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Literacy Pro®

The Essential Management Tool for Independent and Instructional Reading

REVISED FEBRUARY 2026

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The Essential Management Tool for Independent and Instructional Reading

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LXDRESEARCH
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Table of Contents

Introduction **1**

Overview of Scholastic Literacy Pro® 3

Logic Model 5

The Benefits of Independent Reading **6**

Develops Background Knowledge 7

Expands Vocabulary 7

Increases Fluency 8

Improves Comprehension 8

Motivates and Engages 9

Literacy Pro as an Effective Independent Reading Program **10**

Available Anytime, Anywhere 10

Wide Assortment of High-Interest, High-Quality Books 12

Successful Independent Reading for All Learnings 13

Student-Directed but with Teacher Guidance 16

Encourages Setting and Achieving Reading Goals 18

Conclusion **20**

References **22**

Introduction

If I can't bring my book, I'm not going. That ultimatum, printed on the child's T-shirt, would make literacy experts cheer. After all, research clearly establishes the link between time spent reading independently and reading achievement (Foorman et al., 2006; Swan et al., 2010). The more students read books they can and want to read, the more proficient they become at reading. Avid independent reading not only benefits a student's academic performance but also fosters a deep love for books that will continue into adulthood (Bus et al., 2024). "If we want students to embrace reading now and always, then we need to keep at the forefront of our attention the rich, complex, and profound pleasures of reading" (Wilhelm & Smith, 2013, p. 25).

A high-quality independent reading program ensures that all children have the opportunity to connect with stories they love, from fiction to nonfiction, chapter books to graphic novels, and ebooks to paperbacks. Additionally, it supports early readers as they develop their budding literacy skills and challenges more-experienced readers with texts that make them stretch and grow. Students choose their own reading path and enjoy discovering books that connect with their interests and backgrounds. These considerations are at the heart of Scholastic Literacy Pro®, a digital classroom-management tool for independent reading. Literacy Pro is a blended-learning solution that curates a personalized bookshelf for each student in Grades K–8 and captures all their reading activity, both online and off. This capability gives educators a complete picture of each student's reading activities, which can be used to enhance whole- and small-group instruction. Literacy Pro provides students with a wide digital library ensuring consistent access to engaging, level-appropriate texts regardless of home book availability. By offering choice, personalization, and tools that build motivation and comprehension, Literacy Pro supports independent reading growth even where physical book access is scarce.

Research suggests that student choice is a powerful factor for improving reading motivation and comprehension (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004). When students choose what they read—the authors they follow, the topics they learn about, the genres that excite them—they read (McClung et al., 2019). They take ownership of their literacy development and gain confidence in their abilities as readers. Students themselves see the value of book choice, with nine out of ten agreeing that their favorite books are the ones they pick out themselves (Scholastic & YouGov, 2019). Choice positively affects students' motivation and engagement, which in turn fuels reading gains. Specifically, reading engagement connects more strongly to achievement than family background. Students with high reading engagement but lower parental education and income have higher reading achievement than their peers with low engagement and a similar socioeconomic background (Guthrie, 2008).

For students to have choice, they need access to many books—the other key factor driving reading growth. "Children must have easy—literally fingertip—access to books that provide engaging, successful reading experiences throughout the calendar year if we want them to read in volume," note literacy experts Allington and McGill-Franzen (2003, p. 74). In fact, students who have access to a well-stocked classroom library read 50% more than students who do not (Catapano et al., 2009). Many children lack such school-based resources. Research suggests that students attending schools in the most economically disadvantaged communities have the fewest school library resources to draw from (Pribesh et al., 2011; Binkovitz, 2016). "When there are no books, or when there are so few that choice is not an option, book reading becomes an occasion and not a routine. This has enormous consequences for children's reading development and school success" (Neuman & Moland, 2019, p. 143).

Overview of Scholastic Literacy Pro®

Scholastic Literacy Pro® is a comprehensive web-based program for Grades K–8 that promotes independent reading by providing access to over 2,800 authentic fiction and nonfiction ebooks and connecting students to thousands of engaging print titles for offline reading. Using Literacy Pro, students can track every book they are reading in any format, allowing them to log all their independent reading in one place. With a robust library of popular ebooks and connections to thousands of paperback titles, Literacy Pro ensures that every student experiences the joy of reading independently and becomes a reader for life.

Key Features

- Provides 24/7 access on any device with a high-speed internet connection.
- **Enables simultaneous access to ebooks**
  Literacy Pro offers students concurrent access to a collection of more than 2,800 ebooks, supporting shared reading experiences, student-led discussions, and remote learning environments.
- **Generates personalized book recommendations**
  Sometimes the hardest part of reading is finding a book that grabs you. Literacy Pro helps students make reading selections, presenting collections of ebooks that match their grade level and self-identified interests. Books within a student's independent reading level are noted with a target symbol, but students can read any grade-level book that catches their eye. Teachers can also expand students' libraries to include books from higher and lower grade levels.
- **Fosters a goal-oriented mindset**
  Literacy Pro encourages students to make reading a consistent practice. Within their online profiles, students set weekly goals for the number of days they will read and the length of time spent reading each day. Literacy Pro automatically logs all the students' digital reading, and students can also add time spent reading print books offline to achieve their weekly goals. As students monitor their progress against their goals, they gain confidence in their reading abilities and a sense of ownership in their reading journeys. Their self-efficacy flourishes, which can lead them to set even more challenging personal goals. The program also provides both high-level and in-depth reports for educators to monitor the progress of individual students, track improvements in specific comprehension skills, and pinpoint where extra instructional support is needed.

- **Supports comprehension**
  Several tools within Literacy Pro help make independent reading a rewarding experience for all readers. Students can use a built-in dictionary to look up unknown words and hear their pronunciations, take digital notes while they are reading, and, for more than 500 ebooks, listen to the book read aloud. Every ebook and thousands of print titles on Literacy Pro also include a Think More comprehension check, an optional quiz tied to 10 core English language arts (ELA) skills that students can take to gauge their understanding of the text. In addition, teachers have access to over 900 teaching resources to support reading instruction with Literacy Pro ebooks.
- **Values student input**
  Literacy Pro allows students to share their opinions with their classmates and teachers about books they have read (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006). Students can rate a book on a scale of one to five stars, with a book's average rating appearing alongside its cover in the digital library for other students to see. Students can also write book reviews and share them with their teacher, giving further insight into their reading experience.
- **Meets the needs of emerging readers**
  Students who have not yet mastered foundational reading skills can benefit by reading ebooks with accompanying audio on Literacy Pro. The program also includes Scholastic Reading Readiness, an assessment that teachers can assign to measure students' reading readiness and their grasp of foundational literacy skills. Teachers can personally recommend individual titles to students to ensure access to texts that align with each learner's reading development and proficiency.

Logic Model

The 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) encourages districts and schools to adopt evidence-based programs with a well-specified logic model explaining how programs will likely improve outcomes. Figure 1 provides a conceptual model of Literacy Pro's design to facilitate engagement with literature and improve short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes related to increasing access to texts, increasing choice and match, increasing time-on-text, and increasing feedback and reflection. Specifically, this logic model documents the targeted activities associated with Literacy Pro. These activities generate direct and tangible outputs that provide access and exposure to books as well as an appreciation of literacy. The outputs lead to varied outcomes, such as expanded access to libraries, personal goal setting, shared reading experiences, and developing lifelong reading habits that support a love of reading. Together, these elements illustrate how Literacy Pro's logic model aligns with ESSA's emphasis on evidence-based practices by clearly linking program activities to meaningful literacy outcomes.

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes (Short-Term Outcomes)	Outcomes (Intermediate Outcomes)	Outcomes (Long-Term Outcomes)
• Scholastic Literacy Pro digital platform • Library of 2,800+ ebooks and thousands of print titles • Devices with internet access (computers, tablets, etc.) • Scholastic Reading Measure and Reading Readiness assessments • Teacher and student accounts • Built-in instructional tools (dictionary, audio support, note-taking) • Teaching Tip cards and comprehension checks (Think More quizzes) • Professional development and support for educators	• Provide 24/7 access to ebooks and reading tools • Enable students to log and track reading across formats • Generate personalized book recommendations based on interests and reading level • Support goal setting and progress tracking for students • Offer comprehension checks tied to core ELA skills • Facilitate teacher-led instruction using real-time reading data • Provide scaffolding tools for emerging readers and English learners • Administer reading assessments to determine proficiency and readiness	• Number of ebooks accessed and read • Number of student reading logs and goal completions • Frequency and results of Think More comprehension checks • Personalized book recommendations delivered • Student ratings and reviews submitted • Reports generated at student, class, school, and district levels • Teaching Tip cards used in instruction • Reading level data synced and updated • Increased access to relevant texts	• Increased student engagement and motivation in reading • Improved ability to select appropriate reading materials • Enhanced comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency • Greater awareness of personal reading habits and progress • More informed instructional decisions by educators	• Strengthened reading stamina and self-efficacy • Development of goal-setting and self-monitoring skills • Increased collaboration through shared reading experiences • Literacy opportunities for English learners and striving readers	• Lifelong reading habits and love for literature • Data-driven literacy instruction across schools and districts • Empowered, confident, and independent readers

The Benefits of Independent Reading

Independent reading is the practice and application of acquired foundational skills. It is a protected instructional practice in which students read self-selected texts on their own, with minimal or no teacher assistance (Sanden, 2012). It includes regular time for students to read books they choose, access to a wide range of texts, and support within a reading community that encourages engagement and motivation. Its goal is to build habitual, engaged, and proficient readers who develop strong reading identities (NCTE, 2019). Indeed, research examining the relationship between various instructional practices and the reading achievements of first graders suggests that time spent reading significantly explains gains in achievement (Foorman et al., 2006). Additionally, as students progress through the second and third grades, reading instruction "reinforces the basic principles...with the goal of encouraging [children] to read more and to read increasingly more complex books independently" (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020, p. 230). Over the past several decades, research has demonstrated that avid reading supports students in becoming confident, proficient readers (Allington, 2014; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; National Reading Panel Report, 2000).

A meta-analysis by Kim and Quinn (2013) found that structured independent reading (IR) has a modest but meaningful impact on word recognition and reading attitudes. Gambrell (2011) emphasizes the importance of providing time, access, and choice to cultivate engaged readers. Additionally, Allington (2014) argues that consistent, structured IR supports long-term literacy development when integrated with teacher conferencing and accountability measures. Structured IR empowers students to engage with self-selected texts during dedicated classroom time, typically 15–20 minutes daily. For educators, IR offers a way to foster reading fluency, motivation, and positive reading habits, especially when paired with access to diverse classroom libraries and student choice.

Scholastic Literacy Pro features the key attributes that are considered essential to an effective independent reading program. Literacy Pro supports students in applying and practicing skills such as fluency, decoding, and vocabulary gained during literacy instruction to strengthen reading comprehension.

Develops Background Knowledge

Students who read more in their free time develop not only richer vocabularies but also a deeper understanding of the world (Nagy, 2005). Research on structured IR programs supports the notion that wide, extensive reading can have a positive impact on academic background knowledge (Marzano, 2004). Reading authentic texts or trade books, both fiction and nonfiction, complements what students learn from textbooks. By reading books about a topic that interests them, students integrate the content into what they already know and become more engaged (Fuhler, 1991). Other research has reinforced the strong link between how much students read, their reading achievement, and their background knowledge (Merke et al., 2024). One set of studies showed that extensive reading helps build background knowledge—a finding confirmed by a 2014 longitudinal study that tracked 54 students from Grade 1 through Grade 10. In that study, researchers found that reading volume played a bigger role than cognitive ability in developing general knowledge (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Sparks et al., 2014).

Expands Vocabulary

Leading literacy researchers analyzed 10,000 digitized texts written for students and identified a "core vocabulary" that accounts for more than 90% of the words in school materials (Hiebert et al., 2018). The list contains about 11,000 words, far too many to teach directly in the classroom; however, students can dramatically expand their vocabularies through extensive independent reading. Research suggests that reading volume is the prime contributor to differences in children's vocabularies (Duff et al., 2015; Krashen, 2012). The average child at the 90th percentile in reading volume reads almost two million words per year outside of school, over 46 times more words than a child at the 10th percentile (Anderson et al., 1988). "Even the child with limited reading and comprehension skills will build vocabulary and cognitive structures by being encouraged to read" (Cunningham, 2005, p. 64).

Another study analyzed the role of pleasure reading in learning academic words (McQuillan, 2019). The study defined academic vocabulary as both technical terms specific to a given discipline, such as *photosynthesis*, and words that appear across many subject areas, such as *influence*. It found that independent reading of popular young adult fiction is between two and six times more efficient for learning academic words than direct teaching of the words. While the research does not suggest that students can learn all academic words by reading fiction, the activity can "serve as a bridge or 'conduit' to academic language" (McQuillan, 2019, p. 134). Reading nonfiction can also boost vocabulary, exposing students to academic words they must master to be successful readers across a range of content areas (Young et al., 2007).

Increases Fluency

Fluent readers recognize words quickly and accurately, which allows them to focus on "comprehending the text, criticizing it, elaborating on it, and reflecting on it—in short, doing all the things we know good readers do" (Nathan & Stanovich, 1991, p. 176). Reading aloud is a common way to practice fluency, but studies suggest that silent independent reading can play a meaningful role as well (Psyridou et al., 2023). Researchers tested the effectiveness of structured IR with third-grade students. The students were randomly assigned to one of two groups: one practiced guided repeated oral reading throughout the year, while the other used structured IR. The study found that structured IR was just as effective as guided oral reading in improving students' fluency and comprehension (Reutzel et al., 2008).

Improves Comprehension

Giving students the opportunity to read independently aids their literacy growth, including their comprehension skills (Allington, 2014; Foorman et al., 2006; National Reading Panel Report, 2000). In a review of studies that examined the efficacy of in-school independent free-choice reading programs, Krashen (2004) found that in 51 out of 54 comparisons, readers who chose their books did as well or better on reading comprehension tests than students who received only direct instruction and assigned readings. Another meta-analysis reviewed 25 years of research on in-school independent reading programs (Block & Mangieri, 2002) came to a similar conclusion: students who read more for enjoyment scored higher on reading comprehension tests in Grades 2, 4, and 8 and earned higher overall grades.

Reading for pleasure outside of school has a positive effect on comprehension as well (Cremin, 2023; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997). In one of the most extensive studies of independent reading, researchers asked fifth graders to record their daily activities outside of school (Anderson et al., 1988). Among all the ways that the students spent their time, reading books was the best predictor of several measures of reading achievement, including gains in reading comprehension, from Grade 2 to Grade 5 (Cubillos & Troncoso, 2025; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

Motivates and Engages

When students are free to choose what they read and have ready access to a wide assortment of interesting books, they become more engaged and motivated readers (Allington & Gabriel, 2012; Guthrie et al., 2013). Reading becomes an activity they want to do, setting in motion an upward spiral in which avid reading leads to higher achievement and even more reading (Guthrie, 2008). In fact, the most motivated readers spend nearly three times as long with a book every day as the least motivated (Wang et al., 2020). Motivation plays a bigger role in reading achievement than family background. In fact, students who are highly engaged readers, despite having lower parental education and income, outperform peers from similar socioeconomic backgrounds who have low reading motivation (Guthrie, 2008).

Intrinsic motivation has a positive and direct relationship with academic achievement (Kamberi, 2025). Using a sample of more than 4,000 rising fourth and fifth graders in high-poverty U.S. schools, researchers measured the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic reading motivation on comprehension and the amount of leisure reading done outside school. They found that intrinsic reading motivation positively predicted both reading volume and comprehension.

Literacy Pro as an Effective Independent Reading Program

What makes an independent reading program successful? Literacy experts and researchers examined programs to determine which ones boosted reading achievement and student motivation to read (Pilgreen, 2000) and identified several features and practices that are particularly critical.

Available Anytime, Anywhere

Students must have opportunities to read for pleasure, whenever and wherever the mood strikes. Ninety-six percent of teachers, principals, and school librarians say that providing year-round access to books at home is critical to enhancing student achievement (Scholastic & YouGov, 2017). One study, Neuman and Celano (2001) examined the effect that book access in and out of school had on the reading scores of fourth graders. They found that access significantly predicted reading achievement and mitigated the effects of poverty. Book access was also a significant predictor of the difference between Grade 4 and Grade 8 reading scores, suggesting that recreational reading can be effective in supporting reading growth and development (Krashen et al., 2012).

Access to high-quality books outside of school is even more critical for striving readers (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2021). In reviewing dozens of studies, Mol and Bus (2011) found that when students with low reading abilities have access to books at home, they practice more, and as a result, their reading skills improve more than those of their peers with less exposure to books at home.

Technology can help provide access to books outside of school. In 2014, a nationally representative survey of over 1,500 U.S. parents found that nearly two out of three children age 10 and under had either a tablet or a dedicated ereader at home. About half of those children regularly read books on their devices (Rideout, 2014). In addition, nearly three out of four low- to moderate-income U.S. families had a laptop or desktop computer connected to the internet at home, providing a means to access digital books for students living in communities that lack adequate resources like bookstores and libraries (Rideout & Katz, 2016). Digital books address accessibility by providing many students with simultaneous access to the same book, solving the conundrum faced by many school librarians that there are never enough paper copies of a popular title to go around. As one student lamented to a researcher investigating school libraries in high-poverty communities, "I know I won't ever get a Star Wars book. My class comes to the library too late in the day, and someone else has it" (Constantino, 2008, p. 61).

The current generation of school-age children has grown up with technology and appears poised to adapt to digital reading. One study observed second graders using a digital reading device and found that they valued the tools and features of ebooks. They accessed the built-in dictionary to look up words, activated the text-to-speech feature to listen to words they found difficult, and jotted digital notes as they read. The teacher later reviewed students' notes to gain insight into their reading behaviors and comprehension skills to better support their individual needs as emerging readers. Ebooks, the researcher concluded, "have the potential to unveil an array of new teaching and learning possibilities as traditional and new literacy skills are integrated in meaningful ways" (Larson, 2010, p. 21).

Easy access to high-quality, engaging books is critical to developing a daily habit of independent reading (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2009; Neuman & Celano, 2001). Students can log in to Literacy Pro and immediately start reading on any desktop, laptop, tablet, or mobile device with an internet connection, both in and out of school.

Wide Assortment of High-Interest, High-Quality Books

"Because students will not read if they are uninspired by the materials provided; because they must read for their own purposes in order to sustain their motivation; and because they must have materials available that they *can* read when they decide to read, appeal is a crucial element of a free reading program" (Pilgreen, 2000, p. 10). An independent reading library program should appeal to a broad range of interests and feature both fiction and nonfiction titles in a variety of genres to expose emerging readers to different types of text, from mysteries to memoirs, biographies to science fiction (Coleman & Pimental, 2012). By interacting with an array of genres, students learn the unique characteristics of each and improve their literacy skills.

An independent reading library should reflect the various backgrounds and experiences that students bring to school. Students' experiences, backgrounds, and interests should be reflected in the library collection, along with books that affirm and positively represent a wide array of identities in a positive light (Worthy & Roser, 2010). In their research with a bilingual Grade 5 class, they found that students enjoyed reading the same books in both English and their native Spanish to compare the versions and check their understanding. With titles available in English and Spanish, Literacy Pro provides access to material students want to read.

Four out of ten students say they have trouble finding books they like, and for infrequent readers the rate jumps to nearly 60%, according to the *Kids & Family Reading Report*™, a national survey that shares the views of both kids and parents on reading books for fun, and about influences that impact kids' reading frequency and attitudes toward reading (Scholastic & YouGov, 2019). An effective independent reading program entices students with a wide assortment of books that appeal to their varied interests and experiences, thereby boosting their engagement (Allington, 2012). Literacy Pro responds to this mandate by offering immediate, simultaneous access to more than 2,800 fiction and nonfiction ebooks and supports offline reading with connections to thousands of popular paperback titles.

Just as in an actual library, students using Literacy Pro are free to explore and discover books on their own. From the navigation bar, students can select *Search* to find ebooks and print titles for their grade level by author, title, series, genre, interest category, or keyword. Students can filter search results by different attributes, such as ebooks only, ebooks with audio support, and Spanish-language titles only. After a student completes an interest survey, a dashboard highlights three recommended Literacy Pro ebooks based on their interests and grade level. Below the dashboard are several curated collections of ebooks available on Literacy Pro that are also based on the student's interests and grade level.

Successful Independent Reading for All Learners

Proficient readers are able to move through text with a high degree of accuracy, a skill that is essential for making meaning and progressing as readers. Research shows that maintaining very high accuracy is key for supporting growth, as frequent errors can interrupt comprehension and slow development, and extremely low accuracy prevents improvement altogether (Allington, 2012; Ehri et al., 2007). Students are also more likely to internalize new vocabulary when they can successfully navigate the sentence and discourse structures of a text; for example, they learn unfamiliar words at significantly higher rates when reading material they can effectively process compared to texts that are so complex they overwhelm their working memory (Arai & Takizawa, 2024).

Ensuring that students can productively engage with grade-level and increasingly complex texts is also critical for sustaining motivation and confidence (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003; Reutzel & Juth, 2014). Effective independent reading structures therefore emphasize providing students with a broad selection of texts that are compelling and appropriately challenging materials that allow them to experience success while still stretching their capacity to handle the language and ideas characteristic of complex, grade-level work (Pilgreen, 2000).

Early success in reading matters (Park et al., 2023). Research suggests that students who get off to a strong start are more likely to develop long-term reading habits, while those who struggle early can quickly fall behind without targeted support (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997). With explicit scaffolding, however, striving readers can catch up with their peers and engage meaningfully with texts. Independent reading programs that leverage technology are particularly well-positioned to support emerging readers and English learners. Embedded digital supports, such as note-taking tools, built-in dictionaries, and read-aloud features, make reading more accessible while enabling students to remain engaged with text (Larson, 2010).

Research confirms the value of these supports. In one study of first graders in low-achieving elementary schools, students who used ebooks with audio narration and recorded word explanations demonstrated significantly greater vocabulary growth than students who used the same texts without explanations (Lee, 2020). Digital note-taking, the electronic equivalent of writing in the margins of a book, further enhances comprehension while providing teachers with insight into students' reading behaviors to inform differentiated instruction.

Students in the earliest stages of reading development require additional support to ensure independent reading is both accessible and enjoyable. Literacy Pro helps educators identify emerging readers through Scholastic Reading Readiness, an optional evaluation administered before students enter the program. This tool assesses foundational skills—including alphabet recognition, phonemic awareness, syllabication, blending, and decoding—so that instruction and book access can be appropriately aligned.

For students who need additional support, Literacy Pro offers Read-to-Me audio, which models fluent, expressive reading in a natural voice and is available in two speeds to assist striving readers and English learners with comprehension and fluency. Read-to-Me support is available for hundreds of ebooks, primarily in Grades K–3, and is clearly identified with a sound icon on each book's card. Educators who support emerging readers in upper grades can further customize access by expanding classroom or individual-student libraries to ensure that all students encounter texts at an appropriate level of challenge.

Literacy Pro ebooks also include a range of interactive tools that promote comprehension and engagement. Students can highlight text, take notes, and save comments to revisit later or share with their teacher—features that encourage active reading and meaningful reflection. All ebooks include a built-in dictionary that supports vocabulary development and pronunciation. For Spanish-speaking students, Literacy Pro offers more than 400 Spanish-language ebooks, including 70 titles with audio support and over 250 English–Spanish paired titles.

Most Literacy Pro ebooks and thousands of print titles also feature Think More, an optional comprehension support designed to help students reflect on their understanding rather than test it. Think More questions appear alongside the ebook reader, allowing students to refer back to the text for evidence. Students receive immediate feedback, can revisit unfinished activities, and may attempt a Think More multiple times—often with different questions. Teachers can review all results, including multiple attempts, to inform small-group and one-on-one instruction.

The Scholastic Reading Measure, Scholastic Reading Readiness, and Think More comprehension checks each play a distinct role in supporting literacy development, particularly for educators who may not already have reading assessment data. Literacy Pro includes the norm-referenced, adaptive Scholastic Reading Measure, which identifies students' independent reading levels and provides a reliable Lexile® score that can be administered individually or to whole classes and repeated throughout the year to monitor growth alongside other instructional data. Scholastic Reading Readiness offers insight into early literacy fundamentals—such as decoding, word recognition, and basic comprehension—to guide instructional planning and early intervention rather than diagnose overall reading ability or predict long-term achievement. Likewise, Think More comprehension checks are low-stakes prompts that encourage metacognition and give teachers formative insight into students' thinking, not tools for accountability or high-stakes decisions. Together, these measures are most effective when used to inform instruction, support student reflection, and guide educators' next teaching steps.

- The Scholastic Reading Measure provides an estimated Lexile® range of a student's independent reading level based on their responses. It is designed to help educators match students with appropriately challenging texts. This measure is not a diagnostic tool and should not be used as a standalone indicator of overall reading ability or growth.
- Scholastic Reading Readiness focuses on foundational literacy readiness, such as early decoding, word recognition, and basic comprehension skills. It offers insight into whether students have the prerequisite skills needed to access grade-level reading instruction. This measure is intended to guide instructional planning and early intervention, not to label students or predict long-term achievement.
- Think More comprehension checks are low-stakes reflection prompts aligned to core ELA skills, such as identifying key ideas, making inferences, or supporting responses with evidence. They are designed to encourage metacognition and provide teachers with formative insight into student thinking. These checks are not tests and should not be used for accountability purposes. They are best used to inform discussion, feedback, and next instructional steps.

Using Literacy Pro's reporting tools, teachers can access up-to-date information about students' reading progress at any time. Educators can also monitor how frequently students are selecting books within their independent reading range—an insight that helps identify learners who may benefit from additional guidance in book selection or targeted support.

Student-Directed but with Teacher Guidance

Reading books with the right level of text difficulty matters both to improving students' reading skills and supporting their self-efficacy (Yang et al., 2021). In addition, an independent reading library program must also recognize the powerful role of student choice. Students read more, understand more, and are more likely to continue reading when they are free to read what they like (Barberg, 2022; Dougherty et al., 2023). When striving readers select more challenging texts, it affords them exposure to more complex concepts and vocabulary that they may not have otherwise had the opportunity to read (Shanahan, 2019, 2020). As students engage with these more difficult texts, it is important that teachers provide instructional scaffolding or supports in decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and other skills to support students' reading comprehension (Shanahan, 2019). According to a meta-analysis, the two most impactful instructional design factors for increasing reading motivation and comprehension are student access to many books and self-selection (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004).

When students choose their own books, they take ownership of their reading and gain confidence in their ability to pick appropriate materials (Johnson & Blair, 2003). In a study of fourth graders who selected their own books for independent reading, researchers found that the process led to students developing an awareness of themselves as readers (Kragler & Nolley, 1996). Self-selecting books lets students become "deeply involved with the learning process, thus fostering an interest in, as well as developing an ownership of, the reading process" (Kragler, 2000, p. 133).

Students gravitate to books that most interest them, and sometimes their selections are in sync with their reading abilities. In a study, 62% of the books chosen by students were at their independent reading level. The rest were a mix of easier and more challenging texts—and according to research, this is not uncommon (Kragler & Nolley, 1996). Students tend to move across reading levels in a "yo-yo" pattern (Kragler, 2000). Emerging independent readers can benefit from teacher support and guidance, as they are just learning how to select books. One study of first graders found that students chose books that were too difficult for them roughly half of the time (Sewell, 2003). Teachers have a pivotal role in creating a positive independent reading experience by monitoring students' book selections and, when necessary, steering them to books that fit both their interests and their reading abilities.

Literacy experts redesigned a silent independent reading program for third graders with additional support to aid their literacy development, including a weekly check-in meeting with their teacher (Reutzel et al., 2008). During the individual conferences, the teacher reviewed each student's reading progress, asked questions about the book the student was reading, and provided feedback. At the end of the yearlong study, the researchers concluded that the scaffolded silent reading program was as effective as repeated oral reading in improving students' reading skills.

An effective independent-reading program also facilitates peer-to-peer feedback. Like adults, students value their friends' book recommendations and are motivated to read by sharing books with one another (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006). Allowing students to rate and review books validates their opinions and builds their self-confidence as readers, which is a key feature of Literacy Pro.

Literacy Pro puts students in control of their reading, helping them build confidence in their ability to select books that they not only can read but want to read. Each time students log in to Literacy Pro, their screen displays the three books that they have been interacting with most recently. Students can jump back in or browse book collections based on their interests and grade level. If students want to see additional book collections beyond those listed, they can expand their list of interests in their Student Profile. Students are also able to search for titles by grade level, audio support, and other filters. Once a book is selected, students can begin reading immediately or add it to their personalized bookshelf.

Students can access their bookshelf at any time. The bookshelf displays all the titles that a student is reading or would like to read in the future, both ebooks and print titles, enabling students to curate their reading experience and feel a sense of ownership of the titles they have chosen. Students can use various filters to quickly find the book they are looking for on their shelf.

Literacy Pro empowers students by providing the option to read online or offline. Students can record all their independent reading, regardless of format—ebooks or print books. The Reading Log lists all the titles that a student has been reading and those the student has marked as completed. If students read ebooks in Literacy Pro, the time spent reading is automatically logged and students can easily log their minutes for print titles read offline.

Sharing thoughts and opinions about books with peers builds student self-confidence and gives them a sense of authority as readers (Sharples, 2025). Literacy Pro encourages students to provide feedback on books through ratings and reviews. After indicating that they have finished a book, students can rate it on a scale of one to five stars. Ratings are averaged and appear on the Book Card for that title. Students can also write a book review, which is shared with their teacher and can be a conversation starter for student-teacher conferences.

When students choose what they read, their motivation and engagement soars, which drives even more reading and higher achievement. Literacy Pro supports students as they explore their reading preferences and builds excitement and a love of reading.

Encourages Setting and Achieving Reading Goals

"To be independent and successful, all readers must assume responsibility for self-assessment: setting clear goals for reading, monitoring progress along the reading path, and determining if reading is successful" (Afflerbach, 2016, p. 416). Goals drive much of what people do every day, from going to the gym to completing work assignments. Self-set goals have a strong influence on learning (Hattie, 2012) and are more effective than assigned ones. In one study, sixth graders with learning disabilities were taught subtraction in a series of classes. Before instruction began, one group of students set goals for their performance, another group had comparable goals assigned to them, and a third group learned without goals. Those who set their own goals had the highest self-efficacy (Chung et al., 2021).

The best goals are specific, proximal, and difficult (Schunk, 2001). Specific goals promote self-efficacy because progress is easy to gauge. They also boost performance by providing precise details about how to achieve success. When students perceive progress in their reading, they feel capable of improving their skills, connecting the dots between practice and proficiency. Finally, goals should be challenging enough to both motivate and allow students to self-regulate. In studying children's motivations for reading, literacy experts concluded that intrinsic motivation and learning goals are crucial predictors of continuing participation (Wang et al., 2020).

Reading stamina is the ability to focus and read independently for an extended period without being distracted (Boryga, 2024). To increase students' stamina, Literacy Pro guides them to set weekly personal goals for the number of days they will read and the length of time they will read on those days. This feature follows research suggesting that engagement and motivation are enhanced when goals are self-determined, not assigned, and are near-term rather than long-term. Literacy Pro automatically records all ebook reading and applies it to a student's goals. It also motivates and validates reading offline by allowing students to log time spent reading print books to reach their goals.

Reading volume increases when students set their own clear, specific, and short-term reading goals, which strengthens their motivation and leads them to read more frequently and for longer periods (Hattie, 2012; Chung et al., 2021). As students track their progress and see themselves meeting these goals, they build confidence and reinforce the link between sustained reading and continued skill development (Schunk, 2001). Increased reading volume also develops stamina, helping readers stay focused on complex texts without becoming easily distracted or fatigued (Boryga, 2024). More time spent reading exposes students to a wider range of vocabulary, ideas, and text structures—key contributors to comprehension and the ability to make sense of grade-level and increasingly challenging texts (Afflerbach, 2016; Wang et al., 2020). Ultimately, students who take ownership of their reading goals persist more, read more, and grow more as readers.

Goals are displayed prominently to encourage students to stay on task. At any time, a student can view and change the reading goals designated. The Goals section displays current goals, quick stats on the total number of books and minutes read, and personal records for the most minutes read in a day and a week, as well as the number of days the student reads each month. This screen can be emailed or printed out for reviewing at student-teacher conferences and sharing with family.

Literacy Pro provides detailed reports for both students and educators. In their online profiles, students can check their progress against their weekly reading goals, view all the books they are reading and have completed, and track other reading-related data. They also receive instant feedback after completing comprehension checks. Educators, meanwhile, can generate in-depth, real-time reports at the individual, class, school, and district levels to understand how students are using Literacy Pro. The reports track key indicators, such as what students are reading, how many minutes per week they are reading, and how they are performing on comprehension checks, which can be used to inform instruction and conversations with students about their progress.

CONCLUSION

Decades of research confirm that the more students read independently, the better their fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Bus et al., 2024). When students read on their own, they practice the skills and strategies learned in the classroom and take charge of their literacy development. Access to high-quality books and the freedom to choose which ones to read are critical for students' positive independent-reading experiences and sustained engagement. Books should be available anytime, anywhere, in whatever format students prefer—fiction and nonfiction, digital and print, chapter books and graphic novels—and be aligned to their changing interests.

Using Scholastic Literary Pro, students can embark on a successful journey as independent readers. Right from the start, they take control of their reading experience as they define their interests, assess their reading skills, and rate books. They decide which titles populate their personal bookshelf and set their own weekly goals to track their progress. Literacy Pro equips educators with real-time actionable data—at the student, class, school, and district levels—to monitor student goals, comprehension improvements, and reading growth. With a deeper understanding of their students' progress, teachers can better tailor instruction and facilitate better structured IR, with more rewarding reading experiences in and out of school.

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