Beyond Comprehension Builder: Strengthening Reading Comprehension Every Day

As the previous pages have explained, the lessons in this book provide explicit instruction for comprehension strategies and specific comprehension question types. Additionally, it is important to incorporate reading comprehension instruction and practice throughout the year and across subject areas because reading is a big part of how students access learning and information, both in school and beyond. You can work on comprehension as part of almost any lesson and discussion throughout the school day. With that in mind, the following pages provide simple ways to strengthen students' reading comprehension in various contexts.

Emphasize Knowledge-Building Activities

As students expand what they know about the world, they are better able to connect new information to prior learning, draw inferences, and deepen understanding. When teachers emphasize knowledge building—both in reading and in other content areas—students gain the background knowledge and context that support strong reading comprehension.

- Incorporate real-life objects (realia) or visual aids like charts, models, and videos to build background knowledge before reading a text or to support connection-building and retention after reading a text.
- Incorporate texts from a wide variety of topics (e.g., history, sports, animals, plants, geography, technology, art, culture, food, weather, etc.).
- Create a checklist or scavenger hunt to encourage students to read about a variety of topics during independent reading time throughout the year.
- After reading a text, prompt students to generate questions they still have about the topic and guide them in doing research to find the answer.
- Create a class knowledge wall and add fun facts to it throughout the year.
- Use analogies to link new concepts to ones students are likely to already be familiar with.
- Match fictional texts with relevant nonfiction texts or informational videos.
- Incorporate a brief "Show and Tell" into your weekly or monthly routine. Participate along with the students. Make an effort to share something that many students may not know much about and use rich vocabulary to present it.
- Support students in forming book clubs centered on common themes, encouraging collaboration and deeper learning.

Emphasize the Purpose of Reading

When students understand why they are reading, they approach the text with greater focus. This sense of purpose supports their comprehension and builds the habits of engaged, effective readers.

- Remind students that the purpose of reading is to comprehend.
- Provide students with a variety of reading material and frequent opportunities to choose what they read.
- Offer texts from a variety of topics, reading levels, and formats (e.g., articles, graphics, infographics, comics, transcripts, etc.).
- Model a reading life. Share what you're currently reading, and do frequent read-alouds.
- Guide students to create from what they read (e.g., how-to presentations, mini-podcasts, infographics, demos, or teaching younger students).
- Invite student leadership. Assign hosts for story discussions and invite students to add to a class book-recommendation wall.
- Explain how most subjects (e.g., math, science, social studies, etc.) require the ability to read in order to do well.

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Incorporate Meaning Into Foundational Skills Practice

Comprehension development can and should occur alongside foundational skills. While students may need to spend more time on phonics, fluency, and oral language early on, they don't need to reach mastery before working on reading comprehension. In fact, incorporating multiple components simultaneously helps each skill reinforce the other. Students should understand from the beginning that words carry meaning.

- When manipulating letters to practice phonics skills (e.g., wig → big→ bid → bad → fad→ fed), discuss the meanings of the words—especially any that are uncommon or less likely to be understood by students (e.g., bid, fad).
- When decoding words in passages, pause to discuss words that have homonyms. Point out their similarities (sounds or spellings) and differences (meanings and sounds or spellings).
- When working on fluency with read-alongs or repeated readings, emphasize the importance of expression.
    - Explain that using expression helps the reader communicate and bring out the meaning of the words.
    - Remind students to pause for commas and periods, emphasize important words, adjust their pitch for questions, etc.
    - For students working in Read Naturally programs:
        - After conducting a Cold Timing, remind the student of a specific component of expression for them to focus on during the Read Along and Practice steps.
        - Before conducting a Hot Timing, draw the student's attention to the expression rubric and discuss your expectations.
- After a student reads for you, ask them what they think a particular phrase or sentence means.
- Incorporate read-alouds frequently, and pause periodically for group discussions.
- Allow students to discuss short-answer questions with a partner before writing their responses.
- For students working in Read Naturally programs, scaffold writing steps by allowing students to respond orally until they're ready to type independently.

Develop Writing Skills

Writing gives students a way to process, organize, and express their understanding of text. As they put ideas into their own words—through summaries, responses, and written explanations—students clarify their thinking and strengthen their comprehension.

- Have students practice writing while reading. Require a brief margin note (or sketch) per section of text.
- Use simple checklists for students to self-monitor their written responses (e.g., answered the question, included evidence, used key terms).
- Have students journal or write their reactions to texts they've read, videos they've watched, or discussions they've had in class.
- Incorporate peer-reviewing practice. Guide students to note strengths, ask questions, and give suggestions.
- Use writing activities as exit slips (e.g., gist statements, sample sentences, claim-evidence-reasoning frames).

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Expand Word Knowledge and Vocabulary

Knowing more words makes it possible for students to understand more of what they read. Prioritizing vocabulary development—through explicit instruction and exposure in context—ensures students can access more complex texts and engage with a wider range of content.

- Use rich vocabulary with students, explaining the meanings of new words.
- Guide students in maintaining difficult word lists or journals where they record the word, the definition (in their own words), and other connection points that may help them such as a sample sentence, a drawing, a synonym/antonym, a common context, or a "source tag" (reminder of where they learned the word).
- Discuss whether words are specific to certain subjects or if they "travel well" through many different contexts.
- Have multilingual students scan the text to see if any words look like or remind them of words from their home/additional language (e.g., run a quick "cognate hunt"). Teach them to confirm whether the words they find are cognates by using context and/or a dictionary. Maintain a "tricky twins" or "false friends" list to keep track of false cognates throughout the year.
- Teach morphology explicitly (common prefixes/suffixes/roots).
- Practice identifying synonyms and antonyms or building semantic gradients.
- Incorporate word games into your daily routine (e.g., crossword puzzles, word searches, etc.).
- Pause to discuss new/difficult words during class read-alouds.
- Develop a class dictionary throughout the year that includes student definitions, drawings, and sample sentences, or design a collaborative word wall. Have students present their contributions to their peers.
- Ask students to tell you about key words in reading passages and how they're used.
    - For students working in Read Naturally programs:
        - Ask them how the key words relate to one another and what inferences they can make about the story based on the key words.
        - Ask them if there are any other words they think could have been identified as key words and explain why.
        - Remind them to use the key words in their predictions and retells.

Develop Academic Language

Academic language gives students the vocabulary and structures they need to understand and communicate complex ideas across subjects. By intentionally using/modeling, teaching, and reinforcing these words and phrases, teachers help students engage with grade-level texts, participate in discussions, and express their understanding with clarity and precision.

- Find an academic word list to reference and make an effort to incorporate those words throughout your instruction.
- Include academic language in lesson objectives.
- Scaffold instruction with sentence frames such as:
    - **According** to "____ ," ____ . This **fact demonstrates** ____ .
    - The **rate/percentage/pattern** of ____ **indicates** ____ .
    - **Therefore**, it is **reasonable** to **claim** that ____ .
- Encourage precision upgrades: replace vague words (e.g., thing, stuff, good) with domain terms; keep a "better word" list.
- Expose students to rubric language (precision of terms, accurate evidence, effective connectors), and use academic language when giving oral feedback.

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Teach and Reinforce Comprehension Strategies

Comprehension strategies help students actively engage with text, therefore deepening their understanding of it. Teaching specific strategies equips students to process text more effectively, monitor their own thinking, and analyze complex ideas. **The Before, During, and After-Reading Strategies lessons in Section 1 of Comprehension Builder provide explicit instruction and practice to help students learn comprehension strategies**. After completing the lessons, it's important to continue reinforcing students' use of the strategies throughout the year.

- Display the Before, During, and After-Reading Strategies poster and reference it while working in other subject areas as you implement the strategies.
- "Catch" your students using the strategies, ask them to identify the strategy they used, and praise them for using it.
- During your read-aloud time, model expression and the use of the different strategies.
- Review and practice the before, during, and after-reading strategies:

Strategies		Suggestions
Before	Activating Prior Knowledge	▪ Prior to reading a passage for the first time, ask students if they have ever read about or have any personal experience with the topic. ▪ Complete a quick K–G–W (what we Know, our Gaps, what we Want to learn) on a sticky note and revisit after reading. ▪ When students activate irrelevant knowledge, prompt them to consider whether or not the knowledge they are activating is likely to help them understand the story.
	Learning Key Words	▪ Connect the key words to morphology and/or cognates (e.g., geo = earth; evaporation/evaporación).
	Making a Prediction	▪ Scaffold instruction by first allowing oral predictions, then writing together, and then providing sentence starters or frames (e.g., I think this story will be about…because…). ▪ When checking predictions that students write, ask students how they decided on what they wrote.
During	Questioning	▪ While working on fluency with repeated readings, have students draw out and answer one Teacher Question Card (found in the Section 1 Resources folder of the USB drive) between readings.
	Visualizing	▪ Remind students before reading to consider what they wonder about, what they visualize, etc., while they are reading. After reading, ask them to share with you or with a partner.
	Making Inferences	▪ Discuss connections within the text that could lead to a justified inference. ▪ Teach the formulas: ◦ Text Clues + What I Know = Inference ◦ Text Clues + Text Clues = Inference
	Monitoring, Clarifying, and Fix-up	▪ Have students write a prediction before practicing fluency with repeated readings. Then, briefly touch base between practice readings and ask students to remind you what their prediction was. Follow up by asking if their prediction was correct and encourage them to elaborate on their answer. ▪ Teach and model markings to use in the margin. Possible markings include: ! (important) ? (confusing) ↔ (connection) ⊕ (agree) ★ (new idea) ✓ (make sense) ⚲ (need investigating) ⊖ (disagree)
After	Answering Questions	▪ See the Teach and Reinforce a Variety of Question Types subsection of the introduction.
	Retelling and Summarizing	▪ Scaffold instruction by first allowing oral retells, then writing together, and then providing sentence starters or frames (e.g., "This text is mostly about…"). ▪ Have students turn and talk to their neighbor for one minute (each student taking 30 seconds) to tell the other about what they're reading. Model your expectations of what makes for a quality sharing. When the minute is up, ask students to share what they learned about their partner's reading material.

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Teach and Reinforce Text Structures

Understanding common text structures helps readers recognize patterns and see relationships between ideas. Explicit instruction in text structures gives students a framework for organizing information, making it easier to comprehend, and retain, what they read.

- Many schools use a variety of graphic organizers in their core reading instruction. Collaborate with colleagues to identify organizers that the students are accustomed to using and have them available in your setting.
- Model text structure identification during read-alouds. Name the structure and point to the signal words/features.
- Teach, review, and discuss a variety of text structures/elements:

Structures/Elements		Suggestions
Fiction	Characters	▪ Make a list of characters and choose a few to create character profiles for. Include a sketch, 2–3 traits, and a relevant text quote for each.
	Point of View/ Narrator	▪ Identify the narrator (1st/2nd/3rd, limited/omniscient/objective) and underline a line in the text that proves it.
	Setting	▪ Circle or underline words and phrases that define the setting. ▪ Draw or describe the scene and/or fill out a "setting snapshot" with boxes for time, place, environment, and context.
	Goal/Motivation	▪ Complete: "___ needs/wants ___ because ___ ." for important characters/groups.
	Problem/Conflict	▪ Name the conflict type (person/self/nature/society) and find supporting text evidence.
	Plot/Action	▪ Make a 4–6 panel "so/but/then" storyboard of key events; caption each with a page/line reference.
	Turning Point/ Climax	▪ Have students identify the climax and do performative readings of that section of text.
	Resolution	▪ Have students explain the resolution in their own words. List potential costs and benefits of the resolution. Ask students to come up with alternative resolutions.
	Symbols/Themes	▪ Discuss the theme(s) as a group. Have students find a symbol in the text (or come up with their own) that aligns with the theme. Create a mini-presentation with the theme, symbol, and relevant text evidence/quotes.
Nonfiction	Description/ Definition	▪ Fill out a graphic organizer with spaces for the definition, a picture, an example, a non-example, etc.
	Sequence/Process	▪ Identify signal words (e.g., first, next, then, earlier, etc.) while reading. ▪ Have students complete a retell where they recount the events in chronological order. Then, have them identify the differences from the original text.
	Compare-Contrast	▪ Fill out a T-chart or Venn diagram. ▪ Identify signal words (e.g., both, alike, but, unlike) while reading and/or use common signal words to write a summary/retell.
	Cause-Effect	▪ Have students match pictures representing causes and effects. ▪ Create a cause → effect chain, and brainstorm additional possible effects.
	Problem-Solution	▪ Identify the problem and brainstorm possible solutions while reading. After finishing the text, identify which solution was implemented and discuss its costs and benefits.
	Categorization	▪ Encourage two valid ways to group the same items (e.g., by function vs. by parts; by habitat vs. by diet) to build flexible thinking.
	Question-Answer	▪ Name the central question early. Turn the title/heading into a question. After reading, answer that question with references from the text.
	Claim-Evidence	▪ Find three evidence snippets from the text; have students use them to write a claim.
	Cycle	▪ Draw a diagram with the stages; note consequences if a stage is disrupted.

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Teach and Reinforce a Variety of Question Types

Comprehension grows when students engage with questions that address different levels of understanding. Teaching them how to respond to a variety of question types equips readers to think critically and demonstrate their learning in academic settings. **The Question-Specific Comprehension Lessons in Section 2 of Comprehension Builder provide explicit instruction and practice to help students learn about and explore how to respond to a variety of question types.** After completing the lessons, it's important to continue reinforcing students' understanding of and ability to respond to specific question types throughout the year.

- For students using Read Naturally programs or other programs that report on question types, review students' comprehension graphs with them and set goals together based on gaps.
- Have students practice generating their own questions. Consider providing them with question frames.
- Incorporate specific question types in other subject areas and with a variety of texts for additional practice. See the Question Writing Support table.
- Monitor whether students are struggling with a particular question type and provide targeted support. See the Support Scripts by Question Type table.

Question Writing Support

Question Formats			
▪ Multiple choice ▪ Multiple select ▪ True/false	▪ Yes/no ▪ Matching ▪ Ordering/sequencing	▪ Fill-in-the-blank (word bank, dropdown, circle one) ▪ Short answer	▪ Open-ended ▪ Labeling a diagram ▪ Sorting/categorizing

Question Frames/Stems			
1. Detail (Literal)	▪ How many ___ ? ▪ Where was/did ___ ? ▪ What was ___ ? ▪ Who said ___ ? ▪ Who is responsible for ___ ? ▪ What did ___ do when ___ ? ▪ When did ___ happen? ▪ What happened first/after/when ___ ? ▪ How long did it take for ___ ? ▪ Pick the best word to complete the sentence.	**2. Short Answer**	▪ What is ___ ? ▪ How would you describe ___ ? ▪ Who was ___ ? ▪ What do you think about ___ ? ▪ Why did ___ ? ▪ How does ___ ? ▪ What were some ___ ? ▪ What is the relationship between ___ and ___ ? ▪ Why is ___ important to the story? ▪ Describe/explain/analyze ___ .
3. Vocabulary	▪ What does the word ___ mean in the text? ▪ Which definition best matches the word ___ in the text? ▪ Match the word ___ with its synonym/antonym. ▪ Are these two words synonyms or antonyms? ▪ Which word could replace the word ___ in this sentence? ▪ Write a sentence using the word ___ . ▪ Why does the author use the word ___ ? ▪ Name a word from the passage that is new to you and tell how you figured out its meaning.	**4. Main Idea**	▪ What is most of this story/text about? ▪ Which sentence best tells the main idea? ▪ What is the main idea of this story/text? ▪ What is the main thing the author wanted you to understand? ▪ What is the gist of this section/paragraph? ▪ Is ___ a (key) detail or the main idea? ▪ What details in the text support the main idea?

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Support Scripts by Question Type

Question Type	Tell the student...
Detail (Literal)	▪ A detail question asks for a piece of information or a fact stated in the text of the story. ▪ Skim the text to find words from the question, and then look for the answer in the text: It's right there!
Detail (Literal) (Sequencing)	▪ A sequencing question requires you to put events from the story into chronological order. ▪ Chronological order means the order the events happened, which is not always the order they are talked about in the story. ▪ After you arrange the answer choices in chronological order, reread the events to make sure they happened in that order.
Detail (Literal) (Cloze)	▪ Cloze questions require you to fill in blanks with words that would best complete a text. ▪ After you fill in the blank(s), reread the text to check that it makes sense.
Short Answer	▪ Short-answer questions require you to write one or more sentences to answer the question. ▪ Notice important words in the question that tell you what needs to be in your answer. For example: when/time, why/reason, how/explanation, what/a thing or event, not/an opposite, and number words/how many. ▪ Begin your answer by restating the question. Then, write your answer in complete sentences.
Vocabulary (Context)	▪ This type of vocabulary question requires you to figure out the meaning of a word from the sentences near the word. ▪ Read the sentences surrounding the word and look for clues about the word's meaning. ▪ Try the selected answer choice in place of the word in the sentence.
Vocabulary (Matching)	▪ This type of vocabulary question requires you to match each word to a definition, synonym, or antonym. ▪ Word parts such as a prefixes or suffixes often give clues to the meaning of a word. ▪ Check to see if there is a smaller word you already know in the word.
Main Idea	▪ The main idea is a statement that tells what the story is mostly about. ▪ All the answer choices could be true, but only one is the main idea; the others are often just key details. ▪ Read each answer choice and decide if it's a detail or the main idea.
Fact and Opinion	▪ A fact can be proven true or false; an opinion is a belief or judgment. ▪ Look for clue words that signal fact: proven, documented, scientifically, or words that signal opinion: think, feel, should, best/worst.
Cause and Effect	▪ The cause is why something happened; the effect is what happened. ▪ Look for clue words that signal cause: because, when, if, or words that signal effect: therefore, then, so.
Compare and Contrast	▪ Think about how things are alike (compare) and different (contrast). ▪ Look for clue words that signal comparison: both, alike, also, or words that signal contrast: differ, but, unlike, less/more than.
Author's Purpose	▪ Why did the author write this? ▪ Common purposes are to persuade, to inform, or to entertain. ▪ Look for words that signal persuasion: should, best/worst clearly, words that signal information: state, report, is/was/are, or words that signal entertainment: tell, imagine, funny.
Graphical Information	▪ These questions use charts, graphs, maps, tables, timelines, diagrams, etc. ▪ Carefully examine all the elements of the graphic and try to find connections in the text.
Making Inferences	▪ An inferential question often requires you to put together pieces of information in the story to find the answer. Sometimes, it may require you to use information you already know from outside the story. ▪ The answer is not directly in the text, so you may need to search for clues in the story. ▪ Draw a conclusion based on facts from the story. ▪ Say, "I think the answer is _____ because the author told me _____ ." ▪ Begin your answer by restating the question. Then, write your answer in complete sentences.
Retelling and Summarizing	▪ The summary question requires you to write: ◦ A short sentence that contains the common idea in each of the three listed facts. ◦ Three facts from the story that support a summary statement. ▪ Reread your answer to be sure you used your own words and only ideas from this story.

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Provide Support for Diverse Learners

Reading comprehension development will look different for every student as each has unique strengths, needs, barriers, and prior experiences that can affect their learning process. Recognizing when and why a student may need instructional adjustments allows educators to respond thoughtfully and proactively with targeted support.

Many of the suggestions, strategies, and instructional options provided throughout this lesson book already reflect research-based practices that benefit a wide range of students—including multilingual learners, students with dyslexia and other reading disabilities, neurodivergent students, and students who need additional enrichment or acceleration. The suggestions below consist of additional considerations that may help you further differentiate instruction and provide intentional support when specific needs arise.

Students Experiencing Cognitive Overload

Many students experience cognitive overload while reading—especially when reading for the purpose of comprehension, which is the ultimate goal for all readers. When too much mental energy is required to decode words, sustain attention, process language, or organize thoughts, fewer cognitive resources remain for making meaning from the text. It is neither possible nor advisable to wait until these challenges are resolved before providing reading comprehension instruction. However, for that instruction to be effective, it may be necessary to make adjustments that reduce cognitive load.

- If word recognition skills are weak, focus more instructional time on developing phonics and fluency skills and a smaller amount of time on comprehension.
- Work in a lower level of material so that students can focus more on the meaning of text and less on decoding and understanding individual difficult words.
- Provide brain breaks.
- Chunk text into smaller, more manageable sections. After each section, pause to make sure students understand each part before moving on.
    - Discuss what has been read.
    - Clarify vocabulary words or misunderstandings.
    - Ask questions such as:
        - What just happened?
        - Why is that important?
        - Is anything confusing?
        - What do you wonder about?
- Provide audio support while students read (e.g., teacher modeling, choral reading, recorded narration).
- Allow alternative methods to demonstrate understanding (e.g., oral responses, drawings, responses in a primary language, use of sentence starters, etc.).
- Use graphic organizers and sentence frames to help students organize and externalize their thinking.
- Practice repeated reading, focusing on just one comprehension strategy or question during each read-through.
- Provide reading guide strips to help direct attention to one line of text at a time.
- Teach students to recognize overload and to address it by slowing down and checking for understanding.
- Model think-alouds showing the students how you think through questions, misunderstandings, or confusion.

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Students Struggling With Confidence

Students who have experienced repeated difficulty may begin to see themselves as "not good at reading," which can reduce motivation, stamina, and overall engagement with text. When students approach reading expecting confusion or failure, their cognitive energy is often divided between managing frustration and attempting to understand the material. When students begin to see themselves as capable readers, they are more likely to persist, apply strategies, and engage meaningfully with text.

- Provide frequent opportunities for students to experience and demonstrate success (assign shorter tasks, scaffold question difficulty, allow students to revise responses, etc.).
- Normalize struggle; let students know that good readers can get stuck and not understand what they are reading.
- Teach students to recognize their success by conducting frequent check-ins asking them what went well and how they can apply that to future readings. If students cannot identify anything, be prepared to share something that you noticed.
- Monitor students' progress and show them clear evidence of their growth.
- Use repeated reading and more thorough discussion of at least some texts to allow students to truly master them—to give them the opportunity to appreciate and enjoy success.
- Provide specific feedback that recognizes strengths. Celebrate effort and application of reading comprehension strategies, not just correct answers.

Multilingual Learners

For multilingual learners, reading comprehension in a target language can be influenced by several factors: their level of development in phonics and fluency may limit word recognition; the text may include unfamiliar vocabulary or sentence structures; they may not share the prior knowledge or lived experiences assumed by the text; and their oral language proficiency in the target language may not align with the level of the text. Each of these factors can be identified and individually addressed. However, reading comprehension instruction and practice should not be delayed or isolated. Reading itself is a powerful and efficient way to support growth in those other areas when appropriate supports are in place.

- Make adjustments to reduce cognitive overload (see previous section).
- Spend dedicated time developing foundational reading skills. When possible, support students in building foundational literacy skills in their primary language first or alongside the target language.
- Help students prepare for reading by frontloading critical vocabulary and concepts and discussing what students already know about the topic.
- Emphasize knowledge-building activities, expand word knowledge and vocabulary, and teach and reinforce comprehension strategies (see previous sections).
- Find connections (and/or support students in finding connections) between the primary and target languages (e.g., cognates, shared word parts, grammatical structures, text features, themes, cultural connections).
- Allow use of the primary language for discussion, clarification, simple retells, or other responses when possible and appropriate.
- Make use of visual and audio supports (e.g., images, diagrams, realia, gestures, modeling, recorded text, teacher read-alouds).

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Students With Dyslexia or Other Reading Disabilities

For students with dyslexia or other reading disabilities, comprehension challenges are often rooted in difficulties with accurate and automatic word recognition. When decoding is slow or effortful, significant cognitive energy is required just to identify words, leaving fewer resources available for constructing meaning. When word-level demands are reduced and instruction is explicit and structured, many students may demonstrate stronger understanding of text.

- Make adjustments to reduce cognitive overload (see previous section).
- Separate instructional time devoted to word-reading skills (e.g., phonics and fluency) from time devoted to reading comprehension. During comprehension-focused instruction, incorporate more oral language activities—such as read-alouds and text-based discussions—to ensure students can engage with complex ideas in text without being limited by decoding demands.
- Provide extended time for reading and response.
- Use repeated reading to build fluency and comprehension simultaneously.

Students Needing Additional Enrichment/Acceleration

Students who demonstrate advanced reading skills may decode efficiently and comprehend grade-level texts with ease. However, strong word recognition and language comprehension skills do not eliminate the benefits of intentional reading comprehension instruction and practice. Advanced learners may disengage, rush through reading, or miss opportunities to develop higher-order thinking skills. These students often benefit from increased complexity, greater independence, and opportunities to think more analytically and creatively about text. Enrichment and acceleration should extend learning vertically (greater depth and sophistication), not horizontally (more of the same work).

- Provide access to more complex texts (in structure, theme, perspective, or vocabulary).
- Incorporate higher-order questioning that emphasizes analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.
- Offer open-ended prompts that allow for multiple interpretations.
- Provide opportunities for independent research and writing connected to themes in the text.
- Invite students to present, teach, or lead discussions about a text.
- Offer project-based extensions that require application of ideas beyond the text.

Neurodivergent Students

Neurodivergent students—including those with ADHD, autism, executive function differences, or other cognitive processing variations—may experience reading comprehension challenges related to sustaining attention, regulating focus, organizing information, making inferences, or managing working memory demands. Sensory sensitivities or environmental distractions can also affect engagement with text.

- Make adjustments to reduce cognitive overload (see previous section).
- Establish a consistent environment (including structure, routine, and setting) for reading sessions, and limit simultaneous demands.
    - Break task instructions into clearly defined, manageable steps.
    - Consider using supports such as visual prompts to reinforce these routines.
    - Provide clear expectations.
- Ask students to restate the task instructions and expectations.
- Help students prepare for reading by previewing the format and length of the text, setting a clear and manageable goal, identifying key information to focus on, and prompting students to seek clarification about expectations.
- Leverage students' special interests by selecting related texts or asking students to connect new content to familiar topics through comparisons or analogies.
- Encourage physical engagement with text (e.g., annotation, highlighting, reenactment, tracking with a finger, subvocalization).

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Looking for More Information?

The Institute of Education Sciences has two practice guides for educators that also serve as useful sources to consult for designing effective comprehension instruction:

Improving Reading Comprehension in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade

(https://eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED512029.pdf)

This practice guide explains the following five recommendations in depth:

1. Teach students how to use reading comprehension strategies.
2. Teach students to identify and use the text's organizational structure to comprehend, learn, and remember content.
3. Guide students through focused, high-quality discussion on the meaning of text.
4. Select texts purposefully to support comprehension development.
5. Establish an engaging and motivating context in which to teach reading comprehension.

See page 1 of this practice guide for a quick-reference sheet regarding the five recommendations.

Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4–9

(https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED617876.pdf)

Recommendation 3 of this practice guide is to "routinely use a set of comprehension-building practices to help students make sense of the text," and it includes the following parts:

- Part A: Build students' world and word knowledge so they can make sense of the text.
- Part B: Consistently provide students with opportunities to ask and answer questions to better understand the text they read.
- Part C: Teach students a routine for determining the gist of a short section of text.
- Part D: Teach students to monitor their comprehension as they read.

See page 20 of this practice guide for an overview of Recommendation 3.

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