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Guided reading in early childhood classrooms

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Abstract

Guided Reading is a topic that has been discussed in great detail over the last few years. It has been discussed as "best practice" by Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (p.70) and is gaining popularity in classrooms across the nation. In teaching kindergarten during the last seven years, I have seen an enormous change in the curriculum at this level. I want my children to learn to read and want to keep up with the best practice in order to best fit the needs of my children; however, I do not want kindergarten to become first grade. This paper will explore the effectiveness of guided reading in early childhood classrooms.

GUIDED READING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOMS

A Graduate Review

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Shyla Dawn Crosser

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Abstract

Guided Reading is a topic that has been discussed in great detail over the last few years. It has been discussed as "best practice" by Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (p.70) and is gaining popularity in classrooms across the nation. In teaching kindergarten during the last seven years, I have seen an enormous change in the curriculum at this level. I want my children to learn to read and want to keep up with the best practice in order to best fit the needs of my children; however, I do not want kindergarten to become first grade. This paper will explore the effectiveness of guided reading in early childhood classrooms.

Introduction

Definition of Guided Reading

What is guided reading? Fountas and Pinnell (1999) state that "guided reading is a context in which a teacher supports each reader's development of effective strategies for processing novel texts at increasingly challenging levels of difficulty" (p.2). The purpose is to provide children with strategies and skills that they can use to read successfully and fluently on their own. This is done through small groups of 3-5 students at a time working with their classroom teacher on specific reading skills that they need help with. It is believed that "this shared process where the teacher and children interact together allows for:

1. a more focused teaching session

2. an opportunity to teach and extend children of similar ability

3. an opportunity to learn from each other, teacher and children alike (Seymour, 2004).

In the early primary grades, guided reading supports children as they are learning how to read. As children become proficient readers, the focus expands to include reading for information, or reading to learn.

Through ongoing assessment of the students and careful observation, the classroom teacher chooses a book that will provide appropriate support and challenge to the readers in the group. "The text should be short enough to be read in one sitting. Reading an entire text supports their understanding and the ability to apply the reading skills and strategies being practiced" (Schulman & Payne, 2000, p.12). Each child has their own copy of the chosen text and the teacher provides an introduction to give

students a sense of the story and to determine prior knowledge and point out possible "tricky parts". Next, students whisper read, or read the entire text softly to themselves while the teacher closely observes. The teacher guides them as needed.

After reading, the group discusses the text, does some word work and/or strategy instruction and then participates in a follow-up activity determined by the teacher to best suit their needs. The teacher then evaluates the responses to the reading and determines the next instructional focus for their next lesson.

Why Guided Reading is Being Reviewed

"For every child, reading is truly the gateway to knowledge. In fact, teaching children to read is probably the most important task of our elementary schools" (American Federation of Teachers, 1996, p.1). Reading is by far the primary focus at the early childhood level and staying up to date on the current best practice is important in order to provide children with the skills they will need for a lifetime. Kindergarten is now the year where children are developing the building blocks and beginning skills that they need to be successful for a lifetime of reading. It is also known that "children who get off to a poor start in reading rarely catch up" (Iaquinta, 2006, p.1). Teachers at this level take heart in knowing that they play a vital role in a child's life and want to do what is proven to be best.

Guided reading has become a hot trend in literacy education and has received a lot of positive attention in the area of comprehension. Teachers are implementing guided reading in kindergarten classrooms to best teach children the skills of learning to read. Is this appropriate at this age level? Through the undergraduate program at the University of Northern Iowa to get a degree in teaching it was repeated over and over that students

should not be grouped based on their abilities. Should the children be put into guided reading groups at such a young age? "There was much talk years ago as to how terrible it was to put children into high, medium, and low reading groups, that many teachers quit doing this and went to a whole-class direct approach" (Antonacci, 2000).

Another question that has to be asked when discussing guided reading at the early childhood level is what are the remaining children in the class to be doing while the classroom teacher is working with the small group of students? If the teacher is working with 3-5 students at a time, this leaves 15-20 students unattended to in the room. According to Lanning (2002), "Management is considered the cornerstone of an effective classroom" so many teachers are hesitant to take on guided reading in fear that chaos will break out in their classroom.

Methodology

As mentioned before, guided reading is a hot topic in education today. Information is plentiful; however, a bit harder to find in reference to the kindergarten level. Using the Rod Library's resources helped to locate a majority of the information, along with texts and required readings from previous classes as part of the university's masters in education program. The internet proved to be the best source of information along with the book by Fountas and Pinnell (1999), as they have done an enormous amount of research in this topic and have become trusted experts in the area of guided reading. I contacted Dr. Gay Su Pinnell directly via email at Ohio State University and did receive a short but meaningful reply back from her.

After researching, locating, and reading many articles and books on guided reading, I began to note the main issues I wanted to address in this paper. Resources that

are the most current and most relevant to the early childhood level are the resources I

chose for this paper.

<div align="center">Literature Review</div>

The Goal of Guided Reading

"The goal of guided reading is to develop a self-extending system of reading that

enables the reader to discover more about the process of reading while reading" (Iaquinta,

2006). Throughout the process of guided reading, accuracy, speed, and fluency increase

and become more automatic for the child. Antonacci states that "children learn more

than just how to read a story; they learn how to read on their own by applying the

strategies learned in guided reading" (Antonacci, 2000, p.2).

In order to meet this goal, teachers must know how to prompt and guide students

as they work. Teachers move from student to student, listening as they read aloud and

often invite them to reread in order to build fluency and practice new vocabulary.

Iaquinta states that "The process of reading must be dynamically supported by an

interaction of text reading and good teaching. Guided reading serves this important goal"

(2006).

The Teacher's Role

"In a truly balanced literacy program, *how* you teach is as important as *what* you

teach" (Iaquinta, 2006). Every guided reading lesson is different because each group of

readers is working on different skills due to different strengths and needs. Mooney

(1995) believes that:

> your role is similar in some respects to that of a trampoline: each time the
> children touch base, you give them on as much guidance or 'spring' to keep them
> bouncing. If they happen to need extra help, you are there to give them an extra
> bounce – and, at times, you are there as a safety net(p.1).

The teaching sequence for the teacher during guided reading as determined by Schulman and Payne (2000) is as follows:

1. Before the lesson:

    a. The teacher selects four to six students for the group and decides on the focus of the lesson based on the assessment of the students. Some students may require more attention and may be taken individually or in a smaller group of two to three students.

    b. The teacher chooses a text that will support the selected focus and meet the needs of the group. She plans how to introduce the book, how to model the selected reading skill or strategy, and who to observe during the lesson.

2. During the lesson:

    a. The teacher introduces the book. Through discussions with the group, she may do one or more of the following:

        • talk about the illustrations,

        • give a sense of the story or basic plot, ETC.

        • call attention to text features,

        • have students make predictions,

        • discuss reading strategies,

        • anticipate challenging words or language structures, or

        • review parts in the text, particularly tricky words.

      b. Students read the text independently and softly to themselves. The teacher observes the group and coaches individual students as needed; she may focus on one or two students. More advanced readers may read silently at their desks or another reading area.

      c. The teacher may record her observations as anecdotal notes (p. 14).

3. After the lesson:

      a. The teacher and students return to the text as a group and discuss and clarify understandings, do some phonics or word work, or review reading strategies.

      b. Students respond to the text in a variety of ways.

      c. Teacher records her observations and evaluates each student's reading of the text to determine what the students need to learn next.

During the guided reading lesson, the teacher has a vital role in providing the correct prompts for each individual student. Following is a list of promts or ways in which a teacher can coach children in the guided reading group

1.   Meaning: What we read needs to make sense with our experiences, what we know about the outside world, and what is happening in the story.

      Teacher Prompts: Did that make sense?

                     What do you think it could be?

                     Let's read it again to make sense.

2.   Knowledge of Language Stucture: We use our knowledge of the way
we talk to read. Our reading sounds like the language patterns we
speak and the language of the books we read.

Teacher Prompts: Can we say it that way?

Is that like the way we talk?

Does that sound right?

3.   Visual /Grapho-phonic: The words we read must match the
letters/sounds we see. We look at the first, middle, or last letter of a
word, or a familiar part of a word.

Teacher Prompts: Does it look right?

What letter would you expect to see at the
beginning? At the end?

Read it again. Get your mouth ready for the second
sound.

Say it slowly.

4.   Prediction: The student anticipates as he or she reads to predict a word
or event in the story. The reader uses prior knowledge, knowledge of
language, what makes sense, and what would look right.

Teacher Prompts: This about what has happened so far in the story.
Would that make sense?

Look at the picture. What do you know?

What would you expect to see? (letters, words)

What do you think will happen next?

5.   Self-Correct: The student notices on her own that something is not right in the reading. She searches and checks for more information to self-correct or make it right.

Teacher Prompts: I like the way you corrected that all by yourself.

Were you right? How did you know that?

Something's not right on that page, is it? Can you find it? (Schulman & Payne, 2000, p. 232).

Word Study and Phonics

Guided reading allows for teachers to focus on specific strategy instruction, including phonics and word study. "To help students become word-solvers, we plan for word study instruction in guided reading lessons" (Schulman & Payne, 2000, p. 104). Specific ideas provided by Schulman and Payne are:

*Preview books students read to identify words that might present a problem for students, e.g., the meaning or decoding.

*Use words students know to teacher principles about how words work.

*Spend only two to four minutes with a few words to teach the principle.

*Use magnetic letters with emergent readers so you or your students can manipulate the letters.

*Demonstrate on white board, chalkboard, or paper to show how letters and/or words work.

*Explore the meaning of words as part of word study.

*Select words for word study from students' writing and reading (p.104).

Principles to focus on for letter and word study at the kindergarten level include: a group of letters makes a word, letters in words are read from left to right, words can vary in length (some are long and some are short), letters have an alphabetic sequence, letters in words represent sounds, sounds of the letters can be heard in words, words are the same in reading and in writing, and initial letters can be uppercase or lowercase.

Dynamic Grouping

"Dynamic Grouping" is what Fountas and Pinnell (1996) have termed the grouping done in guided reading. Dynamic grouping differs from traditional reading groups in that different grouping for different purposes are done and evaluation is regular and systematic based on individual assessment, rather than a group test. It is also believed that "the children learn how to support and help each other learn from the teacher's interaction with the group" (p.99).

As addressed earlier in the introduction, there has been much debate over the years as to how terrible it is to put children into high, medium, and low reading groups to teach them to read. Antonacci (2000) believes that this debate led many teachers to quit working with children in small groups and they are now teaching a whole-class direct approach with a "one size fits all" approach to teaching children how to read. Antonacci (2000) continues to explain that the difference between the grouping that has been done in the past and the dynamic grouping for guided reading differ on a number of factors: "Traditional groups employ general ability as a factor to determine membership in a group, whereas, in dynamic grouping, the determining factor is the ability of the children to use varied sources of information to read and understand text" (p.3).

Research has been done by McCoach, O'Connell, and Levitt (2006) on the effects of ability grouping across kindergarten. The study is done on within-class ability grouping (groups that are determined by the teacher, based on the skill the group will be working on and the child's area of need) as opposed to between-class ability grouping (teachers or administrators divide students into separate classes based on test scores). The authors understand that "the kindergarten year sets the stage for beginning reading skills and comprehension, so it is essential that one understands factors that may be related to student skill development in these areas" (McCoach, O'Connell, & Levitt, 2006, p. 5). The research showed that schools in which teachers used ability groups on a regular basis tended to have greater gains in reading scores. It was concluded through their study that ability grouping in kindergarten is very much related to reading growth at this level (p.7).

"Guided reading in one place where homogeneous grouping is important. It's critical to students' continued reading progress that guided reading groups remain flexible and change often throughout the year" (Schulman & Payne, 2000, p.60). At the beginning of the year, a teacher will more than likely have to rely on assessment to group his/her students. Through daily observation and running records the teacher may decide whether or not that child should remain in the group that he or she is in or if they would better benefit from another group. This thinking and rearranging of students is continuous. Ford and Opitz (2002) conclude that "the smaller groups provide a greater opportunity for teachers to use instruction that scaffolds the learning and engages the learner – two key characteristics of exemplary teachers in high-achieving primary classrooms (p. 1).

Matching Readers to Books

Once the classroom teacher has divided the class into groups, a text will need to

be chosen for each group. "The importance of selecting texts matched to the needs of

readers in guided reading cannot be overstated" (Schulman & Payne, 2000, p.48).

Ongoing assessment, such as anecdotal notes or running records allows teachers to be

aware of each student's abilities and needs as a reader. With this knowledge, teachers

need to choose books that have appropriate supports and challenges for readers at each

stage of their development. The features to consider as outlined by Schulman and Payne

(2000) are:

1. Concepts in the book – Can students related to concepts or experiences in the

   text? What background knowledge is necessary to understand the text? Do

   events in the story follow a sequential and/or predictable pattern?

2. Illustrations – Do they provide high, moderate, or low support? Where are

   they located on the page? Are they clear or do they need interpretation?

3. Language/Structure – Is the text structure repetitive, familiar, or natural to

   spoken language? Are there high-frequency words that can serve as anchors

   for emergent readers? Is there difficult or technical vocabulary that might

   present a problem?

4. Text Features/Layout – How many lines of print are on a page? Is there clear

   spacing between words? Is the size and placement of the print supportive to

   the reader? Are there unusual fonts that are distracting or confusing? Is the

   text length appropriate for the reader? Are there any unusual text formats –

   such as diagrams, charts, or maps that require explanation? (p.49).

Choosing the Text

"Without interesting and engaging texts, reading instruction is joyless" (Scharer, Pinnell, Lyons, and Fountas, 2005, p.4). It is important to choose texts that captivate the students' interests, even at the beginning levels. At least three kinds of texts are important to provide a rich base for reading comprehension:

1. Books to read aloud – every classroom needs plenty of carefully selected, age-appropriate books to read aloud to students. There are wonderful picture books in every genre. You can read favorites again and again, enabling young students to internalize powerful language.

2. Leveled books – leveled books are categorized along a gradient of difficulty to help teachers organize their small group instruction. They provide a ladder of support so that students can take on more difficult text with teacher support and, in the process, expand their strategies for thinking within, beyond, and about the texts.

3. Classroom libraries – students should be able to choose from a rich variety of books that they can read independently. Students must experience massive quantities of comprehensible reading to build successful processing systems. The quantity of reading that students do really does count (Scharer, Pinnell, Lyons, & Fountas, 2005, p. 5).

What About the Rest of the Class?

If guided reading groups are done with 3-5 children in a group, working with the teacher, this leaves several children in the classroom "on their own". Lanning (2002) states that "management is considered the cornerstone of an effective classroom so when

faces with the possibility of undertaking guided reading groups, teachers often ask

important questions such as , 'How can I ensure the other twenty students are

productively engaged and productively monitored while I'm running a guided reading

lesson'" (p.2). There are several different ways to manage and monitor the rest of the

class while guided reading lessons are being conducted; however, much will depend on

the nature of the students in the class and their learning needs. "There is never 'one' right

way to determine appropriate work for the other students" (Lanning, 2002, p.2). Brian

Cambourne (2001) stresses that determining the types of activities are very important for

several reasons:

1. The activities are the main strategy that teachers have available to "free them
   up" so they can devote their energy and attention to students involved in the
   guided reading lesson.

2. The activities determine how meaningful the learning from collaborative or
   independent work will be.

3. If students cannot or do not engage deeply with these activities, teachers
   intuitively know very little learning will occur.

4. The activities can promote learners in becoming interdependent with respect
   to each other and respect to the teacher.

   It is important to distinguish between independent activities that create excitement
   about reading and writing and those that actually require students to interact with
   print while reading and writing. While any number of cut, color, and paste
   activities done in support of reading and writing instruction, these activities do
   little to require students to actually interact with print (Ford and Opitz, 2000,
   p.3).

Lenz (2005) makes it clear that "the success of guided reading as an effective instructional practice is contingent upon the implementation of a classroom structure conducive to working with the guided reading group while other students are independently and actively engaged in meaningful literacy experiences" (p.2). It is recommended that teachers implement guided reading slowly and gradually, maybe just meeting with one guided reading group a day for a while, especially with the younger children, in order to build up the endurance for the length of time in which they are able to work independently at their seats. Lenz (2005) feels that a span of five to seven weeks should be allowed to demonstrate the guided reading process to the children and not have it be so overwhelming (p.3). It is also suggested by a K-5 reading consultant interviewed by Lanning (2002) that if it is hard to keep the students at their seats on task during guided reading time to split the schedule so that you meet with a couple groups, do some whole class instruction, and then meet with another group (p.3).

Guidelines to consider when establishing instruction away from the center are provided by Ford and Opitz (2002) and are as follows:

1. Facilitate independent use by students. Any activity that has the potential to interrupt small –group instruction because of the complexity of sustaining its operation may be more of a deterrent than a learning tool.

2. Operate with minimal transition time and management concerns. If implementing centers consumes more time, energy, and effort than the instruction and activities that take place in the centers, using them needs to be rethought.

3. Encourage equitable use of activities among learners. If all center-based activities have value, it stands to reason that they would be important for all students. While some students may like some activities more than others, they need to be encouraged to participate in all activities. If the organization precludes some students from having access to the same centers as the other students, arrangements need to be made to equalize access.

4. Include a simple built-in accountability system. Engagement in the center-based activities is critical if students are going to learn what we would like them to learn as a result of completing them.

5. Allow for efficient use of teacher preparation time. Elaborate centers that consume large amounts of teachers' limited preparation time without similar payoffs in duration of student engagement will lead to a quick abandonment of centers.

6. Build around class routines. Routines provide a predictable way for children to engage in learning. Routines also provide a predictable way for teachers to plan instruction that minimizes concerns, confusion, and chaos along the way (pp. 3-4).

There have been many different names for the activities teachers develop for the children in their room to do during guided reading time. Some teachers refer to them as centers or literacy centers. They have also been called stations or kidstations. Fountas and Pinnell (1999) refer to these extra activities as "Workboard" choices.

There are many possibilities for what the rest of the children can be doing during guided reading lessons. Some of the most common and easily adaptable for the early childhood setting are :

1. Literary Friends: Hang up a picture of a favorite character from a children's story (i.e. the mouse from If You Give a Mouse a Cookie by Laura Numeroff). Have the children write letters to the character. An older class may partner up and write responses back to the children.

2. Listening Area: Here the children can listen to a story on tape and follow along, they can read along, or they can turn off the tape and read it again on their own.

3. Journals: Children may free write and illustrate.

4. Reading/Writing the room: Children can use pointers or special glasses to "read" the room. Clipboards and scrap paper may be made available for children to "write the room", copying words from the print-rich environment around them.

5. Books: Children may reread books they are familiar with or picture walk through new books.

6. Poems/Story Packs: When the teacher is finished with a poem or story from large group practice, the words, phrases, or sentences are placed in a large see-through envelope. Students may find a quiet place to shake out the parts and engage in a variety of activities including reconstructing the familiar text or working with a partner to classify or sort words (Ford & Opitz, 2000, p.5).

Guided Reading and Struggling Readers

Not every child gathers the information necessary to read as quickly as teachers would hope. There are those children that seem to have a bit more of a struggle along the way, and it is important to consider how guided reading will affect these children. The response is very positive. "Struggling readers often lack the feedback about their attempts that effective monitoring strategies can provide. Self-correction during oral reading is one observable indication of effective processing. Self-correction requires a combination of monitoring and searching strategies" (Schwartz, 2005, p.4). These strategies can be supported through effective guided reading lessons.

Guided Reading and Second Language Learners

Teacher and researcher, Betsy Suits, wanted to know if guided reading groups were beneficial to second-language learners. She set a goal for herself to see if second-language learners could be integrated into the guided reading groups in the language arts curriculum.

As stated earlier, strategies should build on students' strengths. Watts-Taffe & Truscott (2000) suggest three areas in which teachers can use scaffolding to support children in language development:

1. Background knowledge – It is especially important to find out what an SLL student knows about a topic before reading the text.

2. Vocabulary development – It is crucial that SLL students learn the meanings of English words in order to interact with the text. It is useful to make vocabulary webs including words from their own language, use drama and pictures, and to revisit the concepts in multiple ways over time.

3. Communication - Teachers need to create a feeling of community in the

classroom where risk-taking is encouraged and all students are recognized as

academically able (p.4).

Through her year of implementing guided reading, Suits (2003) found that:

"the use of guided reading groups incorporated many of the strategies

recommended for second-language learners. Guided reading groups enable

children to read books at their level, to work together, to share and clarify ideas

with other children, and to develop self-confidence in a non-threatening

environment (p.6).

What the Research Concludes about Guided Reading

According to the National Research Council (NRC) (2002), one in five children is

estimated to have difficulty learning to read in school; other researchers estimate that as

many as 45% of our children are having difficulty learning to read (National Institute of

Child Health and Human Development (NICHD, 1999). The National Reading Panel

(2000) argued that balanced approaches are preferable when teaching children to read,

based on their review of scientific research-based reading instructional practices used by

teachers in classrooms across the country.

"Balance" is a buzzword in literacy instruction across America today. Teachers

work hard to balance a wide variety of teaching strategies and learning activities to best

meet the needs of their students. "A balanced program requires opportunities for reading

and writing *to* students, reading and writing *with* students, and reading and writing *by*

students" (Rog, 2003, p.8). Guided Reading is only one component of the total balanced

literacy.

"Current research and practice on exemplary reading instruction affirm the principles of effective practice inherent in the Guided Reading model" (Rog, 2003, p.152). Guided reading practices as part of a balanced literacy program conforms to the recommendations on literacy as suggested in position statements by the International Reading Association/The National Association for the Education of Young Children (1998), and the National Council of Teachers of English (2002).

> The National Reading Panel in the United States conducted a meta-analysis of a large body of empirical reading research in reading instruction and found support for five key literacy practices: phonemic awareness instruction, systematic phonics instruction, guided oral reading, vocabulary instruction, and comprehension strategy instruction. An effective Guided Reading lesson incorporates these elements at appropriate levels of development within the context of meaningful reading (Rog, 2003, p. 152).

It has also been found that themes from Vygotsky's work provide very specific support to the framework for guided reading instruction. "Guided reading rests upon sound principles of learning that have provided a framework for Vygotsky's theory or instruction" (Antonacci, 2000, p.7). Vygotsky (1978) has defined the zone of proximal development as the "actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving" and the "potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p.81). For the classroom teacher, this means knowing the children's level of development and shaping their instruction slightly beyond their development. This is done through guided reading lessons. The teacher is able to teach and prepare the guided reading lessons to each child's development through ongoing observation and assessment. After gathering this information, the teacher prepares for the next lesson more effectively and is then assisting them in their zone of proximal development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

After careful research and exploration into guided reading at the early childhood level, I believe that guided reading is appropriate at the kindergarten level but that much of the program's success is determined by the teacher. I am convinced that a teacher will get out of guided reading whatever he or she is willing to put in. I was very much reassured to hear directly from Dr. Gay Su Pinnell (Dr. Gay Su Pinnell, personal communication, July 11, 2007) that "Guided reading is very appropriate for kindergarten". I have great respect for all the time and energy that she has put into guided reading and greatly value her opinion. Dr. Pinnell stated also that "There's no need to push children – make it enjoyable and successful". This, too, I feel is of utmost importance. As I stated earlier, kindergarten is the year that most children are first exposed to print and the joy of learning to read. It needs to be a positive experience and they need to feel confident and experience success. It is important to remember that reading at this level should be fun! It was recommended by Dr. Pinnell to focus on these important strategies at the kindergarten level:

1. Early behaviors such as word by word matching

2. Developing the ability to notices some mismatches using letters and sounds.

3. Being able to start a word by looking at the first letter

4. Learning some high frequency words

5. Understanding simple stories

6. Learning to talk about books (Dr. Gay Su Pinnell, personal communication, July 11, 2007).

As with many ages I am sure, the wide range of prior knowledge and literacy experiences that children come to kindergarten with is absolutely enormous. The dynamic grouping, as defined by Fountas and Pinnell (1996), allows teachers to determine the strengths and needs of each child as an individual and work with them to improve each of these.

The biggest concern is what the other children in the classroom are doing while the teacher is busy working with this small group of children. I feel that many of the center or workstation activities are easily adaptable to be suitable for children at the kindergarten level. A routine needs to be established and children need to know what is expected of them when they are at the seat and kindergarteners are able to carry this routine out.

Rog makes a very good point in stating that "probably the greatest challenge for teachers today is the increasing diversity of students in their classroom" (Rog, 2003, p.152). This is extremely true already at the kindergarten level in my district. Children come from very different home environments, some in which reading or education is not of significant priority. There are children that enter kindergarten not knowing that letters exist, and there are children that enter that can write their name and tell you all the letters of the alphabet. This is most definitely a challenge. How can we teach in such a way that the strength and needs of each student are addressed? I do believe that an effective Guided Reading program is the answer. I believe this gives the classroom teacher the time to work with each child and the Guided Reading lessons are geared specifically toward each learner.

Scharer, Pinnell, Lyons, and Fountas (2005) leave us with great words I believe every teacher needs to take to heart "We want to make two promises to every child: We will teach you to read, and we will help you become a reader – a literate person who experiences the power and joy of comprehending" (p.1). This is most definitely my goal and I am convinced that guided reading will help me meet that goal with children even at the kindergarten level.

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Guided Reading Lesson Plan

Group:

Date:

Book Level:

Text:

Word Work:

Skills/Strategy Work:

Anecdotal Notes:

Next Running Record:

Appendix B

Informal Running Record

Name: _____ Title: _____ Page(s): _____ Date: _____

On each line, make a check for each word read correctly in that line or record miscues as read.

Text Line	Words	Errors				Self-corrections				Comments / Strategies Taught
		M	S	V	#	M	S	V	#	
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										
9										
10										
11										
12										
13										
14										
	TOTAL									

Assessment Tips

Running Records

You can do guided reading assessment by taking a running record using a book that you believe is close to the child's developmental level. The running record allows you to record a child's reading behavior as he or she reads from the book. Reading A-Z provides benchmark books for this purpose. A running record form accompanies each of the benchmark books.

Running records can be taken on a book that has never been seen by the reader or one that has been read once or twice. There are conflicting views on this issue. At Reading A-Z, we believe that using a book that has not been previously read will give a more accurate measure of a child's ability to handle text at the assessed level. For this reason, we provide a benchmark book at each level. Of course, you can always opt to read the book before doing a running record if you believe in using previously read text for your running record.

You can analyze the results of your running record assessment to gain insights into a child's reading and to assign children to the appropriate developmental level for their guided reading sessions.

Taking a running record improves with experience. With practice, you will get better at doing them. Don't be too hard on yourself during the first few attempts.

The Running Record Form

There are two distinct parts to the assessment: the running record and a comprehension check. When you perform a running record, simply use the symbols and marking conventions explained in Table 1 below to record a child's reading behavior as he or she reads from the book. When the session is complete, calculate the reading rate, error rate, and self-correction rate, and enter them in the boxes at the bottom of the page. Scroll ahead to the Scoring section, which appears under Scoring and Analyzing Running Records, to see formulas for calculating these rates.

Before using the running record form, familiarize yourself with the following terms:
Errors (E)
Errors are tallied during the reading whenever a child does any of the following:

- Substitutes another word for a word in the text
- Omits a word
- Inserts a word
- Has to be told a word by the person administering the running record

Self-correction (SC)
Self-correction occurs when a child realizes his or her error and corrects it. When a child makes a self-correction, the previous substitution is not scored as an error.
Meaning (M)
Meaning is part of the cueing system in which the child takes his or her cue to make sense of text by thinking about the story background, information from pictures, or the meaning of a sentence. These cues assist in the reading of a word or phrase.
Structure (S)
Structure refers to the structure of language and is often referred to as syntax. Implicit knowledge of structure helps the reader know if what he or she reads sounds correct.
Visual (V)
Visual information is related to the look of the letter in a word and the word itself. A reader uses visual information when he or she studies the beginning sound, word length, familiar word chunks, etc.

Marking M, S, and V on a Running Record
When a child makes an error in a line of text, record the source(s) of information used by the child in the second column from the right on the running record form. Write M, S, and V in to the right of the sentence in that column. Then circle M, S, and/or V, depending on the source(s) of information the child used.

If the child self-corrects an error in a line of text, use the far right-hand column to record this information. Write M, S, and V to the right of the sentence in that column. Circle the source(s) of information the child used for the self-correction.

You may choose to administer a running record assessment without recording your observations regarding the child's use of meaning (M), structure (S), and visual (V) cues. Even without recording this information on the form, and you can still use the information on error, selfcorrection, and accuracy rates to place the child at a given reading level.

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tm=27&gps=83_2_788_440&f=00&tt=14&bt=1&bts=1&zu=http%3A//www.readinga-
z.com/newfiles/levels/runrecord/runrec.html