

Educators identify three strategies that best help struggling readers

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Credit: Max Fischer from Pexels

To help educators support K-12 students who are struggling with reading comprehension, the University of Oregon's HEDCO Institute has created a tip sheet showing the most successful strategies schools can implement.

"Reading comprehension strategies are helpful when used alone but may be more effective when several effective strategies are used together," said Elizabeth Day, research assistant professor with the HEDCO Institute who helped create [the report](#).

"But more strategies may not always be better, and given [limited resources](#) and time, educators need to know which strategies or combinations of strategies are most likely to improve student reading outcomes."

Of the many reading strategies studied in the review, the following three strategies, when used together, were the ones researchers found best for supporting readers struggling with comprehension:

1. Main idea: Teaching [students](#) to integrate the main ideas from the text in a coherent way.
2. Text structure: Teaching students the features of texts, such as descriptive passages, representation of cause and effect, elements to compare and contrast, and presentation of problem and solution.
3. Retell: Teaching students to organize information to provide a personal rendition of the text, for example, using cues such as first, next and last.

No single reading strategy was found to be the most important. But using a combination of main idea plus text structure plus retell strategies produced the greatest benefits among students with reading difficulties, the review found.

Importantly, the review found that a combination worked best when paired with the key scaffolding ingredient of providing readers with background knowledge instruction. Background knowledge instruction involves teaching vocabulary and/or content knowledge.

Research has shown that reading skills are crucial for many immediate and long-term student outcomes, but many students experience reading difficulties and face challenges with word recognition, reading comprehension or both.

Reading comprehension involves the ability to process text and understand its meaning, as well as integrate text information with what the reader already knows.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, students are struggling to keep up in [reading skills](#). In 2022, 31% of U.S. eighth graders performed below a basic reading level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the highest percentage of students reading below basic level since 1995.

The HEDCO Institute's report was based on Peng Peng and colleagues' Bayesian network meta-analysis published in the Review of Educational Research in 2023. The analysis included approximately 6,349 K-12 students, including students with learning disabilities (37% of participants).

More information: Comprehension Strategies to Support Students with Reading Difficulties. hedcoinstitute.uoregon.edu/reports/reading-strategies

Provided by University of Oregon

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