Comprehension

Why we teach kids to read!
October CRF Institute
2006
Activating Your Thinking

• Give a brief definition or explanation of comprehension

• Discuss the problems or roadblocks you observe with your students in comprehending text

• Describe one strategy, technique, or method you currently use to teach reading comprehension
Significant Statistics

- Recent NAEP results indicate 37% of fourth grade students fall into the “below basic” category, 59% in the “below proficient” category. These percentages rise as the grade levels increase.
- Among eighth graders, those who are non-white or who are from low-income families read 3-4 grade levels lower than students who are white or those who are economically more advantaged.
- More than 8 million students in grades 4-12 are struggling readers. Each school day, some 3000 students drop out of high school.

(Biancarosa and Snow 2004)
The purpose of this workshop... is to examine what research tells us about factors that affect reading comprehension and about what instruction must contain and what it must do to help students become proficient in comprehending text.

It is not enough to teach them the words, they must know how to use the words to understand sentences, passages, and whole texts!
Workshop Objectives

- Understand the major factors that influence comprehension
- Understand how the reader, the text, and background experience interact to influence meaning
- Examine the challenges of ‘Academic Language’ within sentences, phrases, and whole texts and absorb strategies to support these challenges
- Determine effective instructional strategies to use before, during, and after reading
- Fine tune comprehension instruction by outlining specific activities that will support children’s comprehension of the text
Why Teach Comprehension?

- Goal of reading instruction is to ensure students gain meaning from text.
- Students need strategies to read and understand text independently.
- Teachers need processes to help kids connect to difficult text.
- Kids need to understand the importance of reading well and reading early.

“Helping students acquire the skills & knowledge required for proficiency in comprehension of text is the MOST IMPORTANT goal of reading instruction. PERIOD.”

--Joe Torgesen, July 2006
What is Reading Comprehension?

- Intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between a reader and a text.
  - Durkin 1993
- A multidimensional process that involves factors related to the reader, the text, and the activity of gaining meaning.

\[
\text{WORD READING FLUENCY} + \\
\text{KNOWLEDGE & STRATEGIES FOR COMPREHENSION} + \\
\text{MOTIVATION & INTEREST} = \\
\text{READING COMPREHENSION}
\]
Factors Related to the Reader

- Reader Competencies
  - Foundational Skills
  - Higher Order Reading Processes
  - Social and Cultural Influences
Factors Related to the Text

- Text genre and structure
- Language features
Factors Related to the Reading Activity

- Purposes for reading
- Engagement in reading
Critical Question

• How do we use this information to identify the kinds of instruction that will best help students comprehend what they read.

Actively Engage Students in Constructing Meaning
What are Comprehension Strategies?

- Comprehension strategies are specific cognitive procedures that guide readers to become aware of how well they are comprehending as they attempt to read and write.
- What, Why, When, and How
What Strategies Should be Taught?

- Comprehension Monitoring
- Summarization
- Using the structure of stories
- Answering questions
- Generating questions
- Using Graphic and Semantic Organizers
Comprehension Monitoring

Effective readers monitor their comprehension by thinking about their thinking. They are aware of what they understand and are able to identify breakdowns in their comprehension. They use “fix up” strategies when they run into problems.
Steps Readers Take to Monitor Comprehension

• Identifying where in the text the difficulty occurs
• Restating a difficult sentence or passage in one’s own words
• Looking back through text to clarify thinking
• Varying reading rate
• Rereading
• Reading ahead
Strategies to Support Comprehension Monitoring

Think Aloud Using Read Alouds!!
• Use short passages or read-alouds provided with the core materials to initiate modeling of the target strategies.

• Most core programs start with teachers eliciting information or background knowledge. A powerful guidance strategy should include initial modeling and presentation.
Reciprocal Teaching
• After 15–20 days of instruction, Palincsar and Brown (1984) saw students go from scoring 30% to scoring 80% on a reading comprehension assessment.

• After 76 lessons, students improved by one to two reading levels (Cooper, Boschken, McWilliams, & Pistochni, 2000).

• Rosenshine and Meister (1994) reviewed 16 studies of reciprocal teaching and concluded that reciprocal teaching is a technique that improves reading comprehension.
Basics of Reciprocal Teaching

- Predicting
- Questioning
- Clarifying
- Summarizing

Fab Four

- Think Alouds
- Scaffolding
- Cooperative Learning
- Metacognition

Foundations
• Which strategies might you use with students as you preview a selection?
• Which strategies would be helpful to students when they encounter unfamiliar words?
• Which strategies might you use with students if they don’t understand something they have read?
• After reading, which strategies would help students check their understanding of what they have read?
Strategies to Support Comprehension Monitoring

Think, Pair, Share
Paraphrasing
• Provide students many opportunities to stop and paraphrase or rephrase big ideas in the text. They should stop and THINK, then PAIR, then SHARE with a partner.

• Partner or table group sharing with incremental CHUNKS of texts will enable students to hold onto big ideas and connect background experience.
Strategies to Support Comprehension Monitoring

Text Coding or Text Marking
• Give students a strategy to hold onto the big ideas in text as they read independently or through focused guided reading.

• Use small sticky notes, highlighting tape, stickers, or bookmarks to mark pages and ideas according to coded targets.
  - ♣ to highlight new or unusual vocabulary
  - ! to indicate important ideas
  - ? to indicate question or confusion
Get the Gist Strategy

Introduce Get the Gist
• Explain what Get the Gist means
• Ask students to read a selection, one paragraph or section at a time
• Help students determine the main idea of each paragraph or section
  – Name the who or what (the main person, place, or thing)
  – Tell the most important thing about the who or what
  – State the main idea in ten words or less
Get the Gist Activity

- Number the paragraphs in the selection
- Follow the steps on the Get the Gist prompt card
- Write a main idea statement for one of the paragraphs on a sticky note and place next to the corresponding paragraph

Colorado Reading First
Summarizing

• Summarizing is “expressing in a brief form the central idea or ideas of a text.”


• Retelling is the precursor to summarization.
Summarization

- Summarization requires students to determine what is important in what they are reading, to condense this information, and to put it into their own words.
- Increases student awareness of how a text is organized and how its ideas are related.
- Helps students make connections amongst the main ideas of a text.
• Summarizing involves identifying the ‘who’ or ‘what’ and the action. Eliminating verbs and adjectives to give just the gist.
• To summarize at the sentence level we can ask Who (or What?) happened?

Example: The brown spotted cat ran down the street.
Summary: A cat ran.
Summarizing Tips

• Summarize small chunks of information-often!
• Teach summarizing at the sentence level and paragraph level, before asking students to summarize whole passages
• Use sticky notes to make brief summaries and combine to create whole text summaries
YOUR TURN
Recognizing Story Structure

- Refers to the way content and events are organized into a plot
- Students who can recognize story structure have better appreciation, understanding, and memory for text
- Helps students identify story content-initiating events, internal reactions, goals, attempts, and outcomes—and how this content is organized to make up a coherent plot
- Can also help students to understand cause and effect, compare and contrast, problem solution and other relationships among parts of text
Recognizing Story Structure

Students learn

• to identify story content
• to understand who, what, where, when, why, and how
• to recognize how the content is organized into a plot
• to infer causal and other relationships
Recognizing Story Structure

Students learn to recognize story structure through

• explicit instruction
• answering and asking questions
• constructing story maps
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOMEBODY</th>
<th>WANTED</th>
<th>BUT…</th>
<th>SO…</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Scaffolding technique that can help struggling readers organize and remember key information.</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Focuses students’ attention on the important information to include in a summary.</strong></td>
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*Colorado Reading First*
### Somebody, Wanted, But…, So…

- **Somebody** is the who or the most important person or thing.
- **Wanted** refers to what that somebody wanted to do or accomplish.
- **But** signals what happened to cause a problem.
- **So** reminds students to include how the problem was resolved.
Questions Students Learn to Ask and Answer Include

- Who is the main character?
- What does the main character do and why?
- Where and when does the story take place?
- How does the main character feel?
- How does the story end?
Story Maps

- Story maps can be a timeline or sequence chart that shows the sequence of events in a story.
- Other story maps show how events or concepts in a story are related.
- More complex story maps may show rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.
Using Graphic and Semantic Organizers

- Helps students form a memory for concepts and ideas
- Can be used as a prereading, during reading, or post reading support structure
Cooperative Story Mapping

• Explain each element on the story map
• Model the procedures with whole class using the leader cards as a script/guide

  Color code cards!

• Guided practice: In whole group, have students complete story maps with you
• Independent practice: Students are given leader cards & work in small groups to complete story map
• As a whole group, review and discuss answers
Ways Authors Organize Text

- Cyclical Organizers
- Hierarchical Organizers
- Sequential Organizers
- Conceptual Organizers
Participant Activity

• What different types of graphic organizers are used in your reading program?
Question Answering

- Question answering INSTRUCTION can help students get more from their reading by showing them how to find and use information from the text to answer different types of questions.
- QAR (Question Answer Relationships) has been shown to increase students’ ability to interact with text.
Question Generation

- Focuses on helping students learn to ask themselves questions about what they read.
- Teaching students to ask themselves questions improves their active processing of text and so improves comprehension.
- By generating questions students become aware of whether they can answer their own questions, and thus, whether they can understand what they are reading.
Question-Answer Relationships QAR

- **Right There**: answer stated within a single sentence in the text
- **Think and Search**: answer can be found in several sentences
- **Author and You**: requires reading the text but answer is not found in the text
- **On My Own**: can be answered based on reader’s prior knowledge without reading the text

**Text-based**
- Textually explicit

**Scriptal**
- Not specifically in the text, based on reader’s prior knowledge

**pp.39-42**

**Colorado Reading First**
The text states:

*George Washington was the first president of the United States.*

The question asks:

*Who was the first President of the United States?*
Think and Search

The text states in one place
_The desert climate is hot and dry._
Elsewhere, it states:
_In the rain forest, the climate is moist and hot._

The questions ask:
_How are the climates of the desert and rain forest similar? How are they different?_
Jerry picked up his bat, ball, and his glove.

He went to the playing field. Some boys were already hitting and catching fly balls.

1. What did Jerry pick up?
2. Where did Jerry go?
3. What game is Jerry going to play?
4. What is your favorite game?
Jerry picked up his bat, ball, and his glove.

He went to the playing field. Some boys were already hitting and catching fly balls.

1. What did Jerry pick up? RT
2. Where did Jerry go? TS
3. What game is Jerry going to play? A&Y
4. What is your favorite game? OMO
QAR Now
by Taffy E. Raphael, Kathy Highfield, & Kathryn H. Au
Participant Activity

• Using the text provided, create a question:
  – Right There
  – Think and Search
  – Author and You
  – On My Own

Compare and Share.
How Should Strategies be Taught?

Strategy instruction is most effective when teachers use an EXPLICIT instructional approach:

• Model
• Teach
• Practice/Scaffold
• Apply
Model for Instruction: B p. 45

- Select the text
- Select the strategy
- Give a **direct definition**
- **Model** the strategy
- Provide **guided practice with feedback**
- Have students **apply** the strategy

Card #15-Procedure for Strategy Instruction
Direct Definition
• Explain to students what the strategy is and its purpose.

Model
• Demonstrate the strategy for students using a think aloud while interacting with the text.
• Clarify for students that you are thinking aloud. Use a transition statement that tells students you have left the text of the story to provide the think aloud.
• Don’t ask students questions about strategy use during the modeling step.
• Provide additional models for students as needed during reading of selection.

Guided Practice
• Work together with students to help them learn how and when to use the strategy.
• Use the strategy name while guiding students.
• Prompt students to use multiple strategies when appropriate.
• Provide opportunities for active participation for all students.
• Provide many opportunities for guided practice, and remember to prompt students to use strategies every time they read.

Feedback
• As students participate in guided practice, provide feedback regarding correct and incorrect usage of the strategy (praise students for strategy steps they used and remind them of steps they left out).

Application
• Remind students to use the strategy while they continue to read the current text and while they read other texts.
What Strategies Should be Taught?

- Comprehension Monitoring
- Summarization
- Using the structure of stories
- Answering questions
- Generating questions
- Using Graphic and Semantic organizers
Your Turn: Final Activity!!!

• Work with a partner or as a small group
• Plan how you would teach one of the reading comprehension strategies from this workshop using the Model for Instruction on B p. 45
• Select a passage/lesson from your TE. Write the title of the story, Unit #, pp. #
• Select a strategy.
• Write how you would explicitly teach the strategy—Clear Explanation, Model, Support Student Practice, Apply
• Use Card #15-Procedure for Strategy Instruction (fill in gaps in TE)
• Try to integrate one active engagement strategy!

Time: 15 min.