



## Reading for Meaning

### Foundations of Reading

To learn to read well, children need to know how to recognize and pronounce words (**decoding**), what words mean (**vocabulary**) and how to understand the meaning of a group of words or connected text (**comprehension**). To build these foundations of reading, teachers use a balanced approach and focus on the goal of reading for meaning. Parents play a vital role in supporting this work at home.

### What is reading comprehension?

Reading comprehension means more than just reading words and saying them correctly. Comprehension is about understanding and making sense out of what has been read. Reading for meaning and understanding is what reading is all about.

Comprehension happens when a reader interacts with written language by thinking about what has happened and what is going to happen and making connections to what is being read.

Children need to be taught how to comprehend text and how to make connections while they read. Regularly practicing specific strategies will help children develop reading comprehension.

***“Reading is an active, imaginative act; it takes work.”***

**– Khaled Hosseini**

### How can I help develop comprehension skills at home?

There are several strategies you can use at home to support your child’s progress with comprehension:

#### PREVIEW THE BOOK

When you are sitting down to read a book with your child, have them look at the cover, and ask them to describe what they see. If there’s no picture, ask your child what they see in their mind when they read the title. Ask them what the title and cover picture make them think about and why. Accept all of your child’s ideas and share ideas of your own.

#### ACTIVATE BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

The more background knowledge a child is able to bring to what they’re reading, the more likely they are to comprehend what they’re reading about. Ask your child what they already know about the subject of the book and if they have read other similar stories. Talk about previous experiences, whether real or experienced through reading.

If the topic of the book is unfamiliar, you might want to take some time to develop background knowledge by looking through other books or magazines on the topic. If there is a foundation of background knowledge, there will be a place to build new learning.

#### DEVELOP A PURPOSE FOR READING

Encourage your child to make two or three predictions about what they think will happen in the story. Making predictions about the story before it is read will increase curiosity about the story and set the stage for reading.

#### READ REFLECTIVELY

Take time for discussion as you read with your child. Talk about what’s happening in the story and how it relates to the real world and to your child’s life.

## What else can I do to support my child?

- Support the read-at-home program already in place in your child's classroom.
- Talk to your child's teacher to get specific strategies for reading with your child as well as book suggestions.
- Read with your child every day. Even 10 minutes a night of freely chosen reading at home makes a big improvement in a child's performance at school.

### MAKE PREDICTIONS

As you read, ask lots of "I wonder why..." or "I wonder if..." questions and get your child to make connections about what's happening in the story by thinking about what might be coming up next. Making predictions and seeing if the predictions are right will keep your child engaged in the story.

### PAINT A PICTURE

Encourage your child to create a visual image in their mind about what they're reading. This strategy helps children picture the events of the story and focus on comprehension rather than just reading words. Talk to your child about what they see. Can they tell you any details?

### TALK ABOUT THE MEANING OF NEW WORDS AND CONCEPTS

Explain these new words and ideas and encourage your child to share their understanding in their own words. Make note of new words and use them later in conversation to help your child internalize them.

### RETELL AND REVIEW

If you are reading a chapter or two each day from the same book, ask your child to retell what was read at the last sitting before continuing. Draw attention to unresolved conflicts or major events. This doesn't have to be a long discussion, just a quick review.

### DO SOME PROBLEM SOLVING

As you're reading together, ask your child to think of different ways the character's problem could be solved. What would they do? Before you get to the end of the story, ask how they think the story will end and why.

### THINK BETWEEN THE LINES

Encourage your child to think about details or connections in the story. Making inferences (guessing between the lines) requires thinking and making sense of what is being read.

This resource is protected under copyright with all rights reserved by the Board of Trustees of Edmonton Public Schools (“EPSB”). EPSB permits its teachers and staff, as well as third-parties, to use said resource for the purpose of individual classroom training or advancing general educational interests, without seeking permission. Any and all alteration, modification, distribution, transmission, public performance or display, or other exploitation of said resource in any form or any means in whole or in part, in its original or any other form, is expressly prohibited without the prior written permission of EPSB. © 2020 Board of Trustees of Edmonton Public Schools.

Every effort has been made to trace ownership of all copyrighted material and to secure permission from copyright holders. In the event of any question arising as to the use of any materials, we will be pleased to make necessary corrections in future printings.

EPSB is not responsible for any outcome deriving from your use of or reliance on this resource, whereby all such use or reliance, if any, is at your sole risk. EPSB retains the right to update new editions.

Last updated: March 2020