way, educators will be able to offer meaningful and effective interventions to help students

gain reading skills that they might lack while entering, or in middle level grades. Given that there are many programs out there, and that some target specific reading skills or use different learning opportunities, this project will allow educators to see what each of these programs has to offer.

Plans for Implementation

These documents are going to be used by the author in her current school starting in the Fall of 2023, as she will be promoted to the school's first teacher who is a certified Reading Specialist. A specific block of time is included in her schedule that will allow her to work with striving readers multiple times each week throughout the school year. The author will use the documentation to apply the best reading intervention program to each individual or group that she works with for the time allotted on the schedule based on the evaluations of the programs and the students she is working with. This plan has been worked through with the current Head of School. The documentation will also be made available to other teachers and literacy coaches in hopes that they can access the information they need quickly and efficiently.

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Appendix A

Full List of All Programs

Middle Level Reading Interventions Listed

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Please fill out this Google Form when accessing information from this list

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
1	Please fill out this Google Form when accessing information from this list															
2	Program name	Grade Levels Addressed	Access to Program	Accessibility		Focus on Learning Environment	Focus on Authentic Learning	Nature of instruction	Skills Addressed	Accessible studies?	PD Available	Includes Assessments				
3				Technology	Print								Skills Addressed codes:			
4	STARI	6-8, Tier II	Link	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	3	discussion/group	F, D, S, C	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
5	Istation	PK-8	Link	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	2	online activities	D, A, P, F = C (V)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	F	Fluency		
6	Renaissance Accelerated Reader	K-12	Link	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	2	online books/articles	D, C, V	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	D	Decoding		
7	Read 180	3-12 Tiers II & III	Link	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	3	computer, individual, small group	C, V, F, W, A, P	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	S	Stamina		
8	Achieve 3000	K-12	Link	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	3	adaptive online program	F, D, S, C, A, P, V	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	C	Comprehension		
9	REWARDS	4-12	Link	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	2	teacher-led activities/lessons	F, D, W = C, V	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A	Phonemic Awareness		
10	LANGUAGE! Live	5-12	Link	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	3	teacher-guided instruction with online instruction and practice	V, A, G, C	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	P	Phonics		
11				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	V	Vocabulary		
12				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	W	Word recognition/study		
13				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	G	Grammar		
14				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
15				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
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Explore

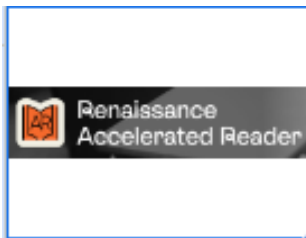
Created by Claire Alexander, 2023

Appendix B

Individual Pages as Shown in Spreadsheet

	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Strategic Adolescent Reading Intervention (STARI)</u> "STARI is a literature-focused, Tier II intervention for students in grades 6-9 who read two or more years below grade level"</p>
Product Name/Link:	
Summary:	The STARI program is developed specifically for middle level that allows students to engage in discussions based on reading passages that address specific skills that need work. It allows them to connect to their reading and see their improvement first-hand as they continue to read and discuss
Grade Levels:	6-8, specifically students at Tier II
Cost:	Free with account, donations encouraged
Principles of Practice:	"Texts need to engage students with issues in their lives and in the world."
Accessibility:	Downloadable printouts, workbooks
Assessments included:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Nature of instruction:	Discussion Partner reading Guided / communal reading
Teacher's Role:	Focus on routine, encourage, monitor discussions
Training/PD Available:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Skills Addressed:	Fluency Decoding Reading stamina Comprehension
Studies:	<p>Hemphill, L. & Snow, C. (2018). Learning to Read While Reading to Learn: The Central Role of Multiple Documents in Two Instructional Programs. In J. L.G. Braasch, I. Bråten & M. T. McCrudden (Eds.), <i>Handbook of Multiple Source Use</i>. New York, NY: Routledge</p> <p>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. <i>Reading Research Quarterly</i>, 52(3), 357-382. doi:10.1002/rrq.171</p> <p>LaRusso, M. D., Donovan, S., & Snow, C. (2016). Implementation challenges for Tier One and Tier Two school-based programs for early adolescents. In B. Foorman (Ed.), <i>Challenges to implementing effective reading intervention in schools. New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development</i>, 154, 11-30.</p> <p>Thomson, J., Hemphill, L., & Snow, C. (2018). The Strategic Adolescent Reading Intervention. In S. Spencer (Ed.), <i>Supporting Adolescents with Language Disorders</i> (pp. 287-310). Guildford: J & R Press.</p> <p>Troyer, M. (2019). "And then my creativity took over." Productivity of teacher adaptations to an adolescent literacy curriculum, <i>Elementary School Journal</i>.</p> <p>Troyer, M. (2017). Teachers' adaptations to and orientations toward an adolescent literacy curriculum, <i>Journal of Curriculum Studies</i>. DOI: 10.1080/00220272.2017.1407458</p> <p>Troyer, M. (2017). Teacher implementation of an adolescent reading intervention. <i>Teaching and Teacher Education</i>, 65, 21-33. doi:10.1016/j.tate.201703.005</p>


	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Istation</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">"To transform students into skilled readers, schools must understand the science of reading and align their literacy instruction to it."</p>
Product Name/Link	
Summary:	Istation is an online program with activities that are presented online as games that are centered around individual student needs for literacy instruction. The lessons adapt based on the assessments that are given through the program.
Grade Levels:	PK-8
Cost:	Demo must be requested, cost involved
Principles of Practice:	Engages students with technology Step-by-step work with assessment to guide instructor
Accessibility:	Entirely online
Assessments included:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Nature of instruction:	Individual, teacher-centric, activities online
Teacher's Role:	Lessons are teacher-centric, with teacher to student interaction, PD to allow teachers to understand actionable data
Training/PD Available:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Skills Addressed:	Based on Scarborough's Rope decoding x language comprehension = reading comprehension
Studies:	<p>Bippert, K. (2019). Perceptions of technology, curriculum, and reading strategies in one middle school intervention program. <i>Research in Middle Level Education Online</i>, 42(3), 1-22. https://doi.org/10.1080/19404476.2019.1565600</p> <p>Bippert, K., & Harmon, J. (2017). Middle school teachers' perceptions of computer-assisted reading intervention programs. <i>Reading Psychology</i>, 38(2), 203-230. https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2016.1245691</p> <p>Brooks, M. D., & Rodela, K. C. (2018). Why am i in reading intervention? A dual analysis of entry and exit criteria. <i>High School Journal</i>, 102(1), 72-93. https://doi.org/10.1353/hsj.2018.0020</p> <p>Luo, T., Lee, G.-L., & Molina, C. (2017). Incorporating istation into early childhood classrooms to improve reading comprehension. <i>Journal of Information Technology Education: Research</i>, 16(1), 247-266. https://doi.org/10.28945/3788</p> <p>Stein, B., Solomon, B. G., Kitterman, C., Enos, D., Banks, E., & Villanueva, S. (2022). Comparing Technology-based reading intervention programs in rural settings. <i>Journal of Special Education</i>, 56(1), 14-24. https://doi.org/10.1177/00224669211014168</p>




Accelerated Reader by Renaissance

"Accelerated Reader puts students in the driver's seat. You guide students, while engaging quizzes and activities help hone students' reading skills with authentic practice—encouraging growth."

Product Name/Link:	
Summary:	Accelerated Reader uses indepented reading activities to engage students in comfortable atmosphere with texts they are interested in that come with assessments that can tell instructors the next literacy skills that need improvement
Grade Levels:	K-12
Cost:	Demo must be requested, cost involved
Principles of Practice:	Students choose their reading materials based on their interest Use of technology to engage students
Accessibility:	Entirely online, access to texts with myOn program
Assessments included:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Nature of instruction:	Online individual reading Lessons are assigned to students based on assessments taken online
Teacher's Role:	Accessing and assessing data from online assessments Set goals for new lessons for students
Training/PD Available:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Skills Addressed:	Decoding Vocabulary Comprehension with nonfiction
Studies:	Accelerated Reader/Reading Renaissance. What Works Clearinghouse Intervention Report. (2007). In What Works Clearinghouse. What Works Clearinghouse. Pfeiffer, C. (2011). Achiving a Standard of Reading Excellence in Kansas. Knowledge Quest, 39(4), 60-67. Renaissance Learning touts success of Accelerated Reader Summer Reading Program. (2006). TechTrends: Linking Research & Practice to Improve Learning, 50(1), 46. Siddiqui, N., Gorard, S., & See, B. H. (2016). Accelerated Reader as a literacy catch-up intervention during primary to secondary school transition phase. Educational Review, 68(2), 139-154. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2015.1067883

	<p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Read 180</i></u> <i>"Read 180 integrates the most effective reading intervention strategies for Tier II and Tier III into one solution."</i></p>
Product Name/Link:	
Summary:	<i>Read 180</i> was updated in 2011 to include print and digital options for reading workbooks and reading materials. Lessons are broken into different activities that can be independent, small group and teacher-led.
Grade Levels:	3-12, specifically students at Tiers II or III
Cost:	Demo must be requested, cost involved
Principles of Practice:	Focuses on Science and Social Studies topics for reading Activity rotations to make it engaging Safe learning environment developed
Accessibility:	Computer lessons Provided books Workbooks available online or print
Assessments included:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Nature of instruction:	Computer-assisted instructional reading Modeled or independent reading Small group instruction with instructor Workbook pages independently and with instructor/small group
Teacher's Role:	Small group instruction Monitoring Progress
Training/PD Available:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Skills Addressed:	Phonemic Awareness Phonics Comprehension Vocabulary Fluency Word Recognition
Studies:	Bippert, K., & Harmon, J. (2017). Middle School Teachers' Perceptions of Computer-Assisted Reading Intervention Programs. <i>Reading Psychology, 38</i> (2), 203-230. https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2016.1245691

	<p><u>Achieve3000</u></p> <p>“Accelerate learning growth for all students with differentiated content and instruction. It is proven to double and even triple expected reading gains in a single school year.”</p>
Product Name/Link:	
Summary:	This adaptive program allows students to connect the their reading while in a comfortable learning environment with constant adjustments being made to reading levels. Lessons are altered for additional work needed on specific skills with an easy-to-use program
Grade levels:	K-12
Cost:	Demo must be requested, cost included
Principles of Practice:	Focuses on teacher-student relationship building for safe learning environment Focuses on the interests of the students Accessible technology
Accessibility:	Entirely online Adaptive programming
Assessments included:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Nature of instruction:	Start with online assessments through the program Texts differentiated based on assessment Embedded assessment in reading assignment Adjustment of goals and Lexile level
Teacher's Role:	Monitoring progress on program Adding in lessons for additional support on skills Focus on relationship development
Training/PD Available:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Skills Addressed:	Based on assessment, the skills are adjusted accordingly
Studies:	Borman, G. D., Yang, H., Audrain, R. L., & Park, S. J. (2023). The District-Wide Effectiveness of the Achieve3000 Program: A Quasi-Experimental Study. <i>Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk</i> , 1-23. https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2023.2218093 Torres, D. D. (2019). <i>Achieve3000 Evaluation, 2018-2019. Research Educational Program Report</i> . In Houston Independent School District. Houston Independent School District.

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Appendix C

Google Form for Evaluation



Middle Level Reading Interventions Listed Responses

Please answer the following questions regarding the listed interventions and the information provided

alexclai@mail.gvsu.edu [Switch account](#)



* Indicates required question

Email *

Your email

Did you choose and use a program that is listed on this product based on the information shared? *

Yes

No

Other: _____

Did you see growth and improvement from the students who were part of the program? *

Yes

No

Maybe

Other: _____

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