

Description and Rationale for Readers Theatre

Description

Readers Theatre is an interpretive activity in which readers use their voices to bring characters to life. It requires no sets, costumes, props, or memorized lines. The performer's goal is to read a script aloud effectively, enabling the audience to visualize the actions. Besides the characters, the narrator has an important role in Readers Theatre. The narrator provides the details and explanations, which can be found in the original text's narration, descriptions, or even illustrations. Texts need to be written within the reader's reach, however, students can participate in challenging text if their parts are within their reach. Stories with straightforward plots and strong characters, with dilemmas requiring thought and talk, can be easily turned into scripts.

Rationale

The empirical data documenting reading improvement through the use of Repeated Reading also supports the use of Readers Theatre as an authentic way to promote repeated readings. Teachers can use this strategy to meet the needs of all of their students and also provide a legitimate reason to reread text and practice fluency. During Readers Theatre, students hear models of fluent reading and can hear how a reader's voice makes text make sense. Students have an opportunity to receive feedback, either formally or informally, as they participate in this strategy. The feedback can come from their peers or from the teacher. All aspects of fluency are practiced when students participate in this strategy (e.g., accuracy, speed, intonation, phrasing, etc.). The activities are carried out in a cooperative format with peers, so students don't feel isolated and alone as they read. This strategy requires active participation and may be more engaging than more traditional types of reading activities.

References

- Martinez, M., Roser, N.L., & Strecker, S. (1998-1999, December-January). 'I never thought I could be a star': A readers theatre ticket to fluency. *The Reading Teacher*, 54 (2), 326-334.
- National Institute for Literacy. (2001). *Put reading first: The research building blocks for teaching children to read*. Jessup, MD: Author.
- Rasinski, T.V. (2000, October). Speed does matter in reading. *The Reading Teacher*, 54 (2), 146-152.
- Tyler, B. & Chard, D. (2000, April-June). Using readers theatre to foster fluency in struggling readers: A twist in the repeated reading strategy. *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, 16(2), 163-166.

Steps for Planning Readers Theatre

- Offer a brief mini-lesson on one aspect of fluency (e.g., noting signals in text, discussing how a character might feel, etc.).
- Have students read the text silently or in pairs. Students can take the scripts home for extra practice.
- Then have students practice reading the script aloud again, taking turns reading different roles.
- The next day, students practice reading the script aloud again, then determine who will read each role for the performance.
- Students can spend time highlighting their parts and reading and rereading their assigned roles.
- Have students perform for the class or some other audience.

Martinez, M., Roser, N.L., & Strecker, S. (1998-1999, December-January). 'I never thought I could be a star': A readers theatre ticket to fluency. *The Reading Teacher*, 54 (2), 326-334.

Description and Rationale for Partner Reading

Description

In partner reading, students take turns reading aloud to each other. Students are divided into pairs. Each student reads a short passage three times and then provides feedback about their own and their partner's oral fluent reading behaviors. For partner reading, partners can have the same reading ability or partnerships can include a more fluent reader with a less fluent reader. Many types of reading materials can be used, such as passages from basal readers, student produced stories, and trade books.

Rationale

Partner reading enables classroom teachers to use repeated reading with a minimum of management difficulties. This strategy gives beginning readers or older students with reading difficulties and opportunity to read contextual materials a number of times so they can experience fluent reading. A typical paired, repeated reading activity takes about 10 to 15 minutes. Many types of reading material can be used, such as passages from basal readers, student-produced stories, or trade books.

References

Koskinen, P.S., & Blum, I.H. (1986, October). Paired repeated reading: A classroom strategy for developing fluent reading. *The Reading Teacher* 40(1), 70-75.

Instructional Steps for Partner Reading

When used as part of the regular classroom reading program, paired repeated reading includes the following steps:

1. The students each select their own passage from material they are currently using in instruction, counting out approximately 50 words. Having students select different passages makes listening to a partner read more interesting and discourages direct comparison of reading proficiency.
2. Students read their passages silently and then decide who will be the first reader.
3. Reader: This student reads his/her passage aloud to a partner three different times. Readers may ask their partner for help with a word. After each oral reading, the reader answers the question "How well did you read?" on a self evaluation sheet.
Listener: This student listens to his/her partner read and, after the second and third reading, tells the partner how his/her reading improved and notes this improvement on a "listening" sheet.
4. After the third reading, students switch roles, and again follow Step 3.

Koskinen, P.S., & Blum, I.H. (1986, October). Paired repeated reading: A classroom strategy for developing fluent reading. *The Reading Teacher* 40(1), 70-75.

Choral Reading Article Summaries

In choral, or unison, reading, students read along as a group with you (or another fluent adult reader). Of course, to do so, students must be able to see the same text that you are reading. They might follow along as you read from a big book, or they might read from their own copy of the book you are reading. For choral reading, choose a book that is not too long and that you think is at the independent reading level of most students. Patterned or predictable books are particularly useful for choral reading, because their repetitious style invites students to join in. Begin by reading the book aloud as you model fluent reading. Then reread the book and invite students to join in as they recognize the words you are reading. Continue reading the book, encouraging students to read along as they are able. Students should read the book with you three to five times total (though not necessarily on the same day). At this time, students should be able to read the text independently.

Put reading first, pp. 27-28

Choral reading involves student reading a text in unison (Gillet & Temple, 2000). It helps build confidence and extend enjoyment of the reading process (Opitz & Rasinski, 1998). Repeated practice of choral reading materials helps to develop reading competence, nurtures collaboration among students, and helps students feel successful as readers.

Fluency: Questions, answers, evidence-based strategies, p. 32.

Choral reading is similar to partner reading in that less able readers receive support in their reading. However, in the case of choral reading, the support is given through a group of readers. Choral reading has become something of a lost art in the elementary schools. In past generations, students together learned and chorally recited poems, songs, famous speeches, interesting passages from stories, and other selections. Through choral reading even the least-able reader was able to join in as much as he dared without risk of failure or ridicule. After several readings of this sort even the less able readers were able to read the passage on his or her own with considerable fluency. Today, however, with so much emphasis placed on silent reading, children have few opportunities to engage in the community form of reading.

Handbook of effective instruction in literacy, n.d.

Description and Rationale for Choral Reading

Description

In choral, or unison reading, students read along as a group with a fluent reader.

Rationale

This is another technique for incorporating fluency training into the general education setting. Teachers may choose texts which are a part of their reading series and warrant additional practice, choose poetry selections, or select literature books which are of interest to the students. This technique provides a model of fluent reading for students as they listen to sound, stress, duration, and pitch. Also, this type of practice brings in the social context to the act of reading. This strategy is cost-effective and easy-to-implement yet yields gains in reading fluency.

References

- Eldredge, J.L. (1990, November/December). Increasing the performance of poor readers in the third grade with a Group-assisted strategy. *Journal of Educational Research*, 84, 69-77.
- National Institute for Literacy. (2001). *Put reading first: The research building blocks for teaching children to read*. Jessup, MD: Author.
- Richards, M. (2000, April). Be a good detective: Solve the case of oral reading fluency. *The Reading Teacher*, 53(7), 534-540.

Instructional Steps for Choral Reading

1. Students and teacher each have copies of the text. The teacher can use a big book so all students can see, students can have individual copies of the text, or students can be placed in dyads sharing the text between them.
2. The teacher begins by reading the text aloud as he/she models fluent reading. Students follow along in the text; some may have students point to the words as they are read.
3. The teacher rereads the text, inviting students to join in as they recognize the words.
4. Students and the teacher read the text several times (three to five) until students are able to read the text independently. Successive readings may occur over several sessions.

Modified from:

National Institute for Literacy. (2001). *Put reading first: The research building blocks for teaching children to read*. Jessup: MD: Author.

Description and Rationale for Repeated Reading

Description

Unassisted

1. Students are given short reading passages that contain words generally recognizable to students. Passage length should be between 50 and 300 words. Passages can be taken from many different types of reading materials and should be at the student's independent level.
2. Students orally read the passage several times until a predetermined level of fluency or reading rate is attained (e.g., 95 words per minute). Students may be involved in recording and charting their own progress.
3. In other cases, students are expected to orally read the passage for a certain number of repetitions. Most studies suggest students benefit from orally reading the passage three to five times.
4. After students have reached criterion, they start the process over with another piece of text.

Assisted

1. The teacher models fluent reading of the selected passage, then discusses new vocabulary and content with the students.
2. The class practices the text as a whole group.
3. Students practice the passage independently until they have reached the desired criterion or have read the passages a specified number of times.

Rationale

The studies on Repeated Reading have found clear improvements across multiple readings regardless of students' reading levels or age levels, although greater gains were sometimes attributed to poor readers (National Reading Panel, pp. 3-15). Repeated Reading can be incorporated into a regular classroom reading program. This technique can be modified to include unassisted or assisted repeated-reading techniques. The investigations on repeated reading suggest that fluency can be improved through repeated readings with or without specific guidance; students can work independently or with support from an adult or peer. Text selections need to be based on students' reading levels. The teacher needs to set the context for rereading so that students don't think of it as a punitive or remedial technique.

References:

Dowhower, S.L. (1989, March). Repeated reading: Research into practice. *The Reading Teacher*, 502-507.

Samuels, S.J. (1979, January). The method of repeated reading. *The Reading Teacher*, 32, 403-408.

Young, A.R., Bowers, P.G., & MacKinnon, G.E. (1996). Effects of prosodic modeling and repeated reading on poor readers' fluency and comprehension. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 17, 59-84.

Instructional Steps for Repeated Reading

Repeated Reading Directions for the Teacher

1. Explain to students how practice helps reading.
2. Select appropriate reading rate goals for each student. For students reading at relatively high rates of speed and accuracy, set a specific number of re-readings rather than a criterion.
3. Select reading selections at appropriate reading levels for each student.
4. If appropriate, determine how to calculate the reading rates by using precounted passages or by using a designated amount of minutes each time.
5. If appropriate, teach students how to calculate, record, and interpret reading rates.
6. The student rereads the passage until a specific rate or criterion is reached.

Repeated Reading Directions for the Learner

1. Choose a story that interests you from the list provided by your teacher.
2. Practice reading the story by yourself or with your teacher or friend for 10 minutes (alternatively, read the story or selection three times.)
3. Ask for help pronouncing words when you need it.
4. After you've practiced reading the passage, record your progress.
5. Compare your performance with the reading rate given to you by your teacher.

Strategies to increase Reading Fluency, n.d.