

Suggested steps to improve literacy

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Many students struggle with the high standards and difficult coursework of college. University of Arkansas professor, Sandra Stotsky, identifies the problem as a lack of increased difficulty in reading requirements throughout high school.

Stotsky collected data in a 2010 national survey of high school English teachers and in a similar study focusing on Arkansas educators. The conclusions were clear: the difficulty of assigned reading material for high school students only becomes slightly more difficult from ninth through 11th grades.

In her book, *The Death and Resurrection of a Coherent Literature Curriculum: What Secondary English Teachers Can Do*, Stotsky identifies five key principles increase literacy competency:

- Texts [read](#) in the early part of the year should have links to texts read later in the year or in future years.
- Assigned reading should increase throughout the school year and subsequent years.
- Reading should be over important works that have stimulated the imagination of students and writers from the time of their writing to the current day.
- Historical and cultural readings should be staged throughout the [high school](#) education due to their reading difficulty.
- Nonfiction readings should provide context for some of the fiction read in the course.

Prior to coming to the University of Arkansas, she served as the senior associate commissioner in the Massachusetts Department of Education from 1993 to 2003. Under her leadership, the Massachusetts K-12 standards were developed and revised. The standards produced the highest reading and math scores for the fourth and eighth grades on the National Assessment of Educational Progress examinations. She also has been involved in many committees and associations that target increased success in the classroom.

Provided by University of Arkansas

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