

# Building Bridges of Understanding

' *Building Bridges of Understanding* ' is a whole school approach to the teaching of comprehension devised by Dr. Ann Courtney of the University of Hartford, Connecticut, Dr. Martin Gleeson, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick and nine schools in the Munster area.

We have decided to implement this programme on a whole school basis. ' *Building Bridges of Understanding* ' is aimed at giving children the strategies they need to become good readers. Comprehension strategies are sets of steps that good readers use to make sense of text. By learning about these strategies, children can become more active readers. Comprehension strategy instruction can help deepen their understanding of the text.

The comprehension strategies taught in ' *Building Bridges of Understanding* ' are:

- Prediction
- Visualizing
- Making connections
- Questioning
- Clarifying
- De-clunking
- Inferring
- Determining Importance
- Synthesis

When working on each of these strategies the children learn a sign or action (called a comprehension processing motion or 'CPM') to indicate when they want to use that strategy during class reading.

## Prediction:

Good readers make good guesses or predictions about what might happen next in the story, using information they have gathered from the book cover, the blurb, the pictures etc.. Children make a 'P' sign to indicate when they want to make a prediction. Predictions can be made before, during or even after the story Predictions do not have to be right. As more of the story is heard, the predictions may change.

### Visualizing:

Visualizing while reading is like making a movie in your head. It is your mental picture or image of what is happening in the story. Good readers have a picture in their head. Other senses such as sounds, smells and feelings may also be used.

### Making Connections:

Good readers make connections between what they read in the story and things that have happened to them in their lives or to people they know. Connections may also be made to other books they have read, movies they have seen, or things that are happening or have happened in the world. Connections can be text-to-text, text-to-self or text-to-the-wider-world.

### Questioning:

Children make a 'W' sign for 'I wonder why . . .' Good readers ask themselves questions before, during and after reading. These questions can be based on what they have read or seen in the book. They may sometimes be based on what is not shown or said in the text. Some questions can be left unanswered by the author. Good readers will use their own interpretation of the story to come up with their own answers.

### Clarifying:

Children make a 'C' sign to indicate they need something clarified or explained. This could be a word, phrase or idea that is confusing and needs further explanation. Good readers always make sure that what they are reading makes sense to them.

### De-clunking:

Readers always come across a word that they do not understand. This is called a Clunk. They then need to 'de-clunk' it. The children learn techniques for decoding these words through the de-clunking strategy. It might involve breaking the words down into prefixes, suffixes etc.

### Inferring:

Children make an 'I' symbol to show they want to infer. Inferring is reading between the lines to determine what the author is hinting at, but not saying directly.

### Determining Importance:

While reading a text, good readers separate out the essential and non-essential information. They determine what is important in the text. The determining importance strategy helps children to identify, sort and order the key pieces of information in the text.

### Synthesis:

Synthesis is the skill of combining all the comprehension strategies and applying them before, during and after reading. It allows the reader to construct their own individual meaning from the text.