



## Shared Reading

### An Instructional Strategy for Teachers Grades K–3

The ideas expressed in this work are generalizations and adaptations based on the shared book method developed by Don Holdaway using big books.

**Description:** Shared Reading is an interactive reading experience that occurs when students join in or share the reading of a big book or other enlarged text while guided and supported by a teacher or other experienced reader. Students observe an expert reading the text with fluency and expression. The text must be large enough for all the students to see clearly, so they can share in the reading of the text. It is through Shared Reading that the reading process and reading strategies that readers use are demonstrated. In Shared Reading, children participate in reading, learn critical concepts of how print works, get the feel of learning and begin to perceive themselves as readers (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Some of the benefits of Shared Reading:

- Allows students to enjoy materials that they may not be able to read on their own.
- Ensures that all students feel successful by providing support to the entire group.
- Students act as though they are reading.
- Helps novice readers learn about the relationship between oral language and printed language.
- Assists students in learning where to look and/or focus their attention.
- Supports students as they gain awareness of symbols and print conventions, while constructing meaning from text read.
- Assists students in making connections between background knowledge and new information.
- Focuses on and helps develop concepts about print and phonemic connections.
- Helps in teaching frequently used vocabulary.
- Encourages prediction in reading.
- Helps students develop a sense of story and increases comprehension.

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**Setting and Resources:** A sense of community is developed when the time is taken to arrange for a small group of students, or when appropriate, the whole class, to gather in an area near a big book, chart/easel, wall story, or text written on the chalkboard, so that all participants can easily see the enlarged text and engage in the experience comfortably. Having a few items on hand during a shared reading will allow the teacher or other experienced reader greater flexibility during the experience. Some items may include:

- A chalk board
- A pointing stick (with a rubber tip for safety when possible)
- File cards
- A post-it
- A highlighter marker

These may be used during a session to reinforce teaching objectives for students. Additional information on how one might use these resources is available in the section called Shared Reading Resources.

**Types of Reading Materials:** Shared Reading provides an excellent opportunity for teachers to model the integrated use of the cueing systems and strategies for reading that can be applied to unfamiliar reading (for more info see Print Literacy K–3 Series). New concepts and strategies are best introduced during Shared Reading before guided practice or independent reading takes place. The shared reading experience also provides the opportunity for the teacher to share different genres, or types of books, with students and familiarize them with some of their text features (Taberski, 2000). Following are examples of the variety of print materials that can be used for Shared Reading:

- Big books and lap books (see Appendix B)
- Wall charts/stories
- Poetry
- Chants or legends
- Songs
- Morning message
- Classroom news
- Language experience stories
- Text constructed and used on overhead projector

**Shared Reading Process:** A shared reading session may be conducted in many ways, depending on the needs of the students and the teaching objectives determined by the teacher. Shared reading with strong teacher support and guided reading with less teacher support are two ways the teacher can give students practice and immediate feedback, as they develop the skills and strategies necessary for successful decoding and comprehension. This section will provide a brief description of how to conduct a shared reading session. This description will be divided into three reading sections: Before, During, and After reading.



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**Before:** In shared reading, the teacher introduces the story, talking about the title, cover, and title page. It is a good time to engage the students in what they see in the cover picture, and what they think it tells them about the story to be read. Do not neglect the back cover of the book, as it often provides an interesting picture clue to what will happen in the story. During the introduction, the teacher conducts a picture walk through the book, briefly pointing out specific character actions or events, asking probing questions to engage the students in thinking about the pictures and story, but *not telling the story*.

**During:** The very first reading is generally for enjoyment. The teacher points to each word as it is read. Students are asked to follow along “with their eyes.” Read the text as naturally as possible, phrased and fluent, though you may choose to slow the pace just a little for students to join in. Model realistic reactions to the text and use appropriate voice intonation. Again, the teacher may pause from time to time asking students to predict a word, phrase or to make predictions about what is happening. During the read, the teacher may ask students to confirm their predictions by asking, “Were you right/correct?”

**After:** After reading, the teacher can take students back to the point of making predictions, whether at the word or story level, and ask how they knew they were right or how they knew if their prediction wasn’t quite correct. Giving students this chance to talk about their thinking is very powerful and ensures their full participation. The teacher asks open-ended questions and helps students build connections to the text by activating students’ prior knowledge to the theme or main idea of the book. The second and subsequent readings allow for the students to chime in with now familiar words and phrases. In some cases, students and teachers can take turns reading (e.g., the teacher reads the left side and students read the right side). Other ways to extend the Shared Reading experience can be found in the Extending Shared Reading section.

### **Shared Reading Resources:**

- The pointer may be used in guiding the reading, pointing to the words as they are read, though it is important that the teacher or other experienced reader model reading with phrased fluency. Avoid the tendency to read word by word. In rereading of familiar text, students may be called upon to use the pointer during reading or to point out specific words being studied.
- Highlight with a yellow marker or highlighter pen the repetitive words, repetitive phrases, or frequently occurring words that the students already know. This can be accomplished with the students or prepared ahead of time.
- Have students read the highlighted words or phrases after the second or third reading, while the teacher reads the other words.
- Cover up (Post-It sheets work very well) to mask key portions of the text to focus on vocabulary or specific aspects of print, such as the beginning of a few words that support the learning objective or teaching point.
- The teacher can use a file card, running it over the top of the print as if to push the words (though not too fast), encouraging students to read the words with a faster pace moving away from word by word reading.

### **Extending Shared Reading:**

- During subsequent rereading of familiar text in the shared reading experience, a teacher may invite students to revisit the enlarged text for different purposes, one of which is to learn about letters or words. This brief attention to the way letters and words work in the construction of a message gives students new insight to bring to their independent reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).
- Displaying the titles of the shared reading books can be very motivational to emergent readers with the caption: "Books We Have Read Together!"
- Once read, the shared reading books may be kept in an area accessible to students for independent and familiar rereading by students.
- Write the story, or a portion of the story, on sentence strips so that students can retell or build the story by putting the strips in order (McCracken & McCracken, 1995).
- Assign students roles by giving them index cards labeled with each character's name. The students then wear the role tag and act out the story as a creative drama activity (Fisher & Medvic, 2000).
- Have students write a big book that extends from the storyline by predicting what would happen next if the story were to continue.
- Create puppets for role-playing so that students can dramatize and become the characters (Fisher & Medvic, 2000).
- Have the students draw a picture of a favorite scene or character from the story.
- New stories can be created or produced by the students using the same theme or sentence/language pattern of the book that has been shared.

## P-CHILD

### References:

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## Appendices

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### APPENDIX A: Additional Descriptions

**Read Aloud**-are seen as the single most influential factor in a young child's success in learning to read. The teacher or other experienced reader reads aloud to students for enjoyment and meaning. Favorite stories/texts, rich in language and meaning, can be read aloud many times. Read alouds provide opportunities for students to experiment with listening and speaking skills. As students observe and listen to experienced readers reading, they develop strategies important for a variety of listening and speaking situations. The teacher provides a high level of support while the students are the listeners experiencing and contemplating literary works they cannot yet read (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Students may at one time or another read aloud in class, serving a different purpose. Students may read aloud to each other, in small groups, or to a whole group at the request of a teacher.

**Guided Reading**- is a situation in which a teacher supports each reader's development of effective strategies for processing texts at increasingly challenging levels of difficulty (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). In guided reading, the teacher selects and introduces the text to the students in a small group where each student has similar instructional needs and is able to read similar text with support. The teacher provides a rich yet short introduction of the text to be read. S/he may work briefly with individual students as they read through the selection. All students are reading the same material at the same time though individual pacing may vary.

**Independent Reading**- provides time for students to read a text without the need of assistance. Students are drawn to texts that are interesting, eye catching and meaningful to their lives. Students need to learn how to select appropriate reading texts for independent reading practice.

**Language Experience**- is an approach concerned with helping beginning readers to bring their own knowledge and experience to construct meaning from print. Relating oral language to written language and relating reading to writing is important. The teacher acts as scribe, recording the dictated words, phrases, or sentences from the students. Over several days, from a single composition, the teacher and students can read and reread the text until it becomes familiar to the students. Students may begin to read the lines alone and begin to associate written words with their own spoken words. From this text, students can focus on recognizing individual words, consonants at beginnings of the words, onset and rims, and phonics, while focusing and emphasizing the construction of meaning (Adapted from Weaver, 1994).

**Lap books** are smaller than big books, but can be held in the teacher's lap. Lap books have sufficiently larger pictures and print to enable all students in a small group to see/read when seated near by.

## Appendices

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### APPENDIX B: Book Choice for Use with Shared Reading Experience

One criterion for book selection is that the book has the possibility of multiple readings for enjoyment. McCracken and McCracken (1995) suggest six types of books that provide these learning opportunities (pp. 41-64):

**Rhythmic books.** The rhythm of the text enables children to anticipate some of the words. An example would include Leland B. Jacobs book, *Good Night, Mr. Beetle*, where each line follows the format, "Good night, \_\_\_\_\_," with a culminating line for "The moon's in the sky."

**Repetitive books.** Many books contain repetitive text by which children can easily learn and join in during that part of the reading. The classic story of the *Three Little Pigs* provides an example of repetition:

I'll huff and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house in.

**Cumulative books.** This type of text continually builds each page by repeating text from previous pages and adding a new line of text with each new page. *The House that Jack Built* is a good example of a cumulative book:

This is the house that Jack built.

This is the malt that lay in the house that Jack built.

This is the rat, that ate the malt, that lay in the house that Jack built.

**Basic sentence pattern books.** In this type of book, a basic sentence pattern is used to provide support for the reader. For example, the basic pattern could be represented by, "This is my \_\_\_\_\_," which is repeated on every page with variations in the blank (e.g., dog, cat).

**Two-part books (question & answer).** *Brown, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin Jr., is a good example of a two-part book. This type of text reads like a conversation in which a question is asked by one animal over two lines in the book, and a response from another animal is given with a subsequent two lines.

**Information books.** These books do not follow a storyline, but are instead full of information about content-related topics. Use of information books is a good way to support students as they learn vocabulary, facts, and concepts. Examples include *Antarctica* by Helen Cowcher, *Sharks* by Russel Freedman, and *Pumpkin, Pumpkin* by Jeanne Titherington. Using information books as part of the shared reading activity also provides an opportunity to teach about tables of contents, reading tables, charts and diagrams, and the index and glossary.