***What has research told us about teaching comprehension?***

**Help for Struggling Readers: Strategies for Grades 3-8,  
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* Preteach key terms to improve comprehension. Is this a comprehension or a vocabulary principle? Both! We revisit it here as a reminder that important terms should be introduced prior to reading in order to assist comprehension. Even if some of the terms are already familiar to the students, introducing them serves to activate prior knowledge.
* Build background thoroughly before your students read. Preteaching key terms is one way, but you will need to find additional ways as well. Providing pictures, diagrams, audiovisuals, factual information, demonstrations, physical props, and discussions of personal experiences your students may have had are just a few possibilities. Remember: It is almost impossible to underestimate the background of some of your struggling readers.
* Make sure your students’ attention is focused as they read. Providing students with specific purposes for reading will improve comprehension. For example, you may decide to pose questions or provide charts or diagrams to be completed. You may in-stead ask students to form their own hypotheses or to decide what they themselves wish to learn. There are few restrictions on effective purpose-setting activities
* Use activities that cause students to transform information. By asking students to use the information they find in sentences and paragraphs to complete charts, build diagrams, write summaries, or engage in similar tasks, they must process and understand what they read. This leads to real comprehension.
* Be cautious about subskill approaches. Skill-by-skill programs, such as those embodied in a basal reader series, can be useful for organizing instruction, but there is a danger that they can dominate your program and lead to a complacent reliance on worksheets or computerized activities to get the job done.
* Be mindful of the difference between improving general comprehension ability and improving comprehension of a specific selection. For example, science teacher may be more concerned with students’ comprehending a textbook chapter than with developing their overall comprehension ability. These are different goals, to be sure, though many teaching strategies will lead to both