



Building Bridges of Understanding Programme

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. Drawing on current research regarding effective comprehension instruction its primary focus is the teaching of comprehension, with the ultimate aim of enabling children to become self-regulated strategic readers.

To this end eight key comprehension strategies are identified, namely, prediction, visualisation, making connections, questioning, clarifying, determining importance, inferring and synthesising. Each strategy is explicitly modelled through a think aloud process using high quality fiction and non-fiction picture books. Children's understanding of each individual strategy is supported by Comprehension Process Motions which are hand movements that help to concretise abstract unseen cognitive processes thus reinforcing the learning through a kinaesthetic pathway.

Children's understanding is further consolidated by the development of Anchor Charts in child friendly language as an aide memoire to the application of each individual strategy. Teacher support is gradually withdrawn as children learn to apply the strategies in supportive collaborative mixed ability groups. Such groups provide support for children in word identification, vocabulary and comprehension in a mutually supportive setting.