

Module 6: Increasing Reading Comprehension

Module Description

In this module, we will explore how to provide the type of instruction and practice needed for students to successfully become readers of complex grade-level text. We will make connections to what was learned in the previous online modules about oral language, phonological skills, phonics, spelling, accurate and automatic word recognition, text-reading fluency, background knowledge, and vocabulary, and we lay a foundation for how they all contribute to reading comprehension. We will review our conceptual models, the gradual release of responsibility model, and the literacy and language practices to help English Learners achieve reading success. We will explore how to purposefully select text and how the use of comprehension strategies plays a significant role in improving students' reading comprehension skills. We will learn explicit routines and instructional strategies for teaching comprehension for all grade levels and fix-up strategies for when comprehension breaks down. We will explore the different types of text structures and how they assist comprehension, how to use Read Alouds in primary grades and masterful reads for adolescents to guide students in high-quality discussions, how to set up protocols for discussion, and finally, how teachers can informally assess comprehension.

*Note for educators who took the K–3 Building a Strong Foundation: Developing Early Literacy Skills training: Content additions are embedded throughout the new K–12 Building a Strong Foundation for Lifelong Literacy Success course, including the addition of examples, videos, and resources. The text in **green font** indicates where significant updates have been made.

Module Objectives

In this module, participants will learn the following:

- The factors that contribute to deep comprehension, including background knowledge, vocabulary, verbal-reasoning ability, knowledge of literary structures and conventions, and the use of skills and strategies for close reading of text
- Teaching strategies that are appropriate before, during, and after reading and that promote reflective reading
- Levels of comprehension, including the surface code, text base, and conceptual model
- The characteristics of major text genres, including narration, exposition, and argumentation
- The definitions of phrases, dependent clauses, and independent clauses in sentence structure
- The parts of speech and the grammatical role of a word in a sentence
- How to identify in any text the phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and academic language that could be a source of miscomprehension
- How to identify cohesive devices in text, and inferential gaps in the surface language of text

- How to identify and understand comprehension deficits in adolescents, and strategies to support adolescent comprehension achievement
- Major differences between narrative and expository discourse
- The similarities and differences between written composition and text comprehension and the usefulness of writing in building comprehension
- How to interpret measures of reading comprehension and written expression to make appropriate instructional recommendations

Module Outline

Section 1: Introduction

Introduction

Welcome to Module 6! This module is the last of six online modules in Colorado’s Building a Strong Foundation for Lifelong Literacy Success, a professional learning series aimed at supporting teachers’ efforts to promote reading achievement in kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Here are the modules in this course:

- Module 1: Understanding the Science of Reading
- Module 2: Building Oral Language and Phonology
- Module 3: Exploring Phonics and Word Study
- Module 4: Creating Fluent Readers
- Module 5: Developing Vocabulary
- Module 6: Increasing Reading Comprehension

Pre-Assessment

Section 2: Introduction to Comprehension

Section Overview

This section provides an overview of comprehension and explores the major contributors to this domain, including background knowledge, vocabulary, verbal-reasoning ability, sentence processing, knowledge of literary structures and conventions, and skills and strategies for close reading of text. This section illustrates the factors that contribute to creating skilled readers of complex, grade-level text along with the factors that contribute to why other students struggle with comprehension.

Simple View of Reading and Scarborough’s Reading Rope

In this subsection, you will continue to understand the causal relationship among oral language, early foundational skills such as automatic word recognition and text reading fluency, background knowledge, verbal-reasoning skill, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. You will learn about factors that contribute to creating independent readers of grade-level, complex text, and the big ideas of how to

create able readers. Finally, you will view a video with insights about the elements of comprehension and complete a reflection.

English Learner Considerations

In this subsection, you will read about six key principles for English Learner (EL) instruction, in addition to 10 literacy and language practices that allow English Learners to participate in challenging, grade-level tasks while supporting their language development. You will also have the opportunity to apply the language and literacy practices to a student scenario.

Check for Understanding

Section 3: Text Structures and Text Features

Section Overview

In this section, you will learn about the three different types of text structures and how they, along with text features, support comprehension. Next you will look at four steps that teachers can follow as they select text to support comprehension development, with a checklist based on these steps that teachers can use as a resource when selecting texts for comprehension instruction. Finally, you will learn considerations for choosing text for English Learners.

Using Text Structures and Features to Support Comprehension

This subsection explains how knowledge of text structure can support comprehension and includes guidance for teaching students about text structures and text features and how to use them. You will view a multimedia presentation, explore the main differences of literary and informational text, and test your knowledge of different text structures. You will compare text structures and look at [example text types and questions by grade bands](#). Lastly, you will learn about the importance of text features and [view a video of common features embedded in text](#).

Check for Understanding

Section 4: Sentence Structure and Syntax

Section Overview

In this section, explore the role that syntax and sentence structure play in reading as well as writing. We will review the parts of speech as well as introduce phrases and clauses and how they help to develop sentences. Next, we look at those devices that hold sentences and paragraphs together, such as transitional words, phrases, and the use of pronouns and substitutions. Finally, we will consider strategies for unpacking sentences for English Learners.

Sentence Structure and Syntax

In this subsection, you will learn about the structure of sentences, identify how sentences grow, and learn how to teach sentence structure as well as types of phrases and clauses. Participants will review grammatical terms, parts of speech, and sentence structure, following along with a printable guide. [Lastly, you will watch two videos to better understand the different sentence structures.](#)

Function of Cohesive Devices in Comprehension

In this subsection, you will identify the cohesive devices (pronoun referents, word substitutions, and transitions), discover how to teach cohesive devices to students, explore multiple resources for elementary and secondary students, and review a chart of instructional practices.

English Learner Considerations: Unpacking Sentences

Unpacking sentences is one way to guide students through an instructional conversation that demonstrates how language works. The videos in this subsection show how to focus on one sentence from a complex informational text with both a kindergarten and fifth-grade class of English Learners.

Check for Understanding

Section 5: Introduction to Comprehension Strategies

Section Overview

In this section, you will explore how to teach students to use comprehension strategies, how to guide students in high-quality discussions, and how to create an engaging learning environment. It also provides information on understanding the levels of comprehension processing, including the surface code (the literal meanings of words), the text base (the meanings underlying the words), and the conceptual model (the main ideas and details, and their connections to each other and to the context).

Research on Reading Strategies

In this subsection, you will first look at what good readers do and the relationship between those habits and behaviors to teaching reading strategies. You will watch a video of Dr. Nell Duke explaining what good readers do and complete a reflection. Then you will read an article, “The Usefulness of Brief Reading Comprehension Strategies,” by Daniel Willingham.

Five Comprehension Strategies

This subsection offers a multimedia presentation that describes common traits of comprehension strategies, identifies the five comprehension strategies explored in this module, and provides research on effective comprehension instruction. [You will also view a video of Dr. Tim Shanahan regarding background knowledge and complete a reflection. Lastly, you will review how to bundle strategies to aid in comprehension and view a video of reciprocal teaching.](#)

Teaching Comprehension Strategies Using the Gradual Release of Responsibility

In this subsection, you will watch a multimedia presentation to review the gradual release of responsibility model and how to implement it when teaching a comprehension strategy.

Inferencing and Comprehension

In this subsection, you will gain an understanding of the levels of comprehension processing, including the surface code (the literal meanings of words), the text base (the meanings underlying the words), and the mental model (the main ideas and details, and their connections to each other and to the context). You will explore strategies for teaching inferencing and understand why it can be a difficult concept for learners. Lastly, you will read a blog by Tim Shanahan regarding what it takes to teach inferencing and watch videos of upper elementary students and middle school students making inferences in text.

Check for Understanding

Section 6: Beyond the Strategies: Methods to Support Comprehension

Section Overview

In this section, we are going to focus on a number of methods to support reading comprehension, such as writing, close reading, masterful read, genre study, and discourse. In addition, we will wrap up by returning to our conceptual models now that we have completed all of the modules in this course.

Writing to Improve Reading Comprehension

In this subsection, you will review the meta-analysis on how writing improves reading comprehension, with a look at having students write about the text they read and teaching students writing skills. You will read a meta-analysis about writing to read by Steve Graham and Michael Hebert, view a video, and complete a reflection. Then you will watch a multimedia presentation regarding the use of graphic organizers, and watch videos on how to teach Cornell Notes, effective ways to annotate text, and how to use anchor charts in the classroom.

Discourse to Increase Comprehension

This subsection will explore genre study: the concept that how you pose questions to students determines how students will respond and how deeply they may need to think to answer the question. In addition, you will learn classroom discussion procedures and how to support students' engagement in text-based discussion. You will read an article, "How to Teach Expository Text Structure to Facilitate Reading Comprehension," and complete a reflection. You will also watch a multimedia presentation about planning your questions for classroom discussion, complete an interactive activity, and watch a video of Tim Shanahan discussing the use of text-dependent questions. Lastly, you will read the research regarding how to improve adolescent literacy and have the opportunity to view multiple videos regarding different discussion formats and protocols, including Jigsaw, Fishbowl, and the Socratic seminar.

Close Reading

In this subsection, you will learn that close reading is not a strategy but rather a way to engage students in cultivating a deeper level of understanding of text. You will learn about how close reading can assist students in achieving this goal. This subsection also includes a multimedia presentation on text complexity and a rubric to select text. You will also have the opportunity to view a video of adolescent students engaging in challenging text, and reflect. Lastly, you will read an article, "What Are the Benefits of Reading Aloud," to explore the value of masterful reads for comprehension. You will then learn about comprehension deficits and read an article regarding deficits in adolescent students.

English Learner Considerations: Supporting Engagement in Discussions

This subsection highlights the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) as a model to use when working with English Learners. We will discuss the importance of strategically using prompts and questions to engage students in discussions about text, provide opportunities for vocabulary use, and monitor comprehension. You will have the opportunity to watch two videos, one that reviews the value of content and language objectives, and another on using the strategy of sentence frames to enhance discussion for English Learners.

Wrapping Up Our Literacy Learning Journey

This subsection reviews the conceptual frameworks discussed throughout the course and the important features of literacy instruction to ensure students learn how to read.

Check for Understanding

Section 7: Assessing Comprehension

Section Overview

Now you will review the use of an informal comprehension inventory to assess students' understanding. In this section, you will gain insights into the complexities of comprehension assessment and what that means for you as a teacher, interpret measures of reading comprehension, learn how written expression supports reading comprehension and some assessment guidelines, and integrate all the learning you have done throughout this study on the science of reading.

Overview of Assessing Comprehension

In this subsection, you will review what contributes to reading comprehension and discuss the implications.

The Assessment Cycle

In this subsection, you will review the parts of the assessment cycle and learn how they are used to assess comprehension of reading and writing.

Universal Screener

You will examine the use of screeners to determine students at risk who need further diagnostic assessment.

Diagnostic Assessment

In this subsection, you will learn more about diagnostic assessment tools for comprehension.

Progress Monitoring

In this subsection, you will learn more about progress monitoring, including how to use formative assessments to inform reading instruction and how to analyze written expression tasks to guide instruction. A multimedia presentation regarding informal comprehension assessment and an activity are included. Resources for a maze assessment and examples of formative assessment, such as rubrics, exit tickets and portfolios, are also included.

Outcome/Summative Assessments

In this subsection, we will discuss the role of outcome/summative assessments in reading development and making instructional decisions. An interactive activity is included to test your knowledge of these assessment types.

Connections to Conceptual Models

Our conceptual models have been our frameworks for thinking about development, reading difficulties, and reading disabilities. In this subsection, you will consider the relationship between assessment and our conceptual models.

Check for Understanding

Section 8: Closing Activities

Section Overview

Section 8 includes an opportunity for you to test your recall and understanding, a self-assessment to compare how you think your knowledge of topics covered in the module changed since the beginning of the module, and a module evaluation. Specifically, the final activity is meant for you to have fun and show what you have learned from the online modules by playing an online version of the game show Jeopardy!

Put It into Practice

In this activity you will evaluate your own classroom practices, completing a Teacher Self-Assessment Rubric by selecting the levels of frequency and proficiency that best describe your use of best practices and instructional strategies to support student learning within your content area. Then you will play a Jeopardy-inspired game to test your knowledge of everything you have learned throughout the course.

Post-Assessment

Module Feedback

Module Completion