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Research Brief

Literacy Coordinator

Question: Is the literacy coordinator position viable in a high school setting?

Summary of Findings: There does not seem to be any research addressing the role of the high school literacy coordinator, nor reports recommending that high schools implement the position. That said, there are plenty of reports and research addressing the literacy needs at the high school level. According to the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, more than 40 percent of working-age adults in the United States lack the skills and education needed to succeed in family, work, and community life today. As de Leon (2002) points out, “As demands for more complex literacy skills have increased, and competition in economic and technological arenas at home and abroad have grown more intense, many U.S. students enter high school with literacy skills unequal to this challenge. In U.S. society, where the information base doubles every 5 years, an educated citizenry is essential. Literacy gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged people are growing. While the general population is aspiring to unprecedented higher literacy levels, progress in achieving these levels has stagnated. Congress and the federal government have recognized the importance of reducing gaps in literacy between advantaged and disadvantaged groups and have declared reading a national priority and committed significant funding.”

High school populations getting special attention include at-risk students, boys, vocational students, GED students, adolescent parents, ESL students, and the adults for whom the high school is a learning center.

Hiring an educator who could provide the literacy leadership for all the teachers in a high school would have no shortage of work:

- Remaining current in adolescent literacy research, programs, and best practice
- Working with classroom teachers to improve literacy and content literacy instruction within the context of their content area
- Team teaching with classroom teachers to implement literacy strategies
- Consulting with adolescent parent, GED, and adult education programs
- Providing literacy-related professional development opportunities

References related to this topic are too numerous to list. What follows is a representative listing of useful resources. A representative list of literacy organizations is also listed.

Online Resources:

Prescription for Literacy: Providing Critical Educational Experiences. ERIC Digest.

Siegel, Donna Farrell; Hanson, Ralph A.;

Two national studies have recently confirmed that specific kinds of educational experiences provided for children by both parents and teachers, from preschool through high school, can make a significant difference in their reading ability as young adults. The results of these two policy studies provide parents, educators,



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and policymakers with some straightforward guidelines for cultivating literacy development. The implications are clear: students who are provided with more of these specific kinds of experiences across their development will have higher reading achievement levels as young adults than those who have less.

ERIC #: ED340001

http://www.eric.ed.gov:80/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal?_nfpb=true&eric_viewStyle=list&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=literacy+high+school&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=eric_metadata&eric_pageSize=50&eric_displayNrtiever=false&eric_displayStartCount=51&_pageLabel=RecordDetails&objectId=0900000b801b2401

The Urban High School's Challenge: Ensuring Literacy for Every Child. 2002 Carnegie Challenge.

de Leon, Anne Grosso;

As demands for more complex literacy skills have increased, and competition in economic and technological arenas at home and abroad have grown more intense, many U.S. students enter high school with literacy skills unequal to this challenge. In U.S. society, where the information base doubles every 5 years, an educated citizenry is essential. Literacy gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged people are growing. While the general population is aspiring to unprecedented higher literacy levels, progress in achieving these levels has stagnated. Congress and the federal government have recognized the importance of reducing gaps in literacy between advantaged and disadvantaged groups and have declared reading a national priority and committed significant funding. School districts nationwide have begun to address the need for effecting systemic change in the teaching of reading to high school students. This report describes some of the approaches being used, which include the genre approach, the disciplinary approach, the talent development approach, and the apprenticeship approach.

ERIC #: ED465839

http://www.eric.ed.gov:80/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal?_nfpb=true&eric_viewStyle=list&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=literacy+high+school&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=eric_metadata&eric_pageSize=50&eric_displayNrtiever=false&eric_displayStartCount=51&_pageLabel=RecordDetails&objectId=0900000b80071750

Adolescent Literacy and the Achievement Gap: What Do We Know and Where Do We Go From Here?

This article is intended to orient readers to a number of issues and studies surrounding the adolescent literacy gap. Identifying the pressing need to coordinate research and evaluation in order to help educators make progress in closing the adolescent and pre-adolescent literacy achievement gap, the authors concluded the following points: (1) that the minority achievement gap results primarily from the poor literacy accomplishments of African-American, Latino, English Language Learners (ELL), and low-income children in the United States; therefore, shrinking the gap will require improving literacy instruction for those groups in particular; (2) that while we know what to do to ensure widespread success at 3rd grade reading, we know much less about how to help pre-adolescents and adolescents with the challenges of learning to read to learn, reading in the content areas, and reading critically; and (3) that while a number of different instructional programs have been developed to improve adolescent literacy, there is little coordinated research designed to



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address pressing questions about those programs.

http://www.ohiorc.org/ohiorc_resource_display/0,3820,3646,00.shtm

or

<http://www.all4ed.org/resources/CarnegieAdolescentLiteracyReport.pdf>

What Does it Mean When High School Teachers Participate in Collaborative Research with Students on Literacy Motivations?

Oldfather, Penny; Thomas, Sally;

Teachers College Record, v99 n4 p647-91 Sum 1998

Presents case studies of six teachers who completed year-long research projects on motivation for literacy learning in collaboration with high school students, considering their views on the nature of knowledge, the purposes of schooling, approaches to teaching and learning, perspectives on motivation, and roles and relationships with the school and research team. Dominant themes were related to epistemological issues.

ERIC #: EJ572771

http://www.eric.ed.gov:80/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal?_nfpb=true&eric_viewStyle=list&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=literacy+high+school&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=eric_metadata&eric_pageSize=50&eric_displayNrtiever=false&eric_displayStartCount=51&_pageLabel=RecordDetails&objectId=0900000b80011f4b

What Adolescents Deserve: A Commitment to Students' Literacy Learning.

Rycik, James A., Ed.; Irvin, Judith L., Ed.;

Compiled to help staff developers, administrators, teachers, and policy makers reexamine current literacy practices and reimagine how they can work with each other and with parents and community members, this collection of 22 previously published articles from various professional journals and one new article offers examples of how educators can revitalize their efforts for teaching middle school and high school students, and form a better understanding of youth cultures and adolescents' everyday lives. Developed as an extension of the International Reading Association's "Adolescent Literacy: A Position Statement," the volume focuses on four commitments the editors believe are critical to achieving results for adolescent literacy learners: literacy access for all students, challenging and supportive instruction, comprehensive and collaborative programs, and reimagining adolescent literacy learning.

ERIC #: ED450367

http://www.eric.ed.gov:80/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal?_nfpb=true&eric_viewStyle=list&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=literacy+high+school&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=eric_metadata&eric_pageSize=50&eric_displayNrtiever=false&eric_displayStartCount=1&_pageLabel=RecordDetails&objectId=0900000b80136569

An Effective (and Affordable) Intervention Model for At-Risk High School Readers.

Fischer, Cynthia;

Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, v43 n4 p326-35 Dec-Jan 1999-2000

Describes an affordable and effective program to improve the reading and literacy skills of struggling high school readers. Describes and discusses components of the program including tailor-made assignments for



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each student, the use of community volunteer and peer tutors, and regular opportunities for the students to read to elementary school children

ERIC #: EJ598846

http://www.eric.ed.gov:80/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal?_nfpb=true&eric_viewStyle=list&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=literacy+high+school&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=eric_metadata&eric_pageSize=50&eric_displayNrtiever=false&eric_displayStartCount=51&_pageLabel=RecordDetails&objectId=0900000b8001d1d3

Effective Literacy Instruction: Building Successful Reading and Writing Programs.

Langer, Judith A.;

This book focuses on middle school and high school literacy programs that effectively support student learning in an era of national and state standards and high-stakes testing. The book offers a programmatic vision, a set of principles, and real-life examples to guide educators who wish to inform their practice with research-based knowledge to help their students to become more highly literate. The book is divided into two main sections: first it discusses key characteristics of effective English programs--the kind of English curriculum and instruction that mark the more effective programs, as well as the related features of professional support empowering individual teachers who are effective in their classrooms; and second, field researchers who worked with the author provide portraits of particularly effective teachers and programs to bring the principles to life.

ERIC #: ED467655

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Boys and Literacy: Why Boys? Which Boys? Why Now?

Freedman, Beverley;

The issue of boys' underachievement in literacy appears to resurface whenever student achievement results emerge as a public issue. Gendered approaches to educational results, given the discourse, are not new but timely. A study examined some of the attitudes of boys regarding issues involving reading and writing in classrooms and on the provincial tests. A series of semi-structured focus groups were conducted with boys in grades 4 and 6 in three schools in which boys performed well in literacy and three schools where boys underperformed compared to their female peers. All students, especially young males, wanted more choice in what they read in school--boys wanted more science fiction and high action books. So teacher-librarians began to gather high-interest reading resources for boys including informational text, magazines, science fiction, and action fiction.

ERIC #: ED477857

http://www.eric.ed.gov:80/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal?_nfpb=true&eric_viewStyle=list&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=literacy+high+school&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=eric_metadata&eric_pageSize=50&eric_displayNrtiever=false&eric_displayStartCount=1&_pageLabel=RecordDetails&objectId=0900000b80121930



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Vocational Readiness: Preparing High School Students for the Literacy Demands of a High-Tech Workplace through Career Education, Material-Relevancy, and Cooperative Problem-Solving Models.

Penn, Alexandra;

The project described in this paper attempted to provide vocationally tracked high school students with the literacy skills needed to compete successfully in today's high-technology work force. This attempt was carried out by: (1) assisting students in establishing their vocational objectives in order to focus on specific literacy requirements; (2) modifying and adapting texts and materials to students' specific vocational needs; (3) employing problem-solving and decision-making models of job literacy; (4) implementing cooperative team learning strategies; and (5) incorporating computer literacy and applications into a basic skills English curriculum. Functional literacy test scores; student, parent, and employer surveys; and the dropout rate all showed improvement, although less than had been expected. Less-than-expected results were attributed to the measurement instrument for literacy used (Career Ability Placement Survey) and the program's brief time period. The report concludes with a recommendation to expand the program into a 3-year effort in vocationally tracked basic English courses.

ERIC #: ED336540

http://www.eric.ed.gov:80/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal?_nfpb=true&eric_viewStyle=list&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=literacy+high+school&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=eric_metadata&eric_pageSize=50&eric_displayNrtiever=false&eric_displayStartCount=1&_pageLabel=RecordDetails&objectId=0900000b8004db06

What Can Employers Assume about the Literacy Skills of GED Graduates?

Kaplan, David; Venezky, Richard L.;

What can employers assume about the literacy skills of General Educational Development (GED) program graduates? Although high school graduates were only slightly more proficient in literacy skills than those completing a GED, relatively large and reliable differences existed between those who obtain a GED and those who drop out of high school and do not study for or pass the GED. Dropouts who study for but do not obtain a GED were statistically equivalent in literacy skills to those who drop out and do not study for the GED

ERIC #: ED363731

http://www.eric.ed.gov:80/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal?_nfpb=true&eric_viewStyle=list&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=literacy+high+school&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=eric_metadata&eric_pageSize=50&eric_displayNrtiever=false&eric_displayStartCount=1&_pageLabel=RecordDetails&objectId=0900000b8012c063

The Family Literacy Project: Using Children's Literature to Enhance the Literacy of Adolescent Parents.

Johnson, Helen L.; And Others

The Family Literacy Project seeks to improve the prospects for adolescent parents and their children by working with student parents while they are still enrolled in school, supporting their efforts toward completion of their high school diplomas through literacy activities, which enhance their skill as parents. The



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Family Literacy Project: (1) sponsors a credit-bearing course, "Children's Literature," which is offered each semester at participating high schools; (2) establishes a permanent collection of children's literature at each participating school; and (3) offers staff development each summer and throughout the school year. Participants have shown improved attitudes toward reading, enhanced writing fluency, increased awareness of children's changing developmental needs, and clear preferences for certain specific books as well as certain types of books. Overall response to staff development has been positive.

ERIC #: ED373335

http://www.eric.ed.gov:80/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal?_nfpb=true&eric_viewStyle=list&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=literacy+high+school&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=eric_metadata&eric_pageSize=50&eric_displayNrtiever=false&eric_displayStartCount=1&_pageLabel=RecordDetails&objectId=0900000b801e7d3

Sustained Silent Reading with English as a Second Language High School Students: Impact on Reading Comprehension, Reading Frequency, and Reading Enjoyment.

Pilgreen, Janice; Krashen, Stephen;

School Library Media Quarterly, v22 n1 p21-23 Fall 1993

High school English as a Second Language (ESL) students in a 16-week sustained silent reading program showed gains in reading comprehension, reported greater frequency and enjoyment of reading, and utilized more sources of books. Results suggest that free reading is an effective means of literacy development with ESL students

ERIC #: EJ473064

http://www.eric.ed.gov:80/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal?_nfpb=true&eric_viewStyle=list&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=literacy+high+school&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=eric_metadata&eric_pageSize=50&eric_displayNrtiever=false&eric_displayStartCount=51&_pageLabel=RecordDetails&objectId=0900000b8003830b

Literacy Organizations and Resources:

Center for Literacy

Since 1968, CFL has provided thousands of adult individuals and families throughout Philadelphia with essential educational opportunities. CFL now serves over 4,000 students and learners at nearly 120 sites throughout the Philadelphia area.

<http://www.centerforliteracy.org/>

National Center for Family Literacy

The mission of the National Center for Family Literacy is to create educational and economic opportunity for the most at-risk children and parents. NCFL's services include professional development for practitioners who work in children's education, adult education, English as a Second Language, and related literacy fields; model program development through our many ground-breaking initiatives; policy and advocacy support to sustain and expand literacy services for families; and the



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Family Literacy Alliance, a membership program. NCFLE relies on the generous partnerships of many individuals, corporations and foundations to accomplish our mission.

<http://www.famlit.org/>

The Collaborative Center for Literacy Development: Early Childhood through Adulthood

CCLD is a partnership among Kentucky's eight public universities and the National Center for Family Literacy, in cooperation with the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), Kentucky Adult Education (KYAE), and others interested in literacy development.

<http://www.kentuckyliteracy.org/>

The Carnegie Center for Literacy and Learning

<http://www.carnegieliteracy.org/>

The National Institute for Literacy

The National Institute for Literacy's activities to strengthen literacy across the lifespan are authorized by the U.S. Congress under two laws, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) in the Workforce Investment Act and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The AEFLA directs the Institute to provide national leadership regarding literacy, coordinate literacy services and policy, and serve as a national resource for adult education and literacy programs. The NCLB law directs the Institute to disseminate information on scientifically based reading research pertaining to children, youth, and adults as well as information about development and implementation of classroom reading programs based on the research.

<http://www.nifl.gov/>

The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) is a federally funded research and development center focused solely on adult learning. NCSALL's efforts are dedicated to improving practice in educational programs that serve adults with limited literacy and English language skills, and those without a high school diploma.

<http://www.ncsall.net>

New England Literacy Resource Center

New England Literacy Resource Center works to strengthen adult literacy services in New England through sharing and collaborative projects among adult literacy professional development providers, practitioners and policy-makers in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont.

<http://www.nelrc.org>



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National Center on Adult Literacy

The National Center on Adult Literacy (NCAL) was established in 1990. NCAL's mission incorporates three primary goals: to improve understanding of youth and adult learning, to foster innovation and increase effectiveness in youth and adult basic education and literacy work, and to expand access to information and build capacity for literacy and basic skills service provision.

<http://literacy.org/ncal.html>

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