



Dyslexia Community of Practice Session 7: Students with Dyslexia: Reading for Understanding

Sharon Vaughn & Elizabeth Stevens

March 26, 2026

mimtsstac.org



Presenters:

The content for this training day was developed based on the work of:



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Austin



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MiMTSS Dyslexia CoP Session Schedule

Date	Time	Topic
September 9, 2025	2:00-3:30pm ET	The Neurobiological Underpinnings of Dyslexia
October 7, 2025	10:00-11:30am ET	Misunderstandings of the Science of Reading
November 4, 2025	3:00-4:30pm ET	Structured Literacy
December 3, 2025	11:00am-12:30pm ET	Multisyllabic Word Instruction
January 23, 2026	2:00-3:30pm ET	Revised IDA Definition of Dyslexia Part 1
February 23, 2026	10:00-11:30am ET	Revised IDA Definition of Dyslexia Part 2
→ March 26, 2026	3:00-4:30pm ET	Reading comprehension practices for students with dyslexia
April 23, 2026	11:00am-12:30pm ET	Understanding Dyslexia and Developmental Language Disorder

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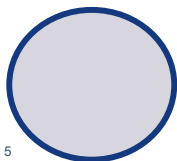
Agenda

- 3:00-3:10 Welcome and check-in on Session 6 
- 3:10-3:50 Content presentation
- 3:50-4:05 Application activity
- 4:05-4:15 Debrief application activity as a whole group
- 4:15-4:30 Wrap up (i.e., answer follow-up questions, review resources, set goals for applying lessons learned, preview next session)

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In the chat: Share one takeaway you learned from session 6 (i.e., Part 2 on understanding the revised IDA definition of dyslexia).



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As a refresher, here are the aspects of the definition that we unpacked in Session 6:

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability

Dyslexia is a protected disability in the workplace and in education

Word reading and/or spelling difficulties occur along a continuum of severity

The role of early identification in prevention

- Identification as early as K or 1st grades; screening past 2nd grade
- Prevention vs. remediation

Comorbidity with WD, MD, other emotional/behavioral disorders

Instructional methods and targets specified in dyslexia laws

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Objectives

1

Explain why students with dyslexia may have challenges with reading comprehension.

2

Identify effective practices for supporting students reading comprehension before, during, and after reading.

3

Apply content learned in today's session to a case study scenario.

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As a reminder, reading comprehension is an instructional target specified in dyslexia laws

Odegard, Farris, Middleton, Rimrodt-Frierson, & Washington (2026)

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Let's see what we know!

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The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry

Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry 61:6 (2020), pp 672-680



doi:10.1111/jcpp.13140

Dyslexia and Developmental Language Disorder: comorbid disorders with distinct effects on reading comprehension

Margaret J. Snowling,¹ Marianna E. Hayiou-Thomas,² Hannah M. Nash,³ and Charles Hulme⁴

¹Department of Experimental Psychology, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK; ²Department of Psychology, University of York, York, UK; ³Department of Psychology, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK; ⁴Department of Education, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

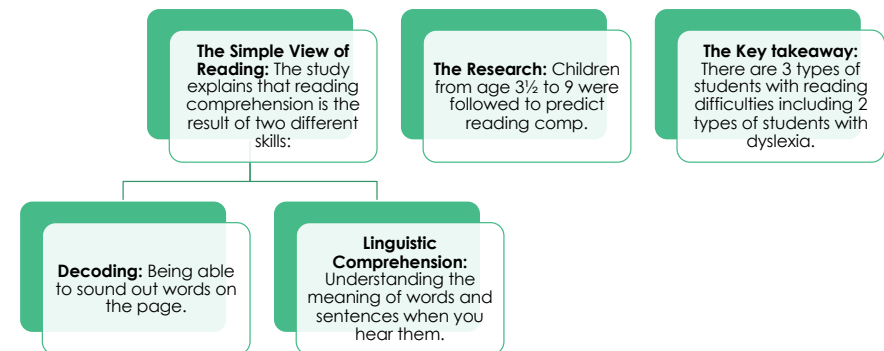
Background: Reading comprehension draws on both decoding and linguistic comprehension, and poor reading comprehension can be the consequence of a deficit in either of these skills. **Methods:** Using outcome data from the longitudinal Wellcome Language and Reading Project, we identified three groups of children at age 8 years: children with dyslexia ($N = 21$) who had deficits in decoding but not oral language, children with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD; $N = 38$) whose decoding skills were in the normal range, and children who met criteria for both dyslexia and DLD ($N = 29$). **Results:** All three groups had reading comprehension difficulties at the ages of 8 and 9 years relative to TD controls though those of the children with dyslexia were mild (relative to TD controls, $d = 0.51$ at age 8, $d = 0.60$ at age 9); while the most severe problems were found in the comorbid dyslexia + DLD group ($d = 1.79$ at age 8, $d = 2.06$ at age 9) those with DLD also had significant difficulties ($d = 1.56$ at age 8, $d = 1.56$ at age 9). **Conclusions:** These findings confirm that children with dyslexia or DLD are at-risk for reading comprehension difficulties but for different reasons, because of weak decoding in the case of dyslexia or weak oral language skills in the case of DLD. Different forms of intervention are required for these groups of children, targeted to their particular area(s) of weakness. **Keywords:** Reading comprehension; dyslexia; Developmental Language Disorder; decoding; language.

Snowling et al. (2020)

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Why is Reading Comprehension Hard for Some?



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Three Different Reading Profiles

Pure Dyslexia:

- **The Struggle:** Difficulty with **decoding** (sounding out words).
- **The Strength:** They have strong oral language and vocabulary.

Pure Developmental Language Disorder (DLD):

- **The Struggle:** Weak **oral language** (grammar and vocabulary).
- **The Strength:** They can often decode/read words aloud accurately, but they don't understand the content.

Comorbid (Dyslexia + DLD):

- **The "Double Hit":** These students struggle with both word reading and language.

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What Does that Mean for Educators?

Pure Dyslexia:

- These students had the **mildest** comprehension problems over time. Because their oral language was good, they could often "catch up" on meaning once they figured out the words.

Pure DLD Group:

- These students had **significant** comprehension problems. Even if they could read every word accurately, they didn't have the language "tools" to comprehend.

Comorbid Group:

- Students faced the **most severe** challenges. Their difficulties made it hard to both read the words and understand the message.

How to Support These Groups of Students

Tailored Support: One type of help doesn't fit everyone.

For Dyslexia: Focus on phonics and sounding out words.

For DLD: Focus on growing vocabulary and understanding how sentences work.

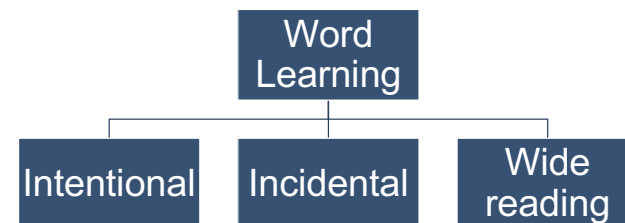
Early Help Matters: Since language is the foundation for reading, helping kids with talking and listening in preschool can prevent reading failure later.

Summary: Dyslexia and DLD are different, but they often happen together. Knowing a student's specific profile helps teachers give the right treatment.

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Why vocabulary learning may be an essential part of comprehension for students with dyslexia?

- Reading texts is an outstanding source of vocabulary development.
- How many words do students with dyslexia read a year, compared to typical readers?



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The role of vocabulary and background knowledge

Background knowledge and vocabulary are important for understanding text (O'Reilly et al., 2019; Oslund et al., 2016; Recht & Leslie, 1988; Shapiro, 2004)

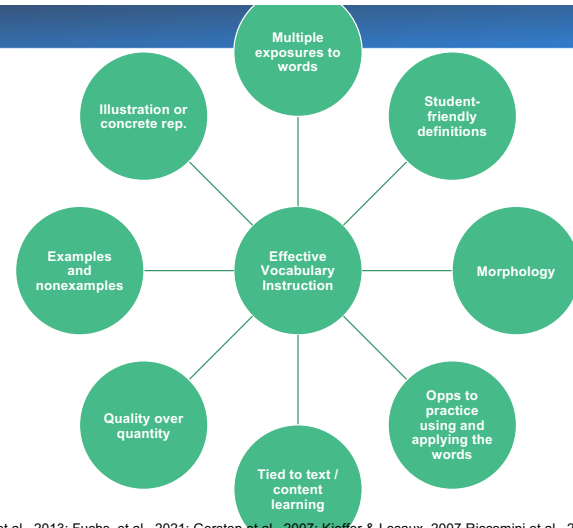
- Students with higher levels of vocabulary and BK performed better on measures of RC
- Background knowledge and vocabulary are closely related

Vocabulary knowledge

- Supports efficient processing of text; frees up cognitive resources to focus on comprehension (Oslund et al., 2016; Perfetti, 2007; Perfetti & Hart, 2002)
- May impact sentence-level comprehension (Oslund et al., 2016) and inference-making (Elbro & Buch-lversen, 2013)

Reading comprehension may be impacted if students don't know 2-5% of word meanings (Hsueh-Chao & Nation, 2000; Nagy & Scott 2000)

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(Baker et al., 2014; Beck et al., 2013; Fuchs, et al., 2021; Gersten et al., 2007; Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007 Riccomini et al., 2015)

Essential Words Routine

- Teachers pre-teach the meaning of important words using a simple graphic organizer and routines

<p>interact (<i>interactuar</i>)</p> <p>When two or more things have an effect on one another</p> <p>shutterstock</p>	
<p>Synonyms: connect, influence, act together</p>	
<p>Example Sentences</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One way to learn a foreign language is to interact with native speakers of that language. 2. The garden produced a lot of vegetables when it interacted with plenty of sunlight, rain, and warm temperatures. 	<p>Turn and Talk</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell your partner about a time when you interacted with someone and it influenced you in a positive way. 2. Tell your partner about how two animals interact in an ecosystem.

<https://greatmiddleschools.org/toolkits/reading/vocabulary-maps/>

www.greatmiddleschools.org

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Exploration (*la exploración*)

The act of traveling over or through a place to learn more about the area or to find something



Synonyms:
Investigation, inspection, journey

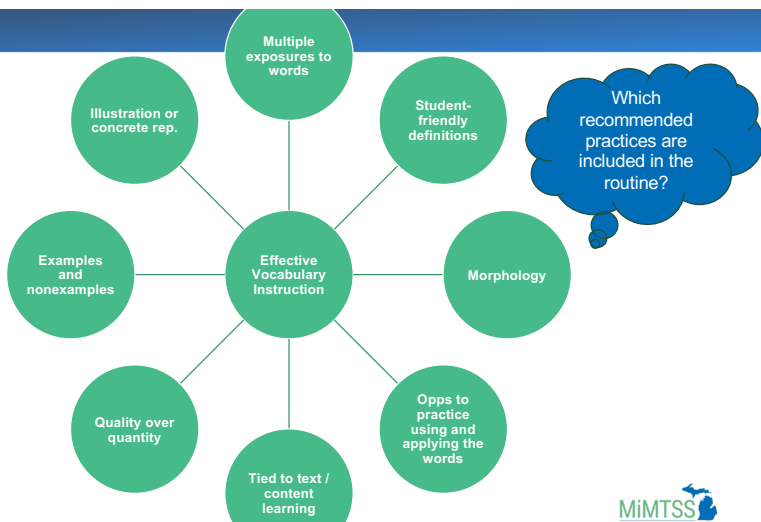
Example Sentences

1. The boy scouts packed a map, water, food, and sleeping bags, preparing for their **exploration** through the campgrounds.
2. Lewis and Clark took many people with them to help with the **exploration** along the Missouri River.

Turn and Talk

1. Do astronauts go on **explorations**? Where do they explore?
2. What **explorations** have we learned about in this unit?

<https://greatmiddleschools.org/toolkits/reading/vocabulary-maps/>




(Baker et al., 2014; Beck et al., 2013; Fuchs, et al., 2021; Gersten et al., 2007; Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007; Riccomini et al., 2015)



What about other content areas (besides social studies?)


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Cognate or translation for English learners	compassion (compasión)	
Student-friendly definition	Showing great care or concern	
		Visual representation to make the word vivid
Synonyms or related words	Synonyms: tenderness, sympathy	
First example relates to students' everyday lives	Example Sentences 1. The Red Cross workers showed great compassion toward the people of Haiti after the earthquake struck by providing food and shelter to many homeless people.	First question relates to students' prior knowledge or experience
Second example relates to the unit of study or passage	2. Mahatma Gandhi is known throughout the world for his compassion , dedication to peace, and commitment to nonviolence.	Second question relates to your course content
	Turn and Talk 1. Tell your partner about a time you showed compassion toward others. 2. Why do you think that Gandhi is known for his compassion ?	

<https://greatmiddleschools.org/toolkits/reading/vocabulary-maps/>



Cognate or translation for English learners	imagery (la imáginería)	
Student-friendly definition	Descriptive language that can appeal to any of the five senses (see, smell, taste, hear, feel).	
		Visual representation to make the word vivid
Synonyms or related words	Synonyms: figurative language, descriptive words	
First example relates to students' everyday lives	Example Sentences 1. My favorite song's lyrics are filled with imagery and describe what it feels like to be a teenager.	First question relates to students' prior knowledge or experience
Second example relates to the unit of study or passage	2. The author's use of imagery was so vivid that I felt like I was watching a movie instead of reading a book.	Second question relates to your course content
	Turn and Talk 1. Brainstorm some words that would provide imagery to your reader if you were describing your favorite food. 2. How does the narrator in the following probably feel, and how do you know? <i>I could hear the footsteps of doom nearing.</i>	

greatmiddleschools.org/toolkits/reading/vocabulary-maps



When should you teach this routine?

Lesson Component	Instruction / Strategy
Before Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit vocabulary instruction • Build Background Knowledge
During Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking and answering questions • Get the gist (main idea generation)
After Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gist-to-summary • Continued vocabulary instruction

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One more example (for upper elementary grades)

UNIT 3 • LESSON 28 Independence Day ALIGN

What are the four core beliefs, or parts, of the Declaration of Independence?

Independence Day

The Declaration of Independence

(1) In July of 1776, delegates at the Second Continental Congress voted to adopt the Declaration of Independence. Thomas Jefferson wrote the document, which explained why the thirteen colonies no longer lived under British rule. The Declaration of Independence included the core beliefs of the American Patriots and is divided into four parts.

Part One

(2) The first part of the Declaration of Independence explains the importance of the natural rights of individuals. American citizens have a natural right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It also states that the American colonists have a right to create their own government. It is the government's job to make sure that people have their natural rights. If the government cannot protect these rights, the people have the **authority** or the power, to start a new government. With this authority, the people have the power to make rules for other citizens. The first part also states that all men were created equal.

Part Two

(3) The second section talks about the idea that a government cannot exist without its people. This is because people have to decide to create and support a government. It's the citizens of a country who give a government the authority to make laws and rule over a country. This part of the Declaration emphasizes the type of government the American colonists wanted to create. The colonists believed that a government should be formed by its people to protect all citizens' individual rights and freedoms.

Part Three

(4) The third section of the Declaration lists all the complaints that the colonists had against King George III and the British Parliament. These complaints included

Before Reading

1. Word authority
2. Definition
3. Image
4. Context
Circle the correct sentence.
A. I sprinkle **authority** onto my grass to help it grow.
B. A teacher has the **authority** to assign homework.

After Reading

5. Word Associations
Choose two related words.
A. control
B. peaceful
C. power
D. puppet
6. Example
Write a sentence or definition that uses the word.
7. Turn and Talk
Why did the British government want to maintain **authority** over the colonists?
"The British wanted to maintain **authority** because _____."

How might we teach these vocabulary practices to students with dyslexia?

1	2	3	4
Be sure to practice reading the word.	Emphasize reading and spelling the word even though it is a vocabulary word.	Give students adequate opportunity to read the word in isolation and in context.	Apply previously taught morphological rules or phonics rules to dissect the word.

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How might vocabulary instruction be tailored to each of these groups?

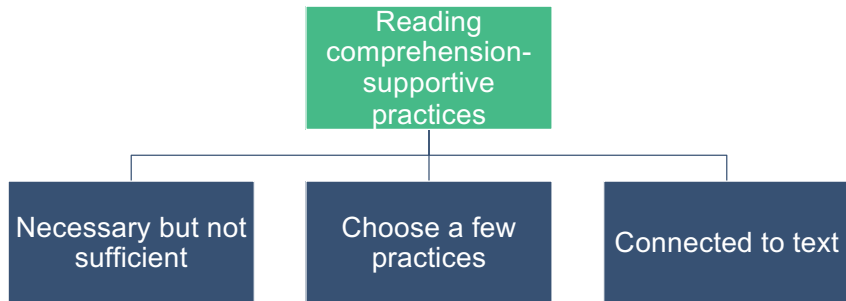
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Pure Developmental Language Disorder (DLD):

Comorbid (Dyslexia + DLD):

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Recommendations for Supporting Reading Comprehension for Students with Dyslexia



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IES Institute of Education Sciences

What Works

Recommendations Details Panel Related Resources

This practice guide provides four evidence-based recommendations that teachers can use to deliver reading interventions to meet the needs of their students.

- Build students' decoding skills so they can read complex multisyllabic words
 - Show More
 STRONG EVIDENCE TIER 1 STRONG
- Provide purposeful fluency-building activities to help students read effortlessly
 - Show More
 STRONG EVIDENCE TIER 1 STRONG
- Routinely use a set of comprehension-building practices to help students make sense of the text
 Part 3A. Build students' world and word knowledge so they can make sense of the text
 Part 3B. Consistently provide students with opportunities to ask and answer questions to better understand the text they read
 Part 3C. Teach students a routine for determining the gist of a short section of text
 Part 3D. Teach students to monitor their comprehension as they read
 - Show More
 STRONG EVIDENCE TIER 1 STRONG
- Provide students with opportunities to practice making sense of stretch text (i.e., challenging text) that will expose them to complex ideas and information
 - Show More
 MODERATE EVIDENCE TIER 2 MODERATE

Before-During-After Reading Lesson Structure

Lesson Component	Instruction / Strategy
Before Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explicit vocabulary instruction Build Background Knowledge
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After Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gist-to-summary Continued vocabulary instruction

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Get the Gist: What is it?

- Gist is another term for main idea
- A gist tells the most important information about a section of the text.

This instructional practice can be applied to any content-area text.

STEPS	DESCRIPTION
Step 1	Who or what is this section about?
Step 2	What is the most important information about the "who" or "what"?
Step 3	Write a gist statement that combines the information from steps 1 and 2 . (The gist statement should be in students' own words, rather than a sentence copied from the text.)

(Klingner et al., 1998)

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Get the Gist: Why is it helpful?

- Why is it important to teach students to generate main ideas when reading text?
 - Recall
 - Monitoring for meaning
 - Integrate information across sections of text
 - Aligns with how good readers naturally process text

(Stevens et al., 2019)

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Let's do an example together

Benjamin Franklin thought that working to help people was the best work to do. One way he helped people was by opening a public library. In the 1730s, only wealthy people owned books. However, Franklin and a few other people asked 50 friends to give them a small amount of money. They used this money to buy books. Then they started a library where people could borrow books to read at home. Today, almost every town in the United States has a public library.

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Example 1

Benjamin Franklin thought that working to help people was the best work to do. One way he helped people was by opening a public library. In the 1730s, only wealthy people owned books. However, Franklin and a few other people asked 50 friends to give them a small amount of money. They used this money to buy books. Then they started a library where people could borrow books to read at home. Today, almost every town in the United States has a public library.

- Step 1: **Who or what** is this section about?
 - Benjamin Franklin
- Step 2: **What is the most important information about the "who" or "what"?**
 - Started a library so people could borrow books
- Step 3: **Write your gist in about 10 words.**
 - Benjamin Franklin started a library so people could borrow books.

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This example is a little harder...

Distancing from Parliament

However, there were times when people in the colonies felt that the distant king still had too much control. As colonial governments grew, the colonists wanted more separation from the King and British Parliament in England. They wanted even more representation in their own government and no longer wanted to follow all the English laws. Parliament was not interested in supporting this. Ultimately, colonists fought for their independence from British rule in the American Revolution.

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Example 2

Distancing from Parliament

However, there were times when people in the colonies felt that the distant king still had too much control. As colonial governments grew, the colonists wanted more separation from the King and British Parliament in England. They wanted even more representation in their own government and no longer wanted to follow all the English laws. Parliament was not interested in supporting this. Ultimately, colonists fought for their independence from British rule in the American Revolution.

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- **Step 1: Who or what is this section about?**
Colonists
- **Step 2: What is the most important information about the “who” or “what”?**
Wanted separation from Parliament because they didn't want to follow English laws
- **Step 3: Write your gist in about 10 words.**
The colonists wanted separation from Parliament because they didn't want to follow English laws.



UNIT 1 • LESSON 12 Colonial Governments **ALIGN** UNIT 1 • LESSON 12 Colonial Governments

Colonial Governments

Read & Get the Gist

(1) Colonial governments played an important role in early American history. Each colony had a charter, provided by the King of England, that laid out the guidelines and rules the colony had to follow. As the colonies grew and changed over time, the charters also changed. These changes affected colonial governments.

Representative Governments

(2) Many colonial charters allowed the colonies to create a representative government. This meant that people in the colonies could choose leaders to speak for them and make decisions instead of the King only making decisions. These leaders were called **delegates**. The first representative government in the colonies was the House of Burgesses in Jamestown in 1619. Delegates represented their colony in important meetings to make fair laws and **solve problems**.

Read & Get the Gist

(3) **Read & ask questions** to life in the colonies. The colonists needed to be able to quickly make new laws to deal with new and changing problems. However, **Parliament** in England could not easily understand life in the colonies because life in England was very different. Therefore, the colonists needed local delegates who could understand what life was really like in the American colonies. Colonial delegates

Read & Get the Gist

(4) Colonial representative governments shared power differently compared to the British monarchy or Parliament. The British monarchy and Parliament had nearly unlimited power and control over the people. In comparison, colonial representative governments gave colonists more control over their government. Since the colonists elected their own representatives in government, colonial delegates had more limited power than the English King and Parliament.

Read & Get the Gist

(5) However, there were times when people in the colonies felt that the distant king still had too much control. As colonial governments grew, the colonists wanted more separation from the King and British Parliament in England. They wanted even more representation in their own government and no longer wanted to follow all the English laws. Parliament was not interested in supporting this. Ultimately, colonists fought for their independence from British rule in the American Revolution.

How might Get the Gist instruction be tailored to each of these groups?

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Pure Developmental Language Disorder (DLD):

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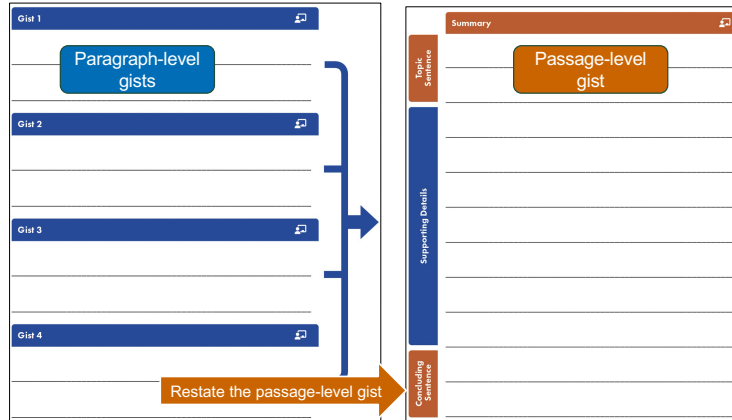
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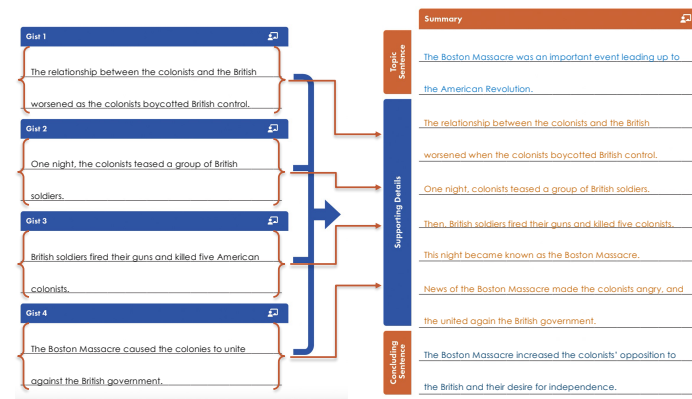
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Gist-to-Summary: What is it?



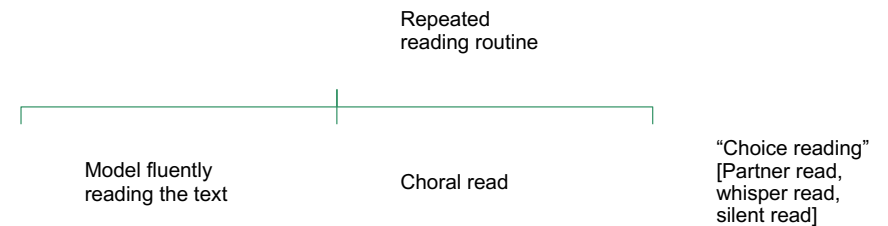
Gist-to-Summary: An example




You may be thinking...

Those texts seem challenging for students with dyslexia to decode!

How can we support students with dyslexia with accessing grade-level text and content?



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Case Study: Jordan (5th grade)



Case Study: Jordan

- 10-year-old student with dyslexia
- Strong verbal skills; enjoys science and discussions

Reading & Comprehension Challenges:

- Slow, effortful decoding; loses place while reading
- Difficulty recalling details and summarizing text
- Struggles with main idea, inferences, and vocabulary

Strengths:

- Strong listening comprehension
- Engages in discussions and hands-on learning

Classroom Scenario:


Students read a 2 to 3-page grade-level text on ecosystems and answer comprehension questions (main idea, details, cause/effect). Jordan appears disengaged and provides limited responses.

Consider:

- What barriers are impacting comprehension?
- What strategies (before/during/after reading) could help?
- What accommodations or supports would improve access?

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Agenda

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Let's debrief!

What questions do you have for us related to today's content and/or the application activity?

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What's coming up? Our last session!

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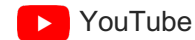
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