Improving Reading Comprehension, Grades 3-5

Course Description

Improving Reading Comprehension, Grades 3-5, is an interactive, online, and in-person professional development course designed for teachers and content specialists of grades 3-5. The 13 online sessions were developed to assist teachers who want to improve their students’ reading comprehension of nonfiction text. The course provides practical strategies for teachers to help students succeed in the various building blocks of comprehension, including:

- Building background knowledge and language for reading.
- Assessing and improving reading fluency.
- Developing vocabulary through direct teaching, independent strategies, and wide reading.
- Fostering and modeling skills for active and strategic reading.
- Writing for understanding.

Lessons plans and classroom resources support all online sessions. The plans and resources ensure that the course content can be seamlessly integrated into classroom reading programs or subject-specific curriculum.

Course Objectives

On completing this course, you will be able to:

- Provide explicit reading and writing instruction for students who are struggling with comprehension.
- Understand the research about reading comprehension and what can be done for students with comprehension difficulties.
- Model best practices in reading strategies for your students in the classroom.
- Teach strategies that will build background knowledge, vocabulary, and fluency.
- Use lesson resources that specifically address ways to teach expository reading and writing in response to text.
Course Outline

1 Course Introduction
1.1 The Importance of Reading
Self-Assessment

2 A Look at the Research
2.1 Overview: When Students Struggle
2.2 Stages of Reading Development
2.3 The Cycle of Failure
2.4 Helping Students Succeed

3 Building the Bridge to Comprehension
3.1 Overview: Getting the Most from Text
3.2 What Do Active Readers Do?
3.3 The Building Blocks of the Bridge
3.4 Teaching Skills and Strategies
3.5 Before, During, and After Reading

4 Assessing Reading Health
4.1 Overview: What's a Reading Physical?
4.2 Four Types of Readers
4.3 Oral Fluency Assessment
4.4 Scoring an Oral Fluency Assessment

5 Knowledge and Language for Reading
5.1 Overview: "Get the Picture?"
5.2 Warm-up: Making a Mental Picture
5.3 Mental Models and Reading
5.4 Previewing a Text
5.5 Creating a Smart Chart
5.6 Four Ways to Build Mental Models

6 Improving Reading Fluency
6.1 Overview: What Is Fluency?
6.2 Warm-up: Reading Word Stew
6.3 Modeling Fluent Reading
6.4 Repeated-Timed Reading
6.5 Phrase-Cued Reading
6.6 Independent Fluency Practice

7 Vocabulary: A Direct Approach
7.1 Overview: Words in the Bank
7.2 Warm-up: Words, Words, Words
7.3 Selecting Words to Teach
7.4 Direct Teaching of Vocabulary
7.5 Mapping a Concept Definition

Improving Reading Comprehension, Grades 3-5  Course Overview
8 Vocabulary: Becoming Independent
8.1 Overview: Becoming Independent
8.2 Warm-up: Looking for Meaning
8.3 Using Context
8.4 Prefixes and Suffixes
8.5 Using Word Roots to Get Meaning
8.6 Wide Reading: Best Source of Vocabulary Growth

9 Developing Active and Strategic Readers
9.1 Overview: Getting Meaning from Text
9.2 Warm-up: Think About Your Thinking
9.3 Building Background and Questioning
9.4 Making Inferences
9.5 Summarizing
9.6 Modeling Self-Monitoring Strategies

10 Getting the Most from Expository Text
10.1 Overview: Reading "the New"
10.2 Warm-up: Take a Reading Challenge
10.3 Features of Expository Text
10.4 Using Graphic Organizers
10.5 Identifying the Main Idea
10.6 Talking About Texts

11 Getting Started with Paragraphs
11.1 Overview: The Reading and Writing Circle
11.2 Warm-up: Quickwrite
11.3 The Comprehension-Composition Connection
11.4 Getting Started with Sentences
11.5 Five Steps to Writing a Paragraph

12 Writing a Persuasive Paragraph
12.1 Overview: Writing Like a Reader
12.2 Warm-up: Reading and Writing for Style
12.3 Using a "Hamburger Organizer"
12.4 Writing an Effective Argument
12.5 Sharpening the Argument

13 Classroom Management: Putting It All Together
13.1 Overview: Recipe for Success
13.2 Setting Expectations and Motivating
13.3 Strategies for Engaging Students
13.4 Matching Students to Text
13.5 Monitoring Student Progress
13.6 The Reading Block
**Improving Reading Comprehension, Grades 3–5**

_Scientifically Based Reading Research_

All content in *Improving Reading Comprehension, Grades 3-5*, is grounded in scientifically based research. *Improving Reading Comprehension* is an interactive, online, and in-person professional development course, designed for teachers and content specialists of Grades 3-5 who aim to improve their students' reading comprehension of nonfiction text. The course focuses on the building blocks of comprehension such as: *Building background knowledge and language for reading; Assessing and improving reading fluency; Developing vocabulary through direct teaching, independent strategies, and wide reading; Fostering and modeling skills for active and strategic reading; and Writing for understanding.*

As participants explore each of these blocks, they'll learn practical strategies to help students succeed in each area. All online sessions are supported by lesson plans and extensive classroom resources to ensure that your learning can be seamlessly integrated into your current reading program.

### COURSE RESEARCH BASE

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<tr>
<th>Phonemic Awareness/Phonics</th>
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- It has been found that 97 percent of prefixed words in printed school English consist of twenty common prefixes (White, Sowel, and Yanagihara, 1989).
- Four prefixes, “un-”, “re-”, “in-”, and “dis-”, represent 65 percent of all the prefixed words.

### COURSE IMPLEMENTATION

<table>
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- A lesson plan on teaching prefixes discusses how to identify prefixes and use them to predict word meanings and outlines classroom activities for students that reinforce these skills.
- Your Turn provides a student resource containing word lists of common prefixes and suffixes to support lessons and classroom activities.

- Suffixes should be taught selectively. Because many suffixes have abstract meanings, some experts feel that teaching suffixes can confuse students more than help them (Stahl, 1997).
- A list of common suffixes that are useful in the instruction of word parts is provided in Your Turn.

- About 60 percent of words in English are of Greek and Latin origin (Henry, 1997).
- A set of instructional steps for teaching a common word root, such as tele- is included in the session.

- Decoding

- Teach students to decode and understand roots and affixes to build a foundation for understanding new concepts, especially in science and social studies (Bear et al., 1996).
- Your Turn provides several lesson plans designed specifically for teaching different word parts and roots.
Instruction must target essential decoding, (Stanovich, 1986); fluency (Moats, 2001); and comprehension skills (Beck et al.1998) as we instruct, guide, and provide opportunities for good reading (Lyon, 1998).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Fluency</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
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<td>The evidence suggests that rereading is a valuable study tool, is helpful for both high and low ability students, encourages more efficient processing, and is especially important for young children. (Downhower, 1989)</td>
<td>Teaching vocabulary as a before-reading step is an instructional intervention to help those who lack prior background knowledge (Christen and Murphy, 1991).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watch fluency building activities in action, including the steps a teacher takes in meeting fluency goals with repeated timed-readings, and listen to a teacher discuss the differences between a fluent and a non-fluent reader in Red TV.</td>
<td>An activity in Red TV helps teachers to both determine and accomplish specific goals for themselves and their students when teaching before-reading strategies.</td>
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</table>
Research shows that we need to encounter a word about twelve times or more before we know it well enough to help us comprehend what we read (McKeown, Beck, Omanson and Pople, 1985).

Research shows that there are three kinds of word knowledge:

- Unknown: the meaning is completely unfamiliar.
- Acquainted: basic meaning is recognized after some thought.
- Established: Meaning is easily, rapidly, and automatically recognized.

(Beck, McKeown, and Omanson, 1987)

Content-area words, or conceptually difficult words representing complex concepts not a part of students' daily lives, should be taught directly (Baumann and Kameenui, 1991; Nagy 1988a).

Research indicates that simply giving students a word in context, having them look the word up in a dictionary, and discussing the definition, can be an effective way to learn these words (Graves et al., 1998).
A concept definition map is a type of semantic map that visually maps out three elements of a definition: 1) What is it? 2) What is it like? 3) What are some examples? (Schwartz and Raphael, 1985).

- For growth, the average student needs to learn 3,000-4,000 new words a year (Nagy and Anderson 1984; Nagy and Herman 1987).
- Researchers estimate that while about 300-400 words per year can be taught directly, the majority of word learning happens while reading. Thus, students need efficient word-learning strategies to use while reading on their own.

Teaching students how to use the words, phrases, and sentences surrounding an unfamiliar word should be a top strategy for facilitating vocabulary growth (Anderson and Nagy, 1991).

Comprehension

Children come to school eager and ready to learn to read and write. However, by the 4th grade, over 30 percent of students score below the basic level in overall reading skill on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

This statistic is from the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP): Students who read "below basic" levels:

- 4th-grade students: 38 percent.
- 8th-grade students: 26 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999).

Students who are not reading at grade level by the end of the first grade have a 1-in-8 chance of catching up without extraordinary interventions (Juel, 1988, 1994).

This situation is commonly called the "Matthew Effect," which highlights the idea that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer (Stanovich, 1986).
<p>| • Telling students to ask themselves “why?” questions about facts can make fact-filled texts more memorable (Wood, Pressley, and Winne, 1990). | ✓ See a teacher in Red TV model how to preview a text in order to both test and build background knowledge. |
| • Orienting readers to prior knowledge can render the facts in a text more sensible (Martin and Pressley, 1991). | ✓ Watch a video of a teacher conducting a lesson on how to activate prior knowledge by building a Smart Chart. |
| • Direct instruction of strategy can significantly help reading performance (Duffy et al., 1987). | ✓ Red TV provides an interactive activity that outlines teacher and student goals involved in reading strategies useful before, during and after reading. |
| • Teaching before, during, and after reading strategies to help students understand and remember text (Levin and Pressley, 1981). | ✓ Red TVs show teachers modeling classroom activities such as Repeated Timed Readings as well as teaching methods for building Mental Models and for discussing fluency with students. |
| • Research indicates that there are explicit techniques that are particularly effective for strategy instruction: direct explanation, modeling, teacher-led practice, feedback, and application (Dickson, Collins, Simmons, and Kameenui, 1998). | ✓ Your Turn provides checklists for students to monitor the reading strategies they are using, a chart for teachers to assess their own role in helping students develop these strategies, and a booklist helpful for classroom instruction. |
| • The value of direct instruction is also recognized (Hunter, 1994, 1995). | ✓ Read an article in Red TV to gain awareness of how images are formed and text predictions are made when reading text. |
| • Research indicates that when we approach a reading experience with a well-developed mental model, chances that we will recall the text afterward are increased (Baldwin, Peleg-Bruckner, and Mcclintock, 1985; Recht and Leslie, 1988). | □ Improving Reading Comprehension, Grades 3-5 Course Overview |</p>
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<tr>
<th>• When students use pre-reading tools such as a Smart Chart, prior knowledge is activated, helping them to create a framework on which to hang new knowledge, (Graves, Juel, and Graves, 1998).</th>
<th>✓ Watch a teacher in Red TV as he guides his class in creating a Smart Chart to help them learn to build and activate mental models.</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Research proves that understanding how text is organized helps readers construct meaning (Dickson, Simmons, and Kameenui, 1998b).</td>
<td>✓ View easy-to-read diagrams and descriptions of graphic organizers in Red TVs that are helpful for making sense of text by understanding text structure.</td>
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<td>✓ Download graphic organizers from Your Turn to distribute to students.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>✓ Access a lesson plan in Your Turn on identifying nonfiction text features.</td>
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<td>• By writing a persuasive paragraph, writers must clarify and fully discuss their ideas. This process of developing ideas from thought to writing also &quot;changes the development and shape of the ideas themselves&quot; (Judith Langer).</td>
<td>✓ Red TVs show how a student can pick apart a paragraph and gain comprehension by examining its individual components, as well as how to write a persuasive paragraph in five simple steps.</td>
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References


National Reading Panel, Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction. Washington, DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000.

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Course Overview


## Improving Reading Comprehension, Grades 3-5

### Professional Development Course Hours

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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Estimated Time</th>
<th>Participation Hours</th>
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<tr>
<td>Self-paced instruction includes the relevant reading research base.</td>
<td>1 hour per session plus additional time to revisit</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation in interactive simulations for practice of research-based</td>
<td>concepts and key activities for ongoing practice.</td>
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<td>strategies. Video modeling by teachers.</td>
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<td>Reflection on learned and applied skills; sharing of ideas and student</td>
<td>2 hours x 4 workshops; 3 hours in-class coaching</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>work; lesson planning; facilitator modeling, in-person instruction and</td>
<td></td>
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<td>in-class coaching.</td>
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<td>Personal journal writing in response to session-specific topics and</td>
<td>10 minutes per session</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>prompts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborative discussions with colleagues and advice/feedback from reading</td>
<td>10 minutes per session</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>specialist.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relevant articles to read study and connect to learning and classroom</td>
<td>20 minutes per session</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>application.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Print and review online resources (lesson plans, management tools, graphic</td>
<td>20 minutes per session</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>organizers, etc.) – for planning and application in classroom.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation for application of learned skills and strategies utilizing</td>
<td>30 minutes per strategy; 1 strategy per week</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>tested lesson plans and student resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation and presentation of course learning.</td>
<td>1 hours</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Setting goals and incorporating into Professional Improvement Plan.</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review online correlations to standards and reading programs. Use online</td>
<td>1 hours</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>correlations in preparing lesson plans for classroom application.</td>
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**Total Hours** 45