Repeated Reading

Why Is This Strategy Useful?

Repeated reading (RR) is a supplemental reading program used to improve reading fluency. Fluent reading is reading in which words are recognized automatically. With automatic word recognition, reading becomes faster, smoother, and more expressive. Students can begin to read silently, which is roughly twice as fast as oral reading. Beginning readers usually do not read fluently, however; for them, reading is often a word-by-word struggle. In RR, children work on reading each text until they are fluent. RR works best with readers who know how to decode some words.

Description of Strategy

RR is a group or individual activity where learners read a text with a fluent reader (e.g., teacher, parent, adult tutor, peer tutor, a cassette tape of an older tutor). Students may be offered the choice to read aloud or silently. This joint reading should help learners understand what they are reading. Teachers and tutors should allow students to ask comprehension questions about the text and provide definitions when needed. Then, learners re-read the text alone until they can read it as fast as the fluent reader did. Teachers can ask students to read the passage repeatedly until they have read it four times or until they reached a rate of at least 85–100 words per minute. Reading can be timed by using a stop watch. Short passages (e.g., 50–200 words) are usually used for RR. Teachers should select texts that are relatively easy for the learner at first; these are followed by progressively more difficult texts. Teachers can use graphing to motivate students by making their progress evident. The basic procedure is to have students read for 1 minute, count the number of words read, and graph the result with a child-friendly graph. To increase students' motivation, teachers should use praise words that refer to students' effort. Teachers may also allow students the choice of high-interest books or articles to make this task more interesting.

Research Evidence

At least one randomized controlled trial showed statistically significant positive effects related to oral fluency of the practiced passage. This study included fourth-, fifth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students with learning disability in reading or at risk for reading failure (i.e., reading at least two grade levels below current placement) who had instructional reading levels at first, second, third, or fourth grade. At least one additional study with a small sample size demonstrated generalization of the skill to similar passages. That study included third-grade students not identified as needing special education services.

Sample Studies Supporting This Strategy


Extensive evidence exists demonstrating the benefits of RR interventions at increasing students’ fluency on intervention passages. Few studies, however, have examined the extent to which repeatedly reading one passage improves students’ reading fluency on similar passages. Using an alternating treatment design, the researchers examined the extent to which two interventions resulted in improvements in students’ fluency on generalization passages. Both interventions
incorporated RR, but one intervention involved students’ reading one passage four times, and
the other involved students’ reading two similar passages twice each. Intervention effects were
evaluated by having students read a generalization passage before and after intervention
implementation. Results indicate that both interventions were effective in increasing students’
reading fluency on generalization passages. For three participants, the RR intervention
produced greater gains in fluency on the generalization passages, while data for the remaining
three participants are inconclusive. Implications of these findings are discussed both for practice
and for better understanding application of the instructional hierarchy to the development of
reading interventions.

reading and question generation intervention on reading achievement. Learning

Research was conducted to ascertain if a combined RR and question-generation intervention
was effective at improving the reading achievement of fourth- through eighth-grade students
who had learning disabilities or who were at risk for reading failure. Students were assigned to
a treatment or control group via a stratified random sampling. Instructional components and
training were based on best practices reported in the literature. Students receiving intervention
significantly improved their reading speed and ability to answer inferential comprehension
questions on passages that were reread. Compared to the control group, students in the
intervention group also made significant gains in oral reading fluency on independent passages.

Additional Resources


Sample Activity

(Source: Developing Reading Fluency, http://www.auburn.edu/~murraba/fluency.html)

Use check sheets for partner readings. With a class of children, pair up readers to respond to one
another. Begin by explaining what you’ll be listening for. Model fluent and nonfluent reading. For example,
show the difference between smooth and choppy reading. Show how expressive readers make their
voices go higher and lower, faster and slower, louder and softer. In each pair, students take turns being
the reader and the listener. The reader reads a selection three times. The listener gives a report after the
second and third readings. All reports are complimentary. No criticism or advice is allowed.