***Reading Research* Chapters Seven and Eight**

**Chapter Seven: Primary Grade Reading**

*Barbara R. Foorman* *and Carol M. Connor*

**Major Points of Interest**

* Research indicates that successful classroom literacy instruction in the primary grades is
	+ Dynamic and responsive to the instructional and social/emotional needs of the individual student
	+ Provides ongoing assessments of skill in order to tailor instruction
	+ Multidimensional in nature instead of either-or (e.g., phonics vs. whole language)
* Research indicates the importance of a comprehensive reading approach in which alphabetic mastery combines with engaging texts and writing opportunities.
* The research needed to effectively investigate primary literacy is demanding, uses both experimental designs and classroom observation tools, and demands closer relationships between researchers and schools.
* Research increasingly indicates that school and curricular reforms are unlikely to meet NCLB’s goal of 100% reading proficiency by fourth grade.
* The Obama administration is likely to maintain NCLB’s accountability for achievement gains among disaggregated groups such as minority populations; the administration will also likely expand NCLB’s teacher quality agenda.

**Additional Points of Interest**

* Key changes in the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading framework have implications for reading instruction.
	+ Vocabulary is “measured explicitly by measuring word meanings in context” (p. 139).
	+ Literary and informational texts are reported on separate subscales, and poetry is assessed in fourth grade.
	+ Cognitive targets (e.g. locate, integrate, critique) are defined and distinguished by text type.
	+ Different standards for grade level expectations (i.e., advanced, proficient, basic) will be created.
	+ 12th-grade NAEP achievement levels are linked to reading and analytical skills crucial to post-secondary success.
	+ A combination of expert judgment and readability formulas will determine passage selection.
* Because the expectation for fourth-grade reading proficiency exceeds that of many state standards, grade-level expectations for primary reading will likely increase. Accordingly, instructional strategies will likely change, specifically to
	+ use more informational text
	+ emphasize more vocabulary instruction
	+ emphasize more engagement and comprehension strategies
	+ emphasize more classroom book reading followed by student-teacher discussion

**Chapter Eight: Adolescents as Readers**

*Patricia A. Alexander and Emily Fox*

**Major Points of Interest**

* Alexander and Fox take an alternative stance toward adolescent reading, exploring the topic from a developmental perspective and focusing on the biophysiological, cognitive, and psychosocial attributes of adolescents. They argue for conceptualizing adolescence as a stage in lifelong reading development.

***Biophysiological changes in adolescence and related reading outcomes.***

* While experiencing changes brought on by puberty (specifically, changes in body size, increased awareness/interest in sexuality), adolescents may use texts as means of learning about sexuality and bodily changes. These texts may affect which sexual mores and physical ideals adolescents internalize, and not always in a positive way.
* As the brain develops (specifically, as changes occur in white/grey matter in the frontal/parietal region of the brain), adolescents show improved ability to monitor reading. They also show greater working memory, which is likely related to improved reading comprehension and more elaborate mental representations.

***Cognitive changes in adolescence and related reading outcomes.***

* As adolescents experience cognitive transformations (specifically, qualitative shifts in reasoning ability and increasing comfort with abstraction), they appear to become more adept at using text structures and features to support comprehension.

***Psychosocial changes in adolescence and related reading outcomes.***

* As a result of identity development (specifically, the development and integration of various aspects of eventual adult identity such as vocation, gender, ideology, sexual orientation, and religion), adolescents may use texts (especially magazines and non-book texts) as means of exploring possible or ideal selves, as well as means of acquiring information about social norms. Adolescents also form self-concepts as readers and understandings of what counts as reading.
* As adolescents develop socially (specifically, in terms of understanding themselves in relation to peers and in terms of moving beyond the network of family roles and responsibilities), their reading habits can be affected by social networks. Adolescents may separate reading enjoyment/ ability outside of school from reading enjoyment/ ability inside of school.

***Ecological changes in adolescence and related reading outcomes***

* As they move from elementary to middle to high school, adolescents tend to experience decreased motivation for “school” reading, to treat textbooks as authoritative sources, to prefer oral and digital information over print, and to focus on the immediate task rather than on building conceptual understanding. Research has shown that when solving problems relevant to their interests, adolescents may utilize strategies for extracting necessary information from texts. Research also suggests that making connections to text can support adolescents’ deeper reading comprehension as long as the connections are accurate and relevant.

***Conclusions***

Based on the biophysiological, cognitive, and psychosocial aspects of adolescent development, the authors offer four empirically derived conclusions.

1. Reading researchers and practitioners should not overlook the biophysiological bases of the literacy experience. They must consider why the particular age of a reader is well suited to any literacy exploration or intervention.
2. We should expand our view of the struggling adolescent reader to include those who lack basic conceptual knowledge in academic domains, those who lack strategies to cope with increasingly complex and abstract reading content, those who perceive reading as “schoolish” and build their self-concept as a reader accordingly, and those who lack the will to engage with text.
3. Narrowly conceived reading programs aggravate reading problems for adolescents. Adolescents would benefit from direct literacy experiences, and we could embed literacy instruction in subject matter domains.
4. The keys to reading motivation may lie outside traditional, in-school texts. Adolescents’ out-of-school experiences, hobbies, and reading habits could act as conduits to in-school, traditional reading abilities.