

# Five Components of Reading

## ***Comprehension***

### **Description**

“Comprehension is a process in which the reader constructs meaning by interacting with text” (Harris and Hodges, 1995). Text comprehension is purposeful, active, and can be developed by teaching comprehension strategies. Comprehension strategies are plans or procedures that readers use and apply when they hear text read aloud, when they read text with a teacher, and when they read independently.

### **How Comprehension Supports a Comprehensive Reading Program**

Comprehension is the reason for reading. If readers can read the words but do not understand what they are reading, they are not really reading (*Put Reading First*). Comprehension instruction is more than just asking questions to assess student understanding. Effective comprehension instruction includes helping students to become more strategic readers so they will understand what they read.

Teachers in the primary grades can begin to build the foundation for reading comprehension. Teachers should emphasize text comprehension from the beginning rather than waiting until students have mastered “the basics” of reading. Instruction at all grade levels can benefit from showing students how reading is a process of making sense out of text, or constructing meaning (*Put Reading First*).

### **Scientifically Based Reading Research Related to Comprehension**

- Comprehension improves when teachers provide explicit instruction in the use of comprehension strategies (Pearson & Duke, 2001).
- Comprehension improves when teachers design and implement activities that support the understanding of texts that students will read in their classes (Pearson & Duke, 2001).
- Comprehension and decoding can exist side by side as instructional goals and valued student outcomes in an exemplary and comprehensive literacy program for primary grade children (Pearson & Duke, 2001).
- When readers are given cognitive-strategies instruction, they make significant gains on measures of reading comprehension over students trained with conventional instruction (National Reading Panel Report).

### **References**

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