

Science-Based Reading Research

Guided Reading: Making It Work in Your Classroom

Guided Reading: Making It Work in Your Classroom an interactive, online, and in-person professional development course is designed for all teachers of Grades K-6. Course content focuses on using leveled books within flexible groups to develop students’ reading skills. Teachers learn how to provide support as students practice and expand key strategies, how to assess and group students, match books to readers, and manage guided reading activities in the classroom.

COURSE RESEARCH BASE

COURSE IMPLEMENTATION

Observation and Assessment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By observing and describing children’s reading behavior, a teacher “builds a working understanding of each child as a reader at a particular point in time. In this way, we can trace changes in behavior as children learn and grow and plan instruction that supports them every step of the way.” (p. 4, Fountas & Pinnell, 1999). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Techniques for informally and continually assessing students are modeled in RedTV videos. Printable resources to reinforce the demonstrations and assist in smooth classroom implementation are provided.
<p>“Because students’ individual needs change so often, ongoing observation of behavior and assessment of their knowledge and experience are essential to the guided reading process. Students progress at different rates, so regrouping is also ongoing” (Pinnell, 2002).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical advice from experienced teachers on how to regularly assess students and keep groups current and stimulating for students is provided in RedTV simulations.
<p>Assessment involves the gathering of information about children’s reading development in order to determine strengths, weaknesses, and the necessary steps that should be taken. One of the characteristics of effective reading instruction is to match accelerating demands to student competence. (Pressley et al, 1998, as quoted in Scholastic Reading Counts Research Report, p. 15)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Videos offer expert analyses of students’ reading and resources provide explicit instructions for interpreting assessment results. Recommended techniques and strategies are up to date and designed with the latest developments in reading research in mind.
<p>“Any errors can be analyzed and used to make teaching decisions about the suitability of the level of the guided reading books being read and about the type of help a student may need” (p. 22, Pinnell, 2002).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Videos show real reading record assessments broken down and explained by an experienced teacher. Commentary on future strategies to use based on the assessment are also offered.

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Grouping for Instruction	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benchmark books are ones that can be read at or above 90% accuracy for most children who demonstrate similar reading behaviors. They are used to place children in initial groups for guided reading and to document their reading progress over time. (pp. 27-28, Fountas & Pinnell, 1999) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A booklist of benchmark titles is offered as a printable resources, and is correlated to grade levels and various leveling systems. Checklists to implement a system for grouping that is both dynamic and flexible can be printed and followed throughout the school year.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small-group guided reading, as powerful as it is, must be understood as but one part of a comprehensive literacy program (Routman, 2000, p.140). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RedTV simulations explain how small group work fits into a comprehensive reading program. Opportunities to practice scheduling small group time are also provided in RedTV. Supportive resources allow for additional scheduling practice. Videos demonstrate how opportunities for independent work during small group time can be created for students. Techniques for working with small groups are modeled in real classrooms and captured on video.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The small groups provide a greater opportunity for teachers to use instruction that scaffolds the learning and engages the learner—two key characteristics of exemplary teachers in high-achieving primary classrooms (Pressley, 1998). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A guided reading lesson for a first grade small guided reading group is modeled on video. Strategies for previewing and introducing text are modeled, as well as techniques to use while students are reading, and tips on how to conduct an after reading discussion with a small group. All of the strategies modeled in videos are reinforced by checklists, guidelines, charts, and other printable resources.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “When you provide small-group reading instruction that enables children to discover how to think about a text, they will be able to use their reading competency in all other classroom reading— independent reading, literature study, and content areas. They will develop effective reading processes they can apply across the curriculum.” (pp. 192-193, Fountas & Pinnell, 2001) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources are provided to assist small-group area set-up and include a checklist of materials. Management plans with instructions and advice for rotating groups among centers are offered as resources.

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COURSE RESEARCH BASE	COURSE IMPLEMENTATION
Leveling Texts and Building a Library	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The best way to determine an appropriate reading level for a child is to observe reading behavior. Select leveled books (for example, benchmark books) to get started.” (p. 31, Fountas & Pinnell, 1999). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed leveling criteria are explained, along with guidelines for matching books to students. • In-class videos and in-depth resources provide information on the behaviors to look for when assessing how well students are matched to a particular text selection.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Leveled books are organized in a gradient of difficulty so that you can use the collection as a foundation for moving children along in their development of a reading process” (Fountas & Pinnell, 1999, p.11). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher resources explain leveling characteristics from levels A through Z. • Checklists and additional teacher tools help you match books to readers and help them move through the levels.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Good readers choose to read a variety of materials—biographies, novels for enjoyment, novels to challenge and inspire us, directions to find out how to put something together or cook, or newspapers and magazines to find out about current events or investments. Today’s workplace demands many different kinds of literacy. Good readers do not simply “practice” reading; they have a range of purposes and objectives” (p. 1, Pinnell, 1999). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research articles contain criteria for leveling books and explain how the leveled book collection fits into a reading framework. • Supportive resources include booklists to help in selecting books for the library, and surveys to gauge students’ reading histories.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Independent reading is fostered by organizing ‘browsing boxes’ or baskets of books that the students either have read in guided reading or are new books on the same level. There should be several browsing boxes at any one time as resources for guided reading groups.” (p.48, Fountas & Pinnell, 1996) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Videos explore a real-life leveled library, with teacher commentary on storing, collecting, and arranging books.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The organization of the book collection is the key to efficient use... You do not need a complete classroom collection before you begin to explore guided reading as an instructional approach.” (p. 39, Fountas and Pinnell, 1999). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A teacher in RedTV gives practical advice on building a leveled library from the ground up. • Printable resources include booklists to guide you in making book selection for a comprehensive classroom library.

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Matching Books to Students	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided Reading provides an opportunity for teachers to explicitly teach reading strategies at students' individual levels. Selecting texts that are just the right level (ones they can read with 90% accuracy), enables students to focus on making meaning of the text while practicing reading strategies they already know. To match books and instruction to a specific level, the teacher first needs to assess skills and strategies students use to decode, comprehend, and interpret different kinds and levels of text. (p. 9, Shea, 2000) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Techniques for determining students' instructional levels, and identifying books within those levels are provided. • Leveling criteria and systems are described in the course and reinforced with accompanying resources, including professional articles and charts. • Websites that help match students to leveled books can be easily linked to right from the course. • Print and post classroom resources are provided to help students make smart decisions when selecting texts.
Previewing & Introducing Books	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "There is evidence that asking children to predict upcoming events in a story, allows them to recall story elements and respond to questions about the text with greater clarity and accuracy" (p. 436, Anderson, Wilkinson, and Mason, 1991). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Techniques for encouraging prediction and the use of background knowledge during book introductions are modeled in videos. • Resources, such as checklists and guidelines are provided to reinforce the methods used in videos.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Readers learn that genres are organized in different ways; knowledge of text organization contributes to, and in most texts is essential to, readers' ability to construct meaning." (p. 306, F & P, 2001, 1996). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for approaching both fiction and nonfiction texts are modeled in videos and online simulations show how text organization and placement differ between levels.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "While the purpose of the introduction is to support the meaning of the text as a whole, you may also draw attention to specific words and letters within words in order to make unfamiliar words accessible to students using their present strategies." (p. 167, Fountas & Pinnell, 1996) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary is selected and highlighted during book introductions for first and fourth grade classes.

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Previewing & Introducing Books, <i>cont'd</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “After reading, talk with students about the meaning of the text, inviting them to make connections. They may revisit the text to search for more information or find evidence to support their thinking. The activities that follow reading draw attention back to the text and build on the learning that took place earlier in the lesson.” • “Inviting your students to talk about their personal response to the text is a key aspect of the guided reading lesson.” (p. 212, Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Techniques for conducting a successful after reading discussion are modeled with a first grade small group. Activities to reinforce the vocabulary, strategies and concepts learned during the lesson are recommended as part of the supportive resources.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children come to develop independent reading strategies, according to Clay (1985), by using the cross-checking strategy where they test their hypothesis about the word derived from the illustration against the graphic characteristics of the word in the text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Techniques for helping readers make meaning out of words and make sense of text-picture matches are modeled on video. • Elements of text, such as how close text-picture matching, are discussed in a supportive resource that also describes typical characteristics of books found at specific guided reading levels.
Classroom Management	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “When space and furniture are arranged with the activities of the classroom in mind, students can work more successfully and independently (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 44).” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources list types of centers and outline the basic materials to include in each. • Videos show examples of centers and include advice from a practiced teacher on how to create and maintain them. Small group areas where effective guided reading lessons are conducted are shown in RedTV.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For guided reading to be effective, the rest of the class must be engaged in other literacy activities that do not require direct teacher involvement. For most classes, this means literacy centers that accommodate small groups of students. So, a strategically arranged classroom for guided reading would have a class library, inviting spots for individual work, spaces for whole-class gatherings and small-group meetings, and several literacy centers.” (p. 10, Pinnell, 2000 adapted from p. 54, Schulman and daCruz Payne, 2000). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher resources include checklists and guidelines for how to set up centers in the classroom, with explicit details and instructions on what materials should be included in each center. • Resources refer specifically to whole and small-group areas and how to set them up and maintain them for effective classroom use.

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Classroom Management, <i>cont'd</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Until routines are well established, it is best not to vary the management plan too much. Children respond to orderly and predictable environments and expectations that help them manage their time and behavior. You will not have to shout directions every few minutes, as you would if the routines were constantly changing. (p. 69, Fountas & Pinnell, 1996) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources include sample management plans to practice scheduling groups and establish routines, and checklists to continuously analyze the classroom environment. • RedTV videos demonstrate how a teacher works with small groups while the rest of the students are engaged in various independent activities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “When initiating guided reading, the first challenge for the teacher is to manage the classroom to be able to work in a focused, uninterrupted way with small clusters of students. (p. 53, Fountas & Pinnell, 1996) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources describe how to set up a small group area so you can manage all students and professional articles are accessible for advice on classroom management. • Strategies are offered by teachers for dealing with the classroom when engaged with small groups during guided reading.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and writing centers “reinforce literacy skills by giving students opportunities to practice strategies they’ve learned in their guided reading groups. (p.9, Finney, 2003) • Center activities provide opportunities for children to work heterogeneously and “can also be differentiated to accommodate the varying needs and abilities of each of your students.” (p. 8, Finney, 2003). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RedTV explains how different reading and writing skills can be practiced and improved upon while working in various centers. • RedTV videos show how a teacher addresses small groups to introduce the skills and strategies students will practice during independent activities after the guided reading lesson.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “...teachers should gradually release to readers the responsibility for learning. To achieve this, readers need a repertoire of independent literacy and learning strategies that will empower them to comprehend and manipulate the meaning they make from all types of text. These strategies are more likely taught than caught.” (Whitehead, Guided Silent Reading) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Techniques for setting up independent reading and writing work for students are demonstrated during an after guided reading lesson. • Strategies for setting up a library conducive to guided reading are discussed by an experienced teacher.

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Classroom Management, <i>cont'd</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The success of guided reading as an instructional practice certainly depends on the implementation of a classroom structure that provides teachers with opportunities to effectively work with small groups of readers independently engaged in meaningful literacy learning activities (Kane, 1995). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies for setting up and maintaining centers in the classroom are available as resources, and advice from experienced professionals on keeping students engaged and fostering independence is given in RedTV.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Create a system whereby you will meet regularly with all students. Lower-achieving students need more guidance and more supported instruction; therefore consider meeting with them almost every day. Higher-achieving students will not require a group meeting every day and can do more on their own after a quick check-in with you. Still, higher-achieving students also deserve regular small-group teaching that helps them refine and extend comprehension strategies.” (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online simulations provide opportunities for teachers to practice scheduling guided reading time with small groups in a variety of classroom scenarios/settings. Strategies and techniques for grouping are provided in RedTV.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guided Silent Reading and similar procedures (Stauffer, 1969) have been used as part of instructional reading programs for many years. They help readers apply a range of decoding skills to solve unknown text including predicting, scanning, selecting, confirming, and correcting. (From: Whitehead, Guided Silent Reading, 1994) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Techniques for helping readers tackle unfamiliar text are modeled on video as part of a guided reading lesson. Guidelines and strategies for incorporating guided reading into a reading program are discussed in RedTV and supported by resources that focus on important components of reading such as phonics, fluency, and comprehension.

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References

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