

## Make New PALS (But Keep the Core)

Customizing an Evidence-Based Practice  
to Improve Student Reading Outcomes

*MCRR Summer Workshop  
August 10, 2011  
Kristen McMaster, Pyung-Gang Jung, & Dana  
Brandes*

## Presentation Overview

- Introduction
  - *The story of Top-Down vs. Bottom-Up PALS*
- Top-Down PALS
  - *Overview and Practice*
- Bottom-Up PALS
  - *Overview and Examples*
- Questions

The Story of Top-Down and Bottom-Up PALS

## INTRODUCTION

## What is PALS?

- Peer
- Assisted
- Learning
- Strategies



## What is PALS?

A “class-wide peer tutoring” program, where  
Students work in pairs  
“First Reader” and “Second Reader”  
Students have different skill levels  
Interaction is highly structured  
“Coach” and “Reader” have prescribed roles  
Reinforcement of academic behaviors is consistent  
A supplement to classroom reading instruction  
Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grades 2-6, High School

## Why Does PALS Work?

- Students get differentiated instruction
  - They read at their ‘instructional level’
  - Peers give immediate corrective feedback
  - Teachers can target most needy students
- Students practice reading a lot!
  - Structure
  - Efficiency
  - Routines are the same throughout program
- Students stay on task
  - Consistent reinforcement
  - Simple routines

## PALS Development

Based on Juniper Gardens Classwide Peer Tutoring  
 Fuchs, Fuchs and colleagues: 15 years of R & D  
 Experimental research has found effects for students  
 From Title I, non-Title I, urban, and suburban schools  
 Of a range of skill levels (high, average, and low)  
 With disabilities  
 Learning English as a Second Language  
 Established as a 'validated practice' (What Works Clearinghouse)

## Recent Research: Scaling Up PALS

- Funded by the U.S. Department of Education
- Conducted in 2004-2010 in Tennessee, Minnesota, Texas
- Examined:
  - Kindergarten PALS (learning to read)
  - PALS for Grades 2-6 (reading to learn)

## Recent Research: Scaling Up PALS

- Kindergarten:
  - Compared 3 professional development models:
    - Workshop Only, Workshop + Booster, Workshop + Booster + 'Mentor'
  - Teachers in Booster and Mentor groups had greater fidelity
  - Teachers in Booster groups had better student achievement
  - Overall, PALS beat controls, but not as much as in earlier research (1998-2000)

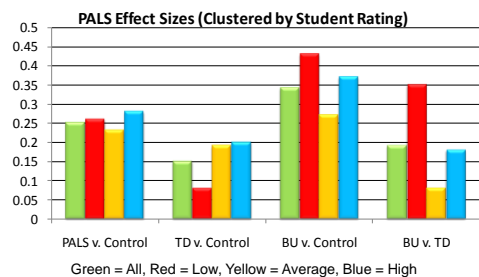
## Recent Research: Scaling Up PALS

- Scaling up is not as easy as we thought!
- The impact of an "evidence-based" intervention may vary with changes in educational contexts.
- We wondered about the balance between *fidelity* and *flexibility*.

## "Top Down" vs. "Bottom Up"

- "Top down" (TD) = Administrator directed
  - Focus on fidelity
  - Implement PALS as prescribed
- "Bottom up" (BU) = Teacher directed
  - Focus on customizing PALS to meet student needs

## Reading Growth (2008-09)



Overview and Practice

## TOP-DOWN PALS

## Top Down PALS

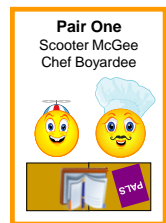
- 4 Activities:
  - Partner Reading (10 Minutes)
  - Retell (2 Minutes)
  - Paragraph Shrinking (10 Minutes)
  - Prediction Relay (10 Minutes)
- 35 Minutes per Session
- Reciprocal peer tutoring
- A motivational peer reinforcement system
- Emphasis on fidelity – Using PALS the way it was designed, *without modifications*.

## Assigning Pairs

Higher-Performing Readers (HP)	Lower-Performing Readers (LP)	
Top HP	Top LP	A
2 <sup>nd</sup> HP	2 <sup>nd</sup> LP	
3 <sup>rd</sup> HP	3 <sup>rd</sup> LP	
4 <sup>th</sup> HP	4 <sup>th</sup> LP	
5 <sup>th</sup> HP	5 <sup>th</sup> LP	
6 <sup>th</sup> HP	6 <sup>th</sup> LP	
7 <sup>th</sup> HP	7 <sup>th</sup> LP	
8 <sup>th</sup> HP	8 <sup>th</sup> LP	

## Partner Reading

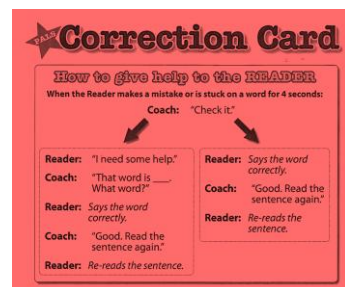
- Purpose
  - Fluency practice
- Organization
  - Students sit in pairs
  - They share one copy of the book



## Partner Reading Procedure

- First Reader reads for 5 minutes
  - “Quickly, carefully, and with expression”
- Second Reader acts as Coach
  - Listens and helps with mistakes and hard words (uses procedure)
  - Marks one point for each sentence
- They switch roles and repeat
  - Second Reader reads the **same text**

## Partner Reading Correction



## Marking Points

- Specific procedure
  - Coach marks one point for each sentence

## Practice in Pairs

### Using children's literature:

- As the Reader
  - Make some errors on purpose
- As the Coach
  - Use the **Correction Procedure** to fix mistakes
  - Mark points after each sentence

## Paragraph Shrinking

- Purpose
  - Build key comprehension skill: Summarizing
- Organization
  - Students still work in pairs
  - They stop after each paragraph
  - Each student reads and shrinks for 5 minutes

## Paragraph Shrinking Procedure

- Readers read for 5 minutes
- The Coach says:
  - “Name the most important who or what.”
  - “Tell the most important thing about the who or what.”
  - “Say the main idea in 10 words or less.”

## Partner Reading Correction

## Paragraph Shrinking Correction

### How to give Paragraph Shrinking help

#### If the Reader says the wrong answer:

- Coach: “Check it!”
- “Let me give you a hint...”
- “The answer is \_\_\_\_\_.”

#### If the Reader says the main idea in more than 10 words:

- Coach: “Shrink it!”

## Additional Paragraph Shrinking Information

- The who or what only counts as 1 word
- Sometimes paragraphs are short
  - Coach decides when to stop
- Students get 3 points per paragraph
  - One for each part of the statement
- Coach still corrects word reading errors
  - No points for reading sentences

## Practice in Pairs

### *Using children's literature*

- Start reading from where the 2<sup>nd</sup> reader left off.
- Readers read for 5 minutes
- The Coach says:
  - “Name the most important who or what.”
  - “Tell the most important thing about the who or what.”
  - “Say the main idea in 10 words or less.”

## Scheduling PALS

- PALS is implemented
  - For a minimum of 16-18 weeks
  - Three times per week for 35-45 min
  - At a regularly scheduled time

## **BOTTOM-UP PALS**

## Bottom Up PALS

## 3 types of BU PALS changes

- Minor
- Flexible
- Major

## Minor Changes

- Small ‘tweaks’ to either the non-core components of PALS
  - Adjustments to the motivational system
  - Amount of time TD PALS read
- Examples:
  - Taking turns during Retell
  - More time on Paragraph Shrinking
  - Interval point system

## Flexible changes

- Designed to better tailor PALS activities to meet students’ needs across time
- Could be either minor or major changes
- Could be introduced and withdrawn
- Examples:
  - Switching between BU and TD PALS activities
  - Use of informational texts
  - Reordering of PALS components

## Major changes

- Designed different activities from TD PALS
  - adding new activities to or within TD PALS components
  - Examples:
    - new vocabulary activities or incorporating writing to TD PALS (i.e., Paragraph Shrinking or Retell)
- Focusing on comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency activities

## Major changes: comprehension

Activity	Description	Examples	Materials
Pre-reading connections	Before reading, students prompt partners to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make predictions</li> <li>• Activate background knowledge</li> <li>• Use mental imagery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “What do you think this story is about?”</li> <li>• “What do you know about this topic?”</li> <li>• “What type of picture is in your mind?”</li> </ul>	Prompts on question cards
Question stems (Read & Ask)	After reading, students select one of six question types, roll a dice to see what question number (1 to 6) to answer. The question types focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge</li> <li>• Comprehension and application</li> <li>• Analysis</li> <li>• Evaluation and synthesis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “What is the setting of the story?”</li> <li>• “What is the best summary of what you read?”</li> <li>• “Compare and contrast two actions and characters?”</li> <li>• “What did you like most about this story?”</li> </ul>	Prompts on question cards, dice
Strategy relay	During reading students implement one of the following strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questioning</li> <li>• Predicting</li> <li>• Monitoring and clarifying</li> <li>• Evaluating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “What question do you have?”</li> <li>• “What do you predict?”</li> <li>• “Did it make sense? What did you learn?”</li> <li>• “Does it relate to anything you know?”</li> </ul>	Prompts on question cards

## Major changes: comprehension

Activity	Description	Examples	Materials
Questioning the Author	Teacher selects an author question type. After reading, students answer the corresponding question from prompt cards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Who did you use as a model for ___?”</li> <li>• “Why did you have [action]?”</li> <li>• “How did you come up with ___?”</li> </ul>	Prompts on question cards
Post-reading connections	After reading, students select a question card prompting them to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check predictions</li> <li>• Reflection about the text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “What changes can you make to your prediction based on what you read?”</li> <li>• “State something you learned that was not in the words?”</li> </ul>	Prompts on questioning cards
Text connections	Student selects a type of connection, explains it to partner, and writes it in two sentences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “What type of connection can you make: text-to-text, text-to-self, or text-to-world?”</li> <li>• “What type of connection can you make: text-to-text, text-to-self, or text-to-world?”</li> </ul>	Question cards, blank pages, pencils
Writing main idea	One student writes the other’s “main idea in 10 words or less” on paper.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Say the main idea in 10 words or less. Write it.”</li> </ul>	Notebook paper, pencils
Written retell	Partners discuss “what happened first” and “what happened next” and record their answers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “What happened first?”</li> <li>• “Write it.”</li> </ul>	Worksheets, pencils

## Major changes: vocabulary and fluency

Activity	Description	Examples	Materials
Vocabulary words with picture cards	Students and teacher preview vocabulary words using picture cards. Students point to the previewed pictures when read in text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Is this the right vocabulary picture? Yes or no?”</li> </ul>	Picture cards
Vocabulary all stars	Students identify two unfamiliar words, use context clues to figure out the meanings, and write one sentence for each word.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Find your words that you don’t know. Look for context clues around the words. Use the words in two new sentences.”</li> </ul>	Worksheets, pencils
Vocabulary relay (Common prefixes/suffixes identification)	Students identify one prefix and suffix, highlight these words after reading, and record the words and the page numbers on a worksheet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The prefix and suffix for today are ___. Find each in words and record them.”</li> </ul>	Worksheets, pencils
Activity	Description	Examples	Materials
Trade reading	Partners take turns every other word for four minutes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Trade words for next four minutes until the timer goes off.”</li> </ul>	Books, timer



## Discuss

3. Would any of these described activities work well in your classroom? Why or why not?
4. Other ideas regarding minor, flexible, or major changes for PALS?
  - How could you adjust PALS to meet YOUR students' needs or individual teaching style?

Thanks!