

Whisper Reading

This document provides the what, why, and how of using the Whisper Read process in secondary classrooms.

What is it?

The whisper read process is an excellent method for supporting the reading of all students in content-area classrooms. Whisper reading is done when all students in the class silently read an assigned text. During this reading time, the teacher floats and monitors students' reading by briefly listening to several individual students read (at a whisper level). By using subsequent whisper reading times, teachers can efficiently listen to all students in their class.

Why do it?

Whisper reading can serve several purposes. First, it gives teachers direct knowledge of each student's ability to read curriculum texts. Second, the monitoring aspect of whisper reading reduces the amount of "fake reading" some students tend to engage in during silent, sustained reading. Finally, information gathered during a whisper read can help teachers plan levels of support for both individuals and the whole class for future required reading.

How to do it

Initially, the instructor needs to teach and model the expectations regarding whisper reading.

Expectations:

1. The teacher provides instructions for an "eternal" reading task. In other words, students are told to read a defined portion of text, then return to the beginning of that section and reread it until the teacher indicates that the reading time is over. This limits the inevitable distractions that arise when students finish a task and are left with unstructured time.
2. All students remain seated and read silently during the reading time.
3. When the teacher comes to a student, the student should point to where they are in the text and begin reading in a whisper. The teacher should be able to hear the student reading, but the whisper is not so loud that students nearby are distracted.
4. The teacher may listen for a few seconds, thank the student, and move to another student, or may offer support or ask a comprehension question before moving on.
5. Although the time spent whisper-reading during a session can vary, it is recommended that the first few sessions be kept short (3-5 minutes), allowing the teacher to affirm

appropriate behaviors and establish expectations. Likewise, the complexity of the text used in the initial sessions should be attainable for most students.

Data Collection

After successfully establishing the expectations, the teacher may use the subsequent few sessions to gather data. Using a class list, the teacher can quickly record a 1 (neither fluent nor accurate), 2 (accurate but not fluent), or 3 (fluent and accurate) after listening to a student.

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