**Developing Comprehension**

There are seven general strategies known to promote adolescents’ reading comprehension. The strategies are ones that proficient readers use regularly and across a wide variety of texts:

**•Plan and Monitor:** controlling one’s mental activities; it is metacognitive in nature, centering about readers’ awareness and control of their comprehension.

When engaged with this strategy, youth are taught planning skills—how to preview texts and how to set a purpose for reading and make predictions. They

are also taught how to clarify ideas by using fix-up strategies and how to clarify vocabulary by using context clues and other word-level fix-up strategies.

**• Determine Importance**: identifying essential ideas and information. This is the ability to separate the wheat from the chaff in text. Youth are taught how to identify stated and implied main ideas, how to summarize texts, and how to note the personal relevance of ideas and information.

**• Ask Questions**: interrogating texts for a variety of purposes, such as checking one’s understanding, querying the author about his or her writing, and

discerning relationships among ideas and information within a text.

**• Make Inferences**: linking parts of texts that authors did not link explicitly. Using what one already knows to form links across sentences and paragraphs. Often

known as “reading between the lines.”

**• Make Connections**: using what is known to enrich authors’ meanings; taking what has been learned from one’s own life experiences, other texts, and cultural and global matters to deepen understandings of what the author presents. Otherwise known as “reading beyond the lines.”

**• Synthesize**: putting together ideas from multiple sources; deciding how ideas go together in a way that is new; figuring out how what one is reading and learning fits together in a way not thought of before. Youth are taught how to draw conclusions, form generalizations, and make comparisons across texts.

**• Visualize:** forming sensory and emotional images of textual contents, especially visual images. This strategy also includes an aspect specifically for teens who don’t consider themselves to be readers: the strategy of recognizing that one is having an emotional response while reading and to identify what the author did to invoke that response.

This set of seven strategies is based on the reading comprehension strategy research that has been reviewed at length since the early 1990s (Gersten, Fuchs, Williams & Baker, 2001; National Reading Panel, 2000; Pearson, Roehler,

Dole, & Duffy, 1992)

This information is from the following website: <http://www.ngsp.net/Portals/0/Downloads/HBNETDownloads/Edge_Mono_Moore1.pdf>

 **How to support development of Higher Order Thinking**

A main goal of educators today is to teach students the skills they need to be critical thinkers. Instead of simply memorizing facts and ideas, children need to engage in higher levels of thinking to reach their fullest potential. Practicing Higher Order Thinking (HOT) skills outside of school will give kids and teens the tools that they need to understand, infer, connect, categorize, synthesize, evaluate, and apply the information they know to find solutions to new and existing problems. Consider the following example to distinguish between memorization of facts and actually engaging in thoughtful ideas:

*After reading a book about Martin Luther King or studying the Civil Rights era, you could choose to ask a child a simple question such as “Who is Martin Luther King, Jr.?”. When answering this question, the child can simply provide facts that s/he has memorized. Instead, to promote critical thinking skills, you might ask them “Why do you think that people view Martin Luther King, Jr. as a hero of the civil rights era?” to elicit a more well thought-out response that requires them to apply, connect, and synthesize the information they previously learned.*

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**What To Do**

Families and out-of-school educators can play a significant role in encouraging higher order thinking with their kids and teens, even when having a casual conversation. Asking open-ended questions that don’t have one “right” answer gives children confidence to respond in creative ways without being afraid of being “wrong.” After reading a book together, a parent might ask their child a question such as: “If you were that character, how would you have persuaded Timothy to turn himself in?” rather than something like “What was the main character’s name in the book?”

Below are more examples of questions to ask your child to spark discussion, make them think critically, and encourage higher order thinking.

**When reading a book:**

* “What do you think might happen next?”
* “Does this remind you of anything from your life?”
* “Can you tell me about what you read today?”
* “Why did he/she act that way?”

 **When visiting an unfamiliar place:**

* “How is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ similar to/different from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?”
* “Can you explain/show me that in another way?”

**When making an important decision:**

* “How would you rank \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?”
* “How do you imagine \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ would look?”
* “What do you think a solution might be?”
* “Why did you decide to choose \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ over \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?”

Try asking children and teens these questions at home and in a variety of educational and non-educational settings. Rather than just having a conversation, you can also ask your child to respond to these questions in writing. Be prepared to respond to your child’s answers with even more thought-provoking questions to continue to encourage higher levels of thinking, also opening up the lines of communication between parent and child!

For the above and additional information, go to:
 <http://www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/>

Additional resources for supporting adolescent literacy can also be located at:

<http://wmpenn.colonial.k12.de.us/sites/wmpenn.colonial.k12.de.us/files/shared/literacy_links.pdf>

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