Literacy And Transition To High School

A Review Of The Literature

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SECTION 1.0

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of the *Literacy And Transition To High School* literature review is to examine the intersection between literacy and preparing youth in Grades 7 and 8 to experience a successful transition to high school.

The results of the literature review will be used to build on the success of the Grade 7 and 8 Wraparound Demonstration Project with a literacy focus.

1.2 ABOUT THE GRADE 7 AND 8 WRAPAROUND DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

The Grade 7 and 8 Wraparound Demonstration Project was initiated by the Child and Youth Network (CYN) under the Education, Literacy, and Employment (ELE) demonstration project and officially launched in November of 2010. The target population for this project was Grade 7 and 8 students of Glen Cairn Public School in London, Ontario (Kovacs Group Inc., 2013). The project was designed to provide enrichment development support to elementary students as they transition into high school.

As a guiding vision, the Grade 7 and 8 Wraparound Demonstration Project adopted a community-based model of intervention and targeted youth at risk of generational poverty to develop a circle of positive influences, beginning with youth in Grade 7, supporting them as they transitioned through Grades 8 and 9, and then following them through secondary school into post-secondary studies or employment (Kovacs Group Inc., 2013).

The intent of the Grade 7 and 8 Wraparound Demonstration Project was to enhance protective factors towards youth and help them achieve positive educational outcomes. The project took a holistic and integrative approach, involving parents and other significant adults, the school system, social service agencies, and the broader community in order to strengthen the web of supportive developmental influences (Kovacs Group Inc., 2013).

1.3 TRANSITIONS TO HIGH SCHOOL

The term "transition" is defined as the process of moving from the known to the unknown or the passage from one position, state, or stage to another (Kovacs Group Inc., 2014). For youth, transitions are a shared experience as they move through various aspects of school, family, and social life.

In defining youth transitions for the purpose of this review, we can conclude that youth transitions: (a) constitute a process, rather than an event, that occurs over time; (b) intersect and change between various contexts and relationships; (c) are grounded in sociological theory; and (d) can be mediated by effective programming, activities, and support.

Research has consistently found the transition to high school is a critical stage for students. Those who struggle to make this transition successfully often face greater challenges later in life. Researchers often identify ninth grade as the most critical point to intervene and prevent students from losing motivation, failing, and dropping out of school (Kovacs Group Inc., 2014). The transition from elementary to secondary school can entail changes in academic achievement, organizational and social concerns among youth and families, and risk factors that have the potential to make this transition more challenging.

1.4 OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW PROCESS

The *Literacy And Transition To High School* literature review included two main components: a review of grey and academic literature and a review of best and promising practice programs and organizations outside of London.

The following research questions guided the literature review:

- What are the literacy-related barriers and challenges youth experience in successfully transitioning into high school?
- What are literacy-focused solutions, interventions, and programs that have been implemented to assist youth to transition into Grade 9 and how are they designed?
- Should literacy be a focus in a transition program for Grade 7 and 8 students and if so, how can literacy be incorporated?

Research was collected from various academic journals by searching social science databases. In addition, Google's search engine was used to find grey literature and literacy-focused programs. Evaluation reports, program websites, and program materials were reviewed and analyzed. For all searches, multiple search terms were used.

1.5 PREVIOUS LITERATURE REVIEWS

In 2013, the CYN commissioned two literature reviews:

- *Youth Transitions: A Review of the Literature* explores youth transitions specifically from Grade 8 to high school and high school to adulthood. In doing so, protective factors and risk factors were explored as they relate to youth development and youth transitions in particular.

- *Youth Literacy Programs: A Review of the Literature* examines best practices that define youth literacy programs. Models and activities were reviewed in the context of home, school, and community.

The *Literacy And Transition To High School* literature review builds on the concepts and ideas presented in the previous two literature reviews.

HOW LITERACY AFFECTS HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITIONS

Successful transitions from middle school to high school are impacted by many factors, including the school environment, level of academic preparation, socioeconomic and minority group status, parental involvement, engagement and motivation to learn, and individual behaviour or learning difficulties. Understanding the intersection between literacy and these transition factors is critical, as literacy affects or is affected by each factor and can therefore greatly impact whether young people experience a positive transition to high school, academic achievement, and success in future transitions to post-secondary education and employment. The connections between literacy and each identified transition factor are outlined in the sections below.

2.1 LITERACY AND THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Young people experience changes in school culture and school systems as they transition from middle school to secondary school that may pose challenges, such as experiencing a developmental mismatch between their needs and the organization of the secondary school environment (Ellerbrock & Kiefer, 2014). As young people transition to a new school environment, school factors such as teachers, guidance counsellors, school structure, and school culture can act as barriers to student engagement in learning and literacy (Tilleczek & Campbell, 2013). For example, through interviews with young people and service providers, Tilleczek and Campbell (2013) found that young people may be affected by a school's lack of learning or literacy culture, as it leads them to strive for less or experience reduced aspirations.

Research also shows that the quality of the school environment can greatly impact young people's attitudes towards school and ultimately their literacy success. For example, a study by Rothman and McMillan (2003) found that students with a higher score on the Quality of School Life achievement scale (a scale measuring satisfaction with school in general, commitment to school work, and attitudes towards teachers) had higher scores on reading comprehension, mathematics, literacy, and numeracy tests. Further, providing supportive environments in school is a key component of maintaining student attendance (Trypuc & Heller, 2008), which research has shown is a significant predictor of course failure in the Grade 9 year, and school dropout (Christie & Zinth, 2008; Neild, 2009; Carlson, 2013) and can affect literacy success (Carroll, 2010).

2.2 LITERACY AND ACADEMIC PREPARATION

Transitions to secondary school involve increased academic demands on young people, with research showing that declines in academic achievement often accompany school transitions (Tilleczek, 2010). Further, a shift occurs in secondary school whereby young people are expected to move from learning to read to reading for the purpose of learning (Janosz et al., 2013). However, if young people have not developed adequate literacy skills to achieve at grade level prior to entering high school, their lack of literacy development can create a barrier to academic success. For example, research has consistently shown that young people with poor literacy skills are unable to meet the demands of the increasingly challenging high school curriculum, resulting in them dropping out of high school (Carlson, 2013).

Inadequate literacy skills and academic preparation can make young people's transition to high school a difficult one by impairing their ability to stay on track and succeed in Grade 9. Difficulties with and inadequate reading comprehension, vocabulary, background knowledge, reading fluency, and motivation to read are present in many young people who reach high school (Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2009). This is significant, as research has shown that Grade 9 students with reading comprehension at least two years below grade level were 25% more likely to not be promoted to the next grade, while those who were two or more years below grade level on mathematics and reading tests had increased odds of failing a core course or dropping out during Grade 9 (Neild, 2009). Further, young people entering secondary school with below grade level comprehension and reading fluency may experience frustration and give up when trying to understand challenging high school textbooks that contain specialized vocabulary (Neild, 2009).

Young people's literacy skills not only impact their success in Grade 9, but can also influence their ability to experience academic success in later grades. For example, students are required to pass the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) in Grade 10 in order to receive their high school diploma. However, research has shown that up to 21% of young people in Canada continue to struggle with literacy skills at the age of 15 (Tilleczek & Campbell, 2013), when they may be required to write the OSSLT. Without adequate literacy development prior to high school, young people will struggle to pass the OSSLT and thus graduate from high school.

Grades 7 and 8 are critical grades for continued literacy development as research shows that young people at risk of being inadequately prepared for high school can be identified during middle school. For example, research has shown that each class a young person fails in Grade 8 increases their likelihood of not being promoted from Grade 9 to Grade 10 by 16% and that test scores in Grade 8 are a good predictor of how well they are likely to do in high school (Christie & Zinth, 2008). There is also evidence to demonstrate that young people in Grade 8 who have poor reading test scores are more likely to drop out of high school (Lee Goss & Andren, 2014). Further, a study by Janosz et al. (2013) found that reading difficulty at age 12, as perceived by parents and teachers, was a precursor to being at risk for high school dropout.

Overall, findings suggest that when students lack reading, writing, and math competency as they transition into high school, without appropriate intervention and supports, they will likely continue to struggle in Grade 9 and throughout high school.

2.3 LITERACY, SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT, AND MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING

There is significant research evidence that demonstrates decreases in student motivation across grades (Sutherland, 2010), meaning motivation declines as young people transition into and progress through high school. Literacy is one of the factors that can affect young people's school engagement and motivation to learn as they move into high school. For example, research shows that young people who feel they have insufficient reading abilities may have reduced motivation to engage in reading (Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2009). Further, poor literacy or verbal ability, both indicators of academic performance, have been identified as risk factors for disengagement from school (Sun, 2016). As high school requires young people to learn through reading challenging texts, young people's lack of motivation to read can greatly impact their ability to develop strong literacy skills, learn, and ultimately experience academic success.

Research has also shown declines in student attendance between middle school and high school. For example, a study by Benner and Wang (2014) found significant disruptions in attendance during the transition from Grade 8 to Grade 9. While literacy can impact school engagement, disengagement from and reduced attendance in school can also impact young people's literacy. Time away from school, no matter the reason for the absence, has been identified as affecting learning outcomes and contributing to low literacy levels (Totten & Quigley, 2003).

2.4 LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS AND LITERACY

Low socioeconomic status has been identified as a factor affecting young people's transition to high school. A breadth of research can been cited to show a connection between low socioeconomic status and poor academic achievement, as well as reduced academic progress and dropout in high school (American Psychological Association, 2017). One way in which low socioeconomic status can affect young people's transition from middle school is through its impact on literacy development, and thus academic preparation for high school.

Research continues to demonstrate a connection between lower socioeconomic status and lower literacy levels. For example, Tilleczek and Campbell (2013) outline research from the OECD International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY), and Youth in Transition Study that establishes a strong link between lower familial socioeconomic status and poorer literacy outcomes. Further, a significant amount of research shows that lower socioeconomic status is associated with reduced levels of numeracy for middle school students (Rothman & McMillan, 2003).

Lower socioeconomic status may also affect young people's ability to access literacy development opportunities and experience literacy-rich environments. For example, a lack of financial resources has been identified as a barrier to access or participation in literacy programming (Tilleczek & Campbell, 2013). Further, lower socioeconomic families may not have the economic resources to support a quality literacy environment at home, such as having a wide variety of books, educational resources, and cultural activities, which has been linked to reading achievement (Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2009).

Parental social class and lower socioeconomic status is also a well-documented risk factor for disengagement from school (Tilleczek & Ferguson, 2007), which can impact academic success and literacy. For example, experiencing poverty has been linked to youth feeling excluded from school by other students, which consequently impacts their school experience and literacy outcomes (Tilleczek & Campbell, 2013).

2.5 PARENTAL CHARACTERISTICS AND LITERACY

Parents and caring adults play a significant role in young people's lives as they transition to high school. An analysis of school transitions literature demonstrates the correlation between parental involvement and students' academic outcomes (Hanewald, 2013). Insufficient parental support has also been identified as a risk factor for school transitions (Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, 2012). Further, parental education and support can impact young people's literacy development and academic success as they enter high school.

Research has shown that lower parental education is related to lower literacy scores among young people (Tilleczek & Campbell, 2013). Parents' ability to model positive literacy values and behaviours to their children, as well as offer help with schoolwork, may be impeded by their own lack of education and literacy skills (OECD, 2011; Totten & Quigley, 2003). Further, parents who themselves dropped out of high school may have lower expectations and support for their child's education (Trypuc & Heller, 2008), which can affect young people's literacy and academic success as they transition into high school.

Parental attitude towards education can also impact young people's achievement. For example, research has shown that actual reading achievement was reliably predicted by a child's personal expectations, which were influenced by the expectations of their parents (Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2009). Thus, parents with low expectations for their children may be impeding their child's success in school. Parental involvement is also critical to school success, as motivation to learn, a key factor in improving school performance and literacy development, has been found to increase when parents are more involved in their child's education (Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2009). However, without intervention to encourage involvement, research has shown a decrease in parent involvement between middle school and high school (Education Partnerships, Inc., 2010). These results demonstrate that parents' approach to their children's education can greatly influence young people's ability to succeed as they face increased academic demands in high school.

2.6 MINORITY GROUP STATUS AND LITERACY

Research shows that minority group and immigrant status continue to be defining characteristics of young people with lower literacy scores (Tilleczek & Campbell, 2013) and are significantly associated with high rates of leaving school early (Tilleczek & Ferguson, 2007). For example, research has demonstrated lower reading comprehension scores among young people born in non-English speaking countries or whose mother was born in a non-English speaking country (Rothman & McMillan, 2003). Further, difficulties faced by struggling readers, such as reading fluency and comprehension, may be exacerbated for young people who do not speak English as their first language or are recent newcomers (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). The parents of these young people may also face language barriers and may be less able to support their children with their academic and literacy development.

Young people identifying as Indigenous may also be at risk for low literacy and high school dropout. For example, research indicates there are significant gaps in literacy scores between Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people (Gulati, 2013). These findings are significant, as the literature has demonstrated that poorer achievement in literacy and numeracy is associated with lower school engagement and lower high school graduation (Rothman & McMillan, 2003).

2.7 LITERACY AND BEHAVIOURAL CHALLENGES

The transition from middle school to high school has been associated with declines in student behaviour (Center for Supportive Schools, 2013), for which poor literacy skills are partially responsible. Research has found that reading difficulties and behavioural problems often occur together and are linked.

For example, a study by Lin, Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, and Cook (2013) found that poor readers were significantly more likely to show internalizing behaviour problems, such as anxiety and low self-esteem, as well as externalizing behaviour problems, such as acting out, arguing, or engaging in disturbing activities. Further, struggling readers may experience feelings of decreased competence and confidence as they enter higher grades, often leading to lower self-esteem and higher levels of frustration, which result in disengagement or acting out (Literacy BC, 2006). There is also some research to indicate reading difficulties and behaviour problems affect each other and cause a negative feedback cycle whereby poor readers are more likely to have behavioural difficulties and those who display behaviour problems are more likely to be poor readers (Lin et al., 2013).

It is important to identify and address behavioural problems as early as possible, as behavioural and learning difficulties in earlier grades are an intermediary factor that can lead to school dropout (Vitaro, 2014). For example, research shows that young people in Grade 6 who were deemed to have poor behaviour by their teacher had a reduced likelihood of graduating high school on time (Balfanz, 2009). Additionally, behavioural problems that result in suspension or expulsion have been seen to increase significantly early on in Grade 9 (Education Partnerships, Inc., 2010), which can negatively impact academic achievement and literacy development due to reduced school attendance.

2.8 LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AND LITERACY

Experiencing learning difficulties has been identified as a transition risk factor (Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, 2012) and is closely tied to poor literacy. For example, a study by Janosz et al. (2013) found that learning difficulties were a predictor of high school dropout, as young people aged 12 years old at risk of dropping out had more learning difficulties than other students, particularly with reading. Further, having a learning disability can exacerbate the challenges experienced by struggling readers, such as poor comprehension and fluency (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006), both of which are critical to successfully reading and understanding the increasingly difficult texts and curriculum presented in high school.

Feelings of incompetence can develop in young people as a result of experiencing a learning difficulty, which in turn can lead to disengagement from school (Janosz et al., 2013) and can further affect literacy development. Research has shown that without adequate intervention, young people with learning disabilities continue to fall behind in school over time (Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2009). Early identification of learning difficulties, learning disabilities, and reading problems can help ensure young people have adequate supports to develop grade level literacy and experience success as they transition into Grade 9.

SUPPORTING SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS THROUGH LITERACY INTERVENTIONS

Findings in section 2.0 establish the importance of literacy for school success and its impact on young people as they transition to high school. These findings highlight the need for interventions in middle school that support young people to develop the literacy skills they will require to succeed in high school and beyond. Through an analysis of the literature and existing programs, seven core literacy interventions to support young people's transition were identified, including tutoring, mentorship, instructional strategies, afterschool and summer programs, technology, OSSLT preparation, and English Language Development and English as a Second Language programs. Each intervention is outlined below, including a description of the intervention's impact, how the intervention can be implemented, and examples of promising programs.

3.1 TUTORING

Why Tutoring Is An Effective Intervention

Tutoring is an intervention that provides young people with extra support that can be targeted to address their specific needs. Research demonstrates that the one-to-one instructional format used in tutoring allows tutors to identify a young person's specific learning needs as they arise (Berrill, 2009), meaning instruction and learning strategies can be provided immediately.

Tutoring has been shown to help young people develop their skills in multiple areas of literacy. For example, one-on-one volunteer tutoring provided over the school year has been found to successfully improve reading comprehension, sight word efficiency, and fluency (Jacob, Armstrong, & Willard, 2015). Further, peer tutoring may be particularly helpful for students with reading disabilities, as it can help these young people not only develop content-specific comprehension, but also practice using different reading strategies (Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2009).

While tutoring is an important intervention for helping young people obtain knowledge in specific curriculum content, it also provides young people with instruction for learning strategies required to complete content-specific assignments (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Receiving learning strategy instruction through tutoring allows young people to complete their assignments more independently in the future, thus increase their likelihood of success in high school as they are expected to complete more complex assignments.

Overall, tutoring has been found to help young people succeed in high school, as it provides them with tools for future learning and improves their literacy skills. Research has shown that students who receive intensive, focused literacy instruction and tutoring are more likely to graduate from high school and attend post-secondary education than those who do not receive this support (Carlson, 2013).

How Tutoring Can Be Implemented

Based on the research and a review of a number of evaluations of tutoring programs, common elements and promising practices of effective tutoring programs are outlined below. There are many considerations when implementing a tutoring program and these promising practices provide options that can be used during program design.

1. **Tutor Recruitment –** Selecting appropriate tutors through a screening process was identified as an important practice (Bixby et al., 2011), ensuring tutors have the skills and competence to meet participants' needs. A review of the literature and existing programs demonstrates that effective tutoring programs can be facilitated by teachers, specialists, peers, or community volunteers. While there is evidence showing peer tutoring creates positive outcomes across a range of populations and settings and that academic benefits occur when qualified teachers provide tutoring (Center for Prevention Research and Development, 2009), it is important to consider the needs of the target population, the setting, and available resources when recruiting tutors.

2. **Tutor Training And Supervision –** Research demonstrates that in order to ensure program quality and positive results for young people, tutoring programs should provide tutors with training to ensure they understand and are able to use effective instructional strategies (Center for Prevention Research and Development, 2009). Further, supervision has been identified as being critical to an effective tutoring program, as a supervisor can oversee the program, provide tutor training, prepare structured session plans, and give tutors continuous feedback on their instruction (Family and Community Support Services, 2014).

3. **Assessment And Monitoring Progress –** According to the literature, best practices of effective tutoring programs include implementing both formal and informal assessments in order to guide the tutoring process, adjust teaching strategies and content, and track participant progress (Center for Prevention Research and Development, 2009).

4. **Session Structure** – A review of the literature demonstrates that effective tutoring programs provide primarily one-to-one support, with some cases of success with group tutoring (Family and Community Support Services, 2014). Further, research of effective programs has shown positive results for tutoring sessions that lasted from 10 to 60 minutes and that met several times a week (Center for Prevention Research and Development, 2009).

5. **Session Content** – Research demonstrates that in order to produce meaningful improvements for young people, it is important for tutoring sessions to have well-designed and structured lessons that contain evidence-based components (Center for Prevention Research and Development, 2009). Further, opportunities for independent reading, incorporating explicit teaching strategies, and developing vocabulary have been identified as important components of tutoring sessions (Berrill, 2009).

Tutoring: A Program In Practice

An excellent example of a tutoring intervention that has implemented several best practices is the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board peer-tutoring program called Peer Associates for Literacy Success (PALS). PALS pairs students in Grade 8 with a Grade 11 or 12 tutor, with tutor pairs meeting daily for sessions of one-to-one tutoring. Prior to their involvement in the program, Grade 8 students receive diagnostic testing and an individual reading assessment, which can be used to identify specific learning needs and provide a baseline for tracking progress. The focus of the PALS program is to help Grade 8 students rapidly increase their reading and writing skills. Tutoring activities include reading scripts from popular movies or television shows, creative writing, and reading. Results from re-testing showed that all participants had higher vocabulary and comprehension scores, and that students achieved grade-level equivalency, sometimes improving their scores up to two or three grade levels (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004).

3.2 MENTORSHIP

Why Mentorship Is An Effective Intervention

An analysis of the research and program review demonstrated that many literacy-focused interventions for middle school students incorporated mentorship, either as one of many components of the program or as the primary intervention. The purpose of mentorship is to provide young people with a positive relationship that can provide friendship, role modeling, and support to reach their goals (Rennie, 2016).

Further, mentorship can provide young people with support in multiple domains, including academics and life skills required to transition to high school. For example, in an Ontario study by Tilleczek et al. (2010) of a Grade 8 peer mentorship program, young people reported that as they transitioned to high school, they benefitted from having a peer mentor show them around their new school, facilitate peer introductions, and provide academic advice.

Although many mentorship programs may not be implemented as a direct literacy intervention, research has shown positive impacts of mentoring for young people's school engagement and self-efficacy, which have been linked to academic and literacy success. For example, an impact study by Tierney, Grossman, and Resch (2000) of a one-to-one mentorship program found that, when compared with young people who did not have a mentor, program participants skipped school less, felt more competent completing their schoolwork, and achieved better grades. Further, former mentees reported doing better in school because of their mentor (Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 2000). Additionally, a five-year study of mentorship programming sponsored by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada found that young people receiving mentorship experienced increased confidence and had fewer behavioural problems (Price-Mitchell, 2013), both of which are factors that can affect literacy development.

Further, mentors can model positive behaviours and skills that promote learning and literacy development. Literature demonstrates that role modeling is a key component of creating a successful learning environment and that as a role model, mentors can provide positive examples and support young people's motivation to learn (Gulati, 2013). Further, mentors can act as reading role models to inspire young people to read, particularly by providing recommendations for reading or discussing the importance of reading (Clark, Osborne, & Dugdale, 2009).

How Mentorship Can Be Implemented

An analysis of the literature of effective mentorship programs highlights the following as examples of key elements that can be considered when implementing a mentorship program.

1. **Mentor Recruitment And Training –** Experts identify that intentional recruitment and providing orientation sessions are important components for effective mentorship programming to ensure mentors are able to meet the needs of the young people being mentored and to ensure they understand the benefits, challenges, practices, goals, and supports involved in mentoring young people (Rennie, 2016).

2. **Mentee Recruitment And Screening –** The literature demonstrates that recruiting and screening mentees is an important component of effective programs, as it can be used to identify whether the mentees' needs can be served by the program and to ensure mentoring is an appropriate intervention (Rennie, 2016).

3. **Mentor-Mentee Matching –** Research has shown that one of the most critical elements to mentorship success is the closeness of the relationship between the mentor and mentee. For example, a study by Bayer, Grossman, and DuBois (2013) of a school-based mentoring program found that developing a close mentor relationship created better academic outcomes, and that young people who did not experience a close relationship with their mentor showed no academic improvements.

   It is also important to consider mentor and mentee backgrounds, as mentors with a similar background to the young person they mentor may help normalize the young person's experience and allow the mentor to share similar personal experiences (Rennie, 2016). Thus, matching between the young person and their mentor may be important to ensure the mentor can support the specific needs of the young person.

4. **Mentorship Format –** A review of the literature shows that successful mentorship programs are provided in a variety of formats, including one-to-one, e-mentoring, peer mentoring, team, and group mentoring, and may occur inside or outside of school (Rennie, 2016). Consideration should be given to the appropriate format for the needs of the target population. For example, research has shown that group mentoring is more effective for Indigenous young people compared to one-to-one mentoring (Rennie, 2016).

5. **Supervision And Monitoring –** Evidence demonstrates that monitoring the mentoring relationship and providing mentors with ongoing support is an important component of effective mentorship programs (Garringer, Kupersmidt, Rhodes, Stelter, & Tai, 2015). For example, regular contact between program staff, mentors, and mentees has been identified as supporting longer-lasting relationships between mentors and mentees (Garringer et al., 2015).

Mentorship: A Program In Practice

The Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel In-School Mentoring Program provides an excellent example of mentorship best practices in use. As part of this mentorship program, mentors meet with their mentee one hour a week during the school year within school grounds to engage in activities such as board games, crafts, or talking and sharing experiences. While engaging in fun activities together, mentors promote the importance of staying in school and having healthy family and peer relationships, foster mentee self confidence, encourage leadership skills, and support independent thinking. Results from the In-School Mentoring Program show that mentees improved their literacy skills and developed increased levels of self-esteem, both of which are important factors for promoting school engagement and academic success in high school (Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada, 2011).

3.3 INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Why Instructional Strategies Are An Effective Intervention

Instructional strategies are specific teaching techniques or methods an instructor can use to help young people meet specific learning objectives and become more independent and strategic learners (RICHA, 2014). For example, explicit instruction is an instructional strategy that involves direct teaching whereby an instructor models a skill, guides participant practice, provides feedback, and supports independent practice (Marchand-Martella, Martella, Modderman, Peterson, & Pan, 2013).

Research points to the need for explicit reading instruction in both middle and secondary school grades, as many students who enter high school have difficulties with comprehension, insufficient vocabulary, incomplete background knowledge, poor reading fluency, and a lack of motivation to read (Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2009). Young people entering high school without adequate reading skills, which are required for learning from complex, technical textbooks and curriculum, are at greater risk for disengagement and dropout (Hoff, Olson, & Peterson, 2015). Further, using direct and explicit instruction is particularly important for young people with reading disabilities, as they may require advanced support to learn phonological process and reading comprehension (Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2009).

Developing young people's comprehension is of great importance for high school success. Bornfreund (2012) cites two major bodies of research on effective literacy strategies that provide evidence to support the use of explicit comprehension strategy instruction for struggling adolescent readers. Comprehension strategy instruction is used to help young people understand what they read and remember the content they have read (Bornfreund, 2012; Marchand-Martella et al., 2013). Further, effective instructional approaches for developing comprehension include: comprehension monitoring and metacognition, modeling, and scaffolded instruction, whereby instructors initially provide intensive support to practice new skills, then slowly decreases support to increase participant self-sufficiency (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).

Vocabulary development is also key to improving literacy and academic success. Literature demonstrates that explicit vocabulary instruction has been identified as an effective instruction strategy that can help struggling readers (Bornfreund, 2012). Explicit vocabulary instruction focuses on helping young people develop greater understanding of the meaning of words by teaching new words and word-learning strategies (Bornfreund, 2012). As a readers' level of vocabulary impacts their reading comprehension (Sidek & Rahim, 2015), vocabulary instruction is an important intervention for developing greater comprehension skills for struggling readers.

How Instructional Strategies Can Be Implemented

The literature of effective instructional strategy interventions demonstrates several common practices that may be considered when implementing instructional strategies.

1. **Professional Development –** Research demonstrates that effective instructional interventions should be accompanied by training for instructors, particularly for subject-specific instructors, to ensure they are able to provide young people with reading instruction (Bornfreund, 2012). Professional development for instructional strategies supports instructors to learn and effectively implement specific instructional methods that will ultimately augment their teaching practices (Slavin, Cheung, Groff, & Lake, 2008).

2. **Use Across Content Areas –** A review of effective adolescent literacy programs demonstrates that instructional strategies should not only be used in one area or subject, but that direct, explicit comprehension instruction and effective instructional principles should be embedded into content-specific texts (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). For example, the literature indicates that effective programs had teachers explain why they were teaching certain strategies and then had students use them across multiple contexts and texts from a variety of different genres and subject areas (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Explicitly teaching learning strategies to young people has been shown to help make the subject matter more accessible to a wide range of learners (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009).

3. **Using Assessment To Inform Instruction –** The literature also identifies the importance of using ongoing assessment to inform the use of instructional strategies. For example, ensuring instructors use formative assessment to consistently identify gaps in learning or areas in need of improvement and matching instructional strategies accordingly has been identified as a component of effective literacy programming (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).

Instructional Strategies: A Program In Practice

Xtreme Reading, a supplemental literacy program designed to help struggling high school readers improve their reading skills, provides a good examples of an effective literacy program that implements instructional strategy best practices. As part of the Xtreme Reading program, facilitators receive curriculum materials, including daily detailed lesson plans, along with professional development to ensure effective program implementation. The program facilitator uses explicit instruction to teach young people foundational reading and motivation strategies. These strategies include guided practice, meaningful feedback, independent practice, generalizing, and modeling. Young people are also taught how to combine strategies and to use them both within and outside of the program. Results from an evaluation of the Xtreme Reading program demonstrated that as a result of their involvement in the program, participants increased their reading comprehension on standardized assessments (Neild, 2009).

3.4 AFTERSCHOOL AND SUMMER PROGRAMS

Why Afterschool And Summer Programs Are An Effective Intervention

The positive impact of high quality afterschool and summer programs on young people's literacy skills and overall academic achievement has been affirmed through several studies (National Summer Learning Association, 2017). For example, a study of the Step Up to High School program, which provides summer programming to incoming Grade 9 students struggling with math and reading, found that students who attended the program had significantly and substantially increased rates of being on track after Grade 9 (Neild, 2009).

Afterschool Programs

Afterschool programs have been found to nurture literacy development in young people and provide literacy rich environments. A literature review conducted by Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (2005) found that afterschool programs with homework help and tutoring had positive impacts on students' reading achievement. Further, the literature demonstrates that effective afterschool programs provide young people with exposure to a wide range of different forms of and purposes for literacy, as well as different types of reading and writing practices (Halpern, 2003), which support literacy development.

Afterschool programs have also been identified as being particularly important for young people from low-income families. For example, as afterschool programs can provide young people with access to a wide range of literacy materials, they may be particularly important for young people from low-income families who are less likely to have access to these materials at home (Halpern, 2003). Further, access to afterschool programs is important for young people for whom English is a second language who may also not have access to academic or English literacy resources and help in their home (Cloud, Lakin, Leininger, & Maxwell, 2010).

Summer Programs

Summer learning programs support accelerated learning for young people during the summer months (Terzian & Moore, 2009) and can provide young people in Grade 7 and 8 with high school readiness and bridging supports. For example, summer bridging programs address specific academic subjects and skills in which at-risk students are underachieving and provide support to ensure young people attain grade-level standards before they enter Grade 9 (Bottoms, 2008). Further, academic summer programs often focus on increasing students' math or reading comprehension, teaching study strategies, and providing young people with transition supports, such as orientation to a new school and meeting high school teachers or peers (Neild, 2009).

Research has demonstrated that young people lose some of the skills they have learned over the summer and that summer programs, whether voluntary or mandatory, can mitigate summer learning losses and even create increased levels of achievement (McCombs et al., 2011). Further, there is some research that demonstrates a link between summer program attendance and benefits for reading and math. For example, a recent study of the National Summer Learning Project found that young people with high levels of summer learning program attendance, defined as at least 20 days of attendance, experienced benefits in mathematics and reading (Augustine et al., 2016).

How Afterschool And Summer Programs Can Be Implemented

A review of the literature highlights examples of key elements to consider for implementing an effective and high quality afterschool or summer program.

1. **Learning Focus –** A review of best practices for afterschool and summer programs identifies that quality programs intentionally focus on accelerated learning and provide opportunities for young people to build their skills (National Summer Learning Association, 2017). For example, summer bridge programs focus on specific academic areas of difficulty and help young people achieve standards for high school (Bottoms, 2008).

2. **Effective, Engaging Approaches –** The literature demonstrates that effective afterschool and summer programs use a variety of engaging activities to encourage young people to learn. For example, high quality summer bridge programs have been identified as integrating evidence-based instructional strategies and remedial approaches with real-world application, technology, meaningful assignments, and recreational or cultural enrichment activities (Terzian & Moore, 2009; Bottoms, 2008). Further, literacy activities implemented by effective afterschool programs included tutoring and homework help (which can positively impact reading scores), reading aloud, dramatization, book discussions (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2005), and independent reading time (Halpern, 2003). These literacy practices can expose young people to new concepts and different types of literature, enhance comprehension and critical thinking skills, engage struggling readers, and support communication skills (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2005).

3. **Staffing And Infrastructure –** Research demonstrates that promising practices of effective afterschool and summer learning programs include having quality, experienced instructors, having at least two adults present, with one instructor being a teacher wherever possible, incorporating content that aligns with school curriculum to complement what young people are learning during the school year, providing small class or group sizes, and using a combination of individual support and group learning (Terzian & Moore, 2009).

Further, effective afterschool and summer programs have strong infrastructure demonstrated by empowering leadership, collaborative planning time, continued staff development, and continuous evaluation (National Summer Learning Association, 2017).

Afterschool And Summer Programs: A Program In Practice

Many school boards offer summer programs that are focused on enhancing literacy and numeracy skills. The following are examples of summer programs that highlight the use of promising and best practices of effective summer programming.

Camp I Can is a four-week summer program offered through Peel District School Board to students in Grades 7 and 8 that provides students with an opportunity to improve their reading, writing, and math skills at a theme-based camp. Games, exploring the outdoors, technology, team-building tasks, and field trips are used to engage and teach students. Students also receive comprehensive in-class learning experiences facilitated by a teacher and educational assistant with small class sizes to ensure they benefit from more personalized instruction. A report is provided outlining students' learning at the end of the camp.

Summer Academy, offered by Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board, is another example of summer programming that helps students prepare for Grade 9 through remedial literacy and numeracy courses. The Grade 7 and 8 summer school is recommended for students achieving a Level 2 or below in English and/or mathematics. The program provides students with textbooks and materials, as well as support with transportation. The program follows core concepts of the Ontario Curriculum, helps students develop independent learning strategies, incorporates physical activity time, integrates the use of technology, and provides a variety of print resources. At the end of the program, students receive a report that is sent to their home school or new secondary school.

3.5 TECHNOLOGY

Why Technology Is An Effective Intervention

Technology can be used not only as a tool for supporting literacy development or enhancing knowledge and skills in a specific subject area, but also acts as a medium of literacy and a topic around which literacy can be developed (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).

As a literacy intervention, instructors can use technology as a supplementary program support for struggling readers or learners to reinforce the instruction provided, help guide reading or literacy practice, provide more opportunities for practice, and encourage engagement (Hougen, 2015).

Using digital media can also enhance young people's learning experience. Users are able to easily engage with technology and are provided with feedback, digital programs can quickly adapt to the unique needs of the user, and programs can track learners' progress (Media Awareness Network, 2010).

Research provides evidence that computer-assisted instruction produces small effects for reading and that it can effectively enhance reading outcomes (Kunkel, 2015). For example, a study by Proudfoot (2016) of students with reading comprehension deficits found statistically significant and positive results from the use of a reading comprehension software showing increased reading comprehension skills that could benefit students with reading and understanding math problems.

The literature demonstrates that technology may also be particularly important as a means for helping young people who do not respond well to printed material to explore and express meaning (Tomlinson, 2009). As a medium for literacy, e-books provide youth with diverse reading options. Research demonstrates that the features of e-books found to be most beneficial to learners include multimedia components that are interactive, as well as the promotion of independent reading and reading enjoyment (Strategic Marketing and Research, Inc., 2013).

Digital literacy games are another way in which technology has been used to support literacy development, with research showing promising potential for such interventions (Strategic Marketing & Research, Inc., 2013). Some research has even demonstrated the ability of games to improve students' knowledge, skills and motivation for learning, as well as a connection between playing games and learning outcomes (Strategic Marketing & Research, Inc., 2013).

Technology can also be used to support interpersonal and collaborative learning in an online setting. Online learning environments offer opportunities for students to collaborate, and when implemented appropriately, online collaborative learning can foster academic learning and support cognitive skills, such as critical and analytical thinking, synthesis, and evaluation (Bates, 2015).

How Technology Can Be Implemented

Technology is used in many different ways to support young people in developing their literacy skills, with an analysis offering some examples of common practices of effective technology interventions, as highlighted below.

1. **Identifying Quality Programs –** The literature identifies the importance of selecting computer and technology programs that are of high quality and contain research-based instructional design components known to support learning (Proudfoot, 2016). For example, design components that accelerate learning include providing learners with some control over the pace and sequence of instruction, guidance towards correct answers, embedded cognitive strategies, and integrating motion or action to learn a skill or concept (Proudfoot, 2016).

2. **Integrating Technology –** A review of the literature indicates that technology should not be used in place of instruction (Learning Point, 2005), but rather should be used to aid instruction. Research shows that effective programs integrate technology to supplement and support learning instruction, and that quality computer programs can help students practice and communicate learned concepts (Collins & Bronte-Tinkew, 2010).

3. **Professional Development And Support –** A review of the literature indicates that instructors may not have the skills to integrate technology into their program activities and are less likely to use technology without adequate training (Collins & Bronte-Tinkew, 2010). Providing training and professional development focused on how to use and integrate technology into teaching is critical to ensuring technology is used effectively.

Technology: A Program In Practice

MindPlay Virtual Reading Coach is an example of a promising online reading program focused on improving young people's reading abilities. This online reading coach supports young people with diverse skills and unique needs to read more effectively. The online program is accompanied by a diagnostic reading assessment to identify student reading skills and weaknesses and provide a baseline benchmark from which progress can be tracked. MindPlay Virtual Reading Coach addresses multiple aspects of reading and literacy development, including phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, grammar for meaning, comprehension, and fluency. A recent study of the effects of MindPlay Virtual Reading Coach on middle school students showed that the program had a significant impact on reading fluency and increased students' reading ability by one to two grade levels (Chambers, Mather, & Stoll, 2013).

3.6 OSSLT PREPARATION

Why OSSLT Preparation Is An Effective Intervention

The OSSLT is a cross-curricular, standardized literacy test that Grade 10 students must pass in order to graduate from high school. With research showing a connection between poor performance on the reading portion of the Grade 6 EQAO standardized test and a reduced likelihood of passing the Grade 10 literacy test (Docherty et al., 2011), it is essential that young people struggling in Grade 6 are provided with additional literacy and OSSLT preparation supports starting in Grades 7 and 8. Identifying struggling readers and providing appropriate supports early on will help ensure young people develop the grade-level reading and writing skills that are required for high school and that will be evaluated on the Grade 10 literacy test.

How OSSLT Preparation Can Be Implemented

Although a review of the literature and existing programs demonstrates a lack of research about the impacts or outcomes of OSSLT preparation programming, analysis of existing programs demonstrates several promising practices, with examples outlined below.

1. **School-Based Intervention For Instructor Development –** Analysis of the literature demonstrates that OSSLT preparation programs are primarily offered through schools and school boards. Some OSSLT interventions focused on providing professional learning opportunities to teachers and staff to ensure students received appropriate instruction for how to prepare for the OSSLT. For example, the Toronto District School Board offered an OSSLT program focused on continuing support for student and school success, in which teachers of all subjects in Grades 7 to 12, school staff, and administrators received professional learning opportunities focused on OSSLT preparation. These professional learning opportunities included professional learning communities focused on literacy, school literacy committees, OSSLT information sessions, support to implement afterschool literacy programs for students in Grades 7 to 10, and instruction in specific reading and writing strategies.

2. **School-Based Intervention For Students –** A review of existing programs also demonstrated that schools provided OSSLT support programs and interventions directly to young people. Many of these programs used Grade 6 EQAO test scores and current academic performance to identify students considered to be at risk and offered them appropriate supports and interventions to improve their literacy skills. For example, schools were seen to offer afterschool Grade 10 OSSLT preparation courses, individual tutoring, practice tests, and afterschool individualized literacy classes.

3. **Providing Online Resources** – An analysis of existing programs showed that schools and school boards often provided students and parents with access to online resources to help them prepare for the Grade 10 literacy test. Resources included sample tests, the EQAO Test Guide for Students and Parents, test tips, and suggested software programs such as *Reading and Writing Achievement* and *After Hours Literacy Program* to practice reading and writing skills for the OSSLT. Some schools also posted information about the test, such as where and when it will occur and the types of questions that may be asked on the test.

4. **Community-Based Programming** – Community agencies were also seen to provide OSSLT preparation programs that supported young people to develop the skills required to pass the Grade 10 literacy test. For example, Scholar's Edge offers courses designed to prepare young people for the OSSLT by focusing on reading and writing skills that align with Ontario curriculum. Scholar's Edge also has tutors that work one-on-one with program participants to advance their knowledge and skills in key subject areas, as well as practice tests from previous years to prepare young people for writing the test in Grade 10.

OSSLT Preparation: A Program In Practice

Henry Street High School demonstrates use of several best practices for supporting OSSLT preparation. At Henry Street High School, the school based literacy team uses Grade 6 EQAO test scores to identify students scoring at Level two or below on their test or who are considered at risk based on their academic performance. These students are then offered a variety of literacy programming to support their chances for success in Grade 10. Interventions provided to these students include introduction to the OSSLT, its purpose, format, and previous test examples; individualized discussion with a teacher about their pre-test performance to identify strengths and weaknesses; small group workshops to address specific test elements; access to an online tool called LiveInk by Pearson to practice writing a news report; one-on-one teacher sessions during the school day to review specific test elements; and supported use of assistive technologies for those who require them. A review of participating students' results demonstrated they were able to improve their skills to a level at which they could pass the OSSLT (Docherty et al., 2011).

3.7 ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

Why ELD And ESL Programs Are An Effective Intervention

English as a Second Language (ESL) programs help young people who have received previous age-appropriate schooling in another country, but who may lack English language skills, while English Language Development (ELD) programs provide young people who have had limited prior schooling to develop age-appropriate language skills (Toronto District School Board, 2014). Both types of programs support young people to learn English, succeed in school curriculum, and participate in school life (Toronto District School Board, 2014).

The literature demonstrates that young people with English as a second language do not perform as well on the OSSLT and have higher rates of deferral for the OSSLT (Cheng, Klinger, & Zheng, 2007). Further, research provides evidence that ELD and ESL students are at increased risk for dropping out of high school than non-ELD/ESL students (Cheng, Klinger, & Zheng, 2007). Thus, providing effective ELD and ESL instruction for Grade 7 and 8 students ensures they have the literacy skills required to transition to and succeed in high school where they will face increasingly complex English texts and writing tasks.

How ELD And ESL Programs Can Be Implemented

A review of effective ELD and ESL programs demonstrates the use of some common best practices. Outlined below are some examples of how ELD and ESL programs can be implemented.

1. **Supporting Young People In Their First Language –** Research demonstrates that it is important to provide young people with support in their first language while they learn English (Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2009). For example, using a young person's first language can be helpful when explaining concepts until their English skills are better developed (Kelso, 2001). Providing books in a native language and offering dual language books and audio have been suggested to support learning, as well as involving a bilingual or ESL specialist (Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2009).

2. **Making Connections To Cultural Background –** The literature suggests that, when teaching ELD and ESL students, it is important to connect content and new concepts to their individual and cultural experiences (Robertson, 2017). Making these connections ensures instruction is meaningful and can support engagement and motivation for learning.

3. **Providing Practice Time –** An analysis of the research outlines the importance of providing ELD and ESL students with multiple and various different opportunities to practice their literacy skills, both independently and with support (Linan-Thompson & Vaughan, 2007). For example, the literature suggests that programs focus on spending time reading and practicing reading strategies (Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2009). Further, spending time developing vocabulary and practicing reading narrative texts may be helpful, as research shows ELD and ESL students have poorer performance on OSSLT questions in which narrative reading, indirect understanding, and reading vocabulary are required (Cheng, Klinger, & Zheng, 2007).

ELD And ESL Programs: A Program In Practice

An analysis of the literature and interventions indicates that ELD and ESL programming is primarily offered by schools and school boards. For example, the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board provides ELD and ESL support at the secondary level to help young people develop proficiency in English. A centralized assessment centre is available for newcomer students and their families where assessments are conducted to determine their math, English, and first language proficiency and academic skills. Teachers are then provided with this information, which is used to inform program adaptations and instructional strategies to address the needs of ELD and ESL students. Students can access ELD or ESL credit courses and high school programming. Provided programs aim to assist newcomers with English language acquisition, orientation to Canadian culture and society, development of interpersonal communication skills in English, and academic language skills required to successfully graduate from high school.

ESL summer camps also provide young people with opportunities to develop their English language skills. For example, Frontier Trails ESL Camp in Ottawa is an overnight camp that provides young people with daily English lessons in an engaging and fun camp setting. Themed and camp-based topics, question and answer sessions, games, and practice exercises help young people who are English language learners to develop their literacy skills.

CORE INTERVENTION ELEMENTS

Through an analysis of the research, literature, and existing programs, a common set of core intervention elements were identified as promising practices of effective literacy programming. Common core intervention elements included assessment and monitoring, individualized or differentiated support, engaging and meaningful approaches, parent involvement, dedicated or extended literacy time, fostering literacy beyond reading and writing, cooperative learning, using a collaborative approach, professional development and competence, fostering positive learning environments, and providing supportive relationships. Each of these program elements is described in greater detail below, including a description of the element, examples of how it can be implemented, and an outline of how it supports success.

4.1 ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING

About Assessment And Monitoring

A common theme across literacy-focused and transition interventions is that assessment and early testing are imperative to fostering young people's literacy development and future academic success. Assessment is used to identify young people's learning needs and preferences and to respond with appropriate learning or instructional interventions.

Both formal and informal diagnostic assessments can be used regularly to identify and monitor how well young people are progressing towards specific school or program goals under the current instructional practices (Adolescent Literacy Learning, 2016). Several methods for assessment and identification of those at risk have been identified across the literature, including academic performance records, instructor observations, attendance records, social relationships, cumulative files, electronic databases, interviews, student surveys, and interest, reading, or learning style inventories (Alberta Education, 2009; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009; Tomlinson, 2009).

How Monitoring And Assessment Can Be Implemented

The literature demonstrates that assessments can be implemented in a variety of different ways to ensure effective intervention and success for young people. For example, the literature suggests that benchmark testing can be used to identify the specific subset of skills a young person has or has not developed in a topic or content area (Balfanz, 2009).

Information garnered from assessments can also be used to inform unit or lesson planning in a way that will address students' needs (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). Further, using assessments and monitoring progress ensure instructional adjustments are made so young people stay on track or get the help they need in order to master a specific skill (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).

While assessments are commonly used at the individual classroom or program level, research has shown positive results for high school transitions when there is communication between elementary and secondary school teachers about assessments, content, and approaches (Tilleczek & Ferguson, 2007), which could help inform instructors about the needs and potential instructional strategies required for incoming students. Further, research suggests that effective programs document assessment information on a computer system to support instructors, administrators, and evaluators to understand and monitor young people's progress, both individually and at a group level (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).

A review of the literature shows that assessment has also been used to support the development of individualized learning and graduation plans for young people that help students and their parents with early goal-setting and planning (Christie & Zinth, 2008). While Individual Education Plans are developed for young people in Ontario with specific learning exceptionalities, a promising practice seen in some States is requiring all students to develop an individual learning or graduation plan as early as Grade 8 (Christie & Zinth, 2008).

Why Use Assessment And Monitoring?

Research demonstrates that assessment for learning has been shown to support young people's achievement. For example, a study by Hanover Research (2014) found better performance on achievement indicators for students who received formative assessment than those who did not receive an assessment.

Implementing assessment and monitoring allows instructors to identify young people who are unprepared for high school and intervene by providing appropriate interventions. Research demonstrates that early testing and assessment, particularly in elementary and middle school, is imperative, as it helps to identify young people who may require additional tutoring and support to ensure they get back on track and are prepared for high school (Trypuc & Heller, 2008).

4.2 INDIVIDUALIZED AND DIFFERENTIATED SUPPORT

About Individualized And Differentiated Support

Differentiated support occurs when instructors "tailor their teaching approach to match their students' learning styles. All the students have the same learning goal, but the teaching approach varies depending on how students prefer to learn" (Tucker, 2017).

Differentiation is used to assign tasks or vary instruction based on young people's interests or ability level (Moir, 2008). Additionally, implementing flexible groups is a best practice of differentiated support, which allows young people at similar levels to work together and for instruction to be provided based on the ability level of the group (Osewalt, 2017).

Further, individualized support focuses on addressing the needs of a single young person and the teaching approach is targeted to address a specific need (Osewalt, 2017). Individualization can occur as part of differentiated support.

How Individualized And Differentiated Support Can Be Implemented

It is important that instructors identify a philosophy and methodology that will help them address young people's individual needs and support young people to achieve positive outcomes. One example of a prominent model within the literature is Tomlinson's model of differentiation (Landrum & McDuffie, 2010), which highlights four core program elements for which differentiation can be provided, including:

1. **Content** – what the young person needs to learn or how they will access the information;
2. **Process** – activities with which the young person engages in order to make sense of or master the content;
3. **Products** – used by the young person to practice and apply what they have learned; and
4. **Affect/Environment** – how the classroom works and feels.

(*Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009*)

Further, effective programs using differentiation have provided young people with a variety of options for how they can demonstrate their learning, such as writing a paper, creating a subject dictionary, or producing a radio show (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009).

The literature demonstrates that effective differentiated instruction uses ongoing assessments to understand their existing knowledge, readiness, interests, progress, and mastery (Tomlinson, Moon, & Imbeau, 2015), which can then be used to plan and implement appropriate learning and instructional strategies. Further, this information allows instructors to adjust and tailor the learning environment and assessment of a young person according to their needs (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009).

Providing young people with books at differing reading levels has also been identified as an effective practice for differentiated and individualized support (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009), which ensures young people are able to access reading and literacy materials suitable to their reading level. Research indicates that providing a diversity of texts, including a variety of difficulty levels and topics, is also a common element of effective literacy interventions for young people (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Further, providing books with high interest and low vocabulary may be particularly beneficial for young people with reading disabilities to ensure they are able to access grade-level content without requiring them to have grade-level comprehension and decoding skills (Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2009).

Why Use Individualized And Differentiated Support?

Research suggests that most young people learn using a combination of learning styles and that their strengths may not be assessed or valued through traditional teaching methods or classroom settings (Totten & Quigley, 2003). Using differentiated instruction can address students' varied learning needs and styles.

Evidence from research demonstrates that interventions designed to address young people's individual needs produce positive results. For example, two randomized control trials have found significantly better reading improvements for students who received individualized literacy instruction in their classroom using small groups and differentiated instruction compared to those in a control classroom (Connor et al., 2010). Further, research demonstrates that individualized interventions are a key component of effective literacy strategies and have been found to be particularly important for struggling readers who may require additional, specialized support (Bornfreund, 2012).

4.3 ENGAGING AND MEANINGFUL APPROACHES

About Engaging And Meaningful Approaches

Although literacy competence is necessary for facilitating student success, it is insufficient on its own to produce academic achievement (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006), as without motivation to learn, young people may disengage. Further, research demonstrates that motivation plays a key role in fostering literacy success, as it can affect the amount of time and effort young people dedicate to learning, whether they seek support when they are struggling, how they relate to those who are teaching them, and how they perform when being tested (Strategic Marketing & Research, Inc., 2013).

A sense of self-efficacy, identity, relevance, engagement, and motivation are key factors affecting literacy development (Adolescent Literacy Learning, 2016), and providing engaging and meaningful approaches to learning can help promote these feelings for young people. Implementing learning activities that are meaningful and increase behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement have been identified by research as positively affecting young people's learning and success (Pino-James, 2014).

How Engaging And Meaningful Approaches Can Be Implemented

Research establishes the importance of supporting self-regulation and self-directed learning in young people (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006), as these factors are critical to instilling motivation and self-efficacy (Kolodenko, 2007), as well as fostering effective learning habits and study skills (Zumbrunn, Tadlock, & Roberts, 2011). Self-regulation is developed when young people are offered choices along with support or aids that will help them succeed in the task they have chosen (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Further, promoting autonomy and choice have been identified as important components of designing and providing an effective learning environment (Adolescent Literacy Learning, 2016), as this allows young people opportunities to explore and incorporate their real-world experiences with the information they are reading and increase their motivation to engage in reading (Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2009).

Throughout the literature, several examples and methods of integration choices and autonomy into instruction have been identified. For example, choice can be offered by providing young people with a choice of the order in which they complete tasks when they have multiple tasks to complete, allowing young people to choose whether they work in pairs or complete a task independently, letting young people choose their own topic for a research project, offering options for how young people demonstrate their learning (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009), and offering diverse texts with a range of topics, and cultural, linguistic, and demographic characteristics (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).

Providing young people with opportunities to connect new learning to previous experiences and express themselves has also been identified as a means for promoting engagement in learning. For example, research suggests that when young people can draw on their existing knowledge, experiences, individual values, cultural background, and interests, they are better able to use their literacy skills to reflect on what others have to say, think about their own opinion, and express their ideas (Adolescent Literacy Learning, 2016). Moreover, employing teaching approaches that support young people to express their voice and identity can help them to take an active role in their learning (Adolescent Literacy Learning, 2016). The literature also demonstrates that when young people have opportunities to think about and frame their own questions, it increases their sense of academic self-efficacy (Adolescent Literacy Learning, 2016), which can help them to engage in the learning process.

Another means of promoting engagement in learning identified within the literature is incorporating meaningful content and activities. For example, research related to best practices for adolescent literacy emphasizes the importance of using learning approaches that connect learning and academic content with young people's interests (National Summer Learning Association, 2017). Further, when young people are provided with assignments that address what is happening in society and topics that are relevant to them, this helps young people become more critical learners (Adolescent Literacy Learning, 2016). Research also shows that when young people can make clear connections between what is happening in the world, which helps them build on their prior knowledge, they are more engaged in learning (Strategic Marketing & Research, Inc., 2013). In order to ensure content and activities are relevant for the young people they are teaching, the literature suggests that instructors should learn about their students' lives and design instruction accordingly (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).

Why Use Engaging And Meaningful Approaches?

A review of the literature shows that strong engagement is critical in middle school and in Grade 9, as greater engagement can improve school attendance (Trypuc & Heller, 2008), and attendance is a key indicator for literacy development and learning outcomes (Totten & Quigley, 2003). Research also shows that a lack of motivation can be a barrier to reading comprehension and can limit a young person's development of literacy strategies that can help them become a successful reader, which in turn can exacerbate reading difficulties and further reduce motivation (Marchand-Martella et al., 2013).

Implementing strategies to motivate and engage young people has been identified in the literature as an effective instructional strategy for struggling adolescent readers, as motivation and engagement can help foster young people's confidence and facilitate literacy improvements (Bornfreund, 2012).

4.4 PARENT INVOLVEMENT

About Parent Involvement

Encouraging parents to be involved in their children's education, learning, and literacy development has been identified within the literature as an important component of effective interventions (Education Partnerships, Inc., 2010; Tilleczek & Campbell, 2013; Tilleczek & Ferguson, 2007). Research demonstrates that insufficient parental support is a risk factor for difficult transitions for young people (Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, 2012), and a factor that affects young people's reading achievement (Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2009). Thus, engaging parents and helping parents to support their children is critical in promoting academic and literacy success as young people enter high school.

How Parent Involvement Can Be Implemented

As research shows, the transition experience and academic preparation can determine high school success. Christie and Zinth (2008) recommend educating families about the importance of the transition to high school and Grade 9 year for future academic success, particularly to ensure parents with less formal or positive educational experiences can properly guide their children and can foster supportive yet challenging learning environments at home. Further, evidence suggests that parents facilitate positive school transitions when they are involved with their children's education and provide encouragement, help with homework, and remind their children about assignment deadlines (Tilleczek et al., 2010).

Numerous strategies exist for engaging parents in their children's learning. Examples of promising practices for supporting parent involvement identified throughout the literature include: providing parents with grade-level reading materials and reading lists of appropriate books (Alberta Education, 2009; Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2009); offering parent workshops or information sessions, newsletters, ongoing parent communication, parent surveys, parent-teacher conferences, or parent advisory committees (Alberta Education, 2009); and using web-based applications to provide parents with access to information about literacy, specialized topics, and information that demonstrates how they can be involved in their child's literacy development (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004).

A review of promising practices also suggests that hosting events where parents have an opportunity to engage with their children and program leaders can produce positive results. For example, Peer Group Connection is a high school transition program that has a strong parent involvement component integrated within the program. The program holds Family Night events for all program participants, peer leaders, and parents or guardians, with the focus on opening communication between parents, their children, and the school. The intent of Family Nights is to increase parental involvement in their child's education. The program also provides incoming Grade 9 students with peer leaders to support them with developing skills such as goal setting, problem solving, decision-making, time management, and teamwork that promote academic success, as well as motivation to do well in school. A study of Peer Group Connection demonstrates that participants have increased academic self-efficacy, higher attendance and grades, and that the program significantly improves participants' graduation rates.

Why Involve Parents?

As the literature demonstrates, parents play a significant role in young people's literacy development and academic achievement, making parent engagement an important element of an effective intervention. For example, research has shown that when parents are involved in their child's transition to high school, they are more likely to stay involved longer in their child's high school education (Education Partnerships, Inc., 2010).

Further, research provides evidence that parent involvement helps young people to achieve better grades and be more motivated in school, and increasing parent awareness of their child's learning activities increases the likelihood they will help with their child's learning at home when asked to do so by a teacher (Olsen & Fuller, 2010).

4.5 DEDICATED OR EXTENDED LITERACY TIME

About Dedicated Or Extended Literacy Time

Dedicating time each day for reading and writing or providing extended time for literacy development activities is a common theme that appears across the literature and has been identified as a component of effective adolescent literacy instruction (Bornfreund, 2012; Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2009; Marchand-Martella et al., 2013).

Intensive reading or writing time is used as a means for teaching and practicing specific reading or writing strategies and skills, while extensive reading or writing is used to promote enjoyment and comprehension by reading or writing a large quantity of materials about a wide range of topics (Mart, 2015).

How Dedicated Or Extended Literacy Time Can Be Implemented

One approach to providing dedicated time for literacy development, which has been identified in the research as an element of effective adolescent literacy programs, is facilitating intensive writing. Research suggests that many of the skills used in writing are also used in reading, and young people who are provided with an opportunity to practice their writing skills in combination with reading have shown improved comprehension, as they are more likely to use critical thinking about what they read (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Further, intensive writing provides young people with an opportunity to practice the types of writing tasks they will be expected to perform in high school (Bornfreund, 2012).

Providing both recreational or silent reading time and intensive, strategy-based reading instruction have also been identified within the research as promising practices of effective literacy programs (Literacy BC, 2006). Dedicating time during programming for reading and writing allows young people to spend focused time practicing and developing their literacy skills. Further, providing independent reading time has been identified within the literature as a way to embed choice into programming, which helps foster self-regulation and engagement (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).

A review of effective adolescent literacy programs suggests that extended time for literacy should include between two to four hours of instruction and practice each day, which may occur as part of language arts classes and content-area classes (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006) or through dedicated reading and writing time. The Definitely Independent Reading Time (DIRT) program at St. Paul High School in Ottawa provides an excellent example of how literacy development can be incorporated into daily programming through dedicated reading time. The focus of the DIRT program is to provide students with 10 minutes of dedicated independent reading time at the beginning of each class each day, with reading materials being supplied for those who do not have their own.

Why Provide Dedicated Or Extended Literacy Time?

Research provides evidence that extensive reading, i.e. recreational reading, can enhance language proficiency, develop confident readers, and improve writing style, while intensive reading helps learners improve achievement in areas of vocabulary and grammar (Mart, 2015).

Frequent reading practice has also been found to facilitate more automatic reading, which is related to increased comprehension and reading enjoyment (Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2009). Moreover, research demonstrates that comprehension and motivation to read are connected to the amount of time a young person spends reading (Strategic Marketing & Research, Inc., 2013). As adolescents develop their intellectual and cognitive abilities through practice (Adolescent Literacy Learning, 2016), dedicated literacy time can be used to target literacy areas that require improvement, which provides struggling readers with the opportunity to practice and further develop their literacy skills.

4.6 FOSTERING LITERACY BEYOND READING AND WRITING

About Literacy Beyond Reading And Writing

The literature demonstrates that definitions of literacy are moving beyond just reading and writing towards a more holistic, complex understanding of literacy. For example, Adolescent Literacy Learning (2016) states that, "literacy is not only used for reading and writing, but also to increase one's understanding of the world." Further, the literature demonstrates the significance of recognizing the importance of literacy to employment success, as definitions of literacy are expanding to incorporate skills necessary for obtaining and maintaining employment (Tilleczek & Campbell, 2013).

The importance of developing literacy skills in a variety of subject areas and that can be applied within multiple different contexts is exhibited throughout the literature. Totten and Quigley (2003) argue that "literacy is comprised of multiple literacies and our job is to...expand [young people's] language-using repertoire to an increasing number of social and cognitive contexts." Further, Adolescent Literacy Learning (2016) provides an example of a comprehensive framework for understanding adolescent literacy, with the core goal of literacy development being that young people acquire the skills they need to effectively think, express, and reflect in multiple contexts.
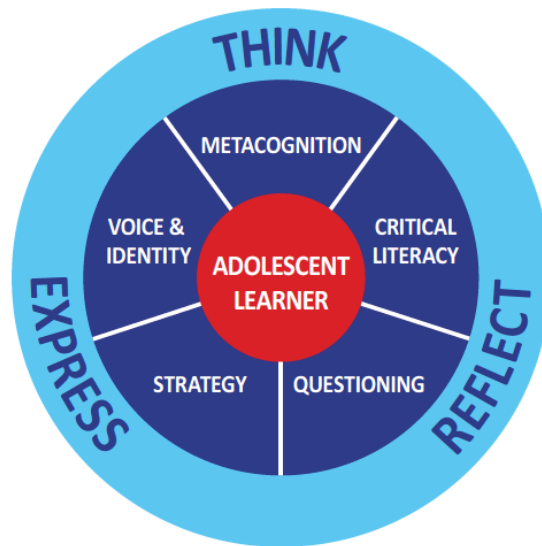
(*Adolescent Literacy Learning, 2016*)

How Fostering Literacy Beyond Reading And Writing Can Be Implemented

A review of the literature demonstrates that there are multiple emerging types of literacy, with digital, financial, and physical literacy being prominent forms of literacy important to young people's development.

Technology And Digital Literacy

Technology has become embedded within young people's everyday lives, their learning environment, and the workplace. There is growing recognition that digital literacy is important in preparing young people for the increasingly digital world and to meet the changing demands of the workplace (Hadziristic, 2017). The Media Awareness Network (2010) states that "education of our youth must not only utilize technology, but also provide the education necessary for young people to safely, effectively, and responsibly engage with digital media."

The literature identifies that teaching digital literacy should focus on helping young people develop the skills and understanding required to access and use different types of digital media, software applications, and devices, critically analyze digital media content, and create using digital technology (Media Awareness Network, 2010).

To support digital literacy development among young people in Canada, MediaSmarts (2016) has created a Digital Literacy Framework called *USE, UNDERSTAND & CREATE.* The framework outlines digital literacy competencies and provides a "road map" for teaching digital literacy skills within Canadian schools, including lessons and interactive online resources linked to grade-specific curriculum outcomes. The framework also includes parent tip sheets to connect home and school practice. A specific framework for Grades 7 and 8 focuses specifically on Internet safety and privacy protection, good online citizenship, responsible use of the Internet, strategies to recognize good information, and approaches for how to apply media literacy concepts within a variety of online spaces, such as social networks.

Financial Literacy

A review of the literature also demonstrates that developing financial literacy skills among young people is also gaining increased attention and support. Research identifies the importance of school-based and afterschool financial literacy programs in supporting young people to understand topics such as budgeting, money management, saving, credit, debt, and consumer behaviour (Prosper Canada, 2015). These types of programs can help prepare young people to make effective financial choices as they prepare for life beyond school.

Prosper Canada (2015) has identified that many young people are not accessing financial literacy resources due to not being aware of them, not being motivated to access them, or lacking an understanding of the relevance and value of financial literacy to their lives. Further, a recent survey of Ontario high school students aged 14-18 found that 50% of respondents reported never being taught personal finance in school (Gotovksy et al., 2016).

Financial literacy has been embedded within the curriculum in Ontario schools since 2011 throughout different subjects, but is not currently provided as a separate subject or course module (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017). However, the increasing importance of financial literacy for young people is apparent, as a newly announced program by the Government of Ontario will be piloting financial literacy as a separate module within mandatory Grade 10 career studies classes across 28 high schools to foster financial skills in young learners (Gordon, 2017).

Technology also shows promise as a means for supporting financial literacy in middle school learners. For example, EduGains recently developed a financial literacy app for Grade 7 and 8 students called "eMe" that is available for free download to a digital device. Young people can use the app in class or independently and it provides a "choose your own adventure" game that addresses important financial literacy topics in alignment with Ontario curriculum. As young people complete activities through the app, they are provided with immediate feedback about their choices and the financial literacy skills they are developing. A teacher guide is also available to support lesson planning.

Physical Literacy

Physical literacy has also been identified within the literature as important to young people's success. The International Physical Literacy Association (2016) defines physical literacy as "the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge, and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life," a definition that is also endorsed by Physical and Health Education Canada (2017).

Physical literacy focuses on supporting young people to master fundamental movement and sports skills that will help them read their environment and make appropriate decisions, move with confidence and control in a variety of contexts, and perform to the best of their ability (Physical Literacy, 2017).

Teaching physical literacy is important not only for the health and well-being of young people, but it can also support their academic and literacy success, as research shows a relationship between physical fitness and academic achievement. For example, studies have indicated that increased physical exercise for adolescents translates to an increased ability to process information, since the cerebellum is responsible for physical movement and coordination, but also coordinates cognitive thought processes (Adolescent Literacy Learning, 2016).

Further, a study conducted by Chomitz et al. (2009) discovered a statistically significant relationship between fitness and academic achievement, finding that the likelihood of passing a standardized mathematics test and English test increased with the number of fitness tests students passed.

An example of an innovative literacy program that addresses both enhanced reading literacy and physical literacy is the Start2Finish Running & Reading Club. Implemented as an afterschool program in communities across Canada, Start2Finish takes place within local schools for two hours one day per week to support young people living at or below the poverty line who require significant literacy support. The program includes circuit training and active games to develop fitness, a "Word of the Day" character-building component, journaling with a mentor, one-on-one and small group reading, nutritious snacks, a take home fitness program, and summer reading. Program results show that the majority of participants remained at or improved their level of literacy up to two grade levels (Start2Finish, 2015). Further, improved literacy skills, increased confidence in reading abilities, and a more positive attitude towards reading were noted, and participants also experienced significant improvements in their aerobic capacity, abdominal core strength, and upper body strength (Start2Finish, 2015).

Why Foster Literacy Beyond Reading And Writing?

2010 Legacies Now (2008) describes that "multiple literacies are a cornerstone of lifelong learning. They are essential to understanding and meeting present and future changes and challenges." Developing comprehensive literacy skills allows young people to become critical and creative thinkers, effective communicators, collaborative learners, and innovative problem solvers (Adolescent Literacy Learning, 2016). As advances in technology continue to impact the types of skills required in the workplace and young people are increasingly required to understand information from a variety of different formats, developing both basic and advanced literacy skills is necessary in order for young people to experience success beyond high school.

4.7 COOPERATIVE LEARNING

About Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning is an approach to instruction in which young people of varying abilities form small groups and work together on a specific task to achieve a common goal, such as solving a problem or completing an assignment (Curriculum Services Canada, 2014).

Cooperative learning has been identified in the literature as a component of effective adolescent literacy instruction (Marchand-Martella et al., 2013; National Summer Learning Association, 2017). For example, a review of reading programs found that those with good evidence of effectiveness integrated some form of cooperative learning where students worked in small groups to help one another master reading skills and in which group success depended on individual learning achievement (Slavin, Cheung, Groff, & Lake, 2008).

How Cooperative Learning Can Be Implemented

Research demonstrates that cooperative learning is an effective approach to text-based learning, as it allows young people with a range of abilities to interact about a variety of different texts and draw meaning through the group process (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Further, cooperative learning is a teaching approach that can be implemented within any subject area (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).

While there are many ways in which cooperative learning can be implemented, scaffolding has been identified as an important tool when implementing cooperative learning to ensure young people at every ability level can engage (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Additional strategies for cooperative learning identified within the literature include assigning group members specific roles and monitoring the group's progress to ensure they remain on task, as well as providing clear instruction about how to complete the task so everyone has a clear understanding of the expectations (Cox, 2017). Further, providing young people with a concrete problem to discuss or solve that will promote oral language and content-specific skills has also been suggested within the literature (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).

The Reading Edge provides an excellent example of a cooperative learning program with evidence to support its effects on reading success for middle school students. The Reading Edge is a comprehensive literacy program for struggling students that focuses on helping young people become strategic, independent, and motivated readers and learners. The Reading Edge integrates a combination of proven instructional practices, curriculum, and frequent assessment and feedback, as well as professional development for instructors. Reading instruction is provided for metacognitive strategy, cooperative learning and peer collaboration, goal setting and feedback, and classroom management. Students meet and work in assigned cooperative teams of four to five students according to their reading level and work together for 60 minutes each day. Student teams set goals together and help each other learn new content, use, analyze, and personalize strategies, and hold each other accountable to the provided task. A randomized evaluation of The Reading Edge has found statistically significant differences of participants' total reading test scores, as well as comprehension and vocabulary sub-scale scores (Slavin et al., 2009).

Why Provide Cooperative Learning?

Research has demonstrated that cooperative learning is a useful teaching approach, as it improves student achievement, relationships, and self-esteem at all grade levels (Marchand-Martella et al., 2013). Further, cooperative learning has been identified as an effective teaching approach, as it has been found to promote cognitive, metacognitive, and motivational skill development, which also foster self-regulation in learning (Fernandez-Rio, et al. (2017).

4.8 COLLABORATIVE TEAM APPROACH

About Using A Collaborative Team Approach

A collaborative team approach occurs when instructors share information about instructional strategies, curriculum, students, and assessments, and is used to support continuous improvement of instructor practices, accountability, and collective responsibility (Killion, 2015).

Collaboration between instructors has consistently been identified within the literature as being important to supporting student achievement and a core component of effective adolescent literacy interventions (Adolescent Literacy Learning, 2016; Decoda Literacy Solutions, 2017; National Summer Learning Association, 2017).

How A Collaborative Team Approach Can Be Implemented

There are many ways in which instructor teams can work together to support young people's success. For example, research on positive transitions supports the promising practice of promoting dialogue between elementary and secondary school teachers about curriculum content and pedagogy (Tilleczek & Ferguson, 2007), which can help young people experience greater consistency during their transition between middle school and high school.

Further, research also corroborates the implementation of interdisciplinary teaching teams as an effective approach for literacy and transition interventions. For example, research has found that a critical element of effective instruction includes implementing interdisciplinary teaching teams that meet regularly to discuss students they have in common, align their instruction, and plan together across subjects to ensure consistency in literacy instruction (Bornfreund, 2012). Members of interdisciplinary teams include administrators, teachers, mentors or advocates, counsellors, librarians, reading specialists, and literacy coaches (Alberta Education, 2009; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).

The National Youth Literacy Demonstration Project provides an excellent example of how a collaborative team approach is implemented to support student success. The National Youth Literacy Demonstration Project is a demonstration school in Surrey, BC that targets at-risk youth aged 15 and 16 who are at high risk of dropping out or have dropped out of school and who have significant literacy challenges. The project developed a comprehensive program model that combines literacy development, academic subjects, social and emotional development, art, and technology to help students upgrade their skills and eventually reintegrate into the mainstream school system (Literacy BC, 2006). The project team identified that a key component to making the program successful is a team that collaborates effectively and supportes the efforts of each team member. (Decoda Literacy Solutions, 2017). Staff meet weekly to discuss student progress and challenges and to create strategies for supporting students experiencing emotional or behavioural problems. Further, this time allows staff to coordinate their activities and provide consistent instruction (Decoda Literacy Solutions, 2017). An evaluation of the program and students' results showed that participants increased their reading comprehension scores by three and a half years, on average, and both students and teachers reported increased reading for pleasure among program participants (Literacy BC, 2006).

Why Use A Collaborative Team Approach?

Adolescent Literacy Learning (2016) highlights the importance of integrating a collaborative teaching approach, expressing that "students benefit from the efforts of all educators working together in a coordinated, purposeful way with a goal of improving literacy."

Research has found that using an interdisciplinary approach to teaching can increase reading interest, enjoyment, and motivation (Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2009). Further, evidence shows that high quality collaboration among teachers, particularly about assessment, is associated with increases in student achievement and performance (Killion, 2015). Thus, integrating a collaborative team approach plays an important role in helping young people to maintain engagement and experience academic success.

4.9 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

About Professional Development

Professional development provides instructors with training and learning opportunities to develop their skills and competency and obtain up-to-date information about promising and best practices. An analysis of the literature demonstrates the importance of professional development to ensuring instructors have the appropriate capacity and knowledge to effectively support literacy development and teach literacy strategies.

How Professional Development Can Be Implemented

The literature outlines many different professional development topic areas and methods for promoting professional learning, with a common theme being that training should be used to help instructors develop specific teaching strategies that can enhance their instruction.

For example, literacy experts have recommended that instructors receive professional development for effective reading instruction to ensure young people develop strong reading skills (Bornfreund, 2012). It is also suggested that instructors receive training to learn instructional components such as peer tutoring and how to establish an engaging learning environment that will promote learner motivation (Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2009). Further, data-driven instruction, small group instructional strategies, and differentiated instruction were also identified as training topics that could help instructors address young people's specific needs (Bornfreund, 2012).

As technology is increasingly becoming a tool for literacy development, as well as a form of literacy itself, instructors should also be provided with training and professional development opportunities that teach them how to integrate technology and digital media into their instruction and develop technical skills, which they can then teach their students (Media Awareness Network, 2010).

Throughout the literature, examples of opportunities for professional development used by effective interventions included in-services, workshops, mini-lessons, conferences, best practice sessions, development of professional learning communities, and book studies (Alberta Education, 2009; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004; Slavin, Cheung, Groff, & Lake, 2008)

Why Provide Professional Development?

Offering professional development and learning opportunities for instructors has been identified within the literature as an important component of effective literacy and transition interventions (Alberta Education, 2009; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Bornfreund, 2012; Marchand-Martella et al., 2013; Slavin, Cheung, Groff, & Lake, 2008).

Research has shown that teaching quality is an essential variable contributing to young people's reading development (Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2009). Further, a review of effective literacy programs found that long-term and ongoing professional development of instructors was critical to promoting lasting, positive changes in instructors' knowledge and practice (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006), which ultimately supports young people to experience greater success.

Continuous instructor learning and development is imperative to effective instruction and promoting achievement among young people because "if teachers do not have the appropriate pedagogical content knowledge, they will be less likely to be able to use materials sensitively, to make adjustments when necessary, or to support student learning" (Learning Point, 2005).

4.10 POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

About Providing A Positive Learning Environment

Creating a positive learning environment ensures young people are supported in a way that meets their strengths, needs, interests, and level of readiness in a safe and caring setting (Government of Ontario, 2013). The literature demonstrates the important role learning environments play in promoting literacy development, highlighting that "literacy is fostered in active, inclusive, and responsible learning environments" (Adolescent Literacy Learning, 2016).

How A Positive Learning Environment Can Be Provided

It is important that instructors identify and understand the factors that may affect their learning environment to ensure they design a positive learning setting that meets the needs of young people. One way instructors can create a positive learning environment is by being or providing role models who help set positive examples (Gulati, 2013).

Incorporating meaningful experiences and activities that promote social connection, relevancy, motivation, and discovery into the learning environment have also been suggested within the literature as important factors to consider (Adolescent Literacy Learning, 2016). Additionally, research indicates that promoting cooperation, collaboration, and co-existence are important to creating a positive and safe learning environment (Hester, Gable, & Manning, 2003).

There are many factors instructors must consider when creating a positive learning environment. For example, Adolescent Literacy Learning (2016) outlines a set of needs that impact young people's learning. These can be transformed into strategies for creating a positive, engaging learning environment in the following ways:

- **Affirmation** – helping young people feel listened to, safe, accepted, and acknowledged.

- **Challenge** – providing young people with an appropriate sense of challenge to help them engage in learning, expand their abilities, and accomplish goals.

- **Contribution** – offering young people opportunities to make a contribution, make a difference, share their perspective, and help others succeed.

- **Power And Autonomy** – allowing young people to make choices.

- **Purpose** – supporting young people to understand what they need to do so they know how they can make a difference, see the significance of what they are doing, and become absorbed in the process that leads them to a desired goal.

(*Adolescent Literacy Learning, 2016*)

Why Provide A Positive Learning Environment?

Research has demonstrated that the design of the teaching environment plays an important role in young people's learning, and providing a supportive environment has been identified as one of many factors that contribute to positive literacy development (Michalak, 2014).

Further, the literature suggests that taking risks is an important part of the learning process, meaning young people must have a learning environment in which they feel physically and emotionally safe to take risks associated with overcoming learning challenges (Literacy BC, 2006; Decoda Literacy Solutions, 2017).

4.11 SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

About Supportive Relationships

Supportive relationships between young people and caring adults help young people to understand their innate value and provide them with encouragement to solve problems, overcome challenges, and discuss issues that are important to them (Price-Mitchell, 2013).

How Supportive Relationships Can Be Fostered

In order to foster positive relationships and help young people succeed, instructors must understand the impact they can have on young people and ensure their approach is supportive. For example, instructor expectations and beliefs play an important role in the relationship between young learners and instructors (Tilleczek, 2010), as young people's perception of their relationship with their instructor can impact their motivation to achieve (Gallagher, 2017). The literature also suggests that when teachers can show young people they care about them and want them to succeed in learning, they can help young people develop a sense of competence and self-worth (Adolescent Literacy Learning, 2016).

Through their research, Ellerbrock and Kiefer (2014) identified that middle grade educators must be developmentally responsive in that they recognize, understand, and address students' developmental needs. They suggest that a student-centred focus promotes high-quality teacher-student relationships, which helps students feel more comfortable and connected (Ellerbrock & Kiefer, 2014). Further, fostering supportive relationships between young people and caring adults can help them access the assistance they might need in order to meet challenging learning standards and overcome obstacles as they experience the transition to high school (Bottoms, 2008).

Supportive relationships can also be used to model and explicitly teach young people positive learning practices and behaviours. For example, young people with literacy challenges may experience difficulties relating with other students and they may be experiencing low self-esteem, which can inhibit learning, both for themselves and for others (Decoda Literacy Solutions, 2017). Research suggests that using explicit instruction, modeling, and activities that foster social and emotional development, such as promoting empathy, controlling anger or disruptive behaviours, and encouraging positive lifestyle choices, can help to create an environment in which young people are better able to learn (Decoda Literacy Solutions, 2017; Literacy BC, 2006).

Peers can also provide young people with positive and supportive relationships that promote success. For example, young people entering high school may benefit from interacting with current high school students who can act as role models for how to succeed in high school (Bottoms, 2008).

Why Provide Supportive Relationships?

Fostering a sense of belonging has been identified throughout the literature as an important factor in facilitating a positive transition to high school and in creating a quality learning environment (Bottoms, 2008; Center for Supportive Schools, 2013; Decoda Literacy Solutions, 2017; Literacy BC, 2006).

Research has shown that teacher-student relationships are a key factor affecting the degree to which students feel cared for and connected to their school community (Ellerbrock & Kiefer, 2014). Further, students who feel supported by their teachers have a more positive, motivational orientation towards school work (Ellerbrock & Kiefer, 2014).

Supportive relationships are also critical to promoting engagement in young people, as research has identified a connection between meaningful relationships and disengagement. For example, one study found that the process of disengagement could be reversed if students had significant people in their lives who acknowledged their strengths (Tilleczek & Ferguson, 2007). Overall, ensuring young people have meaningful, supportive relationships can help them to feel valued, motivated to learn, and experience success as they transition into high school.

SECTION 5.0

KEY STEPS FOR APPLICATION IN PRACTICE

The *Literacy And Transition To High School* literature review has explained how literacy affects a young person's transition to high school, outlined how successful transitions can be supported through literacy interventions, and articulated core elements of literacy interventions.

So what does this mean for the Grade 7 and 8 Wraparound Demonstration Project? There are three key findings, informed by the literature, that should be considered when implementing the Grade 7 and 8 Wraparound Demonstration Project.

Step 1: Integrate A Literacy Focus Into The Grade 7 And 8 Wraparound Demonstration Project

The literature review confirmed that there is a correlation between literacy skill development and a successful transition to high school for young people. The literature also demonstrates that a successful transition to high school can impact high school graduation rates and successful transitions to post-secondary school and work.

Therefore, it is recommended that a literacy focus be integrated into the Grade 7 and 8 Wraparound Demonstration Project. Initially, this can be done by re-designing the Grade 7 and 8 Wraparound Demonstration Project Logic Model. The current Logic Model includes youth engagement, mentorship, parent-school engagement, community partnerships, and employment as main components. It is recommended that literacy be added as a main component with specific objectives, outputs, and outcomes.

Step 2: Incorporate A Variety Of Literacy Interventions

Seven types of literacy interventions have been identified through the literature review, including tutoring, mentorship, instructional strategies, afterschool and summer programs, technology, OSSLT preparation, and English Language Development and English as a Second Language programs. These interventions have been proven to assist young people in developing the literacy skills necessary to successfully transition to high school.

When mapping out the activities and programs that form the Grade 7 and 8 Wraparound Demonstration Project, it is recommended that consideration be given to intentionally incorporating literacy interventions. Organizations currently offering literacy interventions could be approached to determine their interest in becoming a partner. These literacy interventions would then become part of the eco-system of the Grade 7 and 8 Wraparound Demonstration Project. If, upon review of available programming in the community, it is determined that appropriate literacy interventions do not exist, new interventions could be developed to support young people involved in the Grade 7 and 8 Wraparound Demonstration Project.

Step 3: Use Core Intervention Elements To Strengthen Literacy Interventions

Effective literacy interventions have a common set of core elements. Common core intervention elements include assessment and monitoring, individualized and differentiated support, engaging and meaningful approaches, parent involvement, dedicated or extended literacy time, fostering literacy beyond reading and writing, cooperative learning, using a collaborative team approach, professional development, fostering positive learning environments, and providing supportive relationships. Not all eleven core intervention elements need to be included in every literacy intervention; however, using multiple elements strengthens a literacy intervention.

Once the literacy interventions, either existing or new, have been identified, the next step would be to determine whether the literacy interventions include core intervention elements. This should be an active step with organizations either through self-assessment or a third party conducting an assessment. This also can be done at the individual intervention level and at the broader eco-system level. For example, each organization may not be able to provide professional development for their staff; however, professional development could be a shared initiative among all organizations involved in providing literacy interventions through the Grade 7 and 8 Wraparound Demonstration Project. Prior to implementation, gaps in core intervention elements should be addressed, where possible.

SECTION 6.0

CONCLUSION

The *Literacy And Transition To High School* literature review explored the intersection between literacy and preparing youth in Grades 7 and 8 to experience a successful transition to high school.

The literature review revealed school environment, academic preparation, school engagement and motivation for learning, low socioeconomic status, parental characteristics, minority group status, student behaviour, and learning difficulties are factors that influence successful transitions from middle school to high school. The literature review also demonstrated how literacy affects, or is affected by, each of these factors.

To improve literacy skills, which will ultimately assist in the positive transition to high school, literacy interventions are required. Tutoring, mentorship, instructional strategies, afterschool and summer programs, technology, OSSLT preparation, and ELD and ESL programs have proven to be effective interventions to improve literacy skills.

Effective literacy interventions have a common set of core elements, which have been identified through the literature review. These include assessment and monitoring, individualized and differentiated support, engaging and meaningful approaches, parent involvement, dedicated or extended literacy time, fostering literacy beyond reading and writing, cooperative learning, using a collaborative team approach, professional development, fostering positive learning environments, and providing supportive relationships. These core elements serve to enhance literacy interventions.

The findings from the literature review confirmed a connection between literacy skill development and a successful transition to high school for young people. Further, the literature review demonstrated that when implementing the Grade 7 and 8 Wraparound Demonstration Project, a literacy focus should be integrated into the project, a variety of literacy interventions should be incorporated, and the common core elements found in effective literacy interventions should be used.

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