**Topic, Main Idea, and Supporting Details**

**Paragraph:** A group of sentences organized around a topic, a main idea about the topic, and details that support the main idea.

**Topic:** The overall subject of a paragraph.

To find the topic, ask, what or who is this paragraph about?

**Main Idea:** A statement that tells the author’s point about the topic. The main idea provides the message of a given paragraph or the argument that is being made about the topic. The main idea can be directly stated in the paragraph, or it may be implied (not directly stated). The main idea often appears at the beginning of a paragraph, but can also appear at the end or in the middle.

To find the main idea, ask, what is the overall message or argument being made by the author about the topic of this paragraph?

**Supporting Details:** A paragraph contains facts, statements, or examples--specifics which guide us to a full understanding of the main idea. They clarify, illuminate, explain, describe, expand and illustrate the main idea and are supporting details.

Decide which details help you to understand the main idea. Answer question raised by the main idea (who, what when, why or how).

**Types of Supporting Details**

* Stages – steps or phases
* Elements – basics, components, fundamentals
* Ways – techniques, habits
* Questions – requests, queries
* Results – outcomes, effects
* Examples – illustrations, samples
* Reasons – explanations, whys-and-wherefores
* Types – categories, sorts, varieties
* Causes – reasons, sources
* Symptoms – signs, indicators, warnings

Summer is a wonderful time to spend at West Beach. It is a beach with light-

  colored, soft sand. The coastline goes on for a long way and many people enjoy walking

  along it. Children like to play in the surf and walk along the rocks that are visible at

  low tide. This is a fun beach for people of all ages.

      In this paragraph:

* the topic is West Beach
* the main idea (what the writer is saying about the topic) is that summer is a wonderful time at West Beach
* Details: soft sand, long coastline, children playing