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## USA TODAY Education’s Reading Program FAQs

We have eight million struggling readers in our American schools today, and every school day, 7,000 students drop out, often because their literacy skills are too deficient to handle the increasingly complex curricula of today’s secondary schools.

### Course Description:

This standard-based curriculum, utilizing USA TODAY content, will empower struggling readers by providing instruction in and guided practice on reading strategies, improving students’ overall reading ability, with special emphasis on reference and research skills (also known as higher-order thinking or quadrant D learning). Guided by teacher instructions, reading/literacy teachers will model effective reading strategies and students will be guided through pre-reading, during-reading and post-reading techniques which will strengthen their metacognition and metacomprehension.

### Who developed this reading program?

The lessons were designed and developed by a team of experienced and credentialed educators. (Full bios included on CD.)

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## Course Objectives:

The primary goal of this curriculum is to enhance reading comprehension and higher-order thinking by making students aware of and proficient in the strategies utilized by skilled readers. By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Use different pre-, during- and post-reading strategies to enhance comprehension and guide higher-order thinking.
2. Guesstimate a word's meaning through contextual clues.
3. Identify the main idea or essential message of an informational or persuasive text.
4. Identify the author's purpose for writing.
5. Recognize several patterns of writing including cause and effect and compare and contrast.
6. Analyze and evaluate information found in articles, graphs and tables.
7. Evaluate the validity, reliability and support of an argument as found in editorials, letters to the editor or book reviews.
8. Synthesize information found within an article.
9. Synthesize information from several different informational texts.
10. Appropriately apply strategies learned and used in this class to reading problems on standardized tests or reading assignments in other discipline areas.

## Materials:

- 1 year-long (28 week) Reading Program CD, containing 56 student lessons and corresponding graphic organizers with teacher guides.
- A classroom set of USA TODAY newspapers (which serve as the textbook for the lessons), delivered directly to the school.

## How do I order this program?

Go to [www.education.usatoday.com](http://www.education.usatoday.com) and select "**Subscribe**" from any number of places throughout the website.

## What is the Lexile level for this program?

USA TODAY's Lexile levels range from 950 to 1250 (depending on the newspaper section – News, Money, Sports or Life – and the article), allowing for *scaffolding* and *differentiated instruction*.

**Will this help readers three to four grade reading levels below grade level, considering USA TODAY's Lexile scores?**

USA TODAY ranges in Lexile level from 950 to 1250. This allows differentiated instruction, with students reading at lower levels choosing articles from the Sports and Life sections while those at higher levels select from the News and Money sections.

In addition, there are multiple lessons in the Reading Program that focus on short articles, some only a few sentences long. This allows deficient readers to engage with a text length that will not overwhelm them.

Also, there are a few lessons that are focused on the reading, comprehending and interpreting of Snapshots or graphs. This requires minimal reading yet engages higher-order thinking skills.

Finally, almost every article in USA TODAY is accompanied by colored photos and/or graphs, offering valuable context clues for struggling readers.

### **Why should I use this program?**

1. It will improve your standardized reading scores.
2. It is a high-interest text that will engage struggling readers.
3. It comes with “grab and go” lessons, which require no prep on the part of teachers.
4. It was designed to be used as a “toolbox” of lessons; so that you can repeat lessons for additional practice on particular reading skills.
5. For inexperienced reading teachers, the teacher’s edition of each lesson carefully guides teachers through the lesson.
6. It was designed by qualified, credentialed educators and developed by master reading teachers.
7. It has both formative and summative assessments integrated into it, so you will have clear data on its success.

## Why use USA TODAY for a reading program?

### USA TODAY's high interest sports and entertainment news

Struggling readers already "hate" reading or believe they are bad at it, or worse, that they are "stupid" – *high interest* is essential.

### USA TODAY's Newline, Moneyline, Sportsline & Lifelines

- Located on the front page of each section of USA TODAY
- Reading these builds confidence, promotes willingness to read lengthier pieces
- Short, so great for modeling reading strategies

### Color photos and color coded

- Helps struggling readers recognize the context.
- Color-coded formatting ensures that kids are organized and focused.

### USA TODAY's graphics, Snapshots, weather map & TV listings

- Interpreting information in charts is part of standardized tests
- A good jumping off point for modeling strategies

### USA TODAY's clear & concise style

- For resistant readers, the shorter the better
- No articles, save the cover articles of the four sections, ever continues on to another page of the newspaper
- USA TODAY's Lexile levels range from 950 to 1250 (depending on the newspaper section – News, Money, Sports or Life – and the article), allowing for *scaffolding* and *differentiated instruction*.

**In addition**, USA TODAY is the perfect "textbook" for students to *mark up*, *annotate*, *highlight*, *underline* or *cut up*.

## How was the program designed?

### Program Components

- 56 lessons on one CD
- Lessons meet national standards and are tied to a cross-section of state reading standards and are cross-referenced
- Lessons can be used repeatedly to reinforce skills
- All lessons highlight the purpose for reading
- All lessons come with a student and teacher edition

## What is the pedagogical foundation of USA TODAY's reading program?

Our reading program pedagogy is based on the principles outlined by two distinguished reading reports: The National Reading Panel Report and the *Reading Next* Report. Below are 7 of the 15 *Reading Next* elements that we most carefully follow in USA TODAY's reading lessons.

1. Direct, explicit comprehension instruction
2. Effective instructional principles embedded in context
3. Motivated and self-directed learning
4. Text-based collaborative learning
5. Diverse texts
6. Intensive writing
7. Ongoing formative assessment

## What is the basic structure of the lessons?

This curriculum has been designed to be as user-friendly as possible (for both certified and non-certified reading specialists). Each of the lessons comes with a **teacher's guide** that will explicitly guide you through it, and **all fifty-six student lessons follow the same basic structure** (as noted below), which evidence-based research has proven is most successful in developing competent readers.

1. **Pre-reading strategies:** Prepare students for reading by accessing background knowledge.
2. **Modeling:** Model the skills and strategies you want students to acquire. Read a portion of a USA TODAY article aloud and then think aloud, providing your students with the opportunity to "get inside" the brain of a skilled, mature reader.
3. **Direct instruction:** By highlighting *why* students are using different strategies and what kind of thinking they must undertake in order to comprehend a text, answer questions and solve problems, you are heightening their metacognition and metacomprehension.
4. **During-reading strategies:** Ensure that students are involved in reading USA TODAY through collaborative pairs or groups and through active reading strategies, such as read-alouds, highlighting, underlining, questioning the author, drawing pictorial representations, etc.
5. **After-reading strategies:** Help students apply the concepts they read about by exercising their higher-order thinking skills through incisive questions.
6. **Reflect and apply:** Ask students to think about how these reading approaches can be adapted to reading for other coursework or standardized tests.
7. **Formative assessment:** Use strategies such as "teach back" and reflection journals to assess students' understanding of and comfort with the strategies they used and the content they read in the lesson.

### What about differentiated instruction?

- The program is intended to be used as a “toolbox” of lessons, where you ***pick and choose lessons based on the learning needs of your students***. On the CDs, you will find a chart with the lessons cross referenced by standard/skill; this allows you to select lessons based on the specific reading development areas of your students. Because the lessons are on CD and because you are using the newspaper as the “textbook,” you may repeat lessons multiple times in order to reinforce concepts. The “textbook” changes daily and the new articles make for new lessons.
- USA TODAY’s Lexile levels range from 950 to 1250 (depending on the newspaper section – News, Money, Sports or Life – and the article), allowing for ***scaffolding*** and ***differentiated instruction***.

### Will this help me meet my state standards?

#### ***Standards Alignment***

The developers based their standards alignment on the national reading standards and the reading standards of several different states in order to meet the basic learning objectives of state/national reading requirements. Each lesson focuses on a minimum of three reading standards, and all lessons’ standards are cross-referenced, so teachers can easily find which lessons focus on a particular standard. Overall, the primary goal of this curriculum is to enhance reading comprehension and higher-order thinking. Students will learn to use pre-, during-, after-reading strategies to enhance comprehension and guide higher-order thinking.

Standards fulfilled by lessons in the reading program:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analyzing and/or evaluating information</li><li>• Analyzing word/text (building vocabulary)</li><li>• Connecting concepts</li><li>• Conveying symbolic information in writing</li><li>• Differentiating main ideas</li><li>• Drawing conclusions/inferences</li><li>• Evaluating validity/reliability of information</li><li>• Forming written responses</li><li>• Identifying author’s point of view</li><li>• Identifying author’s purpose</li><li>• Identifying details/facts</li><li>• Identifying main idea/essential message</li><li>• Identifying methods of development</li><li>• Interpreting charts and graphs</li><li>• Oral lang. to written communication</li><li>• Paraphrasing</li><li>• Practicing metacognition</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Practicing metacomprehension</li><li>• Producing poetry</li><li>• Recognizing and/or drawing comparisons</li><li>• Recognizing and/or drawing contrasts</li><li>• Recognizing and/or showing cause/effect</li><li>• Recognizing and/or using descriptive language</li><li>• Recognizing context</li><li>• Recognizing text organization</li><li>• Reflecting</li><li>• Summarizing information</li><li>• Supporting decisions in writing</li><li>• Supporting details</li><li>• Supporting viewpoints with text</li><li>• Synthesizing information from multiple sources</li><li>• Synthesizing information from within a single text</li><li>• Taking structured notes</li><li>• Writing intensive</li></ul>
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### **How can I assess how well this reading curriculum has improved my students' reading and thinking skills?**

We are committed to both formative and summative assessment. ***Informal formative assessments are built into every lesson.*** For example, cooperative learning allows you to monitor student progress while written assignments provide you with evidence of your students' level of mastery.

We have also ***built summative assessment into the program*** by providing you with pre- and post-tests. On the CD, you will find these tests, their answer keys and additional information on the summative assessment.

### **What kind of support does USA TODAY provide for this program?**

USA TODAY provides ***professional development*** specifically for this program. If you are interested in participating in a training session, please ask your education account manager or contact us at [education@usatoday.com](mailto:education@usatoday.com).

***USA TODAY encourages you to connect with other reading teachers across the country*** who are also using the reading program—note the web address below—you can go there to post your best practices and to learn how other teachers are innovatively adapting the lessons in their classrooms. [www.usatodayeducation.com/readingcommunity](http://www.usatodayeducation.com/readingcommunity).