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DeBruin-Parecki, A., Kleeck, A.V., & Gear, S. (2015). *Developing early comprehension: Laying the foundation for reading success*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

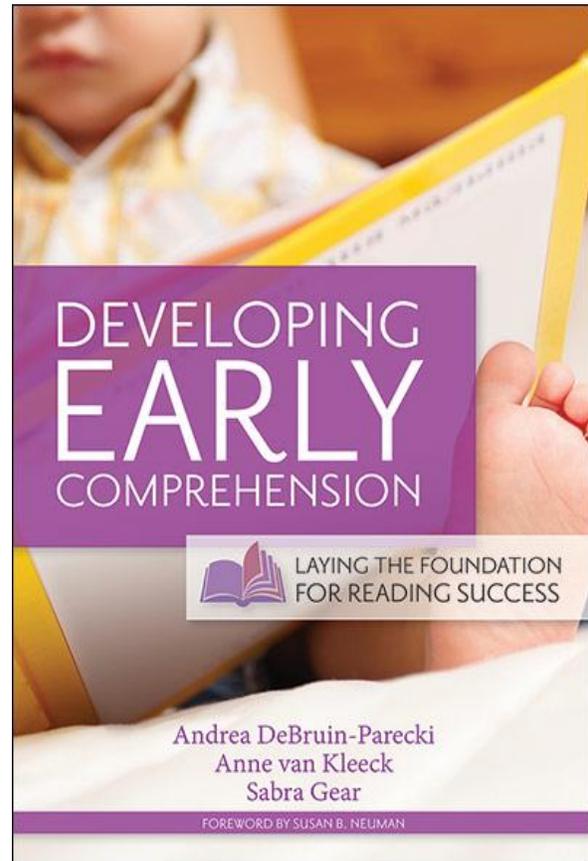
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In the foreword to this edited book book by Andrea DeBruin-Parecki, Anne van Kleeck, and Sabra Gear, Dr. Susan Newman discusses the need to help readers understand meaningful reading is far more than just decoding words. Meaningful reading includes a true understanding of what you read. Dr. Newman also suggests that limiting comprehension to word knowledge and language development is not an accurate picture or a desirable practice. As the cornerstone of reading instruction, comprehension is far more complex, as many of the authors in this edited work discuss in more detail.

Several key points included in this text advance what we know as solid instruction and modeling regarding early comprehension instruction. This text is unique in that it strikes a balance between the two approaches and the authors successfully avoid loaded language



regarding the reading wars. The authors focus solely on what experienced teachers need to know about comprehension with early readers. They provide examples pertaining to teaching children in preschool about understanding what they see and hear as a way to foster early comprehension and to assist them in becoming successful readers. Much of the text focuses on connecting ideas and understanding stories, with ample examples of strategies and how to focus on comprehension within literacy lessons. Early childhood educators will enjoy reading this text since the emphasis in this work focuses on play, knowledge, making inferences, questioning, book sharing, uses of talk, engagement, critical thinking, pre-reading, picture walks, technology, and multiple literacies.

The teachers who focus on problem-based learning, the project approach, and inquiry will enjoy how the authors overlay discussions based on providing access to informational texts, selecting appropriate texts, guiding comprehension of informational texts, and developing academic language. There are also considerations for diverse learners such as children with disabilities and children in multi-lingual classrooms, as well as tips for working with parents.

This text provides many research-based points for those that want to use this work in a graduate level literacy course. Furthermore, the end of each chapter contains a wealth of references and resources. The strongest chapters in this book are chapters 6, 7, 9, and 11. These chapters focus on using informational texts to build comprehension, working with diverse populations, and parents. Practicing teachers will find these chapters the most useful, as they also provide practical resources such as sample lesson plans, examples of how to help children develop language skills, and the emergence of digital literacies. If college instructors plan to use this text, they should consider dividing this work into five sections. Section I – Overview of Comprehension Instruction: This should

include chapters 1, 9, and 10. Section II – Comprehension Strategy Instruction: This should include chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5. Section III – Using nonfiction texts to build comprehension should include chapters 6 and 7. Section IV – Working with diverse populations to build comprehension skills: Chapters 8 and 9. Section V – Working with parents to help children develop comprehension skills: Chapters 11 and 12.

One weakness in this work was the lack of discourse surrounding African American Vernacular English and an emphasis on how to work with these learners. There were about six pages in this text pertaining to the language mismatch between school and home. Despite a few statistics pertaining to African Americans, no direct discussion about these learners was present in this work. There was also no listing of strategies as outlined in other chapters that focus on working with diverse populations. I highly recommend that college instructors using this text supplement with at least two research-based articles that focus on the comprehension of African American students and strategies.

No matter what your theoretical framework is for reading, you must understand how to teach reading and model comprehension in order for children to process the materials they read. This edited book is timely and important for those already teaching and modeling comprehension to young readers. This text includes quite a bit of professional literacy jargon and a heavy reliance on existing research studies, including large-scale studies as well as longitudinal studies. As such, the comportment of the volume suggests it was written for practicing teachers that have already completed a teacher education program or graduate students enrolled in a literacy program. I highly recommend this book for those teaching graduate students in early childhood and literacy programs. This work will be especially useful for advanced graduate students writing a thesis on comprehension.

About the Reviewer

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