

COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY GUIDES

Grades K-6

Read Alouds | Shared Reading | Small Group Reading
Instruction | Vocabulary | Fluency | Writing | Phonological Awareness |
Phonics | Oral Language | Independent Reading

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OVERVIEW

Read Aloud is a strategy in which a teacher sets aside time to read orally to students on a consistent basis from texts above their independent reading level but at their listening level.

We read aloud because it is pleasurable and invites visualization and imagination. It supports reading and writing lessons, is relevant to all curriculum, coaches students so they can be successful in independent and small group reading. While reading aloud, the teacher models thinking processes and also familiarizes students with text structures and genres.

Read aloud, as part of the gradual release of responsibility, feeds naturally into shared, guided, independent reading and book clubs as teachers demonstrate for students how the reading process works (Burkins & Croft, 2010).

As a natural extension of teacher read alouds, students can use read alouds to practice their own fluency, expression and prosody.

CURRICULUM CORRELATIONS

While reading aloud has the potential to correlate to several Organizing Ideas, for this resource the ones with the strongest correlation are Comprehension, Oral Language, Vocabulary and Text Forms and Structures.

Comprehension Organizing Idea:

Text comprehension is supported by applying varied strategies and processes and by considering both particular contexts and universal themes.

- **Kindergarten Learning Outcome:** Children demonstrate understandings of messages communicated in texts.
- **Grade 1 Learning Outcome:** Students investigate meaning communicated in texts.
- **Grade 2 Learning Outcome:** Students examine and apply a variety of processes to comprehend texts.
- **Grade 3 Learning Outcome:** Students analyze text and make connections to personal experiences to support meaning.

- **Grade 4 Learning Outcome:** Students investigate strategies and connections that support text comprehension.
- **Grade 5 Learning Outcome:** Students analyze information, contexts, and perspectives using a variety of comprehension strategies.
- **Grade 6 Learning Outcome:** Students interpret and respond to texts through application of comprehension strategies.

Oral Language Organizing Idea:

Listening and speaking form the foundation for literacy development and improve communication, collaboration, and respectful mutual understanding.

- **Kindergarten Learning Outcome:** Children explore listening and speaking skills through a variety of literacy experiences.
- **Grade 1 Learning Outcome:** Students develop listening and speaking skills through sharing stories and information.
- **Grade 2 Learning Outcome:** Students examine and adjust listening and speaking to communicate effectively.
- **Grade 3 Learning Outcome:** Students examine and apply listening and speaking skills, processes, or strategies in a variety of formal and informal interactions.
- **Grade 4 Learning Outcome:** Students examine and demonstrate how listening and speaking support connections and clarify understandings.



- **Grade 5 Learning Outcome:** Students investigate how oral language can be designed to communicate ideas and information.
- **Grade 6 Learning Outcome:** Students connect the quality and efficacy of oral communication to oral language skills.

Vocabulary Organizing Idea:

Communication and comprehension are improved by understanding word meaning and structures.

- **Kindergarten Learning Outcome:** Children develop vocabulary through a variety of literacy experiences.
- **Grade 1 Learning Outcome:** Students analyze word formation and meaning.
- **Grade 2 Learning Outcome:** Students expand vocabulary by connecting morphemes and words to their meanings.
- **Grade 3 Learning Outcome:** Students analyze new words and morphemes to enhance vocabulary.
- **Grade 4 Learning Outcome:** Students expand vocabulary and analyze morphemes to communicate in multiple contexts.
- **Grade 5 Learning Outcome:** Students analyze how knowledge of vocabulary supports meanings and use of language.
- **Grade 6 Learning Outcome:** Students evaluate how vocabulary enhances communication and provides clarity.

Fluency Organizing Idea:

Comprehension and literary appreciation are improved by the ability to read a range of texts accurately, automatically, and with expression.

- **Kindergarten Learning Outcome:** Children recognize some letters and words with speed and accuracy
- **Grade 1 Learning Outcome:** Students apply accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression in the development of fluency.
- **Grade 2 Learning Outcome:** Students apply fluency strategies while reading.

- **Grade 3 Learning Outcome:** Students apply fluency strategies and develop reading comprehension.
- **Grade 4 Learning Outcome:** Students enhance fluency to refine comprehension and proficient reading.

Text Forms and Structures Organizing Idea:

Identifying and applying text forms and structures improves understanding of content, literary style, and our rich language traditions.

- **Kindergarten Learning Outcome:** Children explore how messages can be organized.
- **Grade 1 Learning Outcome:** Students examine ways that messages can be organized and presented for different purposes.
- **Grade 2 Learning Outcome:** Students explain how the organization of ideas and information within texts can support the purpose or meaning of messages.
- **Grade 3 Learning Outcome:** Students relate the form and structure of texts to the communication of ideas and information.
- **Grade 4 Learning Outcome:** Students examine how the form and structure of texts can support the communication of ideas and information.
- **Grade 5 Learning Outcome:** Students examine how genres, forms, and structures support and enhance communication.
- **Grade 6 Learning Outcome:** Students analyze how text form and structure clarify information and support connecting with self, others and the world.

COMPELLING REASONS TO READ ALOUD

From Maria Walther (2019):

- Promotes reading
- Fosters a strong sense of community
- Celebrates the written (and illustrated) word
- Builds a foundation for future learning
- Expands vocabulary
- Showcases a proficient reader's strategy use
- Supports budding writers
- Sparks collaborative conversations
- Encourages perspective-taking and empathy
- Opens windows to other worlds

From Robin Bright (2021):

- Models fluent reading at an appropriate rate, with expression and attention to punctuation
- Teaches good listening skills

KEY INSTRUCTIONAL COMPONENTS

Sometimes we read aloud for the sheer joy of it. Often we will be reading aloud for instructional purposes through an interactive read aloud. An interactive read aloud is a time in which the teacher reads the text aloud with a clear instructional purpose modeling comprehension and the students are engaged in conversations while trying out the modeled strategies.

A mini lesson in reading is the perfect time to use an interactive read aloud. Teachers may use a text they are reading for the first time, or you may choose to revisit part of text that was used in a previous read aloud. It is important that the gradual release of responsibility is used during this time with the teacher modeling and the students having time for guided practice and engaging in discussions.

The mini lesson key features are:

Teaching point - the teacher reminds students of the learning they have been doing in reading then the teacher explicitly tells them what they will be learning that day, for example, "Today I want to teach you that good readers make predictions about what will happen next/what they will learn."

Teach - the teacher will model strategy use, decoding, etc.

Guided Practice - the students will try out what the teacher has been modeling. They will do this as the teacher continues reading aloud the text, stopping periodically for the students to engage in discussions and share their use of the strategy.

Link - to conclude the mini lesson the teacher restates the teaching point and links what the students have learned to their future reading.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Think Alouds

- Thinking aloud during a read aloud is a terrific strategy to use to make explicit what goes on in the head of a proficient reader as they read. Ness (2018) describes it as, "...a teaching strategy in which a proficient reader (in this case the teacher) verbally reports or models his or her thinking as her or she approaches the text. Think alouds require the reader to stop periodically, to reflect on how a text is being processed and understood, and to relate orally what reading strategies are being employed" (p. 6).
- Think alouds are purposeful, a metacognitive tool, a way to build independent reading skills, applicable in all contexts and content (Ness, 2018).

Anchor Charts

- An anchor chart is a visual reminder of the modeling, thinking aloud, and active work students have done in an interactive read aloud. It is best to create an anchor chart with your students.
- In an anchor chart you will want to include:
- Heading - this makes clear what the chart is about and grabs attention.
- Drawing - simple line drawings, stick people, and sketches are all you need. You don't want to distract from the content of the chart.
- Content - this explicitly states what you have taught students in student friendly language. Students should be able to easily read and understand the content.

BOOK CHOICE

There are so many wonderful texts to choose from, so how do you make a choice? Here are some suggestions to help guide you:

- Choose texts that you and your students enjoy – favourite authors, series, topics.
- Ensure you have a variety of genres over the course of the year. You can take this opportunity to discuss text forms and structures.
- Choose texts with rich language as that promotes interest and develops vocabulary.
- Ensure that you read texts that represent diversity. Rudine Sims Bishop (1990) has said, “Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of a larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books.”
- Picture books aren’t just for our younger students, they are good for all ages. Choose books with interesting, engaging illustrations.
- Choose texts with challenging topics. You never know who needs that book at that moment.
- For younger students, choose books with rhyme, rhythm, and repetition.
- Choose books with a variety of text characteristics.

A FEW THOUGHTS FROM EDUCATIONAL EXPERTS:

- A read aloud should be a joyful celebration for all. For you, your students, and indirectly, for the author and illustrator who toiled over each word and every image that lies on and between the covers of the book. –Maria Walther

- Reading aloud and talking about what we’re reading sharpens children’s brains. It helps develop their ability to concentrate at length, to solve problems logically, and to express themselves more easily and clearly. – Mem Fox
- Simply inviting children to talk during interactive read-alouds doesn’t provide the needed learning boost. It’s the close reading and textual analysis – deep, intentional conversation about the text (Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Fountas & Pinnell, 2006; 2012; Serravallo, 2012; and Shanahan, 2012)—that makes the difference. Scholastic Comprehension Clubs, Research Paper, Fountas & Pinnell, 2012



DESIGNERS OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TIPS

- Don't limit yourself to reading aloud only during one part of your day, or your ELAL time. Use read alouds across content areas.
- If possible, gather students in a space together out of their desks. You want this to be an inviting area.
- Older children like adventures and mysteries where they can see themselves as characters.
- The illustrations are an essential part of the experience for younger children. Position yourself for maximum visibility so students can orient themselves in the context of the story and clarify their understanding as you read. Preferably, students should be able to see the image while you read rather than a brief look before you turn the page.
- You don't have to be perfect. You can make a mistake. You can wonder about the meaning of certain words. You can reread a sentence if need be.
- Be really strategic about the reading behaviours you plan to model for your students.
- You could read the same short book for different mini-lessons. One time you read it for enjoyment, then for character development, etc.

SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE...

- Teacher has pre-read the book. Has a plan for what to highlight, where to pause and what the key learning for the day will be – particular concept, strategy
- Teacher uses pre-reading strategies – activating background knowledge, creating a hook/opener, making predictions, setting a purpose for listening
- Expressive reading of the story – students are visibly engaged
- There are interactive moments during the read aloud: students turn and talk, share thoughts, ask questions, make observations, react to text, predict, jump in on the choral parts, etc.
- Time is spent focusing in on key vocabulary
- There is evidence of deeper thinking about texts

CHALLENGES

- Don't stop too often during interactive read aloud. You can overdo it. Preplan spots with intention.
- Never be afraid to abandon a book if it isn't the spellbinding tale you were hoping for. You can discuss why the class lost interest and model what real readers do in these situations.
- If you have a child that struggles to sit still, ask them to hold the book. It gives them something to focus on and they will have to concentrate to turn the pages. Older students may have a copy to follow along in.

PLANNING A THINK ALOUD

Molly Ness in her book *Think Big with Think Alouds* (2018), describes a three-step planning process for creating a think aloud during interactive read aloud. The steps are as follows:

1. Identify juicy stopping points. Use sticky notes to mark spots and record your thinking. The spots should offer a place to model a comprehension strategy or to work out difficulty, or a place for students to try out the work.
2. Determine where and when to think aloud. Narrow down your planned stopping points to a manageable number. Remember you don't want to overwhelm students by stopping too often.
3. Write a brief script on the spots you plan to think aloud in.

A great resource for ideas of strategies to model is Serravallo's *The Reading Strategies Book 2.0: Your Research-Based Guide to Developing Skilled Readers*.

SEE IT IN ACTION



[An Interactive Non-fiction Gr 2 Read Aloud – Bugs](#)
SRVUSDEmpowerUs, Oct. 28, 2011

[Building Better Readers with Scaffolded Read Alouds](#)
Edutopia, Oct. 27, 2023

[Repeated Interactive Read Aloud in Kindergarten](#)
Rick Stevens, July 9, 2013

RESOURCES

Blog Post – a step by step approach to Interactive Read Alouds and how they connect to a Reading Workshop structure: <http://www.teachingandtapas.com/2013/04/interactive-readaloud-in-six-easy-steps.html>

Bright, R. (2021). *Sometimes reading is hard: Using decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies to inspire fluent, passionate lifelong readers*. Markham, ON: Pembroke Publishers.

Johnson, P. & Keier, K. (2010). *Catching readers before they fall: Supporting readers who struggle, K-4*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse, Publishers.

Layne, S. L. (2015). *In defense of read-aloud: Sustaining best practice*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse, Publishers.

Ness, M. (2018). *Think big with think alouds: A three-step planning process that develops strategic readers, grades K-5*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Literacy.

Serravallo, J. (2024). *Teaching reading across the day: Methods and structures for engaging, explicit instruction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Literacy.

Serravallo, J. (2023). *The reading strategies book 2.0: Your research-based guide to developing skilled readers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Walther, M. (2019). *The ramped-up read aloud: What to notice as you turn the page*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Literacy.

Walther, M. (2024). *More ramped-up read alouds: Building knowledge and boosting comprehension*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Literacy.

