**Intervention Name:**

Reading Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS)

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**Function of Intervention:** Reading PALS is a whole-class peer-tutoring program that can be used with students from kindergarten through sixth grade and in high school. Students work on grade-level reading skills. The focus in kindergarten and first grade is on word recognition and fluency. The emphasis in second through sixth grade and in high school is fluency and reading comprehension. The PALS model allows for students to practice reading skills with immediate feedback and to have extensive reading practice.

**Brief Description:** Typically, a higher-performing reader is paired with a lower-performing reader. Both the higher performing reader and the lower performing reader do the jobs of Coach and Reader. As the Coach, the child provides support by correcting mistakes using a correction procedure. As the Reader, the child practices reading skills with the activities.

In kindergarten and first grade, there is a teacher-directed component to the lesson. In kindergarten, this comprises phonological awareness practice for 3 to 5 minutes in addition to whole-class word reading practice. In first grade, there is 3 to 5 minute whole group decoding lesson. After these whole-group lessons, students then practice reading using lesson sheets designed specifically for PALS (see Figure 1). Finally, students read books at the instructional level of the lower-performing reader.

![Figure 1. First Grade PALS lesson sheet students complete in pairs.](image)
In second through sixth grade and in high school, students read level-appropriate, high interest texts. The texts can vary across the pairs in the classroom, assuring that each pair is reading a book with an appropriate level of challenge. The pairs read to improve fluency for 10 minutes, retell what occurred during that 10 minutes, practice paragraph summary for 10 minutes, and finally practice making predictions for 10 minutes. The pairs follow a series of steps to do these activities.

Here is a sample of the procedures students follow to do Paragraph Shrinking, PALS’ paragraph summary activity:

1. "My dear Mr. Bennet," said his lady to him one day, "have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?" Mr. Bennet replied that he had not. "But it is," returned she; "for Mrs. Long has just been here, and she told me all about it." Mr. Bennet made no answer. "Do you not want to know who has taken it?" cried his wife impatiently. "You want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it." This was invitation enough.

Austen (1813)

2. Name the most important who or what.
3. Mr. Bennet’s wife.
4. Tell the most important thing about the who or what.
5. Mr. Bennet’s wife had just talked to Mrs. Long. She had just learned someone had rented Netherfield Park and she really really wanted to tell Mr. Bennet the details.
6. Say the main idea in 10 words or less.
7. Mr. Bennet’s wife wanted to tell Mr. Bennet the details about someone renting Netherfield Park. 13 words
8. Shrink it!
9. Mr. Bennet’s wife wanted to explain about someone renting Netherfield Park. 9 words

(reproduction of a graphic for a chapter written for Guilford)

Here are the steps in Paragraph Shrinking for a text sample from *Pride and Prejudice*. The Reader reads a paragraph [1], and the Coach tells the Reader where to stop. In this case, the Coach had the Reader read several paragraphs because the dialogue made each paragraph very short. Then, the Coach used the first Paragraph Shrinking prompt [2] to have the Reader identify the subject of the paragraph [3]. The Coach gives the second prompt [4] to have the Reader talk through his ideas about the important details in the paragraph [5]. The Coach gives the third prompt [6] to have the Reader synthesize the information in the paragraph. The response to the third prompt is called a main idea statement. The Coach counts the words in the Reader’s main idea statement to assure it contains fewer than 10 words. Notably, the subject (the who or what from the first step) counts only as one word, as the underline [7] indicates. In this case, the Reader’s main idea statement exceeds 10 words, so the Coach issues the “Shrink it” correction. The Reader tries again to make a main idea statement with fewer than 10 words [8]. When they finish, the Coach marks 3 points on the point sheet, one for each step. (from chapter for Guilford)
Procedures:

- **Duration**: Kindergarten PALS contains 72 lessons. It is designed to be conducted at least 3 times per week, for 25 to 30 minutes a session. First Grade PALS contains 70 lessons. It is designed to be conducted at least 3 times per week, for 45 to 50 minutes a session. Grades 2-6 PALS and High School PALS activities can be conducted all year. Most PALS studies were at least 18 weeks, so at least this amount of time is recommended. Grades 2-6 PALS and High School PALS are designed to be conducted at least 3 times per week, 40 to 45 minutes a session.

- **Teacher training**: Teachers must read and become familiar with the Reading PALS training materials. Attending a formal Reading PALS training can be helpful to provide an understanding of how to use the materials and to learn tips for effective implementation. Reading PALS trainings are conducted for 3 to 6 hours (depending on the version of the program and the individual trainer’s training design).

  In some PALS studies, we have found that students made better progress when teachers participated in training and received additional “booster sessions” where a trainer provided follow-up training for 60 to 120 minutes three times during implementation.

  In all versions of the program, there are training lessons teachers conduct with their classes. There are 7 KPALS training lessons, 8 First Grade lessons, and 12 Grades 2-6 lessons. For High School PALS, teachers can divide the training to different numbers of lessons, as few as 6 and as many as 10.

- **Instructional practices**: Teachers pair students (i.e., students do not get to choose their partner), and teachers switch pairs periodically throughout the program. When students work in pairs, teachers constantly monitor and provide feedback, when necessary. The procedure for creating pairs is shown below:

  (reproduction of a graphic for a chapter written for Guilford)

  How teachers make pairs. For fictional Ms. A.’s small class, she takes an alphabetized class list (left side) and writes the rank order of the students based on her judgment [1]. She has a few questions and makes a couple of adjustments, but she spends a limited amount of time on ranking the students as she will make multiple compatibility adjustments. She also places asterisks next to the names of children who will likely be good Coaches [2]. Next, she rewrites the class list in the rank order [3], writing the top half of the class on the left
and the bottom half on the right. At this point, she does not change the rank order. She also puts the asterisks next to the names of the good Coaches. Next, she draws arrows between children on the left and right sides, making adjustments for the sake of compatibility. For example, Jayda and Shanna do not get along well, so Ms. A will not put them together. She knows that Jayda and Jose will work well together, and she believes that the gap between their abilities is not too large. She also tries to put good Coaches with her most needy students. Ms. A knows, for example, that Tia will be very patient with Chris. She chooses Tia for Chris instead of Leonel—who is perhaps a slightly better Coach—because she thinks the gap between Leonel, her fourth highest reader, and Chris, who is a year below grade level, is too large. Finally, she writes the pairs’ names on the Pairs and Teams Assignments chart [5], being careful to put pairs with strong readers and weak readers on both teams. She also allows the teams to choose team names from a list of ocean creatures from the class’s science unit.

(from chapter for Guilford)

• **Monitoring system:** The program includes a motivation system in which students earn points for completing academic activities. These activities provide social reinforcement for working hard. In High School PALS points are replaced with PALS dollars. The Grades 2-6 point sheet and the High School PALS Earnings materials are shown below:

**Critical Components (i.e., that must be implemented for intervention to be successful):** Teachers must successfully train students on the Reading PALS strategies. Teachers must prepare materials for lessons. Teachers doing KPALS or First Grade PALS must prepare lesson sheets for each day. Teachers doing Grades 2-6 PALS and High School PALS need to prepare folders and durable materials for students, but they do not need to prepare daily lesson sheets. They do, however, need a ready supply of books at the instructional level of the lower performing reader in the pair. Teachers must implement lessons with high levels of fidelity, and students should work in pairs with high levels of fidelity. Teachers need to monitor students carefully and—particularly in Grades 2-6 and High School—conduct short mini-lessons to provide additional instruction to improve the quality of responses.

**Critical Assumptions (i.e., with respect to prerequisite skills):** Children in KPALS and First Grade PALS can participate with very limited prior knowledge of reading, although First Grade PALS may accelerate too quickly for nonreaders. Grades 2-6 PALS and High School PALS require that students can read texts with some fluency (probably more than 50
correct words per minute). Below that, students may not read enough text to profit sufficiently from the program. Teachers use Math PALS as a way to practice, extend, or remediate reading instruction. It is not designed to address all necessary grade-level skills.

Materials: Teachers must purchase the appropriate Reading PALS manual from [http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/pals/](http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/pals/)

Costs are as follows:

- KPALS Teacher/Student Manual: $40
- Grade 1 Teacher/Student Manual: $44
- Grades 2-6 Teacher/Student Manual: $44
- High School PALS Teacher/Student Manual: $40

Note: The teacher will need to make overhead transparencies of certain pages, or she will need to use an electronic version to show to students in large print. A supplemental large print manual is available for KPALS so teachers do not have to make transparencies or use other instructional technologies to complete the lesson.

References:


