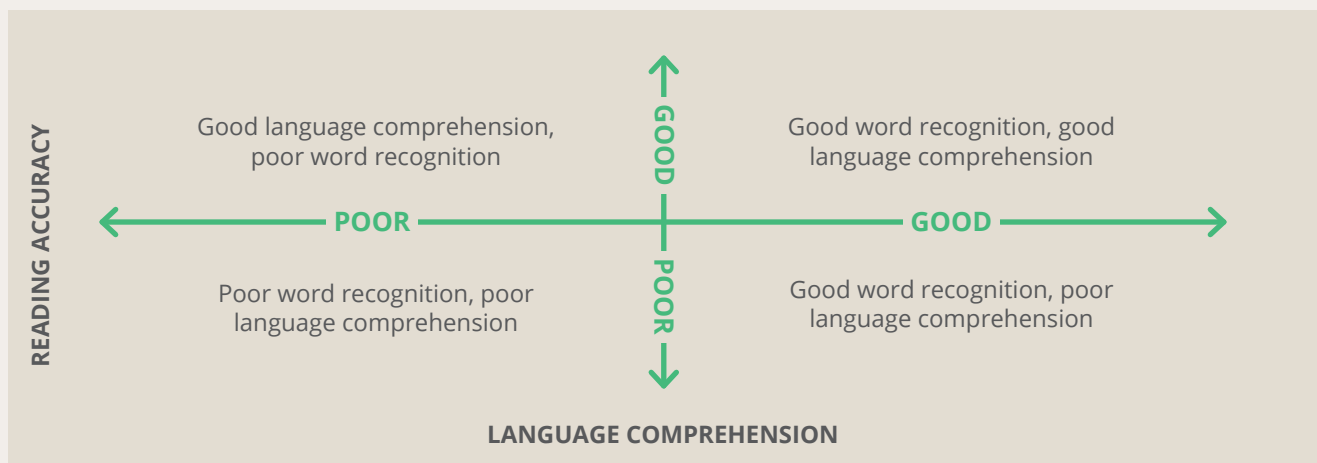


## Tip Sheet

# Reading Remediation for Upper Primary and Lower Secondary Students

It is now widely accepted that there are two dimensions to successful reading, the capacity to read accurately and the capacity to read with comprehension. This is sometimes referred to as the 'simple view of reading'.

## The Simple View of Reading



The 'Simple View of Reading' supports the need for a clear distinction between:

- the skills concerned with *accurately reading the printed words* that comprise the written text and...
- the skills that enable the reader to *understand the messages* contained in the text.

These two dimensions of reading should be approached separately in the planning and teaching of reading activities. It is important to be clear about which activities are designed to teach students to acquire word recognition skills, and which will help them develop high-level comprehension skills.

<b>Word recognition (accurate reading) skills are developed through:</b>	<b>Language comprehension skills are developed through:</b>
Phoneme awareness and phonics teaching Repetition and teaching of 'tricky' words	Talking with children Reading to children Improved vocabulary and grammar skills Teaching comprehension strategies

Students who struggle with reading in the early years often struggle with reading accuracy. As a consequence, they also struggle to comprehend the material they are reading. Older students may also have weak reading accuracy skills which impact on their comprehension. Therefore, it is important to identify the specific areas of difficulty a student is having through observation and assessment. If the student has poor phonological awareness, phonemic awareness and phonics skills, then an intervention should be developed that targets these areas. If the student has adequate phonological skills and phonic knowledge, but poor comprehension, then the focus of the support offered should be in the area of language and reading comprehension.

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## Reading Remediation for Upper Primary and Lower Secondary Students (continued)

### Strategies Designed to Improve Reading Accuracy:

#### Phonological Awareness:

A critical part of reading development is the ability to 'tune in' to the words and speech sounds of English. Instruction in early literacy skills should always include components of phonological awareness. Phonological awareness is a broad term referring to the ability to identify and work with smaller parts of spoken language. More specifically it refers to the ability to:

- identify and discriminate between different sounds (both environmental and speech sounds)
- show awareness of the rhythm of songs, rhymes and spoken language
- identify and produce rhyming words
- blend syllables together to form a word and break words into syllables
- orally blend sounds to form words and orally segment words into individual sounds

Students requiring remediation of their reading accuracy in upper primary and secondary years will often benefit from explicit instruction in phonological awareness skills, in particular phonemic awareness tasks.

#### Phonemic Awareness:

Phonemic awareness refers more specifically to the skills required to 'tune in' to individual speech sounds (phonemes) in words. This typically involves the blending, segmentation and manipulation of phonemes. Before children are expected to automatically recognise a whole word, they should be taught and encouraged to sound out (i.e. decode) in order to read accurately. Development of phonemic awareness can begin with orally blending, segmenting and manipulating phonemes in words but should quickly move towards linking those sounds to letters. In this way, the student builds an understanding that the sounds they say link directly to the letters they read and write.

For further information refer to the information sheet: *"Developing Phonemic and Phonological Awareness Skills"*

#### Phonic Knowledge:

Phonic knowledge refers to the understanding that letters represent sounds (in order to read) and that sounds are represented by letters (in order to spell). Beginner readers should be taught:

- grapheme-phoneme correspondences in a clearly defined, incremental sequence beginning with simple letter-sound relationships;
- to apply the highly important skill of blending (synthesising) phonemes in the order in which they occur, all through a word to read it;
- to apply the skills of segmenting words into their constituent phonemes to spell; and,
- that blending and segmenting are reversible processes.

Many older students who continue to struggle with their reading accuracy require development of their phonic knowledge, often in the more complex grapheme-phoneme correspondences where one sound can be represented with more than one spelling (e.g. /a/ in rain, play, cake, great) and one spelling can represent more than one sound (e.g. 'oo' in look and moon.) This is known as the Extended Code.

High quality phonic teaching is most effective when...

- it involves the effective communication of language (either spoken or written) and visual images (e.g. pictures, icons, diagrams, displays, slides, graphic organisers etc.) to deliver information;

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## Reading Remediation for Upper Primary and Lower Secondary Students (continued)

- it is systematic, that is to say, it follows a carefully planned program with fidelity reinforcing and building on previous learning to secure children's progress;
- it is taught discretely and daily at a brisk pace;
- there are opportunities to reinforce and apply acquired phonic knowledge and skills across the curriculum and in such activities as shared and guided reading; and,
- children's progress in developing and applying their phonic knowledge is carefully assessed and monitored. (Rose, 2006)

If students do not have strong phonic knowledge and reading accuracy, their reading comprehension will be limited. Furthermore, their oral language development will likely suffer due to their reduced exposure to the rich and diverse vocabulary and grammar found in many written texts.

### Recommended Resources:

- *DSF Phonics and Morpheme Activity Packs*
- *'Catch Up' Decodable Readers (e.g. Moon Dog, Magic Belt, Alba, Totem and Talisman series from Phonics Books UK)*
- *Structured Phonics Programs and Resources (e.g. Sounds-Write; Alpha to Omega)*
- *TRUGS (Teaching Reading Using Games)*
- *For further information refer to the information sheets: "Examples of High Quality, Evidence-Based Phonics Programs"*

### Teaching High Frequency and 'Tricky' Words

Knowledge of high-frequency words is necessary for reading fluency. Although many high frequency words are considered to be irregular, research shows that we store and retrieve these words in the same way as 'regular' words. Readers need to pay attention to each letter and the pattern of letters in a word and associate them with the sounds they represent, rather than attempting to visually recognise the word as a whole.

For 'tricky' words that contain letter-sound patterns less commonly seen in English, students should be taught the 'tricky' part and encouraged to sound out the word. For example, the word *said* has just one sound spelled with an uncommon ('tricky') letter pattern; the short /e/ sound is represented by the letters 'ai'. Once the student has this knowledge, they can sound out the whole word the way they normally would, saying /e/ as they pass over the 'ai' letters.

Children should be given ample opportunity to practise reading and spelling a limited set of high-frequency and 'tricky' words alongside words containing letter-sound correspondences they have been taught. With repeated practise these words will be read almost 'automatically' resulting in increased reading fluency.

### Strategies Designed to Improve Reading Comprehension

The goal of instruction in reading comprehension is to ensure students learn to understand written language as well as they understand spoken language. When children first start learning to read there is very little correlation between their language comprehension and reading comprehension. Once they are able to read accurately and fluently, the correlation becomes much stronger.

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## Reading Remediation for Upper Primary and Lower Secondary Students (continued)

There are a number of pre-requisite skills that promote strong reading comprehension. These include: the capacity to read accurately; a strong oral vocabulary; and, knowledge of English syntax (sentence structure / parts of speech). In addition to this, however, there are a number of effective strategies that can be taught explicitly. The National Reading Panel (NRP) identified seven categories of effective evidence-based comprehension instruction. The research suggests that teaching a combination of strategies to bolster comprehension is the most successful.

### 1. Comprehension monitoring;

Good readers have zero tolerance for inconsistencies in meaning when they read. Poor readers often read-on automatically without awareness that something they have read did not make sense. Students should be taught how to ask themselves questions as they read (active reading) and monitor their understanding:

- Does this make sense?
- Do I understand what I am reading?
- What does this have to do with what I already know?
- What will happen next?

When students strike obstacles to their understanding they need to know there are steps they can take:

- Identify the difficulty;
- Use think-aloud procedures that highlight where and when the difficulty began;
- Restate what was read;
- Look back through the text; and/or,
- Look forward in the text.

### 2. Cooperative learning;

Collaborative learning occurs when students work together in pairs or small groups, often with specific roles. The *Clunk to Click* Collaborative Strategic Reading program (Vaughn & Klingner, 1999) describes three phases of an effective activity:

- a) Prior to reading, students brainstorm to identify what they already know and what they are likely to learn.
- b) During reading, students identify and repair parts of the text that are difficult to understand (the 'clunks'), including unfamiliar vocabulary. They also identify the main idea or most important character, place or thing.
- c) After reading, students review their findings: they generate and answer questions to check their understanding.

### 3. Graphic and semantic organisers (including story maps);

Graphic and semantic organisers provide a visual representation of knowledge. This is particularly useful for students with poor working memory or learning disabilities. Graphic organisers have been used for a wide range of purposes, including:

- Generating lists of character traits;
- Deepening understanding of vocabulary;
- Depicting relationships in expository texts;

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## Reading Remediation for Upper Primary and Lower Secondary Students (continued)

- Activating background knowledge / setting a purpose for reading;
- Helping students to see the text structure

The NRP identified that one of most valuable purposes of semantic and graphic organisers is to assist in activating prior knowledge. The 'K-W-L' strategy has been found to be particularly useful:

- K- Identify what I already **K**now
- W- Decide what I **W**ant to learn (set a purpose for reading, including determining what new information will be gathered).
- L- Recall what I **L**earned from my reading

Below is an example of how a semantic organiser (Frayer Model) can be used to clarify the meaning of *amazing*:

<p><b>Definition</b></p> <p>If something is amazing it is very surprising and makes you feel pleased and impressed</p>	<p><b>Characteristics</b></p> <p>Surprising Wonderful Remarkable Very clever</p>
<p><b>Examples</b></p> <p>Fireworks Olympic athletes Flying a rocket to the moon</p>	<p><b>Non-Examples</b></p> <p>A Vegemite sandwich Cleaning your teeth Walking on the footpath</p>

**Amazing**

#### 4. Question answering (teachers ask questions / students receive immediate feedback);

Teachers must provide extensive modelling of asking and answering questions related to vocabulary and text. Students need to be taught how to answer different types of questions to demonstrate their comprehension of what they have heard and read. Students should be taught the relevant information to provide when asked:

- *what* has happened,
- *who* was / which characters were involved,
- *when* the event occurred,
- *where* the event took place,
- *why* the event happened,
- *how* the event happened.

When reading texts, teachers need to make it clear that some questions can be answered by referring back to the text; however, others require high-level thinking (e.g. inference making, prediction) to find answers beyond what is explicitly stated in the text.

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## Reading Remediation for Upper Primary and Lower Secondary Students (continued)

### 5. Question generation (students ask themselves questions to clarify understanding);

Good readers ask themselves questions before, during and after reading. Poor readers often fail to self-question and therefore do not draw the full meaning from the text they are reading. Teacher modelling of effective questioning throughout the reading process assists students to develop self-questioning skills and has been found to have a positive impact on their comprehension.

### 6. Story Structure;

Many of the texts introduced in primary school are stories which tend to follow a predictable format involving an introduction of: time, place and characters, a problem, actions following the problem, and finally the resolution of the problem. Students who are explicitly taught about story structure will more easily comprehend stories they hear and read and become more capable of retelling stories within a logical framework. They also show improvements in asking and answering *who, what, where, why* and *how* questions. For students who struggle to recall the classic story structure, the following strategies have been found to be effective:

- Five finger recall- each finger is used as a memory prompt for one of the structural elements (characters, setting, problem, plot, resolution)
- Write each structural element on a Post-it note. As the student reads or listens to the story being read, they flag each section as they come to it.

### 7. Summarisation;

In order to summarise effectively, students must perform three important tasks:

1. Decide what the most important ideas are in the text
2. Generalise from examples or ideas that are repeated in the text
3. Ignore irrelevant details

In order to locate the main idea of a text or paragraph, students should be taught that the first or last sentence, key vocabulary, and repetitions of the same word or words often give hints.

Students with learning difficulties / disabilities find this particularly difficult. The 'RAP' paraphrasing strategy was developed by a team at The University of Kansas and involves three specific steps:

1. **Read** a paragraph.
2. **Ask** yourself – "What were the main idea and details in this paragraph?"
3. **Put** the main idea and details into your own words.

*Recommended Resources:*

- *Understanding and Teaching Reading Comprehension: A Handbook* by Oakhill, Cain & Elbro
- *Robust Comprehension Instruction with Questioning the Author* by Beck, McKeown & Sandora
- *The Reading Comprehension Blueprint* by Nancy E. Hennessy

## Tip Sheet

## Reading Remediation for Upper Primary and Lower Secondary Students (continued)

### Strategies Designed to Improve Reading Fluency:

In order to read fluently, students need to read accurately, effortlessly, with comprehension and at a reasonable rate. All four factors need to be present in order to identify a student as a fluent reader. Most students do not read fluently until year three, or even year four, as they need to be able to recognise all graphemes -including all the alternate spelling patterns in English- automatically and very quickly. It takes a great deal of practise to become a fluent reader.

The most effective way to build fluency skills is through repeated oral reading. That is, reading the same material several times, aiming to read it accurately and quickly on each occasion. In order to read fluently, a student needs to have strong reading accuracy skills. This frees up their cognitive processing to focus on reading comprehension. It also reduces the pressure on working memory. Decodable readers such as the series produced by Phonics Books UK, including the Moon Dog, Magic Belt, Alba, Totem and Talisman series, are ideal texts for students to develop their reading fluency. The reading material chosen ideally contains only the letter-sound correspondences and high frequency words that the student has been taught.

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