CBEST READING COMPREHENSION APPROACH

1. Read the question.

   Focus on the stem to determine what type of question it is:
   Main idea, explicit, implicit, vocabulary (see next page for how to determine).

   Mark the question with M, E, I or V.

   Skim the possible answers to focus on appropriate parts of the passage.

2. Read the passage.

   Keep the question in mind.

   Make notations, underlining key words or paraphrasing in the margins.

   a. If it is a main idea question, focus more on the beginning and end of the passage.

   b. If it is an explicit question, underline any words in the passage that match any words in the question or possible answer

   c. If it is an implicit question, focus more on the body and the relationships between ideas.

   d. If it is a vocabulary question, underline the word in the passage.

3. Reread the question

   Eliminate obviously incorrect answers.

   One wrong answer will be obvious.

   Two more wrong answers will be less obvious and may require a quick check of the passage.

   You will probably be left with two possibilities.

4. Reread the passage.

   Focus on the two possible choices and decide which choice is correct based on what the passage says and on the type of question being asked.

   Always mark an answer, even if it is a guess. A blank answer is most definitely wrong.
QUESTION TYPES

Main Idea

• The primary purpose of the passage is to .................
• The best title for the passage is .................
• The main idea (theme) of the passage is .................
• The central thought of the passage is .................
• The best summary (paraphrase) of the passage is .................
• The author stresses .................

Strategy:
1. Read the question and the possible answers.
2. Skim the passage and notice the general topic.
3. Concentrate on the beginning and end of the passage for thesis and concluding statements.
4. Go through answer choices and cross off any that are off topic or contradict the topic.
5. Cross out answer choices that are too broad for topic.
6. Cross out answer choices that are too specific, that are only mentioned in one sentence or two in the middle of the passage. Main idea answers are usually not found in the body of the passage.
7. If you are still left with two answers, choose the one that is the most precise and/or complete without adding any new ideas. If you still are not sure, choose the one that most closely relates to the first and last sentence of the paragraph.

Explicit (Facts) -- What is there in black and white

• According to the passage .............
• The author states (makes the point) that .............
• According to the author, all of the following are true except .............
• The “_________” referred to by the author is .............

Strategy:
1. Read the question to focus on the detail in question. Underline key words.
2. Focus on the body of the paragraph.
3. Skim the passage looking for key words, either the actual words in the question or a close paraphrase of the actual words. Underline these words.
4. If the question is asking for a relationship between two facts, look above and below what you have underlined for the appropriate facts and underline them.
5. Eliminate answers that contradict or have facts not mentioned in the passage.
6. Eliminate answers that contain facts that may be true through implication, facts that you would have to use your own critical thinking skills to come up with.
7. If you are still left with two answers, choose the one that most closely follows the language of the passage. Often the answer will contain words identical to those found in the passage.
Implicit (Conclusions drawn from what is written) -- What is in between the lines

• It can be inferred (concluded) that .................
• The writer implies that ......
• The writer’s attitude is ............
• The passage suggests .................
• Which of the following statements would the author agree with?
• Which of the following sentences would be the most appropriate continuation (additional part) of this passage?

Strategy:
1. Read the question to determine what kind of conclusion is being asked for.
2. Pay special attention to qualifiers in the questions, words like except, only, most likely.
3. Look for answer choices that may state the same idea in an opposite way.
4. Focus more on the body of the paragraph. Implicit questions usually ask for an inference drawn not from the main idea but from a specific within the body.
5. Read the passage, underlining key concepts that seem to relate to the question.
6. Eliminate answers that are false or unreasonable.
7. Eliminate answers that can be concluded from the paragraph but do not answer the question.
8. Eliminate answers that exactly repeat the language in the paragraph.
9. If you are still left with two answers, choose the one that can be most clearly concluded from the passage. If you are still left with two answers, choose the one that is only one step removed from the language of the passage.

Vocabulary (Meaning of words)

• The word “_______” is used to mean .................
• A word that could be used in place of “_______” in this passage is ........

Strategy:
1. Read the question to determine what word is being asked about and underline that word in the passage.
2. Check to see if the meaning of the word is given before it is used.
3. Check to see if the opposite meaning is given somewhere in the passage.
4. Replace the word with each of the possible answers, eliminating the ones that do not fit the meaning or the part of speech.
5. If you are left with two choices, choose the one that is the most explicit (does not require additional conclusions).