



The Meadows Center  
FOR PREVENTING EDUCATIONAL RISK  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

## 10 Key Reading Practices for All Middle and High Schools

with strong evidence of effectiveness from high-quality research  
—including selected grade-level descriptions of what students should know and be able to do—

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# 10 Key Reading Practices for All Middle and High Schools with strong evidence of effectiveness from high-quality research

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**All middle and high school students can become proficient readers across all content areas if, in all classes:**

1. Students are explicitly taught the meanings of several new words every day and provided with opportunities to review words previously taught.
2. Students are taught and encouraged to apply word-learning practices (e.g., identifying prefixes, roots, and suffixes; context clues; synonyms) for new words encountered in texts.
3. Students' background knowledge is built through exposure to rich content in print and multimedia formats.
4. Students are taught to monitor their comprehension while reading a variety of texts by asking and answering questions, organizing text information with graphic organizers, generating main ideas and summaries, and discussing their developing understanding with the teacher and their peers.
5. Students have opportunities to work purposefully in collaborative formats with peers as they read, write, and talk about content area texts.
6. Students are taught to analyze an author's use of words, syntactical elements, and organization of ideas to establish the purpose of the text and convey its meaning.
7. Students read a variety of texts daily, compare and evaluate the texts, discuss them in relation to the specific discipline (e.g., history, science), and receive feedback on their responses.
8. Students are taught to cite textual evidence when writing, answering questions, and talking about different texts.
9. Student learning is monitored periodically to inform instructional decisions, such as collaborative group formation, lesson pacing, content for reviewing or reteaching, and supplemental intervention needs.
10. Students who are behind in reading are provided daily, supplemental intervention, including instruction in reading and spelling unknown words.

# Grade-Level Descriptions

Below, we describe what students should know and be able to do to be considered successful readers at the end of 8th, 10th, and 12th grades. Each new grade level adds abilities onto those described in the preceding grades. Although skills introduced earlier should be revisited, students are expected to apply the skills to texts of increasing complexity as they progress through middle school and high school. For example, students of all ages should be encouraged to read a variety of text types for different purposes, to provide objective summaries of what they read, and to go beyond factual understanding by making inferences about the ideas stated in a text. However, students in 12th grade would be expected to demonstrate those skills with texts that contain more mature vocabulary, writing structures, and concepts than the texts students in 10th or 8th grades read.



In addition, all students benefit from explanation of unfamiliar, sophisticated language often seen in the unique texts of different content areas. This explanation may include the characteristics of different genres of text or the ways of communicating ideas in a particular discipline. Texts in middle school and high school commonly contain many long and unfamiliar words; students must be able to read and use those words to understand the content.

Regardless of grade level, all students benefit from frequent opportunities to read, listen to, and discuss a variety of literary and informational texts. Hearing others “think aloud” about a text and thinking critically about a text with teacher feedback help to grow students’ ability to understand a variety of texts.

**By the end of eighth grade**, students can cite specifically stated textual evidence as they analyze written works. For literary text, this analysis includes determining the theme, describing how literary elements interact, comparing written to multimedia or live versions of a work, and examining how themes are presented across different genres and historical periods. For informational text, students can use stated textual evidence to determine how the central idea is developed, trace and evaluate an author’s claims, integrate information from different written and media sources, and compare how two or more authors present events. Students can read and understand texts of various types and can explain how events and ideas are introduced, elaborated, and used to create an overall structure of the text. Students can identify an author’s purpose and discern the perspectives of different authors.





**By the end of 10th grade**, students can cite both stated and inferred textual evidence as they analyze written works. For literary text, students can trace how the theme is shaped by events, describe how complex characters interact and advance a plot, compare how a subject or scene is represented in different artistic mediums (e.g., poetry, theater, music, painting), and examine how authors of different genres and cultures organize a story and use figura-

tive language to create effects. For informational text, students can use stated and inferred textual evidence to determine how an author uses rhetoric (or persuasive techniques) to advance a particular perspective and purpose, trace the way ideas are introduced and connected across a piece, and compare how various accounts of a subject are told in different written formats. Students can read and understand texts of various types and can explain the impact of an author's word choices on the overall tone and meaning of a text.

**By the end of 12th grade**, students can support their analysis of text by citing stated and inferred textual evidence, including where evidence is contradictory or left uncertain. When reading literary text, students can trace how two or more themes develop and interact across a work, describe an author's choices for developing and relating literary elements, and compare multiple interpretations of a story or presentations of a theme. When reading informational text, students can explain how a complex set of ideas or sequence of events interact and develop over a piece, evaluate the effectiveness of the way an author structures an argument, address a question or solve a problem by integrating and evaluating multiple sources of information, and determine how the style and content of a piece contribute to its impact or persuasiveness. Students can read and understand texts of various types and can use their understanding of satirical devices (e.g., hyperbole, understatement, sarcasm, irony) to distinguish what was stated from what was meant. They also can identify how the structure of a part of the text affects the structure of the piece as a whole and its aesthetic impression.



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