

A Parent's Guide to Teaching Comprehension Strategies

Reading is thinking! Thinking is invisible to children. Reading is more than just reading the words. To be successful, the reader must understand what he reads. We can help our children by modeling our own thinking aloud. This provides children a window into the strategies we use to understand a text. You can model your thinking by beginning with this phrase... "When I read this part, I think..."

Schema:

Our background knowledge helps us to make connections to new material. Making connections from the known to the new is a powerful tool for understanding and remembering. As you read with your child, you can help them by utilizing:

Prior Knowledge:

Help your child to predict what this book will be about before you both read the book. Use the title, table of contents, pictures, subheadings, charts, maps, and photos. Reading is more difficult if you have no background knowledge for this subject. Help your child build background knowledge on this topic through the Internet, other books and reference materials.

Monitoring:

Hearing the author's voice as your inner voice while you read allows you to know you comprehend. Observing your reading and knowing when you do not understand triggers strategies to reread and search for more information.

Making Connections:

Making connections to your family's experiences is a powerful tool. You know your child best!

- How can you connect what you read to your own life?
- How can you connect this information to an experience your family has had?
- How can you connect this text to another book you have read?

Questioning:

Asking questions before, during and after the reading helps children to think deeply about the story.

Before Reading:

- What do you think will happen?
- Why do you suppose...?

During Reading:

- I wonder
- Why do you think...?

- How come...?

After Reading:

- What would have happened if...?
- I wonder why the author...
- I wonder where we could find out more information about...

Visualize

One visualizes when the reader can use his or her senses to imagine what he or she might smell, hear, see, taste or feel while reading. Readers will think deeply about the text and create vivid images to help recall and relate to the text.

- Imagine what __ looks like
- What were you hearing? Smelling?
- Feeling?

Defining Importance:

- Identifying themes
- Prioritizing information
- What are the critical ideas? Use of text features
- What is important?

Inferring:

Taking what the reader knows and weaving what is written in the book to read between the lines is called inferring. The ability to infer helps the reader draw conclusions.

Help the reader by:

Predicting

Identifying cause and effect

Identify the main idea

Sequence the events

Create comparisons

Create visualizations from the information

Identify Problems and solutions

Synthesizing

Taking information in the story and making it your own, the 'aha'

Conversations about books between family members creates lasting memories, models of fluent reading, vocabulary, higher level thinking skills, and creates rich deposits from the language of books that will last a lifetime. Fifth grade children in the 1950's had an average working vocabulary of 25,000 words. In 2000, the average vocabulary was 10,000 words. Our children will flourish when we work together to empower their thinking.