DOINGWHATWORKS

SAMPLE MATERIAL

Examples of Effective Reading Comprehension Strategies

Improving reading comprehension in kindergarten through 3rd grade: A practice guide, Institute of Education Sciences

Topic: Improving K-3 Reading Comprehension

Practice: Teach Comprehension Strategies

The IES Practice Guide, *Improving Reading Comprehension in Kindergarten through 3rd Grade*[1], recommends that teachers explain to students how to use several research-based strategies that have been shown to improve reading comprehension because different strategies cultivate different kinds of thinking.

This table (found on pages 12-13 of the Practice Guide) describes the six strategies that are the most important for improving reading comprehension in the primary grades and provides examples of activities to promote strategy practice. Teachers should explain how the strategies can help the students learn from text—as opposed to having them memorize the strategies—and how to use the strategies effectively.

1 Shanahan, T., Callison, K., Carriere, C., Duke, N. K., Pearson, P. D., Schatschneider, C., & Torgesen, J. (2010). *Improving reading comprehension in kindergarten through 3rd grade: A practice guide* (NCEE 2010-4038). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from whatworks.ed.gov/publications/practiceguides.

Table 3. Examples of effective reading comprehension strategies

Effective Strategy	Description	Activities to Promote Strategy Practice*
Activating Prior Knowledge/ Predicting	Students think about what they already know and use that knowledge in conjunction with other clues to construct meaning from what they read or to hypothesize what will happen next in the text. It is assumed that students will continue to read to see if their predictions are correct.	1. Pull out a main idea from the text and ask students a question that *relates the idea to their experience*. Ask them to predict whether a similar experience might occur in the text. 2. Halfway through the story, ask students to *predict what will happen* at the end of the story. Have them explain how they decided on their prediction, which encourages them to make inferences about what they are reading and to look at the deeper meaning of words and passages.
Questioning	Students develop and attempt to answer questions about the important ideas in the text while reading, using words such as *where* or *why* to develop their questions.	1. Put words that are used to formulate questions (e.g., *where, why*) on index cards, and distribute to students. 2. Have students, in small groups, ask questions using these words.
Visualizing	Students develop a mental image of what is described in the text.	1. Explain to students that visualizing what is described in the text will help them remember what they read. 2. Have students examine objects placed in front of them, and later a picture depicting a scene. Remove the objects and picture, and ask students to *visualize and describe what they saw*. 3. Read a sentence and describe what you see to the students. Choose sections from the text and ask students to practice visualizing and discussing what they see.
Monitoring, Clarifying, and Fix Up	Students pay attention to whether they understand what they are reading, and when they do not, they reread or use strategies that will help them understand what they have read.	1. Relate each strategy to a traffic sign (e.g., stop sign—stop reading and try to restate in your own words what is happening in the text; U-turn—reread parts of the text that do not make sense). 2. Write different reading comprehension strategies on cards with their signs, and have students work in pairs to apply the strategies to *text they do not understand*.

Drawing Inferences	Students generate information that is important to constructing meaning but that is missing from, or not explicitly stated in, the text.	1. Teach students how to look for key words that help them understand text, and demonstrate how they can draw inferences from such words. For example, a teacher might show that a passage that mentions "clowns" and "acrobats" is probably taking place in a circus. 2. Identify key words in a sample passage of text and explain *what students can learn about the passage from those words*.
Summarizing/ Retelling	Students briefly describe, orally or in writing, the main points of what they read.	1. Ask a student to describe the text in *his or her own words* to a partner or a teacher. 2. If a student has trouble doing this, ask questions such as "What comes next?" or "What else did the passage say about [subject]?"

Sources: Appendix D provides more details on studies that tested the effectiveness of these strategies: Beck, Omanson, and McKeown (1982); **Brown et al. (1995)**; **Center et al. (1999)**; **Hansen (1981)**; **McGee and Johnson (2003)**; **Morrow (1984, 1985)**; **Morrow, Pressley, and Smith (1995)**; Morrow, Rand, and Young (1997); **Paris, Cross, and Lipson (1984)**; **Williamson (1989)**. Several other studies were resources for illustrating how to teach these strategies but did not test their effectiveness: **Bramlett (1994)**; **Morrow (1985)**; Paris and Paris (2007); Vaughn et al. (2000). See the References section in the practice guide for complete citations.

*Students, especially those in younger grades, will not spontaneously understand how to execute these strategies. For example, a kindergartener may not, on his or her own, understand how to visualize. This section offers explicit suggestions for teaching students to visualize and guiding their practice.