



# Literacy Links

December, 2008  
Volume 5, Number 4

Monthly E-Newsletter of Maine Reading First

Previous issues of Literacy Links have spotlighted revisiting the five essential elements of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension. The November 2005, the December 2006, and the November 2008 editions discussed comprehension and are available at <http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage.htm>



## Upcoming Maine Reading First Events

Debbie Diller is returning to Maine in August 2009! The Maine Reading First initiative will be sponsoring day long workshops with Debbie Diller on August 19 and 20. Her focus will be small group differentiated instruction. On August 19 she'll work with K-3 educators, and on August 20 with grade 4-6 educators. Location details and registration materials will be available in early 2009.

## Spotlight on...

## Comprehension Strategies: Instructional Methods for Helping Readers Construct Meaning

The process of comprehending requires the “orchestration of strategies” (Dorn, 2005, p.2). To promote strong comprehension of text, educators must understand the factors that impact a readers’ ability to comprehend, which strategies proficient readers use to construct meaning, how to assess readers’ use of these strategies, and instructional methods for helping readers’ apply comprehension strategies as they read. In this issue, instructional practices for teaching research based comprehension strategies will be explored.

### Instructional practices for teaching comprehension:

In order for students to comprehend and read to learn, students must be able to “read with divided attention” (Clay 1993). In other words, they need to be able to problem-solve new, difficult text as they read and focus on reading for meaning and understanding. This requires that the reader have control of the essential elements of reading. Decoding skills must operate fluently with knowledge of text vocabulary and application of comprehension strategies to insure that meaning is constructed by the reader. From the instructional point of view, student learning should be continually scaffolded **before, during, and after reading** to support successful comprehending of text.

Teaching comprehension strategies involves two critical components of instruction. *First*, teachers need to demonstrate to children what to do to comprehend by making the **unobservable** behaviors proficient readers use to construct meaning **observable**. *Second*, teachers need to structure guided practice opportunities in which students try using these strategic behaviors before, during, and after reading (Dorn, 2005).

Research from Armbruster, Lehr, and Osborn outline four areas for explicit teaching of comprehension strategies (2001).

- **Explanation**—The teacher explains why the strategy helps comprehension and when to apply it.
- **Modeling**—The teacher models or demonstrates how to apply the strategy, usually “thinking aloud” while reading the text.
- **Guided Practice**—The teacher guides and assists students as they learn how and when to apply the strategy.
- **Application**—The teacher helps students practice the strategy until they can apply it independently.

The Maine Reading First Literacy Leaders' Network (LLN) is underway for the 2008-09 school year. To learn more about the LLN, visit: <http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/materials.html> or contact: [Leeann.Larsen@maine.gov](mailto:Leeann.Larsen@maine.gov)



Neither comprehension nor learning can take place in an atmosphere of anxiety.

--Rose Kennedy

Research in the area of reading comprehension (NRP, 2000; Dorn, 2005) details strategic behaviors proficient readers use to construct meaning before, during, and after reading. These behaviors are listed below:

**Strategic Behaviors that support comprehending before reading:**

- Preview the text/Predict: Using prior knowledge, questioning
- Build Background knowledge: Recognizing text structure (fiction and non-fiction); asking questions before reading, using graphic organizers
- Setting purpose for reading: questioning

**Strategic Behaviors that support comprehending during reading:**

- Monitoring comprehension (metacognition) including clarifying meaning and using fix-up strategies; and Recognizing text structures (fiction and non-fiction)
- Check Understanding: asking and answering questions during reading; using prior knowledge; visualizing and using graphic organizers.
- Integrate new concepts: visualizing, inferring, synthesizing

**Strategic Behaviors that support comprehending after reading:**

- Summarizing: using graphic organizers, questioning, inferring, confirming.
- Evaluating the ideas: by asking and answering questions after reading, using graphic organizers, using prior knowledge (inferring and synthesizing) and using mental imagery (visualizing),
- Make applications: using graphic organizers, visualizing, inferring and synthesizing, confirming.

When first introducing strategic comprehension behaviors, teachers need to explicitly model them and provide opportunities for students to practice applying them before, during, and after reading. Through ongoing progress monitoring, teachers can identify with which behaviors students are secure and with which they need additional practice so that instruction can be adjusted to provide more practice with less secure strategies. Additionally, teachers should work toward students being able to integrate the use of these strategies as they read, and to be able to apply them to increasingly more complex texts.

**Tools for Teaching Strategic Reading Behaviors:**

There are a multitude of techniques for teaching comprehension strategies that fit the criteria for scientifically based reading research (SBRR). Some of these techniques include: Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DRTA), Question-Answer Relationships (QAR), Think-Pair-Share, Visualization Techniques, Graphic Organizers, Monitor/Clarify, Multi-Strategy Instruction. For your convenience, the following are a few of the active web-links that provide resources and student activities for teaching comprehension strategies.

**“Monitoring Comprehension: Teaching Comprehension Strategies to Students”** by Caryn Lewis:

<http://www.ed.gov/teachers/how/tools/initiative/summerworkshop/lewis/index.html>

**“Reading Strategies Scaffolding Students' Interactions with Texts”:**

<http://www.greece.k12.ny.us/instruction/ela/6-12/Reading/Reading%20Strategies/reading%20strategies%20index.htm>

**“Into the Book”:** <http://reading.ecb.org/index.html>

**Reading Quest: “Strategies for Reading Comprehension”** by Raymond C Jones, PhD:

<http://www.readingquest.org/strat/>



## Upcoming Events

Grade 5-9 Teachers—Save the Date

**You'll Reach Every Reader When You Differentiate Instruction**

Laura Robb, veteran educator, author and literacy coach, is coming September 11, 12, & 14, 2009. She will work in three locations across Maine, one location each day. These workshops will be sponsored by the University of Maine College of Education and Human Development. Contact Amy Cates at 581-2438 for registration information

# Description of Instructional Ideas...

## Inferring

From *Into the Book* (2006) Wisconsin Educational Communications Board on-line at: <http://reading.ecb.org/teacher/index.html>.

**Activity:** Reading Between the Lines

**Purpose:** To "read between the lines" or make inferences to construct meaning.

1. Teacher takes an enlarged section of text and displays it on the overhead. Teacher reads aloud selection, pausing at key sections to ask, "So, what is really going on?" (making inferences)
2. Teacher models how to find clues in the text to support thinking. Teacher demonstrates how prior knowledge helps to make inferences.
3. Teacher continues to read selection pausing at key sections and asking students to make inferences about what is going on in the text. Prompts might include:
  - Why do you think that happened?
  - I wonder....
  - What is really going on?
  - What evidence does the author provide to support\_\_\_\_\_?
  - What clues did the author give that led to your conclusion?
  - What is the story beneath the story?
  - How do you know that?
  - How do you think the character feels?
  - How do you combine the clues in the paragraph with what you already know to draw a conclusion?

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## START COMPREHENDING Students and Teachers Actively Reading Text

By Tabatha Dobson Scharlach  
*The Reading Teacher*, 62(1). Pp. 20-31. (2008) IRA

The START framework can improve students' reading comprehension achievement and instruction through the modeling and scaffolding of eight comprehension strategies during teacher read-aloud. Teachers model and scaffold the use of the following eight comprehension strategies:

1. predicting/infering
2. visualizing
3. making connections
4. questioning
5. determining main ideas
6. summarizing
7. checking predictions
8. making judgments

A chart in the classroom refers students to prompts they could ask themselves when using each strategy.

A full description of this innovative instructional framework is available from the September 2008 *Reading Teacher* or for IRA members online at: <http://www.reading.org/publications/journals/rt/v62/i1/>

**Institute for  
Designing Whole  
School Plans for  
Response to  
Intervention, K-8**

This institute will be sponsored by the University of Maine College of Education and Human Development on August 10-12, 2009. Contact Amy Cates at 581-2438 for more information and registration materials.



## Summary of Professional Texts...

It is very difficult to select one text for teachers when they have questions concerning teaching comprehension strategies. New texts and old favorites are offered here:

### **New Publications**

**Comprehension That Works: Taking Students Beyond Ordinary Understanding to Deep Comprehension Grades K-6** (June 2008) by Danny Brassell and Timothy Rasinski is published By Shell Education and the ISBN-13 is 978-1425802646.

This professional resource, co-authored by Timothy Rasinski and Danny Brassell, empowers teachers to facilitate innovative and engaging instruction with their students. Unique classroom-tested strategies integrate current research findings with real-life observations of diverse students in action. Learn why these comprehension strategies matter and how to introduce activities that tap into students' multiple intelligences.

**Four Powerful Strategies for Struggling Readers, Grades 3-8: Small Group Instruction That Improves Comprehension** (July 17, 2008) by Lois A. Lanning is published by Corwin Press. The ISBN-10 is 1412957273 and the ISBN-13 is 978-1412957274.

Lanning presents recent findings from comprehension research and then provides a detailed description of four comprehension strategies: summarizing, making connections, self-regulating, and inferring.

**Teaching Reading Comprehension to Students with Learning Difficulties: What Works for Special Needs Learners** (2007) by Jannette Klingler, Sharon Vaughn, and Alison Boardman is published by Guilford Press. The ISBN-13 is 9781593854461.

In this text, the authors share a variety of instructional strategies for helping students who struggle with reading comprehension, including methods for assessing comprehension, vocabulary instruction, text structure, and combining strategies such as reciprocal teaching and collaborative strategic reading.

### **Old Favorites**

**Reading is Seeing** (2004) by Jeffery D. Wilhelm is published by Scholastic and the ISBN-13 is 978-0439303095.

This book shares well over 100 visualization strategies that build reading skills and make reading, discussing, and reflecting on texts more engaging and relevant. These techniques can be adapted to use with virtually any kind of text, including, fiction, nonfiction, poetry, picture books. Idea tableau, mirror mapping, illustrated journals, picture maps, character symbol maps, and quote books are just a few of the many motivating strategies. Some other books written by Wilhelm and published by Scholastic include *Improving Comprehension with Think-Aloud Strategies* (ISBN: 0-439-21859-4) and *Action Strategies for Deepening Comprehension* (ISBN: 0-439-21857-8).

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## Children's Literature Titles...

### Civil War Era Text Set

The set of books below might make a nice addition current collections of socials studies nonfiction:



What guides us is children's response, their joy in learning to dance, to sing, to live together. It should be a guide to the whole world.

- Yehudi Menuhin

**Lincoln Through the Lens: How Photography Revealed and Shaped an Extraordinary Life** (September 2008) by [Martin W. Sandler](#), Pulitzer Prize nominee and Horn Book Award Honor Book award winning author, is published by Walker Books for Young Readers and the ISBN-13 is 978-0802796677.

More than one hundred images of Lincoln's life and times provide a complete portrait of this revered president and the events that defined him. From the only confirmed existing picture of Lincoln before the historic Gettysburg Address to his second inauguration—where he is unknowingly surrounded by John Wilkes Booth and his coconspirators—to the execution of his murderers, this eye-opening, inspiring visual journey provides a fresh take on one of the most documented and beloved figures in American history.

**Lincoln: A Photobiography** (1989) by Russell Freedman is available from Clarion Books and the ISBN-13 is 978-0395518489. This book is appropriate for ages 8-12.

This Newbery Award-winning study of our 16th president is highly readable and meticulously organized. In a boxed review, Publishers Weekly hailed it as a "superb, encompassing account" of "an intriguing, recognizable human being."

**Abraham Lincoln (10 Days That Shook Your World)** by David Colbert is available in January 2009 from Aladdin Books. The ISBN-13 is 978-1416968078. This book is appropriate for ages 9-12.

**War, Terrible War 1855-1865** (History of Us, Book 6) (2002) by Joy Hakim is available from Oxford University Press and the ISBN-13 is 978-0195153309. This book is appropriate for ages 9-12.

**Mr. Lincoln's High-tech War** by Thomas B. Allen and Roger Macbride Allen will be available Jan 13, 2009 from National Geographic Children's Books and the ISBN-13 is 978-1426303791. This book is appropriate for ages 9-12.

Allens' detailed study demonstrates why Lincoln's appreciation of the importance of technology, his understanding of the art of war, and his mastery of military strategy were key elements in the winning of the American Civil War.

**Causes and Effects of the American Civil War** (American History Milestones) by G. O'Muhr will be available January 2009 from Powerkids Press and the ISBN-13 is 978-1435830134. This book is appropriate for ages 9-12.

**Traveling the Freedom Road: From Slave and the Civil War Through Reconstruction** by Linda Barrett Osborne in association with the Library of Congress will be available February 2009 from Abrams Books for Young Readers and the ISBN-13 is 978-0810983380. This book is appropriate for ages 9-12.

The beautiful  
thing about  
learning is  
nobody can take  
it away from you.  
- B. B. King



A good teacher  
must be able to  
put himself in  
the place of those  
who find learning  
hard.

--Eliphas Levi

Told through unforgettable first-person accounts from slave narratives, journals, diaries, and other sources—much of it never before published for young people—this book is an overview of the antebellum South, the Civil War, and Reconstruction, 1800 to 1877. The perspectives of children and adults who lived through this time and witnessed its significant events are provided alongside photographs, engravings, news clippings, and other archival materials held in the collections of the Library of Congress, and offer a poignant message for readers.

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## News from Maine Reading First...

We want your suggestions! As you peruse the monthly editions of *Literacy Links*, you might have topic ideas for the spotlight, instructional strategy, children's literature, professional text, or web site resource sections. We'd love to hear your ideas. Please email them to: [geecon@fairpoint.net](mailto:geecon@fairpoint.net).

Check it out...

<http://reading.uoregon.edu/comp/index.php>

The University of Oregon's Big Ideas in Reading website is useful for information about comprehension instruction and assessment. In addition to a clear description of the research that supports comprehension, this site includes specific information about the critical features of comprehension instruction and assessment, including a sequence of instruction, appropriate benchmarks for kindergarten through grade three students, and guidance for selecting instructional materials and programs. **Curriculum maps from this site (as shown below) give clear guidance to follow when considering the hierarchy of skills and determining benchmarks.** The numbers in the top row of the curriculum map correspond to the months of the school year. For example, if your school year begins in September, then September would be month 1 on the map. If your school year begins in August, then August would be month one.



**SNEAK PREVIEW**

**Coming soon**

2008-2009  
Literacy Links—

- ❖ *Response to Intervention*
- ❖ *Purposeful Text selection*
- ❖ *Strategies for non-fiction comprehension*

## Mapping of Instruction to Achieve Instructional Priorities Kindergarten

Instructional Priority: <b>Comprehension</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<b>Focus 1: Predicting</b>									
1a: Uses pictures and information about the story to predict what will happen next				X	X				
<b>Focus 2: Identifying Information From Stories</b>									
* 2a: Answers <i>who</i> <sup>1</sup> , <i>where</i> <sup>2</sup> , and <i>what</i> <sup>3</sup> questions after listening to a sentence or short paragraph	1,3	1,3	1-3	1-3					
2b: Responds to stories by answering and asking questions, discussing ideas, and relating events to personal experiences	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Focus 3: Retelling and Summarizing</b>									
* 3a: Retells a familiar story with a book				X	X				
3b: Retells a familiar story without a book including beginning, middle, and end						X	X		
3c: Retells a story and includes characters, settings and important events							X	X	
3d: Identifies the correct sequence of events in a story read orally by someone else								X	X
<b>Focus 4: Making Connections</b>									
4a: Connects events, characters, and actions in the story to specific life experiences	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

\* High priority skill

"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn."

**CORRECTION:**  
 ---Alvin Toffler  
**NOT**

- William Shakespeare



## Mapping of Instruction to Achieve Instructional Priorities First Grade

Instructional Priority: <b>Comprehension</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<b>Focus 1: Identifying Information From Stories</b>									
* 1a: Answers <i>who</i> <sup>1</sup> , <i>what</i> <sup>2</sup> , <i>when</i> <sup>3</sup> , <i>where</i> <sup>4</sup> , and <i>how</i> <sup>5</sup> questions after listening to or reading paragraph(s)	1,2	1,2	3,4	3,4	3,4	5	5	1 <sup>f</sup>	1 <sup>f</sup>
* 1b: Tells the main idea of a simple story or topic of an informational passage	1	1	1	1,2	1,2				
* 1c: Identifies and answers questions about characters <sup>C</sup> , settings <sup>S</sup> , and events <sup>E</sup>	C	C,S	C,S	C, S,E					
<b>Focus 2: Making inferences</b>									
2a: Makes and verifies predictions based on information from the story				X	X	X			
2b: Draws conclusions about information or stories read						X	X	X	
<b>Focus 3: Retelling and Summarizing</b>									
* 3a: Retells the main idea of simple stories		X	X	X					
3b: Retells a story and includes characters, settings and important events			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3c: Retells correct sequence of events in a story or a chronological passage					X	X	X	X	X
3d: Summarizes main ideas learned about a topic from an informational passage							X	X	X
<b>Focus 4: Monitoring Comprehension</b>									
4a: Stops while reading to assess understanding and clarify	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Focus 5: Making Connections</b>									
5a: Connects events, characters, and actions in the story to specific life experiences	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5b: Uses prior knowledge to clarify understanding	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

\* High priority skill  
 f. Integrated

## Mapping of Instruction to Achieve Instructional Priorities Second Grade

Instructional Priority: <b>Comprehension</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<b>Focus 1: Comprehending Stories</b>									
* 1a: Answers questions about main characters, <sup>MC</sup> settings, <sup>S</sup> and events <sup>E</sup>	MC	MC	MC S	MC S	MC S,E	MC S,E			
1b: Identifies characters' actions, motives, emotions, traits, and feelings			X	X	X	X			
1c: Makes and confirms predictions based on information from the story							X	X	X
* 1d: Answers <i>what-if</i> , <i>why</i> , and <i>how</i> questions				X	X	X			
* 1e: Distinguishes main idea/details <sup>MD</sup> ; fact/opinion <sup>FO</sup> ; cause/effect <sup>CE</sup>		MD	MD	FO	FO	CE	CE		
<b>Focus 2: Comprehending Informational Text</b>									
2a: Uses text structure to aid understanding				X	X	X			
2b: Uses information from simple tables, maps, and charts to learn about a topic					X	X	X		
2c: Uses titles, table of contents, and chapter headings to locate information						X	X	X	
<b>Focus 3: Comprehension Monitoring</b>									
3a: Reads for understanding	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3b: Interacts with stories <sup>S</sup> and informational <sup>I</sup> text to clarify and extend comprehension	S	S	S	S,I	S,I	S,I			
<b>Focus 4: Retelling, Summarizing, Synthesizing</b>									
* 4a: Retells explicit <sup>E</sup> and implicit <sup>I</sup> main ideas		E	E	E	I	I	I		
* 4b: Identifies the correct sequence of events	X	X	X						
* 4c: Draws conclusions based on content			X	X	X				
4d: Identifies/discusses theme of text					X	X	X		
<b>Focus 5: Making Connections</b>									
5a: Connects events, characters, actions, and themes to specific life experiences	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5b: Uses prior knowledge to clarify understanding	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5c: Makes comparisons across reading selections					X	X	X	X	X

\* High priority skill



## Season's Greetings



# Mapping of Instruction to Achieve Instructional Priorities Third Grade

Instructional Priority: <b>Comprehension</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<b>Focus 1: Comprehending Stories</b>									
* 1a: Answers literal <sup>L</sup> , inferential <sup>I</sup> , and evaluative <sup>E</sup> questions	L	L	I	I	E	E			
1b: Makes, confirms, and modifies predictions based on text information		X	X						
* 1c: Answers questions about main characters <sup>MC</sup> , setting <sup>S</sup> , theme <sup>T</sup> , and plot <sup>P</sup>	MC S	MC S	MC S,P	MC S,P	MC S,P,T	X	X	X	X
1d: Identifies characters' actions, motives, emotions, traits, and feelings			X	X	X				
* 1e: Distinguishes main idea/details <sup>MD</sup> ; fact/opinion <sup>FO</sup> ; cause/effect <sup>CE</sup>	MD	MD	FO	FO	CE	CE	X	X	X
<b>Focus 2: Comprehending Informational Text</b>									
* 2a: Uses structure of informational text to aid understanding			X	X	X				
* 2b: Uses information in tables, graphs, diagrams, maps, and charts					X	X	X		
2c: Follows multiple-step written instructions	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Focus 3: Comprehension Monitoring</b>									
3a: Checks and adjusts for understanding while reading	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3b: Interacts with stories and text to clarify and extend comprehension	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Focus 4: Retelling, Summarizing, Synthesizing</b>									
* 4a: Retells the main ideas of stories or informational text	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4b: Recalls the correct sequence of events in a story <sup>S</sup> or informational passage <sup>I</sup>	S	S	I	I	X	X	X	X	X
4c: Draws conclusions <sup>C</sup> and generalizations <sup>G</sup>	C	C	C	G	G	G			
4d: Identifies important themes from readings and examines from multiple points of view	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Focus 5: Making Connections</b>									
5a: Connects events, characters, actions, and themes to specific life experiences	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5b: Uses prior knowledge to clarify understanding	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5c: Makes comparisons across reading selections	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

\* High priority skill

## [Newsletter Archives](#)

Earlier editions of *Literacy Links* available on the Maine Reading First website at <http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage.htm>

Edition	Spotlight Topic
March, 2005	Maine Reading First
April, 2005	Maine Reading First Course
May, 2005	Reading Fluency
June, 2005	Vocabulary
September, 2005	Phonemic Awareness
October, 2005	Phonics
November, 2005	Comprehension
December, 2005/January, 2006	DIBELS
February, 2006	Literacy Centers
March, 2006	Interactive Read Aloud
April, 2006	Nonfiction
May, 2006	Word Walls
June, 2006	Classroom Design
September, 2006	Shared Reading
October, 2006	Automaticity
November, 2006	Using Assessment to Guide Instruction
December, 2006	Deepening Comprehension
January, 2007	Selecting Quality Children's Books (part 1)
February, 2007	Selecting Quality Children's Books (part 2)
March, 2007	Making Instruction Explicit
April, 2007	Motivation and Engagement
May-June 2007	Grouping for Instruction
September 2007	Making Instruction Systematic
October, 2007	Pacing Instruction
November, 2007	Managed Independent Practice
December, 2007	A Deeper Look at Phonemic Awareness
January, 2008	Phonics at the K-2 Grade Span
February, 2008	Phonics and Word Work Grades 3-5
March, 2008	Vocabulary Revisited
April, 2008	A Deeper Look at Vocabulary Instruction
May-June 2008	Fluency Revisited
August 2008	Fluency Assessment
September-October 2008	The Revised Maine <i>Learning Results</i> English Language Arts Standards
November 2008	Comprehending Comprehension



For additional information about any of the items in this newsletter or to sign up to receive this e-newsletter, please email [Leann.Larsen@maine.gov](mailto:Leann.Larsen@maine.gov)

Click here to view the Maine Reading First website  
<http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage.htm>

The professional development opportunities and materials are listed in *Literacy Links* for informational purposes only and are not necessarily endorsed by the Maine Department of Education's Maine Reading First Initiative.