



GRADES 4 & 5

# READING TO LEARN

ACADEMIES

GRADE 5

Comprehension

# Section Objectives



This session will enhance your knowledge of explicit and effective instructional practices for

- building students' background knowledge,
- developing students' ability to make inferences,
- applying comprehension strategies, and
- practicing text analysis across disciplines.

# The Importance of Comprehension

**“Reading is a complex process that develops over time ... Emphasize text comprehension from the beginning, rather than waiting until students have mastered ‘the basics’ of reading ... Beginning readers, as well as more advanced readers, must understand that the ultimate goal of reading is comprehension.”**

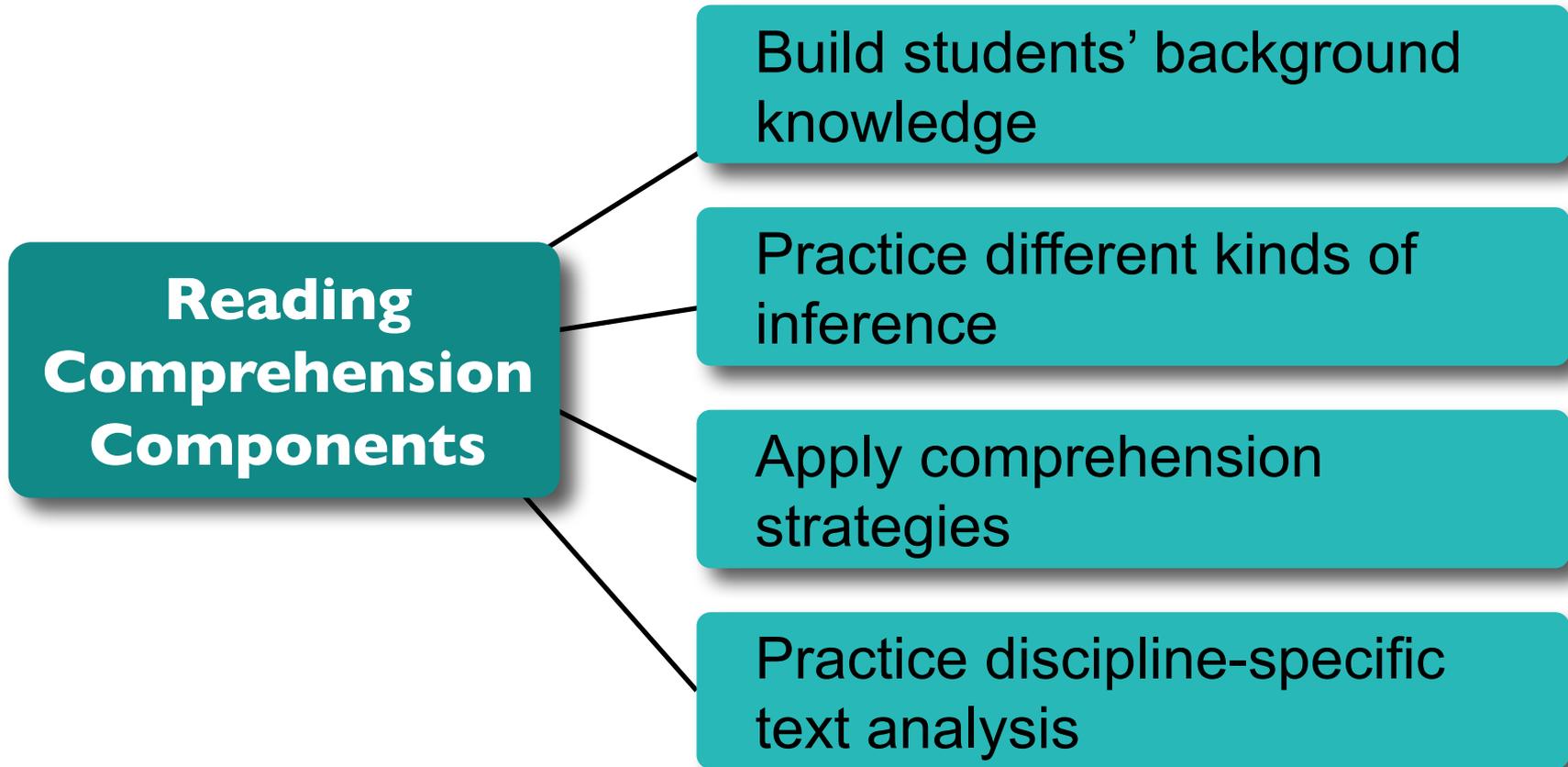
— National Institute for Literacy, 2001, p. 55

# What We Know From Research: Comprehension Processes

**“The teacher needs to consider not only which comprehension skills a child will benefit from most, but also how those might fruitfully be combined with other skills to develop that child’s comprehension overall...The teacher needs to know about the component processes of reading comprehension to teach them when they are relevant, not in a fixed order.”**

— Oakhill, Cain, & Elbro, 2015, p. 110

# Reading Comprehension: Components



# English Language Arts and Reading TEKS



## Oral and Written Conventions Strand

Conventions  
K-12

Handwriting,  
Capitalization,  
and Punctuation  
K-12

Spelling  
K-12

## Reading Strand

Beginning Reading Skills  
K-3

Fluency  
1-8

Vocabulary Development  
K-12

Comprehension of Literary Text  
K-12

Media Literacy  
K-12

Print Awareness  
K-2

Comprehension of Text/  
Independent Reading  
1-5

Phonological Awareness  
K-1

Comprehension of Informational Text  
K-12

Phonics  
K-3

Comprehension Skills (Fig. 19)  
K-12

Strategies  
K-3



# Building Students' Background Knowledge

**“All aspects of a skill grow and develop as subject-matter familiarity grows. So we kill several birds with one stone when we teach skills by teaching stuff. Moreover, there is evidence that by teaching solid content in reading classes we increase students' reading comprehension more effectively than by any other method.”**

— Hirsch, 2003, p. 28

# Importance of Background Knowledge: Example

The procedure is quite simple. First you arrange things into different groups. Of course, one pile may be sufficient depending on how much there is to do. If you have to go somewhere else due to a lack of facilities, that is the next step. Otherwise, you are pretty well set. It is important not to overdo things. That is, it is better to do too few things at once than too many. In the short run this may not seem important, but complications can easily arise. A mistake can be expensive as well. At first the whole procedure will seem complicated. Soon, however, it will become just another facet of life.

— Bransford & Johnson, 1972, p. 722

# Importance of Background Knowledge: Example (cont.)

## Doing Laundry

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# Building Background Knowledge

- To build background knowledge, use content-rich texts to teach reading.
- Additionally, select and read texts within a theme.
  - Use texts from various genres.
  - Explicitly make connections across texts.
  - Use graphic organizers to model connections.

# Building Background Knowledge: Use Texts Across Genres

## Literary Texts

- Folktales, fables, fairy tales, myths, legends
- Poetry
- Fiction
- Literary nonfiction
- Drama

## Nonfiction Texts

- Expository essays
- Procedural texts
- Persuasive pieces

## Media

- Advertisements
- Newspapers
- Websites

# Building Background Knowledge: Content-Rich Texts Within a Theme



- What themes and topics can you plan?
  - Science topics
  - Themes related to historical events or figures, current events, etc.
  - Themes related to social or emotional issues, relationships, community, or family
- What texts can you use within each?
  - Literary texts (fiction, poetry, etc.)
  - Informational texts (expository essays, persuasive essays, etc.)

# Activating Background Knowledge

- Done at a brisk pace before reading a text
- Can be taught by having students skim a text to determine the topic and then brainstorm what they already know about the topic
- Can be taught more formally by using anticipation-reaction guides

# Activating Background Knowledge: Using an Anticipation-Reaction Guide



- Decide on a theme to teach within a text.
- Write two to four statements that connect to this theme with which students could agree or disagree.
- Before reading, have students tell whether they agree with each statement. Discuss their responses as a group.
- During reading, have students identify text evidence related to the statement and write it on the chart.
- After reading, discuss their evidence and have students write their final conclusions.

# Practicing Different Kinds of Inferences

- Effective readers practice making inferences every time they read.
- On the other hand, ineffective readers often don't "put two and two together" or "read between the lines" as we expect them to.
- To help students become effective readers, teach and have them practice the kinds of inference making that effective readers apply often with automaticity.

# Practicing Different Kinds of Inferences (cont.)

## Fill the Gaps

- Ask questions and consider author's intentions.
- Connect background knowledge to text evidence.

## Build a Mental Model

- Connect ideas in a text within a theme.
- Use text structure to connect ideas.

## Make the Text Cohere

- Connect words and phrases.
- Use syntactic knowledge.

# Fill the Gaps: Ask Questions and Consider the Author's Intentions

## Effective Readers

- Ask questions as they read to make sense of what the text says
- Consider the author's reasons for including certain pieces of information or writing the text that way

## Effective Teachers

- Model how to ask these kinds of sense-making questions
- Think aloud about how a text is written and why it was written that way
- Have students practice these questioning and thinking techniques with guidance and support

# Modeling Effective Questioning and Thinking Aloud: Examples



- Plan to read aloud either a short text or part of a longer text related to a specific theme or purpose.
- Find places in the text to ask questions or think aloud about ideas within the text.
- Plan questions or think-alouds for each place.
- Allow students to discuss their thinking.
- After reading the text, tie ideas together in a discussion of the theme or purpose.

# Modeling Effective Questioning and Considering the Author's Intentions: Discussion



- What did you notice about the different types of questions that were asked across the different types of texts—a picture book excerpt, a novel chapter, and an informational text?
- Which questions were easier to answer and which were more difficult? What made some questions more difficult than others to answer?
- How can you use what you learned in this activity to help you plan effective read-alouds in your classroom?

# Planning Effective Read-Alouds to Support Diverse Learners



## Read-Aloud Daily Cycle

### Preparation for Each Text

Choose a narrative or informational text, “chunk” it into sections of 200 to 250 words, and for each chunk, select three or four vocabulary concepts that students do not already know. Use a culturally responsive lens when selecting texts.

### Before Reading

Repeat the routine daily until the text is complete.

**STEP 1:** Preview the selection and introduce the three to four vocabulary words for today’s chunk of text. Use nonlinguistic representations and contextualized examples to teach the words. Activate students’ prior knowledge and make predictions.

### During Reading

**STEP 2:** Read the selection aloud to students without stopping, using appropriate prosody and expression.

**STEP 3:** Have students retell the text and make one inference, scaffolding their use of target vocabulary when possible. Ensure that all students have opportunities to use and practice language through pair interactions.

**STEP 4:** Reread the text, directing students to listen for target vocabulary and discuss meaning. Guide students in creating their own sentences using the vocabulary word.

### After Reading

**STEP 5:** Extend comprehension through deep processing of vocabulary knowledge and text content. Have students turn and talk about the text in relation to their lives. Together with students write a gist statement that gives the main idea for that chunk of text. Extend comprehension by having students write in a reader’s response journal. Use prompts such as, “What do you think will happen next in the story? Write a prediction in your journal.”

### Last Day for Each Text

Choose four to five vocabulary words from previous days that were particularly challenging and in need of further study. Reread or retell the entire story.

Adapted from Hickman, Pollard-Durodola, & Vaughn, 2004. Adapted with permission from Project ELITE, The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk, 2016. Original document available at XXXXX.

# Fill the Gaps: Connect Background Knowledge to Text Evidence



## Effective Readers

- Connect their experiences and what they already know to what they are reading
- Can provide text evidence to support the connections that they make

## Effective Teachers

- Model how to make these kinds of connections between prior experience and knowledge
- Ensure that connections can be supported by text evidence
- Have students practice making these connections and providing text evidence with guidance and support

# Build a Mental Model: Set a Purpose and Use Text Structure

## Effective Readers

- Set a purpose for reading before they begin
- Use text structure to help them organize their thinking and learn from their reading

## Effective Teachers

- Model how to set a purpose for reading and use text structure
- Have students practice these techniques with guidance and support

# Modeling How to Set a Purpose for Reading: Comprehension Purpose Questions

**Comprehension  
purpose  
questions  
help students...**

...set a purpose for reading.

...examine relationships among ideas.

...think actively as they read.

...monitor comprehension.

...review content for understanding.

# Using Comprehension Purpose Questions



- Read the description of comprehension purpose questions.
- Underline words and phrases that help you answer this comprehension purpose question:  
**What is important to remember when setting a comprehension purpose question?**
- Apply what you learned.

# Build a Mental Model: Use Text Structure



## **For narratives**

- Discuss relationships among characters, setting, and events.
- If possible, link relationships to a broader theme.

## **For informational texts**

- Look for specific structures, like sequence or compare and contrast.
- Use key words to identify text structure.

## **Graphic organizers to analyze text structures**

- Story maps
- Character analysis charts
- Webs, flow charts, Venn diagrams, etc.

# Make the Text Cohere

## Effective Readers

- Connect words and phrases as they read to ensure the text sticks together and makes sense
- Use their syntactic knowledge to make sense of complex phrasing or sentence structures

## Effective Teachers

- Model how to make connections among words and phrases within and across sentences
- Model techniques for making sense of complex syntactic elements
- Have students practice making these connections and using these techniques with guidance and support

# Make the Text Cohere: Connect Words and Phrases

**Help students make connections within and across sentences.**

- Linking pronouns to their referents
- Using other cohesive ties (e.g., renaming) within a text to connect ideas
- Understanding relationships among ideas based on connectives (e.g., transition words, conjunctions)

# Connecting Words and Phrases: Performing Syntax Surgery



1. Read a sentence or set of sentences aloud.
2. As you read, think aloud about links you are making between words and ideas.
3. Mark up the text as you think aloud about the relationships that you see.
4. Have students mark up their own versions of the text along with you.
5. Have students practice with another sentence or set of sentences in partners or small groups.

# Using Syntactic Knowledge: Combining Sentences



- Break a sentence into multiple sentences.
- Have students combine the sentences to make one sentence.

<b>Sentence Deconstructed</b>	<b>Original Sentence</b>

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He wanted to slide down to the floor. He wanted to speak to her. He didn't dare.	

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He wanted to slide down to the floor. He wanted to speak to her. He didn't dare.	He wanted to slide down to the floor and speak to her, but he didn't dare.
She was wearing a white sweater. She was wearing a tweed skirt. She was wearing white wool socks. She was wearing sneakers.	

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She was wearing a white sweater. She was wearing a tweed skirt. She was wearing white wool socks. She was wearing sneakers.	She was wearing a white sweater, tweed skirt, white wool socks, and sneakers.

# Using Syntactic Knowledge: Deconstructing Sentences



- Find a sentence with a syntactic element you would like students to practice using.
- Have students break the sentence into two or more sentences that represent idea units within the sentence.

## Original Sentence

After two days, the cement was dry, and the wooden structures were broken down and taken away, leaving the dried cement blocks.

## Sentence Deconstructed

# Using Syntactic Knowledge: Deconstructing Sentences



- Find a sentence with a syntactic element you would like students to practice using.
- Have students break the sentence into two or more sentences that represent idea units within the sentence.

## Original Sentence

After two days, the cement was dry, and the wooden structures were broken down and taken away, leaving the dried cement blocks.

## Sentence Deconstructed

The workers waited two days. The cement was then dry. The workers broke down the wooden structures. They took the wooden structures away. They left the dried cement blocks. (Implied: The dam was finished.)

# What Have We Learned So Far?



## Snowball Fight

1. Think about one thing you have learned related to comprehension instruction.
2. Write it on a sheet of notebook paper.
3. Crumple it into a ball.
4. Stand up and form a circle with your fellow participants.
5. Throw your ball into the middle of the circle.
6. Pick up a snowball and be ready to read it to the group.

# Two Frameworks for Comprehension Instruction

## Applying Comprehension Strategies

- Start with a strategy or set of strategies.
- Provide instruction and practice in applying the strategies to a text or set of texts.

## Practicing Discipline-Specific Text Analysis

- Start with a text or set of texts.
- Provide instruction and practice in analyzing language, making inferences, and using strategies specific to that text or set of texts.

# Applying Comprehension Strategies



- Identifying important information
- Summarizing
- Asking and answering questions
- Monitoring comprehension
- Making predictions
- Creating sensory images

# Applying Comprehension Strategies (cont.)

## What a Strategy Is

- Intentional mental actions during reading that improve reading comprehension
- Deliberate efforts by a reader to better understand or remember what is being read

## What a Strategy Is Not

- Instructional activities such as worksheets, which rarely include instruction on what students should do to improve comprehension
- Practice of skills such as sequencing or drawing conclusions that lacks explicit instruction on how to think in these ways during reading

# Application Is Key

**“Teachers should explain to students how to use several strategies that have been shown to improve reading comprehension because different strategies cultivate different kinds of thinking...Teachers should explain how the strategies can help the students learn from text—as opposed to having them memorize the strategies—and how to use the strategies effectively.”**

— Shanahan et al., 2010, p. 12

# Applying Comprehension Strategies: Identifying Important Information



**Putting together details and ideas in text to figure out what is most important to focus on and learn**

- Begin by teaching retelling and paraphrasing.
- As students master these strategies, teach them how to distinguish main ideas from details.
- Teach students a specific strategy for identifying main ideas. One example is get the gist.

# Applying Comprehension Strategies: Summarizing



**Putting together the most important pieces of information from across a text and saying or writing them succinctly**

- Make an explicit connection between the main idea strategy and writing a summary.
- Explicitly teach summary writing to improve both reading comprehension and writing.

# Applying Comprehension Strategies: Asking and Answering Questions



## Developing and answering questions about information in a text



- Have students practice this strategy both during and after reading.
- Explicitly teach students how to ask questions at different levels.
  - “Right there” questions
  - “Think and search” questions
  - “Author and me” questions

# Applying Comprehension Strategies: Monitoring Comprehension



## Attending to a breakdown in comprehension and doing something about it

- Requires reader to actively build a mental model based on text information
- Requires a need for coherence—a reader must care that comprehension has broken down to do something about it
- Uses “fix-up” strategies, including creating sensory images and questioning

# Applying Comprehension Strategies: Making Predictions



**Connecting textual information with prior knowledge to anticipate what will happen or what will be learned next in a text**

- Can be used both before reading to activate background knowledge and during reading to make elaborative inferences
- Should be combined with other strategies like identifying important information and generating questions

# Applying Comprehension Strategies: Creating Sensory Images

## Creating a mental image of what is described in the text

- Helps poor readers, especially those with memory difficulties
- Can be used with both literary and nonfiction texts, but works best with literary texts
- Should be combined with other strategies like identifying important information and generating questions

# Explicit Comprehension Strategy Instruction

- Start with simpler texts and then move to more complex texts.
- Model how to use the strategy through think-alouds (“I do”).
  - Identify places in the text to stop and think aloud.
  - Tell students that you will stop occasionally to talk about what you are thinking.
  - As you read, stop in the places you have marked to ask questions and share your thinking.

# Explicit Comprehension Strategy Instruction (cont.)

- During or after reading, fill out a graphic organizer to summarize your thinking.
- After you model a strategy and have students practice it with you many times, have them practice it in partners or small groups (“We do”).
- Have students practice a strategy by itself, but eventually put it together with other strategies for students to use together (“We do” and “You do”).
- As students practice using these strategies, ensure that they engage in high-quality discussions about their thinking.

# Ways to Support High-Quality Discussions



- Select a text that allows for compelling discussions. Be sure to consider your instructional purpose and specific student needs.
- Develop questions that go beyond the text's surface level.
- Have follow-up questions prepared to help students delve deeper into a text's meaning.
- Have students work in structured small groups to think more critically and independently about a text.

# Practicing Discipline-Specific Text Analysis

**Instead of trying to impose a strategy on a text, start with what students should get out of the text: What's the disciplinary purpose?**

- Realize that the purposes and processes for reading differ across disciplines.
- Match strategies to these purposes and processes.
- Understand that a specific strategy (e.g., drawing a diagram while reading) might make sense in one discipline (e.g., science) but not in another discipline (e.g., history).

# Disciplinary Literacy Versus Content Area Literacy



**“In disciplinary literacy, the discipline itself and the ways of thinking in that discipline determine the kinds of strategies to use in order to understand texts. This differs from content area literacy, in which the strategies one knows determine how reading ensues.”**

— Hynd-Shanahan, 2013, p. 94

# Disciplinary Distinctions to Consider



## **Vocabulary**

- Technical terms
- Impact of morphological changes
- Use of metaphorical terminology

## **Grammatical patterns**

- Passive versus active voice
- How ideas are connected
- Lengthy noun phrases

## **Author and context awareness**

- Is knowledge of the author important to text understanding and interpretation?
- Should the context of when the text was written have an impact on comprehension?

# Discipline-Specific Analysis: English Language Arts



- Understanding of sensory and figurative language is important.
- Abstract literary elements like character motivation, theme, conflict, and tone are inferred during reading.
- In general, more focus is placed on literary texts with narrative, poetic, or dramatic structures.
- Text analysis and interpretation is the focus of instruction (as opposed to building conceptual knowledge and skills in other disciplines).
- Consideration of author and context is often important.

# Discipline-Specific Analysis: History



- Technical terms are used to describe events or groups or to give a specific perspective on an action or event (e.g., *the Enlightenment*).
- Text structure relates narrative aspects to the author's argument.
- Critical analysis is inherent to effective reading.
- Consideration of author and context is often crucial, especially when reading primary or secondary sources.

# Discipline-Specific Analysis: Science



- Technical language includes morphological derivations (e.g., nominalizations), use of passive voice, and abstract causation (as opposed to human causation in literary or history texts).
- Integration of text with graphics is often important.
- Text structure is used to support understanding and find information.
- Consideration of author and context is not usually important.

# Discipline-Specific Analysis: Mathematics



- Understanding of precise mathematical definitions of vocabulary is crucial.
- Integration of text with graphic elements, equations, and other mathematical elements is important.
- Text structure is used to support understanding and find information.
- Extensive rereading is often necessary to ensure identification and correction of errors.
- Consideration of author and context is not necessary.

# Planning Comprehension Instruction: Consider Text Complexity

- What is my instructional purpose for having students read the text?
- How will the text be used (e.g., for modeling, in cooperative groups, as independent reading)?
- What are the text's quantitative and qualitative characteristics?
- How do the text's characteristics fit with my students' instructional needs?

## Online Quantitative Indices

Lexile Scale: [www.lexile.com](http://www.lexile.com)

Coh-Metrix tool: [www.cohmetrix.com](http://www.cohmetrix.com)

# Examining Qualitative Complexity: Literary Versus Informational Texts



Consider levels of meaning, structural elements, language aspects, and knowledge demands.



## Literary Texts

- Figurative language
- Narration
- Standard English and variations
- Cultural knowledge

## Informational Texts

- Analogies or abstract comparisons
- Language level
- Voice

# Pros and Cons: Comprehension Strategies Versus Disciplinary Literacy



**Synthesize your thinking about the two comprehension instructional frameworks.**

- Create a pros and cons list for teaching within a comprehension strategies framework.
- Create a pros and cons list for teaching within a disciplinary literacy framework.

# Systematic Comprehension Instruction



- Build students' background knowledge.
- Provide instruction and practice in making different kinds of inferences.
- Explicitly teach and have students practice applying comprehension strategies.
- Teach and have students practice disciplinary literacy within each content area.

# Scaffolds for Comprehension

- Use effective questioning to scaffold thinking.
- Complete graphic organizers during and after reading.
- Model using text structure to build meaning.
- Explicitly teach making connections within and across sentences.
- Use think-alouds to model comprehension techniques and strategies.
- Break down strategies into manageable steps.

# Consider Diversity: English Language Learners



- English language learners can learn to derive meaning from texts and practice using language to discuss texts.
- Scaffold instruction to promote language comprehension and use.
  - Take into account students' different levels of English proficiency.
  - Consider prior knowledge and explain unfamiliar terms and topics.
  - Explicitly teach and model comprehension strategies.
  - Monitor understanding frequently.

# Assessing Comprehension



- Use formal assessments, such as the following:
  - Retelling what is remembered from a text that's been read
  - Completing cloze or maze assessments
  - Answering multiple-choice questions
  - Responding to open-ended response questions orally or in writing
- Also use informal assessments, such as the following:
  - Listening to student discussions
  - Examining student responses on graphic organizers

# Taking a Closer Look



- Examine the comprehension lesson in Handout 24.
- Work with your tablemates to complete Handout 25.



# Remember

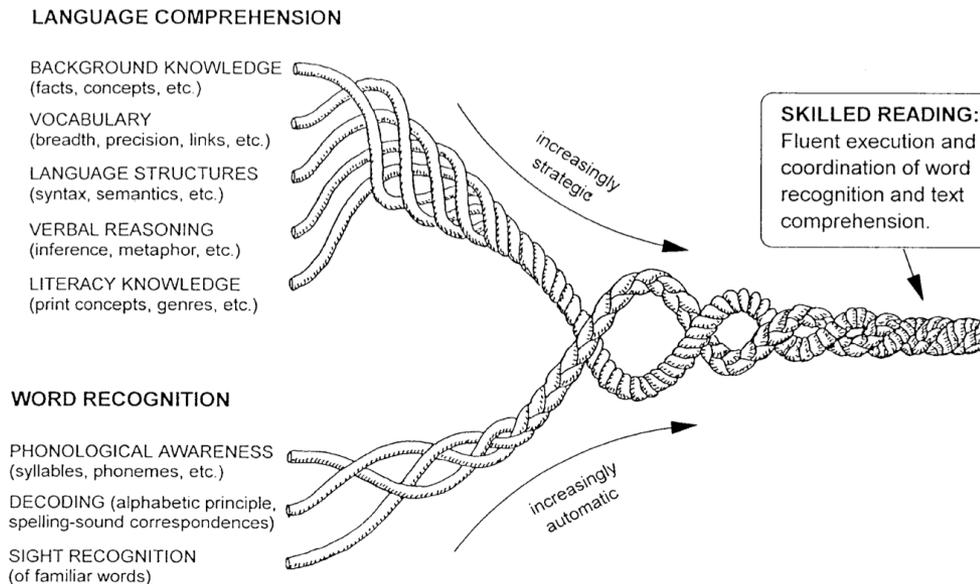
**“It is a mistake to assume that having learned about various procedures or strategies to aid comprehension and learning, the teacher’s job is done. A comprehensive plan is needed. A teacher needs to map out the curricular goals for a course, and then plans for units and specific lessons can be made.”**

— Carlisle & Rice, 2002, p. 6

# The Reading Rope



How do these instructional practices benefit English language learners, struggling students, and gifted students?



Scarborough, 2001

# My Synthesis and Summary



Three to four **example activities and lessons** you want to use

Three to four **workstation ideas**

## Comprehension

Two to three ideas you want to use with **struggling learners**

At least one scaffold you will provide to **English language learners** who need it