

**INTRODUCTION**

Since the GirlSMART revamp of 2022, Reader's Theater is no longer a required program component, but is still highly recommended. Guided Reading, which is an "eyes on the page activity" is now the core GirlSMART program component, followed by read alouds. Although guided reading takes center stage, Reader's Theater can still be implemented as another "eyes on the page" activity.

Reader's Theater was adopted as a program component in 2010 for two reasons: to increase girls' fluency, which is a necessary and often overlooked component to reading, and to include activities that require girls to be actively engaged in their learning. Reader's Theater is supported by research that shows that it is an effective way to improve students' fluency and reading comprehension (Armbruster et al., 2003). It also has the potential to improve students' vocabulary if the teacher directly teaches especially difficult words and ensures that all students understand less common words.

Reader's Theater begins by assigning girls a role from a Reader's Theater script that is at an appropriate reading level for each girl. Next, girls read their role multiple times with a group of girls who read other roles of the script. Expression and drama are encouraged; however, girls are not expected to act out or perform a play. Reading the scripts aloud gives girls essential practice in oral reading fluency. Teachers can monitor students' oral fluency as well as their ability to follow along silently and listen to spoken cues as other girls read. The scripts also give students practice in public speaking, and Reader's Theater provides a great opportunity for group interaction and student cooperation.

After extensive research on Reader's Theater, GirlSMART of Alameda County staff adopted two Reader's Theater publications to serve as the foundation for Readers' Theater time: *Evan-Moor* and *Upstart*. Staff chose these publications because of their low cost and differentiated, leveled roles. The curriculum is organized by grade level and roles within each grade level are divided into three categories of reading skill: below grade level, on grade level and above grade. For really struggling readers, teachers may need to assign students scripts from a lower grade level. A recommended publication for end of the year kindergarten (Reader's Theater is not officially part of the curriculum) and first grade is: *Twenty-Five Just-Right Plays for Emergent Readers* by Carol Pugliano-Martin.

**OVERVIEW OF EVAN-MOOR READER'S THEATER**

The Evan-Moor Reader's Theater curriculum includes many activities to prepare students for Reader's Theater and to extend their understanding of the script after they

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have practiced reading it. Each Reader's Theater script contains a reproducible dictionary page that introduces vocabulary from the script. This page provides students with visual cues to connect key words and meanings. It also identifies other important words from the script. Next, it has the minibook script designed for the students. The third component is a reproducible chant. This chant can be used to provide extra fluency practice. The last component contains reproducible activity pages that reinforce comprehension, vocabulary, and writing.

### **BASIC STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTING EVAN-MOOR**

After choosing a script, teachers should make copies of the components of the lesson they have decided to teach. Teachers will always photocopy the minibook script as well as other activities they want to teach from the other sections such as vocabulary and writing activities. It is important to divide girls up into leveled groups ahead of time. In order to deepen girls' comprehension, teachers should incorporate an extension activity found in the book or that they create to meet the specific needs of their girls. They may decide (no more than 4 times a year) to allow girls to choose their favorite script to perform in front of their class or other classes. Teachers with English learners should pay close attention to the vocabulary in each script and pre-teach important words before girls break into groups to read the script.

### **OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

The best way to ensure that girls are engaged and excited about Reader's Theater or any other reading activity is to find materials that interest them and are at the appropriate reading level. Teachers should look through the Evan-Moor program for the appropriate grade level and choose a script that will most interest and engage the girls. Teachers are encouraged to look for scripts that address similar topics to their read aloud books or that address one of the qualities of strong, smart and bold. Please note that since the main goal of the Reader's Theater is to build fluency, the scripts are written with words that facilitate students' word decoding skills and as such, they may not have the most interesting plots or topics that are highly relevant to the girls. The Internet has many websites and links that post free Reader's Theater scripts. It is important to note that the difficulty (or grade level) of the script is not always stated and most scripts do not have leveled roles, which is a significant disadvantage. Lastly, all staff members should show enthusiasm about Reader's Theater and encourage their girls to enjoy themselves and read with expression.