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Upper Grade Level Literacy: Instructional Strategies for Struggling Readers

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Research Questions:

What can teachers do to improve reading ability in upper grade level struggling readers?

What are the characteristics of a struggling reader?

Misconceptions of Struggling Readers

- Assumptions about reading skills
- Belief that only elementary school teachers can teach reading (Pope, 2007, p. 60; Biancarosa, 2012, p. 23)
- Unbalanced literacy instruction
- Assumption that students want to and will read on their own

Literacy: the ability to read, write, comprehend, and explain texts

Three Themes from Highly Effective Literacy Teachers

Theme 1: Increase enthusiasm

- Reflect the excitement students should have
- Exposure to a large variety of reading
 - “rich in print” classrooms
- Student choice
- Relatable texts

Theme 2: Low stress

- Students need to feel comfortable; have rules
- Show its okay to make mistakes
- Non-intimidating assignments

Theme 3: Targeted literacy instruction

- Continually teach reading and writing
- Work out reading and writing “muscle”
- Teach academic language and vocabulary
 - Attach “visual discoveries”
 - Show vocabulary in context
- Strategic novels

Characteristics of Struggling Readers

From previous research

- Perform poorly on reading measures
- Often vocalize
- “Coast” through school
- Amotivation
- Decline in academic and pleasure reading

From case study

- Personal mental blocks
- Lack of self efficacy: severe limitation
 - Able to complete tasks, but need assistance
- Avoids reading