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**Literacyhow**  
*Empower teaching excellence.*

## June Newsletter

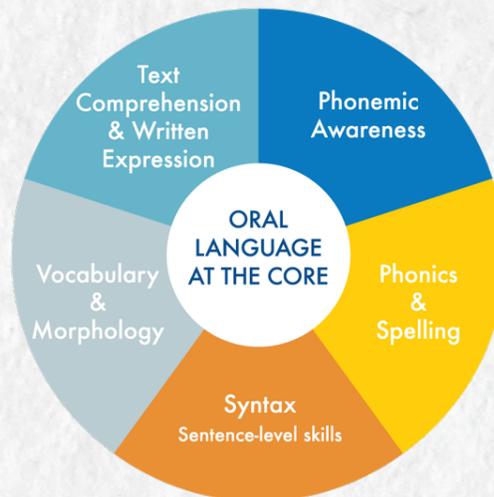


At Literacy How we believe that literacy is the key to opportunity and that **every** child has the right to read. We also believe that teachers, not programs or products, teach students to read, write and spell, and we are committed to supporting teachers as they learn to translate the science of reading in their classrooms.

Our monthly newsletters provide an opportunity to share some of the research and tools we believe will be helpful to teachers in their classrooms throughout the school year. Last month's newsletter focused on vocabulary and this month we get to the ultimate goal of reading: **Comprehension**.

Comprehension is the ability to make meaning. It is much more than a collection of skills and strategies that students apply to text. It requires metacognitive skills, vocabulary, background knowledge, and verbal reasoning ability.

Teachers must first build students' language comprehension skills, best developed early through interactive read-alouds and dialogic reading. This instruction has the added benefit of increasing students' background knowledge, vocabulary, and text structure knowledge as well as their verbal reasoning skills.



#### WHEN AND HOW SHOULD I BEGIN COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTION?

Comprehension can't wait for beginning readers to master decoding. Instruction that focuses on a variety of language processing abilities needs to occur concurrently with code-breaking instruction. Five big ideas shape Literacy How's focus on reading comprehension instruction: text structure, background knowledge, text cohesion, inference, and the reading/writing connection. Each big idea emphasizes the development of students' ability to understand text.

## Videos

Introduction to Narrative: The Critical thinking Triangle. In this video, students review narrative story elements--kick off, feelings, and initial attempt--to deepen their understanding of narrative text structure.



## Tips and ideas for Instruction

### Teacher Tip: Text Selection Matters

When selecting a text to use for comprehension instruction, be sure to consider your instructional objectives for the lesson. All texts are not created equal!

We will also want teachers to consider how to engage their students' deep reading brains as they use culturally relevant literature to encourage empathy, perspective taking, and reflection on what they are reading.

### Teacher Tip: Keep Questioning

Comprehension is a process not a product. It requires students to create a mental model that they will build as you ask open-ended questions to help them connect what they already know to what they are reading and learning about.

### Principal Tip: Support Language Comprehension

Teachers need to understand the language underpinnings of reading comprehension in order to teach children how to "read text closely" (a Common Core State Standard buzz phrase). Students who struggle with language for any reason (i.e., English Language Learners, unfamiliarity with academic language, reading or language learning disabilities) must have highly skilled, well trained teachers!

## Something to read

### Read more to learn more!

- American Educator. American Federation of Teachers. ([Spring 2003. Entire issue](#)). The fourth grade plunge. The cause. The cure.
- Cain, K. & Oakhill, J. (2014). [Reading comprehension and vocabulary: Is vocabulary more important for some aspects if comprehension?](#) L'Année Psychologique 114, 647-662.
- Dymock, S. (2007). [Comprehension strategy instruction. Teaching narrative text structure awareness.](#) The Reading Teacher 61(2), 161-167.
- Hogan, T., Sittner Bridges, M., et al. (2011). [Increasing higher level language skills to improve reading comprehension.](#) Focus on Exceptional Children 44 (3), 1-20.
- Institute of Education Science's 2010 Practice Guide, "[Improving Reading Comprehension in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade](#)".
- Recht, D. R. & Leslie, L. (1988). [Effect of prior knowledge on good and poor readers' memory of text.](#) Journal of Education Psychology 80 (1) 16-20.
- RAND Reading Study Group. (2002). [Reading for understanding. Toward an R & D program in reading comprehension.](#)
- Wexler, N. (January 2019). [Why we're teaching comprehension in a way that doesn't work.](#) Forbes. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nataliewexler/2019/01/23/why-were-teaching-reading-comprehension-in-a-way-that-doesnt-work/#582f6d5637e0>.
- Willingham, Daniel T. (Winter 2006/2007). [The usefulness of brief instruction in reading comprehension strategies.](#) American Educator 30, 39.

## Resources

The **Literacy How Professional Learning Series** translates the latest reading research into how-to instruction. The Knowledge to Practice book Series—Phonemic Awareness and Phonics, Syntax, Vocabulary, and Comprehension—is based on the current and comprehensive Literacy How reading model. It draws upon the authors' decades of expertise and experience working with thousands of general and special education teachers. Based on Chall's Stages of Reading Development, the Series emphasizes Pre-K-3rd grade conceptual and skill development. Teachers of older emerging or struggling readers will also find these tools

useful.

Each book contains relevant research, knowledge for effective instruction, activities for instruction and informal assessment, and text selection skills analysis.

[Purchase Comprehension: Knowledge to Practice Book on Amazon](#)

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