

Elements of Understanding

Deeper Instruction in Reading and Listening Comprehension

Cognitive Strategy Routine



Additional Handouts

"Jamika, my name is Mrs. Keene, and I'm very interested in what you're reading this morning." Wordlessly, she showed me her book and glanced over my shoulder to the dozen or so adults looking on. I thought about what I could do to help her relax a little. "Honey, when did you start this book?"

"This morning." She seemed timid and utterly overwhelmed by the crowd of adults around her.

"Okay, what do you think about it so far? Do you feel like you understand it? Does this book make sense to you, Jamika?"

These are questions I must have asked thirty thousand times in my twenty-seven years in education. I ask them almost as if I'm on automatic pilot—they just come out at the beginning of a conference with a child I don't know. I ask them almost subconsciously—my mind could be anywhere—they're a sort of reflexive way to get the conference going. But those three innocuous questions unleashed a torrent for which I was utterly unprepared. Jamika was anything but timid. Jamika's response became the driving force behind this book.

"All my life," she began in a very determined voice and at relatively high volume. It crossed my mind that she was all of seven years old, and I stifled a giggle. For this tiny girl, I was obviously the straw that had broken the camel's back. "All my life, there's just one thing I don't ever understand. Y'all always say that—does this book make sense? Ms. McKin, she always says that, too. She say, 'Jamika, does that book make sense to you, you feel like y'all are understanding that book, because you know the most important thing about books is they got to make sense to you.' She tell the whole class that, she tell me that, she always sayin', you make sure if you reading a book that don't make sense, you get another book because it got to make sense when you reading."

Jamika hardly drew a breath and was picking up speed and volume a bit like an airplane rolling down the runway for takeoff. "Then it's the same at home. My mama's always saying to me, 'Jamika, you know you better be reading books that make sense to you. The whole thing about reading is that books have to make sense to you and if they don't, you tell me and I read it to y'all or we get you another book, 'cause you gotta remember that the most important thing about reading is that books, they got to make sense to you.' And then I come back here to school and they always asking me, 'Jamika, that book make sense to you? You sure? Because you know the most important thing about reading is it got to make sense to you.'"

I took a quick glance at Jamika's teacher, who was squatting nearby listening in on the conference—make that monologue. From the look on

her face, the president of the United States might have just opened the door holding a bouquet of flowers. She was flabbergasted—think deer in headlights—and while she was still being flabbergasted, Jamika was still talking about how every adult in her long life had emphasized the need to read books that make sense.

Jamika finally took a breath. It was a dramatic pause long enough for me to wonder if she may well *become* the president of the United States some day. I was thinking that the sooner that happened, the better, when she let her final salvo fly.

“But, none a y’all ever say what make sense mean.” She looked at me defiantly.

While I staggered under the weight of that statement, I glanced around me at the rest of the adults, all of whom had that deer-in-headlights look going on. I could almost read their minds, “Okay, Keene, let’s see you deal with *this* firecracker! You sure had a bright idea—start in a new school by conferring with kids in the classroom. Wonder what you think of that now!” And I could almost hear the teacher thinking, “I thought this one was supposed to have written a book on comprehension. She doesn’t look too smart to me.” Their perceptions were undoubtedly strengthened when I replied to Jamika’s query, “Ah, well, ah, you know, hmm, you see, ah . . . I’ll have to get back to you, Jamika!”

Figure: 19 TAC §110.10(b)

19 TAC Chapter 110. Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for English Language Arts and Reading
Subchapter A. Elementary
Reading/Comprehension Skills §110.11 - §110.16

Kindergarten (§110.11 English Language Arts and Reading)	First Grade (§110.12 English Language Arts and Reading)	Second Grade (§110.13 English Language Arts and Reading)	Third Grade (§110.14 English Language Arts and Reading)	Fourth Grade (§110.15 English Language Arts and Reading)	Fifth Grade (§110.16 English Language Arts and Reading)
<p>Reading/Comprehension Skills. Students use a flexible range of metacognitive reading skills in both assigned and independent reading to understand an author’s message. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater depth in increasingly more complex texts as they become self-directed, critical readers. The student is expected to:</p> <p>(A) discuss the purposes for reading and listening to various texts (e.g., to become involved in real and imagined events, settings, actions, and to enjoy language);</p> <p>(B) ask and respond to questions about text;</p>	<p>Reading/Comprehension Skills. Students use a flexible range of metacognitive reading skills in both assigned and independent reading to understand an author’s message. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater depth in increasingly more complex texts as they become self-directed, critical readers. The student is expected to:</p> <p>(A) establish purposes for reading selected texts based upon desired outcome to enhance comprehension;</p> <p>(B) ask literal questions of text;</p>	<p>Reading/Comprehension Skills. Students use a flexible range of metacognitive reading skills in both assigned and independent reading to understand an author’s message. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater depth in increasingly more complex texts as they become self-directed, critical readers. The student is expected to:</p> <p>(A) establish purposes for reading selected texts based upon content to enhance comprehension;</p> <p>(B) ask literal questions of text;</p>	<p>Reading/Comprehension Skills. Students use a flexible range of metacognitive reading skills in both assigned and independent reading to understand an author’s message. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater depth in increasingly more complex texts as they become self-directed, critical readers. The student is expected to:</p> <p>(A) establish purposes for reading selected texts based upon own or others’ desired outcome to enhance comprehension;</p> <p>(B) ask literal, interpretive, and evaluative questions of text;</p>	<p>Reading/Comprehension Skills. Students use a flexible range of metacognitive reading skills in both assigned and independent reading to understand an author’s message. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater depth in increasingly more complex texts as they become self-directed, critical readers. The student is expected to:</p> <p>(A) establish purposes for reading selected texts based upon own or others’ desired outcome to enhance comprehension;</p> <p>(B) ask literal, interpretive, and evaluative questions of text;</p>	<p>Reading/Comprehension Skills. Students use a flexible range of metacognitive reading skills in both assigned and independent reading to understand an author’s message. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater depth in increasingly more complex texts as they become self-directed, critical readers. The student is expected to:</p> <p>(A) establish purposes for reading selected texts based upon own or others’ desired outcome to enhance comprehension;</p> <p>(B) ask literal, interpretive, evaluative, and universal questions of text;</p>

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(C) monitor and adjust comprehension (e.g., using background knowledge, creating sensory images, re-reading a portion aloud);	(C) monitor and adjust comprehension (e.g., using background knowledge, creating sensory images, re-reading a portion aloud);	(C) monitor and adjust comprehension (e.g., using background knowledge, creating sensory images, re-reading a portion aloud, generating questions);	(C) monitor and adjust comprehension (e.g., using background knowledge, creating sensory images, re-reading a portion aloud, generating questions);	(C) monitor and adjust comprehension (e.g., using background knowledge, creating sensory images, re-reading a portion aloud, generating questions);	(C) monitor and adjust comprehension (e.g., using background knowledge, creating sensory images, re-reading a portion aloud, generating questions);
(D) make inferences based on the cover, title, illustrations, and plot;	(D) make inferences about text and use textual evidence to support understanding;	(D) make inferences about text using textual evidence to support understanding;	(D) make inferences about text and use textual evidence to support understanding;	(D) make inferences about text and use textual evidence to support understanding;	(D) make inferences about text and use textual evidence to support understanding;
(E) retell or act out important events in stories; and	(E) retell or act out important events in stories in logical order; and	(E) retell important events in stories in logical order; and	(E) summarize information in text, maintaining meaning and logical order; and	(E) summarize information in text, maintaining meaning and logical order; and	(E) summarize and paraphrase texts in ways that maintain meaning and logical order within a text and across texts; and
(F) make connections to own experiences, to ideas in other texts, and to the larger community and discuss textual evidence.	(F) make connections to own experiences, to ideas in other texts, and to the larger community and discuss textual evidence.	(F) make connections to own experiences, to ideas in other texts, and to the larger community and discuss textual evidence.	(F) make connections (e.g., thematic links, author analysis) between literary and informational texts with similar ideas and provide textual evidence.	(F) make connections (e.g., thematic links, author analysis) between literary and informational texts with similar ideas and provide textual evidence.	(F) make connections (e.g., thematic links, author analysis) between and across multiple texts of various genres and provide textual evidence.

Comprehension Purpose Question:

What do we need to do, as teachers, to make sure our students are proficient readers?

"Teachers should model and explain comprehension strategies, have their students practice using such strategies with teacher support, and let students know they are expected to continue using the strategies when reading on their own. Such teaching should occur across every school day, for as long as required to get all readers using the strategies independently - which means including it in reading instruction for years" (Pressley, 2001, p.4).

Pressley, M. (2001, September). Comprehension instruction: What makes sense now, what might make sense soon. *Reading Online*, 5(2). Available: http://www.readingonline.org/articles/art_index.asp?HREF=/articles/handbook/pressley/index.html



Match the statements on the left to the steps on the right.
Use the Cognitive Strategy Routine card as a guide.

- A) We each know a lot of things. The things we know about make up our background knowledge. Here is a picture of an empty head. I'm going to fill up this head with pictures of my background knowledge – all of the things I already know lots about.
- B) During your independent reading today, if you make a connection, jot it on a sticky note and place it in the book where you made the connection.
- C) This picture of a chain link will remind us of the strategy Making Connections, because a chain connects things.
- D) Today we are going to be learning about a strategy called Making Connections.
- E) Wow, when I read this part about Sara's grandmother, it reminds me about all the things my grandmother has done for me. That helps me understand the story better because ...
- F) When we Make Connections, something in a text reminds us of something else – either something in our lives, or something from another text. Making connections helps us to be more interested in what we read and it helps us to remember better.
- G) Does this page spark any connections in your mind? Let's think-turn-talk about our connections.
- H) Read the following two pages. In five minutes we'll discuss any connections we made on those two pages.

Step 1: Use a real-world example to create a context.

Step 2: Give the strategy a name.

Step 3: Define the strategy, how and when it is used, and how it helps with reading.

Step 4: Give students touchstones, such as a hand gesture or icon.

Step 5: Think-aloud, using the strategy in a variety of contexts.

Step 6: Engage the students by providing them with opportunities to share their thinking and practice application with planned discussion prompts.

Step 7: Scaffold practice, providing opportunities for students to use the strategy while reading, with teacher support and modeling.

Step 8: Provide accountability measures for students to independently use the strategy

Cognitive Strategies



...help me to understand because...

Estrategias Cognitivas



...me ayudan a entender porque...

Research Highlights: Cognitive Strategy Routine

Why Teach Comprehension Strategies?

In the late 1970s, research by Delores Durkin revealed that of the 4,469 minutes of reading instruction observed, only 28 minutes were dedicated to comprehension instruction. In other words, teachers devoted less than 1 percent of the reading period to comprehension instruction.

Durkin, 1978-79

More recent research studies suggest that not much has changed; explicit comprehension instruction is still not adequate.

*RAND Reading Study Group, 2002;
Taylor, Pearson, Clark & Walpole, 1999;
Taylor, Peterson, Pearson & Rodriguez, 2002*

"A large volume of work indicates that we can help students acquire the strategies and processes used by good readers."

Duke and Pearson, 2002, p. 206

Also, for students with learning disabilities, "There is strong evidence that instruction specifically targeting reading comprehension is associated with positive outcomes regardless of the source of difficulty, even in children with decoding problems."

Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs, & Barnes, 2007, p. 201

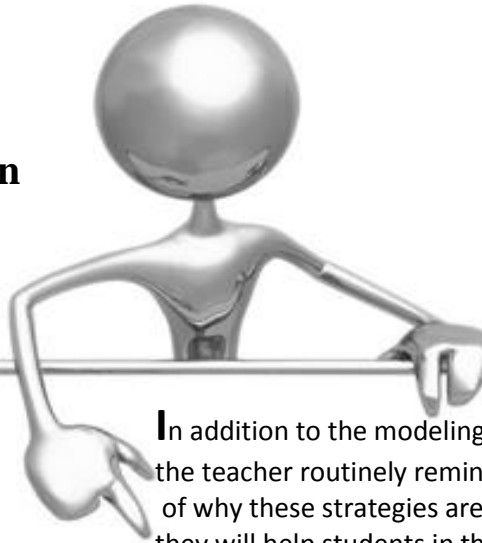
Comprehension should be directly taught to students in a clear, step-by-step manner. Research on students with learning disabilities has found that these students experience difficulty with comprehension because they fail to "discover" strategies.

Coyne, Chard, Zipoli, & Ruby, 2007

"Comprehension can be taught. Teacher-directed, overt, and explicit teaching of comprehension is possible and is effective, in all grades."

Moats, 2005, p. 9

How 2 Teach C omprehension



In addition to the modeling and scaffolding... the teacher routinely reminds students of why these strategies are important and how they will help students in their reading."

Duke & Pearson, 2007, p. 227

"The idea behind explicit instruction of text comprehension is that comprehension can be improved by teaching students to use specific cognitive strategies or to reason strategically when they encounter barriers to comprehension when reading."

NRP cited in Torgesen, 2007

We need to think aloud when and how we use a strategy. Students who struggle with reading "in general do not possess knowledge of strategies and often are not aware of when and how to apply the knowledge they do possess."

Duffy et al., 1987, p.348

Without direct, explicit, systematic comprehension instruction, students will not make progress. High quality instruction has the most potential for changing student outcomes.

Durkin, 1978-79; NRP, 2000 as cited in VGCRLA

"Teachers should model and explain comprehension strategies, have their students practice using such strategies with teacher support, and let students know they are expected to continue using the strategies when reading on their own. Such teaching should occur across every school day, for as long as required to get all readers using the strategies independently - which means including it in reading instruction for years."

Pressley, 2001, p. 4



What 2 Teach:



Research Says....

“...[R]eaders actually use a small repertoire of strategies:

They make predictions based on prior knowledge, make inferential connections to ideas in the text based on prior knowledge, construct mental images representing the ideas in text, ask questions and seek answers, reread and attempt to clarify when confused and construct interpretive summaries of what they have read. For students to acquire such skills to the point of internalization probably requires several years of instruction and scaffolded use, although comprehension gains should be quite pronounced even during the first year (Brown et al., 1996; Pressley et al., 1992). Yes, we have a vision of what it takes to create strategic elementary readers.”

Pressley, April 2006, p. 18

“Comprehension instruction is best when it focuses on a few well-taught, well-learned strategies.”

Duke & Pearson, 2002, p. 236

Although we might introduce and practice comprehension strategies one at a time, it is important to realize that strategies “are not linear steps. They are employed simultaneously” and automatically as needed by the reader.

Lyons & Pinnell, 2001

“There is a huge difference between strategy instruction and strategic instruction. Just teaching strategies is not enough. Strategies must be ‘invoked’ by the learner if they are to be used to increase understanding.”

Routman, 2003, p. 129

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