

Reading Comprehension

Solutions Saturday, Linda Brooks Williams

Reading Comprehension - Comprehension is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. (Rand Reading Study Group).

To be able to accurately understand written material, students need to be able to:

- (1) decode what they read
- (2) make connections between what they read and what they already know
- (3) think deeply about what they have read

What are the impediments to reading comprehension?

1. Weak Decoding skills

- Inability to read at grade level
- Confusion of similar words – extinct versus distinct
- Confusion of little words – of versus to
- Slow, laborious, decoding lacking fluency and prosody

Strategies:

- Multisensory, phonetic, structured approach to teaching language skills such as Orton Gillingham
- Grade level content read orally, or using auditory text, or digital text with screen reader

2. Attention Problems

- Lack of focus and concentration
- Lack of prior knowledge or life experience

Strategies

- Active learning rather than passive
- Reading for shorter chunks of time with scheduled breaks

Examples:

- Metacognition
- Activate prior knowledge and interest
 - Watch a video on the topic
 - Bring in props/pictures/costumes, use music or art activities

3. Poor visualization ability

- Unable to turn words into mental images
- Lack of prior knowledge or life experience

Strategies

- Teach student to describe what he is seeing – What do these words make you picture?
Visualizing and Verbalizing
- Use Structure words: what, size, color, number, shape, where, movement, mood, background, perspective, when, sound.

- Have the students draw what they read, event by event, photocopy and have students sequence and paraphrase.

Resources:

- “Visualizing and Verbalizing for Language Comprehension and Thinking” by Nanci Bell

4. Read But Don’t Understand

- Difficulty with Inference (focus on What happened rather than Why it happened)
- Difficulty with figurative language

Strategies (Inference):

- Active reading strategies which require focus and concentration
- Graphic organizers
- Say, Mean, Matter
- Role Playing
- Given a situation, brainstorm how different people in everyday life would perceive it.

Strategies (Figurative Language):

- Teach figurative language directly: blew his top, shape up, tough of nails, horsing around, out on a limb, make a mark, good as gold, once in a blue moon
- Teach words with multiple meanings and ones that can be used as nouns and verbs (run, check, bank, hand, pawn, coach, race, change)
- Teach simile, metaphors, extended metaphor, idioms, personification, and alliteration.

Resources:

- EPS – Making Connections (grades 1-12)
- Charlesbridge – Insights: Responding to Literature, Reading as Thinking grades K-8
- Voyager Sopris– LANGUAGE!
- Jamestown Comprehension Skills Series – McGraw Hill

5. Read But Can’t Remember

- Difficulty remembering sequence
- Difficulty remembering characters
- Difficulty summarizing
- Difficulty finding the main idea

Strategies:

- PQ4R
- Cornell Two Column Note Taking
- Story and Character Mapping
- Graphic Organizers

Resources:

- Jamestown Comprehension Skills Series – McGraw Hill
- EPS – Reading Comprehension in Varied Subject Matter
- Project Read - Language Circle – story form and/or report form (younger students)