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In this excerpt, author Debbie Diller discusses the importance of partner stations and why they should be included in classrooms; as well as how to implement and set up the station.

LEARN MORE about this title, including Features, Table of Contents, and Reviews.

Why Include This Station?

Reading and talking with a partner builds confidence, fluency, and comprehension.

Daily partner practice at a Partner Reading station is important because reading together and talking about a text

- Provides oral reading fluency practice with the support of another reader
- Helps kids monitor comprehension as they stop to discuss what they've read so far
- Gives students the opportunity to help each other decode words they don't know
- Is sometimes more fun for students than reading alone and provides another way of engaging with text
- Increases reading motivation and concentration, especially if kids work with a partner who helps and encourages them
- Fosters cooperation as kids take turns, listen, and talk with each other

Combine reading together with conversation, and you have a station where kids practice deeper thinking! Plus, for many students reading the same book together can be more fun (and less intimidating) than reading alone. As students read together and then talk with their partner about characters, settings, and plots, they will practice decoding, fluency, comprehending, and using language purposefully with support. Instead of having kids read the same book and then each fill out a sheet to prove they read it, having them discuss what they read and use a graphic organizer to record their ideas can deepen comprehension and build vocabulary. Use the lessons in Section 3 of this book to teach students exactly how to do this. With these new tools, you will probably want to have a Partner Reading station (or two or three) set up all year long!

The Partner Reading station is easy to establish early in the school year. All you need is something interesting and accessible for learners to read together. Familiar books from read-aloud and small group can enhance oral reading fluency and comprehension. Find a comfortable place for children to sit for the Partner Reading station. Some teachers use two small chairs side by side. Others have children take a small lightweight rug to a special spot to read together; this defines the space and may help younger readers stay at this



EL TIP: Reading with a partner can give multilingual students a boost, especially if they read with someone who can help them with pronouncing and understanding new words. They can read together in one voice or echo read—repeating words with the same pronunciation, intonation, and expression as their partner.

**TIME-SAVING TIP:**

Save time (and paper) by using one large laminated graphic organizer or thinking map for the pair to share. You can see it from your small group area, too, and you won't have to look at all those individual pieces of paper to see the work kids did there.

**TIME-SAVING TIP:**

This station shouldn't take a lot of time to prepare. Systematically, add familiar books from whole and small group. Work with your grade level team to divide and conquer; one person might design a large graphic organizer for everyone to use, while someone else creates conversation cards to share.

station. Graphic organizers you've taught with and conversation cards—speech bubbles with sentence starters—you've used in whole and small group will help kids focus their thoughts and talk. See Sections 3 and 4 for resource ideas.

The main thing children do at this station is read and think together, so you'll want to provide a variety of materials: familiar books, stories, nonfiction, Big Books, news articles, poems, and more. Set a purpose for reading to increase the benefits at this station; you'll see more about this idea in Section 3 when we lean in to teaching for transfer. Add oral response as you teach children *how to* respond to literature and informational text. Writing may also be added later in the year, but only if it deepens student understanding (and you've modeled it well). Remember, the Partner Reading station connects to concepts you've taught or are teaching in whole group based on your curriculum, standards, and students' needs. (Again, Section 3 of this book digs deeper into planning for, teaching, and rolling out stations with clear intent.)

When considering what books or materials to include in the Partner Reading station, think about what you want kids to practice as well as the needs of those students. You might provide texts that are easy for children to decode to give them opportunities to read with greater oral reading fluency. Or, you might have students read books on their instructional reading level to give them practice helping each other with decoding and comprehending. Also consider the interests of your kids when choosing books for the Partner Reading station. This will increase student engagement and may encourage kids to read these same books on their own. Search for texts that reflect the cultural background of your class to help them make connections that may deepen comprehension and increase reading motivation.



Two students share one book on a small rug that defines the space where they work at a Partner Reading station.

What Do Students Do at This Station?

Partners work together to practice reading and responding to text using familiar graphic organizers and academic vocabulary taught with during whole group instruction.

Here's what you should see at the Partner Reading station:

- Two students sit side-by-side in a small, defined space sharing one book. They may sit at desks beside each other or on mats on the floor, for example.
- A pair of children read together, discuss, and may record what they understood.
- Students may choose from color-coded baskets or drawers that hold differentiated books.
- Partners help each other decode difficult words as they read together.
- Students may take turns reading in a variety of ways (e.g., You read a page, I read a page.).

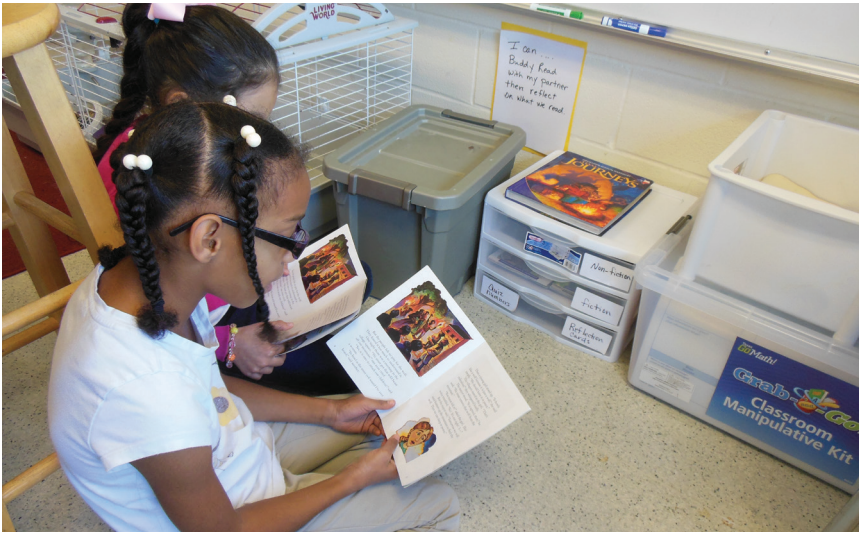


TIME-SAVING TIP:

If you're planning to duplicate this station, make multiple copies of signs and resources at once.



Two pairs of students work at Partner Reading stations at desks in different parts of the room to minimize noise.



Partners choose books from labeled drawers. All materials needed are at their fingertips.

Here is a sampling of the types of work students may do at a Partner Reading station with a classmate. (Ideas on how to develop these are found in Section 3 of this book.) Pairs of students may be:

- Holding one text (fiction, poetry, news article, biography, informational text) together as they read together or take turns reading one page at a time (See *Simply Stations: Poetry* for more ideas on partner reading poetry.)
- Reading just a bit and stopping to talk about what they read, using conversation cards to prompt specific talk about:
 - Author's purpose
 - Theme
 - Comparing two texts (adventures of characters, same topic, same author)
 - Words with patterns being studied (long vowels, open or closed syllables)
 - New information learned about a topic
- Using graphic organizers to jot down specifics connected to what they read
- Using retelling tools or sticky notes to retell or summarize what they read
- Writing interesting or important information in a Community Journal (a spiral notebook shared among all students in the classroom)
- Rereading familiar text from small group



TIME-SAVING TIP:

Instead of having students read a book multiple times with you in small group, they can practice reading it with someone in their group at the Partner Reading station after they've read it once in your guided reading group.

- Coaching each other to decode unfamiliar words
- Highlighting text features as they locate information
- Coding text structures as they examine how authors organize nonfiction
- Searching for high frequency words in their books and connecting these to the word wall

To utilize a Partner Reading station effectively in your classroom, it's helpful to brainstorm with your students what they might do here. I like to create a We Can list, such as the samples pictured here, to clarify expectations for this station. The We Can list helps students work independently in the station, and it reminds them of learning expectations; they'll start to see the connections between your instruction and what they do in stations.

This We Can list was made with a primary class of students.



EL TIP: Provide opportunities for students who are learning English as a new language to read the same text multiple times. This will help them learn new vocabulary and become more familiar with stories and information. You might include a vocabulary list to accompany the book with a picture beside each word to help students pay special attention to those words.



EL TIP: Include photos or simple sketches on your We Can lists so all children can easily read these.

Here is a sample We Can list made with a fourth-grade class.



We can:

- Choose a text to read together.
- Decide how we will read the text.
- Read a bit. Then stop and talk.
- Use the graphic organizer to jot down our ideas.
- Use the conversation card to talk about what we read.



TIME-SAVING TIP: You might keep color-coded baskets near your small group table and simply add a copy of a book finished by that group into their Partner Reading station basket at the end of the lesson.

How Do I Keep This Station Varied *and* Fresh?

To keep the Partner Reading station fresh and working well throughout the year, try the suggestions listed below.

- Introduce different ways to read with a partner at this station over time. Start with having students read together in one voice. (This keeps them both on task and may prevent the one not reading from becoming distracted.) They might also echo read or take turns reading a page or a section.
- Switch out graphic organizers as you teach with new ones. Likewise, add new conversation cards to direct discussions children are having.
- Duplicate this station to have a fiction Partner Reading station and a separate nonfiction Partner Reading station.
- If you teach in a dual language classroom, have an English Partner Reading station *and* a Spanish (or Mandarin or Arabic) Partner Reading station. Provide texts written in each language for children to listen to at a station with the matching language labeled there.
- You might have students go to the Listening and Speaking station to hear a recorded book. Then have them rotate to the Partner Reading station next to practice orally reading that same text. The familiarity may help their decoding and oral reading fluency.
- Over time, you might have students go to a Recording Studio station directly following the Partner Reading station. Simply use an iPad and a book for the Recording Studio station. Students read and video/record themselves. Afterward, they can play it back and listen to how they sound while using a fluency rubric for reflection. (See *Simply Stations: Listening and Speaking* for additional resources.)
- Have students make recordings for other classrooms and/or grade levels. This is a great way to give struggling readers in upper grades a purpose for practicing reading lower-level books aloud. You might include a photo and name of the reader to personalize this.
- Integrate social studies and science into the Partner Reading station by having students read books about the topics they are studying in the content areas.



EL TIP: Multilingual children may benefit from hearing the same text read to them at the Listening and Speaking station before reading it with a classmate at the Partner Reading station. The immediacy and familiarity of the book may give them confidence to try reading this book with their partner and eventually on their own.



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I can retell.
In the **middle** the **problem** was _____

I predict _____
because _____

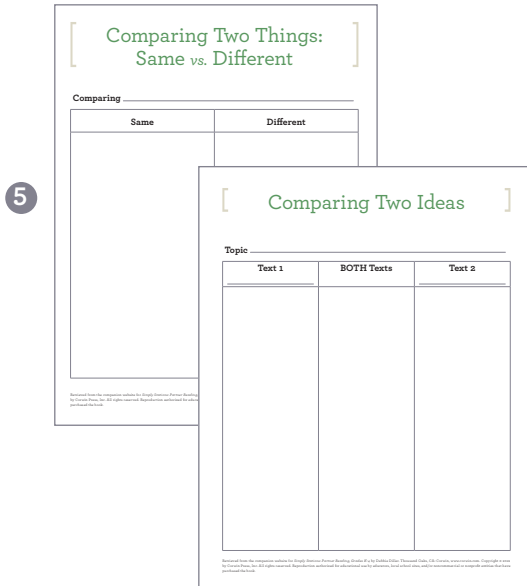
The **syllable pattern** is _____

The **word** is _____

What Are *the* Essential Materials?

Partner Reading stations don't require many supplies. Use what you have at your school. Here are some materials you'll want to help you get started setting up a Partner Reading station.





1 Familiar books from small group and/or read aloud

2 Conversation cards to support discussion

3 & 4 Containers to hold books to read with a partner (color-coded baskets or stacking drawers may be used for differentiating text)

5 Laminated graphic organizers for response

6 Community journal, sticky notes, and two pencils for response

7 Dry erase supplies for response

8 Table and two chairs side by side where partners sit (or two desks side by side where partners sit)

9 Small rug to define the space where partners sit



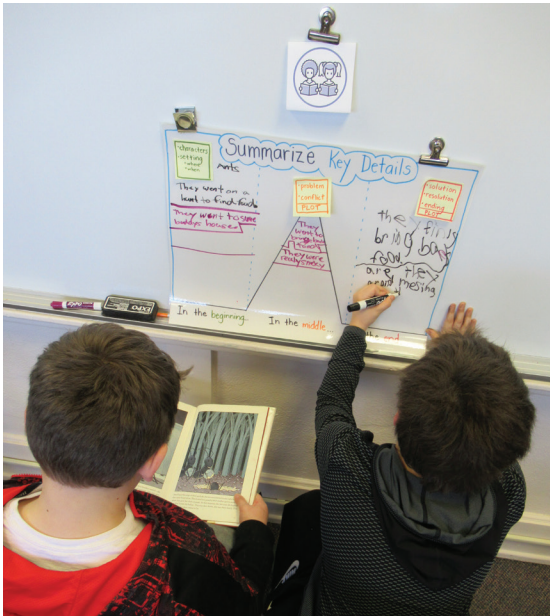
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 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 9: Debbie Diller
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How Do I Set Up This Station?

You don't need a lot of space for the Partner Reading station. And remember—you might have several of these! This station can be portable and moved to two desks beside (not across from) each other. If you choose this option, place baskets of books in a place where kids go to choose their basket *and* response supplies to take to the designated desks. Or the Partner Reading station can be stationary and set up in one permanent spot. Partners sit beside each other on a small bench or two chairs. You might use color-coded stacking drawers at a permanent Partner Reading station with the bottom drawer labeled for response materials.



Two upper-grade kids sit on a discount store rug to read a book together and use a conversation card for discussion.



A pair sit side-by-side and work with a large laminated graphic organizer to read and summarize key ideas.

Two girls sit on the floor beside each other as they read familiar books from small group stored in color-coded drawers.



A fourth-grade teacher used two crates topped with cushions to define a comfy Partner Reading station and help kids focus on the task at hand. Graphic organizers and questions are in this area for students to use for response.