



The Reading Comprehension Blueprint

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Purpose

To help educators understand what reading comprehension truly involves and how to design instruction that intentionally supports meaning-making through language, knowledge, and cognitive processes.

Key Understanding

Reading comprehension is not a single skill and cannot be developed through strategies alone. It is the result of multiple interacting components, including vocabulary knowledge, sentence structure, background knowledge, inferential thinking, and executive functioning. Effective comprehension instruction requires explicit attention to these elements and opportunities for students to actively process text.

Teacher Reflection Questions

- When students struggle with comprehension, do I first consider language and knowledge demands—or default to teaching another strategy?
- How intentionally do my lessons address vocabulary, sentence meaning, and background knowledge before reading?
- Are students asked to explain how ideas connect within and across texts?
- Do my comprehension tasks require active thinking, or mostly recall?
- How often do students engage in discussion or written explanation to make sense of text?

What to Look for in Students

- Read fluently but struggle to explain meaning
- Miss key ideas due to unfamiliar vocabulary or complex sentences
- Rely on guessing or surface-level clues
- Struggle more as text complexity increases
- Have difficulty connecting ideas across sentences or paragraphs

These behaviors signal a need for instructional support—not reduced rigor.

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Instructional Takeaway

Strong comprehension instruction is built intentionally. When teachers plan for language development, knowledge building, and active processing, students are better equipped to construct meaning from text. Comprehension improves when instruction moves beyond strategies and focuses on how language and ideas work together.

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