



Frequently Asked Questions AND Answers from the Weekly Reader webinar:

A Fresh Look at Reading Comprehension Instruction for Grades K through 6: How the Concepts of Comprehension[®] can help improve your students' understanding of what they read.

Research says that students need to think deeply about what they read to successfully comprehend it. The Concepts of Comprehension[®] are a guiding framework developed to help teachers explicitly teach 21 of the most important skills student need to understand what they read. This webinar took an in-depth look at these skills and the explicit strategies you can use to teach them.

Below are the most frequently asked questions and the answers to them provided by Rachel Etienne, from the Urban Education Exchange, who was the presenter of this event.

1. Can you apply the Concepts of Comprehension methods to ESL students?

Explicit instruction can certainly be used to teach ESL students. Explicitly teaching ESL students reading comprehension skills and strategies while exposing them to a wide variety of vocabulary and background knowledge, has long been a best practice in ESL instruction.

The Concepts of Comprehension[®] provide necessary scaffolding for students still struggling with comprehension of a new language, by breaking down a concept (such as setting) into manageable and increasingly rigorous learning objectives. Click on the link below for an example.

http://www.ueexchange.org/null/download?&exclusive=filemgr.download&file_id=122482

Visual scaffolding can also support ESL students' comprehension. As teachers and students think aloud about the text and record thoughts and ideas on charts, ESL students are further supported in language development. Please click the link for an example of visual scaffolding that supports the development of comprehension skills.

http://www.ueexchange.org/null/Predicting+Poster?exclusive=filemgr.download&file_id=12851&showthumb=0

2. Do you address the 21 Concepts of Comprehension[®] in isolation, or can you focus on more than one concept at a time?

Successful reading comprehension requires a reader to use multiple skills and strategies simultaneously. While the Concepts of Comprehension[®] are designed to provide teachers with a framework for instruction—one concept at a time—it is important to address any concept that is appropriate for the overall comprehension of a given text. The Concepts of Comprehension[®] should guide you toward a “focus” skill for explicit instruction without preventing you from supporting students with other concepts if necessary. Addressing more than one concept should be purposeful and complementary (i.e.: discussing Author’s Purpose to identify the Theme of a story).

3. How do small groups fit in with this method?

Since the Concepts of Comprehension[®] are addressed in every grade from K–6, there are materials available at each grade level. When teaching small groups, the entire class can be working with the same Concept of Comprehension[®], but each group should have access to reading materials that are most appropriate for their reading level. Therefore, the Direct Teaching (modeling) portion of the lesson can be taught to the whole class, while the Guided and Independent Practice sections can be supported through differentiated, small groups. Each small group can practice the same skill (or learning objective), but with a text closer to their own reading level.

4. How do you evaluate and assess progress?

When using the Gradual Release of Responsibility methodology, students are given an opportunity for Independent Practice [after the Direct Teaching (or modeling) and Guided Practice portion of a lesson]. By evaluating students' independent work, teachers can get a clear idea of whether students have mastered the newly learned skills. This type of specific, yet informal assessment can guide teachers to determine appropriate next steps, whether they are to re-teach or move on to the next area of instruction.

5. How long do you recommend a read aloud for first grade? How many of the strategies should you target in one read aloud sitting?

Using the Gradual Release of Responsibility methodology is the best approach to a targeted read aloud. It should begin with teacher-led modelling and should cover a small portion of the lesson. As the read aloud continues, students play a role in interacting with the text during the Guided Practice. In total, for both Direct Teaching and Guided Practice, the read aloud should be about 20 minutes.

While it makes sense to take advantage of “teachable moments” during any lesson, it is important to focus on one specific skill/strategy at a time. Other teaching points can be made during a read aloud (i.e.: teaching critical vocabulary); however, the goal is to have a specific, rigorous, and measurable objective for each lesson to increase the likelihood of success for your students.

6. Is there a good or proper sequence for teaching the 21 Concepts?

The Scope and Sequence is a tool for teachers to use in planning their yearlong implementation of the Concepts of Comprehension[®]. The Scope and Sequence is designed with the following considerations:

- First, the Concepts are ordered to **reflect dependencies**. For example, Sequence is taught before Plot, because understanding the sequence of a story is a prerequisite for understanding the plot of the story.
- Second, the Concepts are ordered by **increasing cognitive complexity**. The skills embedded in each Concept of Comprehension[®] advance as the year progresses. For example, Explicit Information requires identifying information "right there" in the text and should occur toward the beginning of the year. Theme necessarily requires abstraction and occurs later in the year.

The Scope and Sequence is recommended, but lessons are flexible so that teachers can adjust to the needs of their classrooms and school year plans.

Please click on the following link to see the recommended scope and sequence.

<http://www.ueexchange.org/home/curriculum/3rd/Comp/General>

7. Should all 21 Concepts be taught throughout each grade or can be split-up across grade levels?

For grades 2-6 all twenty-one Concepts of Comprehension[®] are taught throughout the school year. In grades K-1, certain Concepts are not developmentally appropriate and are not introduced. Concepts that are not included in grades K-1 are Author's Purpose, Cause & Effect, Theme, and Voice.

8. Would you recommend using reading passages to teach comprehension skills as opposed to content reading?

The goal of reading comprehension instruction is that students learn skills, strategies, and habits that can be applied to lifelong reading. Therefore, instruction should occur using a variety of texts. Regardless of reading material, the most important aspect of teaching reading comprehension is that instruction is explicit.

Explicit Instruction includes:

- Specific and measurable learning objectives for each lesson.
- Recommended mentor text for each lesson (either reading passage or book).
- Modeling and practice of the learning objective.
- Student independent work.
- The Gradual Release of Responsibility methodology, in which the control moves from the teacher to the student.

Please click this link for more information how to utilize explicit instruction with any reading material. <http://www.ueexchange.org/home/curriculum/methodology>

9. You said that your read aloud should be above grade level. How far above grade level?

Students' listening comprehension levels tends to be higher than reading comprehension levels, especially for younger readers. In order to maximize the opportunities for vocabulary instruction and exposure to background knowledge, we recommend using texts that are 1 – 2 years above grade level.

Click here for a complete list and definitions of the Concepts of Comprehension[®].

<http://www.ueexchange.org/home/curriculum/training/Concepts>