

Reading Comprehension Difficulties

Definition:

Reading comprehension is a process in which knowledge of language, knowledge of the world, and knowledge of a topic interact to make complex meaning. It involves decoding, word association, context association, summary, analogy, integration, and critique.

The Symptoms:

Students who have difficulty with reading comprehension may have trouble identifying and understanding important ideas in reading passages, may have trouble with basic reading skills such as word recognition, may not remember what they've read, and may frequently avoid reading due to frustration.

Reading Comprehension is also sometimes hindered by deficits in executive functioning because it requires planning, attention, simultaneous and successive cognitive processes, and the ability to notice and address gaps

What to do in the classroom:

It is important to note that this is not just an English issue—all content areas must address reading comprehension because approaches differ in different content areas and approaches must be contextualized with content. This can be done with the following techniques:

- Inquiry-based tools (ask questions about the text both to get answers and to model inquiry)
- In-class or online threaded discussions that key into important comprehension ideas
- Text-structure strategies (discuss how texts in your discipline are structured so students know how and where to look for different types of information)
- Model process and technique in class (read together and model note-taking strategies)
- Activate prior knowledge (ask questions and discuss prior to reading)
- Provide self-monitoring questions for students to use as they read
- Identify main ideas (as a whole class, group, or individual in-class activity)
- Summarize (as a whole class, group, or individual in-class activity)

Technology:

- Reading with eyes, ears and fingers is all equal; therefore reading on technology is no less equal
- Speech synthesis media such as Kurzweil improve proofreading, reading attention, reading rates, and comprehension

