Table 7. Description of NAEP categories of comprehension

Category of Comprehension	Description
Locate and Recall	Identify the main ideas and supporting details; find elements of a story; focus on small amounts of text
Integrate and Interpret	Compare and contrast information or actions by characters; examine connections across parts of text; consider alternatives to what is presented in the text; use mental images
Critique and Evaluate	Assess text from numerous perspectives, synthesizing what is read with other texts and other experiences; determine what is most significant in a passage; judge whether and the extent to which certain features in the text accomplish the purpose of the text; judge either the likelihood that an event could actually occur or the adequacy of an explanation in the text

Source: Categories of comprehension and their descriptions are drawn from the *Reading Framework for the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress*, National Assessment Governing Board (2008), where they are referred to as "cognitive targets."

- **Locate and Recall.** In discussion, the teacher and students should ask questions about what the text means, what the main idea is, and which details support that idea. Before the discussion, the teacher might prepare a guide for the class that highlights which questions students should ask and which the teacher should ask.[70] Teachers should ask some questions and moderate the discussion, but students should do most of the talking.
- **Integrate and Interpret.** In discussion, the teacher begins by reminding students of the comprehension strategies they already know (see Recommendation 1). The teacher then asks the students to read a small portion of the text themselves.

Adapting for younger students

- Take a greater role by asking more questions when working with younger students.
- Explicitly model how to think about the question. For example, the teacher could say: "The question asks about what koalas eat. I am going to look for a heading that talks about food or eating. Headings are these larger, boldface words that tell us what a part of the text is about. Here's a heading that says 'Food for Koalas.' I am going to read that section. I think it will tell me what koalas eat."

Adapting for younger students

- Read aloud and ask students periodically about what's happening, what the story is about, or what they think is going to happen.
- Facilitate a discussion by using a variety of higher-level questions that prompt the students to interpret the text.

When they are finished, the teacher leads a discussion about what they just read, and so on throughout the entire text. The questions asked by the teacher should lead the students to summarize what happens in the text and to interpret these events in light of their own experience, knowledge, or other parts of the text.[71]

- **Critique and Evaluate.** For discussion, the teacher assigns a text that poses a dilemma about which students might disagree, such as the appropriateness of a particular character's actions or whether the outcome of a story seems realistic. The teacher then divides students into teams according to the opinions they express after they read the text. Each team is asked to pick out parts of the text that support its opinion (e.g., events that make the outcome seem realistic or unrealistic). To facilitate this process, the teacher could

distribute sticky notes to students and ask them to mark these points in the text. Students could also mark text that they think is confusing, and teachers could use this material as the basis of a class discussion about what information is needed to make the text easier to understand.

Adapting for younger students

Read a selection aloud, and have students discuss it with a partner and then report back to the class. To start a discussion at that point, the teacher can ask students whether they think the character did the right thing.

2. Develop discussion questions that require students to think deeply about text.

Teachers should develop higher-order questions that encourage students to think deeply about what the text means rather than simply recalling details.[72] Questions should reflect what teachers want students to draw from the text, including implicit as well as explicit information. They generally should not be simplistic ("What is the boy's name?") or ask just for an opinion ("Did you like the story?"). Typical higher-order questions include

- Why did _____?
- What do you think _____?
- If you were the author _____?
- What does _____ remind you of and why?

Table 8 shows sample higher-order questions linked to the NAEP's three categories of comprehension.

When preparing questions, teachers should think about the following: the best time to present each question to students—before, during, or after reading;[73] which questions should be asked when students first read the text;[74] and which questions should be asked after a second or subsequent reading. In a similar vein, teachers should determine exactly where in the text a question will be asked (e.g., after a specific page, paragraph, or illustration). For students in kindergarten and 1st grade, shared reading time or read-alouds provide an opportunity to introduce higher-order questions that invite discussion.

Adapting for younger students

These types of questions can be adapted to students in kindergarten through 3rd grade, but teachers of students in kindergarten or 1st grade who are just becoming familiar with these types of questions may have to ask more follow-up questions (see step 3, below) to clarify what in the text led the students to respond as they did.

Specifically, younger students may find it difficult to take on the viewpoint of the author or a specific character. Teacher guidance can help them recognize and appreciate those viewpoints, drawing on the empathy that children have at this age.

3. Ask follow-up questions to encourage and facilitate discussion.

Reading comprehension improves when teachers ask follow-up questions that encourage students to apply the reading comprehension strategies they know. The questions should be asked in the context of a curriculum in which students are taught comprehension strategies as described in Recommendation 1.[75] In a sustained discussion, teachers should respond to the students' answers in a way that leads them to think about and elaborate on their answers and the meaning of the text.

Teachers should ask students to refer to the text to justify their answers. Depending on the grade level, this may mean recalling events and passages in the text or pointing to illustrations to justify their answers. Follow-up questions should both provide students with a model for thinking about the text and its meaning more actively, and help them learn to construct and support opinions with textual evidence. Examples of recommended follow-up questions include the following: [76]