St. Catherine University

SOPHIA

The Effect of Guided Reading on Student's Academic Achievement in First-Grade Classrooms

Mandy Sioringas
St. Catherine University

Nola Steier
St. Catherine University

Follow this and additional works at: https://sophia.stkate.edu/maed

Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation

The Effect of Guided Reading on Student's Academic Achievement in First-Grade Classrooms

Submitted on April 30, 2019

in fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree

Mandy Sioringas and Nola Steier

Saint Catherine University

St. Paul, Minnesota

Advisor _____Amy Adams_____   Date ____4/24/2019_____

Abstract

The purpose of this action research study was to find out if Guided Reading plays an effect on student reading scores in a first grade classroom. Research was conducted by two teachers in two separate first grade classrooms and each teacher had four student participants. The teachers focused on three components of Guided Reading. These included group size, individualized instruction, and interruptions and absences. Data was collected through Fountas and Pinnell Pre and Post Assessment, Teacher Observation Journal, Student Self Assessments and Teacher Tally Form. The results showed that Guided Reading has a positive effect on student scores and an increase in reading scores was found. Implement the Guided Reading strategy for small group reading instruction is encouraged in first grade classrooms.

Keywords: Guided Reading, student scores, individualized instruction, small groups, interruptions, absences

Children begin the literacy journey through experiences in their homes, school, and community at an early age. From the moment they wake up to the moment they close their eyes, they are engulfed in a literary world. When they enter school, literacy teaching is intentionally used to enhance students' skills in reading, writing and communicating. Reading instruction, in particular, is a primary focus in early elementary classrooms. Making sure each student learns to read proficiently helps to build all students' literacy confidence. Reading instruction builds literary confidence in not only reading, but all curriculum content areas. Providing high-quality reading instruction in the early primary grades can help prevent reading difficulties as they progress through their educational journey (Solari, Denton, & Haring, 2017).

High-quality reading instruction encourages teachers to use a variety of strategies to guide their teachings. One strategy that has been used is Guided Reading. Guided Reading is a research-based strategy that has become a well-known "best practice" in creating balanced literacy in the classroom (Iaquinta, 2006). Fountas and Pinnell (2012) state "Guided Reading has shifted the lens in the teaching of reading to focus on a deeper understanding of how readers build effective processing systems over time and an examination of the critical role of texts and expert teaching in the process" (p. 268). Guided Reading allows teachers to ask questions and guide students in their understanding and learning. It also provides small-group, individualized instruction that is critical for creating independent and life-long learners (Ford & Opitz, 2002).

Teachers have tried increasing students' reading scores by implementing various components in their Guided Reading approach. According to Vernon-Feagans et al. (2012) "a host of early interventions for struggling readers have proven to be successful" (p. 103). However, the strategies teachers use to implement Guided Reading has been inconsistent, partially because Guided Reading has several possible strategies (e.g., grouping, individualized

instruction, and clear teacher/student roles) that can be implemented within its format. Teachers who are consistently using these strategies through their Guided Reading instruction should see an increase in reading scores at grade level and beyond. This study examined eight first-grade students, four boys and four girls, who scored below grade level in reading. The study was conducted in two first-grade general education classrooms in the Midwestern United States.

Guided Reading has become a best practice for teaching reading in recent years. However, Guided Reading includes several components that can be used in varying degrees making it inconsistently implemented in classrooms. Consequently, the variety of strategies available makes it difficult to determine the effectiveness of implementing Guided Reading on improving student reading scores. Therefore, the purpose of this action research project is to determine the effect, if any, Guided Reading has on student reading scores in a first-grade classroom.

Theoretical Framework

Reading instruction is a focus in first-grade classrooms. The Constructivist view of learning supports a variety of teaching practices related to reading instruction in elementary classrooms. In general, Constructivism describes learning as a way of gaining knowledge through experiences. According to Powell and Klina (2009), "Constructivism is a vague concept but is currently discussed in many schools as the best method for teaching, and learning" (p. 241). In order for a teacher to implement high-quality Constructivist practices in the classroom, the teacher needs to know where each student's understanding lies with a concept. Lev Vygotsky's Social Constructivism built upon Constructivism and explains that knowledge is gained through social interaction (Powell & Klina, 2009). Social interaction strategies such as collaborative and cooperative learning in the classroom have been shown to be a highly effective

teaching strategy. Included in Vygotsky's theory is the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development. The idea behind the Zone of Proximal Development "is that with more capable peer or teacher assistance, students are able to operate at a higher level than they could on their own, and this enables them to learn to operate independently at this level" (Wass & Golding, 2014, p. 672). Students are not able to learn a concept if it is too difficult for them on their own. However, if the student receives assistance through interaction with a teacher or peer, students are able to complete tasks that are slightly more difficult than what their capabilities would allow them to complete on their own. When students complete these tasks with assistance, they will gradually be able to do them on their own. Scaffolding is an example of how educators use the Zone of Proximal Development in the classroom today.

Social Constructivism, particularly the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, helps explain how students' Guided Reading scores are socially impacted. During Guided Reading, the teacher provides instruction that is within the students' Zone of Proximal Development by assisting with reading strategies using a text-level slightly above what the students are able to read independently. As Fountas & Pinnell (2012) noted, Guided Reading is "an instructional context for supporting each reader's development of effective strategies for processing novel texts at increasingly challenging levels of difficulty" (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 268). By offering this type of instruction, students will gradually be able to apply the strategies they learn to more challenging texts independently. Social Constructivism also explains how students' scores are impacted through the idea of a socially structured environment. While students are engaged in Guided Reading, they are involved in discussions where sharing their reading experiences and learning from their peers and teacher in a small group setting is encouraged. In this study, providing instruction within the participants' Zone of Proximal

Development during Guided Reading implementation was a focus. This was achieved by building on students' prior knowledge through collaborating in small groups, encouraging students to make predictions and connections, and assisting with reading strategies with a leveled text that was slightly more challenging than what students' could read independently. Through these strategies, students were able to build knowledge through participation in Guided Reading instruction, which, in turn, impacted students' reading scores.

Review of Literature
Three Components to Implement Guided Reading More Efficiently

According to Richardson (2016), "Guided Reading has propelled millions of children into successful, independent reading" (p. 8). Providing instruction by intentionally implementing various components of the Guided Reading approach have been tried by numerous teachers in an effort to increase students' reading scores. When intentionally integrated, a few of the components research suggests are grouping students, individualizing the learning instruction, and considering the roles teachers and students have during Guided Reading instruction.

Grouping strategies. The first essential component to consider when implementing Guided Reading is techniques for grouping students. Grouping strategies should include the size of the group, the reading level of the group, and the group's flexibility. Grouping students should be flexible, temporary, and should provide a place for students to support each other as readers (Iaquinta, 2006). Through observation, teachers can provide an appropriate group size for the individual needs of their students. If a group of three students can achieve the same level of progress as a group of one, students should be organized into groups of three (Vaughn et al., 2003). Teaching a single student is not usually possible in a general educational setting (Lipp & Helfrich, 2016), but it is a way to reach the broad range of learners in a classroom (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). When grouping students for Guided Reading, it is vital for the teacher to think

about their reading levels and use books that are leveled to the students' abilities. Research has found that students seem to read best when texts are at their level and are not too easy or too hard for them (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012; Iaquinta, 2006), and that grouping students according to their individualized reading level has resulted in huge gains by the students (Vernon-Feagan et al., 2012). Being flexible with the way teachers group students is also an essential component for the success of students' reading. Teachers should adjust groups according to how the students' are learning. Guided Reading groups should always be temporary and change to meet the needs of the students (Ford & Opitz, 2008; Fountas & Pinnell, 2012; Laguinta, 2006).

Individualized instruction. The second essential component to consider when implementing Guided Reading is how individualized learning and instruction can be provided to students within a classroom setting. Guided Reading supports the second tier of the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) and Response to Intervention (RTI) framework, as it provides increased support based on student needs as identified in assessments (Fien, Smith, Smolkowski, Baker, Nelson, & Chaparro, 2015; Solari, Denton, & Haring, 2017). This explicit, systematic instruction occurs before, during, and after reading (Solari, Denton, & Haring, 2017). One way to individualize instruction is to use running records to find out the students reading level. Fountas & Pinnell (2012) state, "the A to Z text level gradient has become a teacher's tool for selecting different texts for different groups of children" (p. 270). Research shows teachers who use ongoing running records as a tool to assess student achievement and group students accordingly by level texts has a positive impact on student learning (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). A running record is an assessment tool that is used to assess students reading strategies students have learned from previous instruction. Using assessment results allows teachers to provide a level text that is "just right" for each of their Guided Reading groups. Individualized instruction using

leveled text has positive outcomes for students. Unfortunately, teachers often ask students to read text that are too difficult which has a negative impact on student success (Allington, 2013).

During Guided Reading, teachers should focus on foundational and comprehension skills when using text. Readers who struggle often have difficulty with both of these skills, so it is essential that they are focused upon to provide balanced reading instruction (Solari, Denton, & Haring, 2017). If a teacher focuses on only one of these skills, students may struggle to either correctly read the text or understand the story. Foundational skills are considered alphabet knowledge, print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics, decoding, and fluency. Instruction should be challenging and progress from simple to more difficult concepts (Morris, 2015; Solari, Denton, & Haring, 2017). Comprehension skills should start with easy strategies and gradually move on to harder ones throughout the year. According to research, teachers should spend at least two weeks on a strategy before moving on, and it is recommended to teach these strategies to students in a whole group and then provide additional practice during Guided Reading (Solari, Denton, & Haring, 2017). Vernon-Feagan et al. (2012) suggest "helping classroom teachers offer individualized reading instruction for their struggling readers resulted in large reading gains for the students" (p. 103).

Roles of the teacher and students. The third essential component to consider when implementing Guided Reading is to have clearly defined teacher and student roles. Guided Reading takes place near the end of the gradual release model. The Gradual Release Model starts with the teacher modeling behaviors and decreases their support until the student takes on full responsibility (Solari, Denton, & Haring, 2017; Wall, 2014). The role of the teacher is to provide support only if needed. If teachers do this, students will become more independent readers and develop confidence in their reading ability (Wall, 2014). One way that teachers can support

students during reading is by verbally prompting them to use strategies learned through Guided Reading instruction. The verbal prompts used by teachers, however, should be vague and open-ended as this shifts the responsibility to the student (Wall, 2014). This will ensure that the student is actively engaged in comprehending the text. The goal of Guided Reading is to let students problem-solve by using the strategies they have been taught (Wall, 2014). Another of the teachers' roles is to provide students with immediate corrective and positive feedback, which prevents bad habits from being formed and assures students will learn correct responses (Fien et al., 2015; Solari, Denton, & Haring, 2017).

Students also have a clearly defined role within the reading group. When a student is engaged in the reading group, their purpose is to use the strategies that they have learned and apply them to their reading, with support from the teacher only if needed (Wall, 2014). This allows students to build on their previous knowledge and gain confidence in their reading abilities.

Classroom Structure

Guided Reading instruction is successful when teachers have a classroom structure that allows the teacher to "effectively work with small groups of readers while keeping other readers independently engaged in meaningful literacy learning activities" (Ford & Opitz, 2002, p. 711). Teachers have tried many different methods (i.e., seat work) to help engage students who are independently working outside of their group. Often, when implementing these strategies, students are either not effectively engaged in literacy learning, or the level of difficulty is not appropriate for the individual student (Ford & Opitz, 2002; Worthy et al., 2015). When students are not engaged in Guided Reading, they should be engaged in activities that enhance their understanding of literacy (Ford & Opitz, 2002). Since students spend a lot of time independently

working in the classroom, the instruction that takes place away from the teacher needs to be just as powerful as when students are working with the teacher. This instruction should be based on the students' reading and writing abilities and their degree of independence (Ford & Opitz, 2002).

When classroom activities do not align with students' abilities or classroom goals, challenges may arise, (e.g., disengagement, limited productivity, inappropriate levels of difficulty, and unclear directions), that cause interruptions during Guided Reading group (Worthy et al., 2015). Literacy workstations and Daily 5 are classroom structures that can be beneficial for students and teachers when the activities align with student learning in a small group. During literacy workstations, students work independently or in groups on literacy activities at designated areas around the classroom (Ford & Opitz, 2002). Daily 5 is a similar workstation model. The Daily 5 consists of a short, whole group mini-lesson after which the students move into independent literacy activities. The independent activity only lasts as long as the students are engaged. When student engagement has waned, the teacher conducts another mini-lesson and moves into another independent literacy activity. This cycle continues up to four times (Boushey & Moser, 2012). The independent literacy activities consist of Read to Self, Work on Writing, Partner Reading, Word Work, and Listen to Reading (Boushey & Moser, 2012). During Daily 5, students are often allowed to choose the activity and their location in the classroom. According to Boushey and Moser (2014) "students have control over what they read and write, where they sit, and the activity they participate in" (p. 25). Literacy workstations and Daily 5 teach students independence by cycling through a model and practice framework (Boushey & Moser, 2012; Ford & Opitz, 2002). Literacy workstations and Daily 5 may be implemented differently depending on the needs of the teacher and students.

Based on the findings in this literature review, it is evident that there are "best practices" that impact the success of Guided Reading. Small group or individualized instruction plays a key role in providing balanced literacy in the classroom. Teachers who implement Guided Reading effectively can have a positive impact on students' success in reading. This research study explored these findings by investigating the impact of incorporating Guided Reading on student reading scores in a first-grade classroom.

Methodology

The research methodology used in this study is Action Research. This method focuses on the outcome of increasing student learning through an examination of teaching strategies. This study is intended to help improve teacher practice to better students' academic achievement. This study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, resulting in a mixed methods approach to research. The qualitative data consisted of observations, student self-assessments, and tally forms. The observations and tally forms were conducted daily and the student self-assessments were presented at the beginning, middle, and end of the research period. The quantitative data consisted of assessments of formal running records using the Fountas and Pinnell Leveling System. Pre- and post-assessments were presented at the beginning and end of the research period.

This action research study took place in two first-grade classrooms at an elementary school in the Midwestern United States. This elementary school was one of 16 elementary schools with the local school district. The sample consisted of a total of eight students, four students in each classroom. The sample from Classroom A had three girls and one boy and the sample from classroom B had three boys and one girl. These students were between six and seven years old. Seven of the students were Caucasian and one student was Native American.

These students were pre-selected based on their reading score using the Fountas and Pinnell

leveling system. All students were below the expected reading grade level, but none qualified for

district-provided reading assistance. The sample consisted of five students at a Fountas and

Pinnell level B and three students at a Fountas and Pinnell level C. The sample was

representative of first-grade students in the elementary classrooms. Guided Reading was not a

necessary strategy to implement in first-grade classrooms. However, this curriculum was highly

recommended by the school district.

Fountas & Pinnell Leveling System pre- and post-assessment was used to determine

whether grouping students influenced reading scores. The pre-assessment also served as a

baseline for students' reading level at the beginning of the research. These reading levels were

used to group students at the start of the study. The post-assessments served as a summative

assessment at the end of the research. The observation recording journal was used daily by each

teacher. This form was used to record students' informal running records (records of students'

errors and strategies used when reading text), individual teacher notes, and journal prompts. The

observation data were collected throughout the week to determine whether students understood

Guided Reading strategies at their assigned reading group level. The data collected also provided

insights from the teachers' perspective related to the effect Guided Reading had on student

learning.

Student self-assessments demonstrated how the students felt about their Guided Reading

groups in the beginning, middle, and at the end of the research. The student self-assessments

allowed decisions to be made about changing groups and altering instruction to improve the

learning environment for students. Knowing how the students felt about their reading groups and

the learning that took place helped to identify groupings in which optimal learning would occur.

Finally, the teacher tally form for student interruptions from non-participants within the Guided

Reading group and student absences was used to determine if interruptions and absences

impacted instruction and student progress in their Guided Reading groups.

Each day, during the designated time, the teacher in classrooms A and B implemented

the Guided Reading strategy. The teachers started this process by gathering the students in front

of the classroom. The selected students were dismissed to their Guided Reading group and the

rest of students were dismissed into their independent activity or choice stations. The

independent activities consisted of Read to Self, Work on Writing, Word Work, and Listen to

Reading – all correlating to the Daily 5 structure. The Guided Reading group met at a larger

table in the classroom for one, twenty-minute session per day four days each week. To begin the

Guided Reading lesson, the selected students started writing specific sight words. Students

practiced writing these sight words on individual whiteboards. The sight words were pre-picked

for each student prior to the day's lesson. The teacher would then do a sight word check by

having the students write three predetermined sight words on their boards. If the sight word was

spelled correctly, the teacher would record this using a checkmark or tally mark next to the word

on their sight word sheet. When the student was able to write the sight word five times, the

teacher would move on to a new sight word. If the student misspelled the word, the teacher

would prompt the student with a clue.

The next activity consisted of introducing a leveled text. The teacher prepared the

students by discussing the pictures and words in the text that the students might find challenging.

The students then started reading the text independently while the teacher listened to each

student independently. While listening, the teacher recorded student errors using a running

record in the observation recording journal. Prompts were given to students to help with

problem-solving strategies and to improve accuracy. After the text was read, a short discussion of the story's elements and connections to students' prior knowledge was facilitated. A new sight word was then taught to the group of students. The teacher wrote the word on a small whiteboard, and students tried to read the word. The teacher then erased letters and asked individual students what was missing. The students had to state the letters missing and then spell the word. Each time the teacher erased more letters, this process was repeated. Students were then given their own letters to mix and fix on their own whiteboards. "Mix and fix" was a strategy used that involved students shaking magnetic letters in their hand and then building the word. After the word was built, they read each letter and then read the word. After, implementation of the "mix and fix" strategy, students wrote the word three times using their finger on the table and then wrote the word using a marker on their whiteboards three times. This concluded each daily Guided Reading lesson. The data gathered from these activities helped determine if Guided Reading was an effective strategy to use to increase student reading scores.

Analysis of Data

The pre- and post-Fountas & Pinnell running record assessment was given to each individual participant in both classrooms. The participants read a leveled text to the teacher without prompting or guidance. The teacher recorded student errors on the Fountas & Pinnell recording sheet to determine accuracy. Then the teacher asked comprehension questions to determine participants' understanding of the texts. The accuracy was calculated by dividing the number of words correct by the number of words in the story. This was then used to determine the participants' new instructional level. The criteria for meeting the instructional level, according to the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment Systems, was an accuracy level of 95% or higher with limited comprehension, or an accuracy level of 90% to 94% with satisfactory

comprehension. Students should have entered first-grade at a Fountas and Pinnell level D. All students who were below the level D were grouped in one Guided Reading group for each teacher.

After the pre-Fountas & Pinnell running record assessment was recorded, observational journals were used to record student informal running records and individual teacher notes during Guided Reading instruction. Journal prompts were completed at the end of the week. The observation data collected throughout the week was used to determine whether students understood Guided Reading strategies at their assigned reading group level. The teachers looked at the strategies that were being implemented through instruction and compared this with the skills students were exhibiting during the Guided Reading group. If students were using the strategy effectively, the students showed an understanding of the strategies. If not, the teacher used the information to differentiate the instruction.

The tally marks in the observational journals showed the number of times the Guided Reading groups were interrupted by non-participants or students in the reading group were absent. This data was used to determine whether interruptions and absences impact instruction and student progress in their Guided Reading groups. The data was compared to the post-Fountas & Pinnell running records to determine if this had an impact on the participants reading levels.

Lastly, student surveys were conducted in the beginning, middle, and end of the research to determine how the participants perceived their Guided Reading group. This collection of data was used to make grouping and instructional decisions to help improve the learning environment for students. If students showed a dislike pertaining to their peers or instructional material within a group, groups were re-evaluated to see if a change was needed. If it was determined a change was necessary, the student would be reassigned to a new group. The teachers compared how the

students felt within the reading group with the growth that was made in the post-Fountas &

Pinnell running records to determine the effectiveness the group had on the participant.

Findings

Grouping of Students

The research question first addressed whether the grouping of students had an effect on

reading scores. All of the participants were below the expected reading level of D at the start of

this study (Table 1). Using this data, the teachers were able to group students into two groups for

the study. Teacher A had two students with the instructional level B and two students with an

instructional level C (Table 1). Teacher B had three students with the instructional level B and

one student with the instructional level C (Table 1).

At the end of the research, a post-Fountas & Pinnell assessment was given to each of the

participants to determine the growth between the reading levels. This assessment was given to

seven of the participants at the end of the research. One participant completed the assessment

two weeks prior to the end of the research because they moved out of state. Teacher A recorded

two participants at instructional level G, one at F, and one at E at the end of the study (Table 1).

Teacher B recorded two participants at an instructional level G and two at F (Table 1). All

students gained at least three levels. Two of the participants increased their score by three levels,

four participants went up four levels, and two participants went up five levels. Teacher B had

more growth in levels when compared to Teacher A. Teacher A had two students who moved up

three levels compared to Teacher B whose students moved up more than three levels. However,

Teacher A had a student move away two weeks prior to the end of the research. This could play a

factor in the growth of participant 4A.

Table 1
*Fountas and Pinnell Assessment Before Intervention and
the Conclusion of the Intervention*

Teacher A			Teacher B		
Participant	Pre	Post	Participant	Pre	Post
1A	B	G	1B	B	G
2A	B	G	2B	C	G
3A	C	F	3B	B	F
4A	B	E	4B	B	F

Data from the student self-assessment was used to help determine students' comfort level within their Guided Reading groups (Tables 2 & 3). In question one, the beginning data showed two participants were neutral and six were happy with their group. In the middle of the research, all participants were happy with their group. At the end of the research, two participants were neutral and six were happy with their group. In reference to satisfaction with the material, two participants were natural and six were happy with the material at the beginning of the research. In the middle of the study, all participants were happy with the material. At the end of the study, one participant was neutral and seven were happy with the material. In reference to use of the material, one participant was neutral and seven indicated they used the material outside of their group. In the middle, all participants indicated they used the material outside of their group. At the end of the research, one participant was natural and seven indicated they used the material outside of their group. Overall, the participants were happy with their Guided Reading group, enjoyed what they were learning and indicated they were applying it outside of the reading group.

Table 2
Student Self-Assessment with Multiple Choice Questions Before, Middle, and End of Intervention

Participant	How do you feel about your Guided Reading Group			How do you feel about what you are learning in your Guided Reading group?			When I work by myself, I use the things I learned in my Guided Reading group?		
	B	M	E	B	M	E	B	M	E
1A	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
2A	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
3A	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	2
4A	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3
1B	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
2B	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3
3B	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4B	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3

Key: B = Beginning, M = Middle, E = End, 1 = Sad Expression, 2 = Neutral Expression, 3 = Happy Expression

Data from the second section of the student self-assessment was used to determine what the participants did and didn't like within the group (Table 3). Similarities among participants related to their likes were: learning to read, having fun, and being with friends. Similarities in the students' dislikes included: nothing (meaning they liked everything) and noise level.

Table 3

Student Self-Assessment Short Answer Questions Before, Middle, and End of Intervention

Question 4: What do you like best in your reading group?	
Beginning	
-Learning to read (3 students) -Sight word games (2 students) -Reading books	-Get to be with friends -Get to use markers
Middle	
-Talking -It's really fun -Learning (4 students)	- Learning Sight words - Reading Non-fiction books
End	
-Learning words (3 Students) -Learning about different animals -Reading Non-fiction books	-Talking about Story Elements -It's fun (2 Students)
Question 5: What don't you like in your reading group?	
Beginning	
-Nothing (4 Students) -When people don't let me focus	- Noisy - Writing Words (2 students)
Middle	
-Nothing (4 Students) -When it gets loud it's hard to learn	- I'm not with my friends - I'm the only girl
End	
- Nothing (3) -When people interrupt -Don't like when kids are talking when the teacher is talking and not following along	- The words are hard

Individualized Instruction

To determine ways in which individualized instruction played a role in student reading scores, the teachers completed a daily Observation Recording Journal. Results demonstrated progress the students were making during the study. At the beginning of the study, participants had a difficult time with the accuracy, comprehension, fluency, and performance skills listed in Table 4. These skills were used as a guide for development of differentiated instruction based on the students' needs.

Table 4
Observational Notes Guide Used with Instruction

Accuracy Skills	Comprehension Skills	Fluency Skills	Performance Skills
Breaking sounds apart	Retelling story	Read with expression	Able to focus
Short vowel sounds	Back up and reread strategies	Track words with eyes	Reads from beginning to end of books
Sight words	Making connections to text	Perseverance attitude	Reading confidence
B and D letter confusion	Making predictions		

The accuracy difficulties students demonstrated were related to breaking sounds apart, hearing and recording short vowel sounds in consonant vowel consonant (CVC) words, recognizing appropriate grade level sight words, and b and d letter-sound confusion. Participants' comprehension of the leveled texts were limited at the start of the study. Difficulty in fluency caused students to read the text slowly and choppily, and they tracked reading by pointing to each word. Students also struggled with performance skills, including difficulty focusing, skipping pages, and demonstrating a low reading confidence with a "give up" attitude.

At the end of the study, the students demonstrated growth within their accuracy, comprehension, fluency, and performance skills. The accuracy skills participants showed growth in included: reading all CVC words, beginning and final blends, digraphs, and started reading CVCE words. Participants also showed growth in reading and recording sounds in sequence order from left to right and reading endings of words. Participants' comprehension skills improved in the areas of retelling the story, backing up and rereading to self-correct or confirm, connecting the text with their own experiences, and making predictions before, during, and after reading. The participants started reading with expression and focusing on punctuation while reading. Their reading confidence improved: they developed a perseverance attitude and were able to track words with their eyes instead of their fingers.

Interruptions and Absences

The Teacher Tally Form addressed whether interruptions and absences impacted instruction and student progress within their Guided Reading groups (Figure 1). The data related to student interruptions and absences was compared to the post-Fountas & Pinnell running records to determine whether they had an impact on the participants' reading levels. Normally an increase in interruptions leads to teachers to not being able to complete the lesson, and absences decrease students' scores because they are not there to participate in instruction. According to our findings, interruptions did not have an impact on student learning. Teacher A had fewer interruptions than Teacher B; however, Teacher A had more absences than Teacher B (Figure 1). Teacher B had a higher level of interruptions compared to Teacher A. Even though Teacher B had more interruptions, participants grew the same in their reading level.

Tally Interruptions and Absences

	1-Nov	5-Nov	6-Nov	7-Nov	8-Nov	14-Nov	15-Nov	19-Nov	20-Nov	21-Nov	26-Nov	27-Nov	28-Nov	29-Nov	30-Nov	3-Dec	5-Dec	6-Dec	7-Dec	11-Dec	12-Dec	13-Dec	17-Dec	18-Dec	19-Dec
Teacher B Absences	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
Teacher B Interruptions	4	3	4	4	6	2	2	4	1	5	3	3	3	2	4	1	1	2	4	3	6	3	5	6	3
Teacher A Absences	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Teacher A Interruptions	3	4	2	5	1	2	3	0	0	0	1	2	2	0	0	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	0	1	2

Figure 1. Student interruptions and absences in Teacher A and Teacher B classrooms.

Our findings show that Guided Reading is good approach to use with first-grade students in a small group setting. Keeping groups small and providing specific individualized instruction for those students increases students reading scores. Absences is an area that can not be controlled but our research shows it does play an impact on student growth.

Action Plan

The Guided Reading strategy is a well-known approach for providing small group reading instruction in elementary classrooms. However, the effects of Guided Reading on students' reading scores when they were below the expected reading level at the beginning of the year was not well studied. The purpose of this study, then, was to determine if Guided Reading had an effect on student reading scores in first-grade classrooms. It was anticipated that reading scores would increase due to the small group, individualized instruction provided through implementation of the Guided Reading strategies. After analyzing the results from the study, an increase in reading scores based was found. Some factors related to the increase in students' scores emerged through the study.

The first relevant factor related to how participants were grouped. Participants who felt comfortable within their group were pleased with what they were learning, were able to apply reading strategies outside of their reading groups, and exceeded the expectation of growth for the time of year. The participants who were comfortable in their reading groups grew anywhere from four to five reading levels within the study. These participants also acknowledged that learning to read, having fun, and being with friends were things they enjoyed about their group. Participants who indicated a neutral response in relation to how much they enjoyed their group increased by only three reading levels throughout the study. Changing the participants' group

could have made a positive influence on these participants, which could have increased their reading score.

The second factor relevant to students' reading scores was the individualized Guided Reading instruction used throughout the study. An increase in participants accuracy, comprehension, and fluency skills was noticed during the instruction. The participants' reading confidence and perseverance also improved. This could have been related to how the participants were grouped and the attitudes they had towards reading. Students who showed an interest and actively participated had a higher success rate with their learning. The Guided Reading instruction was specifically geared towards the participants' developmental reading needs and built upon students' interests throughout the study to enhance instruction. Participants were excited to take part in their reading group during each Guided Reading session because of the purposeful incorporation of students' interest into the discussions. Continuing to evaluate and incorporate students' interests within the individualized instruction to help engageme students is highly recommended. Using a variety of fiction and non-fiction text is one way to incorporate interest. Additionally, knowing students' likes and dislikes is beneficial to student growth.

The third and fourth factors relevant to students' reading scores were related to absences and interruptions. First, absences affected student scores. Students with a high number of absences improved less than students with low numbers of absences. However, if these students had been present throughout the entire study, it is predicted they would have grown another level. Unfortunately, there isn't a way of preventing student absences, which can influence student scores. One recommendation for this would be to meet one on one with students who are absent to provide additional support. This could make up for the instruction that was provided when they were gone.

It was not evident in this study that interruptions had an effect on students' growth. Teacher B had a significant amount of interruptions, however, they grew at the same rate as Teacher A. This data was surprising because it was expected that interruptions would be a factor in student growth. The participants mentioned the interruptions were something they did not like. A recommendation would be to have a solid reading structure in place, such as the Daily 5 approach, to prevent interruptions from occurring.

Overall, the benefit of setting-up and using a Guided Reading strategy can play an essential role in increasing students' reading scores in an early elementary classroom, specifically first-grade. It is recommended that educators continue using the Guided Reading strategy for small group reading instruction. However, as Guided Reading is implemented, it is important to pay attention to the grouping, individualized instruction strategies, and student absences because they all have an influence on students' growth. Future research should focus on whether the Guided Reading strategy has an influence on students who are above grade level. If the factors examined in this study would be beneficial for students who are above grade level, it would be evident that all students benefit from effective implementation of the Guided Reading strategy.

References

Allington, R. L. (2013). What really matters when working with struggling readers. *Reading Teacher, 66*(7), 520-530.

Boushey, G., & Moser, J. (2012). Big ideas behind daily 5 and CAFE. *Reading Teacher*, 66(3), 172-178.

Boushey, G., & Moser, J. (2014). *The daily 5: Fostering literacy independence in the elementary grades*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Fien, H., Smith, J. L. M., Smolkowski, K., Baker, S. K., Nelson, N. J., & Chaparro, E. (2015). An examination of the efficacy of a multitiered intervention on early reading outcomes for first grade students at risk for reading difficulties. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 48*(6), 602-621.

Ford, M. P., & Opitz, M. F. (2002). Using centers to engage children during guided reading time: Intensifying learning experiences away from the teacher. *Reading Teacher, 55*(8), 710-17.

Ford, M. P., & Opitz, M. F. (2008). A national survey of guided reading practices: What we can learn from primary teachers. Literacy Research and Instruction, 47(4), 309-331. Retrieved from http://pearl.stkate.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.pearl.stkate.edu/docview/205337312?accountid=26879

Fountas, I., & Pinnell, G. (2012). Guided reading: The romance and the reality. *Reading Teacher, 66*(4), 268-284.

Iaquinta, A. (2006). Guided reading: A research-based response to the challenges of early reading instruction. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *33*(6), 413-418.

Lipp, J., & Helfrich, S. (2016). Key reading recovery strategies to support classroom guided reading instruction. *Reading Teacher, 69*(6), 639-646.

Morris, D. (2015). Preventing early reading failure. *Reading Teacher, 68*(7), 502-509.

Powell, K. C., & Kalina, C. J. (2009). Cognitive and social constructivism: Developing tools for an effective classroom. *Education*, *130*(2), 241-250.

Richardson, J. (2016). *The next step forward in guided reading: An assess-decide-guide framework for supporting every reader*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

Solari, E. J., Denton, C. A., & Haring, C. (2017). How to reach first-grade struggling readers: An integrated instructional approach. *TEACHING Exceptional Children, 49*(3), 149-159.

Vaughn, S., Linan-Thompson, S., Kouzekanani, K., Pedrotty Bryant, D., Dickson, S., & Blozis, S. (2003). Reading instruction grouping for students with reading difficulties. *Remedial and Special Education, 24*(5), 301-315

Vernon-Feagans, L., Kainz, K., Amendum, S., Ginsberg, M., Wood, T., & Bock, A. (2012). Targeted reading intervention. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 35*(2), 102-114.

Wall, H. (2014). When guided reading isn't working: Strategies for effective instruction. *Journal Of Language And Literacy Education*, *10*(2), 134-141.

Worthy, J., Maloch, B., Pursley, B., Hungerford-Kresser, H., Hampton, A., Jordan, M., & Semingson, P. (2015). What are the rest of the students doing? Literacy workstations in two first-grade classrooms. *Language Arts, 92*(3), 173-186. Retrieved from http://pearl.stkate.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.pearl.stkate.edu/docview/1640764759?accountid=26879

Appendix A

My Little Dog–Level B-Fiction   Name_____   Grade_____   Date_____

Recording Form		Summary of Scores:
		Accuracy _____
Part One: Oral Reading	Place the book in front of the student. Read the title and introduction.	Self-correction _____ Fluency _____
Introduction	This girl has a dog. Read to find out all the things her little dog likes to do with her. Point under each word as you read.	Comprehension _____ Writing _____

Page	Text	*My Little Dog* Level B, RW: 55, E: 6	E	SC	E			SC		
					M	S	V	M	S	V
2	My little dog likes to sleep with me.									
4	My little dog likes to eat with me.									
6	My little dog likes to run with me.									
8	He likes to play with me.									
10	He likes to ride with me.									
12	He likes to jump with me.									
14	My little dog likes to read with me.									
16	My little dog likes me!									
		Total								

Part Two: Comprehension Conversation

Guide to Total Score	Subtotal Score: _____/6
6-7 Excellent Comprehension	Add 1 for additional understandings: _____/1
5 Satisfactory Comprehension	
4 Limited Comprehension	Total Score: _____/7
0-3 Unsatisfactory Comprehension	

Part Three: Writing About Reading (optional)

Socks–Level C-Fiction Name_____ Grade_____ Date_____

Recording Form		Summary of Scores:
		Accuracy _____
Part One: Oral Reading	Place the book in front of the student. Read the title and introduction.	Self-correction _____
		Fluency _____
Introduction	Socks the cat was sleeping in lots of different places, and the girl wanted her to wake up. Read to find out what makes Socks wake up.	Comprehension _____
		Writing _____

Page	Text *Socks* Level C, RW: 79, E: 9	E	SC	E M	E S	E V	SC M	SC S	SC V
2	Socks was sleeping on the bed. "Wake up, Socks!" I said.								
4	Socks was sleeping on my chair. I said, "Wake up, Socks!"								
6	She was sleeping on the couch. "Wake up, Socks!" I said.								
8	She was sleeping on the rug. I said, "Wake up, Socks!"								
10	She was sleeping by the window. I said, "Socks, wake up!"								
12	Socks was sleeping by the door. "Wake up!" I said.								
14	Socks was sleeping under the table. "I can wake Socks up," I said.								
16	Purr								
	Total								

Part Two: Comprehension Conversation

Guide to Total Score	Subtotal Score: _____ /6
6-7 Excellent Comprehension	Add 1 for additional understandings: _____ /1
5 Satisfactory Comprehension	
4 Limited Comprehension	**Total Score:** _____ /7
0-3 Unsatisfactory Comprehension	

Part Three: Writing About Reading (optional)

The Nice Little House–Level D-Fiction Name_____ Grade____ Date_____

Recording Form		Summary of Scores:	
		Accuracy	_____
Part One: Oral Reading	Place the book in front of the student. Read the title and introduction.	Self-correction	_____
		Fluency	_____
Introduction	In this story, each animal went into a little house and said, "What a nice little house!" Read to find out what happened when all the animals went in.	Comprehension	_____
		Writing	_____

Page	Text *The Nice Little House* Level D, RW: 129, E: 14	E	SC	E			SC		
				M	S	V	M	S	V
2	The horse went in the little house. "What a nice little house!" said the horse.								
4	The cow went in the little house. "What a nice little house!" said the cow.								
6	The pig went in the little house. The pig said, "What a nice little house!"								
8	The chicken went in the little house. "What a nice little house!" she said.								
10	The duck went in the little house. She said, "What a nice little house!"								
12	The skunk went in the little house. Then...								
14	The horse went out of the little house. The cow went out of the little house.								
15	The pig went out of the little house. The chicken went out of the little house. The duck went out of the little house.								
16	"What a nice big house!" said the skunk.								
	Total								

Part Two: Comprehension Conversation

Guide to Total Score	
6-7 Excellent Comprehension	Subtotal Score: ____/6
5 Satisfactory Comprehension	Add 1 for additional understandings: ____/1
4 Limited Comprehension	
0-3 Unsatisfactory Comprehension	Total Score: ____/7

The Loose Tooth–Level E-Fiction Name_____ Grade_____ Date_____

Recording Form		Summary of Scores:	
		Accuracy	_____
Part One: Oral Reading	Place the book in front of the student. Read the title and introduction.	Self-correction	_____
		Fluency	
Introduction	Kate had a loose tooth and she tried lots of things to make it come out. Read to find out what happened to Kate's loose tooth.	Comprehension	_____
		Writing	_____

Page	Text — *The loose Tooth* Level E, RW:198, E: 21	E	SC	E M	E S	E V	SC M	SC S	SC V
2	Kate had a loose tooth. Her tooth was very loose. Kate played with her tooth. But it did not come out.								
4	"Don't play with your tooth," said Kate's mom. "Eat your breakfast." "I want my tooth to come out," said Kate.								
5	"Your tooth will fall out," said Mom. Kate wiggled her tooth. But it did not fall out.								
6	Kate brushed her teeth after breakfast. She wanted her tooth to come out. She wanted it to come out **now**.								
7	She brushed and brushed. She brushed her loose tooth. But it did not fall out.								
8	Kate went to school. She played with her tooth at school.								
9	"Don't play with your tooth," said Kate's teacher.								
10	Kate played with her tooth at lunch. She wiggled it and wiggled it.								
11	"Don't wiggle your tooth," said Ben. "I want to eat my lunch."								
12	Kate went home. Her brother played with his blocks. Kate played with her tooth.								
13	"It is time to eat," said Mom. "Come and have some soup."								
14	Kate had some soup. She said, "Now I want an apple. I want a big, big apple."								
15	Kate took a big, big bite of her apple.								

Anna's New Glasses–Level F-Fiction **Name**_____ **Grade**_____ **Date**_____

Recording Form		Summary of Scores: Accuracy _____
Part One: Oral Reading	**Place the book in front of the student. Read the title and introduction.**	Self-correction _____ Fluency _____
Introduction	Anna was getting ready for school. Her mom said she might need to get glasses to see better. But Anna didn't want glasses. Read to find out what happened when she got her new glasses.	Comprehension _____ Writing _____

Page	Text *Anna's New Glasses* Level F , RW: 220, E: 24	E	SC	E			SC		
				M	S	V	M	S	V
2	"I am ready for school," said Anna. She had a new red backpack and new shoes. "We have one more thing to do," said her mom. "You may need to get some glasses!"								
4	"I **don't** need glasses!" said Anna. "You may need glasses to help you read," said her mom. "Do you want to read at school?"								
5	"I want to read," said Anna. "I love books! But I don't want glasses."								
6	Anna went to the doctor. "You **do** need glasses," said the doctor.								
7	Anna looked at the glasses.								
8	"I don't like these glasses," she said.								
9	"Look at the purple glasses," said Mom. Anna put on the purple glasses.								
11	Anna put on some red glasses. "I like red and I like these red glasses," she said. "You look great in those glasses," said Mom.								
12	It was the first day of school. Anna put her new red glasses in her new red backpack.								
13	"Don't forget your glasses," said Mom. "I put them in my backpack," said Anna. "Put your glasses on at school," said Mom.								
15	Anna and her mom walked to school. Anna looked at her new teacher. She opened her backpack and put on her new glasses.								

Appendix B

AR Observation Recording Journal

Week:
Date:

This week, the groups are ….

One thing to note about this week's individualized instruction is…

I changed this about my groups or instruction this week…

AR Small Group Observation Records

Date:

Informal running records:

Individual notes:

Name:	Name:	Name:	Name:
Instructional Level: **Below On Above**	**Instructional Level:** **Below On Above**	**Instructional Level:** **Below On Above**	**Instructional Level:** **Below On Above**

Appendix C

AR Running Records Assessment

Student Name	BOAR Level	EOAR Level	EOAR On Target

*BOAR = Beginning Of Action Research
*EOAR = End of Action Research

Appendix D

AR Student Self-Assessment
Beginning   Middle   End

Directions: Your teacher will read you a sentence. Mark the picture that shows how you feel about your reading group (guided reading) when you hear the sentence. For questions 4-5, write in your answers.

1.   How do you feel about your guided reading group?
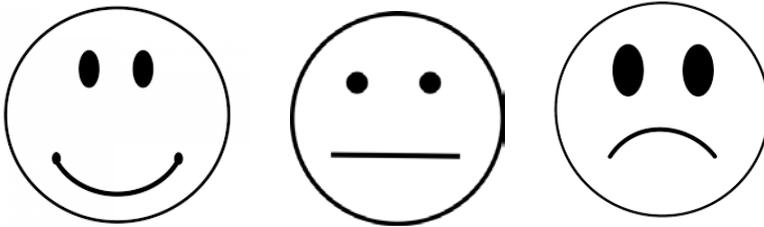
2.   How do you feel about what you are learning in your
         guided reading group?
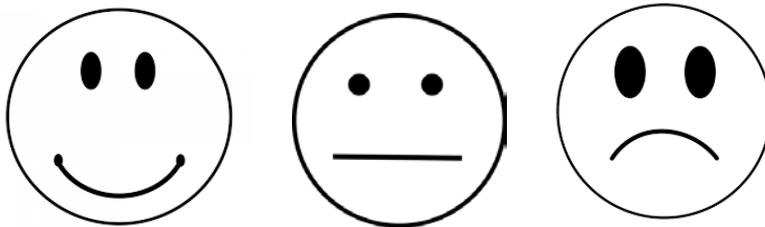
3.   When I work by myself, I use the things I learned in my
         guided reading group?

4.   What do you like best in your reading group?

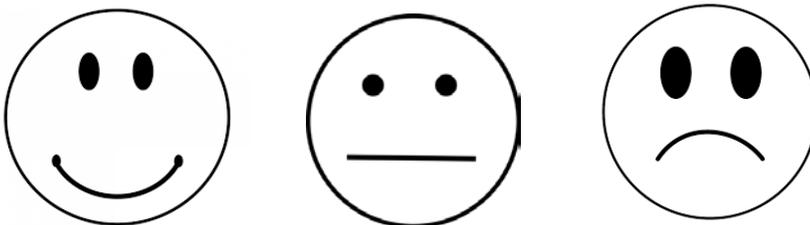_____

_____

_____

5.   What don't you like in your reading group?

_____

_____

_____

Appendix E

AR Teacher Tally Form
Used for Students

Date	Interruptions Tally	Total	Student Absent