Classroom Practices: The 10 Most Important

Get Started

1. Understand Accelerated Reader™, STAR Reading™, and STAR Early Literacy™.

Know how the software works, be familiar with STAR assessments and AR™ Reading Practice Quizzes, and understand key concepts related to points, ATOS™ book level, interest level, and reading level.

2. Find the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

Use a STAR assessment (or another standardized test, the AR Goal-Setting Chart) and your judgment to identify the level of reading practice that is appropriate for each pupil. Make adjustments based on student performance on Reading Practice Quizzes. An average of 85 percent indicates the student is reading within a good learning zone. An average of about 90 percent is associated with the greatest gains.

3. Schedule time for reading practice.

Make guided independent reading practice a priority. Research shows that students need about 35 minutes of scheduled time (15 or more minutes of engaged time) per day to accelerate growth.

Establish Routines and Monitor Progress

4. Use the Student Reading Log.

Have students keep a record of their reading practice. Reproducible forms can be printed from the software.

5. Take Status of the Class daily.

Check in with students every day to monitor their progress, guide book selection, and reinforce achievement. Review Student Reading Logs and TOPS Reports and have brief conversations with students to see how they are doing. Use the Status of the Class Record Sheet to keep track of which pupils you have spoken with.

6. Check the TOPS Report immediately.

Make sure that students take a quiz within 24 hours of finishing the book so that the quiz assesses comprehension rather than memory. Have the software print the TOPS Report after quizzes are taken. Use it to motivate students, monitor their performance, and help them choose their next book. Send TOPS Reports home so parents can see how their child is doing and/or activate Renaissance Home Connect™.

7. Review the Diagnostic Report weekly.

Use reading practice data to plan instruction and intervention. Look for diagnostic codes, which alert you to students who are having trouble. Analyze a struggling student's reading history with the reading log or Student Record Report.

Diagnose Problems, Set Goals and Motivate Students

8. Intervene promptly to ensure successful reading.

Be alert to problems and act on them immediately. Teach and reinforce comprehension strategies. Adjust the level or length of book a student is reading, and provide other kinds of support as needed, such as a reading buddy or peer tutor.

9. Set student reading goals.

Motivate students and personalize practice by setting individualized targets for average percent correct, points, and ATOS book level. Refer to the Resource document titled "Goal-Setting Best Practices" for guidelines.

10. Create a system of motivators.

Make success visible with class and school displays that acknowledge achievement of individual targets. Read books aloud and promote discussion to introduce students to the joys of reading.

Classroom Practices in the Primary Grades

Keep a Classroom Library

Maintain a classroom library so that students can select books quickly and easily. Ask your school librarian to help you choose a collection of books that you can check out to your classroom. Select new books regularly, and keep popular titles longer so your students can read and reread their favorites. Also take advantage of book clubs and used bookstores to build your collection.

Color Code Books

Label Accelerated Reader™ books with colored dots to help young students find books within their ZPD. For example, you might label books at a 1.0–1.5 level with a yellow dot, at a 1.6–2.0 level with a red dot, and so on.

Set Up Activity Centers

Use one center as a location for teaching reading skills. Set up volunteers at another center and dedicate it to read alouds. At a third center, station an older student or parent volunteer to help students take quizzes.

Build Reading Skills with Read To, Read With, and Independent Reading Practice

Be sure to involve students in all three types of reading practice. Emergent readers will spend most of their reading time listening to stories and looking at picture books. As their skills develop, pair students with peer or adult tutors for Read With practice. Later, as students start reading independently, schedule short periods of independent practice time, along with plenty of Read To and Read With practice.

Have Students Quiz the Same Way They Read

Make sure students take Reading Practice Quizzes the same way they read books. If you read a book to a student, also read the quiz to him. If you read with a student, make sure the student reads the quiz with you or a volunteer. Students can also use Recorded Voice Quizzes to quiz on books that were read to or with them.

Monitor Reading Practice

Keep an eye on your students' reading practice by reviewing reading logs and TOPS Reports every day. Set up a simple book checkout system for your classroom library so that you can also see if the books individual students are selecting are a good match.

Recruit Volunteers and Quiz Monitors

Volunteers are essential to reading practice in the primary grades. Parents, retirees, even older students can read to and with students and help them take quizzes. Provide training sessions for volunteers to familiarize them with Accelerated Reader, ZPDs, student reading logs, and other classroom routines.