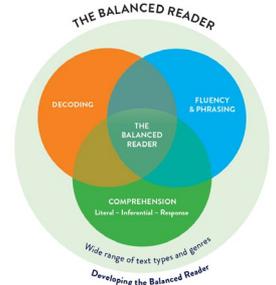


THE BALANCED READER



Strong Foundations in Reading and Literacy

Literacy is an important part of succeeding in life. The ability to read and understand what you are reading is at the centre of this development.

Research shows that adults who read well have a wider access to the many and varied job opportunities which are constantly changing in our 21st century world. In today's society, a child may end up having five or more different careers or jobs in their lifetime! In fact we really do not know what the job opportunities will be over the next decade and beyond. Literacy learning gives our children the knowledge and skills needed to do well in other curriculum areas which they will need throughout life beyond school.

The use of a wide variety of books to teach literacy skills means that students learn different ways to go about writing and open up new experiences through books.

At Salisbury Downs we teach reading by ensuring that students are Balanced Readers, going from 'Learning to read' to 'Reading to learn'. Many students learn all of their letter sounds and blends and can read the words on the page well, but reading is much more than that. Readers need to be fluent with their reading, use expression, good phrasing, follow the punctuation on the page and have a reading rate that allows them to not lose the understanding of what they have read. Speaking of understanding, we read to understand, so readers must have comprehension of the words on the page not just how to say them. The need to understand the simple things the author is writing about, but more importantly how to "read between the lines" and understand the hidden meaning. We call this the understanding of Here, Hidden and Head questions.

Learning to read is not like a running race where everyone competes against each other to be first across the line. Parents often think that if their child can read all the words on the page (decode) then they are ready for a higher level book and that the child's reading success is measured by the reading level they are on. Many parents worry that their child is significantly below another child in their class or not moving up levels as fast as they should.

A reading level (whether it be a number, colour or letter, depending on the book) indicates to the **teacher** what type of reading book the child is able to access. A child could be a beginner reader, emergent (developing) reader or an independent reader. The level is usually displayed at the front or back of the book. A reading level is given by a teacher who has conducted a "running record", which is a reading assessment tool. Teachers use this record of reading to ensure that the student is moving through reading levels as a **"Balanced Reader"**. Yes it is important that a student can read the words on the page, but they must also be fluent, use phrasing, have expression and have a reading rate that is suitable for their age. Eg 8 year old should decode at a rate of 80 words per minute, a 10 year old should decode at a rate of 100 words per minute and a 12 year old should decode at a rate of 120 words per minute. In addition to these skills a student must have strong skills in understanding what they have read. This is called comprehension.

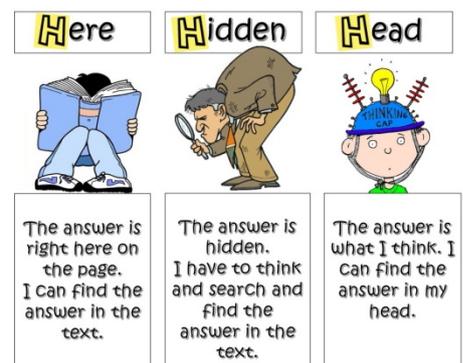
Comprehension - Going from 'Learning to read' to 'Reading to learn'

Comprehension is the understanding of any text being read, viewed or listened to. This includes finding information in tables and graphs, understanding a commercial on television or a street sign as a few examples. We believe in putting the right book in the hands of the right child at the right time and know that pushing students onto harder books just because they can read or decode the words does not mean they can read fluently or deeply understand what they have read. Reading at the right level is the key to being able to access information and make sense of the world around us. The comprehension taught in schools includes activating prior knowledge that is gained in our daily life, inferring meaning from a clue, analysing the information presented to us, knowing how and where to locate information and being able to communicate what has been learnt.

At Salisbury Downs, staff have been highly trained in all aspects of comprehension and explicitly teach these skills using the gradual release of responsibility model. This means students are supported in their learning as teachers gradually give more independent control to students as they show evidence of learning.

Good readers utilise a set of highly complex and well developed skills before, during and after reading so they can understand, learn from the text and remember what they have read. These skills include:

- reading words rapidly and accurately
- noting the structure and organization of text
- monitoring their understanding while reading
- using summaries
- making predictions
- checking predictions as they read
- revising and evaluating predictions as needed
- integrating what they know about the topic with new learning through their own knowledge and understandings related to their cultural and social background
- making inferences and using visualization.
- making connections – text to self, text to text and text to world



All of the aspects of being “**A Balanced Reader**” must be able to be done across a wide variety of text types.

Salisbury Downs offers quality teaching of all aspects of Literacy which are integral to the lifelong learning, future financial stability and success of literate students.