

Interactive Shared Reading Experiences for Students of All Ages

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Abstract

Interactive shared reading experiences establish literacy-rich learning environments among PreK-12 students of all ages. The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of interactive shared reading experiences for younger and older students. This article also describes evidence- and literature-based recommendations for classroom teachers to assist with the planning and implementing successful interactive shared reading experiences in their classrooms.

Keywords: instructional technique, interactive shared reading, older students, younger students

Interactive Shared Reading Experiences for Students of All Ages

Interactive shared reading was originally conceptualized in the late 1970s to support young students with reading texts independently (Holdaway, 1979). Initially, interactive shared reading experiences emulated the bedtime story cycle shared between young children and their parents by affording a class of young students the same benefits, comfort, and security that accompany repeated readings of engaging works of literature (Holdaway, 1982). In today's classrooms, interactive shared reading experiences help PreK-12 classroom teacher establish literacy-rich learning environments that make reading a natural and successful process among students of all ages, particularly students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

High-quality interactive shared reading experiences are planned class activities with specific instructional aims (Chaparro-Moreno, Reali, & Maldonado-Carreño, 2017). Instructional aims include the development of language skills through phonemic awareness tasks (Ukrainetz et al., 2000), learning rimes (Gill, 2006), vocabulary growth exercises (Toub et al., 2018), and the teaching of graphic symbol combinations to students who have limited speech capabilities (Tönsing, Dada, & Alant, 2014). Additionally, instructional aims may be more comprehension-focused and attempt to strengthen students' thinking around concepts and words through class discussions that involve associations, comparisons, explanations, and summarizations (Gonzalez et al., 2014).

Interactive shared reading experiences are also a vital component of the gradual release of responsibility instructional framework (Burkins & Croft, 2010). Within this instructional framework, interactive shared reading experiences occur directly after a teacher-directed read aloud and just before guided instruction. Interactive shared reading experiences provide all students with access to a shared text by incorporating unison reading tasks led by an experienced,

fluent reader (Burkins & Yaris, 2016) who is typically the classroom teacher (Parkes, 2000). During interactive shared reading experiences, the classroom teacher also demonstrates and models reading processes and strategies (Burkins & Croft, 2010) and encourages engagement and participation among all students (Justice & Pence, 2005).

Interactive Shared Reading Experiences with Younger Students

Since its inception, interactive shared reading has primarily been referred to as an effective instructional technique among beginning readers within:

- preschool settings (Gonzalez et al., 2014; Pentimonti et al., 2012; Piasta, Justice, McGinty, & Kaderavek, 2012; Zucker, Cabell, Justice, Pentimonti, & Kaderavek, 2013);
- the elementary grade levels (Dougherty Stahl, 2012; Gill & Islam, 2011; Kesler, 2010); and
- young children with autism spectrum disorder (Kim, Rispoli, Lory, Gregori, & Brodhead, 2018; Mucchetti, 2013).

Much literature has demonstrated a myriad of benefits associated with implementing interactive shared reading experiences among younger students, including improved vocabulary (Coyne, Simmons, Kame'enui, & Stoolmiller, 2004), greater phonemic awareness (Ukrainetz, Cooney, Dyer, Kysar, & Harris, 2000), and deeper understandings about concepts of print (Fisher, 1991). Furthermore, literature has suggested that interactive shared reading experiences provide younger students with the necessary support to derive meaning from a text and coordinate semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic cueing systems (Weaver, 1988).

Interactive Shared Reading Experiences with Older Students

Among older students at the middle and high school levels, Allen (2002) noted that interactive shared reading experiences provide appropriate support for students to “learn how to

negotiate increasingly difficult and specialized texts” (p. 8). According to Fisher and Frey (2016), interactive shared reading experiences in middle and high school classrooms create “an instructional bridge between the teacher-directed read aloud and student-directed independent reading” (p. 45). However, few empirical studies have examined use of interactive shared reading experiences in middle and high school classrooms among all students (Gallagher, 2012) or as an instructional intervention for students with special need for language (Enguñados & Ruiz, 2008) and learning (Ruppar, Afacan, Yang, & Pickett, 2017). Similarly, only a modest amount of professional literature has described effective classroom practices for implementing interactive shared reading experiences within middle and high school classrooms (Allen, 2002; Apitz, Ruppar, Roessler, & Pickett, 2017; Bolos, 2012; Fisher & Frey, 2016).

The goal for this article is to provide an instructional resource for PreK-12 classroom teachers of all grade levels. This instructional resource offers evidence- and literature-based recommendations for planning and implementing successful interactive shared reading experiences. More importantly, this instructional resource reinforces well-documented classroom practices for interactive shared reading experiences among younger students and contributes to the limited amount of related literature for older students.

Planning and Implementing Interactive Shared Reading Experiences

Before the Interactive Shared Reading Experience

Once a classroom teacher has established a clear instructional aim, they must carefully select a text. Text selections must be appropriate for the instruction aim (Fisher & Frey, 2016) and consider any specialized student needs (Mucchetti, 2013). For example, texts with simplified wording and visual supports may offer necessary text adaptations for students who have exceptionalities. The classroom teacher must also ensure that selected texts secure the

interests of students by broadening their viewpoints, eliciting emotional responses, encouraging personal connections, or using rich language (Allen, 2002). Text selections play a vital role in interactive shared reading experiences because they serve as a springboard to discourse that takes place before, during, and after readings (Gosen, Berenst, & de Glopper, 2013; Hindman, Wasik, & Erhart, 2012; Kim et al., 2018; Zucker et al., 2013). Subsequently, the classroom teacher must also make plans to orchestrate discourse in ways that enhance student learning. Depending upon the instructional aim, planned orchestrations may include discussions topics that draw upon students' lower- or higher-level cognitive skills or questioning that encourages basic or advanced responses from students (Zucker et al., 2013).

During the Interactive Shared Reading Experience

An interactive shared reading experience is a collaborative reading of a selected text between a responsive classroom teacher and their students (Allen, 2002; Fisher & Frey, 2016; Parkes, 2002). All participants must have access to the text and remain engaged throughout the entire interactive shared reading experience. Prior to the reading of the text, the classroom teacher may orient students with the text to acquaint them with the text or establish context for the interactive shared reading experience (Weaver, 2002). For example, the classroom teacher may lead a discussion related to text features, such as the cover, illustrations, and title. The classroom teacher may also access students' prior knowledge or engage students in making predictions to prepare them for the reading of the text.

A classroom teacher may structure the reading of the text during an interactive shared reading experience in many ways. To illustrate, the classroom teacher may read the text aloud as students follow along orally or silently, or the classroom teacher and students may read the text aloud together (Weaver, 2002). During the reading of the text, a number of interactions may

take place (see Table 1). The classroom teacher may also manipulate the text to demonstrate specific concepts in a low-tech manner with items, such as highlighting tape, a pocket chart with sentence strips, or poster board (Gill & Islam, 2011). Alternatively, the classroom teacher may have access to technology tools and take a more high-tech approach with text manipulations using a document camera or interactive whiteboard.

Table 1

Interactions between the Classroom Teacher and Students during the Reading of a Text

Interactions	Brief Descriptions
Make Connections	While reading, the classroom teacher stops reading and asks students to visualize aspects of the text (Parkes, 2002). The classroom teacher then guides students to make connections between text visualizations and their personal experiences, other texts, and the world.
Predicting	During a text reading, the classroom teacher pauses at pre-identified places in the text to create opportunities for students to anticipate content (Allen, 2002; Parkes, 2002).
Questioning	Throughout the reading of a text, the classroom teacher poses a variety of question types for students to answer, such as closed- and open-ended or literal and inferential (Zucker et al., 2013).
Text Annotations	As the classroom teacher reads, students make text annotations, such as labeling pictures (Justice & Pence, 2005)

	or making notations that highlight unknown phrases or words, pose questions, or signify key ideas (Fisher & Frey, 2016).
Text Manipulations	While reading, the classroom teacher demonstrates specific concepts in the text with low-tech and high-tech tools (Gill & Islam, 2011). For example, the classroom teacher may use colored highlighter tape to draw students' attention to language elements, such as rhyming or transition words (Parkes, 2002). The classroom teacher may also use a document camera to project high-quality examples of visuals from the text, such as graphs and tables (Fisher & Frey, 2016).
Think-aloud Demonstrations	At specific places in the text, the classroom teacher stops reading and verbalizes questions or statements to model the thinking of a fluent reader (Fisher & Frey, 2016).

After the Interactive Shared Reading Experience

Following the reading of the text, the classroom teacher must provide students with guided learning activities (Allen, 2002). Guiding learning activities provide opportunities for students to construct meaning independently or within a small group of peers around the interactive shared reading experience. For example, students may engage in repeated readings of text in pairs, independently, or within small groups (Parkes, 2002). During repeated readings, students may engage in text discussions, listen to recorded versions of the text, participate in purposeful text-related activities, or reread the text. Students may also engage in word study activities to explore new words encountered in a shared text (Allen, 2002). Word study activities

may focus upon phonics, spelling patterns, or word meanings. Furthermore, the texts read during an interactive shared reading experience serve as valuable models of writing (Weaver, 2002).

Following an interactive shared reading experience, students may work on collaborative or individual pieces of writing that apply concepts or skills from shared texts.

Final Thoughts

Interactive shared reading experiences are a powerful way for PreK-12 classroom teachers to encourage language and literacy development among students of all ages. Through repeated and supported readings of texts, interactive shared reading experiences provide an appropriate amount of teacher scaffolding to guide students towards assuming more independence in their learning. As students gain access to a wide range of challenging and complex texts, they are well positioned to become confident and successful learners.

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