Evidence-Based Facilitator Guide:
Improving Intermediate Literacy

Recommendation 2:
Direct and Explicit Comprehension Instruction

September 2020
An important insight

“Texts young adults are asked to read in postsecondary settings, including community colleges, the workplace, and the military are significantly more demanding than high school textbooks.”

(Williamson, 2008)
The literacy challenge is real
1 in 4 children in America grow up without learning how to read
Overall, 53 percent of fourth-graders read recreationally “almost every day” compared with only 20 percent of eighth-graders.

(Planty et al. (National Center for Educational Statistics), 2009)
Students who don't read proficiently by third grade are four times likelier to drop out of school

(Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011)
A close relationship between illiteracy and crime

Eighty-five percent of all juveniles who interface with the juvenile court system are functionally illiterate.”

(WriteExpress Corporation)
Teaching reading: If not me, then who?

“Learning to read is critical to a child’s overall well-being. If a youngster does not learn to read in a literacy-driven society, hope for a fulfilling, productive life diminishes.”

G. Reid Lyon

*Former Chief of the Child Development and Behavior Branch of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development*
Why focus on improving literacy instruction?

The teacher is the most important factor in student learning. If not me, then who?
Good instruction is powerful

“Good instruction is the most powerful means of developing proficient comprehenders and preventing reading comprehension problems.”

(Snow, 2002)
Idaho’s four key shifts in English language arts (ELA)/literacy standards

1. Students will build knowledge and academic language through a balance of content-rich, complex nonfiction and literary texts.

2. Students will participate in reading/writing/speaking that is grounded in evidence from a variety of texts across the curriculum.

3. Students will use digital resources strategically to conduct research and create and present materials in oral and written form.

4. Students will collaborate effectively for a variety of purposes while also building independent literacy skills.
Grades 6–12 literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects (examples)

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4**
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.10**
By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

*(National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010)*
**Vertically aligned standards** (example)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>READING STANDARDS FOR LITERATURE</th>
<th>KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| CCRA.R.2                         | **Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.** |

*(National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010)*
Grades 4 – 8

| RI.4.2       | Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text. |
| RI.5.2       | Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text. |
| RI.6.2       | Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments. |
| RI.7.2       | Determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text. |
| RI.8.2       | Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text. |

(National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010)
Skilled readers

What are some essential components of being a skilled reader?
Scarborough’s reading rope

**LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION**
- BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE (facts, concepts, etc.)
- VOCABULARY (breadth, precision, links, etc.)
- LANGUAGE STRUCTURES (syntax, semantics, etc.)
- VERBAL REASONING (inference, metaphor, etc.)
- LITERACY KNOWLEDGE (print concepts, genres, etc.)

**WORD RECOGNITION**
- PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS (syllables, phonemes, etc.)
- DECODING (alphabetic principle, spelling-sound correspondences)
- SIGHT RECOGNITION (of familiar words)

**SKILLED READING:**
Fluent execution and coordination of word recognition and text comprehension.

---

# Simple view of reading (SVR)

**Word Reading**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Comprehension</th>
<th>Strong</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adequate WR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate LC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor WR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate LC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate WR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor LC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate LC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor WR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor LC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
\text{WR} \times \text{LC} = C
\]

WR: Word recognition (phonological awareness, decoding, and encoding skills)

LC: Language Comprehension (skills related to language comprehension)

\[
1 \times 1 = 1 \\
0 \times 1 = 0 \\
1 \times 0 = 0
\]

*(Gough & Tunmer, 1986)*
A collection of the best available evidence

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Practice Guide

(Kamil et al., 2008)
Five recommendations for improving literacy

1. Provide *explicit* vocabulary instruction
2. Provide *direct and explicit* comprehension instruction
3. Provide opportunities for *extended discussion* of text meaning and interpretation
4. Increase student *motivation and engagement* in literacy learning
5. Make available *intensive and individualized* interventions for struggling readers provided by trained specialists

(Kamil et al., 2008)
Recommendation 2: Direct and Explicit Comprehension Instruction
Targets for today

» Understand how metacognition improves comprehension
» Learn the structure of a reading comprehension lesson
» Describe two to three evidence-based practices for improving comprehension in specific content areas
» Identify instructional practices and apply them to current core materials
What’s working in your classroom?
What effective strategies, resources, and activities do you use to teach vocabulary?
Reading comprehension is ...

the ability to process text, understand its meaning, and integrate it with existing knowledge.
Comprehension strategies are the ...  

... routines and procedures that good readers use to help them make sense of texts.

Content Literacy
- General strategies to improve comprehension

Disciplinary Literacy
- Specialized strategies to improve comprehension
Role of metacognition

What is metacognition?
Why is metacognition essential to learning how to comprehend text?
How do we provide explicit comprehension instruction?

- Select the text carefully
- Show students how to apply the strategies
- Ensure the text is appropriate for the reading level
- Use direct and explicit instruction
- Provide the appropriate amount of guided practice
Structure of a comprehension lesson: Before reading

Before reading a text:

▷ Set a purpose
▷ Preview the content and structure
▷ Activate prior knowledge
▷ Make predictions
Text structure: What is it?

Text structure is the way in which the author has organized the information in the text.

Examples: Problem and solution, compare and contrast, cause and effect, descriptions and lists, time order/sequence
Text features: Handout 2

Text features include all the components of a story or article that are not part of the main body of text. They include the **table of contents, index, glossary, headings, boldfaced words, sidebars, pictures and captions, and labeled diagrams**.
Brain Basics: Understanding Sleep

“Sleep is an important part of your daily routine — you spend about one-third of your time doing it. Quality sleep — and getting enough of it at the right times — is as essential to survival as food and water. Without sleep you can’t form or maintain the pathways in your brain that let you learn and create new memories, and it’s harder to concentrate and respond quickly.

“Sleep is important to a number of brain functions, including how nerve cells (neurons) communicate with each other. In fact, your brain and body stay remarkably active while you sleep. Recent findings suggest that sleep plays a housekeeping role that removes toxins in your brain that build up while you are awake.

Source: National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, n.d.
Brain Basics: Understanding Sleep (continued)

“Everyone needs sleep, but its biological purpose remains a mystery. Sleep affects almost every type of tissue and system in the body — from the brain, heart, and lungs to metabolism, immune function, mood, and disease resistance. Research shows that a chronic lack of sleep, or getting poor quality sleep, increases the risk of disorders including high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, depression, and obesity.

“Sleep is a complex and dynamic process that affects how you function in ways scientists are now beginning to understand.”

www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/Patient-Caregiver-Education/Understanding-Sleep

Source: National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, n.d.
Sleep cycle

Source: National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, n.d.
Practice round 1: Role-play

1. **Structured partners:** Decide which partner will play the role of the teacher and which partner will play the role of the student. Plan the mini-lesson together, including engagement strategies.

2. **Teacher:** Using the article, *Brain Basics – Understanding Sleep*, lead your “student” through the *Before Reading Activities* using handout 1 and/or handout 2.

3. **Students:** Respond to your “teacher” by following directions and engaging in the activities.
Practice round 1: Before reading strategies

Before reading a text (using the article)

» Set a purpose
» Preview the content and structure
» Activate prior knowledge
» Make predictions
Reflection 1

1. How did the teacher’s instruction help the students prepare to read the article?

2. What strategies did the teacher use to engage the student in learning?

3. How would you rate your own engagement during this activity on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high)? Why?

4. How might you use handouts 1 and 2 in your own classroom?
Structure of a comprehension lesson: During first reading of text

Focus on initial understanding by teaching and using:

- Comprehension strategies
- Close reading
- Word-learning vocabulary strategies
- Discussion strategies
Direct and explicit comprehension instruction using metacognition

» Model your own thinking
» Scaffold thinking
» Facilitate and provide opportunities to notice thinking
Teaching tools for metacognition

Handouts 3 and 4:

» Student bookmarks

» Prompting discussion
During reading strategies

How could Handouts 3 and 4 help all students and not just good readers during the reading of text?

During Reading
- Read with purpose (sometimes sequentially and in depth; other times skimming to focus on key parts)
- Reread parts of the text when needed
- Attend to main ideas and ideas that are related to their purpose for reading
- Verify or refute predictions or assumptions they had before reading the text and adapt their understanding
- Monitor and adjust their understanding of the text based on close reading
- Make informed inferences about the meaning in the text using world knowledge or connections to other information
- Restate the text (paraphrase or summarize) to demonstrate comprehension
- Respond to and evaluate the ideas or content in the text
Structure of a lesson: During second reading comprehension text

Focus on deeper synthesis, application, and analysis by teaching and using:

- Inferences (to apply)
- Close reading (to apply)
- Discussion (to respond to text in writing)
What is close reading?

Close reading, or “reading with a pencil,” involves carefully reading and rereading text while actively thinking about, analyzing, and making decisions about what is being read. It also involves interacting with the text while reading by taking notes, asking questions, and locating text evidence to support answers.
Close reading

- An active process that involves the careful and thorough analysis and evaluation of the key ideas and details of a text, along with a consideration of the text’s craft and structure (Piercy, 2011)

- Requires a deep, thorough, and critical analysis of the ideas in a text and the ways that the text conveys those ideas

- Analytical reading, deep reading, and critical reading are all at least partial synonyms for the ideas inherent in close reading
Close reading involves:

- Understanding the author’s purpose
- Actively engaging with text while reading and writing
- Asking and seeking answers to questions
- Using relevant evidence from the text to support answers
- Analyzing text features and structures
- Paraphrasing and summarizing text information
- Identifying main points and key supporting details
- Evaluating both the meaning and tone of an author’s choices regarding vocabulary, text structure, use of literary devices, and graphic elements
Close reading routine for students

- Restate the purpose of the close reading activity
- Find text evidence to answer the question
- Clarify your thinking during collaborative discussions
- Annotate text and take notes
- Share your answer with someone for feedback and deeper learning
Activity: Watch this video while recognizing the learning benefits of close reading strategies

Close Reading of Informational Science Text
Video reflection

1. How did Mr. Clyde’s use of close reading engage students in analyzing the text?
2. What were some things students were doing during the close reading activity?
3. How did close reading benefit student learning during this lesson? When might you use close reading in your classroom? How could it connect to your core content?
4. Why should discussion be a key component in close reading? How did the teacher in the video use discussion to deepen student learning?
5. What else did you think about during the video regarding student learning?
6. How might you use close reading and/or discussion strategies in your own classroom?
Core instructional materials

1. Choose a text from your own teaching materials to use during this activity.
2. Discuss with a partner how you might use today’s information and tools for teaching students to comprehend.
3. Create a close reading activity.
4. Note any next steps or materials you will need to try this lesson with your students.
Structure of a comprehension lesson: After reading a text

Focus is extended thinking about how the text can be applied to other contexts, situations, or learning by teaching, modeling, and practicing:

» Critique by comparing to other texts
» Write to synthesize into new concepts
» Investigate further
Directly teaching comprehension by discipline

Use graphic organizers for:

- English (narrative example)
- Math
- Science
- Health
- History
Core curriculum connection: Graphic organizers and text features

1. Choose a graphic organizer that best fits your learning target/ objective and text.

2. Discuss with a partner how you might use it to support student learning.
Reflections: Think, write, share

- What information was new? What was a good reminder?
- What implications does this information have for your classroom?
- What is one thing you would like to try with your students?
- How might you use this information when planning a lesson?
References

Annie E Casey Foundation. (2011, April 8). Students who don’t read well in third grade are more likely to drop out or fail to finish high school [News release]. https://www.aecf.org/blog/poverty-puts-struggling-readers-in-double-jeopardy-minorities-most-at-risk/


References (continued)


The content of this presentation was developed under a grant from the Department of Education through the Office of Program and Grantee Support Services (PGSS) within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), by the Region 17 Comprehensive Center at Education Northwest under Award #S283B190033. This contains resources that are provided for the reader’s convenience. These materials may contain the views and recommendations of various subject matter experts as well as hypertext links, contact addresses, and websites to information created and maintained by other public and private organizations. The U.S. Department of Education does not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of any outside information included in these materials. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education. No official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any product, commodity, service, enterprise, curriculum, or program of instruction mentioned in this document is intended or should be inferred.