

# Whole-class reading



Tom Sherrington and Sara Stafford

## What's the idea?

All teachers (across every subject) should deliberately, systematically and enthusiastically teach reading skills. Reading out loud, as a class, is an excellent way to build this skill.

## What does it mean?

As Lemov states in *Teach Like A Champion 2.0*, 'reading is the skill.' (p. 249) When students can read well, they can access the curriculum, engage with complex ideas and become champions of their own learning.

Class reading (reading one text, together, as a class) can seem daunting but, with time, it can be an enjoyable and useful experience for students in all subjects. The key is to approach it deliberately, rather than just letting it happen and hoping for the best. Good planning, structure and resources all help – choose reading material (a critical essay in English or a topical article in geography, for example) that is challenging but accessible.

## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

» Lemov D (2015) *Teach Like a Champion 2.0: 62 Techniques That Put Students on the Path to College*. San Francisco, USA: Jossey-Bass.

» Quigley A (2017) *The power of reading*. Available at: <https://www.theconfidentteacher.com/2017/10/the-power-of-reading/> (accessed 11 January 2019).

## What are the implications for teachers?

Ensure that all students are engaged in – and benefiting from – whole-class reading by holding every learner accountable. The following strategies can help to establish a safe, fair and challenging reading environment:

**'Randomly' select the next reader:** Going around in a circle is predictable and allows students to become complacent between their scheduled reads. Keep them guessing by switching-up the order of readers.

**Keep reading time varied:** Resist the urge to be 'fair' by asking each student to read an identical amount or duration. By varying the length of text you ask each student to read, you can differentiate without being too obvious and keep students alert.

**Teach place-holding:** When you start the exercise, train students to follow the reader with their finger (or a ruler). Show them how they can use this skill to find their place after a pause or when it is their turn to read.

**Set a minimum read:** For some students, reading a paragraph will be challenging. Try setting a minimum expected amount and allow them to opt-out once they have achieved this. Most won't use this but those who do will feel safe; you'll be surprised how quickly their confidence grows.

**Model good reading:** Read to the class yourself, showing them how to follow punctuation and use intonation and voice to aid meaning. This technique can also be used to sustain engagement and to prompt new readers when it is their turn.

**Check for understanding:** Use questioning breaks to ensure that all students are keeping up with the key points. Take time to teach any unfamiliar vocabulary you might have encountered and to discuss any interesting ideas that might have come up.

## Top tips:

Seek out experts at delivering this method. If you can, observe these colleagues or arrange a visit to a local school to observe how teachers of different age groups use strategies to support students in developing reading skills.