

Structured Partner Reading

This document provides the what, why, and how of using a structured partner-reading process in secondary classrooms.

What is it?

Structured partner reading is another excellent method that supports all students' reading in content-area classrooms. As the name implies, structured partner reading involves placing students in pairs who read to each other, following a specified format or procedure. The level of structure can vary widely both in terms of the pairing and format. A lack of structure and clarity about how partnering is established and how the reading process will be conducted can result in less-than-desirable, and sometimes harmful, outcomes. At a minimal level, partners are assigned the role of reader or listener, and each is given a specific task. Often, the roles and functions are reversed or alternated during the reading time. While students read to each other, the teacher should circulate and monitor their reading by briefly listening in on several pairs. By using subsequent structured partner reading sessions, teachers can efficiently listen to all dyads in their class and provide targeted support where needed.

Why do it?

According to Swanson et al. (2018) at the Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk, partner reading is effective.

"Partner reading is a form of peer tutoring, a process that has positive effects on student performance in academic areas such as reading and math, according to a large-scale meta-analysis (Leung, 2015). Partner reading improves reading accuracy and comprehension for both more competent and less competent readers (e.g., Topping & Lindsay, 1992b; Topping, Thurston, McGavock, & Conlin, 2012)."

Structured partner reading can serve several purposes. First, it allows students to practice reading more challenging texts with a peer rather than being exposed to a stressful reading assignment for the whole class. Second, all students are held accountable for reading while at the same time being provided with support and feedback. Third, not only does this format allow for fluency practice, but it can also be used to answer questions and summarize what has been read. Finally, the information gathered via the teacher's monitoring during a structured partner read can help teachers plan levels of support for both individuals and the whole class for future required reading.

How to do it

As mentioned previously, there needs to be intentionality in how the pairing is established and clarity about the roles, tasks, and expectations students should engage in during partner reading time.

Pairing:

- For more challenging texts, students may benefit from participating in a dyad in which a more competent reader is paired with a less skilled reader. The split-half pairing process described by Swanson et al. (2018) is an effective way to create such pairings. In these situations, often, the more competent reader reads first.
- When using leveled text at each student's instructional level, as in *The Six-Minute Solution* (Adams & Brown, 2004), establishing more homogeneous dyads makes sense. In these settings, it is important to vary who will be the first reader and who will read second.

Roles and Expectations

- Partner reading may use roles with varying names (e.g., Partner A–Partner B, Reader–Coach), but regardless of the name, students should know which role they are and clearly understand the expectations for their role.
- The reader should read for the entire time designated using a voice level that is clearly audible to the listener. Positioning students side-by-side or facing each other works well.
- The reader should read as quickly and carefully as possible, paying attention to prosody and inflection while maintaining the meaning of the text. Encouraging good reading posture will help.
- The listener should follow along in the text, noting errors and pronouncing unknown words when possible.
- Scripted comments for students to use when correcting, supplying words, and giving feedback, along with rules such as “no arguing,” tend to prevent disruptions and distractions. For example, if the student is stuck on the word “osmosis”, the listener will allow 3-5 seconds, then say, “That word is ‘osmosis.’ What word?” The reader says, “osmosis.” Then the listener says, “Yes, osmosis. Keep reading.” Or the listener may say, “Yes, osmosis. Go back to the beginning of the sentence.”
- The reader-listener roles may be alternated by the amount of time or by a portion of the text. For extremely challenging text, echo reading may be employed with the more competent reader reading first each time.

References:

- Adams, G., & Brown, S.(2004). *The Six-Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program*. Sopris West Educational Services.
- Swanson, E., Wexler, J., Shelton, A., Kurz, L. A., & Vaughn, S. (2018). Partner reading: An evidence-based practice. Teacher's guide. Austin, TX: The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk.

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