

Figure 3. Academic Literacy Development for Adolescents: Native English-Speaking Struggling Readers and ELLs

Indicator	Adolescent Native English-Speaking Struggling Readers	Adolescent English Language Learners
Position on the path to literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School career of intermittent failure • Unsuccessful in learning to read or in reading to learn • Usually labeled as slow readers or lower track students by secondary school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some make steady progress toward academic literacy; second language acquisition process limits how fast they move forward in learning to read, write, and speak in English • Others manifest the same type of struggle with reading and writing as do the native English speakers • Some have had no opportunity for literacy development yet (i.e., were never taught to read or write)
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tend to have weak intrinsic motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May have strong intrinsic and extrinsic motivation
Oral English proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually have proficient command of the spoken language, at least of conversational English • Have a wide vocabulary range • Often know meaning of words sounded out by decoding • More likely to comprehend orally presented lesson previews, vocabulary definitions, task directions, and classroom assignments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many have weak or no oral English skills • Decoding a word is not sufficient to access its meaning • Providing an oral preview of a text or assignment may not unlock its meaning unless it is accompanied by sheltered instruction techniques • Oral language and literacy development can occur simultaneously
Background knowledge (For this indicator, second- and third-generation ELLs are more similar to native English speakers.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely to understand many U.S. cultural and historical references • Have been exposed to and may recall material covered in prior courses • With teacher guidance, can tap into prior knowledge to aid comprehension or interpretation of new text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have some background knowledge, but it may be for other topics or hard to articulate in English • Need skilled teachers to make connections between content topics and ELLs' personal experiences and background knowledge • Often teachers must build the background; they can't just activate prior knowledge
Vocabulary terms with multiple meanings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More likely to recognize multiple meanings but may still need to be taught appropriate academic terminology • Often have conceptual knowledge of term or concept, if not the technical/academic label 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May know one meaning of a word (<i>power</i> means strength; <i>Cherokee</i> is a large car) but not other meanings, including the one needed for a particular subject (political power; Cherokee tribe) • May apply knowledge of cognates to understand new academic terms
Context in which literacy is developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not have any specialized courses or teachers trained in literacy development • Placed in lower tracks or relegated to remedial classes that specialize in "drill and kill" exercises, not meaningful, motivating activities • Computer-based products designed to aid literacy development are becoming more available • Literacy skills are not regularly assessed after eighth grade • English language arts standards in upper grades don't focus on learning to read 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most have specialized classes to teach them to speak, read, and write in English, usually with a qualified ESL teacher (although years of eligibility vary across the states) • Content of ESL courses is governed by state English language development standards • Tested annually under NCLB on English language development progress • May not have content teachers who understand linguistic needs; and do not know how to develop subject-specific vocabulary and literacy skills

Notes. ELL = English language learner; ESL = English as a second language; NCLB = No Child Left Behind