

PLuS Perspectives

Information about College Students with LD

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Meeting the Challenge:

Reading Disabilities

Part II: Comprehension

The previous November issue of *PLuS Perspectives* focused on decoding, which is one of the two components that make up the reading process. This issue will focus on reading comprehension.

College students with LD or ADHD may have difficulty with reading comprehension because of problems with attention, oral language, memory, or strategy use. Often, the student can read a text aloud with little difficulty, but has a hard time understanding what he/she has read. However, students who have decoding problems will typically also have difficulty comprehending text.

Not all students with LD or ADHD have reading comprehension problems, but those who do *can* be successful in college. They often find reading laborious and require more time to read assignments. However, students can learn pre-reading strategies to prepare them for reading and other strategies to use while reading to help them be successful.

Characteristics of Students with Reading Comprehension Difficulties:

- ◆ Inaccurate comprehension
- ◆ Slow reading rate
- ◆ Poor retention of what is read; forgetting the beginning of a paragraph by the time one gets to the end
- ◆ Difficulty finding important points or main ideas
- ◆ Problems integrating what is seen (text) with what is heard (class lectures or discussions)
- ◆ Giving up too quickly when faced with a difficult passage
- ◆ Dislike, procrastination, or avoidance of reading.

"One common problem I have is that I "read" a whole passage and realize that I haven't understood or remembered a single word. I commonly forget the beginning of a long sentence by the time I reach the end and have to read it three or four times to grasp the whole thing. This forces me to read very slowly". –a student with LD

-Alison May from *Learning Disabilities & Life Stories* by Pano Rodis, Andrew Garrod, and Mary Lynn Boscardin, 2001

"I had always done well in English, but I remember realizing one day that I couldn't "comprehend" what I was reading...well enough to be able to answer any of the questions. I remember going over and over the same bit and not having it stick any better the fifth time than the first..." [I'm] "reading a page, getting through about three lines with comprehension, then all of a sudden finding myself at the bottom of the page not recalling any of the words I just read." –a student with ADHD

-From *Driven to Distraction*, by Edward Hallowell & John Ratey, 1994

"I read much more slowly than most people do, and the truth is I hate to read, but I love to have read, so I do it a lot. But the challenges are nothing compared to the rewards."

-Mark Williamson from LDonline.com



PLuS Perspectives Continued

Technology to Help with Reading Comprehension:

Screen Reading Software-This software aids students with the reading process by reading text aloud. Often students with reading comprehension difficulties are auditory learners and do not gain information easily from printed text. Simply hearing a text can make the learning process more efficient.
http://www.freedomscientific.com/fs_products/software_jaws.asp

Inspiration Software, Inc.- A visual thinking and learning software that helps students or professors organize information taught in the classroom. Students can use Inspiration to take notes while reading and/or summarize what they've read.
<http://www.inspiration.com/productinfo/inspiration/index.cfm>

Suggestions from DePaul Faculty...

DePaul faculty suggest the following strategies to assist *all* students with comprehending difficult reading material:

Use pre-reading strategies

- ◆ Give ample advance notice of readings
- ◆ Place heavy reading assignments strategically in the course
- ◆ Provide rough guide of approximate time to read assignment
- ◆ Explain what you want students to get from the reading
- ◆ Highlight things to look for
- ◆ Discuss pitfalls to avoid
- ◆ Explain how readings are connected

Provide comprehension strategies

- ◆ Provide/have groups create graphic organizers
- ◆ Read/discuss difficult passages in class
- ◆ Provide study questions
- ◆ Provide outlines
- ◆ Provide reading analysis worksheets

Use post-reading strategies

- ◆ Provide discussion questions
- ◆ Engage students in follow-up discussion
- ◆ Have students write reading responses

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Tips to Give to your Students with Reading Comprehension Difficulties:

A study of skilled readers indicated that successful college students use the following strategies when they have difficulty with reading comprehension:

Restatement:

- ◆ Rephrase a passage using simpler words
- ◆ Paraphrase in simpler terms
- ◆ Summarize periodically

Backtracking

- ◆ Reread from the beginning of confusing segment
- ◆ Reread/review previously comprehended parts

Seeking Relationships

- ◆ Ask questions (i.e. who, what, when, where questions)
- ◆ Create links between topics (ask: why, what, how, is this related)

Problem Formulation

Formulate comprehension failure into problem solving task.

- ◆ What do I already know?
- ◆ What am I supposed to know?
- ◆ What does the table of contents tell me?
- ◆ What clues are available from titles or subheads?
- ◆ Why is the author telling me this information at this point in the chapter?
- ◆ What other sources of information do I have on this topic?

Adapted from Bereiter, C. & Bird, M. (1985) Use of Think Aloud in Identification and Teaching of Reading Comprehension Strategies, *Cognition and Instruction*, 2(2) 131-156

