

# Classroom Practices in the Middle and Upper Grades

## Let Students Choose Books They Want to Read

Encourage older students to select books that appeal to their interests. Act as a guide, making sure that content, book level, and length are appropriate.

Emphasize the need to read within one's ZPD, but don't overly restrict book choices. Sometimes students will want to read books outside of their ZPD if the subject is especially interesting.

However, if a student routinely selects books outside his or her ZPD, you may want to negotiate: "Because reading within your ZPD will lead to the most growth, I'd like you to read three books within your range, and then you may read one outside of it."

## Pair Readers with Peer Tutors

Partner less able readers with a peer tutor. Usually, students can tackle more challenging books with this kind of support than they can when reading independently. Moreover, upper-grade students tend to feel motivated by the social aspects of reading with a peer. Be sure to train tutors and acknowledge their contributions with pins, badges, and/or volunteer-recognition ceremonies. For information about a simple and effective tutoring technique, see the Resource document on Duolog Reading.

## Help All Students Succeed With Class Novels

If you want all students to read the same book but the book is too hard for some to read independently, pair less able readers with more skilled readers. Be sensitive to the pairings, however. Avoid partnering the most able with the least able. Instead, pair a student of average ability with a struggling reader. Be alert to social issues as well, and talk to students privately before you place them in pairs.

## Decide Which Teachers Will Take Status of the Class

Get together as a faculty and decide who will actively oversee students' reading practice. In some schools, the homeroom, reading, or language arts teacher takes on this responsibility. In others, the task is shared to avoid overwhelming one teacher with the job of monitoring the reading of a hundred or more students. If you share the responsibility, arrange for everyone to receive training in Accelerated Reader best practices.

## Reinforce Instruction Through Practice

Help students apply the skills and strategies you teach to their AR books. This will solidify their learning and improve their reading ability. For example, if you are teaching characterization, talk about and model how you would analyze a character in a book. Then ask students to analyze the characters in the AR™ books they are reading independently.