



Above are the components of a comprehensive reading program. Most middle school students should have mastery over phonemic awareness, which is the ability to discriminate sounds in the English language. In addition, most middle school students will not need direct instruction in phonics, which is the ability to associate certain sounds to letters and letter combinations. However, struggling readers at middle school probably do have gaps in these areas and will need explicit, sequenced instruction.

Fluency has a direct relationship to improved comprehension, so middle school students need to improve their speed, accuracy, and expression. Our students need to be reading about 150 correct words per minute in order to be proficient readers.

Direct instruction has been found to be highly effective in vocabulary acquisition. 300 - 400 new word meanings can be taught in a year. Select words that are unknown to the students, are important to the understanding of the text, and are likely to be encountered in the future. Low frequency words used in a limited domain (specialized content area words) should not be your vocabulary focus.

The strategies that good readers rely on should be the focus for comprehension instruction. There are several main strategies to teach, and a good mnemonic device to use is A.C.T.I.V.E. reading (see attached article for ideas).