**Inference**

**Definition**

“Inferential thinking occurs when text clues merge with the reader’s prior knowledge and questions to point toward a conclusion about an underlying theme or idea in the text.” (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000). When learners read inferentially, they are involved with the text at a higher level — reflecting on information, making judgments, and drawing conclusions in response to what they are reading. When readers infer meaning they become more personally engaged with and connected to the deeper meaning of the text, resulting in enhanced understanding and increased learning and retention.

An inference is a conclusion you draw based on evidence in a reading passage.

Writers often do not explain everything to the reader. For example, in stories, the writer may not tell the reader the time or place. Often readers have to guess these things. This is called making inferences or “reading between the lines.” Readers frequently need to find small clues that lead them to infer— understand—things that the author doesn’t explicitly state. They need to use information in the text to guess other things about the text. For example, you might read: “The waves rushed up around his legs and he could feel the coarse sand between his toes.” You would then infer that this person was at the beach.

**Purpose:**

Inference is a powerful strategy for creating deeper meaning and enriching the reading experience.

**Expected Outcomes**

Learners must be able to:

• Make predictions before and during reading

• Draw conclusions based on information — or clues — in a text and/or graphic

• Use implicit information in graphics and text to create meaning

• Use background knowledge and questioning strategies to make personal connections to new information

**Clues We Use to Infer Meaning**

**From the world around us:** • Facial expressions • Body language • Tone of voice • Spoken words/conversations • Sounds • Smells

**From text:** • Titles and headings • Pictures • Dialog • Descriptions of how characters react to one another • Reading “between the lines” to find implied information (clues) that lead us to reach a specific conclusion or make a prediction

**Using Inference to Make Meaning**

• Inferring helps us “read between the lines”.

• Inferences help us stay more interested in a story.

• When I make inferences, I feel like I almost become part of the story.

• Inferring helps me combine what I read with what I already know.

**Reasons to use inference to create meaning from text**

Making inferences before, during and after reading helps us:

• “Read between the lines” to understand things the author meant but didn’t say.

• Use pictures and text to make predictions, come to conclusions and form opinions about what we are reading.

• Make personal connections to the text as we add our own thoughts, opinions and ideas to what the author wrote.

• Combine what we read with what we already know to create pictures of the character/setting/subject of the text in our minds.

**Inference Signal Language**

The things we might think or say aloud that signal we are making an inference.

Maybe… I think that… I predict that… I am guessing that… I thought that’s what… I’m surprised that… I’ve come to the conclusion that… I wouldn’t be surprised if… That might mean that… I’m convinced that… I KNEW that… That character is probably thinking… This makes me feel… I’m not sure, but I think this word means… If I were…, I would… This is (is not) like the time I… In my opinion…