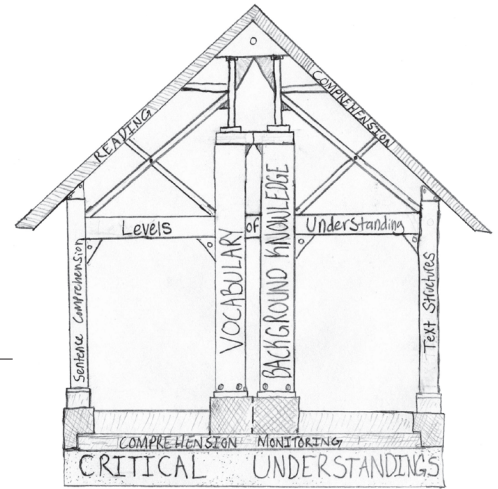


2

Implementing the Blueprint

Preparing for Instruction & Text Reading



This chapter explores the initial components of the Blueprint that focus on getting ready and preparing for instruction and the “bidirectional arrow” components of the Blueprint. As you read, consider connections to your practice.



CHECK IN: Connect to current knowledge and practices!

How does your current comprehension instruction address the acquisition of knowledge and critical language processes and skills? Script a brief response.

Preparing for Instruction

Critical Understandings

“Critical Understandings refer to the big ideas, the important understandings, that we want students to ‘get inside of’ and retain after they’ve forgotten many of the details. They go beyond discrete facts or skills and focus on larger concepts, principles, or processes” (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998, p. 10).

There is an increasing emphasis on the importance and integration of knowledge-building along with literacy skills during comprehension instruction. Individuals such as Tim Shanahan (2017a) tell us, “Too often the emphasis of a reading lesson is so much on the reading skill or strategy that the opportunity to expand children’s understanding of their world is lost.” Hugh Catts has written about and supported “concentrated efforts to build rich and integrated ideas about social studies, science, and other subjects during ELA lesson” (2021–2022, p. 30).

The Blueprint calls for the educator to consider the following questions:

What do you want your students to know and understand after reading the texts?

What are the critical concepts and understandings—the big ideas—you want your students to acquire?

Purpose & Goals of Reading Comprehension

Shanahan (2017a) reminds us that reading lessons need to have “double outcomes—an improvement in reading ability and an increased knowledge about whatever was read.” The Blueprint recommends that this be accomplished by asking the following questions:

What are the content instructional goals and objectives?

What are the literacy instructional goals and objectives?

Implicit in these recommendations is the choice of texts used for comprehension instruction. While decodable and/or predictable texts provide opportunities for initially building foundations for making meaning, this is not their primary purpose. Regardless of reading levels within a classroom, the use of grade- and age-appropriate texts across content areas provides opportunities for developing the language and knowledge base needed for working with all types of academic texts. Experts tell us that we cannot let the language of print get in the way of student progress (Adams, 2010–2011). Educators need to be purposeful about building academic language, particularly for students at risk of reading difficulties and English language learners (Lesaux & Harris, 2015). Academic language, or the language of schools and workplaces, is different from the language we use every day. It features sophisticated vocabulary, complex syntax, and varied discourse structures. Students who demonstrate proficiency in the use of academic language are better able to acquire new knowledge, participate in the academic tasks of school, and express their understanding and ideas. Thus, students must have access to these challenging texts regardless of their respective reading levels. Teachers can scaffold instruction by providing access to read-alouds and/or high-quality audio versions of texts. These accommodations also provide learners with language-based learning differences or, for those who are English language learners, equitable access to the rich texts necessary for developing academic language.

The following questions can prompt reflection on some necessary considerations when choosing purposeful texts for comprehension instruction:

- Do your readings support the development of knowledge?
- Do your readings provide opportunities to develop necessary language processes and skills?



Tips for Success!

Critical understandings share several characteristics:

- They connect to big ideas that have a lasting impact beyond the classroom.
- They are transferrable to other subject areas and disciplines.
- They go beyond facts and provide a foundation for helping students make deeper connections.
- They are recurring and can be revisited and built upon over time.

The following examples highlight how the critical understanding of “growing up” can be adapted and built upon. Notice how these understandings deepen over time, and how these ideas have lasting value beyond the classroom and school.

- Every day we grow and develop.
- Growing up involves increased responsibility.
- Growing up takes patience and kindness with oneself.
- The reality of growing up isn’t always easy.
- Growing up often involves learning important life lessons.
- Moving to adulthood involves looking forward to the future.

- Do your texts provide opportunities to develop and apply academic language skills to text?
- Do your readings represent different genres, disciplines, and the interests and experiences of your readers, and are they culturally responsive?
- Have you considered access issues for struggling readers? (Hennessy, 2020, p. 50)

A Tool for Preparing and Planning for Instruction: The Unit Organizer

The Blueprint provides the framework for informed instruction while the unit organizer provides a tool for making the design and delivery of instruction visible. It serves as an instructional map that helps educators chart and stay the course of instruction by connecting educators’ yearly goals with their everyday instructional planning. They provide the foundation for the design of lesson plans necessary for accomplishing these goals. The organizers begin with the identification of critical topics and enduring understandings, which are the big ideas and concepts we want students to hold onto after they’ve left the classroom. They also provide a vehicle for connecting to the essential questions, overall purpose and goals, purposeful reading, interdisciplinary links, and evidence of learning for the unit. The Blueprint provides the guiding questions, noted in the previous section, which help educators to plan for and craft enduring understandings and identify related content and literacy goals and purposeful texts. The model unit organizer that follows provides potential responses to the Blueprint questions posed while also demonstrating how a common theme (critical understanding) can span different grade levels. The model serves as an example of how to plan for varied themes.

A Model Unit Organizer

The unit organizer in Figure 2.1 compares two instructional units connected with the theme of identity. Notice how the through line of identity is adapted to the developmental needs of each grade level. The concept of one’s identity is a theme that should be revisited across grades and disciplines; however, this big idea is explored on different levels of meaning. This allows for elaboration and further construction of the student’s mental model as they grow. Additionally, the organizer addresses goals, resources, and evidence of learning.

	First Grade	Eighth Grade
Critical topic	<i>All About Me!</i>	<i>Who Am I?</i>
Enduring understandings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am unique; there is no one else like me. • I have likes and dislikes. • I have strengths and challenges. • I am part of a family and a classroom community. • My family is unique. • All of the people in my class are unique and have their own interests and can do different things. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual identities are complex and show themselves in many ways. • Everyone has multiple identities. • Societal views can influence individual identity. • Our identities have similarities and differences. • It’s important to see my identities as well as the identities of others reflected in the world around me.
Essential questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What characteristics and traits make me an individual? • What are my likes and dislikes? Strengths and challenges? • What is a community? • What makes my family unique? • What makes my classmates unique? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What defines our identity? • How is it shaped? • Can we have more than one identity? • Do we keep the same identity throughout our lives? • How do authors develop characters’ identities?
Content goals	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify their own likes/dislikes, and strengths/challenges. • Recognize that everyone has similarities and differences. • Describe a community. • Investigate their own family histories and traditions. • Build awareness of others’ family histories and traditions. 	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a working definition of the word identity. • Describe their own identity and factors that shaped it. • Reflect on the various ways certain social contexts impact our identities. • Examine the topic of identity in a variety of stories.

Figure 2.1. Unit organizer for first grade and eighth grade on the theme of identity.

(continued)

Figure 2.1. (continued)

	First Grade	Eighth Grade
Critical topic	<i>All About Me!</i>	<i>Who Am I?</i>
Literacy goals	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and discuss story elements (characters, setting, events, conclusion). State what authors and illustrators do. Locate the front cover, back cover, and title page of a book. Identify adjectives and identity terms that describe themselves, their families, and their classmates. Use new vocabulary words in their speaking and writing with prompting and support. 	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand there are many variations of the narrative genre. Recognize, from reading and writing, the nature of memoir. Analyze the impact of an author's literary choices in a memoir. Compare characters and self to create connections and demonstrate understanding of the character within a story. Compose a personal narrative that develops a real experience or event in their lives.
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Leo the Late Bloomer</i> by Robert Kraus <i>Eyes That Kiss the Corner</i> Joanna Ho <i>Chrysanthemum</i> by Kevin Henkes <i>Frederick</i> by Leo Leoni <i>The Proudest Blue</i> by Ibtihaj Muhammad <i>We Are All Wonders</i> by R. J. Palacio <i>The Best Part of Me</i> by Wendy Ewald <i>It's Okay to Be Different</i> by Todd Parr <i>The Day You Begin</i> by Jacqueline Woodson <i>Fry Bread</i> by Kevin Noble Maillard <i>Hair/Pelitos</i> by Sandra Cisneros <i>The Family Book</i> by Todd Parr <i>Last Stop on Market Street</i> by Matt de la Peña <i>All Are Welcome</i> by Alexandra Penfold 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Persepolis</i> by Marjane Satrapi <i>American Born Chinese</i> by Gene Luen Yang <i>El Deafo</i> by Cece Bell <i>A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier</i> by Ishmael Beah <i>Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of a Cultural Revolution</i> by Ji-li Jiang <i>I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban</i> by Malala Yousafzai <i>Brown Girl Dreaming</i> by Jacqueline Woodson "The Jacket" by Gary Soto Various chapters from <i>The House on Mango Street</i> by Sandra Cisneros "Fish Cheeks" by Amy Tan "When I Was Puerto Rican" by Esmeralda Santiago "Richard" by Allie Brosh Six Word Memoirs website (www.sixwordmemoirs.com)
Interdisciplinary links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Art: Students will create a family portrait using precut shapes. Math: Students will count the number of family members who live in their house and look for similarities and differences with their classmates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Art: Students will create a symbolic self-portrait that represents their own unique identity. Science/Social Studies: Students will discuss the purpose of genealogy and will conduct a series of interviews to collect family information.
Evidence of learning products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-class discussions Small group discussions Questioning Completed classroom community quilt square Completed sentence starters and sentence frames Completed "Me Book" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-class discussions Small-group discussions Questioning Completed six-word memoir First draft of personal narrative Google doc comments/feedback Revisions to draft

The Lesson Organizer

The lesson organizer is focused on accomplishing unit goals, which are typically detailed and specific to a time period. They identify objectives, the sequence of instruction, and strategies and assessment methods specific to the contributors to comprehension. Examples are included in the chapters that follow.

The Bidirectional Arrow

The bidirectional arrow in the Blueprint (see Figure 2.2) serves as a reminder that reading comprehension is not a step-by-step process but dependent on the interaction of multiple skills and sources of knowledge. It also calls attention to the flexibility of the Blueprint. Instruction is determined by the educator, including choice of setting and use of informed strategies and activities.

Blueprint for Comprehension Instruction	
PREPARING FOR INSTRUCTION CRITICAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF TEXT	What do you want students to know and understand after reading the text? What are the critical concepts and understandings—big ideas you want your students to acquire? What texts will support these understandings?
PURPOSE FOR READING TEXT	What are the content instructional goals and objectives? What are the literacy instructional goals and objectives?
TEXT READING VOCABULARY	Which words will your students need to know? Which are worth knowing? Which ones will you intentionally target and directly teach? Which ones will you incidentally-on-purpose teach? How, when? Which words will you purposefully discuss and incorporate into expressive language activities? How and when will you teach and foster the use of independent word learning strategies?
LANGUAGE STRUCTURES (phrases, clauses, sentence comprehension)	Are there phrases, clauses, and sentence structures that may be difficult for your students? How and when will you directly teach sentence comprehension? How and when will you teach students to work with challenging sentences? How will you facilitate the integration of ideas within and between sentences, e.g., the use of cohesive ties and connectives? How and when will you teach students to work with these?
KNOWLEDGE • Text structure • Background knowledge	How is the text organized? How and when will you directly teach students the purpose, features, and signal words of different genres? How will you teach students to use the structure to understand purpose? To organize and express their understanding? What background knowledge is critical to understanding the text? How and when will you teach students to access and build their knowledge and integrate it with the text?
LEVELS OF UNDERSTANDING AND INFERENCE	How will you teach students to construct meaning at different levels of understanding, including the surface code, textbase, and mental model of text? How will you directly teach students to use inference to integrate ideas and connect background knowledge to the text? How will you support your students' deep comprehension of text?
EXPRESSION OF UNDERSTANDING	What strategies and activities will you use for students to demonstrate understanding at different levels during and after reading? How will you support their oral and written expression of understanding?



Figure 2.2. The bidirectional arrow in the Blueprint. (From Hennessy, N. L. [2020]. *The reading comprehension blueprint: Helping students make meaning of text*. Paul H. Brookes Publishing, Co.)

The arrow also highlights the importance of comprehension monitoring and teaching students how to check their own understanding. There are varied reasons *why* the reader might encounter a breakdown of understanding. For example, a reader may have inadequate vocabulary knowledge and struggle to grasp the precise vocabulary employed by an author. Others may not have the grammar and syntax skills necessary to unpack sentences of varied lengths and constructions, while some readers fail to possess the background knowledge needed to make meaning on a deeper level. Knowing these sources of difficulty provides opportunities to use strategies that the reader has learned as potential solutions. Skilled readers actively notice their thinking as they read and monitor their comprehension to make sure they understand. If they can't, they can apply strategies to repair inaccuracies or misconceptions. Consider Figure 2.3 for an example of comprehension monitoring in action.



Tips for Success!

Comprehension monitoring is a hallmark of skilled readers. They use this ability to reflect on what they read and process their understanding. Skilled readers monitor their understanding by asking themselves questions like:

- Does this make sense?
- When did I lose track?
- What just happened? Why?
- Does what I just read fit in with the rest of the text?

However, struggling readers may fail to recognize when their comprehension breaks down and/or what to do to fix it. Thus, it is an educator’s responsibility to teach all learners ways to monitor their understanding, so that they walk away from the text with its larger meaning overall.

Why	So
Word meaning	Think about using your independent word learning strategies (dictionary, morphemes, context) to figure out what the word means.
Sentence meaning	Reread and ask yourself: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where is the <i>who</i> or <i>what</i> and the <i>do</i> in the sentence? • What words are standing in or substituting for important words in the sentences?
Knowledge	Think about what you know and make connections. Look up or ask for additional information about the topic.
Paragraph/section meaning	Reread the paragraph and ask yourself: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is this all about? • What does it tell me?
Engagement	Tell yourself to stop at the end of a section or page to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • summarize • annotate • visualize • question

Figure 2.3. Comprehension monitoring: The why & so.

Planning for Text Reading

Critical Contributors to Comprehension

This section of the Blueprint reflects what science has taught us about critical contributors to comprehension. While these are intentionally named to highlight the importance of developing language processes and skills, each corresponds to an instructional component including the teaching of vocabulary, sentence comprehension, background knowledge, text structures, and inference.

The questions for each component are intended to call attention to the use of routines, strategies, and activities that focus on the development of necessary language skills and knowledge. For example, teachers need to directly teach vocabulary so that the reader has access to word meaning as they build meaning of the text or build the necessary background knowledge to make inferences. Additionally, the Blueprint calls for educators to teach instructional strategies that support students’ ability to express or demonstrate their understanding of the text such as directly teaching students how to summarize understanding (orally or in writing).

Keep in mind that comprehension is the “the orchestrated product of a set of linguistic and cognitive processes” (Castles et al., 2018, p. 28). The Blueprint was designed to call attention to the importance of developing the processes and skills necessary to create varied products that demonstrate understanding. It calls for the differentiation and use of instruction that supports both process and product.



Voices From the Field: The Blueprint

The Blueprint emphasizes that comprehension instruction must be thoughtfully planned and explicitly taught. In addition, the bidirectional arrow visually represents the integration of skills throughout the reading process. I found the guiding questions in the Blueprint to be opportunities for us to design instruction that meets the needs of all students.

–A Blueprint Book Study Participant

Reflect & Connect

At this point, what are your thoughts about current instruction and the potential use of the Blueprint?



Listening Link

Glean Education Podcast: Blueprint for Reading Comprehension Instruction
<https://www.gleaneducation.com/podcast>

