



Supporting the Middle

Reading Strategies for Parents of Students Grades 4-8

Struggling readers in 4-8 grades are in a challenging position. Schools are searching for age-appropriate ways to address both sides of the **Reading Comprehension house – Word Reading and Language Comprehension** – without causing students to become frustrated. Providing support from home is essential as students continue to work to become fluent and effective readers.



Decoding and Vocabulary:

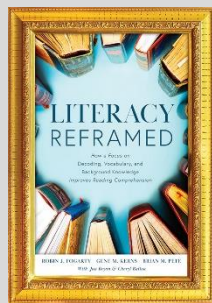
Decoding and phonics require students to understand the relationship between letters and sounds, and **explicit instruction cannot be substituted**. Teaching phonics is not an easy task, especially outside of the classroom. The best way to support word reading and knowledge is through practice, shared reading time, and vocabulary development. Below are activities that support the development of skills often lost when readers are struggling to decode and identify words: understanding voice, text structure, and tone; the rhythm of reading; fluency; and the understanding of the processes of how words work together.



Read-Alouds and Choral Reading – Reading various kinds of text to and with your child helps them gain understanding for “book language” and prepares them for the types of words and phrases they will encounter when reading independently. No matter the age, reading aloud can support growth in reading skills.

Repeated Reading and Close Reads – Select excerpts from a book or article and ask your child to read it multiple times with a different focus each time. **Repetition builds fluency** which improves accuracy, automaticity, and flow which all contribute to understanding.

Morphology Instruction – Morphology is the study of word parts (prefix, suffix, etc.) and how they work together. Understanding the meanings of root words and how a certain prefix or suffix changes that meaning is extremely helpful for children grades 4-8. Pointing out these structures when you see them in print and discussing them with your child supports strong vocabulary development for older learners, providing a sort of “cheat sheet” for new words. **Teaching specific morphemes in an appropriate sequence while using different strategies** for learning is also helpful.



The strategies listed are supported by the work of Fogarty, Kerns, and Pete in their text, *Literacy Reframed* and the guidance report from the Education Endowment Foundation, *Improving Literacy in Key Stage 2*. Additional resources are linked to each image.



Knowledge:

While decoding and vocabulary skills have a definitive impact on reading comprehension, the value of background knowledge and building connections is undeniable.

Provide Experiences – Your child’s background knowledge has a large impact on what they understand and comprehend when reading. As a parent or guardian, providing opportunities for learning about different topics through experience, discussion, and practice can vastly improve learning.

Build Background Knowledge – Before, during, and after reading, discuss circumstances, influences, and connections with the text in order to build understanding. **Knowledge of a topic has proven to be more impactful than socioeconomic differences** and greatly improves comprehension for all students.



Read Nonfiction – Reading non-fictional, informational text is critical to supporting children as they grow in their reading. There are differences between fiction and non-fiction texts and being familiar and comfortable with those differences helps students understand what they are reading. By reading non-fiction and discussing how it is structured and what it means supports students who may be challenged by information-rich text. Additionally, reading a non-fiction text then reading a fiction text about the same information or topic can lead to excellent conversation and higher-level learning.

Writing in Any Form as a Response to Reading – Writing allows students to process information in a way that helps solidify understanding. But writing does not have to be in a traditional format to be effective. Ask your child to write a sentence or a list of words after reading, draw a cartoon of a scene from the text, or write a text exchange between two of the characters.

Talk about What Your Child is Reading – Discussing what your child is reading not only conveys the importance of the task, but it can also help students to organize and summarize the text. After your child has completed reading a chapter or section, ask questions like, “What was the most important sentence in that section and why?” or “If you had to give that reading an emoji, which one would it be?” These questions require your child to think about and evaluate the reading on a deeper level.



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