

Talent Development Middle Grades Extra Help Reading Program

THE SAVVY READERS' LAB

What is THE SAVVY READERS' LAB?

The Savvy Readers' lab (formerly called CATARA lab) offered to students who need additional support in order to participate fully in the Student Team Literature component of the Johns Hopkins University Talent Development Middle School Program. The Savvy Readers' Lab replaces an elective course for ten weeks to provide a substantial "double dose" of intensive instruction.

What is the goal of THE SAVVY READERS' LAB?

The goal of the Savvy Readers' Lab is to help students improve their reading abilities, master more challenging reading material, and improve standardized test scores. The Savvy Readers' Lab provides strategic reading instruction through exposure to various types of reading material with the emphasis on informational text. Students learn to construct meaning through reading and writing and assume responsibility for their own learning. This enables students to experience success across the curriculum.

What are the major components of the Savvy Readers' Lab?

The Savvy Readers' Lab has four major components:

Strategic Reading Instruction: students are introduced to strategies that help them to

- Decode unfamiliar words while reading
- Infer meanings of unfamiliar words
- Make predictions
- Monitor understanding while reading
- Repair comprehension when understanding slows down or stops
- Increase vocabulary

Practice of reading strategies: Students practice reading strategies using core books (read by the group) and independent books (individually selected and developmentally appropriate). Using strategy stickers, students make note of strategies practiced during reading and then share the experience with the class. Students maintain journals to keep track of progress, respond to reading, and communicate with the teacher.

Rotation of learning centers: Students continue to develop reading and writing strategies with activities at each center designed to reinforce what is taught. Students rotate between the following centers:

- Computer center
- Writing center
- Art center (optional)
- Listening/recording center
- Games center
- Information center

Curriculum coaching and in-class support: The Johns Hopkins curriculum coach is in each school one day a week to offer support, assistance, and workshops for professional development.

How does the Savvy Readers' Lab accomplish these goals?

- Students use blocks of time during a lab period when everyone reads from the same “core” book and participates in responsive writing. This ensures a level playing field and enables the teacher to model reading strategies using materials familiar to all students.
- Students receive modeled instruction daily while reading material that is appropriate for their independent and instructional reading levels.
- Students move to learning centers where they continue to practice and develop reading and writing strategies independently and in small groups.

Why is a double dose reading program needed?

- Talent Development Middle Grades Program combines heterogeneous classrooms with a demanding, standards-driven language arts curriculum.
- Many students are significantly behind local and national achievement norms in reading.
- Many students are overwhelmed by the challenging learning tasks that they face in a standards-driven curriculum.
- Many students are first- or second-generation immigrants for whom English is a second language. English language acquisition and development may be significantly below grade level.

What target population does the Savvy Readers' Lab serve?

Students who are significantly behind local and national achievement norms in reading benefit from intensive, focused attention on strategic reading instruction with developmentally appropriate materials and activities. Students are selected based on

teacher recommendations and their performance on standardized tests. In some cases, students may request assignment to the Savvy Readers' Lab

Class size: It is recommended that the Savvy Readers' Lab class have approximately half the number of students of a regular class, but not exceed fifteen students per class. This will enable the Savvy Readers' Lab teachers to provide individualized and/or small-group instruction.

Students rostered to the Savvy Readers' Lab attend five periods a week for ten weeks. The length of the class period varies according to the school's schedule. In schools that offer both the Savvy Readers' Lab and the extra-help math lab (CATAMA), half of a class will attend the Savvy Readers' Lab; the other half will attend CATAMA. The Savvy Readers' Lab also may be offered as a pull-out program.

How does the Savvy Readers' Lab differ from other reading courses?

At the beginning of the class period, the teacher provides strategic instruction. This is followed by either core or independent reading and related activities. (Each of the core books includes a suggested lesson plan; each of the books in the independent library contains four activity cards.) Students may work in teams of five to complete tasks associated with the core books. Students then move to one of five learning centers where they continue to develop reading (and writing) skills. These centers are: a listening/tape center, computer center, information center, games center, and writing center.

During independent and core reading periods, students apply the strategies that have been modeled, taught, and practiced. Students maintain journals to record their progress, respond to reading, and communicate with the teacher. While the class is engaged in silent reading, the teacher works individually with students. During this the Savvy Readers' Lab cycle, students develop a personal dictionary or word ring consisting of new or particularly meaningful words.

As students rotate through the five centers, they complete required assignments. At the listening/tape center, students can listen to books or stories on tape or they can tape a portion of a book they are reading for the teacher to evaluate. At the information center, students are exposed to a variety of magazines and books from which they choose a selection of interest and practice their strategies. At the computer center, students use software like *Word Attack* and *Spell-It* to improve reading and vocabulary skills. The games center is equipped with commercial games that develop word recognition, vocabulary, and thinking skills. The writing center supports writing initiatives in the school, English/Language Arts classroom assignments and/or assignments specific to the Savvy Readers' Lab. Each writing center is supplied with multiple copies of a thesaurus, as well as a dictionary and rhyming dictionary.

Each lab includes approximately fifty independent reading books spanning a four-year range of reading levels to accommodate individual needs and interests.