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Sincerely,
Karen Haag

Ditch Round-Robin Reading and Read More!

By Karen Haag

I observed 3 teachers in one day, all using round-robin reading with their reading groups. Struggling students came together in a group of 4 or 5 with the teacher. Each read a section of the book, unrehearsed. It was painful for me, much less the students.

Despite the barrage of articles about the harm done by Round-Robin Reading, the practice continues.

School is about best practice. Round Robin Reading and it's clone popcorn reading are not supported as viable tools for teaching reading.

The Research

Round Robin Reading is defined as "the outmoded practice of calling on students to read orally one after the other." (Harris and Hodges 1995)

"In terms of listening and meaning-making, this strategy is a disaster." (Sloan and Lotham 1981)

"Clearly, although oral reading can be beneficial, round-robin reading is not. It often prohibits rather than fosters the ability to read." (Opitz and Razinski)

"Being forced to read orally, either in front of the class or in reading group, seemed to be the practice that had the most negative impact on students' self-esteem and attitude toward reading." (Janet Allen, *It's Never Too Late*)

"Tangled readers' listening to 'tangled readers' is not beneficial. Kids love round-robin reading because they are used to it and they are only on the spot a short period of time. Promise the child that if they want to read something aloud that you will find them an audience after he/she has rehearsed the story. Maximize read-aloud time by having all children read aloud or read silently at the same time." (Linda Hoyt)

Eldredge, Reutzler, and Hollingsworth (1996) studied the reading growth of 78 second-grade children, some in classrooms with shared reading and some in classrooms with traditional round-robin reading (where children take turns reading a story orally). They found that shared reading typically moved average students from the 50th to the 80th percentile in word analysis, i.e., letter-sound correspondences, on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. They also found that average students in the shared reading group became 20 percent better in oral reading than the students in the round-robin group and the below average students in the shared reading group became 41 percent better than the students in the round robin group in oral reading. (*Research on Effective Reading Instruction K-4*, Margaret Moustafa)

Why Move Away From Round-Robin Reading?

1. It provides students with an inaccurate view of reading.
2. It can potentially cause faulty reading habits instead of effective reading strategies.
3. It can cause unnecessary subvocalizations.
4. It can cause inattentive behaviors, leading to discipline problems.
5. It can work against all students developing to their full potential.
6. It consumes valuable class time that could be spent on other meaningful activities.
7. It can be a source of anxiety and embarrassment for students.
8. It can hamper listening comprehension.

Good-bye Round Robin: 25 Effective Oral Reading Strategies, Michael F. Opitz and Timothy V. Rasinski

To boost the time students read in class, ditch round-robin reading and add other oral reading practices to your repertoire. What follows is a list of favorites. For a full explanation of 25 oral-reading strategies and how teachers can use oral reading to improve comprehension for students, read *Good-bye Round Robin: 25 Effective Oral Reading Strategies* by Michael F. Opitz and Timothy V. Rasinski. For each, the teacher moves from student to student, listening to individuals read: observing, probing, and taking notes.

Round-Robin Alternatives to Maximize Time Students Read in School

Whisper Reading – Each student in the group whispers the passages independently.

Partner Choral Reading – Read together, side by side, the book placed between the partners.

Echo Reading – One partner reads a line. The other partner repeats the line.

Expressive Reading – One partner reads a chunk. The other reads the chunk with expression.

Part Reading – One partner reads the characters' parts in voices. The other partner reads the narrator's parts.

Taking Turns – One partner reads a sentence, paragraph or page. The other reads the next sentence, paragraph or page.

Silent Reading – Partners read silently, sitting near one another so that they can ask each other for help when they need it.

Stop and Think Reading or Say Something Reading – Partners divide the reading into sections. They both read the section silently or aloud and then take turns saying something. Students say what they are thinking to their partner: a personal connection, a question, something noticed, a connection to another book or movie . . . Say or ask something! Students can read this way in groups with a teacher, as well.

Coding – Nonfiction text copy available to each child. Students read paragraph by paragraph coding the text silently. Then, groups or partners share their codes. For example, W = wonder about, I = very important, * = know that, L = learned something new, C = connection. Students begin by coding every sentence. Eventually students code naturally in their heads and mark places to discuss with sticky notes.

Rehearsal Reading – The teacher assigns an individual page or part to each child. Each child in the group (of 4-6) takes time to practice that reading independently – approximately 3 times – while teacher works with other children. The student try using known strategies first and then asks the teacher. The idea is to come back to group and read the part fluently – even names. When each person reads his/her part, the whole story or article is read aloud expressively and each reader feels successful.

“The small group in today’s classroom should not look, sound, or feel like the small group of yesterday.”
Where Have All the Bluebirds Gone? How to Soar with Flexible Grouping