



Peer Assisted

Strategies

Reading Methods for Grades 2-6

2008 Revised Edition

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PALS

NEW FORMAT

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) for grades 2-6. PALS was first developed nearly 15 years ago at Peabody College of Vanderbilt University to provide teachers with a supplemental, peer-mediated reading program. Its purpose is to get all children involved in intensive practice of key reading skills. In PALS for grades 2-6, these skills include reading with fluency and comprehension.

Across the years, researchers at Vanderbilt, and many researchers elsewhere, have conducted experimental and quasi-experimental studies on the effectiveness of PALS for grades 2-6. In a large majority of these studies, PALS students have outperformed non-PALS (control) students. Furthermore, PALS participation has strengthened the performance of high-achieving, average-achieving, and low-achieving students, students with disabilities, and ELL children in comparison to their respective counterparts in non-PALS classes.

On the basis of these outcomes, the Program Effectiveness Panel in the U.S. Department of Education recognized PALS as an effective educational practice and approved it for inclusion in its National Diffusion Network.

More recently, the What Works Clearinghouse found the “Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies Reading instructional program to have potentially positive effects on reading achievement” for elementary-age ELL children.

This 2008 teacher manual for PALS for grades 2-6 is an extensive revision of the previous manual. We have revised its content, organization, layout, and style—all in an effort to make it as user-friendly as we can. We thank Kristin Taylor, Devin Kearns, Chris Lemons, Loulee Yen, Kristen McMaster, and Laura Saenz for applying their talent and hard work.

For more information on PALS for grades 2-6, as well as information on related PALS programs for kindergarten, first grade, and high school, please visit our website (Peerassistedlearningstrategies.net). At this website, you can also learn about our PALS-Math programs.

OVERVIEW

PALS is a supplemental reading program for students in Grades 2-6. PALS builds fluency and comprehension skills through a set of activities your students do 35 to 45 minutes per session, 3 times a week. In PALS, students work in pairs to help each other improve their reading skills. Pairs motivate each other by awarding themselves "points" for completing activities. As the teacher, you monitor the pairs and provide assistance to help them improve their reading.

To help you understand PALS, this introduction has several sections. First, we explain more about how and why PALS works so well. Second, we tell you how this manual is organized and explain how to use it. Finally, we give you advice to help you get started.

We recommend that you read this introduction carefully before you start because it will help you visualize all of the PALS components.

WHAT IS PALS?

In PALS, students work in pairs to read stories and answer questions through a series of activities.

PAIRS AND TEAMS

You will pair students so that high-achieving students are paired with average-achieving students and average-achieving students are paired with low-achieving students. Pairs read books appropriate for the lower reader's level.

You will assign pairs to 2 teams that change membership every 4 weeks. Pairs earn points that go toward a team total. At the end of each week, you total teams' PALS points, and announce which team earned more points. To make teams fair, it will be important to carefully balance the teams so that the reading levels on the 2 teams are the same.

Guidelines for making pairs and teams are indicated in the Getting Started section on pages xi.

Pairs conduct 4 activities that are designed to promote reading fluency and comprehension.

ACTIVITY 1: PARTNER READING

Partner Reading is the first PALS activity. The higher reader, called the "First Reader," reads first for 5 minutes. The lower reader, called the "Second Reader," coaches or monitors the First Reader. As the Coach, the Second Reader marks 1 point on the Point Sheet for every sentence the First Reader reads correctly. If the First Reader makes a mistake, the Second Reader uses a special "correction procedure" to help the reader fix the mistake. This correction procedure is described in Lesson 3 on page 39, and is shown on the Correction Card on page 181.

After 5 minutes, students switch jobs. The Second Reader reads for 5 minutes while the First Reader coaches, marks points and corrects mistakes.

ACTIVITY 2: RETELL

For 2 minutes, the Second Reader retells all of the events that occurred in the text that the pair read during Partner Reading. The First Reader prompts the Second Reader using the Question Card prompts and corrects the Second Reader if he/she says anything that is incorrect. These procedures are described in Lesson 4 on page 49.

Together, both partners decide how many points, up to 10, they deserve for their effort.

ACTIVITY 3: PARAGRAPH SHRINKING

For 5 minutes, the First Reader reads approximately 1 paragraph at a time, and the Second Reader then gives prompts to help the reader make a main idea statement about each paragraph. They continue this procedure until time runs out. The prompts are shown on the Question Card on page 177 and are described in Lesson 6 on page 62. If the First Reader makes a mistake, the Second Reader uses the correction procedure on the Correction Card, which appears on page 181 and is described in Lesson 8 on page 86. The Second Reader marks points

for correct answers to the prompts.

After 5 minutes, students switch jobs. The Second Reader reads and responds to prompts while the First Reader coaches.

ACTIVITY 4: PREDICTION RELAY

The Second Reader prompts the First Reader to make a prediction, read half a page, and check to see if the prediction came true. This process is repeated for 5 minutes. The prompts are described in Lesson 10 on page 101 and shown on the Question Card on page 177. The Second Reader marks points for correct answers to the prompts.

After 5 minutes, students switch jobs. The Second Reader reads and responds to prompts while the First Reader now coaches and marks points.

POINT TALLYING

On the last day of PALS each week, you tally the points for each team and name the weekly winner. The "second place" team stands and receives applause. The winning team stands, receives applause, and takes a bow.

SUMMARY

PALS consists of 4 activities: Partner Reading, Retell, Paragraph Shrinking, and Prediction Relay. Students conduct these activities in pairs, use special procedures, and reward themselves with points.

WHY DOES PALS WORK?

Students have more opportunities to practice reading.

- Routines are simple, efficient, and remain the same throughout the program.
- Students stay on task.

Students get differentiated instruction.

- Peers give immediate corrective feedback.
- Teachers can target students that need more support.

PALS motivates students to become better readers.

- Consistent positive reinforcement.

PALS enhances peers' social relationships.

- Provides a structure for positive and productive peer interactions.
- Creates an opportunity for lower-achieving students to assume an integral role in a valued activity.