

Improving Reading Achievement: DYAD READING WITH CHALLENGING TEXTS

Lisa Trottier Brown
Utah State University

Bradley R. Wilcox
Brigham Young University

Kathleen A. J. Mohr
Utah State University

Each morning, the third-grade students in Mrs. Brown's classroom hung up their coats and backpacks and picked up their assigned partner reading book bins from the shelves. Each partnership's book bin contained three to five books, a mixture of fiction and non-fiction texts, selected by their teacher. The selected books were two to four grade levels above the current reading level of the lower-scoring student in the pair.

As soon as the Pledge of Allegiance was finished, the partnerships sat side-by-side with their partner and read aloud together from the same book as one partner tracked the words with a finger. These students, along with students in four other classrooms in this Northern Utah school, participated in this paired oral reading practice, known as dyad reading, for 15 minutes per day for 95 school days. During this time, the students' reading comprehension scores increased an average of more than two grade levels.

HISTORY

The practice in which these third graders were engaged is called Dyad Reading. Dyad reading is based on the Neurological Impress Method (NIM), a reading intervention developed by R. G. Heckleman in 1969. NIM was first introduced with an adult reader chorally reading along with a child as the pair

sat side-by-side, sharing the same book. The adult sat slightly behind the student, directing his or her voice toward the student's ear, as the adult tracked the words with a finger. Heckleman found that after 7.5 hours of intervention over six weeks, 24 adolescent reading-disabled students, reading from challenging texts, achieved an average increase of two grade-levels. NIM is a well-known and commonly used intervention that became a staple of fluency research and intervention from the 1960s through the 1980s (Flood, Lapp, & Fisher, 2005). Studies showing the effectiveness of NIM for students from a broad range of ages with various reading difficulties filled the pages of research journals during this time.

In the late 1980s, J. Lloyd Eldredge (1988) introduced NIM with student pairs, creating an intervention that could be used in a whole-class setting. Eldredge and Butterfield (1986) paired 61 struggling second-grade students with strong partner readers, and provided the pairs with texts that were slightly above the struggling reader's independent reading level. They found that, in comparison to a matched control group, the paired readers achieved more than double the growth of the control group in a nine-month period.

Their conclusion was that student-paired oral reading was as effective as the adult-child NIM intervention. Eldredge called this modification of NIM, dyad reading.

The key to the success of dyad reading was in providing a struggling reader with supported access to challenging texts through choral reading with a stronger, more fluent reader. Working with a stronger peer, children were exposed to greater quantities of difficult reading materials. With this support, the struggling reader was able to focus attention on reading with expression and comprehension rather than decoding. The struggling reader experienced greater exposure to frequently used words in difficult text as well as positive experiences with challenging texts. In both NIM and dyad reading, struggling readers hear, see, and say the words in the text, improving sight recognition of words over time (Stahl, 2012).

IMPLEMENTING DYAD READING

Because choice is motivational in reading, children should be allowed to choose from three to five books, both fiction and non-fiction texts, that are at least two grade levels above their current reading level. As reading achievement improves, the level of text challenge should be adjusted to keep students reading at an appropriate text difficulty level.

THE PROCEDURE IS SIMPLE:

Share one book.

Sit side by side.

Use one SMOOTH finger.

Read with two voices.

Keep eyes on words.

Don't go too fast or too slow.

Write down words you don't know.

Have fun!

The child can read with a parent, an older sibling, or a friend who is a strong reader. Read for 15 minutes and then discuss the words that were written down.

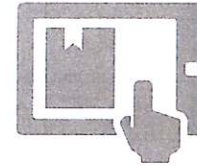
Problem solve together to decode the words the child did not know and determine meanings. Show the child how to decode the words—break the words into syllables, identify root words, prefixes, suffixes, or compound words, and provide child-friendly definitions, emphasizing problem solving and decoding strategies. Show the child how to look up words on the Internet or how to use a dictionary.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND MOTIVATION

Students in this study had positive responses to participating in dyad reading. When responding to the written prompt “What do you like about dyad reading?” student responses included, “You can read with someone and reading with someone is really fun”; “We get a chance to read with our friends and sometimes we find the books very interesting”; and “I like learning new things and learning new words.” When responding to the question, “What don't you like about dyad reading?” typical student responses included, “Sometimes your partner will read too fast or too slow”; “We don't get to choose our partners”; and “Sometimes your partner doesn't want to read a book you want to read.”

Although there were some exceptions, most of the students gave positive responses and said they would like to continue dyad reading.

The teachers involved in the study reported that classroom experiences with paired oral reading were positive because the students had increased social interaction in connection with reading experiences. Comments from parents at end-of-term conferences revealed positive reactions to their children's increased reading scores. Some parents described their children as having an increased interest in reading at home.



OTHER APPLICATIONS OF DYAD READING

Another application of dyad reading to be considered is cross-age tutoring. Students who serve as lead readers to students two to three grades younger have been found to experience positive results from tutoring younger students using books above the younger student's instructional level. The younger students may experience growth in their reading achievement through reading challenging texts with the support of the older student (Topping, Thurston, McGavock, & Conlin, 2012).

The past several years have seen increased research in paired reading and dyad reading applications for English language learners (Almaguer, 2005) and low-income students (Algozie, Marr, Kavel & Dugan, 2009; Ellis, 2009; Klvacek, Wilcox, and Morrison, in process). The process of dyad reading provides English language learners and students from language-poor environments the opportunity to link words they have heard in oral language with the printed form of the word, thus strengthening their recognition of these words in print (Almaguer, 2005; Stahl, 2012). Dyad reading has been found to be an effective strategy for English language learners (ELLs) as it provides a model of good reading expression along with supported exposure to English vocabulary (Almaguer, 2005). Dyad reading can be of particular benefit to ELLs and students at risk in content-area reading, as a stronger reader can provide support for vocabulary and subject area language in subject areas across the curriculum (Almaguer, 2005; Topping, Thurston, McGavock, & Conlin, 2012).

Children can also read a printed text along with an audio recording of the text. As the children follow along with the audio recording, they hear and see the words in the text, building their recognition of the words in print. Children are also given a model of an expert reading the text in a fluent manner. Audiobooks can be found in many public libraries and through online sources.

CONCLUSION

Implementing dyad reading is relatively easy, cost effective, and practical for parents and teachers. Reading in pairs can strengthen both weaker and stronger readers. Dyad reading with texts that challenged students was a powerful contributor to overall reading achievement for the third-grade students who participated in this study. Dyad reading is a practical intervention that can show positive results in a relatively short time.

Grade Level	Guided Reading	DRA2	Utah Core Lexile ²	DIBELS ORF*
K	A	A, 1	BR to 220L	00
	B	2		
	C	3, 4		
1	D	6	220L to 500L	00
	E	8		23
	F	10		
	G	12		
	H	14		
	I	16		
2	J	18	450L to 790L	52
	K	20		72
	L	24		
	M	28		
3	N	30		70
	O	34		86
	P	38		100
4	Q	40	770L to 980L	90
	R			103
	S			115
5	T	50		111
	U			120
	V			130
6	W	60	995L to 1155L	107
	X			109
	Y			120
7+	Z	70		120+

Approximate Text Level Correspondences

DIBELS:

- Beginning
- Middle
- End of Year



*Oral Reading Fluency

²ibid, p. 8.

READING ROUTINE PROCEDURE

(20–30 Minutes)

TIME	<p>Tutoring should be done 20 to 30 minutes daily, three times per week minimum. Typically 8–12 hours of this intervention will increase a student’s fluency. Positive results should begin to occur by the fourth hour of the intervention.</p>
MATERIALS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Texts: Use grade level texts for 1st grade students. Use reading material about two grade levels above the student’s current reading level for 2nd through 6th grade students. The difficulty of the reading material can increase as the student’s fluency increases (see Approximate Text Level Correspondences on page 24). 2. Pocket folder, notebook, and pencil 3. Additional text or passage at student’s current reading level (one minute timed reading) 4. Index cards 3”x 5” 5. Timer
INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURE: Student Reading Aloud With Adult (15 minutes)	<p>State the objective/explanation: “Today we will learn how to read fluently. We will make our reading sound like talking by using good phrasing and expression. This is important because reading with good phrasing and expression can help you remember and understand what you have read.”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The adult and student sit side-by-side. The adult sits slightly behind the student. The student and adult read aloud together from the same text. The adult smoothly tracks the words with one finger while reading. 2. (Note: The adult should read slightly faster than the student’s normal rate. He/she should also read slightly louder with good phrasing and expression.) Occasionally during each session, the adult should lower the volume of his/her voice so that the student’s voice leads the reading. 3. For only a few minutes each session, the adult should read at his/her normal pace so that the student is being pulled along to higher rates of speed. Do not finish reading at this speed. Return to the original rate of speed before ending the session (see p. 25).
Comprehension (3–5 minutes)	<p>After reading, the adult and student talk about what was read (comprehension).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Narrative Text Questions/Fiction (see p. 32) 2. Informational Text Questions/Nonfiction (see p. 33) 3. Reciprocal Teaching: Strategies Good Readers Use (see p. 34)

(continued next page)

Vocabulary (3–5 minutes)	<p>The adult finds two difficult words from the text and talks about them using student- friendly descriptions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The student writes words, descriptions, sentences, and makes a quick sketch in his/her notebook (see p. 36). 2. The adult and student review previous vocabulary words frequently.
Sight Words (3–5 minutes)	<p>The student practices the grade level sight word list, one column at a time until the page is mastered.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Goal: Read grade level sight words in approximately one minute, with 95 percent or better accuracy by the end of the grade level (see p. 38). 2. The adult can make flashcards of missed words for the student to practice.
Fluency Timed Reading (1 minute)	<p>The student reads (new material) for one minute from a passage or a text on his/her current reading level.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The adult times the student for one minute, counts the total words read, subtracts errors, and has the student chart the words correct per minute (WCPM) (see p. 50). 2. The student retells the information read and practices reading the passage a few times with expression, accuracy, rate, and smoothness (EARS).

Note: DECODING WORDS	➔ Say the letter sounds in the word.	➔ Blend the sounds together in sequence.	➔ Use parts of the word you know to decode the word (prefixes, suffixes, phonograms/ little words within the bigger word).	➔ For multisyllabic words, break the word into syllables by identifying vowels and vowel combinations and identify silent /e/ if present.	➔ After three attempts, tell the student the word and ask the student to reread the sentence.
	1	2	3	4	5

³Robert G. Heckelman. "A Neurological-Impress Method of Remedial-Reading Instruction," *Intervention in School and Clinic*, Vol. 4, No. 4, June 1969, pp. 277–282. doi:10.1177/105345126900400406.

READING ROUTINE TEMPLATE

(20–30 Minutes)

Reading Component	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
Student Reading Aloud With Adult (15 minutes)				
Comprehension (3–5 minutes)	<input type="checkbox"/> minimal <input type="checkbox"/> partial <input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> minimal <input type="checkbox"/> partial <input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> minimal <input type="checkbox"/> partial <input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> minimal <input type="checkbox"/> partial <input type="checkbox"/> excellent
Vocabulary/ Writing (3–5 minutes) <i>Use two challenging or difficult words.</i>				
Sight Words (3–5 minutes)				
Fluency—Timed Reading (1 minute)	WCPM*:	WCPM*:	WCPM*:	WCPM*:
Notes:				







*words correct per minute

.....
Note: Decoding words

- ▶ Say the letter sounds in the word.
- ▶ Blend the sounds together in sequence.
- ▶ Use parts of the word you know to decode the word (prefixes, suffixes, phonograms/little words within the bigger word).
- ▶ For multisyllabic words, break the word into syllables by identifying vowels and vowel combinations and identify silent /e/ if present.
- ▶ After three attempts, tell the student the word and ask the student to reread the sentence.

⁴ibid, pp. 277–282.

READING ROUTINE CUE CARD

READING ROUTINE	
1. The student and adult read text aloud together. (15 minutes) page 29	
2. Comprehension (3–5 minutes) pages 32 or 33 (The adult and the student talk about the text/questions.)	
3. Vocabulary (3–5 minutes) page 36 (The adult finds two difficult words to discuss with the student.)	
4. Sight Words (3–5 minutes) page 38 (The adult and the student practice grade level sight word list.)	
5. Fluency—Timed Reading (1 minute) page 48 Words correct per minute (WCPM)	
6. Celebrate!	

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NARRATIVE TEXT COMPREHENSION

GUIDED READING LEVELS D–Z (1st through 6th Grades)

MATERIALS:

- ▶ *Building Readers—
A Parent's Guide*
- ▶ Reading Routine Template
- ▶ Narrative student text

3–5
minutes

ACTIVITY:

If the student read narrative/fiction text, use the questions below. The student should cite evidence from the text to support answers.

1. What is the main setting or other settings in the text?
2. Name the main character and some secondary characters in the text.
3. What are some problems and/or solutions in the text?
4. Who is telling the story (perspective)?
5. What does the author want us to understand?
6. Retell the beginning, middle, and end of the story.

TIP: The adult always asks the student to cite evidence from the text.

RECORD:

The adult checks off “Comprehension” on the Reading Routine Template, and marks “minimal, partial, or excellent.”

INFORMATIONAL TEXT COMPREHENSION

GUIDED READING LEVELS D–Z (1st through 6th Grades)

MATERIALS:

- ▶ *Building Readers—A Parent’s Guide*
- ▶ Reading Routine Template
- ▶ Informational student text



ACTIVITY:

If the student read informational/nonfiction text, use these questions. The student should cite evidence from the text to support answers.

1. What is the topic or main idea of the text?
2. What key details support the topic or main idea of the text?
3. Use the question words **who, what, where, when, why, how, or what if.**
4. What new words or ideas did you learn?
5. Retell main parts of the text using text features (pictures, graphs, charts, etc.)
6. Give a one sentence summary of the text using many details.

TIP: The adult always asks the student to cite evidence from the text.

RECORD:

The adult checks off “Comprehension” on the Reading Routine Template, and marks “minimal, partial, or excellent.”

VOCABULARY ACTIVITY


MATERIALS:

- ▶ *Building Readers—A Parent’s Guide*
- ▶ Reading Routine Template
- ▶ Student text
- ▶ Student notebook

ACTIVITIES:

1. The adult and student review the previous session’s vocabulary words.
2. The adult chooses two (2) challenging or difficult words from the text the student just read.
3. The 2nd through 6th grade student can draw the four-square diagram below in his/her notebook.
4. **The adult will need to draw the four-square diagram and provide extensive support for the 1st grade student.**

3–5
minutes

Word: elated	
1. Write the word: <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.2em;">elated</p>	2. Write a student-friendly description: <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.2em;">extremely happy</p>
3. Write a meaningful sentence. <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.2em;">I was elated when I found out I got an “A” on my mathematics test!</p>	4. Draw a simple diagram or picture. <div style="text-align: right; margin-top: 10px;">  </div>
Comments/Mastery: <i>Child understands this word/remembers it well.</i>	

TIP: The adult should use a student-friendly description of challenging or difficult words. Dictionary definitions are often difficult for students to understand.

RECORD:

The adult checks off “Vocabulary” on the Reading Routine Template.

FLUENCY ACTIVITY

GUIDED READING LEVELS D–Z (1st through 6th Grades)

MATERIALS:

- ▶ Additional text or passage on student’s current reading level
- ▶ Timer
- ▶ Movin’ On Up Chart
- ▶ Oral Reading Chart
- ▶ Reading Routine Template



*Fluency:

E	EXPRESSION
A	ACCURACY
R	RATE
S	SMOOTHNESS

ACTIVITIES:

1. The student reads new material for one minute from a passage or a text on his/her current reading level.
2. The adult times the student for one minute, counts the total words read, subtracts errors, and has the student chart the words correct per minute (WCPM) (see p. 50).
3. The student retells the information read, and practices reading the passage a few times with expression, accuracy, rate, and smoothness (EARS).*
4. The student colors in the total words correct per minute (WCPM) on the Oral Reading Chart by subtracting the errors from the total words read.

TIP: To improve fluency, use the Echo reading method (*I, We, You*):

- ▶ The adult models fluent reading for the student using expression, accuracy, rate and smoothness on two or three difficult sentences.
- ▶ The adult and the student read the two or three difficult sentences together several times.
- ▶ The student reads the two or three difficult sentences alone.

RECORD:

The student charts the WCPM (see p. 50), and the adult checks off “Fluency” on the Reading Routine Template.

MOVIN' ON UP CHART

When is it time to move up a level?

Grade	Level	WCPM
1	D	10
1	E	18
1	F	26
1	G	34
1	H	42
1	I	47
<hr/>		
2	J	58
2	K	68
2	L	78
2	M	87
<hr/>		
3	N	91
3	O	95
3	P	100

Grade	Level	WCPM
4	Q	104
4	R	108
4	S	112
4	T	115
<hr/>		
5	U	120
5	V	125
5	W	130
<hr/>		
6	X	135
6	Y	140
6	Z	145

1. Count the number of words the student read and subtract the errors.
2. When the student has reached the WCPM guided reading level goal at least three times on three separate passages, the adult can move the student up one guided reading level.

ORAL READING CHART

Name: _____

130									
125									
120									
115									
110									
105									
100									
95									
90									
85									
80									
75									
70									
65									
60									
55									
50									
45									
40									
35									
30									
25									
20									
15									
10									
5									
Date									