

# DOINGWHATWORKS



Audio

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

## High School Literacy Intervention

Stoughton High School, Massachusetts • February 2009

Topic: Adolescent Literacy

Practice: Intensive Intervention

### Highlights

- Judith Hamilton, Director of English, explains how Stoughton High School has established a schoolwide approach to literacy intervention for struggling students, beginning with screening and diagnosis in ninth grade and emphasizing explicit vocabulary and comprehension instruction.
- Staff at Stoughton High School understand the need for a data-driven process to identify student needs and interventions, ongoing involvement of special needs and reading teachers throughout the assessment process, and intervention options of different intensity levels to individualize instruction for struggling students.
- The reading specialist plays an integral role in working with content area teachers to plan and monitor reading intervention strategies in classrooms as well as through supplemental reading programs.

### About the Site

Stoughton High School

Stoughton, MA

## Demographics

79% White

14% Black

3% Hispanic

4% Asian

19% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

2% English Language Learners

12% Special Education

Stoughton High School staff work collaboratively to improve students' reading skills and support reading instruction across the content areas. Features of the high school reading program include:

- A schoolwide approach to literacy intervention;
- Explicit vocabulary and reading comprehension instruction across content areas;
- ELL program designed to help students improve their comprehension and vocabulary skills;
- Comprehensive assessment program;
- Benchmarking approach to ensure consistent improvement in classroom and district testing across grade levels;
- Screening practices, diagnostic tests, and a data-driven process for identifying student needs and interventions;
- Ongoing involvement of special needs and reading teachers throughout the assessment process; and
- Intervention options of different intensity levels to facilitate individualized instruction for struggling students.

## Full Transcript

I'm Judith Hamilton. I'm the Director of English for Stoughton High School. I'm responsible for implementing the English Language Arts curriculum for grades 9-12.

With struggling readers, we do a variety of interventions, starting with the incoming grade 9 students. Those students have been screened through using the SRI [Scholastic Reading Inventory] as one of the diagnostic tools for identifying where they are in terms of their reading levels. So, we meet with the English teachers and with the reading specialists and with the special education teachers to identify students who they feel still need to be monitored more closely and given more explicit instruction in reading skills.

Those students then coming into the high school, take our Foundations English class, which is a remedial class. They are team-taught in that class, an English teacher and a special ed teacher. They also are required to take, with our reading teacher at the high school, a special intensive reading course. All of those teachers are engaged in very specific strategies for improving their reading comprehension skills. We monitor their progress to see how have they done from one grade to the next grade. And then, also, I

share with the department as one of our professional developments, we look at the data we have, and the teachers then can look at their specific students in the classes they have to learn what the specific skills are that some of those students need assistance with.

Implementing reading strategies across the curriculum, I think, is essential for improving reading skills. I find that teachers in the other content areas are resistant to the notion of in some way being, quote, a reading teacher. They talk about that they have frameworks and testing, and they need to be able to focus just on that. And yet at the same time, I don't think that they are ignoring reading strategies. Some of them certainly do it and they just don't realize they are doing it.

Social studies teachers regularly use vocabulary instruction. They do that kind of pre-reading, which is what we talk about and they don't define it as that. They don't view it is that. In their mind, this is just part of being a social studies teacher. Science teachers regularly take students through the chapter and look at the bold subtitles, and we explain to them that that's part of pre-reading, and that's a very important strategy for students to use and to develop. For many years, we have had an interdisciplinary Grade 11 American Studies program. In that area then, English and social studies teachers do team-teach, and they occasionally work with somebody in the arts department, somebody in the music department, and so those particular teachers and teams of teachers have been able to, I think, foster reading across the curriculum within those areas.

We have started, a couple of years ago, ninth grade teams where the four major subject area teachers are working together, and in that area the English teachers are helping the teachers in the other areas to understand some of the reading difficulties that they're having and are sharing strategies with them, and so I think that is getting implemented. One of the strategies that work that we have implemented across many courses in the English department, and now they are certainly being used also in Social Studies, is the connections and having students actually engage in identifying as they are reading text to self, text to text, text to world and break down the reading for the students.

We have upon occasion had an opportunity for the reading teacher to work in a classroom with one of the science teachers in this particular case. This particular science teacher had a very large group of students, a large class that also had several English language learners in it. So the reading teacher went to try to team-teach almost and found that she really needed to work with the reading strategies of those ELL students before they could understand the content at all. As a result of that, this year we have an ELL reading class that's dedicated toward helping those students acquire reading skills that are necessary for them to be able to succeed in the content areas.

As a department, we also share ideas and strategies and have compiled an incredible resource within the English office of materials that can be shared, and we also do that now of course on the computer. And teachers put their strategies in there, and anybody can bring those up. As one teacher models for another teacher, then they realize that how easily some of these can be implemented, and it encourages everybody to implement them.