

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION

by:

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Reading comprehension is a crucial skill for academic success and lifelong learning, as it involves not just reading words but understanding and interpreting their meaning. Many students, particularly in the early grades, struggle with comprehension due to limited vocabulary, weak decoding skills, and lack of background knowledge. Employing effective strategies can make a significant difference. Teachers can implement targeted methods to support struggling readers, helping them to better understand, interpret, and engage with texts effectively.

1. **Explicit Instruction in Comprehension Strategies:** Teachers directly teach students how to use specific strategies such as predicting, questioning, summarizing, and visualizing (Duke & Pearson, 2002).

2. **Building Vocabulary and Background Knowledge:** Teachers can enhance students' word knowledge through direct instruction, contextual learning, and exposure to a variety of texts (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013).

3. **Using Graphic Organizers:** Story maps, Venn diagrams, and cause-and-effect charts help students visualize relationships between ideas in a text (Zwiers, 2004).

4. **Promoting Metacognition and Self-Monitoring:** Encouraging students to think about their thinking improves their awareness of comprehension processes. Teaching self-monitoring strategies, such as rereading difficult sections and asking clarifying questions, can be beneficial (Paris & Winograd, 1990).

5. Incorporating Multisensory Approaches: Audiobooks, videos, and interactive digital texts engage different learning modalities, making reading more accessible (Shaywitz, 2003).

6. Teach Vocabulary Explicitly: A strong vocabulary is essential for comprehension. Introduce new terminology in context and give a clear meaning. Encourage readers to use these new words in sentences and engage with them regularly. Tools like flashcards, word maps, and online apps can also be useful for reinforcing vocabulary learning.

7. Use Graphic Organizers: Graphic organizers, such as Venn diagrams, concept maps, and story maps, help readers visually organize information. They can break down complex texts into manageable parts, making it easier to identify key ideas, relationships, and sequences. This visual approach supports better comprehension and retention of the material.

8. Encourage Questioning: Promote an inquisitive mindset by encouraging readers to ask questions before, during, and after reading. Questions like "What do I think will happen next?" or "Why did this character do that?" Foster deep thinking and active interaction with the text. This habit of questioning helps readers actively interact with the material and enhances comprehension.

9. Practice Summarizing: Summarizing helps readers distill the main ideas and important details from a text. Encourage them to practice summarizing paragraphs, sections, or entire texts in their own words. This exercise not only reinforces understanding but also improves the ability to recall and articulate key points.

10. Foster a Love for Reading: Creating a positive reading environment can significantly impact comprehension. Provide access to a diverse range of reading materials tailored to varied interests and reading levels. Celebrate accomplishments, no matter how modest to boost confidence and motivation.

Improving reading comprehension requires a combination of direct instruction, engagement strategies, and a supportive learning environment. By implementing these research-based strategies, teachers can help struggling readers develop the skills necessary for academic success and develop a deeper appreciation for the joy of reading.

References:

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<https://www.readingrockets.org/topics/comprehension/articles/seven-strategies-teach-students-text-comprehension>

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