



Serra Catholic School

READING COMPREHENSION GUIDE FOR PARENTS

What to do when comprehension is a challenge for your child...



Dear Parents,

As we are all “teachers” to our own children/students, we are always looking for ways to help our children study and learn. We have had the opportunity to offer strategies and resources to help a child who is struggling with reading comprehension at conferences. When discussing these strategies with parent, we have often heard in reply, “Oh, I wish somebody would have told me that sooner!”

Taking that comment to heart, we have compiled a list of advice and best practices from our teachers at all grade levels. The first part of this guide has ideas for all students from the International Reading Association submitted by Mrs. Dina Dimler, our reading specialist. Next, we have listed ideas submitted from our teachers from kindergarten through middle school. It is our wish that you find this guide helpful now as you work with your child towards better comprehension and ultimately a life-long love for reading. Should you have any questions or feel you need more guidance, all of our administrators and teachers are happy to help.

Yours in Christ,

The Administration and Faculty of Serra Catholic School

Advice for All Readers

Strategies

Initial Book Activities

One of the easiest ways to begin telling the story of a book is through the use of illustrations. Most books for young children are illustrated in great detail, and noting important details related to the characters, plot, and setting will provide a wholesome first literacy activity.

Set aside a regular time and place for books in your home so that reading books becomes as natural as eating and sleeping.

Browse through books to help your child become familiar with books and how they are handled.

Read the story while your child points to the pictures. Adult and child can repeat interesting sounds, repetitive word patterns, and distinctive word features to the delight of both.

Have your child tell the story using the illustrations, while the adult reinforces the telling. The two can predict outcomes, discuss how the characters feel, and relate the events to their own experiences.

Read the book to your child and enjoy it together. Retell the story together and talk about the characters, setting, plot, and life experiences.

Compare the similarities and differences of children's books available as video productions.

Have children make responses to the books read through art reproductions such as drawings, or by using clay, paper-mâché, dioramas, or finger-paints.

Make regular trips to the library and attend storytelling sessions. Visit bookstores together to begin a personal library for a child.

Beginning Reading-level Activities

Children at this level should be encouraged to browse through books and pretend to read the story, an initial step toward becoming an independent reader. Children may tell the story to themselves or attempt to read frequently highlighted words.

Read the story as your child points to the pictures on each page.

Let your child pretend to read the story as the adult points to the pictures.

Read alternate pages, ask each other questions, and discuss the story. The adult models what he or she thinks of when reading the page so your child gets a variety of perspectives on the ways words have different meanings.

Use computer programs to expand a child's interest in specific topics and to provide valuable information for later curriculum study.

Compare and contrast video adaptations of children's books for this and more advanced literacy levels.

Use Lindamood-Bells "Visualizing and Verbalizing" techniques. Teach your child to change words into pictures in his/her mind and change them back into words by verbalizing what they've just read. Break down each related word or sentence depending on your child's level of understanding by reading aloud the word or sentence and stop and ask your child to visualize what you just read. Ask, "What do those words make you picture?" Place some pieces of differently colored squares in front of your child. Have your child touch one of them and say, "Here I saw...." Your child then gives a word summary, a verbal summary that uses images that formulates generalizations. The key is that the word or sentence images build on one another. It is important to remember that this is an exercise in visualization, not paraphrasing. The goal is to get your child to automatically imagine while reading. It is best to begin this technique with material that is below or at your child's reading level.

Primary-grade Book Activities

Continue to spend time reading with your child; set aside a specific time and place.

Be familiar with Children's Choices books and other high-quality children's literature.

Become aware of the interests of your children and books that extend life experiences so they know what happens in the world around them.

Encourage children to share books read in school with parents and caregivers at home. Parents and caregivers should encourage children to share books they've read at home with their teachers and schoolmates.

Continue to extend the information and knowledge bases through computer programs and other technology that capitalize on topics initiated through reading.

Independent Reader Activities

Challenge readers to compare and contrast books.

Encourage children to develop an interest in a variety of genres such as biography, historical fiction, and poetry.

Encourage children to read books related to beginning career and vocational choices.

Seek a balance between school book activities; home and school literature activities; and familiarity with newspapers, magazines, and other text media that address contemporary social, cultural, and civic issues.

Develop the Desire to Be a Lifelong Reader

Have students apply and discuss what they have read to what is viewed on film, television, computer and other media technologies.

View technology in the reflection of the literature.

Keep in mind that the most memorable conversations are often filled with anecdotes from literature.

Relate what has been read to the solution of problems. By internalizing what has been read, we use knowledge and wisdom to solve personal problems, to make significant decisions related to career choices, to find solutions to community and social problems, and to develop healthy attitudes toward a positive world environment.

Some Questions and Answers

Is it okay for my child to read a favorite book over and over?

Yes! It's okay for a child to re-read a favorite book or to read books that are "too easy."

What should my child be reading? What "counts" as reading?

The basic answer is that any words on a page count as reading as long as they are age appropriate. For example, newspapers, magazines, mail, notes, shopping lists, bumper stickers, street and store signs, religious texts and hymnals are just a few types of print in addition to books that parents can use to make literacy a part of daily life for their families. Closed-captioned television is particularly noteworthy. There are many families who claim that their children learned to read by being exposed to print while watching favorite television programs—your children simultaneously heard and saw the words in print on the television screen. (Take caution not to over-use closed-captioning television.)

When should I stop reading to my child?

The simple answer is never. Many parents believe that "reading to" should cease when their children begin to read independently. Not so! There is great value in continuing to read aloud to older children, perhaps chapters at bedtime or an interesting article from the newspaper. Parents can also read with their children, perhaps alternating pages or paragraphs. They may want to listen to their children read. They may want to sit side by side with their children, each reading what he or she desires. Parents may even want to encourage their child to read to a family pet or

even a stuffed animal. All these activities are legitimate forms of independent reading at home that will lead to success in children's literacy development.

Resources

Our number one book for you, the parent:

Trelease, J. (2001). *The Read Aloud Handbook*. New York, U.S.A. Penguin Group Inc.
ISBN # 0 14 10.0161 5

In this handbook, Jim Trelease shows how to make every child become an avid reader.

Our number two book for you:

Trelease, J. (1992). *Hey! Listen to This, Stories to Read Aloud*. New York, U.S.A.
Penguin Group Inc. ISBN # 0 14 01. 4653 9

To view an extensive list of recommended reading books please visit: www.cbcbooks.org or www.reading.org/resources/booklists.aspx

Kindergarten

Strategies

1. Mini book reports: Draw pictures of what happened first, second and last in the story. Draw a picture of the setting, the main characters, theme or the ending.
2. Ask questions to check for understanding of picture books.
3. Re-read the short stories in the alphabet letter books that your child brings home from school. Ask your child how they think the characters feel in each picture.
4. Read a picture book to your child. Have your child draw four pictures of what happened in the story on 3"x5" index cards to create sequence cards. Have your child place the cards in the correct order and re-tell the story.

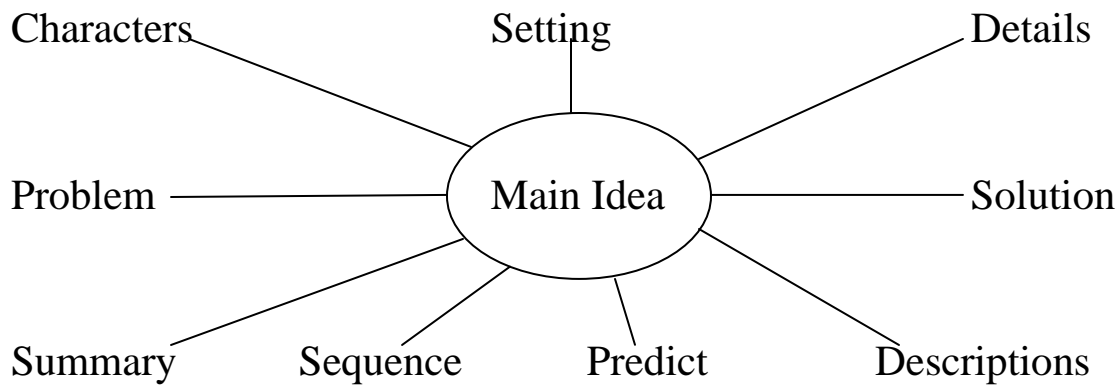
Resources

1. Purchased *sequence cards* from a teacher supply store
2. *Books on tape*

Primary Grades 1 and 2

Strategies

1. Help your child make a story map to help retention and to study the different parts of the story structure.



2. Help your child write a summary of the story or re-tell it to you in his/her own words while you write down what they say.
3. If you are working on an assigned story for homework, have your child answer the questions at the end of the story in complete sentences. If you are working on a story where no questions are provided at the end, ask your child questions about the story using the “w” words and open ended questions. For example: Why did the main character like to go to school? Or, What did the character learn by the end of the story?
4. Help your child develop a growing awareness that words can rhyme. Your child will begin to understand words have parts. For example: b-ag, g-ag, h-ag, n-ag, r-ag, t-ag, w-ag and S-ly-S-am s-lurps S-ally’s s-oup.
5. To help your child develop fluency, expression and meter you can try, “Echo Reading.” You read a sentence or paragraph and have your child read it back to you.

Resources

1. *Tumble Books* – an online library. Go to the web site of a county or city library and Click on “Children’s Services” and then click on “Tumble Books” for access to children’s books.
2. *Bloom’s Taxonomy* describes the levels of thinking beginning with the basic level of knowledge and increases to the higher levels of thinking such as synthesis and evaluation. It offers many words to begin your questions after reading a story with your child.

Bloom's Taxonomy

Knowledge

Who, What, Where, When, Match, Choose, Which one, Define...

Comprehension

State in your own words, Classify, What part does not fit?

Application

Predict what would happen if, Explain, How much change would there be?

Analysis

What is fact? Opinion? Make a distinction. Explain the effects...

Synthesis

Choose, Develop, Propose and alternative. How else would you...

Evaluation

Criticize, Defend, and Compare, What fallacies? Judge, Find the errors....

Grades 3-5

Strategies

1. Read stories and poems that rhyme aloud to your child. Call attention to examples of alliteration. Explain *alliteration* to your child as: *the occurrence of two or more words having the same initial sound*. For example, "Wailing in the winter wind."
2. Stop every few lines and ask your child to predict what will happen next as you read.
3. Take turns reading with your child. Listen to your child read aloud.
4. Model reading with expression and listen to your child read with expression.
5. Have your child use a bookmark to keep his/her place.
6. If your child avoids reading this can be a big red flag. Talk to his/her teacher about this right away.
7. Ask questions to check that your child is getting the point of the reading. Explain what you think the point of the story is if you see your child is not getting the point.
8. Use the vocabulary words in the story when you ask your child questions. Note the vocabulary words your child uses to answer your questions and encourage him/her to use them.

9. As you discuss the story with your child bring up past experiences and encourage your child to relate them with the story.
10. Author Study: Find out facts about the life of the author of the story, talk about them and list them. The goal is to make a connection between a book and an author's life. This shows your child that authors are real people, develops motivation to seek out other works by the same author and hopefully inspires him/her to write about the author or why they wrote the story.
11. Write a Letter to a favorite author. If your child gets a response from the author he/she can share it with the class.
12. Shared Reading: You read one page of a novel and your child reads the next page. You can ask questions to check for understanding after each page or two.
13. Comprehension Checklist: Ask your child these questions after reading a story.
Where does the setting take place? What time of day? What time of year? Who are the main characters? What are their traits/personalities? What is the problem? How is the problem solved? How does the story end?
14. Use books on tape. Have your child follow along in the book. Stop to check for comprehension using the above list of questions.
15. Have your child draw a series of pictures of scenes from the book. Have your child explain what is happening in the pictures.
16. Have your child trace his/her handprint and list WHO was in the story (the characters); WHERE the story took place (the setting); WHAT happened in the story (events); WHY? (Identifying the problem); and HOW it was resolved (the solution).
17. Use the **SQ3R method** for nonfiction comprehension. Follow these steps:
 - Survey** – Look at these things: 1) Titles and Subtitles, 2) Pictures and Writing under them, 3) Graphs and Tables, 4) The First and Last sentences of a short article, or, the First and Last Sentences of Each Paragraph if the article is a long one.
 - Question** – Ask yourself these things: A) WHO or WHAT is it mostly about? B) WHERE and WHEN did it happen? C) WHAT is the MAIN PROBLEM? D) HOW did it TURN OUT?
 - Read** – Read the story or article should be easier to read and remember. You may be able to read a little faster than you usually do.
 - Recite** – Now answer the question (known as the A-B-C-D QUESTIONS) that you asked yourself before beginning to read. Do this aloud, in your mind, or on paper.
 - Review** – Did you get the A-B-C-D QUESTIONS right? Check to make sure. Have your child respond to what they have read by writing down in a journal what they visualized while reading. They can write about how they connected with the writing, how they felt about it, what they are wondering, what they predict will happen in the story as they are reading. This can be done after every chapter or a certain number of pages are read.

Knowledge

Useful Verbs	Sample Questions Stems	Potential Activities and Products
tell list describe relate locate write find state name	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happened after...? • How many...? • Who was it that...? • Can you name the...? • Describe what happened at...? • Who spoke to...? • Can you tell why...? • Find the meaning of...? • What is...? • Which is true or false...? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a list of the main events. • Make a timeline of events. • Make a facts chart. • Write a list of any pieces of information you can remember. • List all the ... in the story. • Make a chart showing... • Make an acrostic. • Recite a poem.

Comprehension Questions

Useful Verbs	Sample Questions Stems	Potential Activities and Products
explain interpret outline discuss distinguish predict restate translate compare describe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you write in your own words...? • Can you write a brief outline...? • What do you think could have happened next...? • Who do you think...? • What was the main idea...? • Who was the key character...? • Can you distinguish between...? • What differences exist between...? • Can you provide an example of what you mean...? • Can you provide a definition for...? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut out or draw pictures to show a particular event. • Illustrate what you think the main idea was. • Make a cartoon strip showing the sequence of events. • Write and perform a play based on the story. • Retell the story in your words. • Paint a picture of some aspect you like. • Write a summary report of an event. • Prepare a flow chart to illustrate the sequence of events. • Make a coloring book.

Application

Useful Verbs	Sample Questions Stems	Potential Activities and Products
solve show use illustrate construct complete examine classify	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know another instance where...? • Could this have happened in...? • Can you group by characteristics such as...? • What factors would you change if...? • Can you apply the method used to some experience of your own...? • What questions would you ask of...? • From the information given, can you develop a set of instructions about...? • Would this information be useful if you had a...? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct a model to demonstrate how it will work. • Make a diorama to illustrate an important event. • Make a scrapbook about the areas of study. • Make a paper-mâché map to include relevant information about an event. • Take a collection of photographs to demonstrate a particular point. • Make up a puzzle game using the ideas from the study area. • Make a clay model of an item in the material. • Design a market strategy for your product using a known strategy as a model. • Dress a doll in national costume. • Paint a mural using the same materials. • Write a textbook about...for others.

Analysis

Useful Verbs	Sample Questions Stems	Potential Activities and Products
analyze distinguish examine compare contract investigate categorize identify explain separate advertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which events could have happened...? • I... happened, what might the ending have been? • How was this similar to...? • What was the underlying theme of...? • What do you see as other possible outcomes...? • Why did...changes occur? • Can you compare your... with that presented in...? • Can you explain what must have happened when...? • How is... similar to...? • What are some of the problems of...? • Can you distinguish between...? • What were some of the motives behind...? • What was the turning point in the game? • What was the problem with...? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design a questionnaire to gather information. • Write a commercial to sell a new product. • Conduct an investigation to produce information to support a view. • Make a flow chart to show the critical stages. • Construct a graph to illustrate selected information. • Make a jigsaw puzzle. • Make a family tree showing relationships. • Put on a play about the study area. • Write a biography of the study person. • Prepare a report about the area of study. • Arrange a party. Make all the arrangements and record the stops needed. • Review a work of art in terms, of form, color and texture.

Synthesis

Useful Verbs	Sample Questions Stems	Potential Activities and Products
create invent compose predict plan construct design imagine propose devise formulate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you design a... to...? • Why not compose a song about...? • Can you see a possible solution to...? • If you had access to all resources how would you deal with...? • Why don't you devise your own way to deal with...? • What would happen if...? • How many ways can you...? • Can you create new and unusual uses for...? • Can you write a new recipe for a tasty dish? • Can you develop a proposal which would... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invent a machine to do a specific task. • Design a building to house your study. • Create a new product. Give it a name and plan a marketing campaign. • Write about your feelings in relation to... • Write a TV show, play, puppet show, role play, song or pantomime about...? • Design a record, book, or magazine cover for...? • Make up a new language code and write material using it. • Sell an idea. • Devise a way to... • Compose a rhythm or put new words to a known melody.

Evaluation

Useful Verbs	Sample Questions Stems	Potential Activities and Products
judge select choose decide justify debate verify argue recommend assess discuss rate prioritize determine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a better solution to ... • Judge the value of... • Can you defend your position about...? • Do you think... is a good or a bad thing? • How would you have handled...? • What changes to... would you recommend? • Do you believe? • Are you a... person? • How would you feel if...? • How effective are...? • What do you think about...? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a list of criteria to judge a ... show. Indicate priority and ratings. • Conduct a debate about an issue of special interest. • Make a booklet about 5 rules you see as important. Convince others. • Form a panel to discuss views, e.g., "Learning at School." • Write a letter to ... advising on changes needed at... • Write a half yearly report. • Prepare a case to present your views about...

Take time everyday to integrate the principles of good reading comprehension into everyday life as you communicate with your child. Excellent oral communication and reading comprehension go hand in hand. Here are some examples:

1. **Storytelling:** Enjoy making up a story with your child. Have fun using your imagination and your child will love this experience. Your storytelling will help your child to create a mental picture of what is happening, which increases comprehension. It will strengthen his/her ability to make predications as you make up what happens next. You can have your child fill in the important parts of the story which will help his or her sense of plot and sequence. Try introducing new vocabulary to your child. Storytelling can be enjoyed anytime, anywhere.
2. **Recalling the Day:** Talk to your child before you tuck him/her in at night. Trace back over the events of the day. Use clue words such as – First, then next, and finally. This will help your child to become stronger at his or her ability to remember how to sequence the events of a story. Ask your child critical thinking questions such as “What made this day special?” or “What did our experience at lunch remind you of?” Good readers are always making connections while they read. These connections can be related to another book they’ve read (text to text) a personal experience they’ve had, (text to self) or something in the world (text to world.)
3. **Movie Watching:** After you watch a movie with your child, talk about the story. Ask thoughtful questions about the characters. Compare the plot of the story to another movie. Ask your child to infer what he or she thinks would happen if there was a sequel to the movie. Find out what theme or lesson can be learned from the movie.
4. **Daily Reading:** Take the opportunity to read with your child each and every day. Chose your favorite childhood novel and read a chapter together each day. By spending just ten minutes a day reading together you can make a tremendous difference in your child’s comprehension ability.
5. **Reading the Newspaper:** Try reading a short article from the newspaper during breakfast instead of watching television. Your child will learn how to read for facts and develop his or her skills at figuring out context clues. Your older child can share his or her opinion about what is happening in the world. Take time to enjoy the comics, too! Your child will infer the meaning of the captions and illustrations.
6. **Visit the Library with Your Child:** Find out what your child is interested in and go to the library to check out books on the subject. Your child will be interested in what he or she is reading and then you can ask questions and share information together.

Hopefully, these examples will inspire you to enjoy communicating with your child in a way that strengthens his/her ability to become a better reader and critical thinker. Reading and talking to your child will enrich your relationship and create wonderful memories. Always model good reading habits and talk to your child about what they are reading. These conversations are treasures in the heart of parenting.

Reading Strategies that can be used in Social Studies or Science

1. **Say Something** - Take turns reading parts of a chapter together. After every paragraph one of you has to “say something” about what you have just read...make a prediction, ask a question, connect with something you know, or just comment. Have your child write down what is said. Tell them if they can’t say something about a paragraph, then they have to re-read it.
2. **Use Post-It® Notes** - Have your child flag sections of the chapters with questions or with comments on what they are reading. They can jot down notes about “people” in the chapter or dates. They can remove the Post-It® Notes after they’ve read the assignment and put them in their notebooks to help with review and studying later. Remember to include page numbers for reference.

Resources

Reading Rockets is a web site on reading, offering information on teaching young children to read. It is a national service of public television station WETA in Washington, D.C., and is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

Read Across America

Reading Rockets home page <http://www.readingrockets.org/>

To receive the latest reading news and information sign up for Reading Rockets newsletters and announcements go to <http://www.readingrockets.org/newsletters>

Middle School

Strategies

Teaching the Habits of Good Readers

Parent should model.....Child should practice:

1. Read slowly, carefully and with meaning.
2. Question.
3. Find the main idea of the story (Example: Somebody wanted.....but...so....).
4. Clarify some point in the story or article.
5. Describe what you visualize.
6. Predict or note foreshadowing.
7. Find incidences of humor or tragedy.
8. Infer (and so, I think that.....will happen; I think this really means...)
9. Draw a conclusion.
10. Make a generalization about what you have read so far.
11. Compare and/or contrast characters, incidences, settings, etc... of the story with another story.
12. Write down a significant passage (especially if it helps your understanding of the character).
13. Comment (Wow! I get it! What does that mean? etc...)
14. Question Author Why did the author write this story? What is the author's opinion?

Additional Strategies

1. Turn off the sound on the television and use closed-captioning. This allows children to read and enjoy television at the same time. Always do this under close supervision to ensure that your child is actually reading, not just watching silent television. You may wish to have your child read the closed-captioning aloud to you. (Take caution not to over-use closed-captioning television.)
2. Use audio books in conjunction with reading. This allows students to hear how words are pronounced. Typically the words that they don't know are words that they would skip.

Give background information before the story starts, especially cultural literary terms that your child might not understand. For example: "Don't *tip your hand* and let him know what you are doing." Give historical background, if necessary. Review new words.

- Use movement. Play charades to act out words, helping to build vocabulary and word understanding.

- Build on your child’s knowledge. Select reading topics that enhance subject matter previously covered or that reflects a child’s interests.
- Connect yesterday’s reading to today’s. Continue a story over several days. Have children restate what happened the day before and make predictions about what will happen the next day.
- Model reading passages with appropriate inflection and emotion as you read aloud to your child. Read aloud to your child for a few minutes every day.
- Have your child read a passage emphasizing a specific emotion such as sadness, excitement, happiness, or fear.
- Model thinking aloud as you read (interacting with the text). Stop and think after you read a passage and then say what you are thinking. (Examples: I wonder how the character will get out of this fix. I had something like that happen to me. I bet the new kid in school will turn out to be the friend he is looking for.)
- Summarize and review often. Recap short passages or chapters. Have your child use Post-It[®] Notes as he/she reads more challenging material such as science or social studies textbooks.

Reading Strategies that can be used in Social Studies or Science

1. **Say Something** - Take turns reading parts of a chapter together. After every paragraph one of you has to “say something” about what you have just read...make a prediction, ask a question, connect with something you know, or just comment. Have your child write down what is said. Tell them if they can’t say something about a paragraph, then they have to re-read it.
2. **Use Post-It[®] Notes** - Have your child flag sections of the chapters with questions or with comments on what they are reading. They can jot down notes about “people” in the chapter or dates. They can remove the Post-It[®] Notes after they’ve read the assignment and put them in their notebooks to help with review and studying later. Remember to include page numbers for reference.

Resources

Beers, Kylene (2003), *When Kids Can’t Read - What Teachers Can Do*,
Portsmouth, NH, USA, Hienemann ISBN 0-86709-519-9

Summary: This text book provides a road map for supporting struggling readers. The book provides particle strategies to help teachers strengthen comprehension as well as vocabulary, fluency, and word recognition skills.

The appendix of this book contains the Fry and Dolch word lists. The Fry lists are made up of the most commonly used words in the English language in printed and written material. It is important that your child recognizes and understands the meanings of these words. The Dolch word list is a list of basic sight vocabulary words. It is important that your child can read these words quickly without having to try to sound them out.