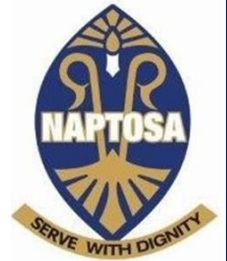


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## Strategies to Promote Reading with Comprehension – PIRLS Part 2

Promoting reading for meaning is essential for developing strong reading comprehension skills, which is essential to enjoy success in all subjects. Below are some strategies that can help:

1. Pre-reading: Encourage learners to preview the text before reading. This can involve looking at headings, subheadings, and any visuals to get a sense of what the text is about. This can also help activate prior knowledge on the topic.
2. Active reading: Encourage learners to engage actively with the text while reading. This can involve asking questions, making predictions, and summarizing main ideas.
3. Re-reading: Encourage learners to go back and re-read sections that are confusing or difficult to understand. This can help improve comprehension and ensure that the reader fully understands the text.
4. Discussion: Encourage learners to discuss the text with others. This can help clarify confusing parts, generate new ideas, and reinforce comprehension.
5. Connecting: Encourage learners to connect what they are reading to their own experiences or prior knowledge. This can help make the text more relevant and meaningful to the reader.
6. Visualisation: Encourage learners to create mental images of what they are reading. This can help improve comprehension and recall.
7. Monitoring: Encourage learners to monitor their comprehension as they read. This can involve checking for understanding, re-reading, or asking questions to clarify confusing parts.

By promoting these strategies, we can help learners develop strong reading comprehension skills and promote reading for meaning.

Over and above these strategies, systemic mechanisms need to be put in place to address challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, the availability of resources at both school and at home. The involvement of parents is also critical, to see an advancement in learner achievement, self-esteem, and behaviour. An increased focus on mother tongue instruction is pivotal. Research shows that education in the mother

tongue is a key factor for inclusion and quality learning, and it also improves learning outcomes and academic performance. This is crucial, especially in primary school, to avoid knowledge gaps and increase the speed of learning and comprehension (UNESCO).

It is of utmost importance that **all** primary school teachers are adequately trained on the science of reading since they are responsible for promoting the development of reading skills by providing direct and explicit reading instruction that builds learner mastery through scaffolded instruction.

To see a real improvement in reading, we need to pay more attention to our Foundation Phase. Learning through play cannot be over emphasized. Learners need sufficient time, space and resources to explore and practice. This can only be achieved if we reduce our class sizes, focus more on the quality of learning, instead of the number of tasks completed.

Our teachers, alongside departmental officials, need to be retrained to rid our system of the assessment *of* learning mentality and redirect the mindset towards assessment *for* learning. It is important to note that increasing the administration of time-consuming tests like **Early Grade Reading Assessments (EGRA)**, which take away essential teaching time, will not assist in addressing the learning needs. Whilst the test may identify gaps in learners' knowledge, if teachers do not have the expertise to address those gaps, it will be time wasted.

There is no quick fix. It will take time and focused effort to improve the reading proficiency levels of all learners.

**Mr BL Manuel**

**Executive Director**