

Building Background Knowledge Through Culture, Family, and Summer Reading

Sustaining Literacy Growth Beyond the School Year

Welcome, Literacy Leaders!

- Thank you for your work this year!
- You are critical to student success
- Today is about extending that impact into summer

The Reality of Summer 'Break'

Summer: Growth or Loss

- Students often lose reading skills over the summer
- Especially when reading is inconsistent
- But summer can also be a time of major growth

It depends on what students experience at home

Core Principle

Reading Comprehension = Knowledge + Language

- Decoding is necessary but insufficient
- Meaning-making depends on:
 - Background knowledge
 - Vocabulary

Today's Focus

What We'll Learn Today

- Why background knowledge matters
- How culture and experiences support reading
- How vocabulary builds understanding
- How to use Kids Read Now tools
- How to prepare families for summer reading

Think About This

Identify a student who:

- Reads fluently
- Struggles with comprehension

Chat / Turn & Talk:

What is the likely underlying cause?

Defining Background Knowledge

- Schema: Stored knowledge about the world
- Built through:
 - Experience
 - Language
 - Reading
- Enables readers to interpret and infer meaning

Why This Matters

Without Knowledge, Comprehension Breaks Down

- Readers integrate text with prior knowledge
- Limited knowledge = limited comprehension
- This is a knowledge problem, not just a skills problem

Decoding ≠ Understanding

Research Anchor

- Comprehension is highly dependent on domain knowledge
- Knowledge supports:
 - Inference
 - Retention
 - Meaning-making

Not a generic skill—context-dependent

The Role of Vocabulary

1. Vocabulary is the carrier of knowledge
2. Strong vocabulary correlates with comprehension outcomes

Word knowledge = access to meaning

Activity (3 min)

Define the word "*reluctant*" for a 2nd grader

Debrief:

- Was it simple?
- Did you connect it to experience?

This is the work we expect from caregivers

How Vocabulary Develops

- Through repeated exposure in meaningful contexts
- Through oral language interactions
- Through reading volume

Not through isolated memorization, but REAL language experiences

Why Culture Matters

Connection Builds Comprehension

Students bring:

- Cultural knowledge→ Familiar topics = better understanding
- Language patterns→Students connect faster to what they know
- Community-based experiences→Representation increases engagement

These accelerate comprehension when leveraged

Reframing Practice

From Deficit → Asset-Based Instruction

- Do not treat knowledge gaps as an absence
- Build from what students already know

Leader Reflection

Turn & Talk / Chat

What do we do to intentionally connect:

- Student experiences
- Text content

Be prepared to share out

Instructional Implications

- Activate prior knowledge before reading
- Bridge new content to familiar concepts
- Make connections explicit

This must be planned—not assumed

Vocabulary in Action

Make Words Make Sense

When students hear a new word:

- Explain it simply
- Connect it to real life
- Use it again

Example

Word: Enormous

- “That means really, really big”
- “Like a giant elephant!”
- “Can you think of something that is really, really big?
Can you use enormous to describe it?”

Oral language = deeper understanding

Talk Is Powerful - Oral Language

Before, During, and After Reading

- Before: "What do you think this is about?"
- During: "What's happening?"
- After: "Why did that happen?"

Talking makes connections and builds thinking

Activity- Using KRN Books as Tools

Kids Read Now books include:

- Embedded prompts
- Opportunities for discussion
- Vocabulary exposure

Tools can be actively used—not passively assigned

Explore one KRN book and describe how you can explain to parents how to use it for increasing comprehension.

Leadership Moves

Show Caregivers How To:

- Ask simple questions
- Keep conversations going
- Make connections
- Build vocabulary naturally

Key Message

Talk + Read + Connect

Conversation is the most powerful tool for
comprehension

The 3 Summer Habits

Simple. Doable. Powerful.

1. Read every day
2. Talk about the book
3. Connect to real life

Habit 1

Read Every Day

- 10–15 minutes is enough
- Take turns reading
- Rereading is GOOD

Habit 2

Talk About the Book

Ask:

- “What happened?”
- “Who is this about?”
- “What was your favorite part?”

Keep it simple

Habit 3

Connect to Real Life

Ask:

- “Have you felt like that?”
- “Does this remind you of something?”

This builds understanding

Vocabulary at Home

Build Word Power

When you see a new word:

- Say it
- Explain it
- Use it

Make words stick

Make It Routine

Reading Can Happen Anywhere

- Before bed
- After dinner
- Outside
- On the go

Consistency matters more than location

Keep It Positive

Confidence First

- Praise effort
- Be patient
- Make it enjoyable

Joy builds readers

Leadership Role

Leaders are responsible for:

- Caregiver training systems
- Modeling practices
- Resource alignment

This is a systems issue and not dependent on any one individual

Implementation Planning Activity

Your Next Step

What is ONE high-leverage action you will implement in the next 2 weeks?

Examples:

- Caregiver workshop
- Summer reading toolkit
- Staff modeling protocol

Share-Out

Invite 3–4 participants to share:

- Their action
- Their timeline

Key Takeaways

Remember:

- Knowledge drives comprehension
- Vocabulary is the mechanism
- Culture is an asset
- Oral language is essential
- Families are critical partners

Final Thought

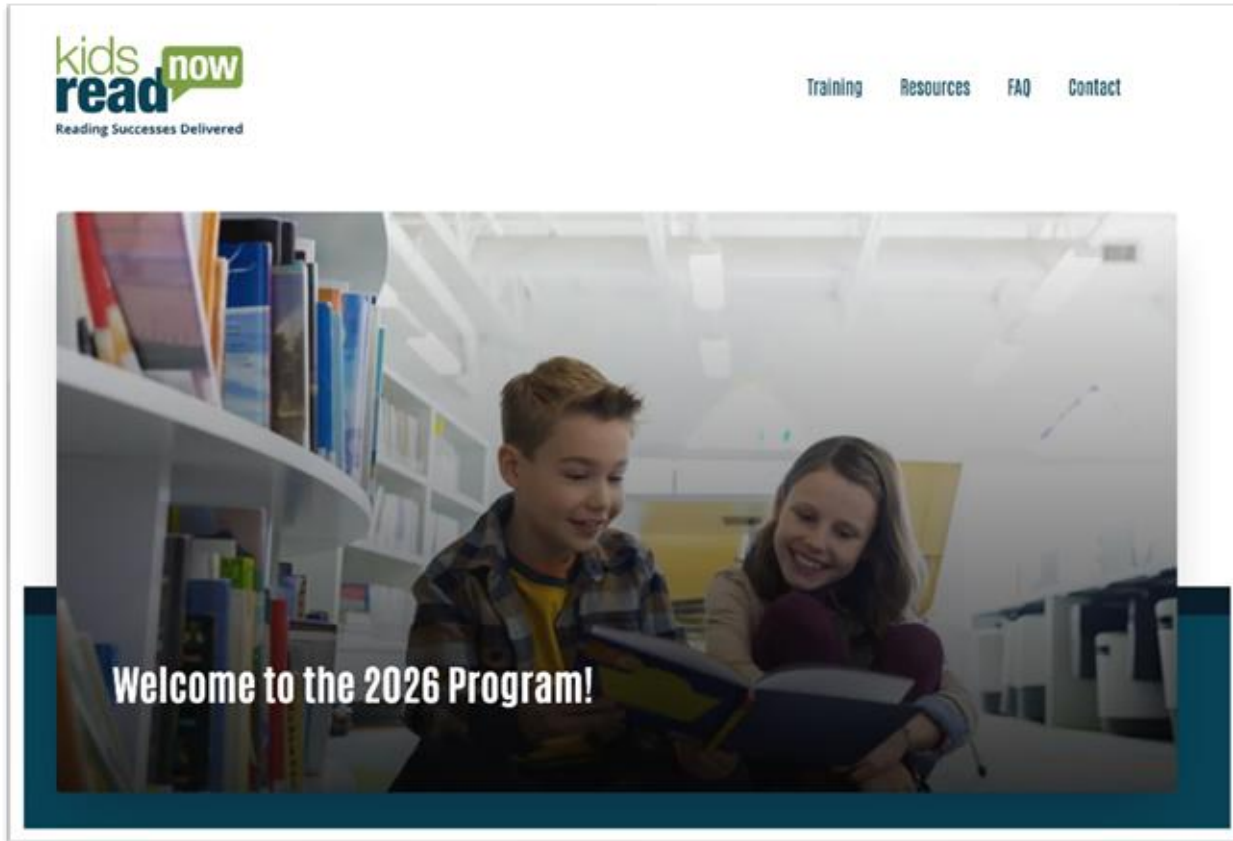
Reading Doesn't Stop at Dismissal

When caregivers are equipped:

- Reading continues beyond school
- Knowledge continues to grow
- Outcomes change

*This is how we use **SYSTEMS** to close gaps systematically*

Kids Read Now Training Site for Schools



<https://kidsreadnow.org/training>

Under the “Resources” tab

Use code: UTPD25

Questions and Poll



Thank You and Q & A

Thank you for your leadership!

Remember how important you are to your family's futures!

Have a great summer!