

# Preface

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The road to reading proficiency can be demanding for both the teacher and learner. Comprehension presents its own challenges owing to its complexity. While a knowledge of the science of reading provides guidance, it alone is not sufficient. The educational community has the task of translating and then implementing instruction that supports their students' understanding of text.

My (Nancy's) membership in the educational community, over many years, has taught me multiple lessons. One of the most important is that our learning is never done if our students are to succeed. My book *The Reading Comprehension Blueprint: Helping Students Make Meaning of Text* was a result of my realization that there is always more to learn and then do. At the same time, my continuing interactions with educators consistently remind me that translating and implementing the science is a time-consuming and arduous task. *The Reading Comprehension Blueprint* represented my effort to provide insight into the research and then make connections to informed instruction.

My (Julia's) experiences in the educational community mirror many of Nancy's sentiments. As a self-declared lifelong learner, I've always strived to use my professional learning experiences to help my students grow. I also learned the value of collaboration early on. Throughout the course of my career, I've had the opportunity to work with and learn from some truly talented educators. These interactions have challenged me to deepen my own understanding and then refine my practices. From these collaborations, I realized that we learn best from each other, especially when our collective efforts work to support student learning and achievement.

We recognize that teachers need multiple resources to support their work. This book, *The Reading Comprehension Blueprint Activity Book: A Practice & Planning Guide for Teachers*, represents a collaborative effort to further bring the Blueprint to life. The initial chapter introduces the big ideas of the Blueprint, including the why, what, when, and where of this framework, followed by a chapter that addresses the purpose for reading, including the identification of content and literacy goals. The remainder of the activity book explores the what, why, and how of this instructional framework, providing multiple lessons and activities for developing and using vocabulary, sentence comprehension, text structure, background knowledge, inference, and writing to construct and express meaning of text.

We know that you take your responsibility to your students seriously and we are hopeful that this book will further support your efforts to bring the science of reading to your practice. We appreciate your commitment to learning and all that you continue to teach us!

*Nancy & Julia*

# Introduction

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## Purpose of the Activity Book

The science of reading includes both word recognition and reading comprehension. Understanding the nature of comprehension, its contributors, and informed instructional approaches is critical knowledge for those educators working with students to achieve reading proficiency. These topics are directly addressed in the text, *The Reading Comprehension Blueprint: Helping Students Make Meaning of Text* (Hennessy, 2020).

This *Activity Book* is designed to accompany and supplement the information provided in the *Blueprint* text. We have included references to related pages in the text. At the same time, it does briefly revisit foundational knowledge based in the science of reading including the why and what of comprehension in [Chapter 1](#) and similar information for topics featured in the remaining chapters for those who need a review or are new to the information. However, the primary focus is on implementation of the Blueprint, an instructional framework that identifies necessary processes, skills, and knowledge and the instructional activities and skills for making meaning of text. The *Activity Book*, not surprisingly, provides additional instructional plans, activities, and resources focusing on content and literacy goals including the development of vocabulary, sentence comprehension, knowledge, inference, and ability to express understanding.

This book is designed as a professional learning resource for practitioners including classroom teachers, interventionists, coaches, specialists, and instructional leaders. It is intended for those working with students in kindergarten through eighth grade but can be adapted for older students with comprehension challenges or those working with disciplinary text. Additional recommendations and resources are provided for these purposes. The book lends itself to varied learning experiences including individual learning, small-group discussions, and professional learning communities. Opportunities for reflection and connection to application are built in throughout the book for this purpose. As you read, note specific features we have included to support your learning:

- Check In: Connect to current knowledge and practices
- Lexicon Checks
- Reflect & Connect
- Tips for Success!
- Listening/Viewing Links
- Try This!



**Viewing Link:**  
**An Introductory Video**  
<https://brookespublishing.com/blueprint-activity-book/>



### Tips for Success!

Keep in mind change takes time. Consider your current curriculum and specific context. A little bit at a time may be the best approach!



# The Big Ideas of the Reading Comprehension Blueprint

**The Big Ideas: The Why, What, When, & Where of the Blueprint**  
This chapter explores the big ideas of the Blueprint by posing a series of questions and providing responses. It addresses the foundational knowledge for understanding and eventually using the Blueprint itself. As you read this and the following sections, reflect on connections to your practice.



**CHECK IN: Connect to current knowledge and practices!**

*Our understanding of how the reader extracts and constructs meaning from text is foundational to how we think about instruction. How do you define or describe comprehension? Script a brief response.*

*“Reading comprehension is not a single entity that can be explained by a unified cognitive model. Instead, it is the orchestrated product of a set of linguistic and cognitive processes operating on text and interacting with background knowledge, features of the text, and the purpose and goals of the reading situation.”*  
Castles et al., 2018, p. 28

## Why: The Science of Reading Comprehension

This science-based description of reading comprehension from Castles et al. (2018) tells us that making meaning of text is neither simple nor straightforward. Ann Castles and colleagues, as well as others, inform us that comprehension is not a single skill; rather, it is a multidimensional process that requires a variety of skills and knowledge. Now, consider Hugh Catts' comments on comprehension:

Reading comprehension is not a skill someone learns and then can then apply in different reading contexts. It is one of the most complex behaviors that we engage in on a regular basis and our ability to comprehend is dependent upon a wide range of skills and knowledge. (Catts, 2021–2022, p. 27)

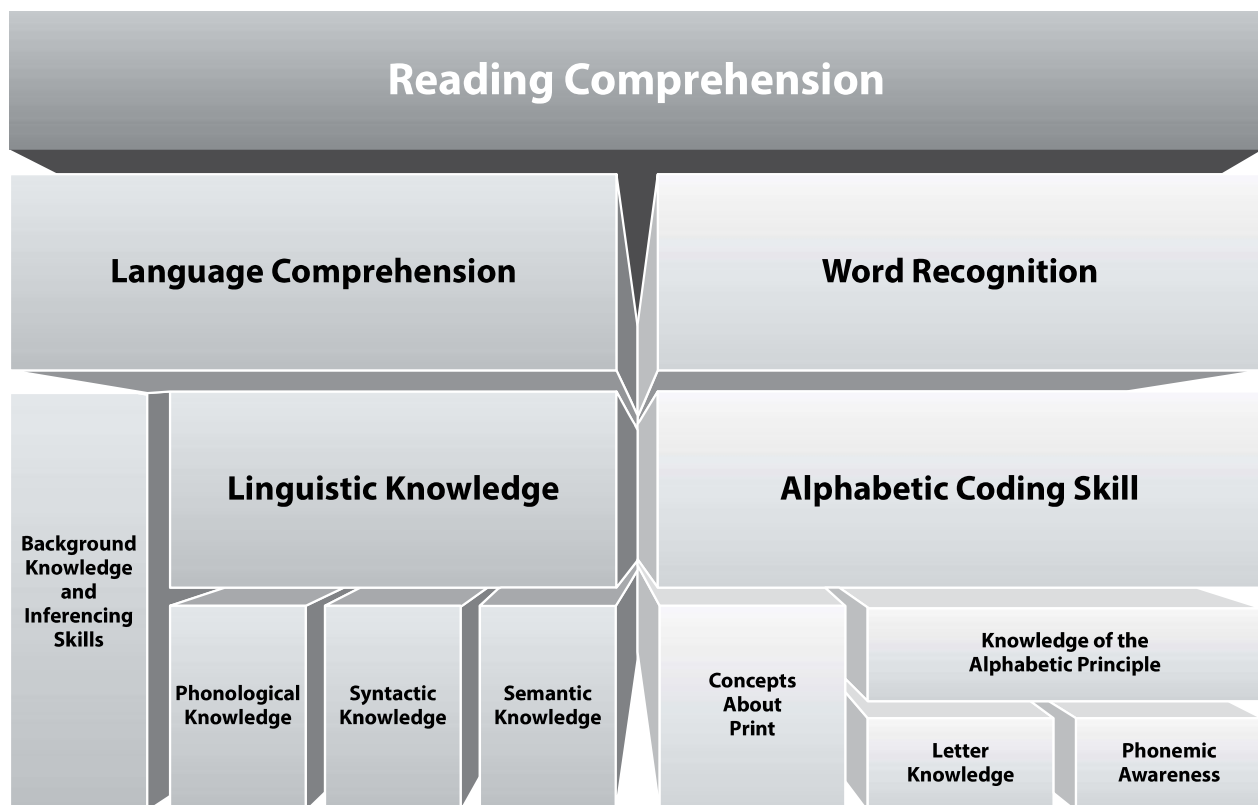
Additionally, others remind us that comprehension for skilled readers, “usually feels pretty effortless . . . but this sense of ease is misleading, however, as it belies the complexity of what we do as we read, even when a text is simple and straightforward” (Nation, 2019, p. 47).

These descriptions and multiple theoretical models of skilled reading and reading comprehension can and should inform practitioners' thinking when teaching reading. They collectively reflect the complexity of the comprehension construct by identifying varied contributors to proficient reading. For example, Hoover and Tunmer's Cognitive Foundations for Reading Acquisition (see [Figure 1.1](#)), an elaboration of the Simple View of Reading, not only identifies the two essential factors of word recognition and language comprehension, originally represented in the model, but also articulates the processes and knowledge that comprise these two contributors.



### Lexicon Check: Processes & Products

The products of comprehension are indicators of what the reader knows and understands after reading is completed, whereas the processes of comprehension are those cognitive activities by which the reader arrives at those products (Rapp et al., 2007, p. 291).



**Figure 1.1.** Cognitive foundations of reading. (From Hoover, W. A. & Tunmer, W.E. [2020]. Summary of the cognitive foundations framework. In *The cognitive foundations of reading and its acquisition: A framework with applications connecting teaching and learning*. [pp. 89]. Springer Cham.)

Castles and colleagues' description reminds us that comprehension is the "orchestrated product of a set of linguistic and cognitive processes" (2018, p. 28). This is reflected in Hollis Scarborough's Reading Rope (2001) and the work of Cain and Oakhill (2007) that further articulate the importance of language processes and skills and connections to instruction.

Scarborough's Reading Rope (see [Figure 1.2](#)) surfaces the contribution of oral language and related language processes to skilled reading. The language comprehension strands of the rope represent critical contributors that work in concert with one another to support reading comprehension.

Cain and Oakhill (2007) further describe levels of language processing that align with the strands of the rope and provide instructional direction. Consider the following and see what connections you make to instruction:

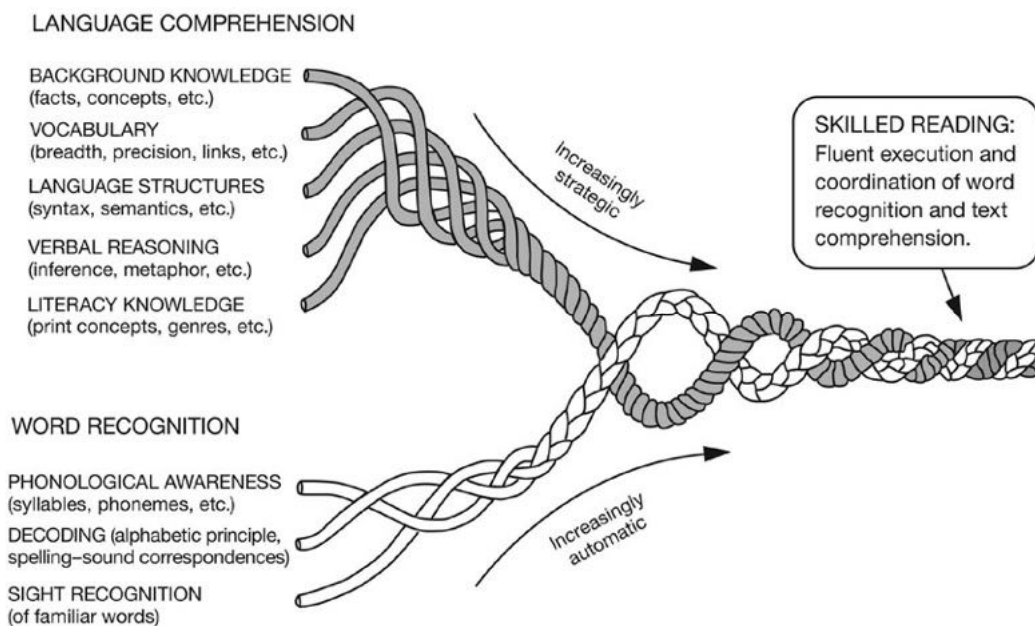
At the word level, the reader must decode individual words [and] . . . access meaning of the words they hear or read.

At the sentence level, the comprehender needs to work out the syntactic structure and sense of each sentence. Simply deriving the meanings of individual words and sentences is insufficient.

In order to construct a mental model of the text, the comprehender needs to integrate information from different sentences to establish local coherence and to incorporate background knowledge and ideas (retrieved from long term memory) to make sense of details that are only implicitly mentioned. (Cain and Oakhill, 2007, p. xii)

Research tells us that the proficient reader simultaneously engages in different levels of cognitive processing (see [Figure 1.3](#)) that complement one another and

## THE MANY STRANDS THAT ARE WOVEN INTO SKILLED READING



**Figure 1.2.** The many strands that are woven into skilled reading. (Republished with permission of Guilford Publications, Inc., from *Connecting Early Language and Literacy to Later Reading [Dis]abilities: Evidence, Theory, and Practice*, by H.S. Scarborough, in *Handbook of Early Literacy Research*, vol. 1 [p. 98], S. B. Neuman & D. K. Dickinson [Eds.], copyright Guilford Press, 2001; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.)

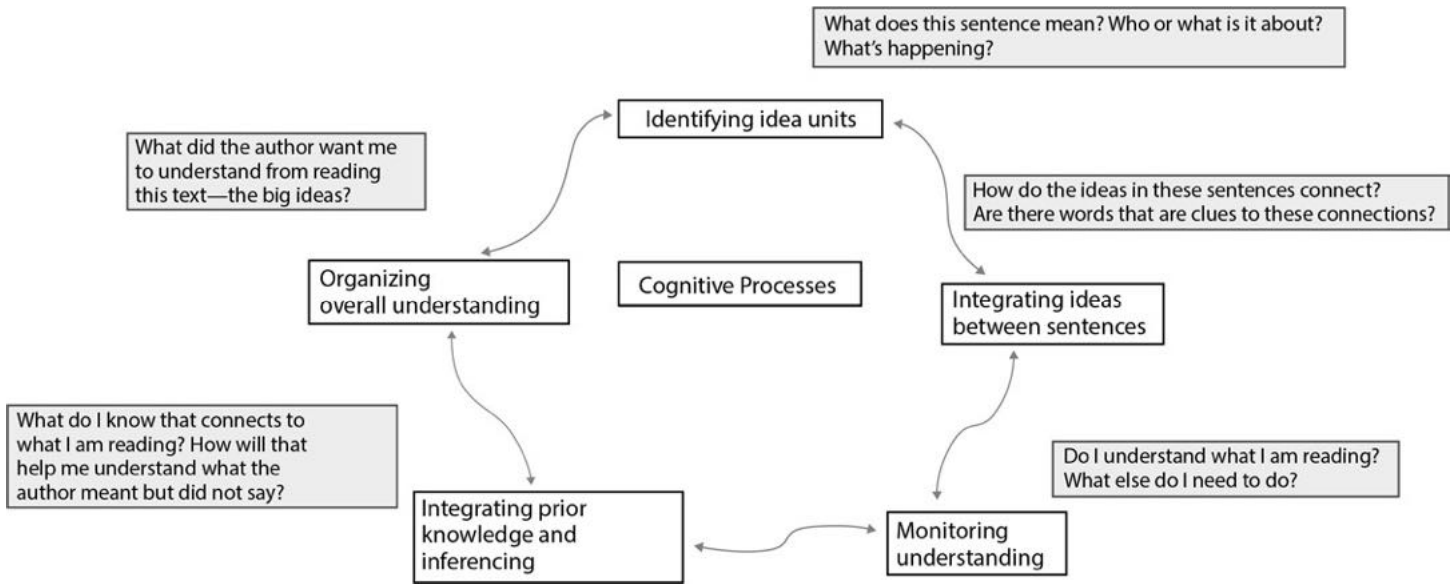


Figure 1.3. The mind of the reader. Hennessy, 2020. Based on Irwin, 2007.



### Tips for Success!

The science of reading addresses not only word recognition but also reading comprehension. Informed comprehension instruction reflects this knowledge and includes the development of instructional approaches that align with the science.

depend on the language processes and knowledge just described. The reader works with the words and sentences of the text (surface code) to identify the idea units that the author has explicitly scripted. At the same time, readers connect the ideas within and between the sentences and integrate their knowledge with what is implied within the text (text base). In this way, the skilled comprehender uses what the author has provided—coupled with their language processes, skills, and knowledge—to create an overall understanding and/or mental model of the text that can be used for future applications (Kintsch & Rawson, 2005; Snow, 2002).

It is important to recognize that reading comprehension is a dynamic process that occurs moment by moment as the reader extracts and constructs meaning. The outcome is shaped by the interaction of what the reader brings to the text, the demands of the text itself, and the nature of the task, all of which occur within varied contexts.

This knowledge of the complexity of comprehension provides direction for an instructional guide that reflects what the science has discovered about the construction of meaning, whether reading by ear or eye. It calls for a framework that directly addresses the language and cognitive processes, skills, and knowledge that are necessary for quality products. The ability to demonstrate understanding (products) at different levels of understanding is dependent on the reader's ability to access, apply, and integrate their knowledge of words, sentences, text structures, and background knowledge to express understanding of text.

## What: The Reading Comprehension Blueprint

What is the Reading Comprehension Blueprint? In the broadest sense, it serves as a master plan or a guide for action. More specifically, it is an evidence-based framework for delivering instruction that facilitates the student's ability to extract and construct meaning from text. It is not a unit or lesson plan; rather, it is intended to organize and scaffold the teacher's preparation of varied texts for varied purposes. This framework can be used flexibly for reading one passage or multiple texts. Although all components



are considered critical to comprehension, the teacher’s instructional focus is determined by student needs. The Blueprint calls for the use of evidence-based strategies and activities but allows for the teacher to choose those that are most appropriate to his or her students and the educational context. It also acknowledges the metacognitive nature of teaching by prompting educators to ask and respond to a series of questions related to the design of instruction—questions that address both the process and product demands of comprehension (Hennessy, 2020, p. 43).

## How: The Components & Related Questions

Take a moment to review the Blueprint’s organization and contents (Figure 1.4). On the left, the focus is on preparing for instruction and for the development of critical competencies for comprehending the text. Note that the Blueprint calls for the identification of critical understandings and purpose—including goals and objectives—and then identifies the instructional components necessary for reading and making meaning of the text. You may have noticed that these components reflect the importance of developing essential language comprehension and cognitive processes, skills, and knowledge.

On the right, the series of related questions, based in science, support the educator in making essential decisions related to the what and how of instruction, while specifically identifying the learning goals, strategies, activities, and routines necessary for acquisition and application of critical contributors to comprehension.

## The When & Where: Instructional Considerations

The bidirectional arrow in Figure 1.4 acknowledges the recursive nature of comprehension and the interrelatedness and necessary integration of these skills, while also recognizing the importance of comprehension monitoring while reading. It acknowledges the when and where of instruction and whether it is the individual, small, or whole group that is determined by the educator and dependent on the needs of the student.

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### Voices From the Field: Comprehension & the Science

I am enjoying putting the science behind literacy practice into the teaching of literacy. It has prompted me to rethink how and why I am teaching in a specific way.

–A Blueprint Book Study Participant




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### Reflect & Connect: Script a Response

How has this information influenced your thinking about reading comprehension and the implications for instruction?

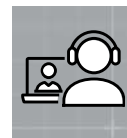



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### Viewing Link

Expert Minute—Thinking About Comprehension

[https://www.mtsu.edu/dyslexia/expert\\_minutes.php](https://www.mtsu.edu/dyslexia/expert_minutes.php)



<b>Blueprint for Comprehension Instruction</b>	
<b>PREPARING FOR INSTRUCTION</b> CRITICAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF TEXT	What do you want students to know and understand after reading the text? What are the critical concepts and understandings—big ideas you want your students to acquire? What texts will support these understandings?
<b>PURPOSE FOR READING TEXT</b>	What are the content instructional goals and objectives? What are the literacy instructional goals and objectives?
<b>TEXT READING VOCABULARY</b>	Which words will your students need to know? Which are worth knowing? Which ones will you intentionally target and directly teach? Which ones will you incidentally-on-purpose teach? How, when? Which words will you purposefully discuss and incorporate into expressive language activities? How and when will you teach and foster the use of independent word learning strategies?
<b>LANGUAGE STRUCTURES</b> (phrases, clauses, sentence comprehension)	Are there phrases, clauses, and sentence structures that may be difficult for your students? How and when will you directly teach sentence comprehension? How and when will you teach students to work with challenging sentences? How will you facilitate the integration of ideas within and between sentences, e.g., the use of cohesive ties and connectives? How and when will you teach students to work with these?
<b>KNOWLEDGE</b> • Text structure • Background knowledge	How is the text organized? How and when will you directly teach students the purpose, features, and signal words of different genres? How will you teach students to use the structure to understand purpose? To organize and express their understanding? What background knowledge is critical to understanding the text? How and when will you teach students to access and build their knowledge and integrate it with the text?
<b>LEVELS OF UNDERSTANDING AND INFERENCE</b>	How will you teach students to construct meaning at different levels of understanding, including the surface code, textbase, and mental model of text? How will you directly teach students to use inference to integrate ideas and connect background knowledge to the text? How will you support your students' deep comprehension of text?
<b>EXPRESSION OF UNDERSTANDING</b>	What strategies and activities will you use for students to demonstrate understanding at different levels during and after reading? How will you support their oral and written expression of understanding?

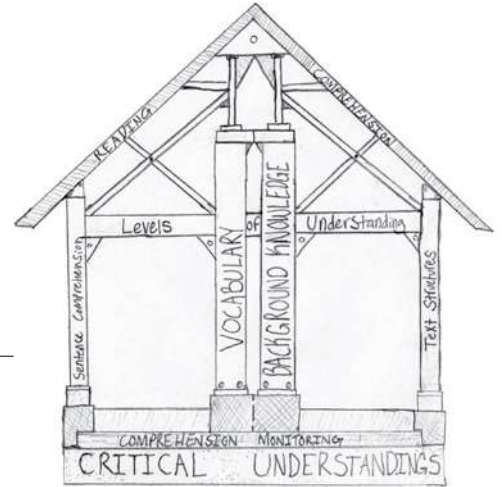
← Before, During, and After Reading: Strategies and Activities      Comprehension Monitoring      →

**Figure 1.4.** Blueprint for reading comprehension instruction. (From Hennessy, N. L. [2020]. *The reading comprehension blueprint: Helping students make meaning of text*. Paul H. Brookes Publishing, Co.)



# Implementing the Blueprint

## Preparing for Instruction & Text Reading



This chapter explores the initial components of the Blueprint that focus on getting ready and preparing for instruction and the “bidirectional arrow” components of the Blueprint. As you read, consider connections to your practice.



### CHECK IN: Connect to current knowledge and practices!

*How does your current comprehension instruction address the acquisition of knowledge and critical language processes and skills? Script a brief response.*

## Preparing for Instruction

### Critical Understandings

“Critical Understandings refer to the big ideas, the important understandings, that we want students to ‘get inside of’ and retain after they’ve forgotten many of the details. They go beyond discrete facts or skills and focus on larger concepts, principles, or processes” (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998, p. 10).

There is an increasing emphasis on the importance and integration of knowledge-building along with literacy skills during comprehension instruction. Individuals such as Tim Shanahan (2017a) tell us, “Too often the emphasis of a reading lesson is so much on the reading skill or strategy that the opportunity to expand children’s understanding of their world is lost.” Hugh Catts has written about and supported “concentrated efforts to build rich and integrated ideas about social studies, science, and other subjects during ELA lesson” (2021–2022, p. 30).

The Blueprint calls for the educator to consider the following questions:

What do you want your students to know and understand after reading the texts?

What are the critical concepts and understandings—the big ideas—you want your students to acquire?

### Purpose & Goals of Reading Comprehension

Shanahan (2017a) reminds us that reading lessons need to have “double outcomes—an improvement in reading ability and an increased knowledge about whatever was read.” The Blueprint recommends that this be accomplished by asking the following questions:

What are the content instructional goals and objectives?

What are the literacy instructional goals and objectives?

Implicit in these recommendations is the choice of texts used for comprehension instruction. While decodable and/or predictable texts provide opportunities for initially building foundations for making meaning, this is not their primary purpose. Regardless of reading levels within a classroom, the use of grade- and age-appropriate texts across content areas provides opportunities for developing the language and knowledge base needed for working with all types of academic texts. Experts tell us that we cannot let the language of print get in the way of student progress (Adams, 2010–2011). Educators need to be purposeful about building academic language, particularly for students at risk of reading difficulties and English language learners (Lesaux & Harris, 2015). Academic language, or the language of schools and workplaces, is different from the language we use every day. It features sophisticated vocabulary, complex syntax, and varied discourse structures. Students who demonstrate proficiency in the use of academic language are better able to acquire new knowledge, participate in the academic tasks of school, and express their understanding and ideas. Thus, students must have access to these challenging texts regardless of their respective reading levels. Teachers can scaffold instruction by providing access to read-alouds and/or high-quality audio versions of texts. These accommodations also provide learners with language-based learning differences or, for those who are English language learners, equitable access to the rich texts necessary for developing academic language.

The following questions can prompt reflection on some necessary considerations when choosing purposeful texts for comprehension instruction:

- Do your readings support the development of knowledge?
- Do your readings provide opportunities to develop necessary language processes and skills?



#### Tips for Success!

Critical understandings share several characteristics:

- They connect to big ideas that have a lasting impact beyond the classroom.
- They are transferrable to other subject areas and disciplines.
- They go beyond facts and provide a foundation for helping students make deeper connections.
- They are recurring and can be revisited and built upon over time.

The following examples highlight how the critical understanding of “growing up” can be adapted and built upon. Notice how these understandings deepen over time, and how these ideas have lasting value beyond the classroom and school.

- Every day we grow and develop.
- Growing up involves increased responsibility.
- Growing up takes patience and kindness with oneself.
- The reality of growing up isn’t always easy.
- Growing up often involves learning important life lessons.
- Moving to adulthood involves looking forward to the future.

- Do your texts provide opportunities to develop and apply academic language skills to text?
- Do your readings represent different genres, disciplines, and the interests and experiences of your readers, and are they culturally responsive?
- Have you considered access issues for struggling readers? (Hennessy, 2020, p. 50)

## A Tool for Preparing and Planning for Instruction: The Unit Organizer

The Blueprint provides the framework for informed instruction while the unit organizer provides a tool for making the design and delivery of instruction visible. It serves as an instructional map that helps educators chart and stay the course of instruction by connecting educators’ yearly goals with their everyday instructional planning. They provide the foundation for the design of lesson plans necessary for accomplishing these goals. The organizers begin with the identification of critical topics and enduring understandings, which are the big ideas and concepts we want students to hold onto after they’ve left the classroom. They also provide a vehicle for connecting to the essential questions, overall purpose and goals, purposeful reading, interdisciplinary links, and evidence of learning for the unit. The Blueprint provides the guiding questions, noted in the previous section, which help educators to plan for and craft enduring understandings and identify related content and literacy goals and purposeful texts. The model unit organizer that follows provides potential responses to the Blueprint questions posed while also demonstrating how a common theme (critical understanding) can span different grade levels. The model serves as an example of how to plan for varied themes.

### A Model Unit Organizer

The unit organizer in [Figure 2.1](#) compares two instructional units connected with the theme of identity. Notice how the through line of identity is adapted to the developmental needs of each grade level. The concept of one’s identity is a theme that should be revisited across grades and disciplines; however, this big idea is explored on different levels of meaning. This allows for elaboration and further construction of the student’s mental model as they grow. Additionally, the organizer addresses goals, resources, and evidence of learning.

	First Grade	Eighth Grade
<b>Critical topic</b>	<i>All About Me!</i>	<i>Who Am I?</i>
Enduring understandings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am unique; there is no one else like me.</li> <li>• I have likes and dislikes.</li> <li>• I have strengths and challenges.</li> <li>• I am part of a family and a classroom community.</li> <li>• My family is unique.</li> <li>• All of the people in my class are unique and have their own interests and can do different things.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual identities are complex and show themselves in many ways.</li> <li>• Everyone has multiple identities.</li> <li>• Societal views can influence individual identity.</li> <li>• Our identities have similarities and differences.</li> <li>• It’s important to see my identities as well as the identities of others reflected in the world around me.</li> </ul>
Essential questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What characteristics and traits make me an individual?</li> <li>• What are my likes and dislikes? Strengths and challenges?</li> <li>• What is a community?</li> <li>• What makes my family unique?</li> <li>• What makes my classmates unique?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What defines our identity?</li> <li>• How is it shaped?</li> <li>• Can we have more than one identity?</li> <li>• Do we keep the same identity throughout our lives?</li> <li>• How do authors develop characters’ identities?</li> </ul>
Content goals	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify their own likes/dislikes, and strengths/challenges.</li> <li>• Recognize that everyone has similarities and differences.</li> <li>• Describe a community.</li> <li>• Investigate their own family histories and traditions.</li> <li>• Build awareness of others’ family histories and traditions.</li> </ul>	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a working definition of the word identity.</li> <li>• Describe their own identity and factors that shaped it.</li> <li>• Reflect on the various ways certain social contexts impact our identities.</li> <li>• Examine the topic of identity in a variety of stories.</li> </ul>

**Figure 2.1.** Unit organizer for first grade and eighth grade on the theme of identity.

(continued)

Figure 2.1. (continued)

	First Grade	Eighth Grade
Critical topic	<i>All About Me!</i>	<i>Who Am I?</i>
Literacy goals	Students will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and discuss story elements (characters, setting, events, conclusion).</li> <li>State what authors and illustrators do.</li> <li>Locate the front cover, back cover, and title page of a book.</li> <li>Identify adjectives and identity terms that describe themselves, their families, and their classmates.</li> <li>Use new vocabulary words in their speaking and writing with prompting and support.</li> </ul>	Students will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand there are many variations of the narrative genre.</li> <li>Recognize, from reading and writing, the nature of memoir.</li> <li>Analyze the impact of an author’s literary choices in a memoir.</li> <li>Compare characters and self to create connections and demonstrate understanding of the character within a story.</li> <li>Compose a personal narrative that develops a real experience or event in their lives.</li> </ul>
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Leo the Late Bloomer</i> by Robert Kraus</li> <li><i>Eyes That Kiss the Corner</i> Joanna Ho</li> <li><i>Chrysanthemum</i> by Kevin Henkes</li> <li><i>Frederick</i> by Leo Leonli</li> <li><i>The Proudest Blue</i> by Ibtihaj Muhammad</li> <li><i>We Are All Wonders</i> by R. J. Palacio</li> <li><i>The Best Part of Me</i> by Wendy Ewald</li> <li><i>It’s Okay to Be Different</i> by Todd Parr</li> <li><i>The Day You Begin</i> by Jacqueline Woodson</li> <li><i>Fry Bread</i> by Kevin Noble Maillard</li> <li><i>Hair/Pelitos</i> by Sandra Cisneros</li> <li><i>The Family Book</i> by Todd Parr</li> <li><i>Last Stop on Market Street</i> by Matt de la Peña</li> <li><i>All Are Welcome</i> by Alexandra Penfold</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Persepolis</i> by Marjane Satrapi</li> <li><i>American Born Chinese</i> by Gene Luen Yang</li> <li><i>El Deafo</i> by Cece Bell</li> <li><i>A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier</i> by Ishmael Beah</li> <li><i>Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of a Cultural Revolution</i> by Ji-li Jiang</li> <li><i>I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban</i> by Malala Yousafzai</li> <li><i>Brown Girl Dreaming</i> by Jacqueline Woodson</li> <li>“The Jacket” by Gary Soto</li> <li>Various chapters from <i>The House on Mango Street</i> by Sandra Cisneros</li> <li>“Fish Cheeks” by Amy Tan</li> <li>“When I Was Puerto Rican” by Esmeralda Santiago</li> <li>“Richard” by Allie Brosh</li> <li>Six Word Memoirs website (<a href="http://www.sixwordmemoirs.com">www.sixwordmemoirs.com</a>)</li> </ul>
Interdisciplinary links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Art: Students will create a family portrait using precut shapes.</li> <li>Math: Students will count the number of family members who live in their house and look for similarities and differences with their classmates.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Art: Students will create a symbolic self-portrait that represents their own unique identity.</li> <li>Science/Social Studies: Students will discuss the purpose of genealogy and will conduct a series of interviews to collect family information.</li> </ul>
Evidence of learning products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-class discussions</li> <li>Small group discussions</li> <li>Questioning</li> <li>Completed classroom community quilt square</li> <li>Completed sentence starters and sentence frames</li> <li>Completed “Me Book”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-class discussions</li> <li>Small-group discussions</li> <li>Questioning</li> <li>Completed six-word memoir</li> <li>First draft of personal narrative</li> <li>Google doc comments/feedback</li> <li>Revisions to draft</li> </ul>

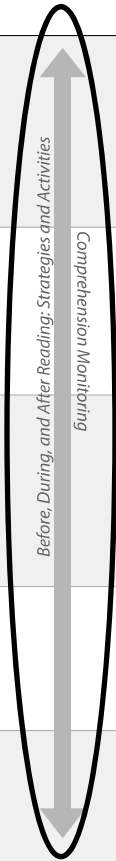
### The Lesson Organizer

The lesson organizer is focused on accomplishing unit goals, which are typically detailed and specific to a time period. They identify objectives, the sequence of instruction, and strategies and assessment methods specific to the contributors to comprehension. Examples are included in the chapters that follow.

### The Bidirectional Arrow

The bidirectional arrow in the Blueprint (see Figure 2.2) serves as a reminder that reading comprehension is not a step-by-step process but dependent on the interaction of multiple skills and sources of knowledge. It also calls attention to the flexibility of the Blueprint. Instruction is determined by the educator, including choice of setting and use of informed strategies and activities.

<b>Blueprint for Comprehension Instruction</b>	
<b>PREPARING FOR INSTRUCTION</b> CRITICAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF TEXT	What do you want students to know and understand after reading the text? What are the critical concepts and understandings—big ideas you want your students to acquire? What texts will support these understandings?
<b>PURPOSE FOR READING TEXT</b>	What are the content instructional goals and objectives? What are the literacy instructional goals and objectives?
<b>TEXT READING</b> VOCABULARY	Which words will your students need to know? Which are worth knowing? Which ones will you intentionally target and directly teach? Which ones will you incidentally-on-purpose teach? How, when? Which words will you purposefully discuss and incorporate into expressive language activities? How and when will you teach and foster the use of independent word learning strategies?
<b>LANGUAGE STRUCTURES</b> (phrases, clauses, sentence comprehension)	Are there phrases, clauses, and sentence structures that may be difficult for your students? How and when will you directly teach sentence comprehension? How and when will you teach students to work with challenging sentences? How will you facilitate the integration of ideas within and between sentences, e.g., the use of cohesive ties and connectives? How and when will you teach students to work with these?
<b>KNOWLEDGE</b> • Text structure • Background knowledge	How is the text organized? How and when will you directly teach students the purpose, features, and signal words of different genres? How will you teach students to use the structure to understand purpose? To organize and express their understanding?  What background knowledge is critical to understanding the text? How and when will you teach students to access and build their knowledge and integrate it with the text?
<b>LEVELS OF UNDERSTANDING AND INFERENCE</b>	How will you teach students to construct meaning at different levels of understanding, including the surface code, textbase, and mental model of text? How will you directly teach students to use inference to integrate ideas and connect background knowledge to the text? How will you support your students' deep comprehension of text?
<b>EXPRESSION OF UNDERSTANDING</b>	What strategies and activities will you use for students to demonstrate understanding at different levels during and after reading? How will you support their oral and written expression of understanding?



**Figure 2.2.** The bidirectional arrow in the Blueprint. (From Hennessy, N. L. [2020]. *The reading comprehension blueprint: Helping students make meaning of text*. Paul H. Brookes Publishing, Co.)

The arrow also highlights the importance of comprehension monitoring and teaching students how to check their own understanding. There are varied reasons *why* the reader might encounter a breakdown of understanding. For example, a reader may have inadequate vocabulary knowledge and struggle to grasp the precise vocabulary employed by an author. Others may not have the grammar and syntax skills necessary to unpack sentences of varied lengths and constructions, while some readers fail to possess the background knowledge needed to make meaning on a deeper level. Knowing these sources of difficulty provides opportunities to use strategies that the reader has learned as potential solutions. Skilled readers actively notice their thinking as they read and monitor their comprehension to make sure they understand. If they can't, they can apply strategies to repair inaccuracies or misconceptions. Consider [Figure 2.3](#) for an example of comprehension monitoring in action.





### Tips for Success!

Comprehension monitoring is a hallmark of skilled readers. They use this ability to reflect on what they read and process their understanding. Skilled readers monitor their understanding by asking themselves questions like:

- Does this make sense?
- When did I lose track?
- What just happened? Why?
- Does what I just read fit in with the rest of the text?

However, struggling readers may fail to recognize when their comprehension breaks down and/or what to do to fix it. Thus, it is an educator's responsibility to teach all learners ways to monitor their understanding, so that they walk away from the text with its larger meaning overall.

Why	So
Word meaning	Think about using your independent word learning strategies (dictionary, morphemes, context) to figure out what the word means.
Sentence meaning	Reread and ask yourself: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where is the <i>who</i> or <i>what</i> and the <i>do</i> in the sentence?</li> <li>• What words are standing in or substituting for important words in the sentences?</li> </ul>
Knowledge	Think about what you know and make connections. Look up or ask for additional information about the topic.
Paragraph/section meaning	Reread the paragraph and ask yourself: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is this all about?</li> <li>• What does it tell me?</li> </ul>
Engagement	Tell yourself to stop at the end of a section or page to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• summarize</li> <li>• annotate</li> <li>• visualize</li> <li>• question</li> </ul>

Figure 2.3. Comprehension monitoring: The why & so.

## Planning for Text Reading

### Critical Contributors to Comprehension

This section of the Blueprint reflects what science has taught us about critical contributors to comprehension. While these are intentionally named to highlight the importance of developing language processes and skills, each corresponds to an instructional component including the teaching of vocabulary, sentence comprehension, background knowledge, text structures, and inference.

The questions for each component are intended to call attention to the use of routines, strategies, and activities that focus on the development of necessary language skills and knowledge. For example, teachers need to directly teach vocabulary so that the reader has access to word meaning as they build meaning of the text or build the necessary background knowledge to make inferences. Additionally, the Blueprint calls for educators to teach instructional strategies that support students' ability to express or demonstrate their understanding of the text such as directly teaching students how to summarize understanding (orally or in writing).

Keep in mind that comprehension is the “the orchestrated product of a set of linguistic and cognitive processes” (Castles et al., 2018, p. 28). The Blueprint was designed to call attention to the importance of developing the processes and skills necessary to create varied products that demonstrate understanding. It calls for the differentiation and use of instruction that supports both process and product.



### Voices From the Field: The Blueprint

The Blueprint emphasizes that comprehension instruction must be thoughtfully planned and explicitly taught. In addition, the bidirectional arrow visually represents the integration of skills throughout the reading process. I found the guiding questions in the Blueprint to be opportunities for us to design instruction that meets the needs of all students.

—A Blueprint Book Study Participant



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## Reflect & Connect

At this point, what are your thoughts about current instruction and the potential use of the Blueprint?



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## Listening Link

Glean Education Podcast: Blueprint for Reading Comprehension Instruction

<https://www.gleaneducation.com/podcast>



**“Clear step-by-step instructional routines to implement in your classroom tomorrow...  
A perfect companion to [Hennessy’s] Blueprint.”**

—Melissa Loftus and Lori Sappington, Hosts of the Melissa & Lori Love Literacy podcast

**“Translates the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of reading comprehension instruction into the ‘how.’”**

—Nancy Chapel Eberhardt, educational consultant and coauthor of *Sortegories and Syntax: Knowledge to Practice*

**“When you are trying to learn something new and complex, nothing compares to seeing  
multiple examples at different grade levels, and this book delivers exactly that.”**

—Stephanie Stollar, Ph.D., Mount St. Joseph University, Founder of the Reading Science Academy

## **How can teachers put the Reading Comprehension Blueprint into action?**

In Nancy Hennessy’s bestselling book, K-8 educators across the country learned the fundamentals of evidence-based comprehension instruction. Now—in response to popular demand—there’s a companion activity book that helps teachers apply the Blueprint in their classrooms!

Grounded in the science of reading, this book is a practical field guide to **intentional instruction that enhances reading comprehension skills for all learners**. The activity book covers every section of the Blueprint: vocabulary, syntax and sentence comprehension, text structures, background knowledge, and levels of understanding and inference, as well as expression of understanding. For each of these critical areas, this activity book gives educators:

- Clear and concise guidance on the what, why, and how of instruction
- Sample lesson plans that teachers can use as models for their own
- Instructional activities that help students build key skills needed for comprehension
- Ready-to-use tips for successful teaching
- “Try This” activities that help teachers reflect on and hone their instruction
- Supports for diverse learners, including students with learning disabilities and English language learners
- Reader-friendly definitions of important terms
- Links to multimedia content for further learning

Perfect for professional development, this hands-on resource can be studied by individual educators, discussed in small groups, or used as the focus for a training program or learning community. A must-have for current and future K-8 educators, reading specialists, and other practitioners, this activity book helps teachers apply their knowledge of structured comprehension instruction in their classrooms—and strengthen reading success for every learner.

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