



Current information on learning, reading and parenting issues.

Volume 10: Issue 3

November 2009



## St. Sebastian School Scholars by Nancy Meier, MA

### Knowing When You "Get It" (and what to do about it when you don't)

Wouldn't it be great if we could see learning taking place inside our brains? Unfortunately we can't see the accumulating knowledge in our child's head. You might see signs, however, when your child *isn't* comprehending. You might recognize the confused look, the looking back at pages previously read, the sighs of frustration, and then the closing (or slamming, perhaps) of the book with plans to try again at another time.

You CAN teach your child the signals to be aware of before confusion and frustration set in.

- "Readers have two types of voices in their head as they read. One of them is reciting the text. The other has a conversation with the

text, in a sense talking back to the words on the page." That voice asks questions, perhaps agrees or disagrees, finds something humorous, etc. If your child only hears herself reciting the words, he has lost his "comprehension voice."

- "The reader's mind begins to wander." When good readers start thinking about unrelated topics, they usually catch themselves and get back to the text.
- "The reader can't remember what has been read." Proficient readers usually can remember at least some of what they just read. If your child can't remember anything, it's usually (cont. on page 2)

### Use Literature When Discussing Painful Topics

Direct, honest and meaningful communication can be difficult when our children are struggling with concerns and problems. Therapists have known for years that children's fiction can help a child feel less alone and can give them answers to their problems.

Dr. Gregory Ramey, PhD, a child psychologist from Ohio, makes these suggestions when working with bibliother-

apy: 1) To find an appropriate book, see [www.imaginationpress.com](http://www.imaginationpress.com) for books on many topics for children and adolescents. You also might want to go to the book Books to Grow With by Cheryl Coon. Dr. Ramey says there are "no perfect books," but many quality fiction books will offer strategies to help your child problem-solve dilemmas such as divorce, death, anger, teasing, bullying and the like. (continued on page 2)

Parents often say to me, "My child has good phonics skills and has no problem decoding words, but he does have problems comprehending and remembering what he just read." Look to your left for the signs to look for when children start to lose their way while reading and what to do to correct the problems.

We always hope that we're the kind of parents that our kids want to open up to, but sometimes it isn't that we're unapproachable, only that our children need time to mull over their problems alone for awhile. When you are concerned that your child might need a little more help, see the article to your left for ways to find comforting fiction that will reassure your child that she is not alone.

## Knowing When You "Get It" (cont.)

an indication that she needs to go back and use fix up strategies. (More about fix up strategies later.)

- "Clarifying questions asked by the reader aren't being answered." Good readers make it a habit to ask themselves literal questions mentally to assess their comprehension. Perhaps your child lacks background knowledge for this topic or it's time to refocus on the text.
- "The reader reencounters a character and has no recollection when that character was introduced." Most of the time proficient readers can keep track of characters. It's a sign to the reader that there is a comprehension breakdown.

You know what they say: First you have to admit you have a problem before you can rectify it! When your child shows a couple of the signs above, it's time for fix-up strategies. **Teach your child that to continue reading without comprehension would be pointless.** Some children think that if they keep reading the words, that comprehension will miraculously follow. Teach your child to stop and use one or all of the strategies below for better understanding:

**Comprehension is next to impossible without connecting the new information with your life, something you've read previously or your knowledge of the world.** Teach your child to stop and reconnect!

- **Make predictions throughout the story to help you stay connected and to help you determine where the story is going.**
- **Stop and think about what you read and put it into your own words. Being able to paraphrase the information indicates comprehension.**

- **Make up a couple of questions and attempt to answer them.**
- **Visualize, visualize, visualize for better understanding!** We should see images in our head especially when we read fiction.
- **If the text is fiction, use story grammar** (character, setting, events, goal, problem and solution) to organize and remember.
- **Use text structure.** (ex: cause/effect, sequence, descriptive, compare/contrast) to organize the information.
- **Regulate your reading rate to fit the situation.** Would you read the back of a cereal box or the details of an insurance policy at the same rate? Of course not. Help your child understand that the complexity of the text and purpose for reading should be considered. In addition to slowing down, some children find it beneficial to read orally.
- **Reread.** Research indicates rereading can be VERY beneficial for improved comprehension.
- **Summarize the story or article in your own words.**

It's interesting to note that when children were interviewed about qualities of masterful readers, they thought that they 1) always understood everything they read the first time they read it and 2) quickly recognized every word. Help your child understand that that is rarely true. **The proficient reader is consistently vigilant to maintain his comprehension.**

Try these strategies and any or all fix-up strategies that you find works for your child. Repeat as needed.

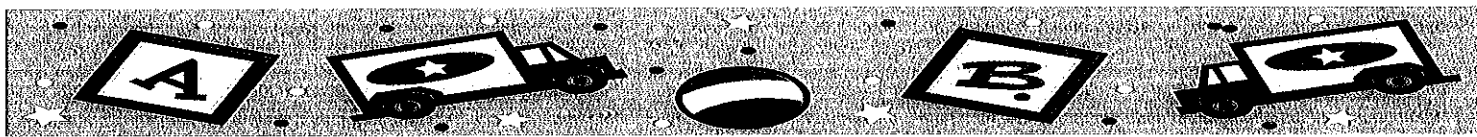
For more information see: [I Read It, But I Don't Understand It](#) by Cris Tovani (2009)

## Use Literature When Discussing Painful Topics (cont.)

2) **Avoid pressuring your child to talk.** Your child may not want to discuss the problem with you immediately. Some kids need to hear the story a few times to feel comfortable. Leave the book out to be viewed when you're not around, too.

3) **Don't talk so much.** If your child is open to it, you can ask questions, but try to do more listening than talking. You might learn more about your child's world if you do. Your job is to open the door for discussion.

For more information see [www.childrensdayton.org](http://www.childrensdayton.org)



# Girl Scout Troop #1294 Needs Your Help!!!

We have adopted two K-5 classrooms We need the following items:

- ✓ Boxes of crayons and markers (washable)
- ✓ Coloring and activity books
- ✓ Cd's of music for young children
- ✓ Erasers and colored pencils
- ✓ Lots and lots of books
- ✓ Baby dolls and clothes
- ✓ Legos
- ✓ Big floor puzzles (36pcs max.)
- ✓ Simple games like candy land or chutes and ladders
- ✓ Name tags (homemade or store bought)
- ✓ Healthy snacks (non-perishable)
- ✓ You may bring anything you else that you think K-5ers will like

## MOST IMPORTANTLY:

- ✓ Warm socks
- ✓ Mittens
- ✓ Hats and scarves

All items should be new or gently used  
Make sure that they are age appropriate

Collection box will be by the gym  
Monday 11/16 thru Friday 11/20

