

1998

Developing more efficient readers : a guided reading, making words, and sentence writing practice

Nancy Hohanshelt
University of Northern Iowa

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Copyright ©1998 Nancy Hohanshelt

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp>



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), and the [Language and Literacy Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hohanshelt, Nancy, "Developing more efficient readers : a guided reading, making words, and sentence writing practice" (1998). *Graduate Research Papers*. 861.

<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/861>

This Open Access Graduate Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Papers by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.

Offensive Materials Statement: Materials located in UNI ScholarWorks come from a broad range of sources and time periods. Some of these materials may contain offensive stereotypes, ideas, visuals, or language.

Developing more efficient readers : a guided reading, making words, and sentence writing practice

Abstract

Inefficient reading of text by poor readers has always been a concern of reading teachers. This paper demonstrates an approach that increases vocabulary, aids comprehension, and improves writing. It incorporates three processes: guided reading, making words, and sentence writing.

The guided reading segment is where the text is introduced and then read by the students. Difficult words are studied and mini-lessons may be initiated at this time or a later time. The second portion of the lesson is for making words. A word is chosen from the guided reading text and becomes the target word for this portion of the lesson. Five or six words are culled from this target word (using only the letters that the target word contains), used orally in a sentence by the teacher, and written by the students. The third teaching segment involves the students writing the target word in a sentence dictated by the teacher.

**DEVELOPING MORE EFFICIENT READERS: A GUIDED READING,
MAKING WORDS, AND SENTENCE WRITING PRACTICE**

**A Graduate Journal Article
Submitted to the
Division of Reading
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Education
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA**

**by
Nancy Hohanshelt
Summer 1998**

This Journal Article by: Nancy Hohanshelt

Titled: DEVELOPING MORE EFFICIENT READERS: A GUIDED READING,
MAKING WORDS, AND SENTENCE WRITING PRACTICE

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the
Degree of Master of Arts in Education

8-8-98
Date Approved

Deborah L. Tidwell
Graduate Faculty Reader

8/11/98
Date Approved

Jeanne McLain Harms
Graduate Faculty Reader

8-14-98
Date Approved

William P. Callahan
Head, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Abstract

Inefficient reading of text by poor readers has always been a concern of reading teachers. This paper demonstrates an approach that increases vocabulary, aids comprehension, and improves writing. It incorporates three processes: guided reading, making words, and sentence writing. The guided reading segment is where the text is introduced and then read by the students. Difficult words are studied and minilessons may be initiated at this time or a later time. The second portion of the lesson is for making words. A word is chosen from the guided reading text and becomes the target word for this portion of the lesson. Five or six words are culled from this target word (using only the letters that the target word contains), used orally in a sentence by the teacher, and written by the students. The third teaching segment involves the students writing the target word in a sentence dictated by the teacher.

Since the first published case study of reading failure appeared more than a century ago (Morgan, 1896), difficulty in learning to read has remained a research focus. There have been many reading problems documented and studied and the factors contributing to these noted. For instance, Johnston and Winograd (1985) and Bristow (1985) talked about the behavior of passive failure and learned helplessness in poor readers. It has long been known that good and average readers learn and utilize "fix up"

strategies when encountering text that does not make sense. They try to immediately remedy a difficult situation with text in order to comprehend the passage. This is not true with poor readers. They do not have strategies to utilize when reading and often skip over unknown words contributing to their lack of understanding text. In fact, poor readers do not see reading as a process, but more as a problem to overcome or avoid.

However, reading is an interactive process. This interaction refers to the connection a reader makes with a text while reading. When the interaction between reader and text breaks down, as with poor readers, reading educators look for instructional approaches that will work to more successfully engage their readers with text. This paper will highlight one particular reading instruction approach that combines a unique sentence writing framework enabling inefficient readers to be more successful.

A School's History

The school where I teach had the lowest test scores in the district. Yearly scoring had been the lowest on ITBS out of all fourteen elementary schools in the school district. The 1996-97 school year found the school's status had risen and was no longer in last place. This was a significant improvement, credited to an increase in real reading time in school, a changing school-wide teaching philosophy with the premise that all students are talented and gifted, and unique teaching practices that focused direct instruction on the specific needs of children.

The first and second grades at my school were being served by

the Reading Recovery teachers (Reading Recovery and Late Intervention). It was agreed that I would work with the 32 third-grade students who had tested poorly on the Jerry Johns Basic Reading Inventory (Johns, 1996) where many could not even complete the testing tasks, and the Observation Survey (Clay, 1993) where most of these third graders scored in the lowest stanines for first grade. Because of the results and the unique needs of most of these students, I decided the best way to build on the strengths they did have and to support their reading development would be to create a guided reading context with intensive word study and sentence writing.

Guided Reading

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" (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 36). Guided reading is just that--reading that is guided. The teacher guides her students to access information while discerning the text. The children do not know what strategies they have available to them, so it is up to the teacher to introduce and promote strategies during reading sessions. A classroom that incorporates guided reading as an instructional method needs to include certain elements. First, the guided reading group must be small with the students in this group being at approximately the same developmental reading level. Second, the teacher introduces the book to be read (with each student receiving a copy of the book) and helps the students develop independent reading strategies. Third,

the children read the whole text independently and silently. Last, according to ongoing assessment, students are grouped and regrouped.

As students in a guided reading group master each book, they are moved up to a higher text level. With the teacher's guidance, they are introduced to words that may be new to them in each level. Thus they are building vocabulary and beginning to form comprehension strategies to "allow them to attend to information from different sources" (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996 p. 5). The overall purpose of guided reading is to construct meaning. Even the child who does not know all of his letters may still benefit greatly from a guided reading group. During guided reading teachers need to observe how children negotiate the different information sources they use when they read.

Clay (1993) talked about the information sources the child uses in beginning reading. These are what the student uses as he works with text. They are implicitly learned as his knowledge of literacy develops. Clay groups these information sources into three areas as follows:

1. Meaning cues come from a child's own experiences in life. Meaning is represented in the language a child uses and his own memories. Reading has to make sense to the child.

2. Structural or syntactic cues are the knowledge of how words in our language are put together. There are only certain ways in our English language that we can put words together and still have them make sense and sound right. As we learn to speak, we become aware

of these rules.

3. Visual cues come from realizing how oral language matches up with its visual symbols. Here the child is learning about letters and that there are spaces between each letter in words and that they are arranged on a page. He is also learning about punctuation.

These three sources of information (meaning cues, syntactic or structural cues, and visual cues), provide the reading teacher with focus areas for observation, which guide her decisions about future instruction for the guided reading group.

A Title I Pullout Approach With a Difference

With the three cueing sources in mind, I developed an approach to use in my reading groups. Each group was 1/2 hour in length and consisted of the guided reading of an appropriate leveled text, a making words segment, and a sentence-writing segment. The initial or the guided reading segment was about 10 minutes in length. The students were each handed a book and were told to read using three-inch voices. That is, voices only they could hear or sound that would only carry from their mouth around their cheek to their ear. During the reading of the text there can be occasional stops or 'detours' for problem solving (Fountas & Pinnell 1996, p. 167). If I notice that a student is stuck on a word or a sound, I help him at this time. I help the students with these problem areas as I travel around the table checking on each one's independent reading. I listen for hesitations and incorrectly decoded words making corrections quickly so the meaning of the text is not lost to the child.

I take my teaching cues from the children. If I notice that

several children are getting stuck on the same word or word part, I may take time after the reading is done by all in the group to have a minilesson on that problem. This clarifies for the students how to go about decoding that particular word.

During guided reading, many strategies are emphasized. I might remind the students to think of what sound the beginning letter of the unknown word makes, to skip the unknown word and read on to the end of the sentence, and, to ask themselves, what would make sense here? Again, meaning is the key. This helps each student to realize the importance of every word in the sentence. The surrounding text provides the student clues to choose the best word possible that would make sense.

The second portion of the lesson is called making words. It runs about 12 minutes in length. Making words (Cunningham & Cunningham, 1992; Cunningham & Hall, 1997) is an active, hands-on, manipulative activity in which children learn how to look for patterns in words and how changing just one letter or letter order changes the whole word. The children are given six to eight letters that will form the final word. The lesson begins with two-letter words, then builds to three-, four-, and five-letter words until the target word can be made with all the letters. I choose a word from the guided reading text that is probably unfamiliar to the students. It might be a vocabulary word, a Dolch word, or a word from their spelling list that also happens to be in their guided reading book.

I have an easel for writing and the children are seated at a horseshoe table with a dry erase board for each student. The blanks

or short lines on my easel are color coded. Before the lesson starts, I mix up the letters from the target word chosen for that day. I list the vowels at the top of the easel in one color marker. For example, the target word forest was chosen from their reading and was also a spelling word in their regular classroom. The vowels are o and e in red. Then, in black, I list the consonants r s f t. The top of my board now looks like this

o e r s t f

I also underline the vowels, emphasizing to the students that every word in English must have a vowel. Then, before I give the students the first word, I draw short lines corresponding to how many letters that word has in it--the vowels having the same color as the vowels listed at the top of my easel, and the consonants having the same color as the consonants above. These are the first clues to the students: (a) how many letters the word has, and, (b) the proper placement of the vowels and consonants. I say the word in a sentence and instruct the students to draw the blanks on their boards and fill them in to make the first word which is or. Our boards now look like this

o e r s t f

- -

In Figure 1, the first word is or. I call on a student who has finished writing it in to spell the word aloud. As she does, I fill in the blanks on my easel and the students check their word with it. I put that word at the top of my easel but under the listed vowels and consonants. My board now looks as follows:

c e r s t f

o r

If the students make a mistake, they correct it on the spot by simply erasing the incorrect part and filling in the correct letters. The same process is repeated for the next word (for), and the next (tore), until all five or six words are finished (see Figure 1). After the first couple of weeks, this process goes very quickly. The children know what to do and are eager to learn it, and feel ownership by each having their own dry erase board and making their own words on it.

Ultimately the students would then have the short list of words in front of them that are spelled correctly, each having been used orally by me in a sentence. (See Figure 1 for a list of words made from forest.)

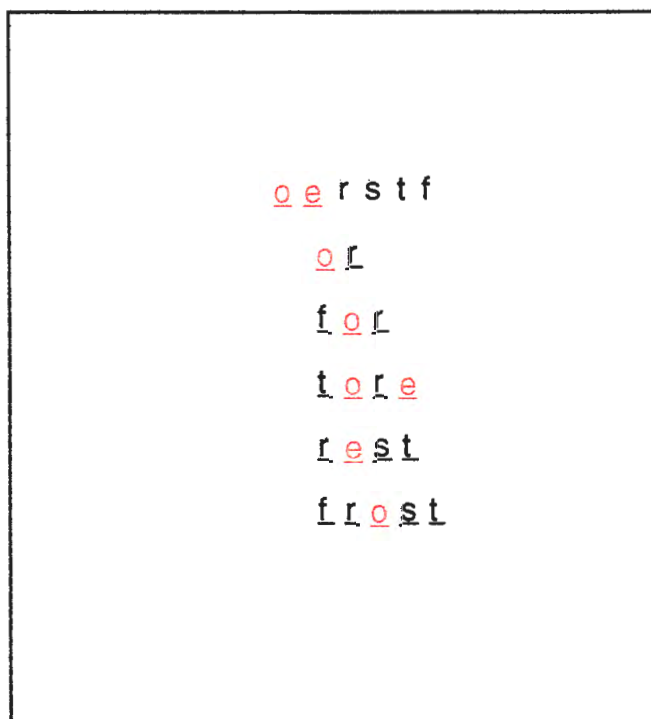


Figure 1 - Making words from the target
word forest

With this list complete, I announce that we are ready for our last word which they have just read in their book. I enter the blanks on my board and may have to give the first letter or some other clue to get them started. I first have them try to think of the word and remind them that it contains all of the letters that are at the top of my easel. If they are stuck for longer than what our time in class will allow, then I let them reopen their books and hunt for the word. Usually they are so excited that they have found it that they are more than willing to blurt it out or share it with their neighbor. I discourage this because I want each child to figure out the word for

himself, while at the same time learning to use skills such as skimming and reading. However, the excitement is quite contagious. Finally all words, including the target word, are listed (see Figure 2).

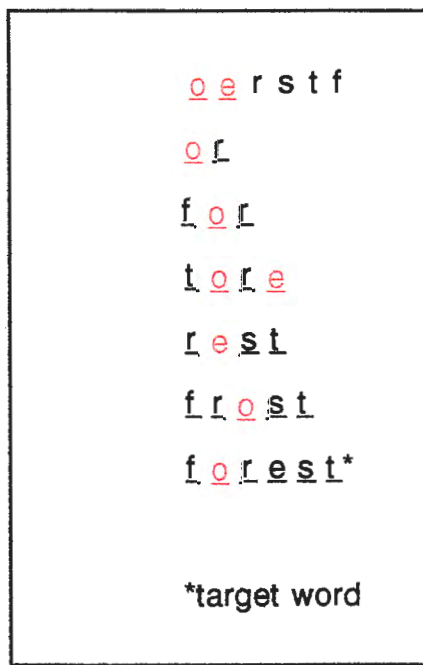


Figure 2.- A making words list including the target word forest

The Writing Connection: A Link With The Classroom

After I ask for a volunteer to spell that final word, then everyone erases everything on their boards. I also erase everything on my easel except for the last word (forest). I then have the students study that word and we spell it out loud together. Then I erase that, too, and dictate a sentence to the students using that word in it. The students write the sentence on their boards. Also, in this writing component I include an additional spelling word and/or a Dolch word for practice. By doing this, I have the students connect what they are learning in my Title I room with what they

are learning in their classroom. It gives the students double practice time on difficult spelling, familiarization with commonly used words, and reinforcement of newly learned words. When asking the student to write the sentence, I try to keep it simple. The following is an example of a simple sentence using the word forest.

I will take a walk in the forest.

In this sentence example, forest is the target word for the day and a spelling word in their classroom. The word take is a Dolch word. And the word walk is an additional spelling word for that week.

The end of the writing segment of our lesson usually concludes our 1/2 hour lesson for that day. If there are a few minutes left at the end, the students are given free reading or independent reading time. This, however, does not occur often because of our time constriction. Because I feel that independent reading is very valuable, I periodically give the students what I call a free reading day in which they choose books to read by themselves or with a partner. Along with this is instruction on how to choose books at their ability level. In this way they can acquire more successful reading practice time. I also want them to enjoy reading in a relaxed, comfortable environment.

All of the lesson content and student progress are conveyed to the students' regular classroom teachers on a weekly basis through casual meetings and hallway conversations. This improves rapport and shows the classroom teacher that a carry-through of student learning between Title I and the classroom is a priority for their

Title I experience.

Sticking with this three-step instructional plan is my main objective because it gives the students a structured lesson I feel they need. They become so familiar with the daily lesson approach that they know what to do from the minute they enter my room to the end of the lesson. They love using their own dry erase boards and are excited to try to guess the secret word. The reading/writing connection is implemented as is the connection to classroom work.

This lesson format can be changed and expanded to conform more to a regular classroom schedule. The teacher may extend the guided reading portion to up to an hour. This may comprise a large reading block of time. The teacher would need to divide the class into ability levels to do this and have many levels of multiple copy books. Also, the writing segment could be included at this time. The making words portion of my lesson may be inserted as minilessons where the teacher deems necessary. Another suggestion, which I will incorporate myself next year, is to provide classroom teachers with brief written summaries of weekly work attempted and student progress on that week.

In summary, a *guided reading-making words-writing words* approach to a pull out program may be the answer to reading problems you may encounter with your students. It provides structure, fosters independence and confidence, and encourages a closer working relationship with classroom teachers.

Inefficient readers lack the knowledge and understanding they need to strategize when encountering reading problems. They would

just as soon skip over a word they cannot figure out or give up. It is up to us as reading teachers to be instrumental in employing reading approaches in the classroom that will encourage poor readers to be more successful with text. An approach that I use and believe works is the one that incorporates three processes: guided reading, making words, and sentence writing.

This type lesson helps students to read for understanding (they can better figure out a difficult word when it is used in the context of a story), and to become familiar with making several new words in actual sentence writing.

REFERENCES

- Bristow, P. S. (1985) . Are poor readers passive readers? Some evidence, possible explanations, and potential solutions. The Reading Teacher, 39, 318-325.
- Clay, M. (1933) . An observation survey of early literacy achievement. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Cunningham, P. M., & Cunningham, J. (1992) . Making Words: Enhancing the invented spelling-decoding connection. The Reading Teacher, 46, 106-115.
- Cunningham, P. M. , & Hall, D. P. (1997) . Making more words. Parsippany, NJ: Good Apple.
- Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (1996) . Guided reading: Good first teaching for all children. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Johnston, P. H., & Winograd, P. N. (1985) . Passive failure in reading. Journal of Reading Behavior, 17, 279-301.