Reading Comprehension

Program Research Base

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Reading Comprehension

Executive Summary

Reading comprehension is the ability to deeply and actively glean meaning from written text. Research confirms that to accomplish this complex task, proficient readers actively engage in balancing multiple strategies. Skilled readers unconsciously and effortlessly move from one strategy to the next, as they move into, through, and then out of text. They engage in "envisionment building," a partnership with the author, in which reader and text join to create a world that readers willingly enter into, navigate through, wonder about, and then move out of with thoughtful reflection.

In order to effectively teach young students to comprehend what they read, researchers have identified specific strategies that proficient readers use, and following their lead, state education departments have incorporated their findings into statewide mandated curricula and standardized assessments. Not only have researchers identified strategies, but a subset of strategies, which are commonly called comprehension skills. **Wright Group LEAD21** incorporates the most commonly cited comprehension strategies and combines them with a set of comprehension skills to create a program that supports children's reading at all levels.

Comprehension strategies in **LEAD21** are defined as those tools which readers can use across any text: that is, all readers should make inferences regardless of the type of text they are reading. In contrast, comprehension skills in **LEAD21** are defined as those tools which are text specific: that is, a reader may only need to distinguish fact from opinion in a persuasive text. Both strategies and skills are effectively combined for a wide variety of genres, providing students with powerful tools for comprehension.

In addition **LEAD21** incorporates a strong instructional plan based on research for teaching comprehension. The Pearson and Gallagher (1983) gradual release of responsibility model has been built into every lesson across all units. It includes five steps to move students from active listening about the strategies and skills to independent use of them: Explicit Instruction; Teacher Modeling/Thinking Aloud; Collaborative Use of the Strategy; Guided Practice; and Independent Use.

The constructive combination of strategies and skills along with a positive instructional plan provide teachers with solid support in the classroom, and students with abilities to support a lifetime of reading success.

Reading Comprehension

Understanding Comprehension

Comprehension means making sense of what one reads. A reader who comprehends text is an active reader. Comprehension is complex, yet reading researchers have developed approaches to teach students to be active readers through the use of comprehension strategies—steps good readers take to make sense of what they read. Comprehension strategies are flexible and adaptable, so they can be used across a wide range of ages, abilities, and texts. Good readers apply similar strategies when reading a simple first novel about a favorite character or a complex explanation of weather phenomena. While we may teach important comprehension strategies and skills individually in practice, good readers use routines that involve picking and choosing from among several skills and strategies that help them make sense of text. Good readers make use of comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading (Dole, et al. 1991; Israel and Duffy 2008; Pearson, and Fielding 1991; Pressley 2000).

> Good readers make use of comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading.

Studying Good Readers

Much of what researchers know about reading comprehension is grounded in studies of good readers. Through these studies we learn that proficient readers share common characteristics:

> They are active readers (Guthrie, et al. 1996; Guthrie, et al. 2004).
> They monitor as they read to make sure it makes sense (Baker and Beall 2008).
> They use strategies flexibly and adaptively based on their purpose(s) for reading and the nature of the text (RAND 2002). For example, good readers
>   • identify the important information in the text
>   • connect information within the text in meaningful ways
>   • link information from the text to their own experiences
>   • engage in questioning as they read
>   • make inferences to fill in gaps in information explicitly stated.

Research shows that students who use and reflect on comprehension strategies improve their comprehension of texts used instructionally and of texts they read in the future. *Interestingly, students improve their comprehension even if they are taught to use only one strategy.* Solid gains are seen when students use strategies in combination, as in before, during, and after reading routines.

Comprehension Strategies in Wright Group LEAD21

The National Reading Panel (2000), RAND Reading Study Group (2002), and many other researchers have identified strategies that are beneficial to developing readers. The lists that researchers created overlap. The definitions of comprehension strategies also vary somewhat. In fact, there is no research to say that there is one set or preferred set of strategies or sequence of using these strategies for successful reading. However, there is a great deal of research that helps us understand *how to teach* students the strategies they will need to be good comprehenders. **LEAD21** draws on this research to create the texts, the activity settings, and the teaching and assessment tools for successful instruction. Teachers using **LEAD21** will be supported in scaffolding their students' learning, and in doing so, will learn to teach all students how to comprehend the wide array of texts they will be using across their other school subjects.

What do good readers do? Good readers first engage in "envisionment building" in which the author and reader create a world that the reader enters, whether they will be reading narrative or informational text (Langer 1995). As the reader steps into the world, he or she draws on background knowledge to connect personal experiences to the upcoming text. As the reader moves through the world (the text), he or she draws on comprehension strategies and monitors comprehension to make sense of the text. As the reader steps back from the text to reflect on it, he or she thinks about how the text has changed his or her own life or knowledge base. As the reader steps out of the text world, he or she engages in critical reflection. These four relationships to the text can—but do not have to—occur within a reading of a single text.

> Good readers first engage in "envisionment building" in which the author and reader create a world that the reader enters, whether they will be reading narrative or informational text.

The comprehension strategies taught in **LEAD21** support readers as they move into, through, and out of text. The **LEAD21** student will practice the following strategies throughout the program (NAEP 2007):

- Predict
- Determine Important Information
- Summarize
- Make Inferences
- Visualize
- Ask and Answer Questions
- Monitor Comprehension
- Make Connections

Comprehension Instruction in Wright Group LEAD21

LEAD21 has a strong instructional plan for teaching comprehension. Over a four-week unit, students will use two comprehension strategies with both nonfiction and fiction. Each strategy is presented individually following the gradual release model. Students will also learn important comprehension skills that are exemplified in the readings or that help students learn how texts are put together. By the end of the unit, students will coordinate their strategy use, choosing a particular strategy to match their reading purpose.

The LEAD21 *Model for Effective Comprehension Instruction*
LEAD21 uses an instructional model based in sound research to teach comprehension strategies. The gradual release of responsibility (Pearson and Gallagher 1983) begins with explicit instruction and moves students to independent use of the strategy.

Step 1: Explicit Instruction. In this first step, the conversation is teacher-led, while students listen. In Step 1, the teacher explains what the strategy is (its name and its definition), why it's important, and when readers might choose to use the strategy. There should be some sort of accountability built in for their listening, such as a pair/ share. This step takes place within the whole group or within the small group during small-group reading.

Step 2: Teacher Modeling/Thinking Aloud. Seamlessly flowing from Step 1, in Step 2 the teacher shares an example of what the strategy looks like in actual operation. The teacher does this using a common text that is visible to everyone: Concepts Big Book, Literature Little Book, Theme Reader. Teacher modeling takes place within the whole group or within the small groups during small-group reading. Thinking aloud is an important part of modeling, as it makes one's thinking audible. A Think Aloud is a demonstration of thought processes; the person says what he or she is thinking as he or she performs a task.

Step 3: Collaborative Practice. With Step 3, the teacher invites students to contribute their questions and observations to the modeling. The teacher guides them carefully through questions and comments that lead readers to effective use of the strategy. Teachers should encourage students to think aloud and share their use of the strategy. Research shows that when students think aloud, they maintain focus.

Step 4: Guided Practice. With this step, the teacher begins to release the responsibility for using the strategy to the students. The teacher supports students as they begin to use the strategy. He or she monitors and evaluates students' level of proficiency, determining when they seem ready to move on to doing this on their own with a new segment of text or new text. The teacher may set students to read independently or in small groups and then listens in while they read and use the strategy. Teachers might also ask readers to write down their predictions, questions, or other indications of strategy use and then review them to monitor their use of the strategy. In **LEAD21** students learn to apply multiple strategies. Multiple strategy use is explicitly taught and and students are guided to apply more than one strategy at a time.

Step 5: Independent Practice. Unlike Steps 1–4, independent use of a strategy will occur in independent reading settings. In principle, the teacher should never simply assign independent work to the whole group. The teacher uses the whole group and guided reading sessions to teach, model, and guide practice of the strategy. Teachers then give students encouragement through important tips, questions, and reminders, which help them effectively apply the learned skills and strategies.

As the teacher and students progress, instruction and practice with a particular strategy changes. The instructional periods become shorter, while students do more and more of the work using the strategy. Students apply the strategies on longer and more challenging texts. The chart on the left is a quick way of thinking about how the gradual release model of strategy instruction works.

Gradual Release of Responsibility Model	
The Teacher	**The Students**
I do (Steps 1 and 2)	You watch
I do (Step 3)	You help
I help (Step 4)	You do
I watch (Steps 4-5)	You do

Comprehension Strategies Survey

The following pages define and show how the strategies in **LEAD21** should be taught. Each strategy is taught using the **LEAD21** gradual release model, and all strategies are taught and practiced with fiction and nonfiction. These strategies can be used at each grade level: The complexity of the text the students are reading shapes the way the strategy will be applied. The specific differences in the way a strategy is applied occurs both within grade levels across texts throughout the year, as well as across grade levels and subject areas.

Table 1 Comprehension Strategies	
Strategies Taught Across All Units in LEAD21	
Predict Students create a hypothesis about upcoming events or text based on background knowledge, text features, and text structure.	**Determine Important Information** Students identify the most important idea or ideas in a section of text. Students distinguish an important idea from details that tell more about it.
Summarize Students create a new text that stands for an existing text. The summary contains the important information in the text.	**Make Inferences** Students "read between the lines" to add information not explicitly stated by the author but needed to make sense of the text.
Visualize Students make visual representations of text, either in the mind or on paper.	**Ask and Answer Questions** Students use prior knowledge and information in the text to create relevant questions to guide their reading for explicit and implicit text information.
Make Connections Students make connections between text and themselves, other reading, and the world.	**Monitor Comprehension** Students evaluate text understanding and use fix-up strategies to resolve comprehension difficulties.

Predict

Teaching Rationale

When readers predict, they use information from the text (in the beginning, this might mean glancing at the cover or skimming through the text) along with their own background information to make thoughtful or informed guesses about what they may experience in the text. Readers use this strategy to get ready to read and to monitor their comprehension during reading.

Teaching the Strategy

Define the Strategy

> Name the strategy for students and explain that making a prediction means creating a guess or hypothesis about what will happen next in fiction or what kinds of information the author will explain or describe next in nonfiction text. For example: *Predicting is making thoughtful or informed guesses about what you will read about next in the text. You then read on to see how the text confirms or does not support your predictions.*

> Immediately have students turn and share the name of the strategy, jot down the name of the strategy, or do some other quick and simple activity to make sure everyone knows the strategy name and what it means.

Model the Strategy

> Tell students that readers use background knowledge and the text to make predictions. With fiction, readers use what they already know about how people behave and how the world works, along with what has happened so far to make predictions. With nonfiction, readers use text structure clues, text features, and their background knowledge and experiences about the specific topic or subject to make predictions.

> Preview the text for clues about the nonfiction topic or what the fiction selection might be about. Depending on the text, teachers can use a picture walk, a study of the text features, or a demonstration of skimming.

> Think aloud to model making a prediction for a few pages of text. For example: *I am going to make some predictions as I read. I start by looking at the cover of this book. Here's a picture of a leopard wearing sunglasses. He has a silly grin. I know that real leopards don't wear glasses, and they don't smile like this. I predict that this story is going to be a fantasy—maybe it will be a funny story.*

> Read a page or two aloud. Then stop to check your prediction. Do not use language that suggests a prediction is right or wrong. Point out places in the text that confirm your prediction, or talk about how the text did not support your prediction.

> Look ahead in the text and make another prediction or refine the old one. Read on and check your prediction.

Guide Practice

> Invite readers to make and share some predictions before you read the demonstration text, or stop periodically while reading aloud. Ask questions to prompt strategy use. Point out text structures or features in nonfiction or actions of characters in fiction if students are having difficulty making predictions.
> - For fiction you might ask the following questions: *What do you think will happen next? What makes you think that?*
> - For nonfiction you might ask the following questions:
>   *What else do you think you might learn about this topic?*
>   *What will the author write about next?*
> - For either fiction or nonfiction, these questions are appropriate:
>   *What do you already know that can help you make a good prediction?*
>   *What has the author told you that can help you make a good prediction?*

> Read aloud the next few pages. Have students listen for information that confirms or disproves their predictions. Ask students to cite clues in the text that helped them make and confirm predictions. Ask: *How close were your predictions?* Discuss how some authors set readers up and then "surprise" them, thereby making accurate predictions impossible. Explain how this might happen in fiction (surprise endings create suspense) or nonfiction (in order to engage readers, scientists find that theories are wrong).

> Have students work in small groups or pairs to read a portion of the text. Have them preview and make predictions and then read to confirm or disprove them. Listen in while the groups discuss their ideas. Listen for evidence that they are using text clues and that their predictions are logical, based on experiences and linked directly to the subject or text they have been reading.

Apply Independently

> Before students apply the strategy independently, remind them to make and check predictions as they read. For example: *You will have a chance to read independently today. As you read, remember what we have been working on—making predictions as we read. Make a prediction for every 3–4 pages you read today. Ask yourself whether what you thought would happen did or whether you were surprised by what was in the text. If you were surprised, ask whether you think the author wanted you to be, or whether there was something important you missed while reading. Then make another prediction, or refine your old prediction, and read on.*

Determine Important Information

Teaching Rationale

Determining important information is a strategy that helps readers differentiate between ideas essential to understanding the meaning of the text and supporting details. Often there can be more than one important idea, and readers use clues from the text to determine which idea or ideas they think the author presents as most important. Students use this strategy to monitor progress, answer questions, and make inferences. This is also a good strategy to use when researching a specific topic. Students use this strategy to better understand what the author wants them to know. Students may find this difficult because the most interesting information in a text may not always be the most important.

Teaching the Strategy

Define the Strategy

> Name the strategy for students, explaining that determining important information means to locate or pick out the most important idea or ideas in a section of text. For example: *Determining important information is a strategy that helps us pick out the most important ideas in what we read. The most important ideas are the ones the author wants us to remember, or the ones we want to remember because the ideas help us achieve our purpose for reading.*

> Have students do a simple, quick activity to make sure everyone knows the name of the strategy, such as sharing it with a partner.

Model the Strategy

> Show students the text you will use to model the strategy (Concepts/Literature Big Book, Theme Reader or other demonstration text that all students can see).

> Page through the book briefly. Explain that the author includes lots of information, but that some ideas are more important than others.

> Think aloud to show students how to pick out the important ideas in a section.
>   • Show students how to look for key words in the title or subhead to determine the topic of the section.
>   • Look at text features, such as words in bold print and illustrations, for clues about the important ideas.
>   • Read the first and last sentences in each paragraph carefully, as authors often put important information here.

> Read the section and stop and ask questions:
  - *What is the most important idea of this section?*
  - *Can I pick out a sentence that tells the most important idea?*
  - *What details are interesting but not that important?*

> Provide a way to record important ideas and supporting details, such as a graphic organizer.

Guide Practice

> Choose another section and invite students to use the strategy with you. Let students do the thinking aloud as they use the steps listed above. Remind them to use what they already know (from the previous section) to help them determine the important information in this section.

> Help students use text structure, such as sequential order or description and explanation, to figure out important ideas of the next section.

> Have students work in small groups or pairs to read some text and work together to determine the important ideas. Listen for evidence that readers are separating important ideas from interesting details, and ask questions to help them if needed. Talk with the groups about how they are deciding what information is the most important.

Apply Independently

> Before students apply the strategy independently, remind them of the goal of the strategy: to figure out the most important ideas of the text. Review some questions they can ask as they read to determine the important information:
  - *What is the topic of this section?*
  - *What information seems the most important?*
  - *Does the author put important information in the first or last sentence of a paragraph?*
  - *What information is interesting but not that important?*

Determining Important Information in Fiction

> When students preview, they should look for clues to what the story will be about.

> As students read, they should identify key story elements (characters, setting, plot, theme). They might use a graphic organizer to keep track of events.

> Students can ask questions to determine the important ideas of a story:
  - *Who is the most important character in the story? What happens to this character?*
  - *Why is this important?*
  - *What is the most important event in the story? Why is it important?*
  - *Why did the author write this story? What does he or she want me to understand?*

Summarize

Teaching Rationale

Summarizing means creating statements in one's own words that convey the most important ideas from a text. Good readers use several strategies as they summarize, such as determining important information, making inferences, and visualizing. It is an important strategy to help readers monitor comprehension.

Teaching the Strategy

Define the Strategy

> Name the strategy and explain what it is. For example:
> *A summary is a paragraph or a statement that gives the most important ideas from what we have just read. We can summarize orally or write a paragraph that summarizes what we have read.*

> Further explain that
> • a summary of a nonfiction article tells the most important information
> • a summary of a story tells what happens in a story: the goals of the characters, how they tried to reach the goals, and whether they reached them in the end
> • we put a summary into our own words

> Have students do a quick activity to make sure everyone knows the name of the strategy.

Model the Strategy

> Show students a familiar text you will use to model the strategy (Concepts Big Book, Theme Reader, or other demonstration text that all students can see). Remind students that you have read this, and now you will summarize it. Depending on the length of the selected text, you can summarize the whole piece or just a portion.

> Think aloud and show students how to summarize.
> • Select key information from the text or part of the text, such as one section. (Depending on the text, use text features, text structure, or story events to identify key points.)
> • Condense the important information. Leave out details that are interesting, but not that important.
> • If appropriate, substitute concepts for details (wild animals for lions, tigers, bears).
> • Write a topic sentence for your summary.
> • Write the summary and read it back to students.

> A graphic organizer, such as a main idea and details frame or a story sequence chart, can be helpful in recording information for a summary. If appropriate, match a graphic organizer to the structure of the text.

Guide Practice
> Choose another section and invite students to use the strategy with you. Let students do the thinking aloud as they use the steps. Prompt students with questions, such as:
> • *What information is the most important? Can you use what you know about text structure to help you figure out the important information?*
> • *What information is less important?*
> • *Can you think of a word that describes several specific details?*
> • *What are the most important events in the story?*
> • *What is the goal of the main character? How does the character try to reach the goal? Is the character successful?*
> • *What could be your topic sentence?*

> Let small groups or pairs work together and write a summary of the section you have used for guided practice or choose another text to work with. Listen for evidence that students are locating important information, and encourage them to ask and answer questions that will help them. Provide help with writing topic sentences, if necessary.

> If the groups have worked on different sections of a larger text, bring the groups together to share the summaries. Work to write a summary of the larger text.

> Early instruction should involve shared writing of summaries.

Apply Independently
> Before students apply the strategy independently, remind them of the goal of the strategy: Thinking about the most important information and putting it in our own words helps us remember it better.

> Students might work in pairs to write summaries of text they both have read.

Retelling and Summarizing
> Retelling is the first step to summarizing. At the early grades, students can retell events in a story. They should be led to create a sentence or two that tells who is in a story and what happens.

> With nonfiction, young students should be able to pick out the main idea(s) of an article before they are asked to summarize it. They should then be led to create a sentence or two that tells what the article is mostly about.

Make Inferences

Teaching Rationale

Making inferences helps readers fill in gaps which the author has left in a text. Authors often leave gaps because writing every single detail would make stories and informational pieces too dense and boring. Examples of gaps reader might encounter include missing steps in a process or unfamiliar words in the text. Readers use their background knowledge and information from the text to fill in the blanks, or read between the lines in texts. Strategies used when making inferences can include determining important information, summarizing, and visualizing. Students can use making inferences as they monitor comprehension. Making inferences helps students make sense out of what they are reading.

Teaching the Strategy

Define the Strategy

> Name the strategy for students and explain that making inferences means adding information to a text in order to make sense of it. For example:
> *Making inferences is a strategy that helps us make sense of what we are reading. We use clues given to us by the writer and what we already know to help us understand what we are reading.*

> Have students do a quick activity to make sure everyone knows the name of the strategy and what it means.

Model the Strategy

> Show students the text you will use to model the strategy (Concepts Big Book, Theme Reader, or other demonstration text that all students can see).

> Think aloud and explain that authors don't tell us everything we need to know and that sometimes we need to fill in these parts on our own. For example, after reading about rain forests and how trees give off huge amounts of carbon dioxide, you might make inferences about what might happen when rain forests are destroyed.

> Continue reading, stopping periodically to make inferences based on the text and your background knowledge. Make inferences from the verbal content, pictures, and the text features as appropriate.

> In addition, instruction will show students other situations in which they may make inferences
  • to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words
  • to figure out plot events, characters' actions, and what the author's message might be
  • to clarify big ideas the author is trying to convey using connections to personal experiences, other texts, or the world.

> If appropriate, provide a graphic organizer to record clues provided by the author, what the readers already know, and the inferences they make.

Guide Practice

> Choose another section and invite students to use the strategy with you. Let students do the thinking aloud as they use the steps listed above. Remind them to use what they already know (from the previous section) to help them fill in missing ideas or events with inferences that make sense.

> Prompt students with questions such as:
  • *What is this about? What do you already know about this?*
  • *How can you infer the meaning of unfamiliar words?*
  • *Do you understand what the author is trying to tell you? What other information do you need to figure out what the author is trying to tell you?*
  • *What facts has the author provided? What conclusion can you draw, based on these facts?*

> Have students work in small groups or pairs to read a section of the text. Have them make inferences to better understand the text, including determining the meaning of unfamiliar words, figuring out plot events, or clarifying the author's big ideas. Listen for evidence that the groups are making logical inferences based on experiences and are linked directly to the text they have been reading.

Apply Independently

> Before students apply the strategy independently, remind them of the goal of the strategy: to add information to make sense of what they are reading.

> Encourage them to use what they already know to help them understand what the author is trying to say.

Visualize

Teaching Rationale

Good readers visualize to make sense of what they read. The pictures readers form in their minds are based on their own sensory imagery and what they have read in the text. Readers can form pictures of characters, settings, or a combination of description and photos in nonfiction text. Visualizing helps readers monitor comprehension, determine important information, and summarize.

Teaching the Strategy

Define the Strategy

> Name the strategy for students and explain that visualizing means creating mental images of text, either in the mind or on paper. For example:
> *Visualizing is a strategy by which we use words to make pictures in our minds. We use it to understand what we are reading.*

> Have students do a simple, quick activity to make sure everyone knows the name of the strategy and what it means.

Model the Strategy

> Find a demonstration text which is age-appropriate and filled with rich imagery. Explain that you will use the text to make pictures, which will help you understand what you are reading.

> Read a chunk of the text. Think aloud and show students how to use information presented in the text to visualize. For example, point out describing words, actions, comparisons, and other text structures.
>   • *This sentence describes Pepper as sprinting towards the door when her owner got home. I picture a trim dog running at full speed towards the door and knocking down her owner.*
>   • *Here it says that Shawn helped his mom identify ducks at the local pond. I picture Shawn with binoculars shouting out names of birds as his mom furiously writes them down in her notebook.*
>   • *The author writes that her favorite memory is cooking dinner with her grandpa, complete with spaghetti noodles and sauce, salad, and garlic bread. One thing I imagine about them cooking is the smell. It must smell yummy—full of garlic, tomato, and spices. It makes me hungry just to think about it.*

Guide Practice

> Choose another section and invite students to use the strategy with you.
  Let students do the thinking aloud as they use the steps listed above. Remind them to
  use what they already know (from the previous section) to add to or revise their
  mental picture.

> Prompt students with questions such as the following:
  - *What is this about? What do you already know about this?*
  - *In your mind, what do you see the character doing? What do you picture
    happening here?*
  - *What do you see in your mind when you read the words [give examples of
    descriptive language]?*
  - *What does this process look like? What do you picture in your mind as you
    read about this historical event?*
  - *What would you feel, see, and hear if you were in this situation?*

> Have students work in small groups or pairs to read a section of the text. Encourage
  them to edit their pictures as they continue reading. Listen for evidence that students
  are creating pictures based on their own experiences and what they have read in
  the text.

Apply Independently

> Before students apply the strategy independently, remind them of the goal of the
  strategy—to use words to make pictures in their minds. Encourage them to use what
  they already know as they read and visualize.

Ask and Answer Questions

Teaching Rationale

Asking and answering questions is a strategy that includes two parts. Good readers ask purposeful questions about the text in order to understand what they are reading. Asking questions helps readers monitor comprehension, determine important information, and visualize. It also helps to draw them further into the text. Answering questions, however, often involves questions that are written or asked by a third party. Answers to these questions can be found in the text or may need to be put together from the student's own experiences. While students maybe more familiar with asking questions, answering questions posed by others can also help clarify text and build understanding.

Teaching the Strategy

Define the Strategy

> Name the strategy for students and explain that asking and answering questions as we read helps us stay interested and helps us make sense of what we read. Have students turn and share the name of the strategy with a partner.

Model the Strategy

> The instruction should focus on how to help students ask appropriate questions as they read and how to locate answers to questions they are asked.

> Show students the text you will use to model asking questions.

> Model asking questions as a way to preview, activate prior knowledge, and set purposes for reading. All questions should be related to the text. Write your questions so all can see them.
> - *I want to ask some questions before I read. Then I will look for the answers to my questions as I read. First, I want to know: What will this selection be about? I can look at the text features, such as the title and the subheads, to help me answer that question. The answer to this question is right here in the text.*
> - *Another question I have is: What do I already know about this topic? The answer to this question is in my mind. I know a little bit about the topic. I will read to see whether there is new information here.*

> Read a bit of the text aloud. Stop and model asking a question or two as you read. Think aloud to show how you answer your questions. Help students understand that some of their questions will be answered in the text and some will require them to take the text and what they know to draw conclusions. Demonstrate how some answers can lead to other questions.

> Read on to see whether any of the questions are answered.

> Point out that often there are questions someone else has asked (such as on a test or at the end of some stories). Talk about how students can answer them.
  • Some questions have answers that are "right there" in the text, such as questions that begin with *who, what*, or *when*.
  • Sometimes questions ask you to put parts of the text together ("think and search") to answer, but all of the information is in the text. You might have to use information from different parts of the text.
  • Some questions ask you to fill in missing parts. The author gives some information, but he or she not does not tell you everything you need to know. (*Why do you think the character did that? What do you think will happen next?*)
  • Some questions ask you to take information from a story or article and use it in a new way. (*What would you have done? How would you have solved the problem?*)

> Present highlighting techniques or an appropriate graphic organizer for recording questions and any answers students find.

Guide Practice
> Invite readers to share some of the questions they have about the demonstration text. Write them next to yours. Read to see whether the questions are answered.

> Let small groups or pairs work together to ask and answer questions about a reading selection. Listen in as they ask and answer the questions. You might ask some "right there" or "think and search" questions to get students started. Emphasize that the questions are intended to help them understand what they read.

Apply Independently
> Before students apply the strategy independently, remind them of the goal of the strategy: We ask and answer questions to make sense of what we read.

> Provide graphic organizers for students to guide their text interactions: record questions they ask and any answers they find as they read.

Make Connections

Teaching Rationale

Wright Group LEAD21 assumes making connections is a subset of the comprehension strategy asking and answering questions. Specifically, it is a way to engage readers with "on my own" questions and as such is an essential part of critical thinking. Readers will make three different connections:

> Text-to-self: Readers connect what they read and their own knowledge and experiences at home or school.

> Text-to-text: Readers connect topics and themes between different books that they have read.

> Text-to-world: Readers connect what they read to issues and ideas in the world at large.

Using this strategy helps get at the larger purpose of reading—to expand the reader's world.

Monitor Comprehension

Teaching Rationale

Monitoring comprehension is an essential strategy that good readers constantly use to assess whether they understand what they have read. If readers do not understand what they have read, they can apply fix-up strategies. Examples of fix-up strategies include rereading, reading on, and seeking help. These will vary depending on the kind of help the reader determines that he or she needs. This strategy is used alongside other strategies, for example when predictions don't come true or when judging whether an inference is needed.

Teaching the Strategy

Define the Strategy

> Tell students that we monitor our comprehension when we think about how we are reading. That means we ask ourselves whether we understand what we read, and we have actions to take when we do not understand what we read very well.

> Students do a simple activity to show that they know the name of the strategy they will be learning about.

Model the Strategy

> Use an appropriate activity to preview the text, activate prior knowledge, set purposes, and make predictions before reading the demonstration text.

> Model setting a purpose and reading to see whether it is met. Use fix-up strategies such as rereading, reading on, summarizing, adjust reading rate, using illustrations, and seeking help when you encounter difficulty. Think aloud to show how to use the fix-up strategies. For example:
>   • *My purpose was to find out what makes the seasons. After I read the section, I still didn't know. I thought I would reread at a more careful pace. This helped because I focused on specific ideas in the text and looked carefully at the pictures.*
>   • *The title of this story has the names of two characters, Iris and Walter. The pictures show a girl and a man walking along. I predicted the man would be Walter, since that is a boy's name. But the girl, who is Iris, calls the man Grandpa. Who's Walter? I need to change my prediction and read on to find out who Walter is.*

> Write down the fix-up strategies for students to refer to.

Guide Practice

> Invite readers to listen as you read some of the demonstration text. Tell them to raise issues that are confusing to them. Talk about which fix-up strategies might clarify the text. If necessary, look for instructional opportunities, such as:
>   • *There are unfamiliar words. (reread for definitions, adjust for reading rate, look up words)*
>   • *I don't understand this process. (use illustrations, reread, summarize)*
>   • *I don't understand what caused this to happen. (reread, read on, ask yourself questions to clarify)*
>   • *Why did the author put this information in? (reread, adjust reading rate, use illustrations)*

> Small groups or pairs can work together and read a common text, monitoring their comprehension and applying fix-up strategies that help them understand what they are reading. Listen for evidence that students are applying appropriate fix-up strategies.

Apply Independently

> Before students apply the strategy independently, remind them to set goals for reading and pay attention so they can monitor their comprehension. Tell them to refer to the list of fix-up strategies when they get stuck or when the reading doesn't match their expectations, purposes, or predictions.

Comprehension Skills in Wright Group LEAD21

LEAD21 also provides explicit instruction in comprehension skills, which can be thought of as subsets of strategies. The **LEAD21** list has been compiled from state curriculum guides and state and national tests. For example, the skill called "sequence events" helps students identify the order of events in a story or explanation. In these instances, sequence is a function of text structure. Understanding how to identify the sequence might be one step in making inferences, especially if the author does not provide all the steps. Table 2 shows how comprehension skills and literary elements can be paired with comprehension strategies in **LEAD21** (Raphael, Highfield, and Au 2006). Skills help readers understand how specific texts are put together and how to work within different kinds of texts. Strategies are behaviors that students can apply to any text they read. The goal of any sound course of reading instruction, including **LEAD21**, should always be to help students become active readers.

> Skills help readers understand how specific texts are put together and how to work within different kinds of texts.

Table 2 Comprehension Strategies and Skills	
Comprehension Strategy	**Selected Comprehension Skills from LEAD21 Scope and Sequence**
Predict Students create a hypothesis about upcoming events or text based on background knowledge, text features, and text structure.	• Use text features, such as titles or subheads, to preview and predict • Use text structures (fact/fantasy; fiction/nonfiction; sequence, cause/effect, compare/contrast, description/definition, problem/solution) to preview and predict • Use prior knowledge to predict • Recognize genres and identify characteristics of genres • Determine author's purpose • Identify literary elements (character, setting, plot, etc.)
Determine Important Information Students identify the most important idea in a section of text. Students distinguish this important idea from details that tell more about it.	• Distinguish between main idea and supporting details • Use text structures to help identify key ideas • Use text features to help identify key words and ideas • Distinguish between fact and opinion • Determine author's purpose • Analyze setting, characters, and plot to identify key story ideas • Generalize
Summarize Students create a new text that stands for an existing text. The summary contains the important information in the text.	• Distinguish between main idea and supporting details • Analyze setting, characters, and plot to identify key ideas • Categorize and classify ideas/examples in text to arrive at big concepts • Use text structures to help identify key ideas • Retell/recall text information or story events
Make Inferences Students "read between the lines" to add information not explicitly stated by the author but needed to make sense of the text.	• Access prior knowledge triggered by words or text events • Draw conclusions about information not explicitly stated • Determine author's purpose • Visualize or create mental images based on the text • Generalize about theme • Identify motives of characters • Think critically: analyze, evaluate, make judgments
Visualize Students make visual representations of text, either in the mind or on paper.	• Use text structures to help identify organizers for text • Use details in the text to create mental images of events, processes, characters, and so on • Use graphic sources
Ask and Answer Questions Students use prior knowledge and information in the text to create relevant questions to guide their reading for explicit and implicit text information.	• Preview, activate prior knowledge, and set purposes by asking questions: *What is this text about? What do I already know about this topic? What do I want to find out as I read?* • Recognize genres • Identify and analyze literary elements • Identify text structures
Make Connections Students make connections between text and themselves, other reading, and the world.	• Think critically: analyze, evaluate and discuss, make judgments • Use prior knowledge
Monitor Comprehension Students evaluate text understanding and use fix-up strategies to resolve comprehension difficulties.	• Set purposes and check to see whether they are met • Identify main ideas and supporting details • Use text structures to recall information • Analyze story elements to check understanding • Use fix-up strategies: reread, read on, ask questions, adjust reading rate, summarize, ask for help

Comprehension Skills Survey

The following pages briefly define comprehension skills taught in **LEAD21**.

Categorize and Classify

Explanation: Classifying and categorizing are sorting activities in which students take objects, ideas, stories, and so on and put them in groups. Items and ideas might be grouped according to use, attributes, or any other scheme an individual can justify.

Instructional Tips
> Have students practice with concrete objects prior to classifying abstract items, such as characters.

> Have students decide on the method for classifying and explain it.

> Have students discuss ways classifying helps them at school and at home.

> Provide questions students can ask to help them classify: *What is similar about the items? Do I use them for the same task or activity? How could it help to sort these things into groups? What is similar about all the stories we have read?*

Compare and Contrast

Explanation: Comparing and contrasting means identifying ways two or more things, ideas, people, texts, and so on are alike (compared) or different (contrasted). Making comparisons to known ideas helps students learn something new.

Instructional Tips
> At first, provide criteria for comparing and contrasting so students can focus their reading. Older students can make their own comparisons between texts and between prior knowledge and new ideas.

> Point out clue words: *like, in addition, unlike, but*

> Provide questions students can ask to compare/contrast: *How are [A and B] alike? How are they different? What details in the text describe [A]? [B]? Are these the same or different? Are there clue words to help me compare and contrast? What is one way to compare these things? Another way?*

> Provide appropriate graphic organizers: Venn diagram, T-chart

Details and Facts

Explanation: Details and facts are small bits of information that tell more about important ideas. Details in fiction may describe settings and characters; details in nonfiction may give examples or more information about the main idea or topic.

Instructional Tips
> Provide main idea and then ask students to locate details that tell more about it.

> Point out sensory details or details that describe when, where, or how.

> Point out facts that support an author's point of view or bias.

> Provide appropriate graphic organizers: concept web with the main idea already stated; a main idea/detail frame with the main ideas provided.

> Read text that is rich with details so students can draw pictures or write using details from the text.

Determine Author's Purpose

Explanation: An author's purpose is the reason for writing. Purposes include to persuade, to inform, to entertain, and to express ideas. Understanding author's purpose helps readers decide on an appropriate rate for reading.

Instructional Tips
> Have students preview the text (features and structure) to make predictions about purpose and then read to see how close their predictions are.

> Remind students that an author does not usually state a purpose for writing; readers must use clues to figure out the important ideas of the selection and this will lead to an understanding of purpose. Point out that there may be more than one purpose—to tell a good story about friendship and to give information about life on a farm.

> At early grades, point out the author's name and talk about what an author does. Later, students should be able to identify the author's main purpose and relate it to their reading rate.

> Provide questions students can ask to determine author's purpose: *What does the author want me to learn? What clues help me draw my conclusion? Why did the author write this? Is the author trying to get me to think about something in a new way? What would I ask the author about this piece of writing? Did the author fulfill the purpose?*

Distinguish Fact from Opinion

Explanation: Facts are pieces of information that can be proved; opinions are statements of belief or personal ideas. Opinions that are supported by facts are valid opinions; those that are not supported by facts may be faulty. Helping students distinguish facts from opinions requires that students evaluate writing and ultimately the author's purpose in writing.

Instructional Tips

> Distinguish between facts and opinions with clear examples. At later grades, students need to see sentences and paragraphs that contain both facts and opinions. Older students may be expected to evaluate whether opinions are valid or faulty.

> Point out clue words that often signal opinions: *I believe, I think, in my view.*

> Have students preview, using text features and text structure as a way to predict whether the piece will contain mostly facts or mostly opinions or a combination.

> Provide questions students can ask to help them distinguish facts from opinions: *Can this statement be proved? How could I check this statement? What do I already know about the topic that could help me decide whether this is a fact or an opinion? Do any of these statements tell what the author thinks or believes? Are these opinions of the author valid or faulty?*

> Provide a graphic organizer for recording facts and opinions as well as evidence supporting each choice.

Draw Conclusions

Explanation: A conclusion is a decision a reader makes using information from text—details and facts—and prior knowledge. Drawing conclusions promotes active reading.

Instructional Tips

> Remind students that authors don't tell us everything we need to know and that we have to fill in some missing pieces.

> Have students preview and predict before reading and then read to see how close their predictions are.

> Help students determine the important information and separate out the details.

> Provide questions students can ask to help them draw conclusions: *What happened? Why did it happen? Why did the character behave the way he or she did? What details help you draw your conclusion? Does your conclusion make sense based on the story and what you already know? What do you think will happen next? Why do you think that?*

Generalize

Explanation: A generalization is a broad statement that can apply to many examples that are mostly alike. We want to teach students to identify generalizations and to make them.

Instructional Tips

> Students must first be able to identify important information. Then they can study the examples, evaluate them, and decide whether they can make a general statement about them.

> Introduce clue words: *all, none, most, many.*

> At higher levels, help students decide whether generalizations are valid or faulty. A valid generalization must be based on supporting facts from the text. A faulty generalization does not have enough supporting facts from the text or does not make sense to you.

> Provide questions students can ask to help them make and identify generalizations: *Do the details or examples all support one idea? Can you use the clue words in a generalization and have it make sense? What information from my own experience tells me this is a valid or faulty generalization?*

Identify Cause and Effect

Explanation A cause is why something happens; an effect is what happens. Understanding cause-effect relationships is an important part of comprehending science and social studies materials.

Instructional Tips

> Tell students that as they read, they should try to figure out what happens and why it happens. Sometimes causes are not stated directly and readers need to use information in the text and their prior knowledge to figure them out.

> Introduce clue words: *because, so, since, therefore, as a result.*

> Older students need to understand that an effect can have many causes and that one cause may have several effects.

> Provide questions students can ask to determine causes and effects: *What happened? Why did it happen? Were there more than one cause or effect? Does the author tell me exactly what happens and why, or do I need to fill in some missing ideas?*

> Provide a cause-effect frame for students to record causes and effects.

Identify Main Ideas and Supporting Details

Explanation: The main idea is what a section is mostly about. Details tell more about the main idea.

Instructional Tips

> With younger students, ask: *What is this story or article mostly about?*

> With older students, explain that the topic is what the selection is mostly about. The main ideas are the most important ideas of the topic. Details are pieces of information that tell more about main ideas.

> Tell students that sometimes the main idea is stated in a sentence, but sometimes it is not. Readers need to figure it out themselves.

> Provide questions students can ask to help identify main ideas and details: *What is this article mostly about? What is the most important idea in this section? What details tell more about this idea?*

> Provide a graphic organizer such as a main idea/details frame for students to record main ideas and details as they read.

Identify Text Structure

Explanation: Text structure refers to the way text is organized, rather than the content it contains. In fiction, we teach students to recognize a story's chronology, or sequence. We teach students to identify the elements of plot: conflict, rising action, and resolution. Nonfiction is organized in various ways, usually according to author's purpose.

Instructional Tips

> Provide examples of common text structures:
Sequential. Fiction or nonfiction may be presented in chronological order as in an historical account, a set of directions, or a story.
Description/definition. This structure often sets out a topic and then describes or defines examples that support it. An overview of a particular habitat might include descriptions of sets and subsets of living and nonliving things.
Compare/contrast. This pattern shows how two or more topics are alike and different. Good compare/contrast writing sets out clear criteria for comparison and contrast.
Problem/solution. This pattern sets out an issue or problem and explains approaches to addressing or solving it. Often more than one point of view is provided; often too, the writing contains bias toward one or more approaches. As with fiction, students can use graphic organizers such as charts, tables, semantic maps, and the like to help them organize and comprehend.

> Have students use text structure during their preview to help them make predictions and set purposes.

> Tell students that recognizing how information in a piece of writing is organized can help them remember it. When introducing a specific text structure, provide a matching graphic organizer.

> Remind students that they can also use what they learn about text structure when they write.

Sequence Events

Explanation: Sequence refers to the order in which events take place. The steps in a process are given in sequential order.

Instructional Tips

> For younger students, events most often happen in order. Help children determine that order by asking: *What happens at the beginning? In the middle? At the end?*

> Older students can look for a wide variety of clue words to help them determine sequence: *first, next, last, in the morning, after that, next spring.*

> More sophisticated material may describe events that happen at the same time or out of order: Flashbacks describe events out of order.

> Help older students understand how sequence can play an important part in a story. Sequence can determine how a character behaves, why plot events happen as they do, and so on.

> Provide questions students can ask to determine sequence: *What are the important events? In what order do they take place? Can I retell what happens first, next, last? What clue words help me figure out sequence? How would the story change if the events happened in a different order?*

> Provide timelines for students to use to record the sequence of events.

Steps in a Process

Explanation: "Steps in a process" describes a way to organize text, such as recipes or how-tos. It is related to following directions as well as sequence. The steps can be easy (make a paper chain) or difficult (repair a car).

Instructional Tips

> Point out directional text, such as recipes or craft instructions. Show students how to read numbered text or help them locate clue words that indicate steps such as numerals or number words.

> Older students may find that steps in a process do not include all the steps and that they might have to fill in gaps.

> Have students give each other directions to follow. This can be in front of the entire class, or in a one-on-one situation.

Use Graphic Sources

Explanation: Graphic sources provide information with pictures or symbols and few, if any, words. Some graphic sources organize a lot of information in a way that makes it easy to compare and see change over time.

Instructional Tips

> Over the program, students will learn how to read illustrations, charts and tables, diagrams, graphs, maps, and timelines. Students will use a routine to read these graphics:
> **Read the title.** The title tells the topic of the graphic.
> **Read the key.** The key shows what the symbols on the graphic stand for.
> **Study the graphic.** Use the symbols, the pictures, and any words to put the information in the graphic in your own words.

> Older students can begin to understand how choosing the most appropriate graphic source can help readers comprehend information quickly.

> Students at all ages can be encouraged to create graphics which contain the information listed in the routine above (title, key, symbols, and so on).

> Provide questions students can use to study graphics: *What does this graphic show? What is the topic of the graphic? How can I find out the topic? How does the key help me understand the graphic? How does this graphic help me understand what I am reading?*

Use Text Features

Explanation: Text features are elements of text which are used to organize and locate information. Elements used to locate information include words in bold type, the Table of Contents, Glossary, and Index. Elements used to organize information include chapter titles, heads, subheads, labels, and captions—all features through which the reader enters the text.

Instructional Tips

> Have students use text features to predict, set purposes, and guide reading.

> Have students use text features to find information about a particular topic, or review something they have read about.

Paraphrase

Explanation: Paraphrasing involves putting small amounts of text into one's own words. The chunks are small enough so that this skill does not include judging which ideas are most important; rather the emphasis is on translating the author's language into one's own.

Instructional Tips

> Before moving to paragraphs have students practice putting sentences into their own words. Students might also paraphrase orally at first.

> Have students paraphrase text to check their understanding of what they have read.

> Encourage students to share their paraphrases. Paraphrases should be logical and text-based, but will differ from student to student.

Conclusion

Wright Group LEAD21 is solidly based on research, which shows that proficient readers choose and apply multiple strategies and related skills in all three phases of the reading process: before, during, and after reading. The comprehension strategies chosen for the series are those most called for in states' curricula and assessments. As utilized in **LEAD21**, comprehension strategies apply broadly to any text, while the comprehension skills are defined as those tools that are text specific. All strategies and skills are critically placed unit-by-unit in ways to best encourage "envisionment building," so that all students learn how to willingly enter the world of the text, move through it effortlessly, and come out of it more knowledgeable than when they began.

All the strategies and skills in **LEAD21** are explicitly taught. Within each instructional unit, students work with two comprehension strategies in both fiction and nonfiction texts, and they are encouraged to work cumulatively with all the strategies they have learned thus far. The gradual release of responsibility model (Pearson and Gallagher 1983) forms the basis for each instructional episode. Teaching the Strategy, under each named strategy in this paper, describes the presentational methods used in **LEAD21**. The varying complexities of the reading texts found in **LEAD21** provide ample opportunities for students to apply various combinations of skill and strategy use, arming students with powerful tools for achieving reading success.

LEAD21 Reading Comprehension Pedagogy	
Research Says	**LEAD21 Delivers**
Good readers simultaneously use a variety of strategies and skills to comprehend text (RAND 2000; NAEP 2007).	Two strategies per unit are taught and students use the strategies cumulatively throughout the year. **Comprehension Strategies:** • Predict • Determine Important Information • Summarize • Make Inferences • Visualize • Ask and Answer Questions • Make Connections • Monitor Comprehension
Research has identified numerous strategies and skills that good readers use (National Reading Panel 2000; RAND Reading Study Group 2002).	Strategies and skills are selected from state curricula and assessments. **Comprehension Skills:** • Categorize and Classify • Compare and Contrast • Details and Facts • Determine Author's Purpose • Distinguish Fact from Opinion • Draw Conclusions • Generalize • Identify Cause and Effect • Identify Main Ideas and Supporting Details • Identify Text Structure • Sequence Events • Steps in a Process • Use Graphic Sources • Use Text Features • Paraphrase
Good readers use comprehension strategies and skills together to understand text (Raphael, Highfield, and Au 2006).	Check Comprehension and Guide Comprehension features label the skill or strategy that the questions assess. • What do you think would happen to the other living things in an ecosystem if part of a food web went missing? MAKE INFERENCES • Ask students how the bicycle analogy on page 322 helps explain the concept of interdependence. MAKE CONNECTIONS
Good readers engage in "envisionment building" (Langer 1995).	Students are encouraged to engage all learned strategies and skills throughout every reading session—before, during, and after reading.
Good teachers use the gradual release of responsibility to teach comprehension (Pearson and Gallagher 1983).	• Liberal use of Think Alouds demonstrate teacher modeling. • Collaborative Practice exemplifies Steps 3 and 4 of the model. • Point-of-use questions, named Guide Comprehension, provide teachers with tools to direct student learning. • Respond and Respond and Write initiates student involvement.

Author Biography

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Dr. Raphael's research has focused on comprehension strategy instruction (Question-Answer Relationships), strategy instruction in writing, and frameworks for literacy curriculum and instruction (Book Club *Plus*). She directs Partnership READ, a school-university partnership funded by the Chicago Community Trust to improve literacy instruction through professional development, recognized by the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education's 2006 Best Practices Award for Effective Partnerships. Dr. Raphael has published nine books and three edited volumes and more than 100 articles and chapters in journals such as *Reading Research Quarterly, American Educational Research Journal, The Reading Teacher, Language Arts,* and books with educational publishers such as Teachers College Press and International Reading Association. She has been a Fellow of the National Council of Research in Language and Literacy since 1996 and a member of the Reading Hall of Fame since 2002. She serves on the Board of Directors of International Reading Association (2007–2010).

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