

# The Primary Comprehension Toolkit: Grades K–2

## strategy books

Instruction in *The Primary Comprehension Toolkit* centers on **six strategy books** organized around research-based comprehension strategies. Based on the gradual release of responsibility instructional framework, *Toolkit* lessons help students use these strategies flexibly across a variety of texts, topics, and subject areas.



### 1 Monitor Comprehension

When readers monitor their comprehension, they keep track of their thinking as they read, listen, and view. They notice when the text makes sense or when it doesn't. Primary grade kids are always thinking about what they hear, see, and (if they can) read. They are noticing, wondering, making connections, and making judgments all the time. Readers, however, need to go beyond retelling and merge their thinking with the text to come up with big ideas and underlying themes. We focus on teaching young readers not just to retell, but to think about the words, the pictures, the features, and the ideas that spring from the text.

- Contents**
- 1 Think about the Text: Look, listen, talk, write, and draw to express thinking
  - 2 Notice and Think about Nonfiction Features: Construct a Feature/Purpose chart
  - 3 Explore Nonfiction Features: Create Nonfiction Feature books



### 2 Activate & Connect

The background knowledge kids bring to their learning colors every aspect of their understanding. Whether they are connecting, questioning, or inferring, their background knowledge is the foundation of their thinking. Kids simply can't understand what they hear, read, or view without thinking about what they already know. To comprehend, learners must connect the new to the known. So we consider every conceivable way to build kids' background knowledge to prepare them to learn new information. We begin by encouraging young learners to think about what they already know and care about, and then explore those topics.

- Contents**
- 4 Discover Your Passion: Become a specialist
  - 5 Think about What You Know: Write teaching books
  - 6 Make Connections: Use personal experience to construct meaning
  - 7 Merge Thinking with New Learning: Stop, think, and react to information



### 3 Ask Questions

Curiosity is at the heart of teaching and learning. Young kids burst through the door bubbling over with questions. *Why is the sky blue? Where does the sun go at night? What happened to the cowboys?* Questions spark curious minds to investigate. As kids try to answer their questions, they discover new information and gain knowledge. Questions can spur further research and inquiry. Instead of demanding answers all the time, we teach kids to ask thoughtful and insightful questions. As we strive to develop critical thinkers, we teach young readers to think about and question what they listen to, read, and view.

- Contents**
- 8 View and Read to Learn and Wonder: Use images and words to gain understanding
  - 9 Wonder about New Information: Ask questions when you read, listen, and view
  - 10 Use Questions as Tools for Learning: Understand why some questions are answered and some are not
  - 11 Read with a Question in Mind: Find answers to expand thinking



## 4 Infer & Visualize

Inferring is the bedrock of understanding. Inferring involves taking your background knowledge and merging it with clues in the text to come up with information that isn't explicitly stated. Visualizing is closely related to inferring. When readers visualize, they construct meaning by creating mental images. Younger children seem particularly inclined to visualize to support their understanding as they listen to and read stories, often living in the stories. Inferring and visualizing allow learners to figure out the meanings of unfamiliar words, surface big ideas, and get at the deeper meaning in text.

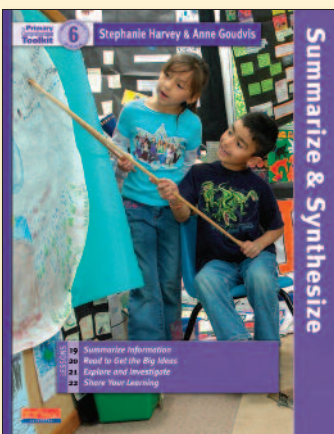
- Contents**
- 12 Infer Meaning: Merge background knowledge with clues from the text**
  - 13 Learn to Visualize: Get a picture in your mind**
  - 14 Make Sense of New Information:  
Infer from features, pictures, and words**
  - 15 Infer and Visualize with Narrative Nonfiction: Tie thinking to the text**



## 5 Determine Importance

After merging their thinking with the information in a text, readers need to figure out what makes sense to remember. Kids need to learn that they can't, and shouldn't, try to remember every fact or piece of information. We teach kids to tell the difference between interesting details and more important information and ideas. Kids learn to paraphrase, or put information into their own words, and they learn to distinguish between facts, questions, and responses in order to sort and organize information. They also learn how notetaking can help them hold their thinking as they prepare to share it with others.

- Contents**
- 16 Figure Out What's Important:  
Separate important information from interesting details**
  - 17 Paraphrase Information: Merge your thinking to make meaning**
  - 18 Organize Your Thinking as You Read: Take notes to record information**



## 6 Summarize & Synthesize

Synthesizing information nudges readers to see the bigger picture and pull together their thinking as they read and write. We begin by simply asking young readers to stop and collect their thoughts before reading on. Then we give them time, materials, and support to use comprehension strategies as tools for investigating self-selected topics. Eventually, children summarize and synthesize their thinking through drawing and writing in all sorts of original ways. Most important, synthesizing has an authentic purpose: kids share their learning with their peers and teachers, who respond with their thoughts and ideas.

- Contents**
- 19 Summarize Information: Put it in your own words and keep it interesting**
  - 20 Read to Get the Big Ideas: Synthesize the text**
  - 21 Explore and Investigate:  
Read, write, and draw in researcher's workshop**
  - 22 Share Your Learning: Create projects to demonstrate understanding**

*“Reading comprehension is the evolution of thought that occurs as we read. True understanding happens when readers engage in an inner conversation with the text, merge their thinking with it, ask questions, infer, think about what’s important, and summarize and synthesize.”*