

"Instructional Support Weekly"

Topic: What to do if the textbook is too hard?

Some of your students may have reading abilities more than three grade levels below the reading level in your textbook (at STM some might be one grade level below). If you simply assign them to read a passage in the textbook, they are likely to become frustrated or just give up.

Here are some ways to help these students develop enough background knowledge to read your textbook:

- **Look for easy nonfiction books.** Work with your media center to find books that support struggling readers. Once students are exposed to the vocabulary and concepts of the material in an easy-to-read format, they will feel more confident about reading the textbook.
- **Search the Internet.** You may find easy-to-read articles that can provide an introduction to the content you will be teaching.
- **Write your own.** Identify the big ideas in the assignment. Choose five to eight vocabulary words students need to know to make sense of the text. Then write a short passage (150-200 words) that includes the big ideas and uses the vocabulary words. Write it as you would explain it in class. Have a colleague read the passage to be sure it's clear. Use a readability measure (there's one in Word) to be sure you have matched your students' reading level.

Have a great week!

From the Instructional Support Team at STM

Elaine McEwan, *40 Ways to Support Struggling Readers in Content Classrooms, Grades 6-12*, ISBN: 9781-4129-5206-4 (National Association of Secondary School Principals and Corwin Press, www.CorwinPress.com)