

Reading Comprehension Strategies

Reading comprehension – the process of making sense of text – is a complex, multifaceted activity that calls on the reader’s thinking and problem-solving skills. Thoughtful readers interact with text by retrieving prior knowledge and experience as they read and by comparing and contrasting what they already know with what they are reading to discover the author’s intended message. They monitor their own reading: they know when they understand what they are reading and when they do not, and they recognize why comprehension breaks down. “They can identify when and why the meaning of the text is unclear to them and can use a variety of strategies to solve comprehension problems or deepen their understanding of a text” (Keene and Zimmerman, 1997, p. 22).

The Goals of Reading Instruction Reading instruction has three main goals for student achievement:

Reading for Meaning

Comprehension is the ability to understand, reflect on, and learn from text. To ensure that students develop comprehension skills, effective reading instruction builds on their prior knowledge and experience, expands their language skills (e.g., vocabulary development, phonemic awareness), and promotes the development of their higher-level thinking skills.

Reading for Accuracy

Fluency is the ability to identify words accurately and to read text with ease, pace, and automaticity (fast, accurate, and effortless identification of words). Fluency results when students reread comfortable (just-right, not-too-difficult) texts about familiar subjects for authentic purposes. Texts for readers in the early stages of learning to read contain mostly familiar, high-frequency words, so that students encounter few unfamiliar words. As they develop fluency, students improve their ability to read with proper phrasing, thus gaining more of the text’s meaning.

Reading for Pleasure

Motivation to read is the essential element for actively engaging students in the reading process. Students need to be immersed in a literacy-rich environment, filled with appealing books, poems, pictures, charts, and other resources that capture their interest and entice them to read for information and pleasure. Students need to see themselves as successful readers.

While the instructional focus in the early years is on learning to read, over time it shifts to an increased emphasis on applying comprehension and higher-level thinking skills. To make this shift, students need help in becoming deliberate and reflective readers. They require explicit instruction in how to develop the comprehension and thinking skills that will enable them to locate and remember important information from the text. They also need help in integrating this information with their prior knowledge in order to build on their learning and deepen their understanding. – A Guide to Effective Instruction in Reading K-3, 2003

When reading a text to your child or with your child, consider the following comprehension strategies and the questions you can use to deepen understanding. See secondary handout for more strategies and sentence starters.

Making Connections

Text to Text	Text to Self	Text to World
<p>Does this remind you of another book? How is this book like/different from another book by the same author? Is the vocabulary in this book like that in another book? Have you read about a setting like this before? Do you know of another book with the same theme? Which one? Do the illustrations remind you of another book? Can you think of another book in the same genre?</p>	<p>How would you solve this problem? What images come to mind when you think about ...? What would you do in the same situation? Is this like something that has happened to you? Have you ever experienced this? How did this make you feel? Have you ever felt this way? Would you ever do this? Do you agree with what the character did? Why?</p>	<p>Does this remind you of something that happened in the news? Is this the same as ... (a real life situation/event)? Has this ever happened before? Where? When?</p>

Predicting and Questioning

Before Reading	During Reading	After Reading
<p>What do you think this book will be about? What words or phrases might be in this book? What do you already know about this topic? What do you predict will be in this book?</p>	<p>Who is telling the story? What do you think this word means? Are your predictions correct? How does the author show us what the character is like? Where does this story take place? Do you want to change your prediction now that you know that ...? Is the story making sense? Where did you find this information?</p>	<p>What did you learn about the book or about yourself as a reader? What important facts could you tell someone? Can you tell me, in your own words, what happened? Have you read other books on this topic? What character did you find the most interesting? Why? How did we know what the author was thinking? What do you still want to know about ...? What are some interesting facts about this?</p>

Inferring

What does it mean to infer?	Sentence Starters/Questions
<p>To deduce, reason or guess an answer based on information in the text and your own background knowledge. Literal Interpretation: -the answer is found from clues in the text eg: The picture shows grey clouds and the character is holding an umbrella, therefore you can conclude it is going to rain. Inferential Interpretation: -the answers are not as clear and must be deduced using critical thinking skills eg: You read that a 6 year old girl has 4 older brothers. Many interpretations can be made about her based on the reader's background knowledge and other text information.</p>	<p>"Even though it isn't in the picture, I can see the..." "Even though it doesn't say it in the book..." "Maybe it means that..." "I think that..." "Based on what the author says and what I already know..." "I conclude that..." How did I know that ...? What other stories have I read that would help me understand ...?</p>

