



## IES Practice Guide Summary

# Improving Reading Comprehension in Kindergarten Through Third Grade

**Audience** Teachers, reading coaches, principals, and other educators.

**Grade level** The guide focuses on reading comprehension abilities that may be taught specifically to students in grades K–3. Although much instruction in comprehension focuses on the upper grades, the panel believes that the teaching of reading comprehension should begin in elementary school.

**Link** [http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/readingcomp\\_pg\\_092810.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/readingcomp_pg_092810.pdf)

### Introduction

Despite the growing demand for highly educated workers in today’s information- and service-related economies, the proportion of American adults classified as “below basic” readers remained remarkably constant between 1992 and 2003. Strong reading comprehension builds the capacity to learn independently, to absorb information on a variety of topics, to enjoy reading, and to experience literature more deeply.

The fundamental assumption in this guide is that the objective of reading instruction is to give young readers the tools they need to understand increasingly sophisticated material in all subjects from elementary through later years of school. Reading comprehension involves both extracting and constructing meaning, understanding what the author states and interpreting it in light of the reader’s knowledge and experience. Reading requires a rich and complex array of abilities that enable comprehension. This guide focuses on three explicit areas of reading comprehension instruction: comprehension-specific knowledge and abilities; thinking and reasoning skills; and motivation to work toward an academic goal. To fully comprehend, students will also draw on other areas of reading and subject area instruction, such as word-level skills, vocabulary knowledge and oral language skills, and broad conceptual knowledge.

Each research-based recommendation featured in the guide includes a summary of evidence, classroom practices and instructional models to support implementation in the classroom, and suggestions for overcoming potential

roadblocks. This guide does not specifically address reading comprehension instruction for special populations.

### Recommendations

#### 1. Teach students how to use reading comprehension strategies.

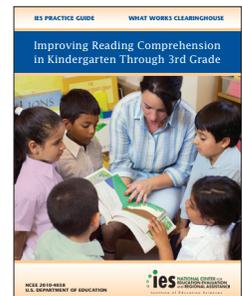
- Teach students how to use several research-based reading comprehension strategies.
- Teach reading comprehension strategies individually or in combination.
- Teach reading comprehension strategies by using a gradual release of responsibility.

#### 2. Teach students to identify and use the text’s organizational structure to comprehend, learn, and remember content.

- Explain how to identify and connect the parts of narrative texts.
- Provide instruction on common structures of informational texts.

#### 3. Guide students through focused, high-quality discussion on the meaning of text.

- Structure the discussion to complement the text, the instructional purpose, and the readers’ ability and grade level.
- Develop discussion questions that require students to think deeply about text.
- Ask follow-up questions to encourage and facilitate discussion.
- Have students lead structured small-group discussions.



#### 4. Select texts purposefully to support comprehension development.

- Teach reading comprehension with multiple genres of text.
- Choose texts of high quality with richness and depth of ideas and information.

- Choose texts with word recognition and comprehension difficulty appropriate for the students' reading ability and the instructional activity.
- Use texts that support the purpose of instruction.

**5. Establish an engaging and motivating context in which to teach reading comprehension.**

- Help students discover the purpose and benefits of reading.
- Create opportunities for students to see themselves as successful readers.
- Give students reading choices.
- Give students the opportunity to learn by collaborating with their peers.

## Related REL Publications

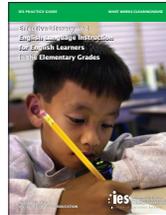


**Achievement Gap Patterns of Grade 8 American Indian and Alaska Native Students in Reading and Mathematics**

(July 2009)

Focusing on student proficiency in reading and math from 2003/04 to 2006/07, this report compares gaps in performance on state achievement tests between grade 8 American Indian and Alaska Native students and all other grade 8 students in 26 states serving large populations of American Indian and Alaska Native students.

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?ProjectID=185>



**Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades** (December 2007)

The target audience for this guide is a broad spectrum of school practitioners such as administrators, curriculum specialists, coaches, staff development specialists and teachers who face the challenge of providing effective literacy instruction for English language learners in the elementary grades. The guide also aims to reach district-level administrators who develop practice and policy options for their schools.

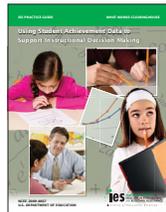
<http://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=WWC20074011>



**Assisting Students Struggling with Reading: Response to Intervention (RTI) and Multi-Tier Intervention in the Elementary Grades** (February 2009)

This guide offers five specific recommendations to help educators identify struggling readers and implement evidence-based strategies to promote their reading achievement. Recommendations cover how to screen students for reading problems, design a multi-tier intervention program, adjust instruction to help struggling readers, and monitor student progress.

[http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/rti\\_reading\\_pg\\_021809.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/rti_reading_pg_021809.pdf)



**Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making** (September 2009)

The guide recommends that schools set a clear vision for schoolwide data use, develop a data-driven culture, and make data part of an ongoing cycle of instructional improvement.

The guide also recommends teaching students how to use their own data to set learning goals.

[http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/dddm\\_pg\\_092909.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/dddm_pg_092909.pdf)

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