<u>Reader's Theater Workshop Notes</u>

Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, has stated that they want to see Stimulus funds trickle down to <u>after-school</u> and <u>summer school</u> programs, and into methods and materials that are **innovative and engaging** and **measurable and sustaining**.

What is Reader's Theater?
- It's simply reading a story aloud, like a play, without memorization, props, or a stage.
- It's usually done in multiple small non-threatening groups of 6 students.
- Each student is assigned one or more roles in the story and has their own copy of the script/book.
- Each student reads their part with expression and with the personality of their character.

Theater Arts and Reading Enrichment

A Theatrical Play	Reader's Theater
• takes a great deal of preparation to put on only one play • requires stage, sets, costumes, coordination, etc. • requires memorization (reading benefits are lost) • gives the spotlight to only a handful of students • not sustaining or measurable	• easy to implement every day or every week • provides the benefits of reading aloud every time • gives ALL students a balanced platform to shine • is *innovative* and *engaging* • is *sustaining* and *measurable*

- According to the National Reading Panel and the National Partnership on Reading, **Repeated Guided Oral Reading is the only proven method for building reading fluency,** and is especially effective when it includes role models. This means it is very important to include in reading programs! **Repeating the text 3-4 times is the most effective.**

- Reader's Theater is an **approved method of RGOR**. It's also **the most engaging for students**, **the most popular**, **and the easiest to implement**.

- Many think they don't have enough time for RGOR but **with Multi-leveled Reader's Theater**, you can save time and perform RGOR with several students at the same time using advanced/older students as the guides for younger or struggling students.

Using the Arts in After-School/Summer School Programs

After School programs that include the arts **add a special dimension.** According to a 10-year study done by the <u>National Endowment of the Arts</u>:

> "Students involved in sustained theater arts (scene study, acting techniques, dramatic or musical theater productions) often show improvement not only in reading proficiency, but also in self-control and motivation and in empathy and tolerance for others. Learning in and through the arts can even help students overcome the obstacles of disadvantaged backgrounds."

So you will be doing 3 very important things for your students when you implement multi-leveled Reader's Theater!
1. Engaging them in **"Repeated Guided Oral Reading"** which is the only proven method for building reading fluency.
2. Engaging them in **"Integrated Instruction"** (high and low students together)
3. Engaging them in **"Theater Arts"** (proven to help them socially, in self-esteem, and self-control.)

Why is Reader's Theater so effective in building oral reading fluency and confidence?

Definition of Reading Fluency:
- The National Reading panel defines reading fluency as **reading with speed, accuracy, and *proper expression*.**
- **Not reading fast enough or accurately is like riding a bike too slow.** If you don't ride fast enough, you fall off. The same is true for reading fluency and comprehension. If a student struggles to recognize the words, the meaning can get lost and the student may not remember what her or she just said.
- **Remember that** *"expression"* **is a key component of the definition of fluency.** Reading with proper expression brings better <u>comprehension and retention.</u>
- It also improves Listening Comprehension – 2 Years Higher

Warm-up for Reader's Theater (use these with your students)

Vocal Inflection is an important part of expression for children to learn at a young age.

- You can engage your students in a simple demonstration of how a sentence can **mean something different by changing the inflection of just one word.**

<div align="center">

I didn't say she liked him.
I *didn't* say she liked him.
I didn't *say* she liked him.
I didn't say *she* liked him.
I didn't say *liked* him.
I didn't say she liked *him*.

</div>

Emotion and Tempo - The highs and lows in your tone of voice directly convey what mood, or level of emotion you are feeling. Language is rhythmic, so you can also project expression and meaning through tempo and using the pause.

Ask 6 different students to each read a different sentence below, first with no emotion or expression, and then again with emotion and proper tempo. Ask them to take notice of the difference in meaning and interest.

"I bought a lottery ticket, and I think I just won a million dollars!"
"I just live to dance, but most people think I'm not very good at it."
"You put your left foot in, and you shake it all about."
"I thought the store was this way, or was it that way?"
"First, he pulled my hair, and then he stepped on my foot!"
"Excuse me, don't I know you?"

Impact on Communication (Source: Positive Path Networks)

- The <u>words</u> you use only have a **7%** impact on your communication.
- The <u>tone of your voice</u> (inflection) amounts to another **38%.**
- Your <u>non-verbal body language</u> makes up a whopping **55%** impact on the message you are trying to communicate.
- 3 V's – Visual, Vocal and Verbal

Powerful nonverbal communication skills include…. POSTURE, GESTURES, FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Match body language with words to be convincing … Ask 5 student volunteers to express some body language! Have them read the sentences below with the proper expression based on what the words mean. Then ask them to read them again with the emotion/expression noted on the right using body language that is convincing for the emotion. Then ask them which is more convincing, the words or the body.

"I'm not mad."	Anger
"This is a lot of fun!"	Boredom
"That was brilliant!"	Sarcasm
"What's your sign?"	Flirtatious
"No problem, I can wait all day."	Annoyed

Overacting can be a great warm-up to reading with expression.
- **The value of over-acting** when reading in the classroom can help expressive reading become natural.
- Once students have practiced exaggerating their gestures, using vocal and facial expressions when reading will seem easier.
- In a healthy and fun setting, laughter sheds inhibitions and encourages students' expressive growth. It breaks down social barriers between people. It's also contagious!
- It's always important to discuss how laughing <u>with</u>, not at, other students represents a positive and supportive audience.

Ask for 4 Over-actors to volunteer! Instruct them to focus their expressions on their <u>body, face, and voice.</u>
(Reward students in your own way for volunteering)

"I try to be fashion forward, but I can't afford the clothes I really want!" *(Say the line as if you were a **runway model having a tantrum**)*
"My teacher announced today that my assignments are due, but my dog ate my homework!" *(Say the line as if you were a **cowboy with a cold**)*
"I left the house early today, but I still missed the bus." *(Say the line as if you were a **hyper exercise instructor**)*
"I would like to see the view, but I'm afraid of heights!" *(Say the line as if you were a **nauseous tight-rope walker**)*

In review, some reminders about introducing the Reader's Theater activity to students in your own creative way.

- Do expression warm-up exercises and demonstrate character reading
- Encourage ideas and discussion
- Explain assigning roles and grouping
- Never let students pick their own roles!

Some additional information on assigning roles…..
   Groups: You may need to assign multiple roles or split roles if your number of readers does not match the "recommended number of readers" on your chart.

   If you have too few readers, give more than one role to one or two of the readers. Avoid combining characters that talk directly to each other in the story and assigning them to the same reader. Also, try to combine characters that are written at the same level

   If you have too many readers, split narration among 2 or 3 readers. Narrators can alternate by paragraph, chapter, or scene.

At the end of your Reader's Theater Program, or at any time, put on a performance!

- Perform student favorite story/play for an audience *(all students, other classes, parents, or teachers)* at the end of the several week program or at any time.
- Vote for best "actors" for the audience performance.
- Use costumes (kids can bring from home).
- Use sets and backdrops, props, etc.