

Guided Reading

Definition

Guided reading is a teaching strategy used with small groups of children who have similar instructional needs in reading. In guided reading, the teacher supports the children's development of effective strategies for processing new texts at increasing levels of difficulty. Research supports using this strategy through grade 5.

Purpose

Students learn to:

- Use reading strategies
- Attend to words, letters, and sounds as needed in a text reading situation
- Integrate their repertoire of knowledge and strategies
- Read books of increasing complexity and/or difficulty
- Read without teacher modeling

Materials

- Multiple copies of appropriate texts
- Any appropriate text may be used.
- Watch Me Read books, Phonics Readers, Little Readers for Guided Reading, Ready Readers, and Paperback Plus books are all suitable for guided reading.
- Anthology stories may be used for guided reading for students reading at grade level.

Procedure

- Before the reading: Grouping of students, selecting the text, identifying a teaching focus, and introducing the book
- During the reading: All students read the entire text or book, or the section selected for that day
- After the reading: Follow-up work with the group; optional extension activities

Before the Reading: Grouping of students

- Students reading at the same level should be grouped together. Usually these students will have similar needs and strategies.
- Periodically, you may want to use an Informal Reading Inventory or other system of leveled texts, such as the Rigby PM Benchmark Kit, to determine students' instructional reading level.
- Grouping is flexible. Students are grouped for a particular text, not permanently.

Before the Reading: Selection of text

- The text should be at the students' instructional level. (Students should almost be able to read the text independently.) Use of a leveling system such as the one developed by Fountas and Pinnell helps teachers identify appropriate books.
- The text should be one the students have not read before.
- Consideration should be given to the skills and strategies needed to read the book. Think about children's interest and background, the story line and/or text structure, the concepts, the comprehension strategies needed, picture support, vocabulary, and word analysis skills needed.
- A book may be chosen for a particular teaching focus.

Before the Reading: Identifying a teaching focus

- Be clear about what the children already know and what you want them to learn from the guided reading lesson.
- The goal is to help students develop the next skill or strategy they need to become better readers.
- Your teaching focus might be:
 - An early strategy such as directionality or one-to-one correspondence
 - Using phonics or word analysis skills
 - Fluency and expression
 - Using more than one source of information at points of difficulty
 - Using a particular comprehension strategy (e.g., predicting, inferring, questioning, monitoring, summarizing)
 - A particular comprehension skill (e.g., sequencing, finding the main idea)
 - Understanding new vocabulary
- Particularly for beginning or struggling readers, be careful not to overwhelm children with too much information or with information that they can't yet understand.

Before the Reading: Introducing the book

- Include important features of the plot, characters, language and concepts.
- Help students activate prior knowledge, but center on the book.
- Preview the book by looking at the pictures, chapter titles, captions, and so forth. Don't read the book to the students.
- You may want to use graphic organizers (e.g., KWL, story map).
- Have students make predictions. Make multiple predictions when appropriate.
- Be on the lookout for confusions the children might bring to the text.
- You may ask students to locate one or two new and important words.
- The introduction is more like a conversation than a presentation.
- Plan key points of the introduction in advance. You can write key ideas on a sticky note on your copy of the book.
- You may want to do all or part of the introduction before giving the books to the children.
- The introduction becomes less supportive as children become more skilled.

During the Reading

- All students read the entire text. (Round robin reading should not be used). For longer texts, read a meaningful portion of the text, taking more than one day to complete the entire text.
- Emergent readers may choral read with the teacher. As children become more independent, they may move to choral reading without teacher support, and then to individual reading in a soft voice. Later they can read silently.
- Students read as independently as possible. They may ask for help if needed. When difficulties arise, ask students to verbalize their thinking.
- You may stop occasionally to discuss, predict, set purposes, etc.
- Instruction, often in the form of coaching or questioning, emphasizes strategies for comprehension, error detection, error correction, and word analysis.
- Keep your teaching focus in mind.

Right after the Reading: Work in the group

- Talk about what has been read. Invite a personal response from the students. Informally assess the students' understanding of the reading from your discussion.
- Keep your teaching focus in mind.
- You may want to emphasize a particular strategy (e.g., summarize, clarify) or skill (e.g., main idea, compare and contrast).
- You may return to the text for one or two teaching points.

After the Reading

- Provide opportunities for the students to reread the text, independently or with others.
- Students may, from time to time, extend work on the book (e.g., by illustrating part of the story, making a story map, doing writing that uses a word, pattern, or concept from the book).

Assessment

Guided reading lessons are effective if:

- Students are able to read texts of increasing difficulty over time.
- Students become more independent.
- Students show improvement in decoding, vocabulary and comprehension over time.
- Accuracy scores are 92% or greater on guided reading texts.
- Students show improvement on classroom assessments such as read and retell, informal reading inventories, running records and/or oral reading checks.