PINPOINTING READING DIFFICULTIES: THE IF-THEN CHART

If…	Then…
the student avoids reading whenever possible…	• Provide daily time in class when independent reading practice is not just encouraged but expected. • Allow students to choose what they want to read. • Engage the student in conversations about his/her interests and help him/her find books that match those interests. • Build confidence with easy recreational reading.
the student lacks adequate background knowledge to access academic and literary texts…	Build and activate background knowledge by: • Ensuring that students have many opportunities for wide reading. • Providing text introductions for assigned reading. • Discussing what background knowledge is necessary for understanding ideas in the text. • Teaching students how to preview texts independently. • Reading aloud to students from texts that they would not be able to read on their own.
the student chooses books for independent reading that are too difficult or too easy…	• Teach techniques for deciding whether a particular book is too difficult for a reader. • Help him/her find engaging reading materials that stretch him/her just a bit, but not too much. • Relax! Allow him/her to read easy books to build confidence and reading enjoyment.
the student can read the words, but doesn't remember or understand what s/he read…	Help him/her move from "word calling" to comprehension by: • Focusing on reading short chunks of text and retelling. • Pausing frequently to discuss and analyze reading. • Encouraging him/her to track thinking with sticky notes. • Providing graphic organizers which require students to record their thinking about their reading.
the student has a basic understanding of what he reads, but fails to grasp inferences or read between the lines…	Scaffold him/her in building inference by: • Providing oral guided practice with read-aloud texts. • Making the process of inference more explicit by analyzing clues from the text and background knowledge required. • Marking *pause points* in the text for students to stop and record their inferences at that point.

the student doesn't repair comprehension break-downs and may not even realize when s/he doesn't understand what s/he reads…	Help him/her build strategies for self-monitoring, such as: • Pausing regularly to consider whether the text is making sense. • Asking him/herself questions, then anticipating the answers and reading on. • Making personal connections to the text during reading.
the student offers only literal or superficial responses to reading…	• Provide plenty of opportunities for discussion. • Ask questions which encourage higher level thinking. • Encourage students to elaborate on their responses and to provide support from the text.
the student reads very slowly and hesitantly…	Help build fluency by: • Ensuring that the student is reading texts at his independent reading level. • Providing opportunities for repeated reading of texts, with one-on-one coaching to improve fluency. • Providing shared, paired and choral reading opportunities. • Engaging readers in performance reading, such as reader's theater plays with plenty of time to practise and rehearse.

the student relies too heavily on "sounding out" words…	• Ensure that students can read high-frequency words automatically.
	• Offer explicit instruction and practice in other word-solving strategies, such as:
	  - Chunking words into segments such as prefixes, roots and suffixes.
	  - Using context clues.
	  - Using resources such as dictionaries and pronunciation keys.

the student makes miscues that interfere with meaning and doesn't self-correct them…	Help him or her develop a repertoire of self-monitoring strategies, such as: • Pause frequently to think about whether your reading makes sense. • If it doesn't make sense, stop and reread or read on for clarification. • Try another word that makes sense in the passage. • Use word-solving strategies.
the student has trouble getting the gist of what s/he is reading…	Teach and practice summarizing by: • Asking students to retell, then teach them to combine details into a summary. • Having students use sticky notes to mark key ideas in a text. • Using graphic organizers to record main ideas and supporting details.
the student offers weak written responses to reading…	Establish expectations that ideas, opinions and responses must be supported with evidence from the text by: • Teaching students to always explain "why" even if it is not asked. • Practising scanning the text for specific details. • Modeling and providing guided practice in effective responses.