

Adolescent literacy

Literature



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Adolescent literacy is a major concern for educators across the country. The challenges faced are manifold, but they are necessary and worthwhile. The challenges are specifically identified as the skills and motivation of the students, the texts used to teach literacy as well as educational administrative structures.

The challenges facing the individual student is where we start. The goal of education is to release optimal student skills and thinking (Tatum). It is a conduit to future prospects for the individual (Tatum). Some students are less interested in school than others. The challenge is to get students who are less interested in academics to read more (Tatum). To do this, instructors must spark the interest of the individual with texts that speak to their particular demographic challenges (Tatum). One of the best ways to do this is finding books that help the student comprehend and act in different ways (Tatum). This is particularly important for students who have traditionally been challenged by reading in particular (Tatum). Literacy education is primarily important to the individual reader.

The next challenges are those that face instructors. There is a distinct difference between teaching to read and teaching about what is read (Jacobs, 2008). When teachers teach to read, they are showing students how to think in a way that makes sense of the text (Jacobs, 2008). When teachers teach about what is read, they are teaching the facts of the subject at hand (Jacobs, 2008). These are two very different approaches and make somewhat of a rift between the two methods. One method is to see teaching literacy on a continuum from skill to process (Jacobs, 2008). That means asking the question about where is the student on this continuum. What is their particular mixture of reading skill and subject proficiency? It boils down

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to selecting the right textbooks. Will they understand the sentence structure? Will they comprehend the words used? Will they get the meaning of the reading? This poses a major challenge to teachers and writers alike.

The final challenges are those faced by administrative educators. The prevailing practice has been that of dividing up subjects into departments (IRA Insights). A critical assessment of this paradigm reveals that it may not provide enough overlap to allow significantly gradual transition from reading skills to reading comprehension (IRA Insights). As such, schools may employ literacy coaches who are adept at helping students increase literacy skills across disciplines (IRA Insights). It is one way of dealing with departmental fragmentation that hinders the overall literacy of adolescents.

The challenges of adolescent literacy are manifold, but they are necessary and worthwhile. The challenges are specifically identified as the skills and motivation of the students, the texts used to teach literacy as well as educational administrative structures. Moving to new historical paradigm of reading instruction will increase the effectiveness of our literacy programs.

References

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