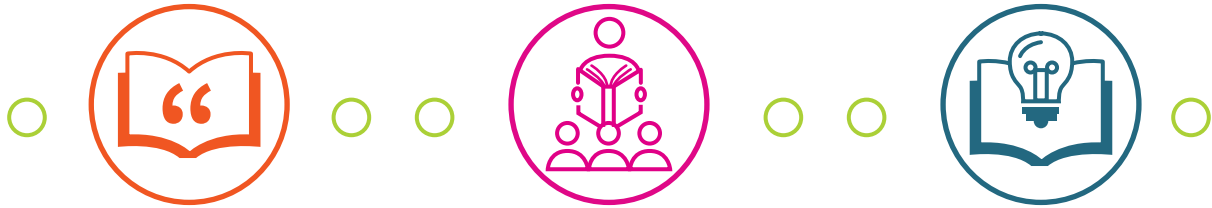# How to Implement Interactive Read-Alouds in an Inclusive Classroom

A read-aloud is one of the most important things an educator can do to build community, create a shared knowledge base for discussion, model fluent, expressive reading, and reinforce the idea of reading for pleasure.

During a read-aloud, the educator reads a carefully selected book to the students, and involves them in asking questions, making predictions, defining vocabulary, and exploring various reading strategies. All students should be engaged in the read-aloud, as this experience enables every child to feel part of the community, to access content they might not access on their own, and to share the enjoyment of reading.

The book selected for the read-aloud should be one that students would find too difficult to read independently, and that allows the educator to introduce new topics or reading strategies to the students.

Stage 1: Before Reading

Before beginning to read, ensure that all students are seated so they are able to see the book clearly. Consider the needs of each student (i.e., students with LDs related to attention should sit close to the teacher, or may be encouraged to help turn the pages of the book).

Before reading, it is very important to identify vocabulary that may be new to most children as well as words that are particularly important to the meaning of the story. Use visual supports such as a word wall.

Select from the following interactive pre-reading activities to help prepare the students to understand the story.

☐ Have students identify the title and author. Depending on the age group and the text, also point out the illustrator, table of contents, index, and glossary.

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- ☐ Discuss the title and cover image. Ask, **"What does this make you think about?"**. This helps the children make connections to their lived experience and prior knowledge. If they do not indicate something that relates to the book, add information yourself by saying, **"The title also makes me think of…"**

- ☐ Ask students to make predictions about what might happen in the story; then ask them what words might be in the story and write them on chart paper. Start by calling on students with LDs, before others have given the most common words.

- ☐ Introduce text features that may be new or difficult.

- ☐ Allow students to ask questions about the text before starting to read. Model a question for them by thinking aloud.

Stage 2: During Reading

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Read the story aloud to students, at a natural pace and using lots of expression. Stop at pre-selected points to emphasize important ideas and enable students to make in-story predictions.

The following interactive reading activities will help engage students during the reading process and teach students important reading strategies. However, do not make this stage cumbersome by pausing too often. Students with LDs related to memory or attention can easily lose track of the story if there are too many pauses. In this stage, the important things are comprehension and enjoyment of the story.

- ☐ Ask open-ended WHAT questions to promote understanding. For example:
  - ▶ **"What do you see in this picture?"**
  - ▶ **"What is going on?"**
  - ▶ **"What do you think will happen next?"**
  - ▶ **"What do you think 'X' might do?"**

- ☐ Sometimes, instead of asking questions, model by using think-aloud strategies. Show how to make connections to prior knowledge or other texts, how to ask questions about the story, and how to use reading strategies.

Stage 3: After Reading

Help students consolidate their understanding of the text and further develop prediction and inferencing skills with these interactive post-reading activities.

☐ Ask students to retell the story in their own words. Starting with one student, others may add to the summary, one after the other.

☐ Immediately after retelling, revisit the predictions that were made during stages **1** and **2**. Compare the predictions to what actually happened.

☐ Review the title and cover image. Ask students if they think it is appropriate for the story, and have them explain their thinking.

☐ Ask open-ended WHY questions, and offer appropriate praise and support. For example:

  ▶ **"Why did 'X' do what they did?"**
  ▶ **"Why did they feel this way?"**
  ▶ **"Why do we see 'X' in this picture?".**

☐ Discuss the vocabulary and text structures that were highlighted during stage 1. Encourage students to use the new vocabulary in their responses.

☐ Ask students to connect the text to their own lives or prior knowledge. For example, **"Tell about something in your own life or from TV, the movies or a book that is like this story."**

☐ Ask students to explain their reactions to the story. For instance, **"What aspects of this story made you want to keep reading it?"** or **"What else might 'X' have done to solve the problem?"**

☐ Add the book to the class library, or make it available to students to read independently.

Some of these activities may be done as a whole group, and others may be better suited to individual work following whole group discussion. Allow students to respond using a variety of media. While some students may write their responses, certain students with LDs may require speech-to-text software. Students with LDs may also benefit from repeating the whole-group activities in an individual response format.

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