

Article at a Glance

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Heitin, L. and Zubrzycki, J. (2015). For Reading, Knowledge Matters More Than Strategies. *Curriculum Matters*, The Thomas B. Fordham Institute: Washington D.C.

Purpose of the Article: Improving reading comprehension is less about giving students good "strategies," and more about increasing their knowledge base about the world.

Background Information:

- The majority of reading comprehension instruction is focused on teaching strategies, like questioning, summarizing, and rereading.
- Comprehension is often misunderstood as a generic skill, rather than dependent on a particular content area or context.
- Reading comprehension engages multiple cognitive-linguistic processes at once and is much more complex than the act of decoding words.
- Particular subsets of students are at risk for developing proficient reading comprehension abilities including but not limited to low income students (who may have limited exposure to the wide world), and students with cognitive and/or language impairments (who often have complex learning needs in addition to difficulty accessing the curriculum).
- The Common Core indicates that students demonstrate reading comprehension by analyzing the structure of texts, making inferences, and evaluating arguments. As such, the focus tilts toward these strategies rather than a larger understanding of reading comprehension as an end in itself.

Key Findings:

These strategies have the best evidence base for helping students develop reading comprehension:

- *Exposing students to broad, basic knowledge of content area*

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- This includes reading materials, visual presentations (slide shows, youtube), and encouragement to link what students learn with what they already know.
- **Thematic Units**
 - Theme-based learning allows students to develop more than a surface understanding of a particular topic.
- **Text Sets**
 - Multiple texts provide repeated opportunities to engage with the same words and concepts across contexts.
 - Students should have the chance to interact and while communicating, listening, reading and writing.

Application of Key Findings to Boardmaker Instructional Solutions:

- **All Boardmaker Instructional Solutions prioritize connecting students with the world.**
 - Book Bridge provides opportunities for students of all abilities to connect with grade level literature, which provides social opportunities, cultural knowledge, as well as knowledge of other people, places, and problems.
 - Current Events connects students of all abilities to the events that shape the world today.
 - Expedition Education offers students of all abilities to learn about continents and cultures around the world as a conduit for understanding the conditions in which we live.
- **Boardmaker Instructional Solutions organize around themes or packets of connected information.**
 - Book Bridge provides comes complete with chapter-by-chapter lessons.
 - All math and language arts activities within the scope and sequence of Current Events center on a weekly theme or topic.
 - Expedition Education is a theme-based unit of content and instruction.
- **Boardmaker Instructional Solutions deliver text sets that center around a larger topic or idea.**

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- Book Bridge comes in grade bands of five books that comprise a diverse collection of grade level literature where there is overlap of things like vocabulary and plot.
- Current Events provides multiple articles and books that provide the same function as a text set.
- Each month in Expedition Education students explore a complete text set that pertains to the history, geography, life, and culture of each location.