

# MIDDLE SCHOOL MATTERS

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The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk at The University of Texas at Austin is seeking partnerships with middle schools that wish to **improve students' reading comprehension in content area classes.**

Partnerships will occur in the 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 school years as part of a U.S. Department of Education research study.

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## How will this project help middle school teachers?

Middle school teachers will learn how to embed **high-impact reading comprehension practices** (e.g., main idea generation, question generation) into their regular content area instruction. We will provide high-quality professional development (PD), facilitate teacher planning time, model practices in classrooms, and embed follow-up support opportunities.

## How will this project help middle school students?

Students will learn and practice these reading strategies throughout the course of the project. These practices have been proven to improve students' reading comprehension and content knowledge in the middle grades and beyond.

## What do participants receive?



### Professional Development

- High-impact literacy practices
- Embedded coaching
- Follow-up support and modeling of practices



### Instructional Materials

- Middle School Matters Reading Field Guide
- Strategy guides with example lessons
- Student materials (handouts, cue cards, etc.)



### Other Benefits

- Stipends for teachers
- CPEs for attending PD
- Contribution to the research base on middle school literacy

## Will all schools receive professional development?

Schools will be randomly chosen to receive the PD and materials either during the 2019–2020 school year (Immediate PD) OR during the 2020–2021 school year (Delayed PD). We guarantee that all participating schools will receive the Middle School Matters PD and materials.

	IMMEDIATE PD SCHOOLS	DELAYED PD SCHOOLS
2019–2020 School Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive PD and materials</li> <li>• Implement practices learned in PD</li> <li>• Collect consent forms</li> <li>• Collect student data</li> <li>• Complete brief surveys</li> <li>• Receive teacher stipends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect consent forms</li> <li>• Collect student data</li> <li>• Complete brief surveys</li> <li>• Receive teacher stipends</li> </ul>
2020–2021 School Year		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive PD and materials</li> <li>• Implement practices learned in PD</li> </ul>

# Examples of Our Materials

## Sample Pages From Get the Gist Strategy Guide

### Overview of the Get the Gist Strategy

#### A COMMON CHALLENGE

Do your students struggle with reading comprehension or determining the main idea of what they read?

#### A RESEARCH-BASED SOLUTION

Teach students the Get the Gist strategy. During reading, students stop to write a brief main idea statement, or **gist**, at predetermined stopping points (i.e., after paragraphs or sections of text). Get the Gist is typically used with expository text but can also be used with narrative texts, such as short stories.



#### How is it done?

During Reading  
→

**Step 1:** Who or what is this section about?

**Step 2:** What is the most important information about the "who" or "what"?

**Step 3:** Write a **gist statement** that combines the information from steps 1 and 2. (The gist should be in students' own words, rather than a sentence copied from the text.)

**Why is this practice helpful?** The Get the Gist strategy supports students' comprehension of text in several ways.

- It encourages students to monitor their comprehension while reading, as opposed to simply reading to "get to the end" of a passage.
- It helps students integrate the important information across sections of text.
- It helps students remember the most important information when they read.

**Does research support the use of this strategy?** YES! Reviews of research demonstrate that when students use a paraphrasing strategy, such as Get the Gist, their comprehension improves. Reading comprehension strategies help students realize when they do not understand a text and provide students with a method for repairing their misunderstanding. Selected research references are available at the end of this guide.

### Example: How to Model Get the Gist in Science



Students, now that I've described the Get the Gist strategy, I will show you how to use it. Look at your passage, called "What Are Clouds?" I will read this aloud and stop where it says I should write a gist, or the main idea. I'll use the three steps in the Get the Gist strategy to help me. Follow along and watch as I show you how to do this.

#### What Are Clouds?

By NASA  
2014

*Spotting a cloud floating overhead is a common sight on our planet, but what are clouds made of? Why do they look like they do? This informational text explains the formation of different clouds and how they contribute to different types of weather on Earth. As you read, take notes on how clouds can affect weather on Earth.*

- [1] A cloud is made of water drops or ice crystals floating in the sky. There are many kinds of clouds. Clouds are an important part of Earth's weather.

#### How Do Clouds Form?

The sky can be full of water. But most of the time you can't see the water. The drops of water are too small to see. They have turned into a gas called water vapor. As the water vapor goes higher in the sky, the air gets cooler. The cooler air causes the water droplets to start to stick to things like bits of dust, ice, or sea salt.



*Unsplash*; by Pero Kalimero is licensed under CCO.

#### STOP AND GET THE GIST OF SECTION 1

Teacher-Prepared Gist Statement

Section	Step 1: Who or what is this section about?	Step 2: What is the most important information about the "who" or "what"?	Step 3: Write gist statement (about 10 words).
1	Clouds	Form from water vapor, which rises, cools, and sticks to particles in the air.	Clouds form when water vapor rises, cools, and sticks to particles in the air.



This section is all about clouds, so that is the most important "who" or "what." Step 2 is to determine the most important information about the "who" or "what." I identified three main points here by rereading the text that describes how the clouds form. Next, I combined the information from the first two steps. Do you agree that this is the main idea of the first section?

## Student Get the Gist Cue Card

### Get the Gist Cue Card

**Step 1:** Who or what is this section about?

**Step 2:** Determine the most important information about the "who" or "what."

**Step 3:** Write your gist statement by combining information from Steps 1 and 2.

Remember, your gist should

- include only the most important information,
- leave out unnecessary details,
- be about 10 words, and
- be a complete sentence.

# Project Tasks

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## Middle School Matters Team Members

- **Randomly assign schools** to Immediate PD or Delayed PD
- **Provide teachers with PD** and **embedded coaching and follow-up support** throughout the year
- **Cover the cost of substitutes** so teachers can attend PD (if needed)
- **Provide all project materials at no cost**
- **Provide a stipend and CPEs to all teachers**
- **Deliver a summative report to principals** describing the success of the project at the school
- **Provide reimbursement or payment** to the district for student demographic data

## Teachers

- **Attend PD**
- **Implement the practices** learned in PD
- Work with the project team to **collect student and parent consent forms**
- **Administer brief measures to students**
- **Complete brief surveys and questionnaires**

## School and District Administrators

- **Assist project team with scheduling PD sessions**
- **Allow teachers to attend PD and implement the practices**
- **Allow teachers to assess students and the project team to collect data for participating students**

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## Questions? Ready to participate?

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[GreatMiddleSchools.org](http://GreatMiddleSchools.org)

