

Top 10 Reading Challenges and Interventions

These interventions should be used to help scholars meet their reading goals. Once you have analyzed data and diagnosed gaps, create prioritized goals around [The 5 Habits of Great Readers](#).



IDEAS & READING COMPREHENSION

Teach scholars to master . . .

1. Main Idea [CONTINUE →](#)
 2. Retelling [CONTINUE →](#)
 3. Holding Onto Meaning [CONTINUE →](#)
 4. Tracking Characters Within the Story [CONTINUE →](#)
 5. Making Inferences [CONTINUE →](#)
 6. Finding and Using Appropriate Evidence [CONTINUE →](#)
 7. Connecting Ideas Within the Text [CONTINUE →](#)
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FLUENCY, PHONICS, AND SELF-CORRECTION

Scholars have not mastered . . .

8. Fluency [CONTINUE →](#)
 9. Phonics [CONTINUE →](#)
 10. The Ability to Self-Correct [CONTINUE →](#)
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The Interventions

1. Teach scholars to master ...

Main Idea.

Use the Thinking Job:

Before reading, discuss the genre and thinking job. As scholars read have them stop to consider their thinking job. Model how you pause and think at critical points in the text — e.g. “What’s happening in this text? What does it make me think?”

Reread to Understand:

Above all, have scholars go back to the text and reread! When scholars struggle with the main idea it shows they are not comprehending. They need to notice when they lose meaning while reading, and begin to independently reread to gain a full understanding.

Chunk the Text:

Teach scholars to make their own “sections” and sum up an important idea after each section. If the text has headings, press scholars to underline or jot the most important idea in that section. At the end of the text, scholars can look back at what they noted to determine the main idea.

Stop and Think:

Have scholars stop and think frequently to develop meaning.

- First, preview the text. Read the title, the first few lines, and any text features to form an initial idea about what the text will be about.
- Then, as scholars read, teach them to build/revise this idea by asking themselves, “What just happened? How does it connect to what I have already read? How does it connect to my initial idea?”
- Continue asking these questions throughout the text until you’ve got the big idea at the end.

Move from Retell to Main Idea:

Start discourse in Guided Reading and Intervention by asking “What happened in this story?” As scholars generate responses, press kids to combine their observations into one big idea — e.g. I heard James say x, Taylor say y, and Paul say z, what does that make us think about this story?

Focus on Characters:

In fiction, when scholars have trouble moving beyond the literal, practice tracking the character(s) throughout the story. Ask scholars, “What can you infer about the characters based on their words, thoughts, and actions?” Then ask, “Why did the author give us this information?”

Understanding the Main Idea in Nonfiction:

In non-fiction, scholars can get caught up on one detail instead of thinking of the text as a whole. Explicitly teach scholars that when reading nonfiction, they need to think about the main idea of the whole text. Point out when a scholar is latching onto one detail within a nonfiction text. It can be helpful to say, “Yes. It is true that X is a detail from the text. To find the main idea, you have to think about how all of the details fit together to develop the main idea. Why do you think the author included X detail? What does the author want readers to understand?”



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2. Teach scholars to master

Retelling.

Use Five-Finger Retelling:

- One finger for the characters the story was about
- One finger for the setting and where it took place
- One finger for what happened in the beginning
- One finger for what happened middle
- One finger for what happened in the end

Implement Graphic Organizers:

Use a graphic organizer or simple T-chart to help scholars organize and keep track of information. For fiction, use genre-based graphic organizer or a story map with characters, setting, and three key events or details. For non-fiction use boxes and bullets.

Identify the Idea on Each Page:

Have scholars use Post-Its to stop at the end of each page, section or chapter to write one important idea they have learned and how it connects to what they have already read.

Press Scholars to Determine Importance:

Give scholars three Post-Its to mark the three most important moments or parts of the text. This helps scholars determine importance and focus their retell.

Track and Order Major Events:

During Guided Reading or Read Aloud write out major events on sentence strips. Have students put them in order and then flip the strips over to retell the story independently.

Partner Talk:

Prioritize partner share at the end of Independent Reading. Scholars should be able to talk about what they read, what it made them think, and whether their partner articulated those ideas in a clear and compelling manner.



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3. Teach scholars to master

Holding onto Meaning.

Stop and Think:

In Intervention or Guided Reading, pre-plan and mark stopping points that are important to the plot. Label these with an “S+T” for “Stop and Think” or any other notation. At each stopping point have the students retell what they have learned so far. If they are unable to, they need to go back and re-read. Scholars can also jot key ideas at the stopping point, and go back and review their jots before moving on to the next chunk.

- Remove the scaffold by putting the thinking work on scholars. Teach them to identify stopping points independently. Press scholars to mark up their own texts with stopping points and ask, “Why are you going to stop there? Prompt scholars to use those moments to stop and think about the meaning of the text.

Teach Scholars to Jot Key Ideas:

Explicitly teach scholars how to jot the key ideas and mark up their texts as they read. These jots will provide essential information to refer back to as they form their main idea. As scholars jot, ask, “Why did you stop here? What led you to this idea?”

Review Previous Content:

For any texts that go across multiple days, have students discuss what they learned the day prior, before they continue reading the next section or chapter.

Example: During guided reading:

- Play “radio show” and “catch up” listeners on “yesterday’s episode”.
- At the end of the lesson, one person in the Guided Reading group makes a “tweet” or a quick sketch of what happened that day in the story. Scholars can then use this as a reference point to review the next day.

Preview Content:

Before components that you anticipate will be challenging for a scholar, introduce the material 1-on-1 or in a small-group. Prepare them to be an active participant when the material is taught to the whole class later in the day.

Example: Before Shared Text:

- Give scholar a copy of the text and read the title, identify the genre, read any text features or pictures.
- Discuss the topic of the text and any other ideas the scholar gets from previewing the text.
- When appropriate, tell the scholar 1-2 questions or discussion topics you will pose to the whole class so he can have an individualized thinking job.
- Scholar could also jot notes from this preview session and prepare questions to bring to the whole-class discussion.



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4. Teach scholars to master

Tracking Characters within the Story.

Use Character Charts.

Provide paper where scholars can chart who their characters are, the actions their characters take, and what they learn about their characters as they read.

Pre-Identify Key Moments:

In Guided Reading, when a book requires close analysis of a particular character, add post-it notes to key parts of the story during your materials preparation. When scholars get to a note, have scholars stop and record their thoughts before moving on. This will help ensure scholars are actively noticing character development. Questions or prompts might include:

- What is the character doing and what does this make you think?
- What character trait would you assign to _____? Why?
- How is _____ feeling now and how do you know?

Dialogue Read:

Each scholar takes on a role of a character from the text. They read as if they are that character by noticing what the character says, does, and thinks.

Note What You Learn About the Characters:

When reading a printed text, use different color highlighters for each character to note when you learn something new about a character. For example, notice what the main character thinks, says, and does — highlight with yellow. Notice what the supporting character thinks, says, and does — highlighting with pink. Then have scholars use their highlights to identify what these actions show them about the different characters.

Use Blank Cards to Record Traits:

Give scholars blank index cards to assign to major characters in their books. They can record traits, feelings, actions, thoughts, etc on these cards and then choose their favorite character when they finish the book. Have them share the information recorded on the card with the the group.



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5. Teach scholars to master

The Ability to Make Inferences.

Tell Scholars When You've Made an Inference:

Make explicit when you or the scholars make an inference and teach them this language. "How did you know the boy was frustrated? The text didn't say that. What were the clues? Look, you inferred that based on the evidence in the story! You inferred by developing an idea using the evidence the author provided in the text."

Strategically Question:

Give a scenario and ask, "What might this character do next?" or "How might this character react?" Follow up with, "Why? What idea from the text made you think that?"

Use Real World Examples:

If everyone in the class comes in with rain boots and umbrellas, what can I infer about the weather? If my class comes back from science, and everyone has smiles and looks of wonder on their faces, what can I infer about what happened in science class?

Be a Reading Detective:

Frame reading as being a detective - you need to gather the clues the author has left and make an inference based on the clues and your own experiences. If kids are stuck, ask kids what do they know, chart all the clues you have, and then strategically question to get to a logical inference. If you miss key details in the text, read aloud that section and ask what they learned.



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6. Teach scholars to master ...

The Ability to Find and Use Appropriate Evidence.

Press Scholars via Questioning:

Ask questions: “What makes you think that?” “Where is your evidence for that?” “What part of the book/text makes you think that?” “Does the evidence prove your claim?” Even if their answer is spot on, scholars must provide evidence to prove why.

Debate!

Ask two scholars to prove their ideas. Have the rest of the class decide who they agree with based on evidence from the text. Press scholars to explain WHY they agree or disagree with their chosen scholar.

Strong vs Weak Evidence:

Teach students to differentiate between strong and weak evidence. Have scholars practice by first giving them a claim. Then present examples of strong evidence and weak evidence. Have scholars select the strongest evidence and explain their reasoning.

Force Rank Evidence:

Teach scholars to search for multiple pieces of evidence as they answer a question. Once they have found more than 2 or 3, they must force rank their evidence to decide which is the MOST convincing.



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7. Teach scholars to master

The Ability to Connect Ideas within the Text.

Teach Scholars to Self Assess:

Teach scholars to ask themselves “How does this connect to my big idea and what I already know?” Press scholars to connect their jots to build the main idea.

Tie Individual Ideas Together:

Have scholars reread the ideas in their jots and identify the theme that unifies the ideas.

Stop and Think:

Have scholars stop and think frequently to develop meaning.

- First, preview the text. Read the title, the first few lines, and any text features to form an initial idea about what the text will be about.
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Fluency, Phonics, and Self Correction

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8. Teach scholars to master

Fluency.

Explain fluency!

Scholars need to be familiar with the actual word and its definition, so that it's easier for them to self-monitor. Articulate that scholars want to sound smooth and natural when they read and not like a robot. Model what it should and should not sound like. Give scholars a physical goal card that reminds them of their fluency goals, and holds them accountable to self monitoring. Don't forget to incentivize!

Notice Reading Logs:

Reading logs give great insight into scholars' reading speed. Scholars should be reading approximately a page a minute. Take note of how many pages they read in class and at home, and whether that number suggests that they are reading at an appropriate rate. Be on the lookout for red flags – scholars reading far too few (or far too many!) pages than they should be within a given time frame.

Repeated Readings:

Providing scholars with the opportunity to read the same text multiple times is greatly beneficial to their fluency. Have scholars identify their favorite part from the previous day's reading of the Whole Class Novel or Guided Reading book. Scholars can practice rereading that section, ending with a competition to see who read it most fluently.

Choral Reading:

This goes hand in hand with Repeated Readings. Determine specific parts of the Whole Class Novel or Guided Reading book that you will have scholars read out loud as a group.

Adjustments to Reading Level:

Scholars with fluency issues will benefit from having two levels of books: one on their independent level and one for "fluency practice" that is at a lower level. They can continue to use the book at their independent level to deepen their comprehension, while the easier book can be read and reread to gain confidence in reading fluently.

Scooping:

Scholars may also benefit from "scooping" – teachers can draw curved lines underneath the text to show scholars which words to "scoop" together into phrases as they read.

Books on Tape:

Have scholars listen to audiobooks, reading along with the story as they listen. Monitor this intervention closely to ensure scholar is following along with the story.

Utilize Audio Recordings:

- Record audio of scholars reading so they can hear their progress. With each recording, coach them on how to improve. Then re-record so that they can hear and celebrate their own progress.
- Have scholars call and leave you a voicemail (2 mins) each night when reading for their reading logs. This is a great way to hold them accountable for practicing reading out loud at home.

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8. Teach scholars to master Fluency (cont.)

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9. Teach scholars to master Phonics.

All Grades:

Assess Sound Gaps: Find scholars' sound gaps through a phonics survey. Then, give scholars words to practice based on their gaps. Hold scholars accountable for that sound whenever they are reading aloud.

Gr 1:

- **Hold Scholars Accountable to SFA HW:** Have 1st grade families focus on SFA homework, especially rereading the books each night. Older students with major phonics gaps should be tested and placed in SFA if they don't 9 out.
- **Use SFA Sounds:** For first grade scholars, remind scholars of SFA sounds and their corresponding phrases when needed (ar-/ar/-start the car). Providing scholars with an individual sound sheet can also be helpful.
- **Use Picture Cards:** Give scholars a picture card with boxes underneath the pictures. Then have the scholars say the word:

For example:
 - Present a picture of a dog with three boxes below. Have the scholar touch the first box and say the first sound, touch the second box say the second sound, and so on. Then have the scholars blend all the sounds that they touched together to make the word.

Gr 2-4:

- **Utilize the Phonics Toolkit:** This provides step by step directions and resources to strategically close phonics gaps.
- **Look for Chunks:** Encourage scholars (especially 3rd and above) to break down words and look for chunks they know. Have them slowly read each chunk and then practice putting the chunks together to read the whole word.
- **Use What You Know:** Teach scholars to use words that they already know how to decode to figure out how to decode new words. For example, if scholars know how to read the word "own" they can use what they know to read "grown."



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10. Teach scholars to master ...

The Ability to Self-Correct.

Explain Self-Correction:

Explicitly teach what self-correcting is and model it. Think aloud for scholars about why you reread a word or sentence.

Teach Scholars to Stop and Think:

Coach scholars to cross check their reading with the following three questions:

- Does it look right?
- Does it sound right?
- Does it make sense? (meaning of the word said fits with context of sentence and their understanding of the book.)

Prompt Scholar to Reread:

When scholars make a mistake and self correct, teach them to go back and reread the entire sentence or paragraph to ensure they understand the text and key ideas.

Partner Reading:

Give students multiple opportunities to read aloud, either to a teacher, parent or another student. Assign one scholar as the monitor. The monitor prompts the reader when she or he makes an error. The student then has the opportunity to self correct.

Teach What the Suffix Means:

Scholars that drop the end sound, or suffix, usually can't explain its purpose. They need to be taught how the meaning changes based on the type of suffix present.

