SCHOLASTIC

GUIDED READING PROGRAM

Research Base for Guided Reading as an Instructional Approach

Gay Su Pinnell

Irene C. Fountas

Guided reading is small-group reading instruction designed to provide *differentiated teaching* that supports students in developing reading proficiency. The teacher uses a tightly structured framework that allows for the incorporation of several research-based approaches into a coordinated whole. For the student, the guided reading lesson means reading and talking (and sometimes writing) about an interesting and engaging variety of fiction and nonfiction texts. For the teacher, guided reading means taking the opportunity for careful text selection and intentional and intensive teaching of systems of strategic activity for proficient reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

After systematic assessment to determine their strengths and needs, students are grouped for efficient reading instruction. While individuals always vary, the students in the group are alike enough that they can be effectively taught in a group. Texts are selected from a collection arranged along a gradient of difficulty. The teacher selects a text that students will be able to process successfully with instruction.

In this paper, we provide background information on guided reading and then discuss its components in relation to research. We will discuss guided reading within a comprehensive literacy program and provide the research base for eight components of guided reading.

Background Information About Small Group Reading Instruction

Small-group reading instruction has a long history in the United States. The practice goes back to the late 1800s, when educators became aware of the wide differences among students at the same grade levels. Reading groups within classes became common, and the market for published materials grew. Barr and Dreeben (1991) conducted a thorough review of traditional grouping practices and concluded that there was little systematic evidence to support or refute their use. And, as tradition-ally practiced, small-group reading instruction had some drawbacks, for example: the rigidity of groups that followed an unchanging sequence of core texts (Hiebert, 1983; Good & Marshall, 1984); less instruction in critical thinking provided to lower-progress groups (Allington, 1983; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989); negative effects on confidence and self-esteem; and the use of many workbook pages as the materials market grew (Barr & Dreeben, 1991).

Educators knew that differentiated instruction was needed. Using the same text for an entire class inevitably meant that it would be much too difficult for some, and those children would struggle or pretend to read every day; at the same time, the text would be so easy for others that learning opportunities would be reduced. In the 1980s, guided reading emerged as a new kind of small-group instruction in schools in New Zealand and Australia. Guided reading was specifically structured to avoid some of the pitfalls of traditional reading groups while still making it possible for teachers to match books to readers and support successful processing. Guided reading was designed with the features that eliminated the drawbacks of traditional reading groups (see Hold-away, 1979; Clay, 1991). Today's guided reading has the following characteristics:

- "Round robin" reading is eliminated; instead, each learner reads the whole text or a unified portion of it softly or silently to himself, thus assuring that students delve into connected reading.

- Teachers select books for groups rather than following a rigid sequence.

- Groups are dynamic; they change in response to assessment and student need; they are flexible and fluid.

- In all groups, no matter what the level is, teachers teach for a full range of strategic actions: word solving, searching for and using information, self-monitoring and

correcting, summarizing information, maintaining fluency, adjusting for purpose and genre, predicting, making connections (personal, other texts, and world knowledge), synthesizing, inferring, analyzing, and critiquing (Pinnell & Fountas, 2008a).

- The teacher's introduction supports critical thinking and deep comprehension.
- Discussion of the meaning is grounded in the text and expands thinking.
- Rather than completing exercises or workbook pages, students may write or draw about reading.
- The teacher has the opportunity to provide explicit instruction in a range of reading strategies.
- The teacher incorporates explicit vocabulary instruction and phonics or word work.

Guided Reading's Place Within a High Quality Literacy Program

We introduced guided reading to the United States in our 1996 publication *Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Students* and recommended differentiated instruction with the characteristics described above. Since that time, small-group instruction in the form of guided reading has become widely used within a comprehensive framework for literacy instruction (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

The framework provides for rich language-based experiences with a variety of texts in whole-group, small-group, and individual settings (see Fountas & Pinnell, 2006 for detailed description). The instructional framework includes interactive read-aloud and reading workshop minilessons in whole-class groups, literature discussion in small heterogeneous groups, guided reading in small homogenous groups, and individual reading conferences.

The first two contexts allow students to benefit from interacting with peers at a variety of achievement levels (Slavin, 1987). Students also have access to interesting texts with age-appropriate content, and they benefit from participating in conversations about the texts. In the process, they build comprehension and vocabulary.

The second two contexts provide the opportunity for students to engage in proficient, independent processing at a level of success that allows them to expand their reading powers. Research has demonstrated that small-group instruction helps students improve achievement. For example, in comparative studies of first-grade reading interventions, Taylor, Short, Shearer, and Frye (1995) studied small groups of six to seven and Hiebert, Colt, Catoto, and Gury (1992) studied small groups of three. Both comparisons showed that the group receiving the small-group intervention did better than the comparison group. Although groups often comprise four or more students, guided reading provides the opportunity for

teachers to work with small groups in a way that is integral to classroom instruction. For those students who are struggling, teachers try to keep classroom guided reading groups small, and the school also provides additional intervention (Pinnell & Fountas, 2008).

The fifth context provides the opportunity for students to read books of choice independently. In the reading workshop, you create a strong instructional framework around this independent reading. While students do not choose books by "level," teachers can use knowledge of text difficulty to guide students' choices. Teachers rely on conferences with individual students to do some intensive teaching and also note student strengths and needs.

An important federally funded study supports the comprehensive framework described above (Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter, 2008; see www.literacycollaborative.org for a summary; to be published in *Elementary School Journal*). Teachers had professional development and coaching over a number of years to implement all elements of the framework. Dr. Anthony Bryk and his research team gathered data on 8,500 children who had passed through grades K–3; they collected fall and spring DIBELS and Terra Nova data from these students as well as observational data on 240 teachers. Here are the primary findings:

- The average rate of student learning increased by 16% over the course of the first implementation year, 28% in the second year, and 32% in the third year— very substantial increases.
- Teacher expertise increased substantially, and the rate of improvement was related to the extent of coaching teachers received.
- Professional communication among teachers in the schools increased over the course of the implementation, and the literacy coordinator (coach) became more central to the schools' communication networks.

Some teachers choose to add guided reading as differentiated instruction when using a core or basal system that generally guides the whole-group instruction. Whatever the approach, guided reading makes it possible for students to effectively process an appropriate text every day, expanding their reading powers through supportive teaching that enables them to gradually increase the difficulty level at which they can read proficiently.

Research Supporting Instruction in Guided Reading Lessons

The research base for guided reading is presented in the eight important components of reading instruction that are described below.

1. *All teaching in guided reading lessons has the ultimate goal of teaching reading comprehension.*

Instructional Contexts for Teaching Reading

Contexts	Instructional Components	Texts	Instructional Goals
Whole-Class Instruction	**Interactive Read-Aloud** **Phonics, Spelling, and Language Instruction**	Literature Other district-required texts and materials	• Build a community of learners • Build a collection of shared texts • Provide age-appropriate reading material • Teach comprehension • Teach language skills • Develop the ability to talk about texts
Small-Group Instruction (heterogeneous groups)	**Book Clubs** (Literature Discussion)	Literature (selected by students with teacher guidance)	• Provide age-appropriate reading material • Develop the ability to talk about texts • Deepen comprehension through discussion
Small-Group Instruction (homogeneous)	**Guided Reading**	High-quality fiction and nonfiction leveled texts (selected by the teacher with specific instruction in mind)	• Differentiate instruction • Teach all aspects of reading explicitly—comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, and word-solving strategies • Deepen comprehension through discussion of a text that is more challenging than independent level • Develop the ability to talk about texts
Individual Instruction	**Independent Reading** **Conferring**	Wide range of texts for student choice (selected by students from a classroom collection)	• Differentiate instruction • Teach any aspect of reading individually • Read a large quantity of fiction and nonfiction texts • Assess reading fluency, accuracy, and comprehension

Reading comprehension is complex and can be taught only through the effective processing—with deep thinking—of connected and coherent texts. In preparing a framework for the National Assessment of Educational Progress that served as a basis for the 2009 NAEP Reading Assessment, the Governing Board used a number of sources to ground their definition of reading in scientific research, including the report of the National Reading Panel (NRP) (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). Three understandings of reading influenced the framework (all cited in NAEP, 2008, p. 5):

1. A report (National Assessment Governing Board, 2002) sponsored by the RAND Study Group provided this definition: "Reading comprehension [is] the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. It consists of three elements: the reader, the text, and the activity or purpose for reading" (*Reading for Understanding: Toward an R&D Program in Reading Comprehension,* RAND Reading Study Group, 2002, p. 11).

2. A second definition comes from "The ability to understand and use those written forms required by society and/or valued by the individual. Young readers can construct meaning from a variety of texts. They read to learn, to participate in communities of readers, and for enjoyment" (*Progress in International Reading Literacy Study [PIRLS],* Campbell et al., 2001, p. 3).

3. The third comes from The Programme for Student Assessment [PISA], an international effort to assess what 15-year-old students know and can do. Their definition of reading is as follows: "Understanding, using, and reflecting on written texts, in order to achieve one's goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential, and to participate in society" (OECD, 2000, p. 18).

All three definitions "stress that reading is an active, complex, and multidimensional process undertaken for many different purposes" (NAEP, 2008, p. 6).

All texts share certain essential reading components. Readers must solve the words, recognize how the text is organized (the text structure), make sense of the sentences and paragraphs (language structure), and understand what they are reading. Research (Pearson & Camperell, 1994; Pressley, 2000) suggests that readers adjust their reading to give attention to different aspects of texts when they encounter different types of texts. To be a skillful comprehender, therefore, readers need exposure—*with teaching*—to a wide variety of texts. Learning to make adjustments to accommodate different kinds of texts requires this exposure.

In guided reading, books are selected from a collection organized along a gradient of difficulty so that readers may experience texts that help them learn more. Within each level, there will be a variety of genres in order to build readers' ability to adjust reading strategies.

Guided reading recognizes that readers need experience reading across a range of literary and practical texts. Literary fiction, which often offers a text structure sometimes called "story grammar," consisting of presentation of setting and characters, definition of a problem (or many problems), a series of events, and problem resolution/ending (sometimes called *denouement*). The use of this story grammar and the demands on the reader vary considerably from text to text as readers encounter realism, fantasy, historical fiction, and forms such as mystery. Nonfiction works may also have some strong literary characteristics that add interest to the text, as well as underlying organizational patterns such as sequence or comparison and contrast. Expository texts often include argumentation and persuasion. Another challenge is mixed or hybrid texts (National Assessment Governing Board—NAEP, 2009, Reading Framework). These texts contain elements of narrative (story grammar) as well as elements of nonfiction. For example, an historical account may have stories or letters embedded within it, along with timelines, descriptive information, and comparisons. Often, readers at all grades must integrate information across a series of texts, taking information and ideas from each.

In guided reading, teachers provide specific demonstrations and teaching of comprehension strategies such as inferring, synthesizing, analyzing, and critiquing. Teachers prompt readers to think and talk in these strategic ways. This kind of teaching is supported by research. The National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) has suggested that teaching a combination of reading comprehension techniques is highly effective in helping students recall information, generate questions, and summarize texts.

Discussion-based guided reading lessons are "geared toward creating richly textured opportunities for students' conceptual and linguistic development" (Goldenberg, 1992, p. 317). Goldenberg found that talk surrounding texts has greater depth, and it can stretch students' language abilities.

Guided reading provides a setting within which the explicit teaching of comprehending strategies is ideal:

- Teachers select texts that are within students' ability to comprehend *with teaching*.
- Teachers select a variety of genres and a variety of text structures within those genres.
- Teachers introduce the text to students in a way that provides background information and acquaints them with aspects of the text such as structure, content, vocabulary, and plot. This introduction does not involve

reading the text to the students; rather, it is a conversation that assures deeper understanding. In a comparison of three instructional methods, Stahl (2009) found that the text introduction yielded statistically significant effects in reading comprehension and science content acquisition.

- While students read, teachers may listen and intervene to prompt for and reinforce thinking. Teachers provide specific demonstrations of comprehending strategies.
- After reading, the teacher skillfully guides a discussion that may involve students' talking about their inferences, predictions, synthesis of new learning, analysis of aspects of the writer's craft, and critique (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). The teacher can probe for deeper thinking.
- Teachers can make specific teaching points that demonstrate comprehension strategies to students.
- Teachers might also invite students to write about their reading to extend thinking.

2. *In guided reading lessons, the teacher provides a sequence of high-quality, engaging texts that support individual progress on a scale of text difficulty.*

Each day, every student needs the opportunity to perform effectively as a reader. Teachers need to closely match texts to readers in order to help them experience effective reading.

A gradient of text is a teacher tool that is used to assist in the selection of books for guided reading. "Creating a text gradient means classifying books along a continuum based on the combination of variables that support and confirm readers' strategic actions and offer the problem-solving opportunities that build the reading process" (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 113). The level takes into account a composite of text factors that we described in other publications (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006; Pinnell & Fountas, 2008). According to Clay (1991, p. 215), ". . . at the heart of the learning process is the child's ability to use a gradient of difficulty in texts by which he can pull himself up by his bootstraps: texts which allow him to practise and develop the full range of strategies which he does control, and by problem-solving new challenges, reach out beyond his present control."

The gradient of text we published in the 1990s has been refined and developed over the years (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; 2006). You can now find over 35,000 books listed by level on fountasandpinnellleveledbooks.com.

The Fountas and Pinnell gradient is a defined continuum of characteristics related to the level of support and challenge that a reader meets in a text. Terms such as *easy* and *hard* are always relative terms that refer to the individual reader's foundation of background knowledge. At each level (A to Z), texts are analyzed using ten

characteristics: (1) genre/form, (2) text structure, (3) content, (4) themes and ideas, (5) language and literary features, (6) sentence complexity, (7) vocabulary, (8) word difficulty, (9) illustrations/graphics, and (10) book and print features (see Pinnell & Fountas, 2006, 2008a). The levels are explained in great detail in *Leveled Books for Readers, K–8: Matching Texts to Readers for Effective Teaching* (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006) and *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, K–8: A Guide to Teaching* (Pinnell & Fountas, 2008a). There you will find text characteristics for each level, A to Z, and specific curriculum goals (behaviors to notice, teach, and support).

This gradient was used as a standard by the New Standards Project® (Resnick & Hampton, 2009). New Standards is a joint project of the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania) and The National Center on Education and the Economy (Washington, D.C.). Heading a consortium of 26 U. S. states and six school districts, New Standards developed performance standards in English language arts and other areas. Resnick and Hampton (2009) recommend rigorous yet achievable standards by text level for each grade level. These standards provide a common vision for literacy teachers and offer guidance for intervention. "Teachers can use leveled texts to monitor students' progress along this continuum, tracking milestones and flagging problems by midyear—in time to intervene with extra time, attention, and instruction" (Resnick & Hampton, 2009, p. 15).

Text selection for guided reading is assisted by the text gradient. Clay (2001) has written widely about the way different kinds of learning are drawn together and applied as children successfully process many texts on an increasing gradient of difficulty. Supported by strong teaching, the system expands and becomes more efficient. "This happens provided the reader is not struggling" (Clay, 2001, p. 132).

The text gradient allows teachers to match texts to students' reading levels and work to increase their ability; at the same time, it allows the systematic and carefully sequenced use of children's literature that will engage students. Studies have demonstrated that using children's literature enhances both literacy development and children's interest in reading (Hoffman, Roser, & Farest, 1988; Morrow, 1992; Morrow, O'Connor, & Smith, 1990). We also know that literature-based programs affect children's attitudes toward reading (Gerla, 1996; Goatley & Raphael, 1992; Stewart et al., 1996). Dahl & Freppon (1995) found that literature was related both to persistence on the part of students and to their ability to work together. Engagement as an important factor is explored in point 8, below.

Guided reading:

- Allows the teacher to match texts to students' current reading abilities.
- Provides a strong instructional context within which teachers can support students' successful processing of increasingly challenging texts.
- Allows the teacher to select texts that offer learning opportunities and will engage students.

3. *Guided reading lessons increase the quantity of independent reading that students do.*

Anderson and other researchers studied the relationship between growth in reading and the ways in which children spend their time outside of school (see Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988). They found that over a period of 26 weeks, "among all the ways children spent their time, reading books was the best predictor of several measures of reading achievement, including gains in reading achievement between second and fifth grade. However, on most days most children did little or no book reading [outside of school]" (p. 285). If we look at these relationships, we can see that children who achieved at the 98th percentile read 4,358,000 words in books over the twenty-six weeks, and children at the 90th percentile read 2,357,000 words. But children at the 10th percentile read only 8,000 words.

Guided reading is designed to provide a great deal of opportunity to read continuous text. The reading that students do in guided reading groups is strongly supported by instruction to move them further, and it is accompanied by independent rereading of texts or of novel texts at an independent level. The more a student reads, the more likely she will be a proficient reader (Cullinan, 2000; Newkirk, 2009). Book reading is strongly correlated with school success.

Guided reading gives us the opportunity to assure more reading in school (with instructional support); additionally, students should also read independently during the reading workshop and take books home to read. Quantity matters, and guided reading provides the following:

- Daily experience reading a text at a level that supports accuracy and comprehension
- Experience with a wide variety of genres so that students can develop favorite types of texts
- Encouragement to read at their independent level as part of the reading workshop
- Opportunity to talk and write about texts

4. *Guided reading lessons provide explicit instruction in fluency.*

Another good reason for careful text selection using a gradient is that we want students (with instructional support) to achieve fluent reading. Fluency changes over time, of course. Children reading at levels A and B finger-point and work for voice-print match. They will tend to read word by word, but that will change quickly. As they begin level C, they will encounter dialogue, and their eyes should begin to take over the process. From that point on, we would expect fluent reading, which is very important for comprehension.

Reading fluency has been a concern for years (Allington, 1983). An Educational Testing Service research team assessed the oral reading fluency of a nationwide sample of fourth graders and found almost half of 1,000 readers were rated "dysfluent" on a reliable four-point scale. The readers with high fluency also had high reading comprehension scores on the NAEP test. In the interviews, these were also the students who said they read voluntarily and could name favorite books and authors (see Pinnell, Pikulski, Wixson, Campbell, Gough, & Beatty, 1996). As a result of the study described above, a six-dimension rubric has been created to measure fluency (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006, p. 102). That is, fluency is not synonymous with *fast*. There are several dimensions of fluency, including pausing, phrasing, intonation, word stress, and rate (meaning not too slow but also not too fast to be comprehensible).

Fluency is not a result of rapid word recognition alone (although that is essential). It requires attention to language and meaning, and it may be developed only by reading connected text at a level within the reader's control. "Teachers need to know that word recognition accuracy is not the end point of reading instruction. Fluency represents a level of expertise beyond word recognition accuracy, and reading comprehension may be aided by fluency. Skilled readers read words accurately, rapidly, and efficiently. Children who do not develop reading fluency, no matter how bright they are, will continue to read slowly and with great effort" (NICHD, 2000, 3-3).

The National Reading Panel Report (NICHD, 2000, pp. 3–6) stated that ". . . fluency helps enable reading comprehension by freeing cognitive resources for interpretation . . .." Members of the NRP found considerable evidence in research to conclude that guided oral reading procedures "tended to improve word recognition, fluency (speed and accuracy of oral reading), and comprehension with most groups." In their synthesis of research, they included a very wide range of guided oral reading techniques, some of which would not generally be used in guided reading lessons. However, teachers frequently do include some focused guided oral reading of passages or sections so that they can become more aware of factors related to fluency—pausing, phrasing, word stress, and intonation (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2006).

Fluency is not a stage of development. For any reader, fluency varies with the complexity of the text, the purpose

for reading, the genre, the reader's familiarity with the text, and other variables. To develop fluency in reading, guided reading practice offers the following:

- Teachers select books that are within students' control. They can read most of the words already, and the teacher's support provides help with a few new or important words.

- The teacher introduces the text to support comprehension and connections to language.

- The teacher gives special attention to the needs of English language learners (by frequently rehearsing syntactic patterns or idioms that are difficult).

- The reading provides the opportunity to use word recognition and comprehending strategically in a smooth, orchestrated way while reading orally or silently.

- The teacher explicitly demonstrates and teaches, prompts for, and reinforces fluency throughout the lesson.

- With the teacher's guidance, the students may reread texts to work for greater fluency. The explicit demonstration and teaching may focus specific dimensions of fluent reading as well as the integration of these aspects.

5. *Guiding reading lessons provide daily opportunities to expand vocabulary through reading, conversation, and explicit instruction.*

Vocabulary is important in early literacy acquisition and also in long-term proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking (Beck & McKeown, 1991). "The relationship between word knowledge and text understanding has been demonstrated empirically in many ways and along multiple dimensions both historically and contemporarily" (Baumann, 2009, p. 335). Vocabulary is an important factor in both decoding words and comprehending text. In general, children are much more likely to be able to solve a word if they already have it in their oral vocabulary (NICHD, 2000). Reading comprehension and vocabulary are deeply connected (Baumann, 2009).

Vocabulary, too, is a significant element of comprehension (called *meaning vocabulary* in the NAEP Reading Assessment to indicate "application of one's understanding of word meanings to passage comprehension."). Here the authors are assessing students' ability to derive the meaning of words that are integrated into continuous text. The meaning of individual words, though, is not enough. Passage meaning is also important (Bauman, Kame'enui, & Ash, 2002; Bauman, 2009). Simple exposure to or brief interactions around words are not likely to result in higher comprehension (Baumann, 2009). We must provide instruction in "passage-critical words" and provide it over time. Students need to develop the ability to learn words from context (Nagy, Herman, & Anderson, 1985). Comprehension of individual vocabulary words, including content-bearing words, more often depends on the interaction between the meaning of words and the meaning of the whole passage or even the whole text.

Guided reading provides a setting within which teachers can help children derive the meaning of words from context and also help them understand how passages work—that is, there are key or critical words within passages (fiction and nonfiction) that carry the meaning and must be understood in relation to the rest of the text. In the guided reading lesson, the following principles generally apply:

- Texts are selected so that students know most of the words, but there are a few new words to support vocabulary learning.

- In the text introduction, the teacher selects words to use in conversation in a way that helps students understand their meaning within this text.

- After reading, students and teacher may discuss the meanings of particular words within the text, sometimes noting words that they want to remember.

- As a teaching point, the teacher can demonstrate how to derive word meaning from context.

- After reading, the teacher has the option to engage students in preplanned word work that helps students attend to meaningful word parts and word meanings (affixes, base words, root words, homophones, synonyms, and antonyms).

- The teacher guides provide specific suggestions for discussion of and expansion upon story themes and ideas. These discussions are aimed at providing opportunities for students to practice vocabulary, exchange opinions, and articulate their own responses to the reading.

6. *Guided reading lessons include teaching that expands students' ability to apply phonemic awareness and phonics understandings to the processing of print.*

Phonemic awareness refers to children's understandings of the sounds they hear in words. Phonological awareness begins with sensitivity to rhyme and rhythm in poems and songs. Children learn words that "sound alike"—for example, a word that sounds like their names at the beginning or end. It becomes much more precise as children learn to hear the individual sounds or phonemes in words. Phonemic awareness is a very important factor in beginning reading, but according to the National Reading Panel's review of research, "PA training does not constitute a complete reading program" (NICHD, 2000, pp. 2–6). Describing phonemic awareness training as a "means to an end," the panel concluded that ". . . literacy acquisition is a complex process for which there is no single key to success. Teaching phonemic awareness does not ensure that children will learn to read and write. Many

other competencies must be taught for this to happen" (NICHD, 2000, pp. 2–7). They further noted that "PA instruction does not need to consume long periods of time to be effective. In these analyses programs lasting less than 20 hours were more effective than longer programs" (NICHD, 2000, pp. 2–6).

Another interesting recommendation of the panel was that teachers should connect phoneme awareness instruction with alphabet letters. "In the rush to teach phonemic awareness, it is important not to overlook the need to teach letters as well. The NRP analysis showed that PA instruction was more effective when it was taught with letters. Using letters to manipulate phonemes helps children make the transfer to reading and writing" (NICHD, 2000, pp. 2–33).

As they become aware of sounds, children also become aware of how the letters look and how the sounds and letters are related. They grasp the alphabetic principle; that is, they understand that there is an important (and complex) relationship between the sounds in words and the letters or groups of letters that represent them. Any literacy program will have a daily phonics lesson to acquaint children directly with these building blocks of language (see Pinnell & Fountas, 1998; Pinnell & Fountas, 2003—Grade K, Grade 1, Grade 2, and Grade 3).

As it did with phonemic awareness, the National Reading Panel stressed that "phonics is never a total reading program" (NICHD, 2000, pp. 2–97). "Teachers must understand that systematic phonics instruction is only one component—albeit a necessary component—of a total reading program; systematic phonics instruction should be integrated with other reading instruction in phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension strategies to create a complete reading program. Although most teachers and educational decision makers recognize this, there may be a tendency in some class-rooms, particularly in first grade, to allow phonics to become the dominant component, not only in terms of the amount of time devoted to it, but also in terms of the significance attached. It is important not to judge chil-dren's reading competence solely on the basis of their phonics skills and not to devalue their interest in books because they cannot decode with complete accuracy. It is also critical for teachers to understand that systematic phonics instruction can be provided in an entertaining, vibrant, and creative manner" (NICHD, 2000, p. 11).

As described at the beginning of this paper, guided reading is designed *to work within a curriculum that includes this daily direct teaching of phonemic aware-ness, phonics, and word study* (as appropriate for the level of readers). According to the National Reading Panel Report, "It is important to recognize that the goals of phonics instruction are to provided children with some key knowledge and skills and to insure that they know

how to apply this knowledge in their reading and writing. Phonics teaching is a means to an end" (NICHD, 2000, pp. 2–96). Students need the opportunity to read a great deal of continuous text so that they use phonics knowl-edge "on the run" while reading for meaning. The result will be a higher level of comprehension, more-fluent reading, and continual acquisition of known words.

Automatically known words allow readers to begin to monitor and correct their reading; they also free readers' attention to think about meaning. Often, readers use phonics to solve a word several times and then it be-comes known; other words (like *these* and *some*) are learned using sound-to-letter correspondences along with knowledge of the visual features of the word (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009).

Word solving must also be strategic and varied. An interesting study by Kaye (2007) indicates that young readers continually construct their repertoire of known words and flexible ways of solving words; progress is usually very rapid. She analyzed proficient second graders' reading behaviors across a school year, collect-ing more than 2,500 text-reading behaviors. The readers demonstrated more than 60 ways (both one-step and multistep actions) to solve words (and these were only the problem-solving behaviors they displayed overtly). Presumably, much more happened in the head but was unvoiced. Children usually worked with large sub-word units; they never articulated words phoneme by phoneme, although they could do so because they had excellent letter-sound knowledge. They appeared to take more efficient or "economical" approaches, as described by Clay (2001). They were also very active in problem-solv-ing; for example, they never appealed to the teacher without first initiating an attempt.

Guided reading provides the opportunity to teach this kind of problem-solving using phonics and, in addition, may provide one or two minutes of "hands on" phonics and word work at the end of each lesson. Phonics is an active part of the teaching in guided reading:

- In the introduction, the teacher draws attention to aspects of words that offer students ways to learn how words "work," for example, by point out first letters, plurals, word endings, consonant clusters, vowel pairs, or syllables.

- As students read, the teacher teaches, prompts for, and reinforces children's ability to take words apart (see Fountas & Pinnell, 2009, for explicit teacher language to teach, prompt for, and reinforce word solving).

- After reading, the teacher may make an explicit teach-ing point that shows students how to take words apart rapidly and efficiently.

- The teacher may preplan some specific word work that shows children phonics elements that they need to

know to solve words at this particular level of text. Students may learn to hear sounds in words (in sequence), manipulate magnetic letters, or use white boards and dry-erase markers to make phonics principles explicit.

7. *Guided reading lessons provide the opportunity for students to write about reading.*

A balanced-literacy program incorporates a wide range of oral language, reading, and writing activities. (Lyon & Moats, 1997; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Writing supports reading in many ways. For the younger child, it presents the opportunity to hear sounds in words and closely examine aspects of print. For all students, writing provides the opportunity to revisit the text in different ways—making predictions, working out the organization or structure, noticing interesting language, noticing aspects of the writer's craft, or making inferences with specific evidence from the text to back them up.

In guided reading, teachers help children extend their understanding and vocabulary through both oral language and writing. Students present their written ideas in four basic categories—persuasive, expository, narrative, and descriptive—as well as poetry.

Additionally, the teacher often engages students in follow-up activities that use print in different ways, for example, by incorporating ideas into graphic aids such as posters, diagrams, charts, or lists. This follow-up is an ideal way to help children develop the skills of summarizing, extending meaning, analyzing aspects of text, interpreting text, and discovering the structure of text—all essential skills that are also tested on proficiency tests.

8. *Guided reading lessons create engagement in and motivation for reading!*

There is ample evidence that learning is not just a cognitive process, although we often treat it as such in school. According to Lyons, "The brain always gives priority to emotions" (Lyons, 2003, p. 66). Emotion is a factor in whether children learn to read and write.

Along with emotion, motivation plays a strong mediating role in the reader's engagement (Wemtze, 1996). In turn, engagement is strongly related to reading achievement (Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992; Campbell, Voelkl, & Donahue, 1977). Motivation rests on a constellation of emotional factors such as confidence and a sense of ownership, both related to engagement (Au, 1997). Nystrand and Gamoran, 1991, found that student engagement is connected to incorporation of students' responses into the discussion and authentic comments and questions (Commeyras & Sumner, 1995).

According to the National Reading Panel, the importance of motivation in the effectiveness of any reading program cannot be overestimated. It is critical that future pedagogical research takes into account the approaches that teachers prefer and those that have proven to be the most effective in successful classroom instruction (NICHD, 2000).

In guided reading:

- Teachers select books that will be interesting to children, from a broad range of genres, styles, and levels of difficulty.
- Texts are introduced in a way that is specifically aimed at engaging interest, encouraging curiosity about a topic, and motivating students to pursue reading as a way of satisfying their need to know.
- Students experience success at processing texts.
- Students extend their thinking and engagement as they talk with others about texts.

We have ended this research paper with perhaps the most important category—motivation. But motivation is related to all of the competencies that were mentioned in points 7 and 8. The issue confronting reading teachers is that students simply cannot be motivated unless they can experience the competence of reading with proficiency. That means matching the books to readers and providing the research-based instruction that will move them to the next level—with all that implies in terms of comprehension, vocabulary, and word-solving. At the same time, *what* they read and *how they talk about it* is all-important. Guided reading is not an "exercise to practice reading skills." It is real reading of high-quality and high-interest books at every level. The teacher provides the intentional and intensive instruction that develops the proficiency that allows students to focus on the interesting information. The wholeness of the lesson is directed toward engagement in texts—the goal of authentic reading in the real world.

References

Allington, R. (1983). Fluency: The neglected reading goal in reading instruction. *The Reading Teacher, 36,* 556–551.

Allington, R. L. (1983). The reading instruction provided readers of differing reading ability. *Elementary School Journal, 83,* 548–559.

Anderson, R. C., Wilson, P. T., & Fielding, L. C. (1988). Growth in reading and how children spend their time outside of school. *Reading Research Quarterly, XXIII,* Summer, 285–303.

Au, K. H. (1997). Ownership, literacy achievement, and students of diverse cultural backgrounds. In J. T. Guthrie & A. Wigfield (Eds.), *Reading Engagement: Motivating Readers Through Integrated Instruction* (178–182). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Barr, R, & Dreeben, R. (1991). Grouping students for reading instruction. In R. Barr, M. L. Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, & P. D. Pearson (Eds.) *Handbook of Reading Research, Volume II.* Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Baumann, J. F., Kame'enui, E. J., & Ask, G. E. (2003). Research on vocabulary instruction: Voltaire redux. In J. Flood, D. Lapp, J. R. Squire, & J. M. Jensen (Eds.). *Handbook of Research on Teaching the English Language Arts,* (2nd ed.), 752–783. Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Baumann, J. F. (2009). Vocabulary and reading comprehension: The nexus of meaning. In S. E. Israel & G. G. Duffy (Eds.) *Handbook of Research on Reading Comprehension* (223–246). New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Beck, I. L., & McKeown, M. G. (1991). Conditions of vocabulary acquisition. In R. Barr, M. Kamil, & P. D. Pearson (Eds.). *Handbook of Reading Research, (Vol. 2),* 789–814. New York: Longman.

Biancarosa, G., Bryk, A., & Dexter, E. (2008). Assessing the value-added effects of Literacy Collaborative professional development on student learning. Paper presented at the 2008 Conference of the National Reading Conference, Orlando, FL.

Campbell, J. R., Kelly, D. L., Mullis, I. V. S., Martin, M. O., & Sainsbury, M. (2001). *Framework and specifications for PIRLS assessment 2001.* Chestnut Hill, MA: Boston College, Lynch School of Education, PIRLS International Study Center.

Campbell, J. R., Voelkl, K. E., & Donahue, P. L. (1997). *NAEP 1996 trends in academic progress* (NCES Publication No. 97-985). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Cipielewski, J., & Stanovich, K. E. (1992). Predicting growth in reading ability from children's exposure to print. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 54,* 74–89.

Clay, M. M. (2001). *Change over time in children's literacy development.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Clay, M. M. (1991). *Becoming literate: The construction of inner control.* Auckland, New Zealand: Heinemann.

Commeyras, M., & Sumner, G. (1998). Literature questions children want to discuss: What teachers and students learned in a second-grade classroom. *Elementary School Journal, 99,* 129–152.

Cullinan, B. (2000). Independent reading and school achievement. *School Library Media Research* (Vol. 3). Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/ala/aasl/aaslpubsandjournals/slmrb/slmrcontents/volume32000/independent.cfm>.

Dahl, K. L., & Freppon, P. A. (1995). A comparison of inner-city children's interpretations of reading and writing instruction in the early grades in skills based and whole language classrooms. *Reading Research Quarterly, 30,* 50–74.

Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (2008). *When readers struggle: Teaching that works.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (1996). *Guided reading: Good first teaching for all children.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (2006). *Teaching for comprehending and fluency: Thinking, talking, and writing about reading, K–8.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (2009). *Prompting guide 1: A tool for literacy teachers.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (2008). *The Fountas and Pinnell prompting guide: Teaching for strategies in reading and writing.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Fountas, I., & Pinnell, G. S. (1999). *Guiding readers and writers, grades 3–6: Teaching comprehension, genre, and content literacy.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Gerla, J. P. (1996). Response-based instruction: At-risk students engaging in literature. *Reading & Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties, 12*(2), 149–169.

Goatley, V. J., & Raphael, T. E. (1992). Non-traditional learners' written and dialogic response to literature. *Fortieth Yearbook of the National Reading Conference* (313–322). Chicago: National Reading Conference.

Goldenberg, C. N. (1992/93). Instructional conversations: Promoting comprehension through discussion. *The Reading Teacher, 46,* 316–326.

Good, T. K., & Marshall, S. (1984). Do students learn more in heterogeneous or homogeneous groups? In P. L. Peterson, I. C. Wilkinson, & M. Hallinan, (Eds.). *The social context of instruction.* New York: Academic Press.

Guthrie, J. T., Wigfield, A., Metsala, J. L., & Cox, K. E. (1999). Motivational and cognitive predictors of text comprehension and reading amount. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 3*(3), 231–256.

Hiebert, E. H. (1983). An examination of ability grouping for reading instruction. *Reading Research Quarterly, 18,* 231–255.

Hiebert, E. H., Colt, J. M., Catto, S., & Gury, E. (1992). Reading and writing of first-grade students in a restructured Chapter 1 program. *American Educational Research Journal, 29,* 545–572.

Hill, M. (1998). Reaching struggling readers. In K. Beers & B. Samuels (Eds.). *Into focus: Understanding and creating middle school readers* (81–104). Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.

Hoffman, J. V., Roser, N. L., & Farest, C. (1988). Literature-sharing strategies in classrooms serving students from economically disadvantaged and language different home environments. In J. E. Readence & R. S. Baldwin (Eds.), *Dialogues in literacy research: Thirty-seventh yearbook of the National Reading Conference* (331–338). Chicago: National Reading Conference.

Holdaway, D. (1979). *The foundations of literacy.* Sydney, Australia: Ashton Scholastic.

Institute of Education Sciences. (2004). *Identifying and implementing educational practices supported by rigorous*

evidence: A user friendly guide. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Kaye, E. L. (2008). Second graders' reading behaviors: A study of variety, complexity, and change. *Literacy Teaching and Learning, 10,* 2, 51–75.

Lyons, C. (2003). *Teaching struggling readers: How to use brain-based research to maximize learning.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Morrow, L. M. (1992). The impact of a literature-based program on literacy achievement, use of literature, and attitudes of children from minority backgrounds. *Reading Research Quarterly, 27*(3), 251–275.

Morrow, L. M., O'Conner, E., & Smith, J. (1990). Effects of a story reading program on the literacy development of at-risk kindergarten children. *Journal of Reading Behavior, 22,* 225–275.

Nagy, W. E., Herman, P. A., & Anderson, R. C. (1985). Learning words from context. *Reading Research Quarterly, 20,* 233–253.

National Assessment Governing Board. (September, 2008). Reading framework for the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress. Washington, DC: NAGB

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction: Reports of the subgroups.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, NIH Pub. No 00-4754.

Newkirk, T. (2009). *Holding on to good ideas in a time of bad ones: Six literacy principles worth fighting for.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Nystrand, M., & Gamoran, A. (1991). Student engagement: When recitation becomes conversation. In H. C. Waxman & H. Walberg (Eds.), *Effective teaching: Current research* (257–276). Berkeley, CA: McCutchan.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2000). Measuring student knowledge and skill: The PISA 2000 Assessment of Reading, Mathematical, and Scientific Literacy.

Pearson, P. D., & Camperell, K. (1994). Comprehension of text structures. In R. B. Ruddell, M. R. Ruddell, & H. Singer (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (4th ed.) (545–586). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Pikulsky, J. J. (1997). Factors common to successful early intervention programs. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Pinnell, G. S., Pikulski, J. J., Wixson, K. K., Campbell, J. R., Gough, R. B., & Beatty, A. S. (1995). Listening to children read aloud: Data from NAEP's integrated reading performance record (IRPR) at Grade 4. Report No. 23-FR-04 Prepared by Educational Testing Service under contract with the National Center for Education Statistics, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.

Pinnell, G. S., & Fountas, I. C. (1999). *Matching books to readers: A leveled book list for guided reading, K–3.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Pinnell, G. S., & Fountas, I. C. (1998). *Word matters: Teaching phonics and spelling in the reading/writing classroom.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Pinnell, G. S., & Fountas, I. C. (2006). *Leveled books, K–8: Matching texts to readers for effective teaching.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Pinnell, G. S., & Fountas, I. C. (2008). *The continuum of literacy learning, K–8: Behaviors and understandings to notice, teach, and support.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Pinnell, G. S., & Fountas, I. C. (2008). *When readers struggle: Teaching that works.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Pinnell, G. S., Lyons, C. A., DeFord, D. E., Bryk, A. S., & Seltzer, M. (1994). Comparing instructional models for the literacy education of high risk first graders. *Reading Research Quarterly, 29*(1), 8–39.

Pressley, M. (2000). What should comprehension instruction be the instruction of? In M. L. Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, P. D. Pearson, & R. Barr, (Eds.) *Handbook of reading research, Vol. III* (545–586). Mahway, NJ: Erlbaum.

RAND Reading Study Group. (2002). *Reading for understanding: Toward an R&D program in reading comprehension.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

Resnick, L. B., & Hampton, S. (2009). *Reading and writing grade by grade.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Slavin, R. E. (1987). Ability grouping: A best-evidence synthesis. *Review of Educational Research, 57,* 293–336.

Stahl, K. A. D. (2009). The effects of three instructional methods on the reading comprehension and content acquisition of novice readers. *Journal of Literacy Research, 40,* 3, pp. 359–391.

Taylor, B., Short, R. A., Shearer, B. A., & Frye, B. (1995). First grade teachers provide early reading intervention in the classroom. In R. L. Allington & S. A. Walmsley (Eds.), *No quick fix: Rethinking literacy programs in America's elementary classrooms* (159–176). New York: Teachers College Press.

Wentzel, K. R. (1996). Social and academic motivation in middle school: Concurrent and long-term relations to academic effort. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 16,* 390–406.