



Leading Literacy Post-Lockdown

A Guide for UL Leaders advising how to effectively address the literacy gap and support staff and students upon their return to school



“Enjoyment of reading has a greater impact on a child’s educational achievement than their parents’ social-economic status”



Overview

The 'summer reading loss' is well known and widely documented:

<https://www.scholastic.com/readingreport/summer.html>

The majority of our students will have been away for 5 months, a significantly longer time than just the summer break.

It's possible that our students will have lost more than 5 months of reading proficiency which will have a huge impact on their reintroduction and outcomes for next year. Crucially, this may have an impact on Year 11 outcomes as a recent report from GL Assessment shows a strong correlation between reading age and GCSE grades.

The closure of school and public libraries will also have had a knock-on effect to those who may want to be reading during lockdown, especially with those who have limited access to devices/internet.

In particular, disadvantaged students will have most likely not had access to reading material, as a National Literacy Trust study reveals that 1 in 8 disadvantaged children in the UK do not own a single book at home. *"This is of notable concern as the summer slide is a primary contributor to the reading achievement gap between lower- and higher-income students."*
- Scholastic report

This guide has therefore been designed to assist UL schools by bringing together the latest research and resources to make sure your staff and students are supported in addressing the literacy gap.



1 in 8 disadvantaged children in the UK say that they don't have a book of their own

Children who say they have a book of their own are three times more likely to read above the level expected for their age than their peers who don't own a book (12% vs. 4.2%). **Read more.**

For further information, please contact:

Katie Vince

English Teacher – Literacy Coordinator – UL Subject Ambassador for Literacy

[**k.vince@northampton-academy.org**](mailto:k.vince@northampton-academy.org)

Assessing Reading Age

At Northampton Academy, we assess student reading ages using NGRT (New Group Reading Test by GL Assessment). All students in Years 7-10 are assessed 3 times a year to give us updated progress. This data is shared with staff to enable them to differentiate in the classroom and is also used to select students for further intervention.

The aim this September, is to get these assessments completed as early as possible to give us a picture of how big the impact of lockdown has been on our students' reading ages.

This information will be shared with staff early on, particularly KS4 teachers so they can start planning to address the gap, with support from Department Literacy Reps.

2019-20							
Year 7	Non PPM			PPM			Apr Gap
	Oct 19	Apr 20	July 20	Oct 19	Apr 20	July 20	
Above CA	59%	65%		45%	59%		-6%
Within 10m of CA	9%	15%		9%	10%		-5%
Below 10m of CA	32%	20%		45%	31%		-11%

2019-20							
Year 8	Non PPM			PPM			Apr Gap
	Oct 19	Apr 20	July 20	Oct 19	Apr 20	July 20	
Above CA	63%	75%		55%	61%		-14%
Within 10m of CA	29%	13%		20%	15%		-2%
Below 10m of CA	17%	12%		24%	24%		-12%

2019-20							
Year 9	Non PPM			PPM			Apr Gap
	Oct 19	Apr 20	July 20	Oct 19	Apr 20	July 20	
Above CA	53%	58%		51%	55%		-3%
Within 10m of CA	15%	7%		10%	11%		-4%
Below 10m of CA	32%	35%		39%	34%		-1%

2019-20							
Year 10	Non PPM			PPM			Apr Gap
	Oct 19	Apr 20	July 20	Oct 19	Apr 20	July 20	
Above CA	62%			50%			-12%
Within 10m of CA	5%			3%			-2%
Below 10m of CA	33%			47%			-14%

As you can see, at Northampton Academy we were making significant progress in terms of closing the reading gap between PPM and non-PPM students so reading age data will be imperative in planning on how best to continue to reduce this after the impact of lockdown. We know that many of our parents will also have low reading ages, so parents will be informed of their child's reading age and given advice on how best to support them. A DfE study shows only 31% of students are read to at home.

Adult literacy rate

16.4% of adults in England, or 7.1 million people, can be described as having 'very poor literacy skills.' Adults with poor literacy skills will be locked out of the job market and, as a parent, they won't be able to support their child's learning.

[Find out more. >](#)





Strategies

Alex Quigley works for the Education Endowment Foundation and produces a lot of material designed to specifically support literacy. Many of his webinars during lockdown focussed on how to close the gap once students return to school.

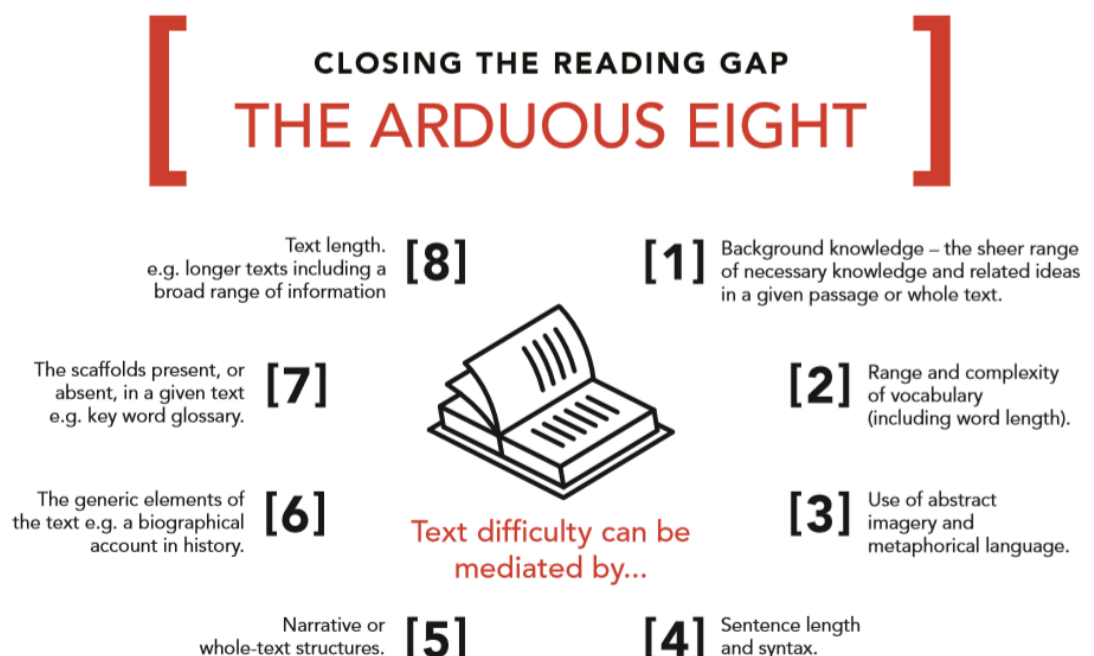
The most important thing is to enable teaching staff in being fully prepared in supporting students with their potentially weakened literacy skills.

Our literacy foci, as suggested by Quigley, should ask us to consider the following:
Are we....

- Communicating with parents to support reading at home?
- Developing reading for pleasure and increase reading practice?
- Supporting the most vulnerable pupils to not fall behind?
- Ensuring our pupils can access reading/vocabulary?
- Ensuring our pupils gain some vocabulary practice?
- Ensuring students gain purposeful feedback?
- Ensuring our students access literacy instruction?
- Ensuring our pupils catch up quickly when back in school?

Schools across United Learning provided exemplary literacy support during lockdown which now needs to be continued from September. Reading Ages need to be assessed quickly and effectively for intervention to be set up rapidly to support our weakest students.

Teaching staff can be supported with various CPD and teaching materials – Quigley provides a template called 'The Arduous Eight' which is an accessible infograph to help the class teacher identify what barriers students might face when approaching a text to read.



Non-English subject teachers also need reminding of the complexity of skills it takes to read a variety of texts across the curriculum. To become a skilled reader in a subject requires both knowledge and strategy – two things that need explicitly taught by the teacher. The former might come more naturally to subject teachers, but the latter might be less familiar as the concept that teaching reading should be the role of the English teacher.

Simple strategies that all teachers can introduce when reading a text in their lesson include:

- Skimming (reading rapidly for a general overview of the text)
- Scanning (reading rapidly to find specific information)
- Slowing down
- Rereading
- Reading back through the text
- Checking the index, glossary or scaffolds (students might need this skill modelling)
- Asking questions
- Summarising (a very powerful tool for teachers to check for understanding)
- Noticing patterns and text structures
- Reading related texts (context/knowledge – might be a good idea to set wider reading as homework)

Teachers also need to be aware and supported in the teaching of vocabulary – specifically tier 2 (academic) and tier 3 (subject specific). One of the key points from the OUP's recent 'Why the Word Gap Matters' report is that the word gap is an issue that is relevant to a school's *entire* curriculum. 85% of secondary school teachers found that a limited vocabulary was leading to slower than expected progress in subjects other than English, including Geography (86%), History (90%), and Religious Studies (78%).

A recent GL Assessment report also shows the correlation between good literacy and good student outcomes at GCSE being higher in subjects like maths than in some arts subjects like History and English Literature.

GCSE subject	Correlation
English Language	0.65
Geography	0.65
Maths	0.63
History	0.61
Science Combined	0.61
English Literature	0.60
Drama	0.57
Citizenship	0.56
German	0.55



Literacy, therefore, needs to be a whole school priority – even without taking the impact of schools closures into account. Now, more than ever though, schools need to address the gap in order to lessen the achievement drop it may cause.

Suggested actions:

- Early and systematic assessment of reading (NGRT recommended – can be completed on paper or online)
- Development of a reading culture for both pleasure and purpose (this is crucial. Recommend to introduce DEAR time, Accelerated Reader programme, cross-curricular use of the Library, whole school reading events etc.)
- Reading interventions for pupils below age-related expectations (could use Direct Instruction, one-to-one reading mentors, reading log to use at home)
- Sequenced design of a cumulative reading curriculum (make sure students are supported in their subject reading right from year 7 through to year 11)
- Explicit teaching of reading strategies (e.g. reciprocal reading)
- Organised vocabulary instruction (introduce Word of the Week, subject Knowledge Organisers with key vocab that is quizzed on regularly)
- Supporting home reading/prioritising reading in homework (English Dept at NA have launched reading based homework this term to address/improve any comprehension skills lost during lockdown)
- Development of reading 'in the disciplines' (Department Literacy Reps can be strategic in this)
- Development of a variety of whole-class reading approaches (needs to be consistent and effective)

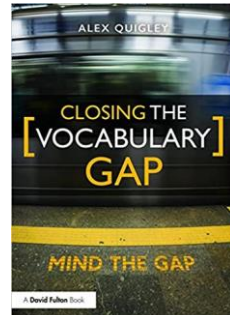
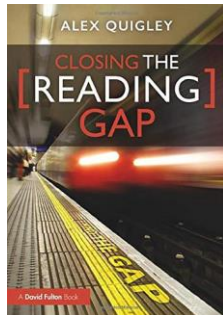
Intervention possibilities:

- Small group catch-up sessions, targeted by subject area (could be withdrawn from non-core subjects or during Tutor Time)
- Intervention programmes such as Direct Instruction for the weakest readers
- One-to-one reading sessions for extremely weak readers – could be led by a TA or Sixth Form student during library lessons or Tutor Time
- Reading Log – students expected to read with an adult at home on a daily basis and reading log is monitored by teaching staff
- Catch-up curriculum plan

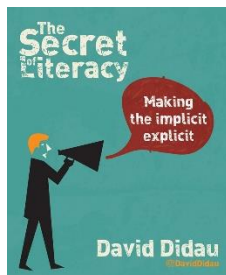


Suggested Further Reading:

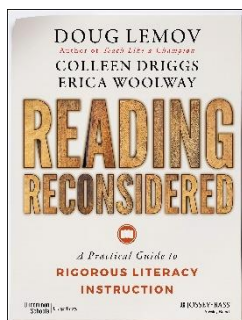
<https://www.theconfidentteacher.com/>



<https://learningspy.co.uk/>



<https://teachlikeachampion.com/books/reading-reconsidered/>



<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/improving-literacy-in-secondary-schools/>

<https://www.oup.com.cn/test/word-gap.pdf>

<https://www.gl-assessment.co.uk/whyreading/>