

Title: “Developing Expertise in Reading Comprehension”

Full Citation: Pearson, P. D., Roehler, L. R., Dole, J. A., & Duffy, G. G. (1992). “Developing Expertise in Reading Comprehension.” In S.J. Samuels & A. E. Farstrup (Eds.), *What Research Has to Say About Reading Instruction*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Subject(s): Comprehension

Grade Level: All

Synopsis: Recent research shows that reading comprehension can be taught, by teaching some basic strategies for coping with text. Rather than teaching a scope and sequence of discrete skills, teachers should teach a few flexible, adaptable strategies, and the same strategies should be taught at every grade. From a variety of studies, the authors have identified as most useful these seven strategies:

- use prior knowledge
- monitor comprehension
- repair comprehension (fix-up strategies)
- determine what is important in the text
- synthesize information within and across texts (summarizing)
- draw inferences during and after reading
- ask questions

The authors then address effective instruction. Research has found that effective comprehension instruction involves four kinds of teacher actions:

- planning (wisely choosing what academic tasks the students will complete)
- providing motivational opportunities (teachers must provide opportunities for success with difficult tasks, and they must show students the usefulness of what they are learning)
- sharing information (e.g., through modeling comprehension strategies)
- nurturing student understandings (helping students redefine their understandings, revising instruction based on student feedback, gradually releasing control to students)

Quote(s): Prior Knowledge: “In summary, an impressive body of research points to the importance of prior knowledge in text comprehension. Research clearly indicates that good readers use prior knowledge to help make sense of text, while poor readers often do not. Poor readers can be taught to use, and even alter, their prior knowledge; when they learn to put such knowledge to use, their comprehension improves.”

Drawing Inferences: “Despite the conventional wisdom that teachers should delay inferential activities until students have mastered literal comprehension, both basic and applied research in reading clearly support a strong emphasis on inferential activities from the outset of instruction.”

Instruction: “Teachers cannot simply ask comprehension questions and supervise completion of accompanying workbook pages. Instead, their

instructional actions must include sharing with students explicit information about how expert readers make sense of text and adjusting that information as instruction proceeds to accommodate students' emerging understandings and awareness.") . . . "The bottom line is straightforward. Teachers begin the process with fairly well-planned intentions; they decide what to teach and what academic work to assign. Along the way they provide motivation, share key information, and respond in whatever ways are necessary to nurture student understandings. During this nurturing process, teachers must summon all their flexibility, adaptability, and problem-solving skills just to keep pace with the wondrous and varied understandings that students bring to and take from the instructional experience."

