Reading by choice: young people's interests, source judgment and participation

A source-based review of reading interests and choice, source judgment, meaningful participation and access. It separates enjoyment from comprehension, checking from sound judgment, and resource availability from demonstrated benefits.

Research by Education Angel Group.
Education Angel Group is developing Students Need More and has an interest in the proposed product. This review does not establish its effectiveness.

Current edition reviewed: 2026-10-13. Revision: public-v3.

Earlier editions

- Reading by choice: young people's interests, source judgment and participation

  Research edition reviewed: 2026-10-12. Revision: public-v2.

- Students Need More: useful help, authentic action and the next question

  Research edition reviewed: 2026-09-19. Revision: public-v1.

Prepared by Education Angel Group (EAG). Review date: October 12, 2026. Wording corrected: October 13, 2026. This focused review examines young people's reading interests and choice, comprehension, source evaluation, meaningful participation and access to practical resources. EAG has an interest in the planned Students Need More publication discussed in Section 6. The external findings are not results from that publication or a study of its readers.

1. Enjoying, understanding and using a text are different outcomes

What draws a young person to a text, what they understand from it and what they do with it are related but distinct questions. A reader may enjoy a story, follow an interest, examine a school-life question or look for instructions to make something. None of those purposes makes the others compulsory. This review

considers what the retained surveys, source-evaluation studies and participation guidance can establish about these questions, and where evidence is missing.

Enjoyable reading need not produce a worksheet or a public response. At the same time, enjoyment does not establish comprehension. Relevance concerns the connection between a topic and a reader's interests or situation; comprehension concerns what the reader understood, including uncertainty. The self-report surveys examined in Section 2 describe reading preferences and behavior, not independently assessed understanding of an article.

Source judgment adds another distinction: identifying who produced a claim, inspecting its evidence and reaching a defensible conclusion are not equivalent to opening a link. Practical usefulness concerns whether instructions fit the reader's time, materials and support. Meaningful participation concerns whether someone with decision-making responsibility considered a contribution and explained what happened to it. Combining these into one engagement score would conceal differences that matter.

A reader could enjoy an article while misunderstanding its central claim. Someone could check several websites and still draw the wrong conclusion, as the course evidence in Section 3 illustrates. A useful project resource might help a group begin without establishing independent source-evaluation skill. These are reasons to keep the questions separate, not a claim that every reader has those difficulties.

The available sources differ in age, setting and purpose. UK school-network survey responses, U.S. adolescent assessment tasks, an undergraduate course and rights-based guidance cannot be combined into a single estimate of what young readers need or how well an intervention will work.

Figure 1

Direct resources can be the better route

Purdue OWL | First-party guide

Interpret one assignment prompt

University/multilingual-oriented guidance. Instructor clarification remains appropriate; child-age efficacy untested.

Digital Inquiry Group | First-party lessons

Examine identity, evidence and corroboration

Educator-oriented lessons; some account/download limits and unwatched videos. Availability is not efficacy.

NASA | First-party making guide

Check the real requirements before building

Activity body grades 6-12, 45-90 minutes, groups three/four, materials, safety and test/revision. Not ten-minute solo no-material.

EAG | Proposed comparison conditions

Read elsewhere, use an original or leave

Library, trusted youth publication and direct article can be sufficient. These options are not an audited superiority ranking.

Resource descriptions and EAG comparison conditions have different status. No effectiveness ranking or automatic publication advantage.

Direct resources can be the better route

Resource descriptions and EAG comparison conditions have different status. No effectiveness ranking or automatic publication advantage.

- A0. EAG product direction
- D1. Purdue OWL: Reading Practices for Assignment Prompts
- D2. Digital Inquiry Group: Civic Online Reasoning and research index
- D3. NASA: Build, Launch, Recover: Build a Crane Activity

These equivalents preserve the figures' complete qualitative comparisons. Source IDs resolve to this report's references. A0 is EAG's product direction, not research evidence or proof of availability. Sources and official pages were inspected in prior October 11, 2026 work; the report review date is October 12, 2026. No new source retrieval or measured magazine result is implied.

Figure 1. Direct resources can be the better route

Resource descriptions and EAG comparison conditions have different status. No effectiveness ranking or automatic publication advantage.

Question: What does an article add beyond a direct resource?

Source or choice	Comparison	Scope and limits
Purdue OWL | First-party guide	Interpret one assignment prompt	University/multilingual-oriented guidance. Instructor clarification remains appropriate; child-age efficacy untested.
Digital Inquiry Group | First-party lessons	Examine identity, evidence and corroboration	Educator-oriented lessons; some account/download limits and unwatched videos. Availability is not efficacy.
NASA | First-party making guide	Check the real requirements before building	Activity body grades 6-12, 45-90 minutes, groups three/four, materials, safety and test/revision. Not ten-minute solo no-material.
EAG | Proposed comparison conditions	Read elsewhere, use an original or leave	Library, trusted youth publication and direct article can be sufficient. These options are not an audited superiority ranking.

Uncertainty: No measured Students Need More effect, benefit score or numerical confidence shown.

Transformation: Source-specific qualitative comparison by EAG; source guidance and EAG proposals remain distinct. No pooled result, effect forecast or ranking.

Sources:

- A0. EAG product direction: the proposed free Students Need More publication beneath Education Needs More, EAG's editorial umbrella; ordinary reading, optional companions and separate reporting choices. Not an external study, observed outcome or proof of availability.
- D1. Purdue OWL: Reading Practices for Assignment Prompts: Repeated reading; task verbs/important phrases; questions for instructor. Direct alternative for specific prompt task, not magazine definition or child-age efficacy. Linking does not grant copying/adaptation rights.

- D2. Digital Inquiry Group: Civic Online Reasoning and research index: Source identity, evidence, corroboration; lessons/download conditions; https://www.inquirygroup.org/publications/research-articles. Some downloads require account; videos not watched. Availability not efficacy; index is not access to every original evaluation.
- D3. NASA: Build, Launch, Recover: Build a Crane Activity: Body grade/time/group/material/safety and sketch/build/test/redesign requirements; metadata grade bands. 45-90 minutes, materials and group requirements; not ten-minute solo no-material task or universal benefit. Body/metadata distinction retained; reproduction/accessibility rights not established.

Figure 1. Different resources address different tasks. The proposed comparison conditions are not a ranking or audited superiority claim. Section 5 examines their requirements. Text and data alternative

2. Interest and choice are useful questions, not a demand forecast

The National Literacy Trust's 2025 reading report gives a specific reason to examine topic fit and choice. Among 71,100 respondents ages 8-18 who enjoyed reading only a bit or not at all, 37.1% selected reading about interests or hobbies as something that could make them want to read, and 26.6% selected having a choice about what to read. These percentages concern that subgroup, not all surveyed students. They describe possible motivators reported by respondents, not the effect of offering an interest-led article. Book clubs ranked low in the same subgroup, complicating an assumption that social reading is the obvious starting point for everyone. Clark, Picton and Cole, R1, pp. 24-26, Figure 14 and Table 8

The report states that 114,970 children and young people ages 5-18 participated across 515 UK schools, from January to mid-March 2025. Recruitment through school networks and partners, self-report and the setting limit generalization. Its appendix counts do not sum to the stated total; this review does not repair them or derive a population estimate from that inconsistency. Book-oriented answers from UK respondents do not establish demand for a particular U.S. publication or format.

The 2026 report prevents a simple story of uninterrupted decline. Reported reading enjoyment among ages 8-18 rose from 32.7% in 2025 to 36.1% in 2026; reported daily reading rose from 18.7% to 20.3%. Unequal patterns persisted, and some widened. The report's introduction identifies 125,375 respondents ages 5-18 across 479 UK schools; Appendix A identifies 118,325 older respondents. Different annual samples mean these changes are not individual readers followed over time. The appendix labels participation as 2025 even though the introduction and tables identify 2026. That discrepancy remains unresolved. Clark, Picton and Arif, R2, pp. 1-3, 5-12 and Appendix A

Interest connections and reading engagement are associated in the report, but the direction of causation is uncertain. Many low-enjoyment readers still read. One preference answer is therefore a poor basis for sorting students into readers and nonreaders. Nor do popular topics establish that barriers involving language, disability, time or access have been removed.

Choice and consultation also need separate appraisal. Topic suggestions may reveal interests among people who choose to respond; they cannot establish what all students want. A collection selected only by highly engaged volunteers could become narrower while appearing participatory. That selection problem connects reading choice with the inclusive-participation guidance in Section 4, without turning either source into proof of an optimal editorial formula.

3. A visible source trail must support judgment

An accurate article can make its evidence difficult to understand. A list of impressive organizations does not tell a reader which source supports which statement, whether a number describes an experiment or a survey, or why another setting might differ. The question is how readers distinguish a source's identity, its evidence and the scope of its claim, rather than treating the presence of a citation as sufficient.

Breakstone and colleagues' *Students' Civic Online Reasoning: A National Portrait* provides relevant adolescent task evidence. The accepted author manuscript reports an analytic sample of 3,446 students from 31 schools, 16 U.S. districts and 14 states, drawn from 6,445 completed assessments. Six constructed-response tasks examined real online material. Difficulties with source identity, evidence and advertisement distinctions caution against equating device fluency with source judgment. Surface appearance, a domain name or a site's own description can be inadequate grounds for a conclusion. Breakstone et al., R3, accepted manuscript pp. 6-16, 19-23 and appendices

The sample was not a national probability sample. Voluntary participation, missing data and distinct task denominators matter: the analytic sample is not a denominator that can be applied automatically to every task. Search behavior was not fully observed. The inspected Methods do not establish a collection year; the NCES 2016-17 reference describes sampling information, not a verified assessment date. The title's national scope should not become a prevalence claim about every student. The study tested neither a magazine nor improvement from a source sidebar.

Figure 2

Checking a source is not the same as judging it correctly

R3 | Adolescent task evidence

Source identity and evidence require judgment

Analytic 3446 of 6445 completed assessments; six tasks, 31 schools/16 districts/14 states. Voluntary / missing / variable-denominator limits; collection year unverified.

R6 | Undergraduate instruction

Lateral reading can accompany an incorrect conclusion

87 participants in summer 2020 five-week courses, four required one-hour modules. 31 of 67 posttest lateral readers accepted target or rejected for irrelevant reasons.

EAG | Interpretation, not a product result

Measure judgment separately from a visible strategy

R3 is not a probability sample or intervention; R6 has no untreated control and unverified durability/ordinary transfer. Casual magazine reading cannot inherit their results.

Source-specific assessment and course evidence, with EAG interpretation. No common score, promotional pre/post chart or magazine effect.

Checking a source is not the same as judging it correctly

Source-specific assessment and course evidence, with EAG interpretation. No common score, promotional pre/post chart or magazine effect.

- R3. Breakstone et al.: Students' Civic Online Reasoning: A National Portrait, accepted author manuscript
- R6. Breakstone et al.: Lateral reading: College students learn to critically evaluate internet sources in an online course

Figure 2. Checking a source is not the same as judging it correctly

Source-specific assessment and course evidence, with EAG interpretation. No common score, promotional pre/post chart or magazine effect.

Question: Can visible source-checking coexist with incorrect judgment?

Source or choice	Comparison	Scope and limits
R3 | Adolescent task evidence	Source identity and evidence require judgment	Analytic 3446 of 6445 completed assessments; six tasks, 31 schools/16 districts/14 states. Voluntary/missing/variable-denominator limits; collection year unverified.
R6 | Undergraduate instruction	Lateral reading can accompany an incorrect conclusion	87 participants in summer 2020 five-week courses, four required one-hour modules. 31 of 67 posttest lateral readers accepted target or rejected for irrelevant reasons.
EAG | Interpretation, not a product result	Measure judgment separately from a visible strategy	R3 is not a probability sample or intervention; R6 has no untreated control and unverified durability/ordinary transfer. Casual magazine reading cannot inherit their results.

Uncertainty: No measured Students Need More effect, benefit score or numerical confidence shown.

Transformation: Source-specific qualitative comparison by EAG; source guidance and EAG proposals remain distinct. No pooled result, effect forecast or ranking.

Sources:

- R3. Breakstone et al.: Students' Civic Online Reasoning: A National Portrait, accepted author manuscript: Manuscript pp. 6-16, 19-23 and task/denominator appendices. Variable denominators, selection/missing data and unobserved search behavior; no magazine intervention, mastery measure or population prevalence. Accepted manuscript distinguished from publication. The published edition was not checked.
- R6. Breakstone et al.: Lateral reading: College students learn to critically evaluate internet sources in an online course: Findings 1-2; Methods; Limitations. 31 of 67 posttest lateral readers accepted target or rejected for irrelevant reasons. Visible strategy is not correct judgment. Durability and ordinary-use transfer unknown; not casual reading/product treatment. Linked appendices and videos were not separately reviewed.

Figure 2. Source-specific evidence about evaluation tasks and instruction, not a publication effect or a common score. Text and data alternative

A separate 2021 study by Breakstone and colleagues makes the process-versus-judgment distinction concrete. Eighty-seven undergraduates completed pre/post measures in two five-week asynchronous nutrition course sections during summer 2020. Four required one-hour modules provided instruction, modeling and practice. Although lateral reading increased, 31 of the 67 posttest lateral readers still accepted the target site or rejected it for irrelevant reasons. Looking elsewhere was not sufficient for a correct conclusion. There was no untreated control group, and durability and ordinary-use transfer remained unknown. A casual article visit cannot inherit the results of that instructional setting. Breakstone et al., R6, Findings 1-2, Methods and Limitations

These studies concern different tasks and settings. The adolescent assessment documents difficulty with real online material; the undergraduate study examines instruction, practice and subsequent assessment. Neither establishes how an ordinary reader responds to an annotated article. The course result supports a narrower conclusion: observing a strategy and observing a sound judgment are different forms of evidence.

For understanding a source trail, it matters whether a survey describes respondents' preferences, an activity page supplies a procedure or an interview records one person's perspective. None substitutes for the others. Knowing who produced a statement and where its supporting evidence appears can make inspection possible, but this review has no causal evidence that a locator, source cue or sidebar improves independent judgment. Correctly judging one source with annotations also does not establish transfer to another source without them.

4. Speaking, being heard and influencing a decision are distinct

Authentic representation has two related parts: accurately presenting what someone shared, and giving contributors a meaningful relationship with a decision. A suggestion box supplies an opportunity to speak, but it does not by itself show who listened or whether the contribution affected anything. Participation counts therefore answer a different question from consideration or influence.

Welty and Lundy's 2013 commentary distinguishes Space, Voice, Audience and Influence. It describes safe, inclusive opportunities; support for expression in different forms; an identifiable decision-making audience; and feedback about consideration and decisions. Choosing not to participate is part of the model. Its caution about privileging articulate or literate children is relevant to a process that might otherwise favor polished submissions. This is conceptual, rights-based guidance, not a participation-effect trial or a new determination of U.S. legal duties. Welty and Lundy, R4, pp. 2-4

The decision-making audience is not merely a larger group of viewers. Someone must have responsibility for considering the contribution; feedback concerns how it was considered and what was decided. That distinction matters when adults retain the decision. The model does not require every suggestion to be adopted or published, and choosing not to participate is not a failure of the child.

UNICEF's ethical reporting guidance adds a distinct reporting boundary. It emphasizes dignity, accurate context, voluntary informed permission, avoiding staged accounts and assessing potential harm. Changing a name may not prevent identification or harm. When an individual account cannot be used safely, general-situation reporting may be more appropriate. These are reporting principles, not evidence that student interviews improve reading or wellbeing. UNICEF, R5, Principles, Interviewing children, Reporting on children and Use of materials

Reporting and participation are not interchangeable permissions. An opportunity to express a view does not automatically grant permission to publish an identifiable account, image or recording. UNICEF's guidance supports attention to use and harm, not a blanket legal certification. Public access to that guidance grants no right to reuse UNICEF media.

An interview is an attributed perspective, not a representative sample. Selection focused on awards, articulate speakers or available adult contacts can miss ordinary experiences. A few accounts cannot establish balanced representation. Neither a plausible invented quote nor a composite student presented as a real participant repairs that limitation.

5. Access includes time, materials and support

Access is not established by the existence of a public link. A useful resource may assume a reading level, language, device, adult help, group, materials or more time than its introduction suggests. For a known task, a direct guide or a teacher/librarian conversation may be sufficient. Library reading, trusted youth publications and direct articles are also comparison conditions here, not inspected providers or evidence of superiority.

Purdue OWL's assignment-prompt guide offers a short route for interpreting task verbs, reading requirements again and asking the instructor about unresolved meaning. Its university and multilingual-student context does not establish child-age efficacy. It may be sufficient for that specific job; it is not evidence about every young person's reading purpose. Linking to the guide does not grant copying or adaptation rights. Purdue OWL, D1

Digital Inquiry Group offers educator-oriented Civic Online Reasoning lessons about source identity, evidence and corroboration. Some downloads require an account, and videos were not watched in the source review. A direct lesson or librarian/teacher discussion may fit a known source-evaluation task better than an extra article. The provider pages establish availability, not an effect estimate for every lesson or age. Digital Inquiry Group, D2

NASA's *Build, Launch, Recover: Build a Crane Activity* supplies an instructive making comparison. Its activity body specifies grades 6-12, 45-90 minutes, groups of three or four, materials, safety and sketch/build/test/redesign requirements. Metadata separately lists grade bands 5-8 and 9-12. Those requirements are material to deciding whether the activity fits. A shorter introduction cannot honestly turn it

into a ten-minute, solo, no-material task. The complete original may already be the best starting point; the provider description is not an efficacy trial or accessibility certification. NASA, D3, activity requirements and procedure

Practical burden includes reading the introduction, finding supplies, understanding instructions, arranging required group or adult support, doing the activity and reviewing it. A short on-page interaction can hide work outside the page. Readers need enough context to decline or choose another resource before investing time. The retained provider pages establish specific requirements and availability, not comparative benefits of an extra article or planning card.

Age, language, disability and access fit require direct evidence. A capable tone can still contain inaccessible vocabulary, dense visual explanations or an assumed school context. No reading level, translation quality, assistive-technology compatibility or low-bandwidth usability for a new publication is established by these external sources. The sources also do not show that a successful project start produces enduring learning.

6. Relevance to Students Need More

Students Need More is a planned free publication beneath Education Needs More, Education Angel Group's editorial umbrella. Its current definition combines creative ideas, school-life features, sourced explanations and genuine student perspectives. Selected articles may offer optional authored companions; ordinary reading is complete without a project, account, public reflection or recruitment. It is not an assignment-help intake, tutor, answer generator or assessment service. EAG publication context, A0

The review offers questions for that editorial work, not a tested recipe: whether topics allow worthwhile choice, sources explain what a claim rests on, practical resources disclose their requirements and contributions receive real consideration. Its fictional group-project example compares dividing tasks and assigning a source check with sketching a presentation together before dividing work. Both options include review and reconsideration. It remains one clearly fictional authored example, not reporting about students or a validated teamwork treatment.

Zachary Obasiolu is the sole operator. Any contribution process or feedback promise must fit actual capacity; no submissions, interviews or editorial influence have been observed here. Identifiable minor reporting requires applicable guardian/institution permissions, age-appropriate student assent and separate scopes for name, photograph, quotation, recording, article and promotional use. Actual legal and school requirements need checking before collection or publication. Raw personal material belongs in the restricted editorial store, not public pages. Reporting, publicity and paid membership remain independent choices.

No demand, literacy, grade, mastery, wellbeing, career or durable-transfer benefit is established for Students Need More. No reader study is authorized or conducted by this review. Ordinary reading does not require storing a student's diagnosis, grades, precise location, family circumstances or private work. The external findings do not demonstrate a publication effect; EAG's interest in the publication does not change that boundary.

7. Scope, methods and references

This is a focused narrative review, not a systematic review or meta-analysis. Independent questions about reading, source evaluation, participation and access organize the synthesis; the current EAG editorial definition governs only the publication context in Section 6. External original-source access recorded on October 11, 2026 is reused here; this author did not retrieve those originals anew. The October 12 synthesis date follows America/New_York time and is not a publication date. Prior source work obtained full originals or official pages for the retained claims, with source-specific locators and access limits.

The evidence includes school-network self-report surveys, constructed-response source-evaluation tasks, a small undergraduate instructional study, conceptual participation guidance, reporting principles and first-party resources. Their populations, purposes and measures differ; no common effect size, benefit score or forecast is calculated. The 2025 NLT denominator discrepancy and 2026 appendix year conflict remain unresolved. R3 is the accepted author manuscript, not a checked copy of the published edition. No comprehensive correction or retraction search was completed.

Abstract-only middle-school and high-school lateral-reading leads supply no methods, outcome estimates or figure data here. Restricted downloads and unwatched videos likewise supply no findings. Earlier geometry-tutor, mathematics self-regulation and 2007 instructional evidence belong to the preserved historical review, not the central evidence for these independent-reading questions.

There is no direct magazine trial, readership-demand evidence, age-specific comprehension or access proof, actual editorial contribution, permissioned interview or measured companion result in this review. Library reading, trusted youth publications and direct articles are proposed comparison conditions, not inspected evidence of superiority. Retrieval establishes what was read, not reproduction permission or accessibility certification. New sources, reported accounts and time-sensitive resources need claim-specific review before use.

The October 13, 2026 wording correction aligns current EAG attribution and publication terminology; it adds no source retrieval or empirical appraisal.

References and source roles

- A0. EAG, current Students Need More editorial definition, including approved October 12, 2026 source wording and EAG/Education Needs More hierarchy. Publication authority, not observed effectiveness. Public entity context.
- R1. Clark, Picton and Cole, *Children and young people's reading in 2025*, National Literacy Trust, June 2025. UK school-network self-report; pp. 24-26, Figure 14/Table 8; appendix p. 36. 38-page original.
- R2. Clark, Picton and Arif, *Children and young people's reading in 2026*, National Literacy Trust, June 2026. UK school-network self-report; pp. 1-3, 5-12, 24-26/Table 11 and 30-31/Appendix A. 34-page original.

- R3. Breakstone et al., *Students' Civic Online Reasoning: A National Portrait*, 2021 accepted author manuscript, later published in *Educational Researcher* 50(8), 505-515. Task evidence with voluntary-sample/denominator limits. 48-page university manuscript.
- R4. Welty and Lundy, *A children's rights-based approach to involving children in decision making*, *JCOM* 12(3), C02, December 11, 2013. Conceptual guidance, pp. 2-4. Five-page original.
- R5. UNICEF, *Ethical reporting guidelines*, undated official guidance. Principles, Interviewing children, Reporting on children and Use of materials. Reporting principles.
- R6. Breakstone et al., *Lateral reading: College students learn to critically evaluate internet sources in an online course*, February 23, 2021. Summer 2020 course study; Findings 1-2, Methods and Limitations. Linked appendices/videos not separately reviewed. Original article.
- D1. Purdue OWL, *Reading Practices for Assignment Prompts*, undated university/multilingual-oriented guidance. Direct guide.
- D2. Digital Inquiry Group, *Civic Online Reasoning* and research index, undated first-party resources. Account/download and unwatched-video limits retained. Lessons, research index.
- D3. NASA, *Build, Launch, Recover: Build a Crane Activity*, page updated September 12, 2025. First-party requirements, not an efficacy trial. Complete activity.