

# Introduction

**A**s educators, we strive to prepare students to become successful, contributing members of society. Reading is a vital part of this preparedness. It is more than matching sounds with letters or learning sight words; reading involves comprehension—understanding what is read, what is meant, what is implied. When students have comprehension difficulties, the task of text instruction becomes increasingly complicated for educators. How can students learn from text if they cannot understand their assigned readings? This issue can be approached from different perspectives depending on the grade level of the students.

For teachers of middle school students there are several issues to consider. By the time students have reached middle school, they are expected to read and comprehend grade-level texts. Many middle school teachers are uncertain how to approach instructing students who have difficulties with text comprehension. They may assume that this is the job of the reading teacher, or they may feel they do not have the skills to teach reading. In reality, we are all reading teachers. If students have a problem reading or comprehending the text we have assigned, it is our job to assist them.

This book offers 56 strategies for middle-grade learners, with descriptions, discussions, and examples of how these strategies can be used in different content areas. Included with each strategy is a description of the strategy and its uses, content area examples, and suggestions for assessment. Depending on the student reading differences in the classroom, these strategies can be used with individuals, small groups, or the entire class.

The strategies have been divided into six sections based on their primary goal. “Checking for Understanding” features strategies that will assist you in assessing the level of students’ comprehension and show how to help students increase their comprehension. Awareness of comprehension level is important to you and to the students in your classroom. Many of these strategies require students to share the information they have learned with you or with another student. The student is able to use these strategies to assess the information he or she has comprehended in a format that is not strictly reading questions and writing out answers.

“Fostering Cooperative Learning” contains strategies that improve the comprehension of students working with partners or small groups. These strategies are especially useful in situations in which you believe a student will increase his or her comprehension with peer support. The strategies can be used with small groups or an entire class.

“Connecting to Previous Knowledge” provides strategies that allow readers to connect the information they are reading to knowledge or interests they already have. These strategies are especially useful in motivating students and creating interest in new topics.

“Improving Organization” provides strategies for helping students to organize material in a way that will improve their comprehension. These strategies incorporate the use of outlines and charts.

“Promoting Independent Learning” offers strategies that students can learn and apply independently in numerous situations. The main focus is teaching the necessary steps of each strategy so students will be able to use a particular strategy independently when needed. These strategies provide students with a way to approach a particular concept, word, section of text, or to question and break down the information into steps, which will increase their levels of understanding.

“Teaching to Learning Style” contains strategies that specifically focus on one or more mode of learning (visual, auditory, tactile, etc.). Because students learn in a variety of ways, you can use these strategies to help students with particular learning styles who have strength in a particular modality.

The strategies presented in this collection not only will assist students with reading comprehension difficulties, but they also will enhance students’ learning experiences through a variety of modes and methods that may encourage the reluctant reader and enrich the experience of the enthusiastic reader. This variety gives students the opportunity to gain comprehension through the mode or strategy that best suits them individually.

A must for teachers  
in all curricular areas...

# Practical tools to help students understand assigned readings

## Comprehension Strategies for Middle Grade Learners A Handbook for Content Area Teachers

Charlotte Rose Sadler

When students have poor reading skills, educators across the curriculum face a daunting task. Now, help is at hand in this new collection of easy-to-use classroom-tested strategies to help middle school educators teach students who lack strong literacy skills.

*Comprehension Strategies for Middle Grade Learners* arms teachers in all curricular areas with practical tools to help students understand their assigned readings. Each of the 56 strategies includes a brief description and easy-to-follow procedures, content area examples, and suggestions for assessment. You'll appreciate the accessibility of each strategy on a simple one-page layout and the ease with which you can identify the content areas for the strategy. Depending on the reading differences in your classroom, you can use these strategies with individuals, small groups, or the entire class.

Content teachers who are not experienced in teaching reading will especially value these strategies for strengthening students' learning in their particular subject area.

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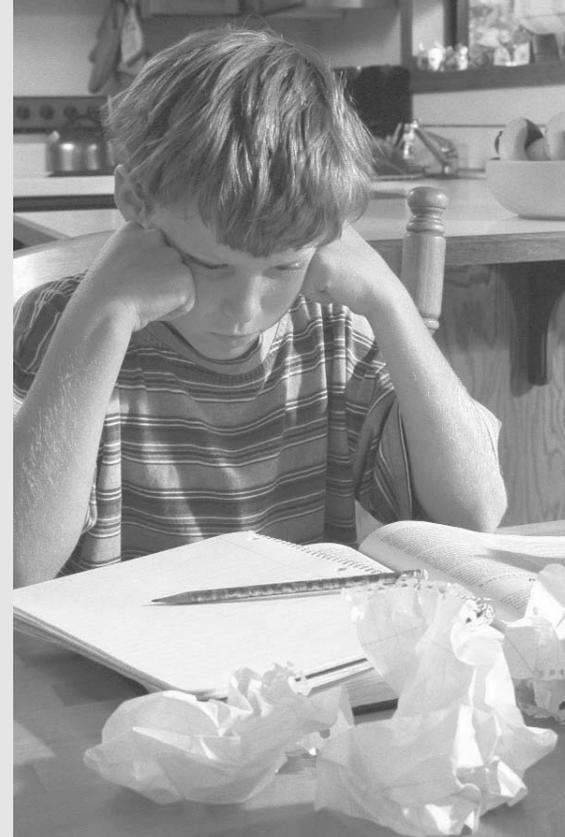
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56 strategies conveniently grouped  
in six sections**

**1 Section 1: Checking for Understanding**  
Strategies to help you assess and improve  
comprehension levels among your students

**2 Section 2: Fostering Cooperative Learning**  
Strategies to improve comprehension of students  
working with partners or small groups

**3 Section 3: Connecting to Previous  
Knowledge**

Strategies to allow readers to connect the  
information they are reading to knowledge or  
interests they already have

**4 Section 4: Improving Organization**  
Strategies for helping students organize  
materials for better comprehension

**5 Section 5: Promoting Independent Learning**  
Strategies the student can learn and apply  
independently in numerous situations

**6 Section 6: Teaching to the Learning Style**  
Strategies that focus on one or more modes  
of learning, e.g., visual, auditory, tactile, etc.

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