

COVID-19 Resources

Reading Intervention Protocol: Partner Reading and Paragraph Shrinking

This handout was developed in tandem with *Considerations for Reading Intervention Upon the Return to School* as part of NASP's return to school academic guidance series. This series and the related webinars can be accessed on the NASP website at <https://www.nasponline.org/covid-19-webinar-series>.

Burns et al. (2015) and Preast et al. (2020) modified the Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS; Fuchs et al., 2001) program to implement partner reading and paragraph shrinking as class-wide interventions and demonstrated the immediate positive effects. Partner reading and paragraph shrinking involve the following steps (Burns et al., 2015; Fuchs et al., 2001).

1. Organize each classroom in dyads by dividing the class into two groups—higher readers and lower readers. Match the top reader in the lower half with the top reader in the upper half, the second highest reader in the upper half with the second highest reader in the lower half, on down until the lowest reader in the class is matched with the lowest reader of the higher group.
2. Each dyad is given a folder with their team name on it (the students can make up the name if desired). On the front of the folder, in addition to the team name, write Student 1 and Student 2. Student 1 is the better reader of the dyad and Student 2 is the weaker reader. Inside the folder are a visual depiction of an error correction technique, the basic rules (e.g., talk only about reading, keep your voices low, help your partner, and do your best), and several passages written at Reader 2's instructional level. We often use <https://www.readworks.org/>, which is a free resource, to find passages that approximate the Lexile score that represents Reader 2's instructional level.
3. The partner dyads meet for 20 minutes each day for 2 weeks in elementary schools and 3 weeks in middle schools.
4. In the first session the teacher discusses the rules and then explains that, during the sessions, Reader 1's job is to go pick up the folder while Reader 2 finds a place to work. The students should practice this procedure until they can do so quickly and quietly. The students then work in pairs to read text aloud.
 - a. The partner reading involves having each student read the same passage out loud for 5 minutes each. Reader 1 always reads first. Remember that the passages are written at Reader 2's instructional level and Reader 1 is the stronger reader. Thus, Reader 1 should be able to read the passages with little difficulty. Reader 2 follows along while Reader 1 reads for 5 minutes. At the end of 5 minutes, the teacher announces that it is time to switch and Reader 2 then reads the exact same passage for 5 minutes while Reader 1 follows along.
 - b. If a student cannot read a word, the other student provides error correction by saying, "That word is _____. What word? Yes, that word is _____. Now go back and read that sentence again."
5. On the second day, the teacher has the students pick up their folders and engage in partner reading, but also introduces paragraph shrinking.
 - a. Paragraph shrinking involves having each student read aloud for 5 minutes. After reading each paragraph, the student stops and restates the most important who or what in the paragraph, what happened to the most important who or what, and then describe both of these in 10 words or less (e.g., Thomas Edison was the most

important who or what. The most important thing that happened to Thomas Edison was that he was raised on a farm, but didn't like living on a farm because he liked working with machines. In 10 words or less, "Thomas Edison didn't like farming; he liked working with machines.")

- b. After reading for 5 minutes, Reader 1 stops and Reader 2 picks up where Reader 1 left off to read novel text and paragraph shrinks after every paragraph for 5 minutes.
6. The intervention in days 2 through 10 (15 at middle school) is fully up and running (Reader 1 reads aloud for 5 minutes while Reader 2 follows along, Reader 2 reads the exact same text again for 5 minutes while Reader 1 follows along, Reader 1 reads new text aloud for 5 minutes and paragraph shrinks after each paragraph, and Reader 2 reads new text aloud for 5 minutes and paragraph shrinks after each paragraph).

Burns et al. (2015) and Preast et al. (2020) described positive results of partner reading and paragraph shrinking after just 10 school days. The median curriculum-based measurement score for two third-grade classrooms went from 81 and 87 words read correctly per minute (WCM; the benchmark criterion was 91) to 104 and 115 WCM, respectively. The number of students who needed support went from 12 (out of 23) and 11 (out of 18) to 5 in each classroom.

REFERENCES

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