What is a Read Aloud and what is its purpose?

A Read Aloud is reading preselected text aloud to students. Read Alouds are done with purpose and intention and are a critical part of developing student outcomes in a number of content areas. For example, a teacher may intentionally select a text to Read Aloud because it provides a strong example of particular content knowledge, alliteration, rich dialogue, or strong opening or theme sentences. The selected purpose for the Read Aloud comes from student learning data or learning evidence. In other words, if you are noticing a lack of understanding about a concept or technical skill, you could choose to emphasize them through the use of a Read Aloud.

Read Alouds can be brief, sharing as little as a sentence and illustration or a single paragraph. When the teacher is looking for good models to share and discuss with students, they should look for passages that:

- address concepts that fit into curriculum content across disciplines,
- are well-written, especially in terms of how the author(s) announced and supported his/her major points, and
- are strong examples of the element you are wanting to highlight with your student.

One of the major instructional purposes of nonfiction Read Alouds is to provide an opportunity for students to learn science, social studies, mathematics, and other curriculum concepts and vocabulary. Use of the Read Aloud also provides students with modeled and guided practice using strategies for comprehending texts.

Read Alouds should not be confused with Reading Out Loud to students. While Reading Out Loud on a regular basis provides students with the chance to become engaged with a strong piece of literature – to build their love of literacy or to learn more about an area of interest – the Read Aloud is used when the teacher has a particular aspect of skill or concept development in mind. The teacher cannot under value the use of Reading Out Loud to students. However, the teacher also can’t afford to use this strategy as a substitute for the Read Aloud. These are two powerful, yet different strategies with different purposes and outcomes in mind.
What should be consistent about Read Alouds?
How will teachers know when they are effectively and deeply implementing Read Alouds?

Student data should be the consistent starting point when planning for instruction and the learning environment. The teacher always uses student data, along with curriculum outcomes, as a foundation for planning targeted learning experiences for students.

- Carefully chosen texts (sentence, paragraph, short passage) are used that are connected to curricular content and teachable moments.
- The teacher uses a balance of good quality fiction and nonfiction texts.
- The Read Aloud is used with intent to develop vocabulary and background knowledge.
- The teacher uses plenty of expression, adjusting the pace to fit the text (preplan and practice is recommended).
- The teacher uses a variety of genre, including electronic resources, culturally responsive materials, newspaper articles, poetry, etc.
- Students will be able to find and use strong textual examples connected to particular content, vocabulary or skills.

How is the consistent practice of Read Alouds supported in the literature or in research?

- When the Read Aloud from expository and narrative text is consistent and coupled with word analysis and discussion between adult and child(ren), then we can expect vocabulary knowledge to increase. Moreover, these benefits persist beyond the age when children are capable of reading independently. (Cunningham, 2005)
- Reading aloud serves to “reassure, entertain, inform, explain, arouse curiosity and inspire our kids.” (Trelease, 2006)
- Reading aloud to children is a simple and research-proven way to motivate children of all ages to become readers. When thinking about the struggling readers, however, the teacher also needs to consider what they are reading aloud. Reading aloud matters to motivation, and what is read aloud may really matter to struggling readers. (Cunningham and Allington, 2007)
What does the teacher do or who can they talk to for support with Read Alouds?

- Other teachers in their school
- Talk to the school’s teacher librarian
- The staff development teams
- The school’s administrative team
- The Literacy for Life Portal
- Professional Reading
- Read Aloud Log
- Defining and Differentiating the Alouds
- Tips for Reading Aloud
- 3 Alouds Checklist
- Resources (see below)

What evidence will the teacher have that Read Alouds are making a difference in student learning outcomes?

- Students use new vocabulary and information in their own writing and speaking.
- Students’ fluency, comprehension, and background knowledge steadily improve after consistent modeling.
- Students choose books teachers have read aloud.
- Students are able to provide or share strong examples of texts containing particular concepts, vocabulary or skills previously modelled by the teacher in previous Read Alouds.

Resource List

- Robb Laura. 2010. *The Reading in Middle School: A Strategic Approach To Teaching Reading That Improves Comprehension and Thinking*. 2nd ed. Scholastic