

## Considerations for Reading Intervention Upon the Return to School

The summer slide is a phenomenon that is all too well known to educators in this country. Students tend to experience a learning loss in reading during the summer, especially for students with lower socioeconomic status and or a disability. Curriculum-based measurement scores for reading were 5% to 10% lower in the fall than in the previous spring among children attending a Title 1 school after the 3-month summer break (Sandberg Patton & Reschly, 2013). It is not difficult to imagine the effect that a 5 to 6 month break due to a pandemic will have on student learning. Educational professionals have responded valiantly, quickly, and wisely to the change from in-person to virtual instruction, but a potential return to in-person instruction in the fall is going to represent another significant shift in how we educate our students. What has worked in previous years, may not work now. This document and the webinar for NASP members that it supports outline ways to change core instruction and intervention in reading to best meet the changing demands of educating children. The guidance addresses core instruction and Tier 2 intervention in reading, and offers suggestions both for school psychologists and parents.

### CORE INSTRUCTION

There will be two fundamental ways to which core instruction will need to be modified. First, we will need to teach skills at each grade level that were previously considered to be too foundational for that grade. For example, decoding multisyllable words is an instructional goal for third grade, and applying previously learned skills to read unfamiliar multisyllabic words in text is a fourth-grade instructional target (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Fourth-grade teachers may have to reteach the approaches to decoding multisyllabic words in the fall before they can reasonably expect students to apply them. In fact, it might be necessary to review skills such as reading vowel teams, prefixes and suffixes, etc., which may be considered more appropriate for late second or early third grades. Grade level teams (elementary school) and department teams (secondary school) should review the scope and sequence of skills in reading before school begins to identify foundational skills that may need to be retaught in the fall.

The second way in which core instruction will need to be modified is to implement class-wide reading intervention immediately when school begins. VanDerHeyden recommended that class-wide interventions occur prior to universal screenings in the fall in order to change the base rate and increase screening decision accuracy (National Association of School Psychologists, 2020). Class-wide interventions also help increase reading skills so that the number of students requiring intervention decreases to approximately 20%. Table 1 lists class-wide interventions that can be used at various grade levels.

**Table 1. Class-Wide Reading Interventions for Each Grade Level**

Grade	Intervention	Source for Information
Kindergarten	K-PALS (Fuchs, Fuchs, Al Otaiba, et al., 2001)	<a href="https://frg.vkcsites.org/what-is-pals/pals_reading_manuals/">https://frg.vkcsites.org/what-is-pals/pals_reading_manuals/</a>
1st	Build a Word (PRESS Research Group, 2014)	<a href="https://www.presscommunity.org/">https://www.presscommunity.org/</a>
2nd–8th	Partner Reading and Paragraph Shrinking (PRESS Research Group, 2014)	<a href="https://www.presscommunity.org/">https://www.presscommunity.org/</a>
High School	High School PALS (Fuchs, Fuchs, Thompson et al., 2001)	<a href="https://frg.vkcsites.org/what-is-pals/pals_reading_manuals/">https://frg.vkcsites.org/what-is-pals/pals_reading_manuals/</a>

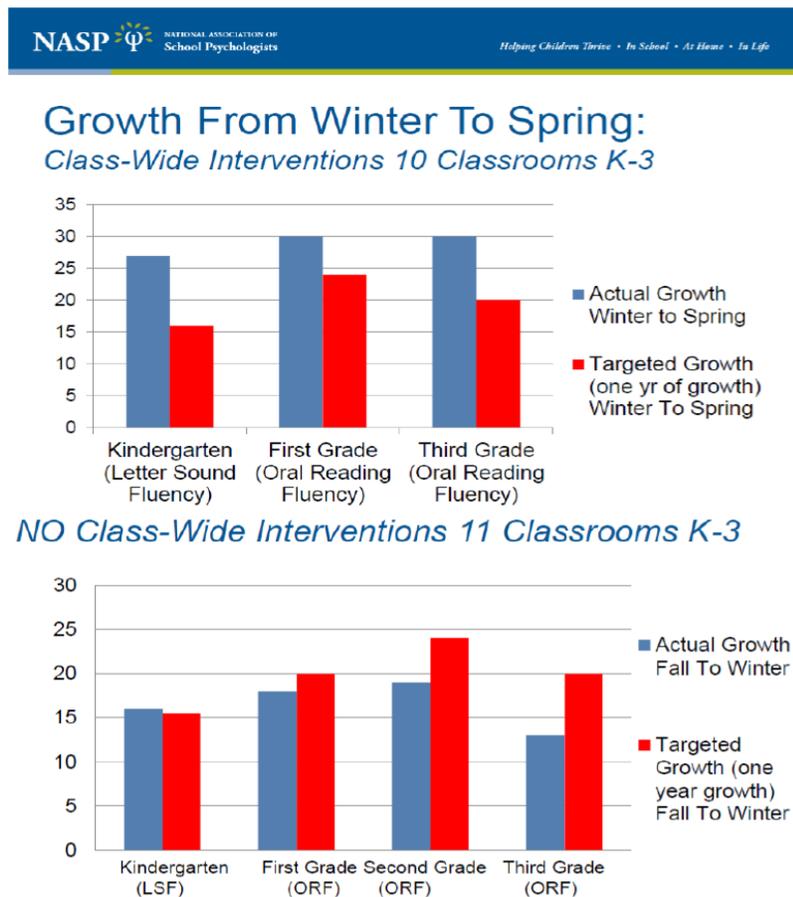
Burns et al. (2015) and Preast et al. (2020) modified the Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS; Fuchs et al., 2001) program to implement partner reading and paragraph shrinking as class-wide interventions and demonstrated the immediate positive effects. Partner reading and paragraph shrinking involves following specific steps outlined in the companion document *Reading Intervention Protocol: Partner Reading and Paragraph Shrinking* (Burns et al., 2015; Fuchs et al., 2001).

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.

Data shown in Figure 1 demonstrate how, when class-wide interventions were implemented with 10 K–3 classrooms, as part of the initial implementation of the Path to Reading Excellence in School Sites (PRESS Research Group, 2014), the students grew at a rate that exceeded the norm group based on benchmark criteria. However, with the exception of kindergarten, students who did not receive the class-wide intervention grew at a rate that was less than expectations based on benchmark criteria. For the students who received the class-wide intervention, the gap between them and proficient readers lessened, but the gap got bigger for those who did not receive the intervention.

The studies described above were implemented because of a class-wide need (i.e., class median on the universal screener was below the benchmark criterion). However, schools in the fall should consider implementing class-wide interventions before conducting universal screenings to increase accuracy and address skill deficits due to the extended school closures.

**Figure 1. Results of Class-Wide Intervention (Top Graph) on Winter and Spring Benchmark Assessments Compared to Students Who Did Not Receive the Intervention (Bottom Graph)**



## TIER 2 INTERVENTIONS

After class-wide interventions occur, students who score low on universal screenings can receive small-group Tier 2 interventions. Students are likely to return to school with even larger deficits between skill and their new grade-level expectations. Thus, what may have worked as a Tier 2 intervention for a given grade in previous years may not work this coming year. School personnel should more closely match Tier 2 interventions to student needs.

Hall and Burns (2018) meta-analyzed 24 studies of small-group reading interventions in kindergarten through eighth grade, and found a moderate overall effect ( $g = 0.54$ ). However, the interventions were far more effective if they were matched to student need ( $g = 0.65$ ) than if they were comprehensive and addressed multiple areas of reading ( $g = 0.35$ ). Many schools use one intervention for every student needing reading support. The research questions that practice in general, but certainly it will be problematic following the extended school closure.

Interventions can be matched to student needs with the framework of the National Reading Panel (2000) by focusing on reading comprehension, fluency, phonics, or phonemic awareness. Practitioners should identify the most foundational skill in which the student struggles and target the intervention there. The sequence outlined below could be used as a diagnostic assessment process to target the intervention.

1. Assess comprehension. Comprehension and vocabulary are treated together because they are difficult to separate in assessment and intervention. Most group administered reading tests (e.g., MAP-Reading or Star Reading) primarily measure comprehension. If a student scores low on comprehension, then we assess reading fluency.
2. Reading fluency can be directly assessed with curriculum-based measures of reading. Middle and high school students could complete a group-administered measure such as the Test of Silent Contextual Reading Fluency. If a student scores well on reading fluency, but demonstrated a deficit in comprehension, then the intervention targets comprehension. If a student scores low on reading fluency, then we assess decoding.
3. Decoding can be assessed with any measure of pseudoword reading (e.g., Nonsense Word Fluency, Word Attack, Pseudoword Fluency). If a student scores well on a measure of decoding, then fluency is the intervention target. A low score on decoding suggests the need to examine phonemic awareness.
4. Phonemic awareness is assessed with measures of blending, segmenting, or manipulations such as First Sound Fluency, PRESS Phonemic Awareness Inventory, and the Phonological Awareness Screening Test, all of which are available for free. If the student scores well on phonemic awareness, then the intervention should target decoding. If the student does not score well on the phonemic awareness measure, then the intervention should target phonemic awareness.

Once the target is identified, then school teams can select a Tier 2 intervention that focuses on that skill. There are examples of reading interventions for each grade shown in Table 2, but there are many other well-researched interventions to select from. Websites for interventions are included in the External Resources section of this handout.

**Table 2. Examples of Tier 2 Reading Interventions for Each Grade Level**

Grade	Phonemic Awareness	Phonics	Fluency	Comprehension
Kindergarten	Road to the Code	Sound Partners	NA	NA
First Grade	Road to the Code	Sound Partners	NA	NA
Second Grade	Interventions for All: Phonological Awareness	Sound Partners	Read Naturally	Reciprocal Teaching
Third Grade	Interventions for All: Phonological Awareness	Reading Mastery	Read Naturally	Reciprocal Teaching
Fourth Through Twelfth Grade	NA	REWARDS	Read Naturally	Reciprocal Teaching

The assessment and intervention sequence works for most students, but we suggest adding a vocabulary component for students for whom English is not their native language. That can be done by preteaching words with pictures before the intervention begins. For example, keywords from a reading fluency passage can be pretaught with pictures, as could words that start with the target sound for a decoding intervention (e.g., preteach pictures of a chair, cheese, and chain when teaching the /ch/ sound).

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

This is an important time for school psychologists to act as agents of system change while also taking an ecological–systems approach to working with individual students. We suggest the following points on which to focus practice in the fall to enhance academic outcomes for students.

- Work with teachers to understand the role of class-wide intervention in accurate screening decisions.
- Consult with classroom teachers about how to implement class-wide interventions.
- Help teachers and school-based teams (e.g., grade-level teams and English/Language Arts department teams) interpret diagnostic data to target reading interventions to student needs.
- Consult with administrators and staff to reconceptualize student difficulties as a mismatch between student skill and task demand.
- Encourage caregivers to provide additional reading activities in the home setting.

## ENGAGING PARENTS

Parents will play a crucial role in successfully reopening schools. School personnel should see them as partners and include components to be implemented at home to supplement intervention efforts (e.g., words and passages that contain sounds taught that day to be read at home, repeated reading passages to be read one more time at home, review flashcards, preteach vocabulary). There are specific activities in which parents can engage to improve the reading success of their children and youth. Of course, all parents should read widely with their children and youth. Encourage them to read different kinds of books and materials, and to read often. In an upcoming resource, we will provide other ideas for engaging parents in reading supports and have it linked with this document.

## CONCLUSION

The world continues to change, but the challenges faced by educators today are unique and are greater than any we have faced since the attacks of September 11, 2001. School personnel have admirably met the challenge thus far, but they will need to make additional adjustments for continued success after reopening schools. To summarize the points raised above:

- Students will likely experience regressed reading skills after the extensive break from learning.
- Core instruction needs to focus on skills that are more foundational than what was taught in previous years.
- Class-wide interventions in reading will increase decision-making accuracy and help close the gap between student skill and grade-level expectations.
- Student difficulties are likely the result of mismatches between student skill and current grade-level expectations.
- What worked as a Tier 2 intervention last year may not work this year.
- Reading interventions will have to be closely linked to student need to be effective.

Students will experience difficulties when schools reopen. Students will have experienced a different level and type of trauma than they have ever experienced before, and they will likely experience a larger summer learning loss than ever before. The guidelines suggested in this webinar can help facilitate the transition back to in-person instruction and are not difficult to implement, but will require systems change. Given the likelihood that students will experience reading difficulties at a higher level when school reopen, and our commitment to serving their needs, the change seems warranted.

## NASP Resources

- NASP COVID-19 Resource Center <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/covid-19-resource-center>
- Virtual Service Delivery in Response to COVID Disruptions <https://www.nasponline.org/x55063.xml>
- Equity Considerations During and After COVID-19 School Closures <https://www.nasponline.org/x55210.xml>

## External Resources

- PRESS: Path to Reading Excellence in School Sites (free account) for reading assessments and interventions. <https://www.presscommunity.org/>
- READWORKS.org for free reading passages that can be sorted by grade, reading level, type of reading, and content. <https://www.readworks.org/>
- Florida Center for Reading Research for free lessons to address areas of reading. [https://fcrr.org/resources/resources\\_sca.html](https://fcrr.org/resources/resources_sca.html)
- National Center for Intensive Intervention for a free list of academic interventions and summaries of the research supporting them. <https://intensiveintervention.org/> (tools charts, implementation rubric)
- Evidence-Based Intervention Network for free scripts for academic and behavioral interventions. [www.ebi.Missouri.edu](http://www.ebi.Missouri.edu)
- YouTube page with free videos of intervention, including those that were conducted remotely with a free <https://zoom.us/> account. [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0ad1ei6p\\_HOHHhc-T-JnZg/videos?](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0ad1ei6p_HOHHhc-T-JnZg/videos?)
- Burns, M. K., Riley-Tillman, T. C., & Rathvon, N. (2017). *Effective school interventions: Evidence-based strategies for improving student outcomes* (3rd ed.). Guilford.

## REFERENCES

- Burns, M. K., Karich, A. C., Maki, K. E., Anderson, A., Pulles, S. M., Ittner, A., ... Helman, L. (2014). Identifying classwide problems in reading with screening data. *Journal of Evidence-Based Practices for Schools*, 14, 186–204.
- Fuchs, D., Fuchs, L. S., Otaiba, S. A., Thompson, A., Yen, L., McMaster, K. N., ... Yang, N. J. (2001). K-PALS helping kindergartners with reading readiness: Teachers and researchers in partnerships. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 33(4), 76–80.
- Fuchs, D., Fuchs, L. S., Thompson, A., Svenson, E., Yen, L., Al Otaiba, S., ... & Saenz, L. (2001). Peer-assisted learning strategies in reading: Extensions for kindergarten, first grade, and high school. *Remedial and Special Education*, 22, 15–21.
- Hall, M. S., & Burns, M. K. (2018). Meta-analysis of targeted small-group reading interventions. *Journal of School Psychology*, 66, 54–66.
- National Association of School Psychologists. (2020). Considerations for academic screening upon the return to school [handout]. Author.
- National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers. (2010). Common core state standards reading and language arts. Author.
- National Reading Panel. (2000). Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction: Reports of the subgroups. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health.
- Prest, J. L., Burns, M. K., Brann, K. L., Taylor, C. N., & Aguilar, L. (2019, March). Class-wide partner reading intervention for science comprehension. *School Psychology Forum*, 13(1), 29–40.
- PRESS Research Group. (2014). PRESS intervention manual. Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Center for Reading Research University of Minnesota.
- Sandberg Patton, K. L., & Reschly, A. L. (2013). Using curriculum-based measurement to examine summer learning loss. *Psychology in the Schools*, 50, 738–753.

Contributor: Matthew K. Burns

© 2020, National Association of School Psychologists, 4340 East West Highway, Suite 402, Bethesda, MD 20814, 301-657-0270, [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org)