INTERACTIVE READ ALOUD

Effective Components & Rehearsals with Teacher Candidates

Abstract

This toolkit provides basic background information on the interactive read aloud (IRA) and essential components of the IRA. This toolkit can be utilized by teacher educators and teacher candidates for rehearsals information.

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What is the Interactive Read Aloud (IRA)?

> The fire of literacy is created by the emotional sparks between a child, a book, and the person reading. It isn't achieved by the book alone, nor by the child alone, nor by the adult who is reading aloud. It is the relationship winding between all three bringing them together in easy harmony. (Mem Fox, *Reading Magic: Why Reading Aloud to Our Children Will Change Their Lives Forever*).

The interaction between the text and the IRA learner sparks the sharing of ideas that lead to enhancing students' language for understanding of new ideas and alternative perspectives (Lennox, 2013). Interactive Read Aloud (IRAs) are a common part of elementary literacy instruction. Interactive Read Alouds provide students with many benefits, such as opportunities to develop listening skills, enrich their vocabulary, understand print concepts, and deepen conceptual knowledge. When teachers facilitate effective Interactive Read Alouds with students, they promote joy and motivation for reading, introduce students to new ideas and topics, model teaching strategies for comprehension, and demonstrate fluent expressive reading (Fisher et al., 2004).

The Difference Between *Interactive Read Aloud* and *Shared Read Aloud*

In IRAs, the teacher has access to the text and leads the students through a more in-depth exploration of the text's meaning. Whereas, in a Shared Reading Experience, both the teacher and the students have access to the text, and each contribute and participate in the reading. Shared Reading mimics lap reading by parents and is an invitation by the adult for young readers to interact with the text through a variety of problem-solving activities (Burkins & Yaris, 2016). The main difference between these two instructional strategies is the level of support provided by the teacher. IRAs are more teacher-directed than a shared reading experience. Please see the graphic below for more information:

READALOUD	SHARED READING
• **Text Level**: More complex than what students can decode and comprehend independently (several levels above most students' reading levels)	• **Text Level**: Slightly more challenging than what students can read independently (1-2 levels above most students' reading levels)
• **Teacher's Role**: Introduces the text, reads all the words, incorporates brief modeling or think-alouds, teaches vocabulary, asks questions about the text	• **Teacher's Role**: Introduces the text, reads the text aloud and invites students to join in when they are ready, has a central teaching point, encourages students to participate, asks questions about the text
• **Student's Role**: Listens and, when invited, discusses the text's meaning with peers and teacher	• **Student's Role**: Initially listens and then joins in the reading as soon as possible, assists with decoding the print, answers questions about the text
• **Teaching Topics**: Fluency (mostly through modeling), comprehension strategies, vocabulary, print concepts	• **Teaching Topics**: Print concepts, letter sounds, sight words, phonics patterns, vocabulary, fluency, performance reading, comprehension strategies

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What are key components of the IRA?

In their study with 25 expert teachers, Fisher et al., (2004) identified seven essential components of an Interactive Read Alouds.

Seven Essential Components of an Interactive Read Aloud	
Essential Component	Teacher Action
Text Selection	● The teachers carefully selected the text based on the interests and needs of the students in their classroom. ● The texts selected were of high-quality children's literature for their Read Alouds.
Preview & Practice	● These teachers also previewed and practiced the text in order to pause effectively and engage in questioning techniques.
Clear Purpose	● The teachers established a clear purpose for reading the book and the lesson.
Model Fluency	● The teachers also provided a clear model of fluent oral reading.
Animation	● The teachers facilitated the Interactive Read Alouds with animation and expression to convey emotions and various moods. They often included facial and hand gestures as well as props.
Questioning	● These expert teachers also demonstrated strategic use of discussion strategies before, during, and after the Interactive read-aloud.
Connection to Independent Reading & Writing	● The teachers displayed their ability to connect the read-aloud to independent reading and writing throughout the school day.

Why is it important to conduct Interactive Read Alouds in the classroom?

Research shows a strong correlation between reading aloud to children and reading performance and language development. Within the early childhood classroom engaging in effective Read Alouds can also help build a reading and writing community (Berkowitz, 2011). Thus, it is important that teacher candidates understand how to create and facilitate an IRA.

The power of the IRA is realized through careful book selection and planning of the Read Aloud. This includes selecting rich texts to share with young students, effective modeling of literacy strategies used during think-alouds, and a caring invitation for students to actively engage with the text (Slay & Morton, 2020).

Teacher Candidate Checklist for Planning an Interactive Read Aloud	
Planning Considerations	Checklist
Managing logistics	● Where will you stop? ● What questions to ask?
Anticipating novice trends	● Have you planned for "follow-up" questions? Consider what misconceptions students may have? ● Do you know where students can engage actively with the text? What will that look like?
Stabilizing content	From the list below, check off what skill work can be reviewed before or after Read Aloud? ☐ Phonics ☐ High-frequency Words ☐ Punctuation ☐ Prosody
Delivery	Please check from the list below, what plan will you use for students to rehearse? ☐ Partner micro-teach ☐ Fish-bowl ☐ Other _____

How can Teacher Educators introduce and facilitate practice-based learning of the IRA with Teacher Candidates?

Practice-based learning opportunities (PLOs) are activities that allows an individual the time and space for deliberate practice, timely feedback, and targeted learning of teacher practices (Driver & Zimmer, 2022). Integrating PLOs in teacher preparation programs is vital as it provides teacher candidates purposeful practice of skills that are important for success in the classroom. The below section will highlight some ways to facilitate PLOs in the context of IRAs.

Rehearsals

Rehearsals are role plays in which one teacher candidate takes on the role of teacher, the other teacher candidates act as students, and the teacher educator becomes the coach. These types of rehearsals are a form of approximation that provides teacher candidates with opportunities to simulate interactive teaching without students present. During the rehearsal, the teacher educator pauses the teacher candidate's teaching to provide in-the-moment feedback. The teacher educator prompts the teacher candidate in a variety of ways to decompose the lesson so they can apply and integrate feedback in their immediate teaching. Coached rehearsals with teacher candidates that involve direct and explicit feedback from teacher educators can be beneficial in supporting teacher candidates as they learn to listen closely to students' responses, elicit students' thinking and questions, and adjust teaching during an interactive read-aloud (IRAs) based on student responses and contributions (Schutz & Danielson, 2019).

Schutz & Danielson (2019) discuss the importance of rehearsal for teacher candidates and identify effective rehearsal moves modeled by teacher educators. Such moves include closed modeling moves/stances which are defined as modeling by the teacher educator for the teacher candidates. Other types of modeling include highlighting where the teacher educator draws specific attention to something the teacher candidate did or said during the lesson rehearsal. The teacher educator explains what specifically happened in a particular moment and how this might affect student learning. Another kind of modeling is contrasting where the teacher educator contrasts typical teaching practices with research evidence-based practices. Inviting moves are defined as eliciting teacher candidate thinking or opening up a problem of practice by the teacher educator asking the teacher candidate to describe their decision-making in order to understand the teaching and give other teacher candidates access to the thinking.

Puzzling

Another kind of modeling move/stance is called puzzling, where the teacher educator positions themself as a learner in an attempt to provide insight into how the teacher candidate's words and actions are being interpreted. In the study conducted by Schutz & Danielson (2019), the coaching move of highlighting was enacted by teacher educators as a way to draw attention to the actions and language used by teacher candidates during the rehearsal that supports student learning. Teacher educators seek clarification from the teacher candidate in order to encourage authentic decision-making during the rehearsal as well as facilitate collaboration by inviting feedback from the other teacher candidates. Additionally, as teacher candidates participate in rehearsed interactive Read Alouds, they are naturally aware of managing the logistics of carrying out the Read Aloud with students.

Mixed Reality Simulation

Another PLO is using mixed-reality simulation (MRS) in teacher preparation programs. The use of simulation is a well-validated approach that has been used in military and medical training and has some traction in the education setting (McGaghie et al., 2010; Driver & Zimmer, 2022). This interactive technology merges artificial intelligence with human knowledge and interaction created by an actor referred to as a simulation specialist. BranchED offers a simulation lab that allows participants to learn and master new skills in an environment that does not put others (e.g., K-12 students) or relationships at risk, by eliciting participant thinking and adjusting to real-time responses during interactive teaching (Dieker et al., 2014). Numerous early literacy scenarios were created and can be found on our Resource Portal. These innovative scenarios allow preservice teachers to practice early literacy skills, decision-making, and receive feedback on their practice through virtual responses.

Appendix A: How to Create an Effective Interactive Read Aloud

Planning for your IRA for the First Read Aloud
Teacher candidates can use these prompts to create an effective and engaging IRA.

1. **Initial Step**: Select a high-quality fiction picture book for this assignment.

   Book selected for Interactive Read Aloud: _____

2. **Rationale for selecting this book:** Why is this book appropriate for use as an Interactive Read Aloud?

3. **Preparation**: Read through the book and add sticky notes to pages to mark the places where you will stop to pose four "on the surface" questions about the plot, characters, setting, or problem.
4. **Record** your "on the surface" questions here:

   1.

   2.

   3.

   4.

5. Select and prepare definitions of 3 keywords that are important to the story but may be challenging for young students.
6. Record keywords and definitions here:

Word	Child-friendly definition
1.	
2.	
3.	

Explicit Instructions on How to Implement your IRA for the First Read Aloud

1. **Read** the book cover to cover.
2. As you read, **stop briefly** to define the 3 selected keywords, pausing to explain what the words mean in child-friendly terms when the word appears in the reading. (e.g., "surround" means all around). Provide examples of how the word can be used in a complete sentence (e.g., "The friends surrounded the birthday cake.")
3. **Talk**: Pause at appropriate places in the reading to ask the questions you planned about the plot, characters, setting, or problem.
4. **Write/Draw**: After the book has been read and discussed, invite students to write about and/or draw a picture that goes along with the questions, or the vocabulary words you have highlighted during the reading. Younger students will usually draw their responses, while older children may write responses or use a combination of drawing and writing.

Planning for your IRA for the Second Read Aloud

1. **Preparation**: Choose specific sections of the book to revisit and read again. Select parts that are central to the theme of the book (the moral or the big message).
2. **Select** sections to reread:

Record page numbers of selected sections:

3. **Prepare** 3 thoughtful "below-the-surface" questions for the sections selected above that emphasize the theme. This type of question helps children think about what the text infers. These questions probe the child's thinking to get to the deeper meanings that the author does not explicitly state.
4. **Record** your "below-the-surface" questions here:

1.
2.
3.

Explicit Instructions on How to Implement your IRA for the Second Read Aloud

1. **Read** the selected parts of the book aloud, pausing to explain and model your thinking. Be sure to introduce the reading by referencing what occurred in Read Aloud #1 and clearly explain to students [1]why you are rereading these chosen parts of the book.
2. **Talk**: Pause during the re-reading at appropriate places to ask the below-the-surface questions you have planned. Encourage the students to respond in complete sentences.

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[1] Adapted from Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs). *Planning for an Interactive Read Aloud with Children in. Pre-K, Kindergarten, or 1st Grade1. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/covid-19/*

3. **Write/Draw**: After the selected sections have been read and discussed, invite students to write about and/or draw a picture that goes along with the theme or lessons learned from the story. Younger students will usually draw their responses, while older children may write responses or use a combination of drawing and writing.

Planning for your IRA for the Third Read Aloud

1. **Choose** specific sections of the book to read again (different than those read in Read Aloud #2). Select parts that allow students to think more deeply about the theme of the book (the moral or the big message).

Select sections to reread:

Record page numbers of selected sections:

2. **Prepare** 2 "deeper dive" questions. These types of questions support students in thinking more deeply about the meanings the author is trying to convey in the text, such as the author's purpose, how the author conveys the theme, or how illustrations enhance the story.
3. **Record** your "deeper dive" questions here:

1.
2.

Explicit Instructions on How to Implement your IRA for the Third Read Aloud

1. **Read** the selected parts of the book aloud. Be sure to introduce the reading by referencing what occurred in read aloud #1 and #2 and explain why you have chosen to reread these parts of the book.
2. **Talk**: Pause during re-reading to pose the deeper-dive questions. Encourage the students to respond in complete sentences.
3. **Write/Draw**: After the sections have been reread and discussed, invite students to write about and/or draw a picture of one or more of their responses.
4. **Optional extension**: Invite students to write about or draw a picture of their own personal connections to the theme (moral or message) of the story.

Younger students will usually draw their responses, while older children may write responses or use a combination of drawing and writing.

Appendix B: Rubric for an Effective Interactive Read Aloud

Element	Distinguished	Proficient	Developing	Needs Improvement
Pitch/Volume 10%	Consistently uses pitch and volume variation to effectively engage students in the book; Reads so all students can hear	Uses pitch and volume variation at times to hold students' attention in the book; Reads so most students can hear	Pitch and volume are appropriate most of the time while reading the book to students. May drop endings of sentences or mumble at times.	Reads in a monotone or too fast/slow; Pitch or volume does not match the flow of the story or detracts from the read aloud experience
Oral Expression 10%	Captures the spirit of the story with appropriate voice inflection and variation in facial expression; Enunciates clearly; Uses Character voices and/or sound effects with ease (if applicable)	Appropriate oral inflection; Pleasant facial expression; Correct pronunciation of the words	Oral expression is adequate. Occasionally makes mistakes while reading or occasionally mispronounces words	Limited expression. The mood of the story is lost due to the lack of voice inflection. Stumbles on words quite often or makes obvious errors in pronunciation
Pacing/Rhythm 10%	Pace is appropriate; The reader alters the reading speed and effectively employs distinct rhythm and pauses for dramatic effect. Gauges the student responses to know when to move on or slow down.	Pacing and rhythm are fitting for the book. Uses appropriate timing.	Pacing and rhythm are mostly suitable with a few mistakes	Little pace variance: No rhythm or flow to the read aloud
Eye Contact 10%	Eye contact is utilized to maintain connection with students throughout the reading to assess and respond to students in an engaging manner.	Maintains good eye contact with students during the read aloud.	Eye contact is used at times during the read aloud	Seldom makes eye contact with students; eyes are only on the book.
Preparation (Written Template) 30%	Thoughtfully prepares for initial reading and subsequent re-readings of the book. Submits a complete and well-designed planning template.	Prepares for initial reading and subsequent re-readings of the book. Submits the planning template assignment on time.	Generic or weak preparation for initial reading and subsequent re-readings of the book. Submits the planning template at the last minute.	Prepares only for one section of the Read-Aloud Template or read aloud sections do not build on one another. Planning template is submitted late.
Engagement & Extension (Rehearsal) 30%	Creative and effective delivery of selected read-aloud. Teacher Candidate draws students into the story with the reading of the book/section; pauses to allow students to respond to prompts, poses thoughtful questions and/or explanations & definitions in an effective manner. Invites students to respond through writing, drawing, or other extension activity.	Candidate conducts an appropriate read-aloud of the selected book. Students are included in read-aloud; Teacher Candidate pauses briefly for students to respond to prompts, prepared questions and/or explanations & definitions. Candidate provides students opportunities to respond through writing, drawing, or other extension activity;	Generic or brief delivery of selected read-aloud. Students are somewhat included in the story with the reading of the book/section; Teacher Candidate does not pause for students to respond to prompts, poses generic or weak questions or definitions. Tells students to respond through writing, drawing, or other extension activity.	The delivery of the read-aloud needs additional work. The teacher candidate was not prepared. Students were not the focus for reading of the book/section; The candidate does not pause for students to respond to prompts, poses generic or weak questions and/or definitions. Does not include student response or activity.

Appendix C: Peer Observation Tool for the Interactive Read Aloud

Eliciting student thinking during the interactive read aloud	What the teacher does and says…
<u>Before Reading</u> Questioning: ● What kind of questions does the teacher pose? ● Do the questions elicit student knowledge/connections? ● Do the questions foster comprehension or discussion?	
<u>During Reading</u> Questioning: ● What kind of questions does the teacher pose? ● Do the questions elicit student knowledge/connections? ● Do the questions foster comprehension or discussion?	
<u>After Reading</u> Questioning: ● What kind of questions does the teacher pose? ● Do the questions elicit student knowledge/connections? ● Do the questions foster comprehension or discussion?	

Appendix D: Interactive Read Aloud Diverse Book List

Book Title, Author, and Illustrator:	Possible Themes:	Possible teaching points:	
My Papi has a Motorcycle by Isabel Quintero & illustrated by Zeke Peña	• Family • Community	• Onomatopoeia • Dialogue	• Print features • Punctuation
I am Every Good Thing by Derrick Barnes & illustrated by Gordon C. James	• Identity • Confidence • Self-esteem	• Figurative language • Voice	• Word choice • Prosody
Dreamers by Yuyi Morales	• Family • Belonging • Immigration	• Word Choice • Sequencing • Prosody	
Big Moon Cake for Little Star by Grace Lin	• Family • Tradition • Imagination	• Onomatopoeia • Dialogue	• Verbs • Thought shots
Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak	• Feelings/Emotions • Imagination	• Sequencing • Prosody	• Role Play
The Perfect Nest by Catherine Friend	• Celebrating differences • Responsibility	• STEM connections • Adjectives	• Making predictions
The Most Magnificent Thing by Ashley Spires	• Perseverance - keep trying • Creativity • Imagination	• Making connections • Verbs • STEM connections	
Ada's Violin: The Story of the Recycled Orchestra of Paraguay by Susan Woods	• Recycling • Music – musicians • Hope	• Onomatopoeia • Cause/Effect	
The Day You Begin by Jacqueline Woodson	• Diversity • Friendship • Self-esteem	• Illustrations have meaning • Figurative language	

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