Teacher Perceptions of Guided Reading

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Teacher Perceptions of Guided Reading

by

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August, 2011

A thesis or project submitted to the
Department of Education and Human Development of the
State University of New York College at Brockport
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in Education
Teacher Perceptions of Guided Reading

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Imagine a classroom full of students sitting at a colorful, alphabet-letter-covered carpet, listening to their teacher model what readers do. After this lesson, many students say, “I don’t get it.” And after that same lesson you hear from other students, “This is too easy.” Teachers hear these comments on a daily basis because all learners have different needs. Teachers must address these issues through differentiation: modifying teachings to meet the needs of all students. Within the reading process, the best method for meeting the needs of all students is through a well-planned and effective guided reading lesson (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009).

Problem Statement

Owocki & Goodman (2002) state that “all children have literacy knowledge” (p. 5). A teacher needs to tap into this literacy knowledge and expand on it. In return, a teacher will be giving a student the tools s/he needs to reach further in their reading/literacy potential. Teachers need to be effective through understanding how students learn, organizing for literacy instruction, and linking instruction and assessment (Tompkins, 2010). One way to provide effective literacy instruction is through guided reading (Clay, 1985; Fawson & Reutzel, 2000; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). However, I have seen many teachers who either do not know how to create guided reading lessons or modify reading lessons ineffectively.
Significance of Problem

Becoming a literate individual is a very important and complex process in a person’s life. Today, many children are reading and comprehending far below grade level standards. In Monroe County, New York, alone, in grades 3-8, less than 50% of students met the proficiency standards for the state from the 2009-2010 school year (NYS Board of Regents). More importantly, 44 million United States adults are functionally illiterate (Walker, 2005). Our students are leaving school without the appropriate skills needed to navigate the intricate reading process. Students need ongoing assistance from effective teachers throughout the reading process to expand their reading abilities (Tompkins, 2005).

Many studies have shown the benefits and positive achievement outcomes of students who participate in regular guided reading lessons (Calkins, 2001; Dymock, 1998; Fawson & Reutzel 2000; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Opitz & Ford, 2001; Sonricker, 2008). However, are teachers really conducting guided reading lessons appropriately for their students? Are teachers continually assessing their students’ reading ability to drive further instruction? If teachers are unaware of how to plan for and conduct a guided reading lesson, students will not reach their potential in reading (Clay, 1985; Fawson & Reutzel, 2000; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). This study was designed to explore whether teachers are aware of how to structure and plan for guided reading lessons. As a result of this study, we now know teachers are not as prepared as they need to be and need more training in order to advance students through the literacy process.
Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore teacher understandings and practices of the guided reading process. Guided reading is a process coined/originated in the United States by Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell, literacy teachers and researchers who have made numerous contributions to the education field with their books and programs. Fountas and Pinnell (2001) state that the purpose of guided reading is to “meet the varying instructional needs of all the students in [a] class, enabling them to greatly expand their reading powers” (p. 191).

Data was collected to answer the following question: What are teacher perceptions about guided reading? I based my research of guided reading on the definition produced by Fountas and Pinnell (1996, 2001, 2010): small group instruction for students who read at about the same book level, demonstrate similar reading behaviors, and share similar instructional needs. I surveyed teachers of kindergarten through sixth-grade students. Through this study, I examined how teachers conduct guided reading lessons and whether they align with the prescribed method and definition. I hope to share my study results with colleagues, administrators, and college literacy professors. This study demonstrates whether teachers are knowledgeable enough about the guided reading process in order to help students advance through the reading process.
**Rationale**

As a substitute teacher, I have the opportunity to work with and observe many other teachers. Throughout my substituting experience, I have noticed many differences in guided reading lesson styles and structures. Some teachers conduct their guided reading lessons as a process for the teacher to assist the students through the reading process. Others merely use guided reading as an opportunity to read a new book aloud with their students. I wanted to know whether teachers are prepared to take on the task of teaching students how to read through guided reading as defined by Fountas and Pinnell (1996, 2001). Or, are teachers using reading instruction time unwisely and potentially harming students' literacy development?

**Definition of Terms**

- **Balanced Literacy**- "A balanced reading program includes a range of literacy activities, carefully selected materials for each activity, and a responsive teacher who knows how to structure literacy interactions that move children to higher levels of understanding" (Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998). It is a “philosophical orientation that assumes that reading and writing achievement are developed through instruction and support in multiple environments in which teachers use various approaches that differ by level of teacher support and child control” (Frey, Tollefson, Pass, & Massengill, 2005).
- **Guided reading** – small group instruction for students who read the same text. The students read at about the same book level, demonstrate similar reading behaviors, and share similar instructional needs. These groups are small (from three to eight students) and temporary (they change as the students’ needs do) (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001).

- **Reading** – The word “reading” does not merely mean identifying words in a text. “Reading is a constructive process of creating meaning that involves the reader, the text, and the purpose...the goal is comprehension...it’s a complex process involving: phonemic awareness and phonics, word identification, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension” (Tompkins, 2010, p. 42).

**Summary**

Today, standardized testing is on everyone’s mind: from politicians to administrators and educators to parents and even students. Our students’ scores are not where any of these people would like them to be. More importantly, children are going through school without the necessary reading skills they need for later life. Through Fountas and Pinnell’s guided reading approach to teaching reading, children will begin to move through the complex reading process with more ease (Calkins, 2001; Dymock, 1998; Fawson & Reutzel 2000; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Opitz & Ford, 2001; Sonricker, 2008). However, if teachers are not conducting the lessons appropriately, some students will not reap the benefits of such an effective system.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

“Balanced literacy is a philosophical orientation that assumes that reading and writing achievement are developed through instruction and support in multiple environments in which teachers use various approaches that differ by level of teacher support and child control” (Frey, Tollefson, Pass, & Massengill, 2005, p. 272).

Figure 2-1 is a visual I made to demonstrate the level of teacher and student control. A balanced literacy approach to learning involves teacher-centered components gradually becoming student-centered components while using phonics instruction and meaningful texts during small and whole group activities. The teacher models reading and writing strategies through read-alouds. Slowly students become involved during shared reading and shared writing. More control is shifted toward the child as the teacher guides them during the reading and writing process. Students take responsibility for their learning and practicing reading and writing strategies during independent reading and independent writing. The goal of a balanced literacy program is for students to apply what they have learned with the teacher and be able to be successful independently (Baumann & Ivey, 1997; Fountas & Pinnell 1996, 2001, 2010; Frey, Tollefson, Pass, & Massengill, 2005; Tompkins, 2010)
**What is Guided Reading?**

Guided reading has been called the “heart” of a balanced literacy program (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001, 2010). It is an essential component of any classroom in order to best foster student literacy success (Fountas & Pinnell). Guided reading is an instructional setting that allows the teacher to work with a small group of students to help them learn effective strategies for processing text with understanding (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001).

Fountas and Pinnell (2010) say:

Guided reading is a teaching approach designed to help readers build an effective system for processing a variety of increasingly challenging texts over time. Using benchmark assessments or other systematic observation, the teacher has determined the approximate instructional reading level of each of the students. (para. 3)

A student’s instructional level is the stage at which a child can read the text with some support from an efficient reader (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001, 2010). In other words, the student can read most of the words and comprehend most of what was read. The teacher is available for support when the child needs it.

Fountas & Pinnell, (1996, 2001, 2010) say the following about guided reading: In guided reading, the teacher forms temporary groups of students who have similar instructional needs. Since students grow in their abilities, the groups are flexible and change periodically and as needed. When a group is selected, the teacher selects a text that will be interesting to the group while offering teachable moments
within the reading. The purpose of guided reading is to enable students to become engaged in their reading and develop strategies for understanding texts. The ultimate goal is for students to apply these strategies within their independent reading and move on to more challenging texts.

A few essential components are required when planning for a guided reading session (see Figure 2-2). Before the groups gather, the teacher thoroughly plans for the students. Part of the initial planning is text selection. The text selected is based on ongoing observations of the students. A text is selected based on students’ needs. For example, if students need more practice reading dialogue, the teacher would choose a book that has a fair amount of dialogue in it in order for the students to practice more.

Before the students read the selected text, the teacher gives a thorough yet brief book introduction. “The teacher’s goal is to interest the children in the story, relate it to their experience, and provide a frame of meaning that will support problem solving (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 8). When relating the text to a student’s experience, the teacher encourages them to connect it to their own lives, their knowledge of the world, and/or to other texts they have read. During an introduction, the teacher may also demonstrate questions students ask about a text, prompt students to think about the author’s style (such as patterns, rhyming, metaphors, onomatopoeia), prompt students about what they know about the topic already, bring students’ attention to specific conventions (such as punctuation, headings, subtitles), demonstrate how to navigate the text layout, prompt students to interpret illustrations
or other visual aides, or point out special vocabulary and language structures (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, 2010).

During the reading, teachers encourage students to read silently. If they are more emergent readers, they will read softly and work toward reading silently. While students are reading, the teacher asks individual students to read aloud portions so s/he may take notes on the student’s reading. Also during the reading, the teacher asks individual students questions about the reading to help clear up any confusion. The teacher “listening in” to students’ reading individually is meant to be as unobtrusive as possible. It is meant for observation, note taking, and guidance as needed. Children are encouraged to go through the text and the reading process independently. This way, they will be able to solve problems independently and construct their own meaning of the text. One of the main purposes of reading is to understand what is being read.

After the reading, the teacher encourages the students to talk about the story they have just read. This is an opportunity for teachers to take notes on how the students made meaning of the text. The students are able to share their personal feeling about the text as well. Teachers also use this time to revisit the text for teaching opportunities. For example, s/he may revisit points of problem solving or look back in the text for further understanding. This is an opportunity for students to summarize and synthesize information, communicate their ideas, make inferences, connect the text to their lives, listen to others interpretations of the text, think
critically about the text, and discuss character development. (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, 2010).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Essential Elements of Guided Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before the reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- selects an appropriate text, one that will be supportive but with a few problems to solve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- prepares an introduction to the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- briefly introduces the story, keeping in mind the meaning, language, and visual information in the text, and the knowledge, experience, and skills of the reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- leaves some questions to be answered through reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- engage in a conversation about the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- raise questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- build expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- notice information in the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2-2 (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 7)
After reading, there is also an optional opportunity for extension activities. For example, teachers may have students further discuss their reading through writing, comparing and contrast two works, art, drama, or other means (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001, 2010). There is also an optional opportunity for word work. Fountas and Pinnell (2001) point out that “one important aspect of being an effective reader [through the help of guided reading] is the ability to solve words rapidly and easily while reading continuous text” (p. 213). This means that solving words should be done quickly while reading. It should not hold up the reading process and in turn affect comprehension. The purpose of word work is so students discover how words work. There are many ways for students to explore words. Some ways are through magnetic letters, dry-erase boards, chalk boards, sentence strips, and clay.

*What do the studies say about teacher perceptions of guided reading?*

*National Survey of Guided Reading Practices: What We Can Learn from Primary Teachers.*

Michael Ford and Michael Opitz (2008) conducted a national survey of 1500 K-2 teachers describing their understandings and practices related to guided reading. They wanted to know what teachers understand and do in their efforts to implement guided reading. Five key issues were addressed in the questionnaire: purposes for using guided reading groups, grouping techniques, texts used, planning instruction
with and away from the teacher, and assessment tools and techniques. Their findings will have the possibility to direct future professional development aimed at supporting teachers in improving guided reading practices.

The survey from this study was sent out to a list of 3000 teachers randomly selected from two sources. Fifteen hundred names were obtained from a customer list of a publishing company which markets guided reading materials. The other 1500 names were solicited from an educational data firm. Of the questionnaires sent, 1563 were returned. The teachers who returned their questionnaires were predominantly Caucasian. All the teachers had instructional responsibilities for grades K-2 students. Of the teacher respondents, 91% said they were very or fairly well informed about guided reading instruction.

The survey consisted of 28 multiple choice questions. Some questions allowed more than one response resulting in some items exceeding 100%. All the results were tabulated using a frequency count for each response to each item. The results were reported as percentages.

The first key issue of this study was: What do teachers see as the purpose of guided reading? The choices were provide demonstrations of skills, strategies, responses, and/or procedures; provide interventions around scaffolded instruction for students; facilitate a group response between students around a shared text; or facilitate a group response between students around multiple texts. In this particular survey, two-thirds of the teachers identified demonstrations as the primary focus of guided reading. Ford and Opitz (2008) considered this finding surprising because
primary guided reading should be focused on scaffolded instruction that provides teacher support to students as they attempt a new skill or strategy. If teachers see the purpose of guided reading as demonstrations, then their groups are not guided through the reading.

The second key issue of this study was: What grouping techniques do teachers use during guided reading? One-fifth of the teachers reported using five or more guided reading groups. Another fifth reported using one or two groups. The teachers reported predominantly using homogenous grouping. Twenty-two percent of teachers reported using heterogeneous grouping. Of the teachers using homogeneous grouping, 60% grouped students based on developmental levels, 40% by needs, and 6% by other methods. The average size of groups was six students. Over one-fourth reported meeting with their groups every day. Another fourth reported meeting with their groups once or twice a week. The majority of teachers (53%) reported changing their groups less than once a month. Twenty-five percent of teachers reported changing their groups weekly.

Ford & Optiz (2008) note the variation reported in grouping techniques. Fountas and Pinnell (1996) state that a powerful guided reading practice when meeting with groups, is meeting with groups more than twice a week. Many of the teachers of this study are failing to do so. Fountas and Pinnell (1996, 2001, 2010) also recommend keeping groups dynamic: evaluating the students regularly and reforming groups based on needs. An effective strategy teachers use during guided reading is their grouping methods. Most teachers base groups of levels and/or needs.
This way, students will be with others that have similar needs. The teacher will then be able to tailor the lessons based on what will help each child.

The third key issue of this study follows: What texts do teachers use during guided reading? The largest group of teachers used the book leveling system from their basal programs. This study found 53% of teachers reported usually using “little books,” 43% used trade books, 32% used basal texts, and 24% used supplemental basal materials. Teachers also reported that all students read texts at their instructional level 58% of the time. Ford and Opitz (2008) discuss that there needs to be more balance between using informational and narrative texts. This will better prepare students for comprehending texts outside school. The researchers also discuss the troubling aspect of less than half of all students read at their instructional level. The teacher’s purpose in guided reading is to choose texts that will offer a challenge based on what the students need. If students read texts that are too easy, they are not getting anything out of the lessons. However, you don’t want the texts to be so challenging that it frustrates children into shutting down. The books need to offer a bit of challenge while allowing children to feel success along the way.

The fourth key issue of this study involved the following question: How do teachers plan for instruction with and away from the teacher during guided reading? The teachers of this study estimated that about 37% of their 90-120 minute reading block was devoted to guided reading (33-44 minutes). This comes out to be about 22 minutes per guided reading group. Teachers reported activities of the other students in the room while teachers are working with their guided reading groups. Seventy-
two percent of teachers use centers with their other students, 62% use independent seat work, 35% utilize another adult for separate guided reading groups, 30% use independent reading and writing for their students, and 5% use inquiry projects to engage the students who are not in their guided reading groups. The most popular centers included a listening post (68%), writing corner (53%), working with words station (49%), computer (48%), reading corner (46%), reading/writing the room (36%), math center (34%), art projects (32%), buddy reading (31%), and pocket chart activities (22%). Ford and Opitz discuss that this entire study demonstrates how much teachers benefited from having a significant time-block for language arts instruction.

The fifth key issue of this study answered the question “How do teachers assess during guided reading?” Much of student grouping for guided reading depends on ongoing assessment. In this study, teachers were not asked about their use of specific assessment products (DIBELS, Concepts of Print, etc.). Over 70% of the teachers surveyed reported using daily observations, running records, and/or informal reading inventories to assess students. Forty-five percent of teachers also used assessments built into their reading programs. Twenty-one percent of teachers informed their thinking by reviewing records from previous years that are on file for the students. The researchers in this study were very encouraged that teachers used at least four assessment techniques. This helps to provide more evidence about the importance of the use of informal assessment.
As many questions were answered as arose in this study. Ford and Opitz (2008) interpreted the survey results in a way that outlines important problems that need to be examined in designing thorough and comprehensive staff development programs to support teachers with implementing and improving guided reading practices: help educators develop a clear understanding of the purposes of guided reading; show educators how to foster connections between guided reading and other components of the literacy program; explain and demonstrate different ways to respond to texts; shift educators’ focus from quantity issues related to guided reading to quality instruction issues; help educators make better text selections to insure students are working at their instructional level with a better mix of fiction and nonfiction texts; explain how independent learning opportunities away from the teacher can rival the power of instruction with the teacher; help teachers integrate the variety of assessments that are available to them.

This study addresses the need for more staff development in the area of guided reading. In this particular study, teachers saw themselves as highly informed and knowledgeable about guided reading. However, through the survey, we now know that many are not implementing guided reading in the ways it is intended to be most beneficial to the learner.

*Guided Reading: It’s for Primary Teachers.*

Jackie Ferguson and Jenny Wilson (2009) conducted a survey about guided reading practices and implementation. Four of 63 urban, elementary schools in
Southwest Texas that were asked to participate in the study. The researchers specifically wanted to know if teachers have been trained in guided reading practices, are teachers implementing guided reading practices, and what are teachers’ rationale for implementing or not implementing guided reading.

The participants of this study included a total of 40 primary and upper elementary teachers who completed and returned their surveys. Of the respondents, 19 taught grades K-2 and 21 taught grades 3-5. Teaching experience ranged from the first 3 years to more than 6 years.

The survey was short: 8 questions that asked about general teacher background (current grade level, years of experience at that grade level, and total number of years of teaching experience), the types of guided reading training received, and questions about the frequency of guided reading utilization. Background and training questions were tallied based on circled responses. The remaining essay questions were grouped into categories.

The first key issue of this study asked, “Have teachers been trained in guided reading practices?” Out of the 40 teachers, 21 teachers said they have received training of some kind in undergraduate or graduate level schooling. Staff development training was attended by 33 teachers. These development periods ranged from 3 hours to 3 days. In addition, 8 teachers reported self-studies of guided reading through reading professional books.

The second key issue of this study asked, “Are teachers implementing guided reading?” For 14 of the 19 primary teachers, guided reading used on a daily basis.
The remaining five stated that they used guided reading two to three times a week. Only 5 of the 21 upper elementary teachers used guided reading on a daily basis. The researchers noticed that many of the teachers who used guided reading did not follow the guided reading framework. Many teachers grouped students based on needs. However, only eight upper elementary teachers said their reading groups were flexible or that groups were based on some sort of assessment data.

The third key issue of this study asked, “What is the teacher’s rationale for implementing or not implementing guided reading?” Teachers at all grade levels saw benefits to guided reading. Some teachers stated that they see strategies they are teaching being utilized by the student when s/he reads alone. Teachers also noticed an increase in comprehension. Limitations teachers saw to guided reading were time constraints or simply that other students were unable to do independent work while they met with a group.

The respondents of this study reported having some training on guided reading. The researchers of this study discuss the need for teachers to gain more knowledge of the components and framework of guided reading. If the goal is for students to improve, teachers need a better understanding of the benefits in order to implement guided reading successfully. The researchers of this study also address the need for more comparative and quasi-experimental studies.
Summary

Decades of teaching practice have shown the benefits of teaching using a guided reading instructional setting (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Students are able to be scaffolded from teacher guidance to applying new strategies outside school. With the teacher’s support, students are exposed to different types of texts at their instructional level. This offers a bit of a challenge to the students with the teacher observing and assisting at points of concern. This way, children will be successful in their own independent reading.

Too few studies (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009; Ford & Opitz, 2008) have been conducted on what teacher perceptions of guided reading are. The researchers of these studies discuss the need for teachers to gain more knowledge of the components and framework of guided reading. The respondents report being educated on the topic, however, through the survey, we now know that many are not implementing guided reading in the ways it is intended to be most beneficial to the learner. It would be beneficial for districts to conduct their own studies in order to inform professional development. Administrators and literacy specialists need to be informed about what their teachers know about guided reading and how they actually apply it. With staff development as needed, guided reading will be an invaluable instructional approach in the classroom that will meet the needs of all students.
Chapter 3: Methods & Procedures

The purpose of this study was to explore teacher understandings and practices of the guided reading process. I based my research of guided reading on the definition produced by Fountas and Pinnell (1996, 2001, 2010), the originators of the guided reading process. Specific elements of guided reading include book selection, grouping, book introductions, support planning, and ongoing assessment methods.

Research Questions

I explored the following research question:

- What are teacher perceptions about guided reading?

Within this broad question, I also hoped to find answers to the following sub-questions:

- How do teachers' definitions of guided reading compare to the definitions of Fountas and Pinnell, the originators?
- How do teachers structure their guided reading lessons?
- How do teacher definitions align with their guided reading lesson practices?

Participants

The participants I worked with are teachers of grades K through six. These teachers work in an urban school in Western New York. Within this school, I asked
45 of the grades K-6 teachers to volunteer for this study. This way, I had a wide range of teacher experience. I chose this school and these teachers based on convenience, accessibility and our prior professional connections. I ensured the confidentiality of the participants through the use of pseudonyms.

**Positionality of the Researcher**

I am currently in my final semester of graduate studies for a master’s degree in childhood literacy. I hold a New York State initial teaching certificate in Childhood Education grades 1-6, Early Childhood Education grades birth-2, Students with Disabilities grades 1-6, and Health Education grades K-12.

I have had previous personal and/or professional connections with all the respondents in this study to a varying degree. I have been a per diem substitute within this school for three school years. During this time I have developed ongoing relationships with the faculty and staff of this school.

**Criteria for Trustworthiness**

My goal for this research was to present my observations and the survey results in an honest and professional manner. The results of this study are dependable. The research processes are clearly defined and open to scrutiny. Specific quotes of teachers from the survey were used to demonstrate actual answers. I took every precaution to list the facts in a nonjudgmental way and to not let my personal and professional bias or connections influence the data collection and
analysis. The dates are also confirmable. The date is available for review and the outcomes are demonstrably drawn from the data.

**Data Collection**

I used one primary data collection instrument to understand how teachers perceive guided reading. This instrument was a teacher survey. This survey was sent to the respondents through their school mailboxes. The survey was a printed word document for them to fill out (Appendix A).

**Data Analysis**

Results of the surveys were organized using a frequency count for each response to each item. Results of multiple choice responses were reported as percentages. Items that allowed for multiple responses or short responses were charted for the reader to see these multiple responses quickly and easily. These answers are also discussed in the findings just as general thoughts the teachers may have about guided reading.

**Time Schedule**

Data Collection took place over a six week period during the 2010/2011 school year. The teachers were asked to return the survey in two to three weeks. Teacher surveys were based on teacher/sample availability and convenience.
Procedures

1. A total of 28 teachers were asked via email to voluntarily participate in a survey about teacher perceptions of guided reading.

2. Those teachers who agreed to participate in the study were given a paper copy of the survey. The questions on the survey pertained to their teaching and education experience, definition of guided reading, materials used in guided reading, assessment methods, and grouping methods (Appendix A).

3. Once the surveys were completed, I then compared the teacher survey answers to how they actually reported implementing a guided reading lesson.

Limitations

There were several limitations that bound this study. Perhaps most significant is the small sample size within one type of demographic: urban. This demographic reflects an extremely narrow sampling of overall teachers. However, I attempted to give a variety of perspectives by including classrooms with different instructional makeup, and teachers with different levels of experience and educational backgrounds.

Self-reporting is also a limitation of this study. Participants self-reported and I did not observe actual guided reading lessons.
Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to explore teacher understandings and practices of the guided reading process. Specifically, this study was designed to examine whether teachers are using the strategies of guided reading aligned with the prescribed method and definition, in order to meet the varying instructional needs of their students and help them grow in their abilities to use the reading process as recommended by Fountas and Pinnell.

Questions 1 through 7: Background of Teachers

In order for comparisons to be made across classrooms, the reader must know about the teachers. The teachers were predominantly Caucasian (88%) and Latino (12%). Most of the participants were female (88%). The teachers’ instructional responsibilities ranged from kindergarten through grade six. Second grade was not represented in this study. The educators taught in an urban school that had approximately 640 students, 4 classrooms per grade level, and an average of 28 students per class. Figure 4-1 outlines the current positions and years of experience held by each respondent.

It is also important to note that all respondents reported being trained in guided reading through at least one of the following ways (participants were able to choose more than one answer): college (75%); their district (63%); self-study (50%). One participant reported being trained by the school. While all participants report
being trained in guided reading in some way, only 50% of them were able to identify the designers of guided reading.

**Question 8: Guided reading defined**

According to Fountas and Pinnell (2001), guided reading is small group instruction for students who read the same text. The students read at about the same book level, demonstrate similar reading behaviors, and share similar instructional needs. These groups are small (from three to eight students) and temporary (they change as the students’ needs do).

Fountas and Pinnell (2010) say the following:

Guided reading is a teaching approach designed to help readers build an effective system for processing a variety of increasingly challenging texts over time. Using benchmark assessments or other systematic observation, the teacher has determined the approximate instructional reading level of each of the students. (Para. 2)

An instructional level of a student is a reading level in which a child can read the text with some support from an efficient reader (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001, 2010). In other words, the student can read most of the words and comprehend most of what was read. The teacher is present for support when the child needs it.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Current Grade Level</th>
<th>Current Position in that Grade Level</th>
<th>Years in that position</th>
<th>Total Years Teaching</th>
<th>Master’s Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Regular education teacher</td>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>Curriculum Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Regular education teacher</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>7-10</td>
<td>Literacy Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Regular education teacher</td>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>Curriculum Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Regular education teacher</td>
<td>7-10</td>
<td>11+</td>
<td>Elementary Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Regular education teacher</td>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>7-10</td>
<td>Literacy Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4, 5, 6</td>
<td>Intervention teacher</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>7-10</td>
<td>Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Special education teacher in an integrated classroom</td>
<td>7-10</td>
<td>7-10</td>
<td>Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Special education teacher in an integrated classroom</td>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>Curriculum Specialist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4-1 Respondents’ Background Information

26
In their definitions, all the respondents included working with a “small group of students.” Only 50% of the teachers reported guided reading’s focus is on practicing and utilizing “reading strategies.” All the respondents reported grouping students based on similar needs. Respondent four said, “[guided reading is a] teacher working with a small group of children, grouped at similar/same reading levels.” Only 38% of respondents reported specifically using books or groupings at the students’ instructional level. Teacher two said guided reading is, “a small group of students practicing their reading skills and strategies using books at their instructional level…” Further data on group fluidity and methods are discussed in results of later survey questions.

**Question 9: Limitations to guided reading**

Most of the respondents (88%) did not see any limitations to guided reading itself. Some concerns (25% of respondents) about guided reading were implementing groups while the rest of the class works independently. Teacher number one says, “just that [guided reading] leaves the rest of the class ‘alone’ at centers.” Other teachers (38%) noted time constraints as an issue. They wanted to work with certain groups more often but did not have the time. Teacher number six said, “Sometimes it’s hard to see a particular group as often as needed.”

Teacher number seven was the only teacher who saw a limitation to guided reading. This teacher saw guided reading as only beneficial for primary students. This teacher stated that, “I think guided reading works very well for primary students.
After a certain level of reading is achieved (possibly about a DRA level K-L) I wonder if it’s an effective use of time.”

**Question 10: Is guided reading used in classrooms**

All respondents of this study reported using guided reading in their classrooms. Participants gave the following reasons for using guided reading:

- helping students improve their reading abilities and strategies
- ease of instructing small groups of students
- benefits of teaching students at their instructional level and needs
- it adds more reading into the day
- repeated reads
- students’ attention is greater
- individual, ongoing assessment
- students being able to practice with the teacher close by

Teacher number two pointed out that, “[guided reading] gives me a chance to teach reading strategies and assess individual strengths and weaknesses. Small groups are always easier to teach.” Teacher number seven enjoys the routines and that “the students have my attention for 20 minutes.”

**Questions 11 through 14: Guided reading group size, times conducted, and fluidity**

Fountas and Pinnell (2001) recommend conducting guided reading groups daily in order to best meet the instructional needs of all students in a class. Some
groups of students, depending on need, will need to meet with the teacher more than two times a week. Groups with students reading at an appropriate level need to meet with the teacher only one to two times a week.

Sixty-three percent of the respondents reported using guided reading on a daily basis. Other respondents reported using guided reading 3-4 times a week (25%), and varies (12%). All the respondents reported keeping groups for guided reading small with six or fewer students in each group. Groups of 3-4 students were used in 75% of classrooms while 25% used groups of 5-6 students. All the respondents also reported keeping their guided reading groups fluid. No one reported keeping groups the same all year. Groups are changed every couple of months for 75% of teachers. The other 25% reported changing groups around once a month. The teachers who changed groups most frequently taught Kindergarten and first grade.

**Question 15: What are the other students usually working on while the teacher meets with guided reading groups? Activities students typically do at centers while the teacher is meeting with a guided reading group.**

One respondent of this study was an intervention teacher. Therefore, those groups for guided reading are pulled out of the regular classroom while the regular classroom teacher provides instruction. For this reason, the intervention teacher will not be included in this section because she worked only with the small group and did not need to provide additional activities.
This question of the survey allowed for more than one selection. Teachers had the option of choosing from working at centers, working on independent seat work, working with another adult in a separate guided reading group, working on inquiry projects, working in readers/writers workshop, and/or other. If a teacher selected “working at centers,” they were asked to select from the following choices: listening center (books on tape); reader’s theater, puppets, and/or dramatic play; reading and/or writing; pocket chart activities; working with words materials; art projects; book publishing; buddy reading; science center; social studies center; math center; computer center; overhead projector activities; big books; other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Participant</th>
<th>listening</th>
<th>dramatic play</th>
<th>reading/writing</th>
<th>pocket chart</th>
<th>working with words</th>
<th>art</th>
<th>book publishing</th>
<th>buddy reading</th>
<th>science</th>
<th>social studies</th>
<th>math</th>
<th>computer</th>
<th>overhead projector</th>
<th>big books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4-2 displays the center activities for the respondents. Respondent 6 was an intervention teacher who pulled students out of their regular classroom to
conducted guided reading groups. Of the respondents whose students worked in centers while a guided reading group was conducted, none of the teachers provided the following centers: art, book publishing, science, social studies, or math.

**Question 16: Materials used in guided reading**

The materials used in guided reading varied from teacher to teacher. The materials used include pencils, dry-erase boards and markers, letter manipulatives (magnetic letters, letter tiles, etc), sentence strips, index cards/word cards/flashcards, notebooks, pictures/diagrams/globes, leveled narrative texts, and anecdotal binders used to hold data regarding the students’ reading. Leveled texts and some type of index or flashcards were reported as being used by all the respondents.

**Question 17: Components of a guided reading lesson**

In order for a guided reading lesson to be effective and assist in student achievement, certain components must be present in all lessons before reading, during reading, and after reading the text. These components are discussed in more depth in Chapter 2 and illustrated in Figure 2-2.

I asked the respondents to report on the components that Fountas and Pinnell (1996, 2001, 2010) recommend as well as components that Fountas and Pinnell discourage. I chose to do this so I could get a good evaluation of whether teachers were conducting guided reading lessons the way Fountas and Pinnell designed.
Participants were asked to report use of the following components during the introduction of a text (Results are shown in Figure 4-3):

- introduces title and author
- confirms student prior knowledge
- text to text connections
- discuss new vocabulary and word meanings
- encourages student to repeat new words
- prompts students to interpret illustrations
- draws attention to illustrations to foreshadow
- defines the problem or plot of the story
- other (specify) ____________________________

All of the respondents reported using at least 50% of the above listed components. Teacher 4 was the only teacher that used all of the components. The most common missing component was text to text connections (missing from 5 teachers), teacher draws attention to illustrations to foreshadow (missing from 5 teachers), and teacher defines the problem or plot of the story (missing from 7 teachers).

Participants were asked to report use of the following components during the reading of the text were (Results in Figure 4-4):

- round robin reading
- popcorn reading
- teacher *solely* reads
- student reads independently
- student reads aloud while teacher listens
- explains / demonstrates how punctuation is used to convey author meaning
- other (specify) ____________________________

All teachers reported that students read while the teacher listens. Six out of the eight teachers surveyed reported that students independent read. Seven out of eight
teachers report using round robin, popcorn, or choral reading with their guided reading groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Teacher introduces the title and author</th>
<th>Teacher confirms student prior knowledge</th>
<th>Text to text connections</th>
<th>Discuss new vocabulary and word meanings</th>
<th>Teacher encourages students to repeat new words</th>
<th>Teacher prompts students to interpret illustrations</th>
<th>Teacher draws attention to illustrations to foreshadow</th>
<th>Teacher defines the problem or plot of the story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4-3 Respondents Reporting on “Introducing the Text”**

Participants were asked to report use of the following components during after reading the text were (Results in Figure 4-5):

- discussion – setting
- discussion - characters
- discussion – plot
- discussion – connections
- word work
- extension activities
- other (specify)
All respondents reported discussing the setting and characters of the story. Seven out of eight teachers report discussing the plot of the story. Two out of eight teachers did not discuss connections to the story being read.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Round robin reading</th>
<th>Popcorn reading</th>
<th>Teacher solely reads</th>
<th>Students independent read</th>
<th>Student reads while teacher listens</th>
<th>Teacher explains/demonstrates punctuation</th>
<th>other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>strategy practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>choral reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>choral reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>echo/choral reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>questions throughout</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>all students read aloud</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4-4** Respondents Reporting on “Reading the Text”

**Question 18: Student assessment**

Ongoing student assessment is vital for all guided reading groups. It allows teachers to track students’ progress and modify instruction based on student needs (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001). All the respondents reported using some sort of anecdotal notes and observations to assess their students. All teachers also reported
using running records, DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment), and DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills). Other forms of assessment included oral and written responses and comprehension questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Discussion-setting</th>
<th>Discussion-characters</th>
<th>Discussion-plot</th>
<th>Discussion-connections</th>
<th>Extension activities</th>
<th>Word work</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>summary, questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>recall, retell</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>writing</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4-5  Respondents Reporting on “After Reading”

**Summary**

The respondents of this study varied in terms of experience, grade level, and prior education on guided reading. However, many of the teachers formatted their guided reading lessons in the same way. Many teachers also used the same assessments and materials for their groups. Most importantly, all the respondents felt that guided reading is beneficial and all respondents used guided reading in their classrooms.
Chapter 5: Conclusions

This study was designed to answer the following research question: What are teacher perceptions of guided reading? Within this broad question, I hoped to find answers to the following sub-questions: How do teachers’ definitions of guided reading compare to the definitions of Fountas and Pinnell (1996, 2001, 2010), the originators of the program? How do teachers structure their guided reading lessons? How do teacher definitions align with their guided reading lesson practices?

In order to answer the above questions, 45 teachers in an urban school setting were invited to complete a survey. This survey consisted of 19 questions about teacher experience and how teachers define and implement guided reading. Of the 45 surveys sent out, 8 surveys were completed and returned.

All respondents were trained (self-study, college, district or other ways the participants specified) in guided reading. Also, all teachers conducted guided reading in their classrooms daily or weekly. Discrepancies were found between teachers’ knowledge of guided reading and how they actually conducted their lessons. Many teachers do not format their lessons in ways that Fountas and Pinnell (1996, 2001, 2010) recommend.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore teacher understandings and practices of the guided reading process. The intent of this report is to clarify teacher definitions versus Fountas and Pinnell’s definition of guided reading. There are four major
findings from this study: teachers are somewhat educated on the purposes for implementing guided reading, teachers need access to a broader range of texts, respondents of this study do not include several of the essential guided reading components, and teachers often use methods for reading that are not appropriate for an effective guided reading lesson.

Teacher Education

All respondents of this study reported being trained in guided reading in one or more ways: district, college, and/or self-study. However, only half of the respondents were able to identify the originators of guided reading, Irene C. Fountas and Gay Sue Pinnell. Fountas and Pinnell are recognized by many literacy experts in America (Calkins, 2001; Fawson & Reutzel, 2000; Ferguson, & Wilson, 2009; Ford & Opitz, 2008; Frey, Tollefson, & Massengill, 2005; Opitz & Ford, 2001).

As discussed in Chapter 2, Fountas and Pinnell (1996, 2001) define guided reading as small group instruction for students who read the same text. All the respondents were able to identify at least one of the following purposes for guided reading. The students read at about the same book level, demonstrate similar reading behaviors, and share similar instructional needs. These groups are small (from three to eight students) and temporary (they change as the students’ needs do). The purpose of guided reading is to encourage students to become engaged in their reading and develop strategies for understanding texts. The ultimate goal is for students to apply these strategies within their independent reading and move on to
more challenging texts. All respondents of this study keep their groups of students small (5-6 students or less) and flexible (changed once a month or every couple months). It can be concluded that this group of teachers are somewhat educated on the purposes for implementing guided reading as they were able to identify at least one of the above listed purposes to guided reading.

➢ Essential Guided Reading Components

Several essential components direct guided reading lessons designed by Fountas & Pinnell (1996, 2001). As discussed in Chapter 2, Figure 2-2, Fountas & Pinnell assign teachers certain responsibilities before the reading, during the reading, and after the reading. The respondents of this study do not include several of these essential elements.

Before reading, the teacher’s job is to select an appropriate text and prepare an introduction to the text (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). The teacher introduction involves introducing the title and author, confirming students’ prior knowledge, making text to text connections, discussing new vocabulary, encouraging students to repeat new words, interpreting illustrations, and defining the problem or plot of the story. During this time, the students have a conversation about what they notice about the text and ask questions. All eight of the respondents neglected to provide an appropriate book introduction. Only one respondent reportedly discussed the plot of the story before reading. All but one respondent was missing at least one element of the book introduction.
The recommended procedure for during the reading of the text is when the teacher listens to individual students’ readings. The teacher will take notes during this time about specific strategies the students are using or misusing. The students read softly or silently and ask the teacher for problem solving help as needed. Half the participants reported using round robin reading where each child takes turns reading aloud. One teacher reported that all the students in the group read aloud together. Two teachers do not have students read independently at any time.

Fountas and Pinnell’s (1996, 2001) recommended procedure for after the reading of the text involves a whole group discussion between the students and teacher. All respondents reported some element of discussion of the setting, characters, plot, and/or connections.

All of the respondents reported using half of the components of the book introduction. The most common missing component was text to text connections (missing from 5 teachers), teacher draws attention to illustrations to foreshadow (missing from 5 teachers), and teacher defines the problem or plot of the story (missing from 7 teachers). All respondents reported that students read while the teacher listens during reading. Seven out of eight teachers use reading procedures not recommended by Fountas and Pinnell (1996, 2001). After reading the text, all respondents reported discussing the setting and characters. One respondent did not discuss the plot while two did not discuss connections.
Unorthodox Guided Reading Methods

All of the following methods of reading are not appropriate for an effective guided reading lesson. One teacher did not use some type of joint reading such as popcorn reading (when teacher stops reading aloud students “pop” in and read starting at the next word), round robin reading (students take turns reading aloud), choral reading (students and teacher read aloud together), and/or echo reading (teacher reads and student will echo what the teacher read). One respondent reported that all the students read aloud. Fountas and Pinnell (1996, 2001) state that teachers listen to one student read quietly at a time. In addition, all the students should be reading to themselves to work out the text independently while the teacher is there for support as needed. This will help students practice reading strategies that will support their reading away from the guided reading lessons when the teacher is not available due to working with other groups.

Implications for the Classroom

The interpretations of these survey results will inform educators of the following needs. Although many respondents reported being trained in some way in guided reading, in order to successfully implement guided reading, educators need the following:

were able to identify a few purposes of guided reading. However, half of the respondents were missing a few components such as using books or groupings that are at the students’ instructional level and practicing and utilizing reading strategies.

- a clearer understanding of the format of guided reading during reading. The majority of respondents did have a clear understanding of the process before and after reading in a guided reading session. However, 25% of respondents do not include student independent reading. Incorrect elements that 65% of respondents reported using were choral reading, round robin reading, and/or echo reading.

- demonstrations of high quality guided reading lessons that include good book introductions, procedures for during the reading, and discussions after the reading (Fountas and Pinnell, 1996, 2001).

- skills for planning and managing the remainder of the class while guided reading is being conducted. The respondents of this study reported that a limitation of guided reading is what to do with the rest of the class. Teacher one mentioned she doesn’t feel comfortable leaving her kids “alone” at centers because they are unable to work independently.

- professional development regarding content literacy. No respondents reported using special subjects as a center option. Also, many respondents have issues with time constraints. If teachers were able to link other subjects (art, social
studies, science, and math) to their literacy lessons and centers, more time could be available for literacy development.

- More professional development opportunities are needed so teachers will be able to implement effective guided reading lessons by using time wisely in order to get the most out of one session.

**Future Research**

Non-respondents of this study may be less familiar with and/or less engaged in guided reading practices. A larger sample size would be necessary for deeper analysis. It would be beneficial for studies to be implemented within different schools in different districts (urban, suburban, and rural) with more participants. A closer look at and consideration of the teachers' individual definitions of guided reading followed by observations of their individual practices would allow researchers to evaluate where the breakdown between teacher perceptions and teacher instruction lies.

Since teachers implement guided reading practices with many different learners, it may be useful for school districts to develop and administer a similar survey locally and interpret the results. Their findings could lead them to their own questions that need to be addressed within their unique body of learners. For example, are expensive programs (Such as Houghton Mifflin, Read 180, and Corrective Reading) worth the cost? Do educators see the benefits of these scripted programs?
This study raises many more questions for future research. For example, it would beneficial for a study to be conducted to examine the relationship between teacher perceptions of guided reading and student success in guided reading. Does a student’s reading level increase as a teacher’s knowledge and practices of guided reading increases? Would a student perform better in a classroom that holds regular guided reading groups? Is guided reading still effective in upper elementary settings? Are students presented opportunities to take part in appropriate and differentiated activities away from the teacher? Are assessments used to actually guide instruction?

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore teacher understandings and practices of the guided reading process. To do this, a survey was sent out to teachers of grades kindergarten through sixth in an urban elementary school. Of the surveys sent out, almost 20% of them were completed. The survey consisted of a total of 19 questions about teachers’ experiences, how they perceive guided reading, and how they structure their guided reading lessons.

It was found that all responding teachers, regardless of years of teaching experience, had received training in guided reading instruction. Most of the respondents conducted guided reading on a daily basis. Each teacher was able to describe guided reading. However, there was a discrepancy between what they reported they knew about guided reading and how they conducted their lessons.
Many teachers are not structuring their lessons using recommended methods (Fountas and Pinnell, 1996, 2001, 2010). I conclude that teachers recognize the components and benefits of guided reading but continue to need additional training and professional development opportunities in order to learn to plan and implement effective guided reading lessons.
References


Appendix A

Teacher Survey

1. What grade level are you currently teaching?

   __ 1  __ 2  __ 3
   __ 4  __ 5  __ 6

2. How many years of experience do you have at that grade level?

   _____ 0-3  ____ 4-6  ___ 7-10  ____ 11+

3. What is your current teaching position in the classroom?

   _____ regular education teacher  _____ special education teacher
   _____ teacher assistant  __________ other, please specify

4. How many total years of teaching experience do you have?

   _____ 0-3  ____ 4-6  ___ 7-10  ____ 11+

5. What type of master’s program did you complete or are you completing?

   ___ Literacy Education  ___ Curriculum Specialty
   ___ Other, please specify _____________________________

6. Who is/are the originators of guided reading?

   __________________________

7. Check all ways you were trained in guided reading

   ___ college  ___ district
   ___ self-study  ___ Other, please specify ________________

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8. How is guided reading defined?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

9. Do you see any limitations to guided reading? If yes, please explain.

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

10. Do you currently use guided reading in your classroom?

____ yes why? _____________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

(please continue on through the survey)

____ no why? _____________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

(thank you for your time, your survey is complete)

11. How often is guided reading conducted in your classroom?

____ never ______ 1-2 times/week ______ 3-4 times/week

____ daily ______ varies

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12. How long do you typically meet with a group?

__ less than 10 minutes __ 10-14 minutes __ 15-19 minutes
__ 20-24 minutes __ 25+ minutes

13. How many students are typically in your guided reading groups?

__ 1-2 __ 3-4 __ 5-6 __ 7 +

14. How often do you change your groups’ make-up?

__ never/annually__ around once a month __ around once a week
__ more than once a week __ around once every couple months

15. While you are working with a guided reading group, what are the other students usually doing? (Check all that apply)

__ Working at centers
__ Working on independent seat work
__ Working with another adult in a separate guided reading group
__ Working on inquiry projects
__ Working in readers/writers workshop
__ Other (specify) ________________
If you checked “working at centers” what are the activities students typically do at centers while you are working with a guided reading group?

- Listening center (books on tape)
- Readers Theater, Puppets, dramatic Play
- Reading and/or Writing
- Pocket Chart Activities
- Working with word materials
- Art projects
- Book publishing
- Buddy reading
- Science center
- Social Studies center
- Math center
- Computer center
- Overhead projector activities
- Big Book stand
- Other (specify) ____________________
- Other (specify) ____________________
- Other (specify) ____________________

16. Please list materials you use for guided reading

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

17. Please check all the components of your typical guided reading lessons:

- Introducing the text:
  - introduces title and author
  - confirms student prior knowledge
  - text to text connections
  - discuss new vocabulary and word meanings
  - encourages student to repeat new words
  - prompts students to interpret illustrations
  - draws attention to illustrations to foreshadow
  - defines the problem or plot of the story
  - other (specify) __________________________________________

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• Reading the text:
  ___ round robin reading
  ___ popcorn reading
  ___ teacher *solely* reads
  ___ student reads independently
  ___ student reads aloud while teacher listens
  ___ explains / demonstrates how punctuation is used to convey author meaning
    ___ other (specify)
    ___ other (specify)

• After Reading:
  ___ discussion – setting
  ___ discussion - characters
  ___ discussion – plot
  ___ discussion – connections
  ___ extension activities
  ___ other (specify)
  ___ other (specify)
  ___ word work

18. How do you assess your students in guided reading?

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

19. If you are willing and available for the researcher to observe a guided reading lesson and/or interview you further based on your convenience, please put your name on the line.

_________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your time and honest answers!