

**SOWING SEEDS FOR SUCCESS: K-2 TEACHERS, GUIDED DISCUSSION, AND
GUIDED READING**

By

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ABSTRACT

Underperformance in literacy is a pressing concern for educators, especially school leaders and teachers in chronically underperforming elementary schools. For primary grade students in high-needs schools, which tend to be composed of youth from underserved groups, the impact of such underperformance can have lasting effects, including lack of preparation for college-level work. To prevent this underperformance requires that teachers know how to teach reading most effectively, which includes the practice of guided reading. However, helping K-2 teachers improve their guided reading instruction first requires an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. This qualitative case study of three primary grade teachers in a chronically underperforming elementary school in northern New Jersey examined participants' knowledge and practices around guided reading through surveys, observations, and semi-structured interviews to learn 1) what K-2 teachers know about guided reading, 2) how they use guided discussion during guided reading in general, and 3) how they use guided discussion as a formative assessment tool during guided reading. The researcher found that the focal teachers (a) used discussion in different ways, for different purposes, and to varying degrees; and (b) improvised their discussions instead of planning strategic formative assessment. These findings identify gaps in the focal teachers' knowledge of how to use guided discussion as formative assessment during guided reading. A key implication of these findings is the need for continuous, high-quality, job-embedded professional development on guided reading instruction. The author presents a matrix to help classify these gaps and develop more differentiated professional development.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Mary Martha Lee-Smith (1940-) and Armstead David Smith, Jr. (1938-2010), whose sacrifice, support, and unconditional love put me on the pathway to success. I am eternally grateful to them for sowing the seeds of success in me by modeling a strong work ethic, a genuine appreciation for cultural diversity, and a devotion to intellectual curiosity.

Ma, thanks for instilling in me the value of standing tall and recognizing my own self-worth. I also want to thank you for teaching me how to pay attention to detail. Without your strong and insightful coaching, I could not have come this far.

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PREFACE

The year 2015 marked my fifteenth year as a public school educator. When I began teaching in 2000 in suburban Hanford, California, which is the county seat of Kings County, located approximately 30 miles outside of the Central San Joaquin Valley city of Fresno, I was struck by the staggering number of struggling Black and Latino students. At the time, I was not aware of the prevalence of underperformance among Black and Latino students across the nation. I thought that the problem was limited to the Central San Joaquin Valley community. According to the 2000 United States (U.S.) Census, Hanford's population of approximately 42,000 people was mainly White (approximately 60%) and Hispanic or Latino of any race (approximately 40%). Only five percent of the population was Black or African American and three percent were Asian. Nearly 30% of people in Kings County had graduated high school and 10% had earned a Bachelor's degree or higher (United States Census Bureau, 2015a). Today, the number of people who have earned a Bachelor's degree or higher has risen slightly to 12.5%, which is low compared to the state average of 31% and the national average of 29% (United States Census Bureau, 2015b).

In 2003 I moved to Morristown, New Jersey, which is a much more densely populated and racially and culturally diverse suburban town in the New York Metropolitan area. I began substitute teaching in the district's elementary schools. And as I moved from school to school, I began to realize that the majority of the Black and Latino students in the district underperformed in literacy. It was disheartening to see these students underperforming at such alarming rates. It was also disheartening to see how this academic underperformance often manifested itself in "acting out" behaviors, causing many teachers to 1) associate "brownness" with acting out and 2) view these students as "problem children" who simply could not be helped. In all of these schools, Black and Hispanic male students were sent to the principal's office for "acting out" far

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more frequently than their peers, a pattern that usually continued all the way into the middle school and high school years.

After nearly a year of substitute teaching, I accepted a position as a third grade homeroom teacher in one of the more challenged elementary schools in the district because I felt a strong connection to the racially and socioeconomically mixed community served by the school. I also felt a responsibility to work in a school with a significant number of students of color because I wanted to serve as both a role model and advocate for students from underserved groups in a school whose teaching staff members were predominantly middle-age, White, and from middle-class backgrounds. Upon accepting the job, I quickly learned that the Black and Hispanic students in my school and across the district—males in particular—were overrepresented in special education and basic skills classes. In fact, my school and my district were the focus of an investigation by the State of New Jersey into the over-classification of students of color. At the same time, Black and Latino students were underrepresented in the school's (and the district's) gifted and talented program—a concern addressed widely in the literature on the social context of education (Anyon, 2005; Bonner, 2014; Carter, 2007; Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Noguera, 2009).

In particular, the literature on cultivating and nurturing academic achievement among Black male students from preschool through college and graduate school, known as the P-20 school system, clearly and consistently identifies the systemic nature of the overrepresentation of Black male students in special education and underrepresentation in gifted and talented programs. Through his collection of research-based models and frameworks designed by leading researchers of Black male achievement, which includes his own work, Bonner (2014) stresses the importance of helping P-20 school systems restructure their orientation toward Black males

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to better serve them, an idea that also applies to elementary school communities composed of mainly Hispanic students in poverty, such as my research site. This work would involve a special focus on many things, including 1) helping teachers understand how race impacts their practice, and 2) helping school systems institutionalize “scholar identity” (Whiting, 2014) habits of mind among students, particularly among students from historically underserved groups. As Bonner (2014) advises, central to this work is the question of who our students are and how the contexts in which they live and learn might impact our work as educators and, in turn, students’ academic achievement.

Near the end of my first year as a third grade teacher in this district, I began to read books on the social context of education, specifically the impact of race and class on a child’s education, deepening my desire to improve the K-12 school experience for struggling students of color, students in poverty, and students of color in general. I also began to connect with the few colleagues of mine who shared this interest. In my heart, I knew there was a better approach to educating the children who were doing the worst, but I struggled to get my building principal and district administrators to investigate the underperformance of Black and Latino students and design a research-based plan for attacking the problem. The idea of using culturally relevant pedagogy to reach and effectively teach all children simply was not a part of the district’s culture. In other words, understanding the social context surrounding their students and exploring how these contexts might impact their work as educators seemed to be of no consequence to the district’s leadership.

With the exception of a few, rare classrooms in my school and in schools across the district, “the normalization of failure on the part of Black males” (Noguera, 2009, p. xix) persisted. Sadly, the “silenced dialogue” Delpit (2006) aptly describes could not be given voice.

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If only I could show them that there is a better way to teach struggling students of color.

Knowing that I needed to prove this “better way” in order for other educators in my district to accept the idea that cultural relevance greatly impacts the academic success of the children they serve, I decided to return to graduate school to pursue a doctoral degree in education. During this time, I learned how to conduct critical analyses of the existing literature and used this knowledge to research the topics that interested me the most: early literacy, culturally responsive pedagogy, and education as a social justice tool. I ultimately chose to focus my research on early literacy education and professional development for teachers due to their centrality to all learning and their heightened importance to the progress of disadvantaged students.

The subject of the present dissertation study is influenced by my professional experience as a general education teacher, teacher leader, and early literacy consultant in racially diverse, public elementary schools in California, New Jersey, and New York. This alternative dissertation project is the culmination of 15 years of thinking about the problem of underperformance in literacy. My goal is to help advance the conversation about finding viable solutions for ensuring the success of children from disenfranchised groups, including Black and Latino students and students in poverty, through strategic, high-quality early literacy instruction.

In this dissertation, I first introduce the idea of the prevalence of underachievement in literacy among U.S. elementary students and provide a review of the theoretical and research literature illuminating best practices in reading instruction in the elementary grades. I then share my reflections on a presentation I gave at the 2015 National Conference of the American Association of Blacks in Higher Education (AABHE). Next, I describe the methodology I used to examine my problem of practice then share the manuscript based on my research study that I submitted to a leading, peer-reviewed, scholarly journal for publication. This manuscript is

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followed by a description of the professional development training I delivered to the teachers at the elementary school in which I conducted my study. I end with some closing remarks about the process of completing this dissertation project and the significance that my research holds for the future.

The aim of this dissertation is to contribute to the existing body of early literacy research, particularly on the use of guided discussion as a way to deliver effective reading instruction to young children—struggling students of color and students from underserved groups in particular. Through this dissertation project, I examine the use of guided discussion as formative assessment during guided reading as a means of equipping young children with the skills and knowledge they will need to reach success in higher education and beyond. Metaphorically speaking, because of the centrality of literacy to all learning, early literacy teachers plant seeds that provide a foundation for additional, self-directed learning that allows students to prepare themselves for college and beyond. Likewise, research-based professional development plants seeds for early literacy teachers by providing strong, solid roots that help them anchor their practice in what we know to be true about effective reading instruction.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

Ensuring that our schools use the most effective methods of literacy instruction is a critical element of early childhood education, especially given the current challenges K-12 students in the United States face in literacy. Much can be learned about teacher knowledge of effective literacy instruction simply by studying teachers at work. This study explores what three primary grade teachers in one chronically underperforming elementary school know about using guided discussion (GD) as formative assessment (FA) during guided reading (GR). I chose to focus on this school because it faces specific challenges regarding its students' proficiency in reading. These challenges include high rates of absenteeism, large numbers of students whose English language skills are far below the grade-level expectation, and organizational issues such as low teacher morale.

I chose guided discussion because of its potential to advance learning for young children and because it is an inherent part of GR, which has been shown to be one of the more effective ways to teach literacy (Ford & Opitz, 2008; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Fountas & Pinnell, 2012; Schwartz, 2005). I also chose guided discussion during guided reading because many teachers struggle to execute it with precision (Ford & Opitz, 2008), indicating a potential need to develop teachers' understanding of what GR is and how GD plays a critical role in effective GR instruction. My research study shows that for GD—and thus, GR—to be effective, it must be taught by teachers who are skilled in planning purposeful, strategic, scaffolded instruction and using a variety of curricular resources to do so. Specifically, findings from my research support the view that teacher knowledge impacts a teacher's ability to use effective methods for early literacy instruction, which is critical given current student performance in reading. In this

introduction, I first describe student underperformance in reading and related national remediation efforts. Then I define the concepts of “guided reading,” “guided discussion,” and “formative assessment” and explain the underlying theory that informs the use of guided discussion during guided reading.

Underperformance in Reading

Systemic underperformance in literacy among K-12 students in the United States has been evidenced by standardized test score data and in numerous reports on literacy achievement (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2014a, 2014b; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2010). Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), an assessment of student achievement in reading and math, indicate that only 25.5% and 27% of fourth grade public school students across the nation scored “proficient” on the 2011 and 2013 administrations of the reading portion of the assessment. During these same years, 33.5% and 33% of fourth graders scored “basic,” and 33.5% and 31.5% scored “below basic” (NCES, 2014b). These statistics show that roughly only a third of fourth grade students across the nation demonstrated proficiency in reading. Similarly, according to NAEP scores, only 30% of New Jersey fourth graders in public schools scored “proficient” on the NAEP reading assessment (NCES, 2014a). These data suggest that literacy instruction is failing to help two-thirds of New Jersey students meet and exceed grade-level standards.

However, test score data from the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) from 2011-2013 tell a different story about the level of reading proficiency among New Jersey fourth graders. In 2013, fifty-one percent and 8.4% of fourth grade students in the State of New Jersey scored “proficient” and “advanced proficient” on the Language Arts Literacy (LAL) portion of the NJASK (State of New Jersey Department of Education, 2014c). In

2012, approximately 54% and 4.0% of fourth graders scored “proficient” and “advanced proficient” (State of New Jersey Department of Education, 2014b). Similarly, in 2011, approximately 55.5% and 7.2% of all fourth grade students scored “proficient” and “advanced proficient” on the NJASK (State of New Jersey Department of Education, 2014a). According to these aggregate data from New Jersey schools, which range from very affluent to severely economically disadvantaged, it appears that roughly half of the fourth graders in New Jersey are proficient in LAL. However, when broken down by student demographics, it becomes evident that fourth graders in New Jersey’s most underserved schools are drastically less proficient in reading than their more affluent peers, which raises the question of equity in education as it relates to literacy.

Scholars and practitioners (Anyon, 2005; Lareau, 2011) suggest that socioeconomic factors prevent many families from providing resources and experiences that contribute to literacy learning, giving children from more affluent families an advantage over their less affluent peers. Indeed, standardized test score data support the idea that poverty and underperformance in literacy achievement are correlated. Take, for example, these two schools in northern New Jersey: 1) McKinley School—a large (approximately 1,000 students), high-needs (92% economically disadvantaged; 5.6% limited English proficient (LEP); 31% students with disability), high-absenteeism (28 % of students with 15 or more absences) school located in a low-income neighborhood in Newark, New Jersey and 2) Thomas Jefferson School—a mid-size (approximately 300 students), relatively low-needs (27% economically disadvantaged; 6% LEP; 16% students with disability), low-absenteeism (4 % of students with 15 or more absences) school located in a mostly affluent neighborhood in Morristown, New Jersey (State of New Jersey Department of Education, 2014f, 2014g). On the 2013 administration of the NJASK,

36.2% of McKinley’s fourth grade students scored “proficient” in LAL while 0% scored “advanced proficient.” In contrast, during the same year, 57% and 22% of fourth graders at Thomas Jefferson School scored “proficient” and “advanced proficient.” Further, in the previous three years, the same pattern is visible: students in schools that serve predominately economically disadvantaged students tended to perform significantly worse than students from schools that serve more affluent students. In addition, the rate of “advanced proficient” students in these underperforming schools is significantly lower in comparison to that of the more affluent schools (NCES, 2014b).

Similar to McKinley School, the focus of my research, Maple Elementary, is located within a school district classified as a “B” district according to the State of New Jersey’s District Factor Group (DFG) system—a scale that uses relative socioeconomic status to rank districts in terms of their demographic similarity for the purpose of comparing students’ performance on standardized assessments. Maple Elementary, which is a high-needs school (92% economically disadvantaged; 65% LEP; 5% students with disability), exemplifies how socioeconomic status influences academic achievement (State of New Jersey Department of Education, 2014d).

Over the past three administrations of the LAL portion of the NJASK, the rates of “proficient” and “advanced proficient” fourth graders at Maple Elementary School have averaged approximately 29.6% and 0.3% (State of New Jersey Department of Education, 2014e). These data, and the aggregate data illustrating the performance of New Jersey students in general, highlight the need for effective literacy education programming—specifically high-quality literacy instruction delivered by skilled teachers with strong content and pedagogical knowledge of reading instruction—throughout the state but especially in schools within low-

ranking DFGs. Quality instruction will help mitigate the effects of the absence of out-of-school academic learning experiences in the lives of underprivileged students.

As stated earlier, implementing heightened learning standards in chronically underperforming schools is also problematic because, based on standardized literacy achievement test scores, students lack basic foundational literacy skills as early as fourth grade, which means that many teachers must first teach students the foundational literacy skills they lack before they can teach them the skills they need in order to read at grade-level. The problem of needing to improve standards for learning but not being able to do so without “going back to basics” is complex and persistent in school communities that serve high-needs populations, such as Maple Elementary. Unfortunately, this phenomenon is not new. Similar underperformance in literacy was reported in earlier years by the NICHD (2010), leading one to ask what impact the onset of underperformance in reading during the early years has on students’ academic achievement and their general quality of life once they complete their schooling.

The lasting effects of literacy underperformance. Underperformance in literacy is a pressing concern for struggling students and their teachers because of its far-reaching and long-lasting effects. Policy briefs and reports on literacy development warn practitioners that, without solid reading skills, students struggle to fully engage in learning activities in other core subjects such as Social Studies and Science (Lesaux, 2013; National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000). Diminished engagement in learning activities in these core subjects can also cause young learners to miss out on learning opportunities that might fuel their quest for knowledge, potentially shaping their future and preventing them from learning the social codes needed to participate in and reach success in mainstream society (Delpit, 2006).

Students in school communities such as Maple Elementary—schools that face a predominance of poverty and language diversity—are at a disadvantage when their teachers’ beliefs lean toward a deficit mindset, causing their teachers to set low learning goals for students and potentially contribute to students’ underperformance. A teacher’s deficit mindset toward and low expectations for students with backgrounds different from her own is one example of the cultural conflict in the classroom that Delpit (2006) cites as a primary cause of diminished engagement in academic activities and academic underperformance among students of color in particular.

Delpit and other scholars (Carter, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Noguera, 2009) posit that when a teacher is unfamiliar with students’ socioeconomic status and/or sociocultural experience, and when a teacher makes certain unfounded assumptions about students, that teacher’s judgment can become misguided, causing her to block students from accessing pathways to full engagement and, in turn, success. These scholars warn that diminished engagement in learning activities impacts achievement and can cause learners to miss out on learning opportunities that might fuel their quest for knowledge and potentially shape their future. These scholars also warn that an anemic (or absent) quest for knowledge also prevents children from learning the social codes needed to participate in and reach success in mainstream society because their drive for attaining academic success gets derailed by feelings of marginalization caused by their teacher’s failure to teach them from a place of empathy and responsiveness to their specific needs (Delpit, 2006).

What is worse is the fact that Black and Hispanic students—males in particular—tend to feel the repercussions of low expectations and academic underperformance worse than students from most other racial/ethnic groups (Delpit, 2006; Noguera, 2009). These repercussions come

in many forms, including harsh, “zero-tolerance” school policies, disproportionate graduation rates, and a phenomenon Noguera (2009) refers to as “the normalization of failure on the part of Black males” (p. xix), all of which contribute to chronic underperformance (Hoffman, 2014; Noguera, 2009; Schott Foundation, 2015; The Advancement Project, 2010).

The role of teacher cultural competence. Ladson-Billings’ (2011) notion of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) involves using one’s awareness of the social context in which learning takes place in order to help students reach their full potential. Culturally relevant teachers view their work as an opportunity to equip students with the tools they need to navigate and soften the blow of the social inequities that exist. These teachers develop relationships with students that are rooted in high expectations because they see their students’ potential, rather than only their deficits. Such teachers also view the curricula they use as teaching plans that are not necessarily “fixed” or set in stone. Rather, they understand that curricula should be adapted to meet students’ present needs. Such teachers also understand that curricula must first be examined critically, then unpacked and restructured for their particular students, rather than followed blindly. Without critical reflection on the accuracy, fairness, and relevance of what she is being asked to teach in those curricula, a teacher risks perpetuating misconceptions about students’ heritage, including her ability and their families’ interest in helping them achieve academic success. Such misconceptions prevent teachers from helping their students understanding and take pride in their own cultural heritage, which impacts students’ sense of self-worth and self-efficacy (Ladson-Billings, 2011).

Ladson-Billings’ research (2001, 2009) also tells us that teachers who employ CRP are also culturally competent, meaning that they employ inclusive instructional strategies that are not only student-centered but also customized to meet the individual, cultural needs of their students.

In order for a teacher to use a culturally relevant approach to teaching, she must understand the cultures of the students in her class. This may require the teacher to invest extra time in learning about her students' lives outside of school and adapting the curricula she uses so that the content and learning activities serve as “mirrors” and “windows” for students. Such teachers view this investment of time as worthwhile because it helps them reach their end goal, which is to help students reach their full potential.

In support of the benefits of adopting a culturally relevant mindset, we can look to Ladson-Billings' (2001) qualitative case study of eight inner city novice teachers, which illuminates the challenges many teachers face when teaching children of diverse backgrounds. In that study, she found that prospective teachers (and, I would add, practicing teachers) must have opportunities to learn about their students' communities. One of the biggest findings from her study was that teachers must also apply theories of teaching and learning to their practice and learn from the process of using those theories to inform their instruction—what Ladson-Billings and her colleagues called “intellectual work.” These findings speak volumes about the ways in which teacher knowledge informs the dynamic between teachers and students, which so greatly impacts student engagement and learning.

Many teachers of students in poverty, such as Maple Elementary, come to the profession with hopes of making a difference in the lives of their students because they realize that their students' home life and/or socioeconomic status may present a barrier to their success. Most of these teachers approach their work with sincerity. In other words, they have good intentions. However, as Milner (2011) argues, good intentions are not enough for students, and especially not for students from marginalized groups whose success is influenced by sociocultural factors. This is particularly true when a teacher's background differs from her students'—indeed, much

of the literature focuses on White teachers who teach students whose cultural background differs from their students' background (Delpit, 2006; Howard, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 2001, 2009; Milner, 2014) and what they must do to bridge this gap.

Howard (1999) posits that one of the first steps for White teachers striving to become culturally responsive is honesty about the privileges they have been afforded because of their Whiteness. Milner (2011) recommends that teachers reflect on three things as they strive to elevate their thinking about how to become a culturally responsive educator: 1) their own life experiences, 2) the habits of mind they have developed that shape their way of being, and 3) the way in which they "situate [themselves] in the education of others" (p. 60). This work, however, is only the beginning of the path to culturally responsive teaching.

During the 2011-2012 school year, the teaching force was 81.9% White, 7.8% Hispanic, 6.8% Black, 1.8% Asian, and 1.6% Other (NCES, 2015b). As the teaching workforce has remained predominantly White, middle-class, and female, students of color are increasingly becoming the majority of students served in our nation's public schools (Landsman & Lewis, 2011; Milner, 2011). According to school demographic data from National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 49% of students who attended public schools in the U.S. in 2012 were students of color. That figure is projected to increase to approximately 55% by the year 2024 (NCES, 2015a).

If the body of elementary school teachers remains predominantly White, middle-class, and female, then the cultural mismatch between teachers and their students will become even more pronounced, transforming schools and districts that were once homogeneous in terms of race and socioeconomic status into places of learning where teachers are forced to reach and

teach students who are “not like the students [they] used to teach.” This transformation has already begun to happen in many of our suburban school districts.

However, in many of our urban public schools, the student body of which tends to be composed mostly of students of color from the United States and from various developing nations around the world, as well as high concentrations of students in poverty, this cultural mismatch between administrators, teachers, and students has been the norm. In addition, the vast majority of students in these schools have underperformed academically over an extended period of time, causing many educators to raise the question “Why can’t our students learn what we need them to learn?” when in reality, as Howard (1999, p. 81) recommends, teachers working to become culturally responsive must address 1) who they are racially and culturally, 2) what they know and value about the cultures of their students, 3) the social reality of the environment in which they teach through multiple perspectives, 4) how their knowledge about the history and dynamics of dominance shows up in their teaching, and 5) how their teaching nurtures a passion for social justice and social action in their students.

The growing racial and ethnic diversification of schools impacts what elementary school teachers—who, again, tend to be predominantly White, middle-class females—must know and be able to do to meet the needs of all students, particularly students whose image and cultural orientation and experience differ from theirs. This has increasingly become the focus of many education scholars as well as some administrators and teachers who actually work in the schools, but it remains elusive to the vast majority of administrators and teachers.

In addition to the obvious benefits of a teacher being able to engage in teaching practices that are culturally relevant to her students, there are other, less obvious, but no less important benefits to this cultural sensitivity. One of these is that a culturally enlightened teacher will be

able to better communicate to her students not only educational skills, but also social skills. In some ways, cultural awareness of one's students is even more critical for the teaching of these social skills, as culture can often be even more closely tied to socialization than it is to education. And these social skills are, in turn, woven into a wider social code that allows a person to successfully navigate life's challenges. But, without proper knowledge of these social codes—which often dominate mainstream spaces such as schools—a student has a lower chance of developing a psychosocial orientation toward achievement, which Whiting (2014) has aptly dubbed “scholar identity” and explains in his scholar identity model (SIM). Without this identity—whether it comes from an educator's view of a student or a student's view of himself, or both—an individual has limited potential for attaining success in school, which impacts that individual's ability to reach success in later years.

The dynamics at play in many schools may provide a surface explanation for student disengagement and academic underperformance (Anyon, 2005; Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2001, 2009). But, in pursuit of a deeper explanation of and a solution to academic disengagement and underperformance in reading, educators of underperforming students such as those at Maple Elementary must ask themselves what drives effective literacy instruction in the early grades. It is clear that low expectations do not.

Guided Discussion As a Solution to Underperformance in Reading

To prevent underperformance in literacy and put students on a solid path to academic success, experts have recommended teaching foundational literacy skills as early as possible (Barone & Mallette, 2013; NRP, 2000; Taylor & Duke, 2013) using a culturally relevant pedagogy (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2001, 2009; Milner, Allen, & McGee, 2014). Guided reading is often regarded as a best practice in reading instruction when used as part of a

balanced literacy approach to literacy instruction (Ford & Opitz, 2008; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Fountas & Pinnell, 2012; NRP, 2000). During GR, a teacher meets with a small group of like-ability students to help them read and understand a challenging text at the group's instructional level. The key to a child's textual comprehension during GR is the teacher-student and peer discussion during the lesson, otherwise known as "guided discussion." I use the term "guided discussion" to mean exchanges of speech that help children work through defined tasks at points of difficulty, including the speech of a peer or that of a teacher (Vygotsky, 1978). This speech involves the use of prompts or questions to start or redirect a discussion for the purpose of guiding the student from his or her current level of understanding towards a higher level determined by the teacher.

Thus, the teacher is expected to function more as a *facilitator*, rather than a *dominator* of discussion (Pennell, 2014; Porath, 2014). Through this facilitative talk (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012), GD becomes an effective tool for FA, which can be defined as low-stakes, non-evaluative monitoring of student progress based on short-cycle assessments for the purpose of improving teaching and learning (Black & William, 1998). Purposeful and strategically-planned GD as FA can help a teacher not only to teach students new vocabulary and oral language skills but also to provide scaffolded instruction (Dashiell & DeBruin-Parecki, 2014; Wasik & Iannone-Campbell, 2012). Though critical to a students' early literacy development, many teachers struggle to implement and manage this complex process (Ford & Opitz, 2008; Schwartz, 2005).

Research Questions

The three focal teachers of this study teach guided reading daily. Despite its potential for helping students achieve success in reading, standardized test score data suggest that guided reading may not be helping the students of Maple Elementary School reach proficiency in

reading. In other words, many of Maple Elementary's students still cannot read well even though their teachers implement the proven approach of guided reading in their classrooms. In this qualitative case study, I used survey, observation, and interview data to examine how teachers use guided discussion to guide their students during guided reading. Specifically, I sought to understand how Kindergarten through second grade (K-2) literacy teachers in Maple Elementary School, a chronically underperforming elementary school (a) use guided discussion to teach new skills and concepts, (b) monitor student learning as they do so, and (c) use their findings to make adjustments to their instruction *during* guided reading lessons to meet the needs of learners. Therefore, I focused on 1) what teachers know about guided reading, 2) how they use guided discussion in guided reading in general, and 3) how they use guided discussion as a formative assessment measure during guided reading.

This study helped me discover what K-2 literacy teachers in this school know about using guided discussion to advance student learning and determine how students are progressing toward the established guided reading learning goals. By understanding what and how much the K-2 literacy teachers at Maple Elementary know about guided reading and how they use guided discussion to teach new concepts and inform their guided reading instruction, I was then able to design and deliver a professional learning experience on the use of guided discussion as both a teaching strategy and a formative assessment measure during guided reading.

By examining how K-2 literacy teachers in a high-needs elementary school use discussion during guided reading to support students in moving from their actual level of reading ability to their potential level of reading skill, I was able to develop a clearer understanding of the role that pedagogical content knowledge—what a teacher knows about the techniques of

teaching a subject—plays in creating effective reading teachers at the primary level. Three research questions drove this qualitative case study:

1. What do K-2 literacy teachers know about guided reading?
2. How do K-2 teachers use guided discussion in guided reading?
3. How do K-2 teachers use guided discussion as a formative assessment measure during guided reading?

I was interested in examining the focal teachers' knowledge about guided reading and their use of guided discussion as formative assessment through these three research questions because I wanted to better understand how underperformance in reading in this particular school might begin in the primary grades—a time during which children learn foundational literacy skills. While it can be argued that teacher pedagogical content knowledge as the foundation for effective reading instruction is important for all classrooms, it is paramount in school communities where students' primary (and sometimes only) exposure to (a) high-quality modeling of rich vocabulary, (b) habits of discussion that support critical thinking about and deep comprehension of text, and (c) books that support their reading development, occurs in school under the guidance of a teacher. I was also interested in observing how teachers' cultural backgrounds impact their reading instruction because studies of the impact of race and social class on teacher behaviors predict a profound impact.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This qualitative study examines how three K-2 teachers use guided discussion as both a teaching strategy and a formative assessment measure within the context of guided reading (GR) instruction. The study is informed by Vygotsky's (1978) Social Development Theory (SDT), which asserts that social interaction—the use of language in particular—drives learning.

Throughout my inquiry of how teachers use guided discussion as formative assessment during guided reading, I used SDT to 1) guide my explanation of the concepts of guided reading, guided discussion, and formative assessment, and 2) highlight the importance of strong teacher pedagogical content knowledge ([PCK] Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Shulman, 1986) in guided reading instruction.

Social Development Theory

The practice of guided discussion can be informed by Vygotsky's (1978) Social Development Theory (also referred to as Social Learning Theory), which states that "community" input is both a contributor to what children learn and a lens through which children learn new things. Vygotsky (1978) argues that language (or discussion) is the primary vehicle for this learning exchange and that this exchange aids cognitive development, improving students' conceptual and critical comprehension, which is particularly important for students who have disengaged from learning or struggle to perform well academically (Pennell, 2014).

Guided discussion is just such an exchange, designed to guide a student towards a pre-set learning goal (guided discussion) and to determine how close the student is getting to that goal (formative assessment). Vygotsky's (1978) term for the role of "guide" is "More Knowledgeable Other" (MKO)—an individual who has a more developed understanding of the skills and concepts being taught. In fact, an MKO is an essential part of cognitive development because he or she provides scaffolded instruction at a level that is slightly higher than the learner's independent level. Teachers and more capable peers can serve as MKOs, who make up part of Vygotsky's (1978) "community." This community helps to bridge the distance between *where a child is* (point A) and *where a child has the potential to be* (point B) (which is the purpose of FA) through the planned use of language. Vygotsky (1978) called the distance between point A

and point B the “Zone of Proximal Development” (ZPD), which he defined as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p.86).

In Vygotsky’s (1978) view, the act of learning is active and it requires interaction between teacher and learner. A critical piece of Vygotsky’s theory is the idea that cognitive development is optimized when students play an active role in their own learning. Rather than functioning as mere observers of instruction, students should collaborate with their teachers during learning exchanges. This means that teachers must find ways to share the teaching stage with their students so that students can have agency in their own learning. Vygotsky (1978) refers to his own research on how children use speech to solve challenging tasks in his description of how language plays a role in learning to solve problems. He explains the findings from his research:

Children not only speak about what they are doing; their speech and action are part of *one and the same complex psychological function*, directed toward the solution of the problem at hand.

The more complex the action demanded by the situation and the less direct its solution, the greater the importance played by speech in the operation as a whole.

Sometimes speech becomes of such vital importance that, if not permitted to use it, young children cannot accomplish the given task. (Vygotsky, 1978, pp. 25-26)

To illustrate the connection between the ZPD and an MKO, let us consider a reading lesson in which the teacher first teaches a reading strategy then confers with students

individually. Before the lesson, the teacher must identify the student's current level—his or her “point A” as described above. The teacher must also identify the child's potential—his or her “point B”—so that the teacher may successfully guide the student through the ZPD from point A to point B. During the conferences following the lesson, rather than “doing the heavy lifting” for the student, the teacher (MKO) prompts the student to think about various aspects of his or her reading in a variety of ways at points of difficulty. For example, the teacher may prompt a student struggling with summarizing, for instance, to explain his or her thinking out loud. By elaborating on his or her thinking orally, the student demonstrates his or her understanding of the text, and the teacher deepens her knowledge of the student's point A. The teacher then uses this information to plan next steps for instruction. It is this type of interaction—scaffolded discussions and prompting at points of difficulty—that helps children learn reading strategies in ways that are deep and lasting.

Guided Reading

Guided reading is regarded by many as a best practice in reading instruction when used as part of a balanced literacy approach to literacy instruction (Ford & Opitz, 2008; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Fountas & Pinnell, 2012; NRP, 2000). In a final report on its research on the most effective ways to teach children to read, the NRP (2000) identified five areas essential to effective literacy instruction: 1) phonics skills and phonemic awareness, 2) fluency, 3) guided oral reading, 4) vocabulary development, and 5) comprehension. These five areas are intertwined, meaning that a child's success in one area may rely on or support growth in other areas. The NRP (2000) cited guided oral reading—a process in which a child reads aloud to a teacher or other, more knowledgeable reader—as one approach to helping students become

better readers because it provides a child the opportunity to practice his or her phonics skills and improve his or her reading fluency at the same time (NICHD, 2010).

During guided reading, which encompasses guided oral reading, a teacher meets with a small group of like-ability students to help them read and understand a challenging text at the group's instructional level, which is approximately one level above what the students can read successfully without support from an MKO. As a component of the balanced literacy approach to literacy instruction, guided reading holds special importance because it affords teachers the opportunity to use facilitative talk to help small groups of students acquire the skills and knowledge they need to advance their reading development (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Fountas & Pinnell, 2012; NRP, 2000).

Guided Discussion

Effective teachers of guided reading use a mix of “teacher-directed” instruction and “student-supported” learning involving direct, explicit instruction and guided discussion when appropriate (Peterson & Taylor, 2012). Yet, simply “guiding” a student through his or her reading, such as a layperson might do, is not enough. The pedagogical technique of “guided reading” requires the skillful application of guided discussion during the lesson, which requires that teachers possess specific pedagogical content knowledge and pay close attention to the use of formative assessment. As such, Vygotsky's SDT is an excellent lens through which the practice of guided reading can be observed and analyzed.

High-quality guided discussion, which includes the use of prompts or questions to start or redirect a discussion for the purpose of deepening students' understanding of a concept and subsequently the text also involves active responding to questions and prompts, which is proven to impact student engagement and learning outcomes (Peterson & Taylor, 2012). Further,

student-centered guided discussion driven by inquiry into concepts presented in the text leads to critical and lasting comprehension of that text (Pennell, 2014). Fountas and Pinnell (2012) refer to this guidance as “facilitative talk” and “language to support analytic thinking about texts” (pp. 279-280). They assert that effective teachers of reading function more as *facilitators* of talk, rather than *dominators* of discussion, the latter of which researchers have found occurs commonly in classrooms (Pennell, 2014; Porath, 2014).

Countless literacy experts, including Dashiell and DeBruin-Parecki (2014), Roskos and Neuman (2012), Wasik and Iannone-Campbell (2012), argue that purposeful and strategically planned opportunities for discussion during literacy instruction are essential to helping children learn rich, new vocabulary and concepts, expand their thinking, and develop the oral language skills necessary for articulating their ideas. Yet, despite this academic support for the strategic employment of discussion, many teachers are left wondering how best to manage this process in the classroom. Research (Ford & Opitz, 2008; Schwartz, 2005) suggests that this process, exemplified by guided reading instruction, is a highly complex undertaking requiring a combination of skills and abilities on the part of both the reader and the teacher, which may explain why so many teachers struggle to teach guided reading effectively. Nevertheless, teachers must use these skills and abilities in concert in order for their students to progress.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment (FA), first popularized in the United Kingdom by the Assessment Reform Group (ARG), an organization established in 1989 by volunteer education researchers who were members of the British Educational Research Association, is defined as generally low-stakes, non-evaluative monitoring of student progress for the purpose of improving teaching and learning. It involves providing feedback to students and encouraging student self-reflection. It differs from its counterpart—summative assessment—because it focuses on short-cycle assessments that are used to inform teachers’ decisions as the learning is in progress. In their position statement on FA, The National Council of Teachers of English ([NCTE], 2013) defines FA in the following way:

[Formative assessment is] the lived, daily embodiment of a teacher’s desire to refine practice based on a keener understanding of current levels of student performance, undergirded by the teacher’s knowledge of possible paths of student development within the discipline and of pedagogies that support such development (p. 2).

The NCTE asserts that FA is a highly effective way for teachers of literacy to study students as they work and learn for the purpose of discovering how to better help them learn. These authors highlight four types of FA activities—observations, conversations, student self-evaluations, and artifacts of learning—each one consisting of several different strategies for eliciting information from students (NCTE, 2013). These FA strategies, each of which is important, range from the use of running records and conferences to the use of exit slips and regular reviews of student work samples. Conversations are a particularly effective method of determining students’ misunderstandings *during* the lesson for the purpose of clearing up these

misconceptions before the lesson ends. However, effective instruction and formative assessment practices rely on the careful construction of opportunities for children to engage in discussion.

Such instruction and formative assessment also rely on careful analysis of the language students use to articulate their thoughts. Students' home life plays a critical factor in analyzing this language. In her longitudinal, ethnographic study of 300 working-class families over three decades, Heath (2012) found that children of working parents—Black and White alike—typically receive fewer opportunities for 1) extended talk, 2) deliberative talk that fosters metacognition and planning, and 3) talk that helps them learn moral and ethical codes by talking out analogies and hypotheses about the consequences of their behaviors. These types of experiences with discussion at home benefit children when in school because they are privileged by school systems. But when children do not engage in this type of discussion at home, their only hope of receiving it is at school, making guided discussion during guided reading especially important for children in poverty and children who are not exposed to such discussion at home.

Further, effective educators understand the tension between the expectation that children learn the habits of reading, writing, speaking, and listening privileged by school systems, which may be very different from habits cultivated at home, and Gee's (2001) argument that an individual's literacy development is deeply intertwined with his or her sociocultural practices. That is to say, effective educators not only understand Gee's concept of New Literacy Studies (NLS), which argues that individuals should be viewed as "meaning producers," rather than as mere "meaning consumers" (p. 30) but honor this reality through culturally responsive leadership and instruction. What does this mean for teachers as they plan for the use of discussion to teach new concepts and monitor student progress?

Discussion as a formative assessment measure. The very discussion inherent in GR is itself a highly effective FA tool. Vygotsky's (1978) SDT helps our understanding of this discussion by introducing the concepts of MKO (the person guiding the discussion) and the ZPD (which defines the journey for which the MKO is providing guidance). A key part of the MKO's discussion with the student is to determine whether or not the current instruction is leading the student through the ZPD towards point B and, if it is not, find a way to adjust instruction to increase the student's chances of reaching point B.

Others have used Vygotsky's (1978) SDT to explore the role of discussion as a FA tool in reading instruction. Palincsar and Brown (1986), for example, introduced the term "reciprocal teaching" in their treatment of the use of interactive teaching methods to promote comprehension and metacognition during reading. In reciprocal teaching, a teacher facilitates a group discussion in which students and their teacher make predictions, ask questions, summarize the text, and clarify their thoughts *together* in a casual and improvisational manner in preparation for students to eventually guide the discussions *on their own*. In this activity, students are more invested in the learning because they get to help guide their instruction via classroom discourse with their peers and teacher, leading to greater learning (Palincsar & Brown, 1986).

Other literacy scholars have emphasized the power of posing open-ended questions of students in such guided discussions to introduce new concepts and formatively assess students. These open-ended questions are used to probe students for more information, to follow up on previously taught concepts, or even teach students how to make inferences that deepen their comprehension (Afflerbach, 2010; Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). But harnessing that power can be difficult. Many studies of the use of questioning as a teaching strategy (Frey & Fisher, 2010; Peterson & Taylor, 2012; Phillips, 2013) have revealed that teachers in the primary grades need

additional guidance in learning how to use questioning to assess students' grasp of key concepts that were taught.

Pedagogical Content Knowledge

In the present study, the notion of pedagogical content knowledge, or PCK (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000), is presented within the context of teacher knowledge of what must be taught (the content) during reading and instructional methods that help her teach reading effectively, both of which are necessary for a teacher to make appropriate and timely instructional decisions that advance student development in reading. The idea of subject-matter pedagogical knowledge was first conceptualized by Shulman (1986) in one of his seminal pieces on teacher knowledge and effective teaching. He remarks that effective teaching requires that teachers know both the subject matter they are teaching and the principles of teaching related to that particular subject. Shulman defines the concept in the following passage:

Within the category of subject-matter pedagogical knowledge I include...the most useful forms of representation of those ideas, the most powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations, demonstrations—in a word, the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others.

Subject-matter pedagogical knowledge also includes an understanding of what makes the learning of specific topics easy or difficult, or the conceptions and preconceptions that students of different ages and backgrounds bring with them to the learning... (pp. 13-14)

Shulman's definition of subject-matter pedagogical knowledge raises important questions: Does the teacher possess the knowledge necessary to determine a student's "actual developmental level" (point A) or a student's "level of potential development" (point B)? And

does that teacher possess the knowledge necessary to determine if the student is making adequate progress from point A to point B? If not, the expected learning will not occur, as we see today in schools such as Maple Elementary.

Guided discussion is a powerful tool, but it can be difficult to apply, especially during an activity as complex as GR. This difficulty can be compounded by a teacher's insufficient knowledge of the practice of GD. But how can we pinpoint where that knowledge deficit might exist? According to Shulman (1986), the teacher (or MKO) must possess specific knowledge in each of three content knowledge domains: 1) *content knowledge*—knowledge of the key component concepts of the subject being taught; 2) *pedagogical content knowledge* (PCK)—knowledge of the effective use of those concepts in teaching; and 3) *curricular knowledge*—knowledge of the scope of existing curricular resources that aid a teacher's instruction (see Figure 1).

According to Shulman's (1986) framework, each of these domains serves an important function individually, but only produces the desired results when used in conjunction with the other two. I have further categorized these three domains as either "content," "process," or "content-process" knowledge. Shulman's Content Knowledge is *content*, Curricular Knowledge is *process*, and PCK is *content-process*. Figure 1 illustrates this conception of teacher knowledge as it relates to the use of GD during GR. These categories can help to identify the exact knowledge deficits that a teacher might have and, thus, where remediation efforts must be focused.

Figure 1

Guided Discussion Through Shulman's Teacher Knowledge Lens

CONTENT	CONTENT-PROCESS		PROCESS							
CONTENT KNOWLEDGE										
	PROCESS KNOWLEDGE									
<div>The Potential for Effective Instruction</div>										
					Subject-Matter Content Knowledge (or Content Knowledge) <i>Reading</i>	+	Subject-Matter Pedagogical Knowledge (or PCK) <i>Guided Discussion</i>	+	Curricular Knowledge <i>Guided Reading</i>	=
STRATEGIC KNOWLEDGE		STRATEGIC KNOWLEDGE		STRATEGIC KNOWLEDGE						
CASE KNOWLEDGE		CASE KNOWLEDGE		CASE KNOWLEDGE						
PROPOSITIONAL KNOWLEDGE		PROPOSITIONAL KNOWLEDGE		PROPOSITIONAL KNOWLEDGE						

For Shulman (1986) to consider a teacher “effective” in reading instruction, she would need to know the subject of reading so well (content knowledge) that she can anticipate the reading difficulties students might face, provide explanations and examples to overcome these difficulties (content-process knowledge), and know the relevant curricular resources available (process knowledge). In the more specific context of GR, the effective teacher must be able to create a learning community (Vygotsky, 1978) within her GR groups, use GD at the most opportune times to elicit student responses, and use these responses to inform her next instructional steps (NCTE, 2013; Schwartz, 2005). It is within these last two activities that GD

serves as a powerful form of FA—by using questions to determine where the student is (point A) and tailoring instructional steps for getting that student to where he or she needs to be (point B).

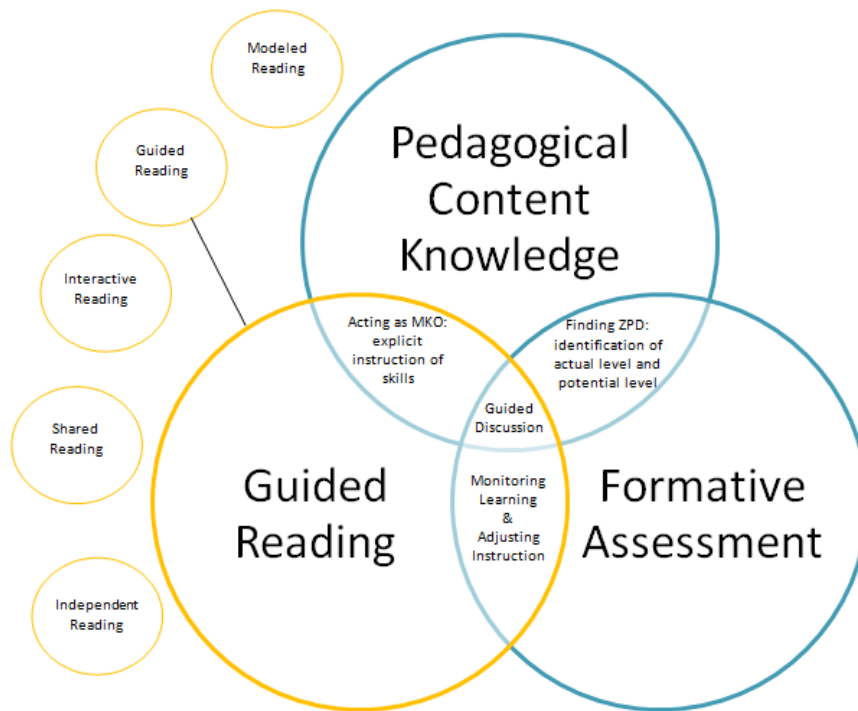
A teacher's ability to facilitate students' reading development depends on her level of mastery within each of Shulman's (1986) knowledge domains as shown in Figure 1. Shulman describes these domain mastery levels as three interrelated subparts: 1) *propositional knowledge*—knowledge of the basic principles of a particular subject; 2) *case knowledge*—knowledge of specific instances in which these principles can be applied; and 3) *strategic knowledge*—knowledge of how to use principles and specific instances to solve problems they have not previously encountered. To demonstrate the relationship between these different levels of knowledge, let's examine the hypothetical case of a Kindergarten teacher. If this teacher only has propositional knowledge, she can name and provide proper definitions of the various skills and knowledge she knows she must teach her students, such as concepts about print and phonemic awareness. Sticking with the idea of teaching concepts about print or phonemic awareness, if the same teacher possesses adequate case knowledge of these terms, she can recall and describe specific students with whom she worked to teach these skills and knowledge. She can recall what she did and how the students responded to her instruction. In terms of this same teacher's strategic knowledge as it relates to teaching concepts about print and phonemic awareness, she demonstrates strategic knowledge when she has used her knowledge of a concept to teach students and can recall specific cases of students she has taught to problem-solve when she encounters difficulty teaching those same concepts to a different group of students. Her understanding of how to teach concepts about print and phonemic awareness are aided by her own experience teaching them to real students, and her ability to try new teaching moves and resources when she encounters difficulty with these new students. This combination of

knowledge is what makes a teacher truly effective and illustrates why new teachers are, by definition, at a disadvantage when it comes to strategic knowledge.

The teacher, or MKO, must possess specific knowledge of the subject being taught and how to teach it in order to use FA effectively. Shulman's (1986) framework as outlined in Figure 1 illustrates the multiple elements of teacher knowledge required for the expected student learning to occur and helps to identify the specific knowledge element that a teacher might lack. I use this framework to describe the categories of knowledge a teacher needs to engage in effective reading instruction and to identify where professional development efforts should focus in order to address teachers' instructional deficits.

Best practice in literacy instruction cites classroom discourse as one of the major vehicles for promoting literacy development. Therefore, social learning is inherent in PCK because a teacher must rely on classroom discourse to assess students' grasp of the concept being taught. More specifically, research on reading instruction in the primary grades has proven that literacy instruction is a complex undertaking, one that relies on a combination of skills and abilities on the part of both the reader and the teacher. Effective teachers of reading not only understand how learners learn but they also possess PCK specific to reading instruction (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Scanlon, Anderson, & Vellutino, 2013). Effective teachers anticipate the types of problems students might have and they understand the intricacies of using FA to teach students the skills they need in a way that leads to lasting knowledge. In Figure 2, I illustrate how effective guided reading instruction, which is rooted in specific SDT principles, relies on the use of guided discussion as formative assessment and is driven by teacher pedagogical content knowledge.

Figure 2

The Role of Guided Discussion in Guided Reading**Exploring Guided Discussion as Formative Assessment**

Vygotsky (1978) states that the MKO could be a teacher, other adult, or peer—but is “more” knowledgeable sufficient for literacy learning to reliably occur? Perhaps the MKO must possess a certain threshold level of PCK in order to effectively guide the student from point A to point B. Can a peer really have such PCK? Would even the average adult? Indeed, does every teacher have this PCK? The key concept within GR is *guidance*. In other words, GR requires teachers to effectively coach their students toward their point B (Ford & Opitz, 2008). In order to do this, teachers need a tool—a pedagogical compass that informs their instructional decisions. Formative assessment (FA) is one of those pedagogical compasses. While it is critical for all effective teaching, it is an essential part of GR.

When applied to the context of guided reading, Vygotsky's (1978) SDT helps teachers think about seizing opportunities for guiding students from point A to point B during guided reading via the social interaction inherent in guided discussion. These social interactions include posing questions to others, disagreeing with others, defending one's ideas, and collaborating on ideas. However, in order for teachers to guide students in becoming proficient readers, teachers must themselves have a solid understanding of how to present new ideas through, for instance, the use of drawings, analogies, and demonstrations and recognize and address opportunities for helping students at points of difficulty.

Metaphorically speaking, early literacy teachers plant seeds through their instruction. The quality of these seeds depends on the level of teacher knowledge, and the viability of the seeds depends on how well the teacher tends to their needs. However, in order for a teacher to be able to sow these seeds and nurture them, she must understand the purpose of what she is doing and know which high-leverage instructional strategies will help her deliver effective reading instruction. Thus, professional development for teachers also plants seeds in the minds of teachers—seeds that give them the knowledge needed to help students develop in reading.

Shulman's (1986) framework as outlined in Figure 1 illustrates the multiple elements of teacher knowledge required for the expected student learning to occur and helps to identify the knowledge element that a teacher might lack. I have used this framework throughout the present study to (a) describe the categories of knowledge a teacher needs to teach reading effectively and to (b) identify where professional development efforts should focus in order to address teachers' instructional deficits.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I introduce the theoretical and research literature that informed the present study. I begin with a description of how my approach to searching for literature changed once I began the data analysis process, then move to an examination of the research studies that helped me analyze the data I collected. I end with a summary of how the research studies contribute to what is known about the use of guided discussion as formative assessment during guided reading.

The Search Process

The present qualitative case study examined how three K-2 teachers at Maple Elementary School use discussion as a formative assessment measure during guided reading. In order to gain greater insight into the topics of guided reading, guided discussion, and formative assessment, I reviewed the existing body of theoretical literature and research literature published in peer-reviewed scholarly journals. These studies, primarily informed by either Vygotsky's (1978) Social Development Theory and/or Shulman's (1986) framework of teacher knowledge, included quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods empirical studies of 1) guided reading in the elementary classroom, 2) the use of discussion in literacy instruction in the primary grades, and 3) the use of formative assessment in literacy in elementary classrooms.

My search for literature for this study occurred in two waves. The first wave, in which I used an inductive approach to finding literature on the concepts of guided reading, guided discussion, and formative assessment to learn how the existing body of research was laid out, helped me conduct an initial literature review for my research proposal. I later revised my literature review to include more recent and more relevant theoretical and research literature.

During the first wave I began my initial search for literature by looking for articles about formative assessment during guided reading and formative assessment in general. I reviewed 18 studies, 14 of which examined the formative assessment practices of Kindergarten through fifth grade teachers of science, math, and literacy in Canada and the U.S. Of these studies, 10 studied literacy teachers at the elementary level and nine focused on K-2 literacy teachers. Of the nine, one was conducted in Canada and the remaining eight in the United States. I settled on 11 of the 18 original studies because they illustrated three major facets of Vygotsky's (1978) Social Development Theory, which I initially used as the only main theory framing my study. Findings from these studies supported Vygotsky's theory that 1) discussion aids student learning, 2) effective teachers find and work within students' zone of proximal development (ZPD), and 3) a teacher's understanding of the subject and its pedagogy are essential to student learning. Table 1 provides a breakdown of where the studies I reviewed fell when viewed through Vygotsky's Social Development Theory lens.

Table 1

Themes in the Literature by Grade and Subject

Social Development Lens	Elementary Studies (Grades K-5)		Middle or High School Studies (Grades 6-12)		Total
	Reading	Math or Science	Reading	Math or Science	
Using discussion to aid learning	3	0	0	1	4
Finding and working within students' ZPD	3	0	0	0	3
Understanding a subject and its pedagogy	2	1	0	1	4
Subtotal	8	1	0	2	11
Grand Total	9		2		

In the early stages of my research, these studies helped me to develop my thoughts about the relationship between guided discussion, formative assessment, guided reading, and teacher knowledge. These studies covered multiple subjects and examined teacher practice in a variety of mostly urban, K-12 classrooms, which helped me understand the key components of effective formative assessment, regardless of the subject being taught or the age of the students. As I was collecting data and conducting preliminary analyses of these data sets, I began to read articles about early literacy instruction in general. These articles, the topics of which ranged from guided reading to interactive read-aloud, helped me realize that the studies I had originally reviewed for my proposal were just the beginning of a much larger yet more specific body of literature related to the actual data I had collected. In other words, understanding the concepts of discussion and guided reading more broadly helped me to determine which aspects of reading instruction in the primary grades were especially critical.

The discrepancy between the literature I had reviewed prior to analyzing my data and what I still needed to read in order to better analyze these data caused me to rethink my search strategy. Realizing that the concepts of discussion and guided reading were key components of my research, I began to search for studies that focused on how discussion, formative assessment and reading instruction exist together in a classroom setting. The focus of my study became clearer as I “listened” to the observation and interview data I had collected. In other words, I returned to the research and analyzed simultaneously, an iterative process that helped me merge what I knew about guided discussion, formative assessment, and guided reading with what the research and the observation data from Maple Elementary were telling me.

The second wave of my review of the literature, which followed a deductive approach to finding literature to review, helped me refine my thinking as I analyzed the data I had collected.

Although I conducted a new search for relevant literature, I did not abandon what I had learned from the first wave of literature I had reviewed. Instead, I used the theoretical literature that had guided these initial studies of formative assessment during reading instruction in the primary grades to inform my own theoretical and conceptual framework. I also used some of the studies I had found toward the beginning of my search for relevant literature. However, I knew that because I wanted to learn more about how teachers use discussion to teach concepts and determine where their students are still struggling, I would need to search for articles about guided reading in the primary grades instead of focusing on formative assessment alone. I wanted to first see what the studies of guided reading produced then decide how I could use these studies to examine how primary grade teachers use discussion to both teach new concepts and identify their students' strengths and weakness.

As I began to analyze the data I had collected, I quickly realized that I was also aware that new studies relevant to my topic had been published since I had completed the first wave of my literature review nearly a year earlier and that I would need to include some of that research. Also, patterns in the data I had collected helped me to refine my research focus, which initially was primarily FA during GR, and choose a better entry point for looking at teachers' formative assessment practices. These patterns helped me see that the three focal teachers in my study were using some very specific instructional moves, some of which were healthy and some of which were not. These moves would be the lens through which I would analyze the data I had collected.

The focus of my study began to shift away from the mere absence or presence of discussion, which was more general in nature, toward the quality of teachers' questioning and prompting as well as the amount of teacher-centered talk utilized during guided reading. I wanted to better understand how teachers use specific instructional tactics—namely questioning

and prompting—during discussion. I realized that I also needed to understand how teachers plan for the use of questions and prompts ahead of time and how their knowledge helps them manage the process of using discussion to aid student learning. For this reason, Shulman’s (1986) conception of teacher knowledge played a more prominent role in my research.

Subsequently, I conducted a new search in which I used different variations and combinations of the search terms “guided reading,” “early literacy,” “discussion,” and “primary grades.” As a result, I found 27 additional studies, 12 of which I added to my existing collection of research literature because of their relevance and quality. This brought the total number of studies in the present literature review to 20, which fell into five categories. Each of these five categories fit into one of two guiding questions, which are modified versions of the research questions guiding my study, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Research Literature by Study Focus and Study Type

Guiding Question	Focus of Study Related to the Question	Total Number of Study Types	
1. What do teachers know and believe about reading instruction?	Impact of teacher disposition on his/her practice (n=4)	Quantitative	0
		Qualitative	2
		Mixed-Methods	2
	Impact of teacher practice on student learning (n=2)	Quantitative	1
		Qualitative	0
		Mixed-Methods	1
	Decisions teachers make as they are teaching (n=2)	Quantitative	0
		Qualitative	2
		Mixed-Methods	0
2. How do teachers use guided discussion as formative assessment?	Teacher use of discussion (n=6)	Quantitative	0
		Qualitative	6
		Mixed-Methods	0
	Impact of inquiry-based instruction and professional learning on student learning outcomes (n=6)	Quantitative	0
		Qualitative	6
		Mixed-Methods	0
Total			20

Characteristics of the research studies. The majority of the studies I reviewed were small, qualitative studies. Only three of the studies used mixed methods to examine their topic of study and only one study used quantitative measures. Table 3 lists the studies in terms of size and type.

Table 3

Studies in Terms of Participants, Type, and Duration

Number of Participants	Number of Studies	Study Type/Number	Number of Longitudinal Studies
1	6	Qualitative (n=6)	0
2-9	6	Qualitative (n=5) Mixed-Methods (n=1)	1
10-39	4	Qualitative (n=2) Mixed-Methods (n=2)	1
40 or more	4*	Quantitative (n=1) Qualitative (n=3)	3

*One of these studies involved 1,500 teachers.

The literature review for the present study is informed by 24 pieces of non-research literature that inform my theoretical and conceptual framework as well as the findings and discussion of my study. These works include peer-reviewed articles published in scholarly journals, reports, book chapters, and entire books. This literature review also includes 20 research studies published in peer-reviewed scholarly journals. Some of these studies are considered seminal works that have shaped research for decades following their publication. In addition to these landmark studies, I also included current research that illustrated how teachers in other studies used guided discussion as formative assessment.

In addition to current research, I included six empirical studies that were published over 6 years ago because 1) they had a focus that was similar to the focus of my study and 2) they represented a mix of research designs. Three of these older studies focused on K-2 teachers' use of assessment data during literacy instruction and support my argument that teachers must use students' response to instruction to inform their next instructional steps so that students can advance in their reading development. Two of these three studies were conducted in urban schools or in schools that served large numbers of students in poverty and students who received academic support in literacy.

In terms of their research design, two of these older studies (Graves, Gersten, & Haager, 2004; Wold, 2003) were longitudinal studies that lasted two years each, and two of the six studies (Bailey & Drummond, 2006; Graves, Gersten, & Haager, 2004) were mixed-methods studies that used observational data and student performance data to link student learning outcomes to teacher practice. In addition to these mixed-methods studies, I found one quantitative study (Ford & Opitz, 2008) that used survey data from 1,500 teachers to determine what teachers across the United States know about guided reading. Together, these mixed-methods and quantitative studies strengthen my argument that teacher knowledge impacts practice and student learning outcomes because they examined a problem of practice by using multiple measures, which typically strengthens the validity and reliability of a study (Patton, 2014). Findings from the large quantitative study in particular gave me greater confidence when formulating my own conclusions regarding the critical role claims that teacher knowledge plays in a teacher's ability to effectively facilitate discussions during guided reading and how those discussions can be used to assess student progress in reading.

Five of the studies I selected for this review stand out from the other studies for a variety of reasons, including their contribution to the field of education. Some of the studies were landmark studies conducted by scholars whose work has impacted teacher practice in significant ways, from programs for pre-service teachers to professional development for in-service teachers. Their work has shaped the way educators think about discussion, guided reading, and formative assessment. For example, in their qualitative study of how reciprocal teaching impacts students' literacy learning, Palincsar and Brown (1986) found that first grade students learned more when they had agency in their own learning through the use of four reciprocal teaching activities: predicting, questioning, summarizing, and clarifying. By encouraging students to assume the role of teacher during guided reading, which required students to lead discussions of the text using these four activities, teachers help students become better, more engaged readers. Reciprocal teaching is driven by social interaction—namely MKOs using discussion as they work with students within their ZPD and encouraging students to assume the role of the MKO to get them from where they are to where they need to be.

Other studies helped me think about my own research more analytically. They illustrated the types of teacher and student behaviors I saw when I observed the three focal teachers in my study. These studies helped me decipher what I had seen during lessons and heard during post-observation interviews. For example, Phillips' (2013) qualitative case study of how questioning impacts students' comprehension during guided reading corroborates Vygotsky's (1978) theory that speech aids learning. In her qualitative case study of a teacher's use of questioning during guided reading, she found that open-ended questions are helpful to students and teachers but not when the teacher's intent is closed, which raises an important point about the use of dialogue to aid learning. Phillips makes the point that it is not enough to simply ask questions during

instruction—teachers must consider the types of questions they ask and the way in which they pose these questions. She recommends “the use of a conversational questioning approach” (p. 117), which involves prompting students in such a way that students are encouraged to expand on ideas.

The idea of using a conversational questioning approach during guided reading is relevant to my study because the point of using discussion during a lesson is to elicit information from students about their understanding and clear up any misconceptions students may have. It is a key formative assessment activity, one that helps teachers find students’ ZPD and work within it. It also supports the idea that a student’s cultural capital informs his or her understanding of a concept and the way he or she approaches learning tasks, making it imperative that teachers understand how to use what students already know to help them reach the established learning targets (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Carter, 2007).

One study in particular, Ford and Opitz’s (2008) survey of what teachers across the nation know about guided reading and how they implement it in their classrooms, helped me confirm my suspicion that many teachers are unclear about the definition and purpose of guided reading, greatly impacting their instruction. Findings from this national survey of 1,500 teachers revealed five key findings about teacher knowledge as it relates to guided reading instruction in the primary grades, two of which are 1) how teachers plan for instruction of students who are with them and away from them and 2) how teachers assess students during guided reading. The key studies I reviewed are listed in Table 4.

Table 4

Key Studies Informing This Literature Review

Research Question	Findings from Studies	Key Studies
1. What do K-3 literacy teachers know about guided reading?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher knowledge impacts teacher disposition and affects practice. Teachers need help planning for guided reading instruction and assessing students during guided reading. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ford and Opitz (2008)
2. How do K-3 teachers use guided discussion in guided reading?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers use specific instructional moves that either start or keep discussions going as they teach small-group guided reading lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peterson and Taylor (2012) Palincsar and Brown (1986)
3. How do K-3 teachers use guided discussion as a formative assessment measure during guided reading?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers make numerous decisions about what to do with what they learn from students during discussions as they are teaching. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phillips (2013) Porath (2014)

Big Ideas

Three overarching ideas were emphasized heavily in the literature. Each idea showed up in the findings and discussion sections of studies from three of the four categories into which the studies fell. First, the research corroborated the idea that teachers tend to trust their gut instead of relying on evidence. Second, the studies emphasized the notion that effective teachers work systematically to teach students specific skills and knowledge. Third, the researchers stressed the idea that professional development and support from coaches can help teachers improve their reading instruction and, in turn, students' reading proficiency. These three big ideas helped me frame the findings and discussion section of this study because together they helped me to tell

the story of what I learned when I examined K-2 teachers' practice around using guided discussion as formative assessment during guided reading.

Teachers trusting their gut. Several studies found that instead of relying on evidence, teachers tend to make decisions based on "gut feelings," which does not generally help teachers make informed decisions. One key study in particular (MacDonald, 2007) found that teachers made better decisions about what to teach their students and taught more effective lessons when they kept written records of what students can (and cannot) do and reviewed those written records regularly to reflect on their own practice. This practice, known as pedagogical documentation is one example of how effective teachers use data to decide their next instructional steps.

Other studies (Frey & Fisher, 2010; Porath, 2014; Reilly, 2007) found that effective teachers also use formative assessment data in the moment as they are teaching, rather than trusting their gut, to decide what to do next to help students get "unstuck." Effective teachers provide ample opportunities for students to talk. They also listen closely to students as students discuss their ideas about the text. Effective teachers also use a combination of "teacher moves" that range in complexity and challenge students to assume more responsibility for solving their problems sooner rather than later. In other words, effective teachers scaffold less at the beginning of the lesson and add scaffolds as needed, depending on student response to their scaffolded instruction. These key studies demonstrate that 1) students are capable of doing more of the heavy lifting required to enhance their reading development and 2) they can play a greater part in developing their reading skills when their teachers give them the opportunity to do so.

Teachers working systematically. In order to teach reading effectively, teachers must work systematically to teach students specific skills and knowledge. In other words, they must

plan strategically and use a combination of specific moves to help students move ahead during guided learning. Their instructional moves are intentional, high-leverage strategies that maximize teaching and learning time. Higher-order questioning is one such strategy that effective teachers plan and use with fidelity because it pushes students ahead in their ability to think critically about texts, which deepens their comprehension and aids their reading development (Peterson & Taylor, 2012). However, children must be systematically taught how to think about reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). The intimate, small-group setting of guided reading afford teachers the opportunity to deliver this instruction in an individualized and targeted way, using a gradual release of responsibility until students have mastered the skill or strategy being taught.

Numerous studies emphasize that teachers' discourse practices impact learning in many ways. Teachers learn about their students and are able to help them push through points of difficulty and learn new words through the use of language (Blum, Koskinen, Bhartiya, & Hluboky, 2010; Frey & Fisher, 2010; Graves, Gersten, & Haager, 2004; Pennell, 2014; Peterson & Taylor, 2012; Reilly, 2007). Throughout these studies, researchers mentioned that teachers tend to dominate discussions, discouraging students from contributing to the discussion and preventing them from using discussion to deepen their comprehension. For example, in her qualitative case study of one third-grade teacher's conferring style, Porath (2014) found that the focal teacher helped her students more when she talked less and listened more while conferring with them during readers' workshop. This approach helped the focal teacher attain full engagement from her students, which in turn helped students deepen their knowledge of the reading process.

Similarly, philosophical inquiry promotes comprehension because it involves engaging students in open-ended discussions in which they develop their thinking about a text by

negotiating the meaning of the text with their peers (Pennell, 2014). In order to be fruitful, this negotiation should involve agreement and disagreement among individuals with different perspectives and experiences. It is through thinking through a text with peers—social learning—that children learn. Pennell argues that teachers must teach students how to engage in philosophical inquiry around texts, and when teachers act as facilitators of this talk, students' reading development advances.

Teachers growing with coaching. Knowing that teachers have gaps in their knowledge that impact their practice and student achievement, those responsible for staff development for teachers must provide them with adequate and ongoing professional development that is rooted in self-reflection and guided by support from a knowledgeable literacy coach. Such reflection and support can be helpful in preventing teachers from losing sight of their instructional focus and helping them refocus when they do lose their way. However, leading teachers in self-reflection about their practice in order to get them to restructure their approach to teaching literacy requires that a coach be able to help teachers form beliefs and dispositions that positively impact their teaching and assessment practices (Wall, 2014; Wold, 2003). The authors of these two qualitative case studies of how coaching impacts teacher use of formative assessment measures found that the process of collecting and analyzing student achievement data is complex and requires ongoing professional development, guidance, and patience.

For example, in her qualitative case study of how coaching conversations with primary grade teachers about actual classroom practice impact teachers' guided reading instruction, Wall (2014) found self-reflection to be one of the most powerful levers in helping teachers improve. Through coaching conversations and grade-level discussions of student work over one full school year, she helped the teachers in her school take greater ownership of their teaching

behaviors, which led to improved reading instruction. Specifically, she found that successful teachers of guided reading did the following: 1) reflect with colleagues on what their successful students do and stop focusing on menial (unrelated, low-leverage) skills; 2) provide many more opportunities for students to engage in productive struggle in response to text; and 3) prepare students to work independently by establishing student-centered habits of discussion and holding students accountable for using them.

Findings from Wall's (2014) and Wold's (2003) research have implications for educators who organize professional learning experiences for teachers because these findings support the idea that teachers must be engaged in professional development in which they are shown how to pause in order to reflect on and analyze their practice as well as students' response to their practice. They must also be shown how to then adjust their instruction based on this information. This process of reflection and adjustment helps teachers make a philosophical shift in their thinking about what is possible to accomplish with their students, which leads to enhanced guided reading instruction.

Areas of Promise

Collectively, the research studies I reviewed give us hope for improving literacy performance among children in grades three through twelve. The research illustrates that school turnaround is possible when schools ensure inquiry-based learning for students as well as build and sustain a school culture that fosters assessment-based literacy instruction. The literature also stresses the importance of 1) developing a strong, research-based instructional framework for early literacy to help these teachers teach reading well and 2) using a variety of student-centered approaches to discussion aimed at developing oral language, thinking, reasoning, and reading independence.

Research-based instructional framework for early literacy. Most of the studies selected for this literature review were qualitative studies of what teachers do during reading instruction and how they use discussion during reading instruction. They all used multiple sources of data (e.g. observations, interviews, and test scores) to answer their research questions and focused on relatively small numbers of participants. These qualitative studies included rich descriptions of teacher moves used during reading instruction as well as teachers' thoughts about how they strive to deliver effective reading instruction to their students.

Three of the studies were mixed-methods studies that relied on data from observations of instruction and student assessment data to share what they learned about teacher practice and student learning. One study was a large quantitative study that used survey data from 1,500 teachers across the U.S. (the only one of the studies that included a large sample size) to determine what teachers know about guided reading. Regardless of their research design, these studies helped me analyze the data from the present study. Findings from these studies revealed that teachers' knowledge of the purpose of guided reading and effective guided reading instructional strategies is developing (Ford & Opitz, 2008; Graves, Gersten, & Haager, 2004). Together, these findings also support the idea that teacher effectiveness correlates strongly with teacher knowledge, and greatly impacts student learning. The authors of these studies, which were conducted in large, urban schools in the United States and Canada similar to Maple Elementary, suggested frameworks for teaching reading that would help early literacy teachers become more effective. Central to each of the frameworks was the notion of using student-centered learning activities during guided reading.

Student-centered approaches to discussion. Many of the qualitative studies I reviewed helped me understand how teachers use student-centered approaches to deliver effective

instruction because they provided detailed descriptions of how effective teachers of early literacy used discussion to teach students new concepts and determine what students still needed to learn. The studies cited the following instructional moves as approaches to delivering effective reading instruction: 1) using prompts that range in complexity to stimulate discussion; 2) using higher-order questioning and philosophical inquiry to fully engage students in learning about texts; 3) providing ample opportunities for students to engage in discussion with peers; 4) providing explicit instruction on how to participate in conversations teaching; and 5) holding students accountable for contributing to discussions in meaningful ways.

Gaps in the Literature

The studies I reviewed for the present study were very useful in providing research-based frameworks for effective reading instruction based on their findings. The studies also gave clear descriptions of how effective teachers use guided discussion as formative assessment during guided reading, namely student-centered learning activities that cause students to think analytically about texts and discuss their thoughts with peers in a structured manner, thereby deepening their comprehension and advancing their reading development.

Despite the strengths of the studies, gaps in the literature became evident during my review. For instance, I had a difficult time finding quantitative studies of the use of guided discussion in the primary grades. While I found some quantitative and mixed-methods studies of reading instruction in the primary grades, the bulk of the studies focused on all of the components of balanced literacy (e.g. shared reading, read-aloud, independent reading), rather than on guided reading alone. I also failed to find more than one large-scale quantitative study of teacher knowledge of guided reading. Studies of this kind might have helped bolster my case for using guided discussion as a means of improving student learning outcomes in reading. Such

studies might have also helped me design a mixed-methods study with strong quantitative piece, which might have helped to make the case for the use of guided discussion as formative assessment during guided reading.

This gap in the research indicates the need for more research on the specific topic of the use of guided discussion as formative assessment during guided reading in the primary grades. There is also a need for more large-scale studies—using qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods—of how early literacy teachers use guided discussion as a formative assessment measure during guided reading. Specifically, there is a need for studies that examine the discussion practices that K-2 teachers utilize in their classrooms and how they keep track of student progress for the purpose of using formative assessment data to inform their instruction. By understanding the knowledge and practices of early literacy teachers across the nation, better policies and teacher education programs can be created and implemented.

Conclusion

Findings from studies of how teachers use discussion during small-group reading lessons informed the design of the present dissertation study in which I examined how three K-2 teachers in a chronically underperforming, high-poverty school in northern New Jersey use guided discussion as both a teaching strategy and a formative assessment measure. The research I reviewed for this study have found that while many teachers of reading use formative assessment, many have difficulty using discussion as formative assessment to advance student reading development. This is particularly true of primary grade teachers.

Therefore, understanding how the primary teachers at Maple Elementary use guided discussion to determine student strengths and weaknesses in reading is important because of the stark performance gap isolating students such those at the school. Only one-third of all American

fourth graders who were tested were proficient in reading, according to 2011 and 2013 NAEP data (NCES, 2014b). Similarly, as measured by the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK), only approximately 30 % of fourth graders at Maple Elementary were proficient between 2011 and 2013 (State of New Jersey Department of Education, 2014d).

Chronic underperformance in Maple Elementary, and schools like it, illustrate the urgent need for strategic, high-quality, culturally responsive literacy instruction in the schools that need it the most. And high-quality literacy instruction is doubly important for these students because solid reading skills support learning in other academic areas as early as Kindergarten, meaning that without strong literacy skills, the possibility of success in other academic areas is significantly challenging. For this reason, it is imperative that all teachers, especially K-2 teachers in chronically underperforming elementary schools, understand the purpose of guided reading and apply that knowledge to their instruction. Specifically, teachers must know how to use guided discussion to teach new concepts and to elicit information from students that helps teachers understand what students still need to learn. Central to this work is the understanding of how to institutionalize a school culture that prioritizes authentic, culturally relevant pedagogical practices in the hallways and common spaces of the school as well as in individual classrooms.

CHAPTER 3

THE SILENCED DIALOGUE AND FERTILE LAND LYING FALLOW

“Instead of asking, ‘How should I adjust my instruction to meet the specific needs of students acquiring English language?’ she focused on what her students cannot do and how the dual language program is preventing her from helping her struggling students learn.”

-Excerpt from manuscript I submitted to The Reading Teacher

Without a strong early literacy foundation, students have diminished opportunities for overall academic success, which jeopardizes a student’s chance of getting accepted to college and doing well once they get there. High-quality, responsive early literacy instruction helps students acquire the literacy skills they need to do well in their academic career, from the early grades, through college, and beyond. The absence of such foundational instruction compromises a child’s development of early literacy skills, which has long-term effects. Organizations like the American Association of Blacks in Higher Education (AABHE) strive to ensure that African Americans have pathways to success in institutions of higher education (IHEs). This mission includes K-12 students who will eventually go to college.

When I was a classroom teacher, my words and sometimes my actions were restricted by the silenced dialogue about race, class, achievement, and the influence that teachers’ beliefs and practices have over student success. I found it ironic that the louder the dialogue, the quieter my colleagues, including school and district administrators became. I was puzzled. Isn’t dialogue supposed to bring about conditions for change? Perhaps, but I have learned that silenced dialogues are often intentional, in which case the dialogue we did not have in my old district served its purpose as the students who needed help the most remained underserved.

I chose the 2015 AABHE annual conference as the forum in which I would present preliminary findings from my study of how the Kindergarten through third grade (K-3)

teachers—the initial focus of my study before changing it to K-2 teachers—at Maple Elementary use guided discussion during guided reading because I wanted to contribute to their discussion about ensuring pathways to success in higher education, particularly as it pertains to African American K-12 students. As an African American, female scholar—a researcher who has devoted her life to education—I also felt a responsibility to use my literacy skills to improve education for underserved children. Instead of acquiescing in a *silenced* dialogue about why a subgroup of children in our public schools are reading far below grade-level, I wanted to *start* a dialogue that would impact the teaching that occurs in these schools.

By the end of the conference, I had learned that there are places where this dialogue is occurring and that I needed to be in those places so that I could be a part of it. I also knew that I still had a lot more work to do in order to effect the type of change at the K-12 level that would help pave the pathway to success for African American youth in higher education. In other words, I was ready to plant the seeds that would not only grow, but would create strong branches and robust leaves that would allow these students to continue their growth long after they had passed through my classroom.

CHAPTER 4
SOWING SEEDS FOR SUCCESS: GUIDED DISCUSSION AS
FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN K-3 GUIDED READING

Reflections on My Concurrent Session Presentation

at

The American Association of Blacks in Higher Education

2015 National Conference on Blacks in Higher Education

Pathways to Success in Higher Education: Moving from Enrollment to Employment

in

Charleston, SC

April 9-11, 2015

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Abstract

High-needs public schools, defined as schools that largely serve students from low socioeconomic status households and have a record of chronic underperformance, tend to have markedly low student learning outcomes in literacy as indicated by standardized assessment data. Further, a student's admission to and academic achievement at an institution of higher education are greatly impacted and determined by his or her literacy skills. In an effort to find viable solutions for improving literacy performance in high-needs schools, educators, researchers, and policymakers continue to search for potential causes of this underperformance. In this presentation, I share preliminary findings from my qualitative case study in which I sought to learn 1) what the K-3 literacy teachers know about guided reading, 2) how they use guided discussion in general, and 3) how they use it as a formative assessment measure to monitor student progress during guided reading. In line with the conference theme, *Pathways to Success in Higher Education: Moving From Enrollment to Employment*, I make the case that in order for high school students to be prepared for college, they must receive the best possible preparation in reading and writing during their formative (early elementary) years. I recommend using guided discussion as formative assessment during guided reading in the early grades as a solution to (or the prophylaxis against) the underrepresentation and underperformance of African American college students.

Keywords: guided discussion, guided reading, early literacy, African American youth, college success

Introduction

I have been a member of the American Association of Blacks in Higher Education (AABHE) since 2013. The organization is committed to examining the African American students' path from matriculation to employment to career in an effort to help its members develop their leadership skills and enhance their scholarship. In April 2015, I attended the annual conference of AABHE to present preliminary findings from my dissertation study of how K-3 teachers of Maple Elementary School (pseudonym) use of guided discussion during guided reading. This paper contains my reflections on that experience.

Members of AABHE, who are graduate students, professors, and administrators from a variety of backgrounds, gather annually for three days to achieve a common goal: to help fellow members collaborate with one another and network to develop their leadership skills as well as enhance their scholarship. Therefore, the conference promotes conversations among participants about the complexities surrounding the experiences of African Americans in institutions of higher education (IHEs), both as academics and as students.

Early literacy may be addressed in today's schools, but the results are unacceptable, particularly for our disadvantaged populations. Every student deserves the best instruction as informed by the best research. One of the foci of the conference this year was the school-to-college pipeline, which involves exploring ways to help African American high school students plan strategically for the college application process.

Conference Context

The theme of the 2015 conference, which was held in North Charleston, South Carolina, was "Pathways to Success in Higher Education: Moving from Enrollment to Employment." Ironically, the conference took place just days after and mere miles from the fatal police shooting

of an unarmed Black man, Walter Scott. This incident, the most recent in a wave of police shootings of Black men, was the primary story covered by the majority of media outlets. Images of protestors in Ferguson, Missouri and other major cities across the nation still filled television screens and front pages of newspapers across the United States (U.S.). Protesters were still enraged over the death of 18-year-old Michael Brown at the hands of police only a year earlier. In response to Walter Scott's and Michael Brown's deaths, the mood of the conference was somber at times as conference goers discussed the tragedies. We were all reminded, once again, that the use of excessive force by U.S. police often unnecessarily results in the death of an unarmed Black male.

Although each of the keynote speakers throughout the conference acknowledged the tragic event that had transpired only days earlier, it was opening keynote speaker Dr. Randal Pinkett, a noted entrepreneur, author, and scholar, who delivered the first of many touching messages about the death of Walter Scott. Dr. Pinkett commented on the circumstances surrounding Mr. Scott's death and urged audience members to never forget how the man's death was proof of the prevalence of race-related inequality that still exists today. Dr. Pinkett concluded by saying that the work of organizations like AABHE is far from being finished—even after decades of grassroots efforts, policy reforms, and legislation aimed at leveling the playing field for African Americans, the work must go on.

During his acceptance speech, the recipient of AABHE's 2015 Lifetime Achievement Award, Dr. Norman Francis, the president of Xavier University for the past 47 years, shared a historical perspective of the impact of racial inequality on the success of African Americans. Dr. Francis described his experience as a young scholar who would eventually become a successful academic during one of the most turbulent times in modern U. S. history: the Civil Rights

Movement. Despite the often insurmountable challenges faced by African Americans under the Jim Crow laws that enforced segregation in the south, Francis nevertheless persevered by virtue of the guidance he received throughout his career. He ended by reminding conference goers that incidents like the Walter Scott shooting highlight, once again, the importance of AABHE's work: raising public awareness of the issues of race, identity, and equality of opportunity through research and advocacy—particularly in education.

The Presentation

The majority of the plenary and concurrent sessions covered topics such as 1) gateways to success in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields; 2) the overrepresentation of Black male students in special education; 3) understanding microaggressions that create stress for Black faculty; and 4) legitimizing African American student narratives on predominately White campuses. The plenary sessions typically lasted 90 minutes and the concurrent sessions lasted approximately 50 minutes.

My 50-minute presentation took place in a small conference room. Four participants attended, two of whom were teacher education program professors at two different nationally recognized universities in the United States. The other two participants were community organizers interested in learning more about strategies for helping the young students enrolled in their literacy program achieve success in reading. During the presentation, I first described the national and state statistics on student performance in language arts literacy that prompted me to select this research topic, including the context of the school community in which the study was taking place. Next, I shared the concepts and theories driving the study. Then, after sharing my methodology with participants, I presented preliminary findings from survey and informal

interview data that I had collected and analyzed. I ended with a discussion of the implications of my research for teacher practice. A slideshow of the presentation is described in Appendix D.

Key Preliminary Findings and Significance

This presentation shared preliminary findings of the present study based on two sources of data: 1) the completed *Survey of Guided Reading Knowledge and Practices* (see Appendix A) I had received from four of the teachers in the school, and 2) informal interviews with teachers in the school as I introduced the study and tried to recruit participants.

Findings from survey data. Based on the survey data, I learned that the amount of time devoted to guided reading in this school is insufficient to meet the needs of the students. Three of the four teachers who completed the survey reported spending only 25 minutes (out of the 120-minute literacy block) on guided reading per day. Only one of the teachers reported spending approximately 45 minutes on guided reading each day. These figures indicate that teachers are only meeting with one or two groups of students for guided reading per day even though teachers have approximately five or six guided reading groups. Further, most of the students in these groups were reading either just below or way below grade level. How are students to progress if they do not receive daily, high-quality reading instruction?

The survey data also suggested that, while three of the four teachers had reported using conversation to assess student progress during guided reading, only two (50%) of the most widely-used center activities required any discussion, which caused me to wonder how the work students were doing “away” from the teacher (at centers) supported what they did with the teachers during guided reading. If the goal was to talk to learn (and peer discussions are equally as important as discussions with teachers), then why were there so few center activities that involved peer discussion?

Survey data also revealed that 75% of teachers had reported regrouping their students for guided reading only two to three times per year—typically after they administer district benchmark assessments in the fall, winter, and spring. This statistic concerned me because it suggested that teachers were not using formative assessment data—real-time information about student progress—in between benchmark assessments to inform their decisions about grouping students for guided reading. I wondered: *If the guided reading model is intended to help students receive targeted instruction in order to advance to the next reading level when ready, how are these teachers using formative assessment to inform their instruction and their decisions about regrouping students?* I also wondered whether teachers were maximizing discussions by using them as an assessment tool to inform their instruction.

Findings from informal interview data. In late March of the 2014-2015 school year, I visited Maple Elementary School to introduce the study to K-3 teachers and recruit participants. Over the course of a two-hour period, I sat in the teachers’ lounge and greeted the school’s K-3 teachers, who had been urged by the principal to stop by and meet me during their lunch period. During the short amount of time I spent in the teachers’ lounge, I learned quite a bit from the dozen or so teachers I met.

First, I learned that the K-3 teachers of Maple Elementary had mixed reactions to the study. Some teachers were very interested and expressed their interest in helping me, adding that they really wanted to learn more about effective guided reading instruction so they could improve their guided reading lessons. One teacher in particular stated that she wanted me to observe her teaching guided reading so she could get some feedback from me. She was curious about whether she was doing a good job. Another teacher was intrigued but a little shy. She said that she was feeling stressed at the moment and didn’t really know whether she wanted to “add

one more thing to [her] plate.” A third teacher was also intrigued but declined to participate outright, explaining that she had just started the job in February and that everything was “a stressful mess.” She admitted that she was not doing GR at all because she was spending all of her time getting her students to behave and learn basic skills that they had failed to learn earlier in the year and in previous years.

These informal, preliminary interviews revealed that there was no consistent guided reading instruction across Maple Elementary’s classrooms. I also learned that the teachers were doubtful yet intrigued by the idea of learning how to make sense of the complex undertaking of teaching guided reading. Although some teachers reported teaching guided reading, they did it with little confidence in their ability to do so effectively. All of the teachers with whom I spoke generally lacked confidence in their ability to teach guided reading effectively (or their students’ ability to receive their instruction), even one teacher who had formerly served as a literacy coach in the school. Three teachers in particular either told me that they felt they were not well-equipped to teach guided reading or expressed a desire to make sure their students were “ready” (behaviorally and academically) before engaging them in guided reading. Their lack of confidence caused many of them to shy away from teaching guided reading.

During these informal interviews, I also found out that teachers in this school do not have to submit guided reading lesson plans. One first grade teacher explained, “We have so many other things we have to do in terms of lesson planning requirements, that we don’t have to submit lesson plans for guided reading.” I thought this was very telling, and I noted it as something to investigate during my future conversations with the principal. How can a teacher provide targeted instruction with a clear purpose and a strong formative assessment piece if he or she does not have a plan—a road map? During my presentation, I acknowledged the possibility

that even though the teachers in this school do not have to submit guided reading lesson plans, they may rely on guided reading plans from another source (e.g. unit plans from the reading program they use). At the same time, I could not help but wonder whether some of the teachers, feeling relieved by having been excused from one of the many time-consuming tasks they must accomplish, simply do not write lesson plans for guided reading, instead taking a freeform approach to teaching guided reading.

At the time of my presentation at the AABHE conference, this question of whether teachers 1) follow enough of a plan to teach guided reading effectively and 2) actually use guided discussion as formative assessment to improve their reading instruction, remained to be answered. However, observation and interview data from the next phase of the study would help me gain a better understanding of how these teachers used guided discussion as formative assessment to help their students advance in reading.

Open Discussion

At the end of the presentation, I explained to the participants who attended my presentation that the next phase of data collection would involve collecting and analyzing the rest of the data from observations, interviews, and documents. I then devoted the last ten minutes of the presentation to a discussion, which I opened by asking participants what they are experiencing with their college students in terms of their ability to handle the rigors of college level reading and writing. Each of the participants said that their students—K-12 and college alike—seem to want everything to be done for them. In response to this question, one college professor said, “They want me to provide a rubric for every single assignment. And without this guide, most of them do not know where to begin writing on a specific topic.”

Another participant, a professor in the science and math department of a teacher education program at a notable southern university, wanted to know whether there were other approaches to teaching reading beside guided reading. In that instant, I realized that I needed to survey more of the literature on the different approaches to reading instruction because I did not know the answer to his question. There has been a big push in education to only expose students to “rigorous,” grade-level texts, providing supports for students who are reading below grade-level and some literacy experts believe that guided reading does not offer that type of instruction.

In response to the participant’s question, I offered that some schools engage students almost exclusively in close reading using grade-level texts as part of the reading program they use. I cited ReadyGEN, a reading program used widely in the elementary grades in New York City public schools, as an example. I explained that there are benefits and disadvantages to using only grade-level texts (as opposed to “instructional level” texts). One benefit is that students are exposed to rigorous texts whether they are reading on grade-level or not, which gives them the opportunity to engage with texts that may be cognitively appropriate for them even if they cannot read them independently. One of the disadvantages of engaging students in close reading using grade-level texts exclusively is that students cannot learn to read grade-level texts from exposure alone. They must develop the decoding, fluency and comprehension skills that are appropriate for where they are on the reading development continuum. This development occurs gradually, each reading behavior building the foundation for the more complex reading behaviors they will encounter in the next higher reading level.

After I replied to his question, I realized that while it sounded intuitive to me, I needed to develop a better understanding of approaches to reading besides guided reading. I needed to be able to explain which other methods are currently being practiced in schools.

Reflection and Next Steps

I enjoyed my experience at the AABHE conference because the range of topics covered reflected the organization's commitment to helping emerging scholars and raising public awareness of issues of race, identity, and equality of opportunity through research and advocacy. The conference was especially helpful to me because it enabled me to get feedback on my research and my preliminary findings. Participants' level of engagement and thoughtful questions prompted me to think about my familiarity with the literature on guided reading. Toward the end of my presentation, I realized that as I moved forward in the data analysis process, I would need to continue to read empirical studies about guided discussion and guided reading to further shape my understanding of the practice of using guided discussion as formative assessment during guided reading. Immediately upon returning home, I began the second wave of my literature review for the present study in order to broaden my knowledge of guided discussion as formative assessment.

Looking to Dr. Francis' words of encouragement and accomplishments as an example of excellence in the face of adversity, one is reminded that all change comes from earlier actions that sparked that change. To elaborate on the seeds of success metaphor, I would add that while *some* seeds for success have already been planted, society is learning that these seeds are not enough. We are seeing that literacy rates among school-age children have stalled and our students are suffering as a result. My research emphasizes the fact that we have not taken full advantage of the fertile minds of young children, and early literacy is the type of seed we must plant. The seeds must be of high quality and they must be monitored and nurtured so that they have a chance of surviving and bearing fruit.

CHAPTER 5

SURVEYING THE LAND

“It is important [for students] to discuss [texts]. Again, I’m being redundant but the Bloom’s Taxonomy...I feel that [discussion] is really important and not only discussion with the students and the teacher, but also peer discussion.”

-Ms. B. (post-observation interview)

The purpose of research is to systematically investigate a question or problem for the purpose of drawing new conclusions about the subject under investigation or finding a solution to a problem. Qualitative research, although it typically produces findings that are less generalizable than findings from quantitative studies, offers insights on a phenomenon that quantitative research does not capture (Merriam, 2009). Through a carefully-designed qualitative case study with a strong data analysis component that factors in the context in which the data live, a researcher can find answers to the questions guiding his or her inquiry (Yin, 2011).

I designed this qualitative case study because I wanted to learn how the primary grade teachers in a specific school community—a chronically underperforming, high-poverty elementary school—use guided discussion to teach new concepts and elicit information from students that indicates just how much they are grasping. This study would inform the creation of a professional development training for the teachers in my research school, Maple Elementary, who come from a variety of racial, cultural, and education backgrounds, including their preparation to teach guided reading. Data from in-depth observations of the three focal teachers’ guided reading lessons and other literacy instruction during the literacy block as well as interviews allowed me to “survey the land” in order to decide what to include in the targeted professional development training on guided reading I created for the teachers of Maple Elementary.

CHAPTER 6

RESEARCH DESIGN

I conducted a qualitative case study of three K-2 literacy teachers in Maple Elementary School (all names are pseudonyms), a chronically underperforming, high-poverty school within a struggling district in northern New Jersey. The primary purpose of this study was to learn how teachers at Maple Elementary School use guided discussion (GD) as formative assessment (FA) with the long-term goal of helping all of the school's K-2 literacy teachers improve their guided reading (GR) instruction. Improved reading instruction is particularly critical for Maple Elementary students because of their language diversity and poverty, which greatly impacts their teachers' ability to help them become proficient readers. My research was guided by three questions:

1. What do K-2 literacy teachers know about guided reading?
2. How do K-2 teachers use guided discussion in guided reading?
3. How do K-2 teachers use guided discussion as a formative assessment measure during guided reading?

This case study design was informed by Merriam (2009), who defines case study as an examination and description of a particular unit of study within a "bounded system," meaning that a researcher can choose to study a single person, group or phenomenon that is part of a larger context. Merriam also explains that, though qualitative case studies generally involve a small sample size, diminishing their generalizability, they can be very informative because they provide researchers "insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing" (Merriam, 2009, p. 42). One of the strengths of qualitative case study research is that it unearths the meaning behind a particular event or happening, giving full consideration to the context in

which the data live (Yin, 2011), making it an appropriate research approach for this proposed study because I will examine teachers' behaviors surrounding a particular event (the use of guided discussion as formative assessment) within a specific context (small-group guided reading sessions within a general education classroom in a school with significant needs).

My aim was to better understand teacher practice around using guided discussion as both a teaching technique and a formative assessment activity to inform guided reading instruction. I make a case for how educators of Maple Elementary and similar schools, can begin to sow the seeds for success in literacy through the use of guided discussion in the primary grades. I do this by providing thick, rich descriptions of the three focal teachers' practice, which, as Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert, strengthens the trustworthiness of the findings of a qualitative inquiry and fortifies the validity, reliability, and objectivity of the research.

In the case of this study, trustworthy findings are essential to helping the teachers of Maple Elementary School improve their use of guided discussion as formative assessment during guided reading. In order to address the research questions, the study utilized data from a custom 27-item survey, one 90-minute observation of each focal teacher teaching a collection of lessons during the 90-minute literacy block (including guided reading), and one semi-structured interview with each focal teacher. The study took place over a five-month period during the 2014-2015 school year. After analyzing the data, I designed and delivered a professional development training for the primary grade teachers of Maple Elementary in which I defined the concept of guided literacy and helped the teachers understand the structure and relevance of guided discussion as they relate to the key findings of this study.

Setting

This qualitative case study of K-2 literacy teachers' formative assessment practices in guided reading was conducted in Maple Elementary School, a traditional public elementary school in a racially diverse northern New Jersey city whose school district faces challenges such as chronic underperformance, underfunding, and low teacher morale. During the 2014-2015 school year, Maple served approximately 627 students in Kindergarten through sixth grade. Approximately 92% of the students were eligible to participate in the school's free or reduced lunch program. In addition, 65% of the student body was classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) and 5% was eligible to receive special education services because of a disability. Maple Elementary's student body is predominately Hispanic and African American, with 74.5% Hispanic students, 23.3% African American students, 1.2% White students, and a combined total of 1% who identified as either Asian, Pacific Islander, or "Two or More Races." The language diversity of the student body is wide, with 72.5% of the students speaking primarily Spanish at home; 25.6% speaking primarily English at home; and a half a percent or less of students speaking either Yoruba, Creoles/Pidgins, Chinese, Arabic, or another language at home. To accommodate this language diversity, the school offers a dual language program in which students receive instruction in either the "English-Spanish" bilingual program or the "English-only" program, depending on the option chosen by their parents.

The "English-Spanish" bilingual program and the "English-only" program differ in that students in the "dual" program are consistently taught subject matter in English and Spanish interchangeably throughout the day while students in the "one-way" program are taught in English-only for an entire week, then in Spanish-only the next week. This pattern continues throughout the year in such a way that students continually go back and forth between learning in

English and learning in Spanish on an alternating weekly schedule. The goal of the bilingual program is not necessarily to teach students how to speak Spanish. Rather, it is to help students whose native language is Spanish use their Spanish language skills to become proficient speakers, readers, and writers of English. Conversely, students enrolled in the “English-only” program are taught every subject, in English, all year, in all of their classes. During the 2014-2015 school year Maple Elementary had one “English-only” class at the Kindergarten, first, and third grade levels, and two “English-only” classes at the second grade level.

At the time of the study, there were 29 homeroom classes in the entire school, seventeen of which were K-2 classrooms. Five of the homerooms were Kindergarten classes; five were first grade classes; and seven were second grade classes. Each homeroom class served approximately 25 students and was led by one homeroom teacher. In Maple Elementary, Kindergarten classes are led by one teacher supported by one full-day aide. Table 5 shows class size and program enrollment information for the school during the 2014-2015 school year.

Table 5

2014-2015 Enrollment in Maple Elementary School’s Primary Grades

Grade	Number of Classes	Students per Class	Total Students in Grade	Students in Bilingual Program	Students in “English-only” Program
K	5	25	125	100	25
1	5	25	125	100	25
2	7	25	175	125	50
Total Number of K-2 Students			425	325	100

During the 2014-2015 school year, the faculty of Maple Elementary School comprised 55 teachers, the majority of which were of various Hispanic backgrounds. Approximately 93% of the teachers speak Spanish fluently and use that skill in core subjects such as Math, Science,

Social Studies, and Spanish Language Arts. The literacy block, which consists of reading and writing instruction, runs for 90 minutes each day and takes place in the morning in each of the K-2 classrooms. During the 2013-2014 school year, the year before this study took place, the K-2 teachers began to learn about and try on parts of one approach to managing literacy instruction called “The Daily 5” (Boushey & Moser, 2014) and its companion assessment system called “The CAFE” (Boushey & Moser, 2009). These approaches work together by promoting student independence so that teachers can devote more time to helping individual students in small-group settings. The Daily 5 approach to literacy suggests that teachers give students a variety of literacy learning activities and hold them accountable for completing five of the many options offered. The CAFE approach recommends that teachers use students’ needs to decide how and when to confer with them to assess their growth. Beginning in September 2014, the literacy teachers in this school continued their work with these two approaches to literacy instruction and assessment by committing to using them with fidelity in their classrooms.

Participants

The participants for this proposed qualitative study were purposefully selected from the 17 K-2 teachers who taught literacy in an “English-only” class, an “English-Spanish Dual” class, or an “English-Spanish One-Way” class. Purposive sampling, according to research design experts (Patton, 2014; Merriam, 2009), is characteristic of qualitative research because it allows researchers to select the participants they believe will help them best understand the phenomenon they are researching. The criteria for selection of participants were as follows: 1) teach English Language Arts (ELA), 2) willing to complete the Survey of Guided Reading Practices, and 3) willing to participate in an interview with me.

During an early January 2015 lunch meeting, arranged by the principal, I met most of the K-2 literacy teachers and invited all of them to participate in the study. I explained to the teachers that due to my inability to speak Spanish, I would not be able to observe teachers when they are delivering instruction in Spanish. I did, however, invite all of the teachers to complete the Survey of Guided Reading Knowledge and Practices (see Appendix A). I wanted to learn how these teachers conduct guided reading in their classrooms and how they used guided discussion as formative assessment during guided reading.

Focal teachers. By the end of the first full academic week of March 2015, I had identified which teachers would participate in the study. Three teachers, one at each grade level from Kindergarten to second grade, were purposefully selected for this study based on the principal's recommendation and the selected teachers' desire to participate. A desire to participate was important because I wanted to ensure that all participants would be willing to talk openly about their instructional practices and allow their instruction to be observed and their beliefs and practices analyzed. As Table 6 shows, two of the teachers, Ms. O. and Ms. G., served as the English language counterpart of their dual language grade-level teams. They had 11 and 18 years of classroom experience at the time of the study, respectively, and do not speak Spanish. The third teacher, Ms. B., a native Spanish speaker, was in her first year of teaching and was the Spanish language counterpart of her grade-level team.

Table 6

Description of Focal Teachers

Teacher	Years Teaching	Language of Instruction	Race/Ethnicity	Native Language
Ms. B.	1	Spanish	Hispanic/Latino	Spanish
Ms. G.	18	English	White/Caucasian	English
Ms. O.	11	English	Black/African American	English

Data Collection

This study was an examination of how teachers guide students during guided reading, using guided discussion as both a teaching technique and a formative assessment activity during guided reading. Lincoln and Guba (1985) urge qualitative researchers to take certain steps to ensure the trustworthiness (or credibility) of their findings. Collecting data from multiple sources is one of these steps. In order to understand what teachers know about guided reading and how they use guided discussion to advance student learning, I employed the following four data collection methods: 1) administered a survey to participants; 2) conducted classroom observations; 3) conducted individual, semi-structured interviews; and 4) collected teacher-generated documents (e.g. teachers' guided reading lesson plans).

During the data collection phase of this study, I used the Guided Reading Observation Checklist (Appendix B) and the Guided Reading Interview Protocol (Appendix C), both of which I designed for this study. I also used the Survey of Guided Reading Knowledge and Practices (Appendix A), which I adapted from Ford and Opitz's (2008) national survey of 1,500 primary teachers. The Survey of Guided Reading Knowledge and Practices (Appendix A), is divided into seven categories: 1) purpose of guided reading 2) grouping students, 3) text

selection, 4) planning for time when students are with the teacher, 5) planning for time when students are away from the teacher, 6) assessment tools and techniques, and 7) final thoughts. The Guided Reading Observation Checklist and the Guided Reading Interview Protocol were informed by the “Tools and Strategies of Formative Assessment” section of the NCTE’s (2013) position statement on formative assessment. These tools include interview and observation items that focus on what teachers understand to be the most important aspects of using discussion during guided reading, and how teachers use guided discussion as both a teaching strategy and a formative assessment measure during guided reading. Together, these data sources helped me ensure the validity, reliability, and objectivity of this study.

Surveys. The survey data from this study served as a starting point for my examination of teachers’ knowledge of guided reading and how they use discussion to guide students during guided reading. These data helped me gain a preliminary understanding of where teachers stood in their conceptual understanding of formative assessment as well as their perception of strengths and needs around using formative assessment in small-group reading session. Yin (2011) remarks that surveys are not the best data collection instrument when used by themselves because of the wide range of context-driven responses participants may offer in response to the survey items. However, I felt that the use of survey data in this study was an appropriate tool for participants because it provided a way for teachers to anonymously report their guided reading practices. The 27-item, multiple-choice, paper-pencil survey was designed to elicit information from teachers about their knowledge of guided reading. It is divided into seven categories: 1) the purpose of guided reading, 2) grouping of students, 3) text selection, 4) planning for time when students are with you, 5) planning for time when students are not with you, 6) assessment tools and techniques, and 7) final thoughts.

In the third week of March 2015, I administered the Survey of Guided Reading Knowledge and Practices to participants during a specially-scheduled meet-and-greet during teachers' lunch periods, which was arranged by the principal. I explained the study to the teachers who stopped by to meet me and asked them to complete the survey even if they were not interested in participating in the observation/interview portion of the study. Participants were asked to place their completed surveys in the large envelope, marked "Completed Guided Reading Surveys," which was placed in a central location in the room. That day, I collected four completed surveys and received promises from three teachers that they would complete the survey and leave it for me in the office. Eventually, I collected these three completed surveys, bringing the total number of complete surveys to seven. Unfortunately, I only received seven complete surveys from the Maple Elementary teachers. Nevertheless, data from these surveys helped me customize the Guided Reading Observation Checklist and the Guided Reading Interview Protocol I had developed for this study.

Observations. The second source of data, observations of teachers' guided reading instruction, allowed me to see what teachers were actually doing during small-group reading sessions. Both Merriam (2009) and Yin (2011) promote the use of observations as one of the best means of collecting data. As a primary source of information, observations allow researchers to "see" what participants may not share (or remember to share) upfront. Observations must be conducted very carefully so that researchers capture everything that was observed, exactly as it was observed. During these "systematic observations," as Yin (2011) calls them, I used the Guided Reading Observation Checklist (see Appendix B), which I designed for this study, to focus on how each focal teacher engages students in discussion during the lesson. This

observation checklist was informed by the guidelines for assessment types and strategies identified by the NCTE (2013) in its position statement on formative assessment.

During the observations, I also jotted down what each teacher did during that lesson, noting the frequency of teacher behaviors and comments about the qualitative features of the lesson, such as the types of questions teachers asked and how students responded to teacher instruction. In addition to these written notes, I audio-recorded each guided reading lesson so I could refer to these lessons during the data analysis phase of the study. As a source that can be checked during an audit of this research, audio-recordings of these sessions also lend to the credibility of my research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In addition to using a checklist, I also wrote down my impressions of each lesson after each observation in the research journal I set up for this study. These journal notes helped me keep track of developments in my thinking as I went through the data collection process, which, in turn, helped me analyze the data rigorously (Yin, 2011). Data from these observations also informed the semi-structured post-observation interviews I conducted with participants on the same day I observed them.

Interviews. In addition to collecting survey data from every participant and observation data from three participants, I also conducted one semi-structured, audio-recorded, individual interview with each of the participants for this study. The third data collection method, semi-structured, individual, 30- to 40-minute, audio-recorded interviews, was an excellent vehicle for gaining insight into how participants perceive a particular phenomenon—in this case, the use of discussion as both a teaching strategy and a formative assessment activity during guided reading. Interviews also give researchers the opportunity to learn more about participants' thoughts on a topic—something that is not always easily learned during an observation (Yin, 2011).

It is important to note that this interview protocol was originally designed for use with participants I would observe teaching guided reading as well as participants I would not observe. By the time the teachers were able to participate in the observations and interviews, I had modified the protocol because I learned that I would only be able to interview the three focal teachers I had observed. Before using the interview protocol with the three focal teachers, I tested it with a small group of K-5 general education teachers who teach literacy, including colleagues from my dissertation study group. Each 40-minute interview took place in either the focal teacher's classroom or the library immediately following the lesson. Once finished, I first had the audio-recorded interviews transcribed then I uploaded them to an Excel spreadsheet so I could refer to them during the data analysis phase of this study, a step researchers take to ensure the trustworthiness of their research findings (Patton, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The purpose of collecting interview data was to hear firsthand how participants viewed guided discussion and formative assessment during guided reading. Interviews also allowed me to learn firsthand what the focal teachers thought about their practices around using guided discussion as formative assessment during guided reading. During the interviews, I also asked follow-up questions about the guided reading lessons I had observed. For this reason, I used open-ended questions, phrased in a conversational style, to elicit authentic responses from participants. Their responses helped me understand how teachers use guided discussion as formative assessment during guided reading.

During these interviews, I asked participants open-ended questions from four categories: 1) rationale for behavior during observation, 2) views on the use of discussion during guided reading, and 3) habits around the use of discussion during guided reading, 4) struggles and triumphs in the use of discussion during guided reading. These four categories were informed by

the quantitative survey used in Ford and Opitz's (2008) national study of primary teachers' guided reading practices, the findings of which revealed that teachers generally lack a solid understanding of the purpose of guided reading and how to implement it with students.

Documents. Originally, I had planned to use two types of documents in this study: teacher-generated documents—specifically guided reading lesson plans—and field notes. I wanted to look at teachers' lesson plans in order to gain a better sense of how participants incorporate guided discussion into their guided reading lessons. However, during the participant selection phase of the study, I learned that the teachers at Maple Elementary are not required to submit lesson plans for guided reading. Instead, the documents I used were my field notes and research journal.

Field notes are a researcher's written notes about what was experienced during the research process (Merriam, 2009). Expert researchers (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2011) view field notes as a powerful way to keep track of what is going on in the field and clarify one's thought about what they are experiencing in the field. Lincoln and Guba (1985) also cite the reflective journal as a key place where researchers can examine their own thinking about the research they have collected (and may still be in the process of conducting). In line with this thinking, data were drawn from my field notes and entries from my research journal for this study. As Yin (2011) suggests, feelings, which can include physical feelings of a space (e.g. warmth or coldness, brightness, or noise levels) and observations about the way in which people react and interact, are a valid and useful form of qualitative data, especially with case study research.

In addition to field notes and journal entries, I asked the principal to share general, non-confidential information with me about the participants (e.g. cultural affiliation, level of experience, professional development track record, professional commitment, where they live)

because these data influence the school context and must, therefore, be included in my analysis of what the study participants know about guided reading and how they use discussion as both teaching strategy and a formative assessment activity during guided reading.

It is important to note that, although each of the four methods of data—surveys, observations, interviews, and documents—individually helped me determine what teachers know about guided reading and how they use discussion during as formative assessment during guided reading, these data *collectively* helped me determine how teachers use discussion to engage students during guided reading instruction. Triangulation, a concept that involves gathering of data from multiple sources, and then demonstrating that the sources share a common theme, theory, or idea, helped me confirm that participants’ self-reports about what they know about guided reading and what they do during guided reading are aligned with what I was witnessing during observations and interviews. Scholars (Patton, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009) cite triangulation as a practice that helps researchers add a layer of credibility to their findings. Careful collection and analysis of descriptive data from survey responses and observations of guided reading lessons as well as observations of and interviews with teachers enabled me to gauge what teachers understand about the role of discussion as formative assessment during guided reading instruction.

Data Analysis

In this case study of how three K-2 literacy teachers in one elementary school use guided discussion during guided reading, I used a data analysis approach informed by Merriam (2009), who takes an interpretive-constructivist stance toward qualitative research. Merriam suggests that researchers make meaning of the data they find, using details from collected data to construct final conclusions about these data. Drawing from Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) constant

comparative method of analyzing qualitative data, she recommends that qualitative researchers 1) analyze data as soon as they collect it, 2) examine each data set individually, 3) examine all data sets together, and 4) draw conclusions about the data as a whole.

Constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is a powerful data analysis method because it allows researchers to systematically review data, establish codes, and create categories for the purpose of reaching a conclusion about the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 2009). This method differs from more traditional research models because the “hypothesis” or theory is the end result of the study, rather than the starting point. Although constant comparative analysis can be used to derive a theory, I used it to make meaning of the present study’s survey, observation, interview, and document data collectively.

The purpose of data analysis is to help researchers make meaning of the information they have collected through systematic examination of this information so they can share their findings with a wider audience. Scholars of qualitative research (Patton, 2014; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2011) concur that interpretation is a key part of this process. That is to say, qualitative researchers use their knowledge of existing theories and concepts as well as what previous research reveals. In some cases, this includes first-hand knowledge from a researcher’s own practice, which he or she uses to make sense of the individual pieces of qualitative information they encounter. These scholars also state that researchers have a responsibility to organize these data in such a way that together they tell a story that was prompted by the study’s initial research questions.

Through this iterative process of continuously comparing and contrasting units of data, organizing (and reorganizing) them into themes, and revisiting the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study, I was able to develop a sound conceptual summary of the data and the

categories into which I had sorted them. This required me to draw inferences about what the data were telling me, a process that involved continually going back and forth between 1) what the data said about what teachers know about guided reading and 2) how teachers used guided discussion as formative assessment during guided reading. I interpreted these data based on my knowledge of and experience with using discussion during guided reading (Merriam, 2009).

This process involved using constant comparative data analysis to analyze the data collected from multiple sources. I looked within data sets and across data sets to better understand how K-2 literacy teachers in the proposed research site use discussion as a formative assessment measure during guided reading. At times I analyzed data from a single source (e.g. teacher or data type), without analyzing data from other sources. At other times I analyzed data from one source while I also conducted an analysis of a set of data I had collected earlier. Frequently, I analyzed one data set as I was collecting another set of data. Conducting multiple data analysis tasks at the same time is characteristic of qualitative research (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2011). Toward the end of the data collection phase, I had begun to develop a solid understanding of what the data meant together. However, I continued to compare the codes, patterns, and themes derived from each individual data set to the others in order to conduct a complete analysis of the entire set of data collected for this study.

During this study, I used memos—notes about my thinking as I review data—to keep track of my comparisons, which helped me derive naming conventions for the preliminary codes and final codes I had created (Patton, 2014). At first, I established preliminary codes—through the lens of this study’s guiding theories and research questions—to inductively arrive at conclusions about how the teachers in this school use discussion during guided reading to improve student learning outcomes in reading (Merriam, 2009). After I had collected all of the

data and begun to analyze them, I went back to the research literature and even conducted a new search for more relevant research literature because I found that I needed a sharper lens through which to analyze the specific teacher moves I had observed during guided reading lessons.

As I analyzed each data set, I uploaded these notes to Excel, a data management system I used to keep track of the data I had collected. The Excel spreadsheet helped me manage the process of sorting through data, identifying tentative categories within the data, establishing preliminary codes, and deciding which final themes to address in my findings. To streamline the data, I assigned names to the potential themes, which were driven by a variety of sources, such as the researcher, the participants, or sources outside the study (Merriam, 2009, p. 184).

Analysis of survey data. For the data analysis phase of this study, I began with an early analysis of the first set of data, which was survey data, as soon as participants submitted the completed surveys. First, I read through the surveys, line-by-line, then chunk-by-chunk, creating memos about my initial thoughts about the data and general patterns that had emerged from the data. I then reread the data through the theoretical lenses guiding this study—Vygotsky’s (1978) Social Development Theory and Shulman’s (1986) conception of teacher knowledge—looking for potential codes. As I reread the data, I looked for responses signifying teachers’ knowledge of the purpose and principles of guided reading, which made me think of my first research question: What do K-2 teachers know about guided reading? I jotted down key ideas as I read, then returned to this list afterward to see how best to group the ideas. My initial groupings included categories such as “planning—themes,” “guided reading instruction—grouping,” and “assessment—benchmark.”

I then reread the survey data with the research literature in mind, again looking for potential preliminary codes. As I read, I kept going back to the studies whose findings aligned

with my research questions, as shown in Table 7. With Ford and Opitz's (2008) study of teachers' knowledge of guided reading, Peterson and Taylor's (2012) study of the impact of using higher-order questioning on culturally and linguistically diverse students' reading development, and Porath's (2014) study of the impact of less teacher talk can improve student reading achievement in mind, I assigned preliminary codes to the survey data.

Table 7

Key Studies Aligned with My Research Questions

Research Question	Findings from Studies	Key Studies
1. What do K-2 literacy teachers know about guided reading?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher knowledge impacts teacher disposition and affects practice. Teachers need help planning for guided reading instruction and assessing students during guided reading. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ford and Opitz (2008)
2. How do K-2 teachers use guided discussion in guided reading?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers use specific instructional moves that either start or keep discussions going as they teach small-group guided reading lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peterson and Taylor (2012) Palincsar and Brown (1986)
3. How do K-2 teachers use guided discussion as a formative assessment measure during guided reading?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers make numerous decisions about what to do with what they learn from students during discussions as they are teaching. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phillips (2013) Porath (2014)

After having created preliminary codes for the survey data through a theoretical lens, a research question lens, and a research literature lens, I created a running list of preliminary codes for the survey data, which I continued to build as I analyzed the observation, interview, and document data I had collected.

Analysis of observation data. When I reviewed the observation data from observations of the three participants teaching guided reading, I kept in mind the preliminary codes I had established for the survey data and added new preliminary codes to my running list based on these new data. My additions included codes such as “assessment—formative—conversations” and “discussion—heavy focus on questioning.” To analyze the observation data, I followed a

process similar to the one I used to analyze the survey data. First, I read through the surveys, line-by-line and chunk-by-chunk, creating memos about any interesting responses I found. Second, I reread the data with the theoretical literature in mind, looking for potential codes. Third, I reread the data with the research questions in mind and the research literature in mind, looking for potential codes. Throughout this process, I continued to create memos about how the survey data and the observation data were similar and different. My memos became richer and more detailed. They also began to include more questions as I compared the observation data to the survey data. For instance, when I created the first code mentioned above, I was noting how the teacher had carefully listened to a student's response then based her explanation on the misconception the student had demonstrated. With the second code, I noted that I was wondering about the teacher's line of questioning and her pacing. These thoughts helped me deepen my analysis of the post-observation interview data I had collected.

After I examined the observation data through multiple lenses and developed a list of preliminary codes for this data set, I created a new list of preliminary codes that reflected data from both survey and observation data. At this point, it became important to begin thinking about which patterns were emerging from the data and how these patterns were united through the theoretical, research questions, and research literature lenses because these lenses would serve as a unifying way of making meaning of the data (Merriam, 2009).

Analysis of interview data. To analyze the interview data, I reviewed the transcripts from the semi-structured, post-observation interviews I had conducted with participants, examining each interview individually through the theoretical, research question, and research literature lenses and then collectively through these same three lenses. As I analyzed the data, I kept in mind the preliminary codes I had derived from the survey and observation data as well as

the patterns that were starting to emerge from the data. At this point, I noticed some potential themes—prominent ideas about a data set—that came from the patterns in the data that were consistent across the survey, observation, and interview data. These potential themes included “teacher beliefs,” “teacher knowledge,” and “improvisation.” I created one new list of potential themes based on what the survey, observation, and interview data revealed. Thus, the constant comparative analysis method helped me draw conclusions about the data collected. As I compared these data sets and create this new list, I created additional memos about any thoughts and findings that had emerged during the data analysis phase of the study and added new categories to the running list of groupings I had created at the start of the data analysis phase.

Analysis of document data. I analyzed my field notes as I read each data set to see whether I had missed any teacher comments or behaviors in the other data sets. I looked for notes that reflected best practices in guided reading and the use of guided discussion as formative assessment in guided reading (Ford & Opitz, 2008; & Fountas & Pinnell, 2012; NCTE, 2013). I then used these notes to inform the preliminary codes I established for the survey, observation and interview data sets.

Looking across data sets. After analyzing the survey, observation, and interview data sets individually and against one another, I looked across all of the data sets again to see how they aligned. I used the refined list of preliminary codes derived from my comparison of all of the data sets as I reviewed them one by one and one against another to create a framework of potential codes for the data. These potential codes, which were derived from the patterns that had emerged from the data sets I had reviewed individually and collectively, allowed me to arrive at a final list of codes, which I used to create my codebook. These codes were exhaustive and

mutually exclusive, every relevant piece of data fitting solidly into either one category or another.

Through the use of constant comparative analysis, I had made meaning of the survey, observation, and interview data I had collected (Merriam, 2009), which prepared me to identify the preliminary themes that were beginning to emerge from the data. With a set of exhaustive and mutually exclusive codes in place, I then revisited the memos I had created during the process I followed to create my codebook to see whether I had missed anything. Then, using the final set of themes from the entire set of data, I wrote up the findings from this study. I sought to answer each of the research questions through the lenses of the theoretical framework and empirical studies guiding this study. Table 8 shows the timeline for this study.

Table 8

Study Timeline

Research Questions:			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do K-2 literacy teachers know about guided reading? 2. How do K-2 teachers use guided discussion in guided reading? 3. How do K-2 teachers use guided discussion as a formative assessment measure during guided reading? 			
Date	Activity	Tool/Procedure	Purpose
March 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced study to teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met with teachers during a specially-scheduled meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlist teachers as participants • Build relationships with teachers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chose participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal helped me decide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select a diverse group of participants
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveyed participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey of Guided Reading Knowledge and Practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address Research Questions 1, 2, and 3
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzed survey data • Reviewed field notes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excel spreadsheet • Research journal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine preliminary findings for AABHE presentation • Establish potential codes for survey data
April 2015 - May 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observed participants • Interviewed participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided Reading Observation Checklist • Guided Reading Interview Protocol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address Research Questions 1, 2, and 3
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzed observation and interview data after each observation and interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excel spreadsheet • Research journal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish potential codes for observation data • Establish potential codes for interview data
May 2015 - July 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed and analyzed all of the data together • Reviewed memos • Created codebook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excel spreadsheet • Research journal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish preliminary codes for observation data • Establish preliminary codes for interview data • Establish final codes • Identify patterns and themes in the data

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify findings • Finalize themes and findings • Answer research questions • Synthesize study data for final study findings and discussion
August 2015 - November 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised the introduction, literature review and methodology chapters of dissertation • Designed and delivered professional development trainings • Wrote final draft of manuscript 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theoretical framework • Empirical studies • Research questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
December 2015 - January 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised and published dissertation 		

Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are important considerations when deciding how much faith one can place in an empirical study's findings (Patton, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2011).

Researchers who understand this take the necessary steps to design studies that are as valid and reliable as possible. I took several steps to ensure that the findings from my research are trustworthy.

Strengthening validity and reliability. To fortify the validity and reliability of the present study, I spent approximately one day visiting with teachers and students prior to officially beginning the study because I realized that teachers and school leaders in the proposed research site face numerous, recent and simultaneous shifts that impact their practice (e.g. the

adoption of the new Common Core State Standards and a new literacy approach, a stronger focus on teacher evaluation, and the introduction of new standardized assessment format). I also met with the principal on three occasions to discuss the details of the present study and exchanged e-mails with him throughout the study to finalize the details of the study, including dates for the teacher observations and the professional development training I would eventually conduct. These interactions helped the principal and participants feel as comfortable as possible during the data collection process, helping me see a true representation of the teachers' guided reading practices.

Another way to get an accurate picture of how teachers implement guided reading was to collect data from multiple sources and compare them to one another for the purpose of demonstrating that the sources share a common theme, theory, or idea (Patton, 2014; Merriam, 2009). For this reason, I designed this study to include survey, interview, observation, and document data from, each one supporting the other data sources.

I also presented my offer to teachers to participate in this study as both an opportunity to engage in professional learning and an opportunity to advance education research. This was important because, in this particular school, teachers are still adjusting to recent changes to the teacher evaluation system. Teachers were also still adjusting to changes brought on by the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) and the adoption of the CAFE (Boushey & Moser, 2009) and Daily 5 (Boushey & Moser, 2014) approaches to literacy instruction.

Threats to validity and reliability. Unfortunately, the teachers in this school faced several simultaneous shifts that impacted their practices (e.g. the adoption of CCSS and a new

literacy approach, a stronger focus on teacher evaluation, and the introduction of new standardized assessment format), which posed a threat to the validity of this study. As teachers were expected to plan and teach in new ways, they may have felt compelled to plan “special” lessons for our scheduled observations—lessons in which participants showed me what they *thought* I wanted to see rather than what I actually wanted to see, which was a true representation of how teachers were actually using guided discussion as formative assessment during guided reading.

Although I tried to mitigate potential threats, five limitations threatened the validity of this study. First, as an “outsider,”—someone who the staff had never met or worked with prior to this study—my presence might have influenced teachers’ behaviors because they may have been uncertain of my intentions for conducting this study. This uncertainty may have limited the quality and the quantity of the data I collected.

Second, as a “complete observer,” my only role was to observe teachers as they interacted with students during guided reading instruction. Third, I do not speak Spanish, the language of instruction used by most teachers in this school. By only observing guided reading lessons in two of the “English-Only” classrooms, I missed out on observational data that could have informed my understanding of teachers’ practice around formative assessment during small-group, guided reading sessions. Fourth, I did not include the administrators of Maple Elementary in my interpretation of factors that impact the three focal teachers’ ability to teach guided reading effectively. Fifth, I did not include policy implications for requiring culturally relevant pedagogy to be included in teachers’ preparation and instruction.

Limitations as advantages. Earlier I stated that my outsider status and my role as a complete observer may have limited the quality and quantity of the data I collected. However,

these “limitations” turned out to be advantageous to me. For example, as an outsider I was able to examine Maple Elementary’s problem of practice objectively. In addition, my status as an African American female who is well-versed in the dominant discourse of the predominantly minority, working class school community in which this study will be conducted, gave me an advantage over researchers who are not fluent in this culture. With this “insider” status, I was able to get teachers to invite me into their classrooms and share their thoughts about their literacy instruction with relative ease. To the teachers in my research school, I was a familiar face and voice—someone who understood their culture as well as the culture of the school community and could provide a culturally responsive solution to helping them meet the needs of their students.

Further, as a complete observer I was able to focus completely on the teachers’ and students’ behaviors. Because I was a knowledgeable observer—a former general education teacher with 13 years of experience teaching reading to elementary students and over five years of experience helping elementary teachers deepen their knowledge of effective literacy instruction—I was able to understand and interpret 1) the teacher moves I witnessed during observations of guided reading lessons and 2) the comments teachers made during post-observation interviews.

Researcher Positionality

The subject of this dissertation study is influenced by my 13 years’ experience as a general education teacher in relatively racially diverse, K-5, public schools in California and New Jersey and my two years of experience as an early literacy consultant in New York City schools. Throughout my nine years as a third grade teacher and teacher leader in a New Jersey school whose student body was approximately 13% African American and 26% Hispanic, I

found myself battling the very system to which I had been so loyal. I was aware of this battle, and it weighed very heavily on me from my second year in the district to the day I left the district seven years later, because it was disheartening to see Black and Hispanic students underperforming at such alarming rates yet feel such apathy about this underperformance from the very people in charge of turning it around.

Near the end of my seventh year in this district, I was admitted to the Ed.D. program at Rutgers University, an experience that changed the trajectory of my professional career. The education scholars whose work I had read on my own time in order to better understand the social context of education and improve my own practice appeared on the syllabi for many of my classes at Rutgers. My experience as a classroom teacher informed my reading, writing, and discussions with classmates and professors, including the design of the present dissertation study.

CHAPTER 7

REACHING A WIDER AUDIENCE: A MANUSCRIPT SUBMITTED TO THE READING TEACHER

“Then, since I don’t follow a script per se or because I don’t always get to preview the book, the challenge is listening enough to pull a lesson out of it.”

-Ms. O. (post-observation interview)

As a scholar and a doctoral candidate, I am expected to contribute to conversations in my area of study in a meaningful way. Lee Shulman (1986) explains how the names given to the degrees earned at today’s universities reflect the values and practices of the medieval universities established in Europe between the 11th and 14th centuries. To earn a doctorate degree during the medieval times, he explains, one was required to demonstrate mastery of the subject matter for his or her research topic by passing an oral examination in which he or she would “teach” the committee about his or her research. The same is still true today.

I have chosen to complete an alternative dissertation, which requires that I write an introduction to my research, conduct a literature review, and write a description of my study’s methodology in addition to completing two additional tasks that demonstrate scholarship around the topic of my dissertation. The purpose of an alternative dissertation is to provide doctoral candidates the opportunity to complete authentic tasks that will help them professionally, including sharing their research with a wider audience. Getting published in a scholarly journal was one way to accomplish this goal of sharing findings from my study with other educators.

This past fall, I submitted a manuscript to International Literacy Association’s *The Reading Teacher* in which I share key findings from my dissertation study and discuss the implication of these findings for Maple Elementary and schools like it. As I wrote the

manuscript, I kept the following two questions in mind: 1) How is my research helpful to in-service teachers? and 2) How does my research help advance the conversation among other scholars about what is known about effective guided reading practices? It was important to me that the manuscript comment on the urgent need for high-quality reading instruction in the primary grades because this early instruction is the very seed that must be planted in order for students to lay down the roots of reading which are needed to support all subsequent academic growth.

CHAPTER 8

GUIDED DISCUSSION AS FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT DURING GUIDED READING

Abstract

This article explores what teachers in one high-needs elementary school know about using guided discussion as formative assessment during guided reading. Guided discussion and formative assessment were chosen as the primary focus for this qualitative case study because many teachers struggle to execute them with precision, indicating a potential need for developing teachers' understanding of how guided discussion as formative assessment plays a critical role in effective guided reading instruction. The author first describes the underlying theory informing the use of guided discussion as formative assessment during guided reading then shares findings from the study and discusses the implications for practice in the research school and other schools that serve K-2 students. This article also provides a framework for identifying the exact knowledge gaps a teacher might have and, thus, where professional development efforts must be focused.

Keywords: guided reading, discussion, formative assessment, teacher knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, professional development, underperforming elementary schools

Teaser: Attending to the quality of pedagogical questions is critical when teaching young children—especially children acquiring English—because their knowledge of the world and the English language is still developing.

Much can be learned about teacher knowledge of effective literacy instruction by studying teachers at work. This article explores what teachers in one high-needs elementary school know about using guided discussion (GD) as formative assessment (FA) during guided reading (GR). I choose to focus on a high-needs school because such schools face specific challenges. I choose GD because of its potential to advance learning for young children and because it is an inherent part of GR, which has been shown to be one of the more effective ways to teach literacy (Ford & Opitz, 2008; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Fountas & Pinnell, 2012; Schwartz, 2005). I also choose to focus on GD during GR because many teachers struggle to execute it with precision (Ford & Opitz, 2008), indicating a potential need to develop teachers' understanding of what GR is and how GD plays a critical role in effective GR instruction.

My research shows that for GD—and thus, GR—to be effective, it must be taught by teachers who are skilled in planning purposeful, strategic, scaffolded instruction using a variety of curricular resources. I will first describe student underperformance in reading and related national remediation efforts. I then explain the concepts of GD and GR and the underlying theory that informs the use of GD during GR. Next, I describe my study, its research design, and its findings, and end with a discussion of the implications for practice at the K-2 level.

Remediating Underperformance in Reading

Systemic underperformance in literacy among K-12 students in the United States has been evidenced by standardized test score data and in numerous reports on literacy achievement (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2014; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2010). To remedy this underperformance, experts have recommended teaching foundational literacy skills as early as possible (Barone & Mallette, 2013; National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000; Taylor & Duke, 2013).

Guided Discussion As a Solution to Underperformance in Reading

Guided reading is often regarded as a best practice in reading instruction when used as part of a balanced literacy approach to literacy instruction (Ford & Opitz, 2008; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Fountas & Pinnell, 2012; NRP, 2000). During GR, a teacher meets with a small group of like-ability students to help them read and understand a challenging text at the group's instructional level. The key to a child's textual comprehension during GR is the teacher-student and peer discussion during the lesson, otherwise known as "guided discussion." I use the term "guided discussion" to mean exchanges of speech that help children work through defined tasks at points of difficulty, including the speech of a peer or that of a teacher (Vygotsky, 1978). This speech involves the use of prompts or questions to start or redirect a discussion for the purpose of guiding the student from his/her current level of understanding towards a higher level determined by the teacher.

Thus, the teacher is expected to function more as a *facilitator*, rather than a *dominator* of discussion (Pennell, 2014; Porath, 2014). Through this facilitative talk (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012), GD becomes an effective tool for FA—low-stakes, non-evaluative monitoring of student progress based on short-cycle assessments for the purpose of improving teaching and learning (Black & William, 1998). Purposeful and strategically-planned GD as FA can help a teacher not only teach students new vocabulary and oral language skills but also to provide scaffolded instruction (Dashiell & DeBruin-Parecki, 2014; Wasik & Iannone-Campbell, 2012). Yet, many teachers struggle to implement and manage this complex process (Ford & Opitz, 2008; Schwartz, 2005).

Guiding Theory

Research on teaching and learning confirms that three key things help to make effective instruction possible: social settings, peer support, and skilled teachers.

The Social Nature of Learning and the Support of Peers

The practice of guided discussion can be informed by Vygotsky's (1978) Social Development Theory, which states that "community" input is both a contributor to what children learn and a lens through which children learn new things. Vygotsky (1978) argues that language (or discussion) is the primary vehicle for this learning exchange and that this exchange aids cognitive development, improving students' conceptual and critical comprehension, which is particularly important for students who have disengaged from learning or struggle to perform well academically (Pennell, 2014).

Guided discussion is just such an exchange, designed to guide a student towards a pre-set learning goal (guided discussion) and to determine how close the student is getting to that goal (formative assessment). Vygotsky's (1978) term for the role of "guide" is "More Knowledgeable Other" (MKO)—an individual who has a more developed understanding of the skills and concepts being taught. Teachers and more capable peers can serve as MKOs, who make up part of Vygotsky's (1978) "community." This community helps to bridge the distance between *where a child is* (Point A) and *where a child has the potential to be* (Point B) (which is the purpose of FA) through the planned use of language. This advance planning is guided by the teacher's content knowledge of the subject and her process knowledge of how to teach that subject (Shulman, 1986).

The Integration of Content Knowledge and Process Knowledge

Guided discussion is a powerful tool, but it can be difficult to apply, especially during an activity as complex as GR. This difficulty can be compounded by insufficient knowledge of the practice of GD. But how can we pinpoint where that knowledge deficit might exist?

According to Shulman (1986), the teacher (or MKO) must possess specific knowledge in each of three content knowledge domains: 1) *content knowledge*—knowledge of the key component concepts of the subject being taught; 2) *pedagogical content knowledge* (PCK)—knowledge of the effective use of those concepts in teaching; and 3) *curricular knowledge*—knowledge of the scope of existing curricular resources that aid a teacher’s instruction (see Figure 1). According to Shulman’s (1986) framework, each of these domains serves an important function individually, but only produces the desired results when used in conjunction with the other two. These three domains can be further categorized as either “content,” “process,” or “content-process” knowledge. Shulman’s Content Knowledge is *content*, Curricular Knowledge is *process*, and PCK is *content-process*. Figure 1 illustrates this conception of teacher knowledge as it relates to the use of GD during GR. These categories can help to identify the exact knowledge deficits that a teacher might have and, thus, where remediation efforts must be focused.

Figure 1

Guided Discussion Through Shulman's Teacher Knowledge Lens

CONTENT	CONTENT-PROCESS		PROCESS							
CONTENT KNOWLEDGE										
	PROCESS KNOWLEDGE									
<div>The Potential for Effective Instruction</div>										
					Subject-Matter Content Knowledge (or Content Knowledge) <i>Reading</i>	+	Subject-Matter Pedagogical Knowledge (or PCK) <i>Guided Discussion</i>	+	Curricular Knowledge <i>Guided Reading</i>	=
STRATEGIC KNOWLEDGE		STRATEGIC KNOWLEDGE		STRATEGIC KNOWLEDGE						
CASE KNOWLEDGE		CASE KNOWLEDGE		CASE KNOWLEDGE						
PROPOSITIONAL KNOWLEDGE		PROPOSITIONAL KNOWLEDGE		PROPOSITIONAL KNOWLEDGE						

For Shulman (1986) to consider a teacher “effective” in reading instruction, she would need to know the subject of reading so well (content knowledge) that she can anticipate the reading difficulties students might face, provide explanations and examples to overcome these difficulties (content-process knowledge), and know the relevant curricular resources available (process knowledge). In the more specific context of GR, the effective teacher must be able to create a learning community (Vygotsky, 1978) within her GR groups, use GD at the most opportune times to elicit student responses, and use these responses to inform her next instructional steps (National Council of Teachers of English [NCTE], 2013; Schwartz, 2005). It is within these last two activities that GD serves as a powerful form of FA—by using questions

to determine where the student is (Point A) and tailoring instructional steps for getting that student to where he or she needs to be (Point B).

A teacher's ability to facilitate students' reading development depends on her level of mastery within each of Shulman's (1986) knowledge domains as shown in Figure 1. Shulman describes these domain mastery levels as three interrelated subparts: 1) *propositional knowledge*—knowledge of the basic principles of a particular subject; 2) *case knowledge*—knowledge of specific instances in which these principles can be applied; and 3) *strategic knowledge*—knowledge of how to use principles and specific instances to solve problems they have not previously encountered.

Shulman's (1986) framework as outlined in Figure 1 illustrates the multiple elements of teacher knowledge required for the expected student learning to occur and helps to identify the knowledge element that a teacher might lack. I will use this framework to describe the categories of knowledge a teacher needs to engage in effective reading instruction and to identify where professional development efforts should focus in order to address teachers' instructional deficits.

The Study

I conducted a qualitative case study of three K-2 literacy teachers in Maple Elementary School (all names are pseudonyms), a chronically underperforming school within a high-needs district in northern New Jersey. The primary purpose of this study was to learn how teachers at Maple Elementary School use GD as FA with the long-term goal of helping all of the school's K-2 literacy teachers improve their GR instruction. Improved reading instruction is particularly critical for Maple Elementary students because of their language diversity and poverty, which greatly impacts their teachers' ability to help them become proficient readers. My research was guided by three questions:

4. What do K-2 literacy teachers know about guided reading?
5. How do K-2 teachers use guided discussion in guided reading?
6. How do K-2 teachers use guided discussion as a formative assessment measure during guided reading?

Context and Methods

Maple Elementary School serves approximately 627 students in Kindergarten through sixth grade. Approximately 92% of the students are eligible to participate in the school's free or reduced lunch program. In addition, 65% of the student body is classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) and 5% is eligible to receive special education services because of a disability. The school has a rapidly-growing dual language program in which students receive instruction in either the "English-Spanish" bilingual program or the "English-only" program, depending on the option chosen by their parents.

The faculty of Maple Elementary School comprises 55 teachers. Most faculty members are of various Hispanic backgrounds. Approximately 93% of the teachers speak Spanish fluently and use that skill in core subjects such as Math, Science, Social Studies, and Spanish Language Arts.

Three teachers, one at each grade level from Kindergarten to second grade, were purposefully selected for this study based on the principal's recommendation and the selected teachers' desire to participate. A desire to participate was important because I wanted to ensure that all participants would be willing to talk openly about their instructional practices and allow their instruction to be observed and their beliefs and practices analyzed. Two of the teachers, Ms. O. and Ms. G., serve as the English language counterpart of their dual language grade-level teams. They have 11 and 18 years of classroom experience, respectively, and do not speak

Spanish. The third teacher, Ms. B., a native Spanish speaker, is in her first year of teaching and is the Spanish language counterpart of her grade-level team.

In order to address the research questions, the study utilized data from a custom 27-item survey, one 90-minute observation of each focal teacher teaching a collection of lessons during the 90-minute literacy block (including guided reading), and one semi-structured interview with each focal teacher. The study took place over a five-month period during the 2014-2015 school year.

Findings

The data revealed that all three focal teachers are uncertain about effective GR instruction and frustrated by organizational challenges that impact their ability to implement it. Three themes emerged from the data: 1) teacher knowledge, 2) improvisation, and 3) teacher beliefs. I address these themes below within each research question.

What Do Teachers Know About Guided Reading?

The focal teachers were all aware of some of the key components of a GR lesson. For instance, they knew that during GR they should 1) meet with one small group at a time; 2) conduct a lesson centered around a short, engaging text at students' instructional level; 3) incorporate questioning to test students' understanding of the text; and 4) monitor student progress for the purpose of providing targeted instruction. All of the lessons took place with students gathered closely and facing the teacher. They used a mix of texts, ranging from small, leveled readers typically used for guided reading to the basal readers used in the school's GR program. All three teachers incorporated questioning into their lessons before, during, and after the reading of the text. But, despite their knowledge about grouping, text selection and questioning, their instruction and their post-observation interviews revealed that they have gaps

in their knowledge of the purpose of GR and how it fits into the balanced literacy framework, impacting how they use GD during GR.

How Do Teachers Use Guided Discussion During Guided Reading?

There was no single use of GD that was consistent across the three classrooms. The focal teachers used GD during GR in different ways, for different purposes, and to varying degrees. For example, Ms. B. planned for the use of discussion but used it in a rigid fashion. She did not stray from the script and she quickly redirected students whose questions threatened the planned course of her lesson. Ms. G. and Ms. O., in contrast, used discussion improvisationally during GR.

When I asked the seasoned teachers, Ms. G. and Ms. O., to describe how they use GD during GR, they both remarked that teachers need the freedom to improvise during GR. Describing her freeform approach during GR, Ms. O. remarked, “I love guided discussion because...I don’t even know that it’s always guided actually because sometimes, the kids, it just comes from them.” Thus, both seasoned teachers allowed their students to freely negotiate the meaning of the text. Both felt that students should engage in unscripted tasks—what they referred to as authentic or “real-world.” Ms. G. noted that, in adult book clubs, readers are allowed to share their ideas freely—they are not required to focus only on one particular skill or idea.

Although they did not seem to have a strategic plan for using GD, all three focal teachers did incorporate a lot of questioning and prompting—an important part of using facilitative talk to generate robust discussion. But each of the teachers used questioning for different purposes. Ms. B. and Ms. G. were trying to get students to recall parts of the text in order to check whether they had provided the correct response, rather than encourage students to analyze characters’ actions

or respond to their peers' textual comments. These teachers primarily asked questions such as "What was this page about?" and "What was your favorite part of the story?" instead of questions such as "What made you think that?" and "What was your evidence from the text?" which encourage higher-order thinking and student engagement.

In contrast, Ms. O.'s GR lesson on making predictions was filled with highly engaging discussions. She invited students to discuss the text they had read by posing rich questions that caused them to think about the question and refer to the text before responding. As students shared their predictions, a natural flow of discussion emerged, mostly without students raising their hands to speak, similar to the way adults interact during book clubs. The following excerpt demonstrates Ms. O.'s use of facilitative talk:

- Ms. O.: Isabella, what was your prediction?
- Isabella: He is going to use the wood to make a house.
- Ms. O.: Okay. And what did it say in the text?...[gives wait-time]...He said, "Don't destroy the tree." What else did he say? Let's look on page 460...[gives wait-time]...He was going to make something for the people.
- Larry: He said, "This tree belongs to everyone." The woodcutter wanted to make sculptures so everybody could use it.
- Student 3: Yeah, he said not to make it into firewood.
- Ms. O.: So Larry's prediction was totally different. [He] was thinking it had to be something that everybody could use. So, [Larry], what made you think you could make sculptures out of it?
- Larry: Well, I looked at the picture. It looked like he was going to work on something.
- Ms. O.: So, you used the *illustrations* on the next page... but like Larry said, because he has that hammer and that *chisel*, you could tell he's trying to *make* something out of it, not just trying to get firewood. I think you just brought up something really important...

Ms. O. then used direct instruction to explain and model how predictions are driven by one's schema and how text and illustrations help readers either confirm or reject their original thinking.

Ms. G.'s discussions, on the other hand, lacked focus and complexity. Students answered the questions she posed, but her questions did not cause students to build on their ideas about the story's plot and thus deepen their knowledge of the text. Ms. G.'s lesson also did not include much peer discussion, with the exception of one moment in which a student, Eric, noticed a change in the main character's facial expression at a pivotal point in the story. Eric's comment prompted his groupmates to take a closer look at the illustration then go back to the text to see what had happened:

Eric: Ms. G., first, she's mad. Second of all, she's happy. What is *that* deal?!

Student 2: [looking at the illustration] Oh yeah!

Ms. G.: I don't know. Maybe she's *moody*.

Student 3: I know why! I know why! Because they pulled the bus with the rope.

Ms. G.: Oh, so *now* she's happy. That could be it.

Ms. G. and the students continued to offer possible reasons for why the character's mood had changed from mad to happy. The students were better prepared to understand how the character's problem would be resolved because of the discussion that Eric's observation had prompted.

During the post-observation interview, Ms. G. explained that Eric, a non-native speaker of English who is still acquiring English language, is always raising his hand and eager to participate. When I asked her specifically how she uses students like Eric to help get GR discussions started, she replied, "The hard part [is that]...it's difficult when he's not guided because he is not...always the best at communicating in English. So...it's hard to have him peer-tutor somebody else." She added that several other students also get conversations started with their enthusiasm and observations but most of her students are still acquiring English language,

like Eric, which makes it difficult for her to let them work independently or peer tutor other students.

How Do Teachers Use Guided Discussion as Formative Assessment?

The focal teachers either used GD as FA inconsistently or not at all. They seemed to have no clear plan for how to conduct rigorous and strategic FA via discussion. Formative assessment involves assessing progress towards a lesson goal, but there was often no goal, making FA difficult if not impossible. For example, the two seasoned teachers had a general idea of what they wanted their students to learn, but their lessons lacked a clear instructional focus. One of these teachers, Ms. O., utilized freeform textual discussion without a pre-determined instructional path. While she acknowledges the importance of advance planning, she often decides the discussion topic and which parts of the text she is going to highlight *as* she is reading or discussing the text with her students. She explains that as the group reads and a discussion unfolds, she sees "...what they need or [can learn] from each other. And then [says], 'Oh, that's a great main lesson! That's going to help them.'"

The other seasoned teacher who also believes in unscripted, improvisational teaching, Ms. G., began her lesson by having students read aloud, one by one, to the group. Ms. G. periodically posed basic recall questions such as "What did the captions say?" to test their understanding of the text. She also paused to ask students to make a prediction about what might happen next in the story. However, while this questioning incorporated some very good teaching points, the lesson lacked a solid instructional focus. First, she did not define a learning target. Second, her instruction moved back and forth between word-solving, fluency, sight word recognition, identifying text features, and making predictions, without focusing on any one or

two main teaching points. Third, Ms. G. did not close her lesson with a brief recap of what she had taught and a link to the next lesson she would teach.

Discussion

This study was designed to learn how K-2 literacy teachers at Maple Elementary School use GD as FA in GR. As revealed in the findings above, the focal teachers in this study did not use GD as a tool for FA, despite their best efforts. The teachers viewed GD as an integral part of GR and intended to use it as a FA tool. However, their failure to establish a specific teaching goal for their GR lessons—a Point B—prevented them from using FA as a way to guide their students from Point A to Point B.

This study illuminates the gap that can exist between theory, practice, and results. Just because an effective theory exists and something related to that theory is being practiced in the classroom does not mean that it is being practiced correctly or producing the desired results. Maple Elementary School is a good example. At the time of this study, the school was in its first year of a new reading program, which has a complete set of web-based resources for teachers and students as well as textbooks, teacher's edition guides, and leveled books for GR. The teachers used these materials to teach GR, meeting with one or two groups each day. Why then did the focal teachers not use GD as FA when they taught GR? I suggest that knowledge deficits and conflicting personal beliefs interfered with the teachers' success.

Questioning as Formative Assessment?

The focal teachers know that GR involves small-group instruction and teacher-directed questioning and prompting during GD to determine students' understanding of the text. However, these teachers failed to distinguish between mere questioning and the practice of effective FA. Research on the development of teacher knowledge as it relates to FA indicates

that content and pedagogical content knowledge are essential for teacher success and that a lack of either has serious implications for student learning (Bell & Cowie, 2001; Harris, Phillips, & Penuel, 2012; Wold, 2003).

It is helpful to note that all of the focal teachers incorporated questioning into their instruction, indicating their awareness of its importance. Two of the three teachers, however, showed significant weakness in questioning, which is a critical component of 1) GR instruction, 2) facilitative talk to prompt discussion, and 3) the use of discussion as a type of FA. These teachers misunderstood how to use increasingly complex questions to help students deepen their textual understanding. They posed lower-order questions that caused students to skim the surface of the text rather than delve into it in search of deeper meaning. The first-year teacher in particular used questioning to conduct checks for basic understanding of the story, rather than to generate discussion among students, which may explain why the level of student engagement during her lesson was low.

Attending to the quality of questions is particularly important when teaching young children—especially children acquiring English—because their knowledge of the world and of English language is still developing, which impacts their ability to engage in robust discussions of a text that is slightly above their independent reading level. Skilled higher-order questioning, however, can challenge students to reflect on the text, merge those reflections with their background knowledge, and articulate their ideas about the text more deeply than when a teacher asks lower level questions (Peterson & Taylor, 2012).

Beliefs Informing Instruction: Improvisation

The focal teachers used GD during GR in one of two ways: either improvisationally or rigidly. In post-observation interviews, Ms. G. and Ms. O., both with over 10 years of teaching

experience, expressed strong philosophical beliefs about teaching GR, including the belief that students should be allowed to express their ideas about what they read without being stifled by a lesson plan (or a teacher) that narrowly focuses on just one skill or concept. In addition, they believe that teachers should be allowed to improvise during GR, following the path of student discussion.

These two teachers used improvisation with mixed results but, even when the results were favorable, the lesson did not go as far as it could have if a strategic plan for using GD as FA was used. Improvising during a lesson makes it impossible to have a fixed goal and not having a goal makes it impossible to conduct FA by the very definition of FA. While a teacher may take advantage of teachable moments, effective reading instruction requires advance planning and intentional, systematic instruction that is aligned with the intended learning outcomes (Roskos & Neuman, 2012).

While both of these teachers had certain knowledge gaps, they knew the basic definition of GD. They also knew that GD was a form of FA. And they knew the definition of FA—in particular, that it required an end goal, or “Point B.” But these two teachers nevertheless engaged in discussion during their reading lessons either without having established a point B or allowing point B to deviate during the lesson. Without a point B, you might have discussion, but you don’t have *guided discussion*. And further, without a point B, you cannot have FA. While teachers do need the freedom to improvise or act on teachable moments, the goal of the lesson—the point B—cannot be improvised (Roskos & Neuman, 2012).

Beliefs Informing Instruction: Low Expectations

The most experienced teacher in this study holds a deficit belief that her below grade-level, Spanish-dominant students are more dependent, less capable and, therefore, less

independent and less likely to hit grade-level benchmarks. Instead of asking, “How should I adjust my instruction to meet the specific needs of students acquiring English language?” she focused on what her students *cannot* do and how the dual language program is *preventing* her from helping her struggling students learn.

Research suggests that socioeconomic factors prevent many families from providing resources and experiences that contribute to their children’s literacy learning. When compounded by teacher beliefs that lean toward a deficit mindset, students in school communities such as Maple Elementary—schools that face a predominance of poverty and language diversity—are at a disadvantage if their teachers set low learning goals for them, contributing to students’ underperformance. Black and Hispanic students—males in particular—tend to feel the repercussions of low expectations and academic underperformance worse than most other racial/ethnic groups (Delpit, 2006; Noguera, 2009). Furthermore, countless studies have found that harsh, “zero-tolerance” school policies, disproportionate graduation rates, and a phenomenon Noguera (2009) refers to as “the normalization of failure on the part of Black males” (p. xix) all contribute to this chronic underperformance (Hoffman, 2014; Noguera, 2009; Schott Foundation, 2015; The Advancement Project, 2010).

The dynamics at play in many schools may provide a surface explanation for student disengagement and academic underperformance (Delpit, 2006). But, in pursuit of a deeper explanation of and a solution to academic disengagement and underperformance in reading, Maple Elementary educators must ask themselves what drives effective literacy instruction in the early grades. It is clear that low expectations do not.

Implications for Practice

This study's findings hold implications for both the use of and training in GD as FA during GR. For school districts, the key to success may lie in focusing on specific "Shulman" (1986) categories of teacher knowledge. Figure 1 parses this knowledge—specifically the knowledge required to teach a subject—into several categories (Shulman, 1986). This categorization can be used to identify more precisely where a teacher has knowledge gaps that need to be bridged by professional development. This training would go beyond Ford and Opitz's (2008) recommendation that districts provide in-depth professional development on best practice in GR. Rather, it would require that school districts use differentiated, discussion-based approaches to helping teachers deepen their professional knowledge, just as educators are required to use high-level discussion as part of a set of differentiated approaches to aiding student comprehension. Thus, professional development for novice teachers might focus on content knowledge related to the subject of reading and some strategies for developing related PCK. Then, as teachers gain experience, their professional learning experiences might shift from content-focused to PCK-focused and would include an emphasis on specific PCK and curricular knowledge that support the use of high-level discussion to aid comprehension. School districts might also encourage teachers to collaborate, depending on a teacher's content knowledge, using their classrooms as communities of practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) to tackle their biggest instructional challenges in an efficient manner.

Districts would also need to understand that changing programs repeatedly—multiplying the knowledge a teacher needs to master—is counterproductive and drives teachers to fall back on "instinct," as did the two seasoned teachers in this study. Instead, teachers need continuous, differentiated, multi-phased professional learning that is job-embedded and encourages them to

deepen their knowledge of the use of GD during GR. This is all the more necessary for teachers in high-needs schools, where time is further squeezed by the need for remedial instruction.

Figure 2 outlines a possible plan for districts interested in providing such professional learning for teachers.

Figure 2

Professional Learning Experience: Using Guided Discussion During Guided Reading

Phase	Experience
1. Building Content Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisit definition and purpose of GR • Learn rationale behind using GD as FA during GR • Discuss connection between GD as FA and reading development
<i>Introduction during faculty meeting; grade-level discussions</i>	
2. Building Pedagogical Content Knowledge & Curricular Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore curricular resources for teaching reading • Use knowledge about GD and FA to design and enhance existing GR lessons • Set goals for improving use of GD during GR
<i>Full-day session during in-service day</i>	
3. Building Strategic Knowledge by Applying Knowledge in the Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model GR instruction in classrooms • Get feedback from colleagues while learning to use GD as FA with students • Revise lessons based on feedback from colleagues
<i>Grade-level intervisitations; debriefs during grade-level meetings</i>	

Conclusion

The teachers in this study report teaching GR daily. Yet, despite this and the fact that GR is known to help students read successfully, many children in Maple Elementary School still cannot read well. Contributory factors include teachers' a) lack of knowledge (particularly the Case and Strategic components of the relevant PCK); b) beliefs that improvisation and instinct can outweigh researched-based approaches to reading instruction; and c) beliefs that lower socioeconomic students have deficits that cannot be overcome.

A key conclusion is that teachers need help developing rigorous, relevant discussion questions and planning for ways to strategically incorporate these questions into GR lessons. To help them do this, districts must take the time to learn what and how much each teacher knows about FA, GD, and GR and map out any knowledge deficits on the Shulman (1986) knowledge matrix in Figure 1. Districts must then use this information to design and deliver differentiated, multi-phased professional development sessions that address the specific knowledge deficits that are identified.

Pause and Ponder:

- How can teachers strike a balance between following the script and following teachable moments?
- How can school districts increase the likelihood that teachers who are trained on a specific data-driven, research-based teaching method will not allow their personal beliefs or instincts to “override” that training?
- What are some high-leverage professional development experiences teachers can engage in to develop knowledge in all three domains: content knowledge, PCK, and curricular knowledge?

Take Action:

1. Record yourself teaching a GR lesson to gain some insight into how you use GD.

Ask: How do I structure the complexity of my questions? How much time do I give students to respond? How do I encourage struggling/reluctant readers to join the conversation? Do I have a specific goal (a Point B) defined for each lesson and do I adhere to it?

2. Hold a focus group interview in which grade-level colleagues discuss how GD is used to teach new concepts and how it is used to discover gaps in student knowledge.
3. Help teams identify their GR instructional challenges then set goals for improving their use of GD as FA during GR. Focus on one or two high-priority problems weekly.
4. Encourage team members to hold one another accountable for trying new discussion techniques and adjusting instruction according to student response to instruction.

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“Learning That Gets Made in 2nd Grade” with an example of discussion in the early grades:

<http://maryannreilly.blogspot.com/2015/03/learning-that-gets-made-in-2nd-grade.html>

CHAPTER 9

TEACHERS NEED SEEDS TOO

“...the part about doing this work with my colleagues, the part about the intervisitations, is a little scary but very powerful. I can’t wait to get started, though, because we need help.”

-Maple Elementary Teacher (professional development training, October 2015)

In mid-September of 2015, I led a one-hour staff meeting in which I introduced my study to the K-3 teachers of Maple Elementary to prepare them for the one-day professional development session that would take place approximately three weeks later on October 9th. The full-day session in October took place approximately six weeks after I had completed the data analysis phase of this study. I incorporated findings from my study into the training in order to create a tailored professional learning experience that would address the specific needs demonstrated by the focal teachers and the needs identified by all of the K-3 teachers during our initial meeting in September.

In an earlier part of my dissertation, I spoke of the need to plant high-quality seeds of learning in young children. As we tend to the seeds we have planted, we must also remember the farmers—the teachers. We must provide nourishment to them so that they are able to cultivate literacy learning in young children. This nourishment comes in the form of teacher-centered, differentiated, professional development for teachers because, as Shulman (1986) stresses, each teacher possesses a different amount and level of knowledge.

The need for differentiated professional development, in turn, supports the idea that professional learning should take place in actual schools—with real students—and should result in dialogue between teachers about the impact of *their* instruction on *their* students’ learning.

The verbal and written feedback received from the K-3 teachers about the October 9th full-day professional development training on guided literacy supports this notion.

CHAPTER 10

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE: A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR EARLY LITERACY TEACHERS

The primary goal of this qualitative case study was to learn how three K-2 teachers at Maple Elementary School use guided discussion as formative assessment during guided reading in an effort to design a customized professional development training for the primary grade teachers of the school. Realizing that all of the teachers were at different points in their understanding of the purpose of guided reading and best practices for teaching small-group guided reading, the aim of this training was to help each individual teacher accomplish the professional learning task that was the most important to him or her at the time of the training. To do so, I presented a variety of ideas and examples about guided literacy on multiple levels.

First, I wanted the teachers who chose not teach guided reading at all to understand the purpose, structure, and benefits of guided reading so they could warm up to the idea of using small-group guided reading instruction to help students advance in reading. Second, I wanted the teachers who were doubtful of their ability to teach guided reading effectively to become comfortable with the anatomy of a guided reading lesson so they could begin to develop a clear understanding of the key strategies effective teachers use during guided reading. Third, I wanted the teachers who *did* engage their students in guided reading to begin to think more deeply about their use of guided discussion as formative assessment. I wanted them to notice how guided discussion could be used to evaluate their students' progress and how that evaluation could in turn allow them to craft more effective instruction.

A Professional Development Plan

Findings from the present study allowed me to develop a customized, research-based professional development training on the use of guided discussion as formative assessment in guided reading for the K-3 literacy teachers at Maple Elementary School. The three-phase training would help the teachers learn how to use guided discussion during guided reading to optimize student learning. To inform the design of the training, I first looked to the specific needs and strengths of the school community because I wanted to ensure the relevance of this training. I then looked to the body of literature on professional development for teachers, namely findings from studies of effective models of professional development for teachers (Putnam & Borko, 2000; Shulman & Shulman, 2004), which suggest that professional growth persists when teachers have opportunities to engage in self-directed, collaborative learning that is situated within their work environment. Next, I looked to studies of the use of discussion as both a teaching strategy and a formative assessment activity during literacy instruction (Pennell, 2014; Porath, 2014). Finally, I drew upon my experience as an elementary homeroom teacher, teacher leader, and educational consultant to K-3 literacy teachers in large, high-needs schools in New Jersey and New York to develop a training based on the findings from this study. Table 9 outlines the three-phase, customized professional development training I designed for Maple Elementary School.

Table 9

Professional Learning Experience: Using Guided Discussion During Guided Reading

Phase	Experience
1. Building Content Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisit definition and purpose of GR • Learn rationale behind using GD as FA during GR • Discuss connection between GD as FA and reading development
<i>Introduction during faculty meeting; grade-level discussions</i>	
2. Building Pedagogical Content Knowledge & Curricular Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore curricular resources for teaching reading • Use knowledge about GD and FA to design and enhance existing GR lessons • Set goals for improving use of GD during GR
<i>Full-day session during in-service day</i>	
3. Building Strategic Knowledge by Applying Knowledge in the Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model GR instruction in classrooms • Get feedback from colleagues while learning to use GD as FA with students • Revise lessons based on feedback from colleagues
<i>Grade-level intervisitations; debriefs during grade-level meetings</i>	

In the first phase of this professional development training, teachers revisited the definition and purpose of guided reading and learned about the rationale behind using guided discussion strategically during “guided literacy,” a slightly different approach to guided reading. We ended the session by creating a list of things teachers still struggled to accomplish in guided reading and identifying some points they wanted to cover in the upcoming full-day session. The teachers were then asked to read an article on guided reading by Fountas and Pinnell (2012) in preparation for the work we would do in phase two of the training.

During the second phase of this training, I first gave a full description of the structure of guided literacy, which includes a guided reading component with a strong emphasis on discussion in response to text. I then asked the teachers to use their knowledge of the principles of guided reading and of specific cases in which they had used guided discussion during guided reading to design or revise their own guided literacy lessons (Shulman’s “case knowledge”). The

aim of this second phase was to give the teachers the opportunity to develop lessons that prioritize rich guided discussion with support from their colleagues and me.

Due to time constraints on my part, I was not able to deliver the third phase of the training in which I would teach a core group of teacher leaders (identified by the principal) how to help their grade-level colleagues improve their practice by observing grade-level colleagues teach guided reading. This third phase was intended to help teachers think critically about their own guided reading instruction through observing someone else's instruction, sharing their practice with others, and thinking about guided discussion through a new, research-based lens.

Struggles and Triumphs

As with many professional learning initiatives in large schools, I encountered several challenges—challenges that prompted me to consider the feasibility of helping teachers learn (or re-learn) the foundational skills and knowledge required for effective instruction. For example, as I delivered the October training, there were times when I wondered just how much the teachers were gaining from the experience. It seemed as though the teachers needed more than this one session. It also became evident that the teachers needed and longed for more than a one-day workshop to shift their thinking and deepen their knowledge around guided discussion as formative assessment during guided reading.

As a researcher, teachers' expressed desire to continue working on guided reading for the rest of the year indicated their level of self-awareness about their knowledge of best practices in guided reading and their confidence in their ability to teach guided reading effectively. As a coach who delivers professional development to teachers in chronically underperforming schools, I noted that the teachers' desire to work with me on guided reading for the rest of the year supported the idea that many teachers welcome (and need) ongoing, job-embedded

professional development facilitated by a knowledgeable coach. As the literature on effective literacy instruction supports, consistent, targeted professional development for teachers is required to effect meaningful change.

The challenges that were encountered were nevertheless accompanied by several reassuring successes. At the end of the introductory session in September, one teacher told me that she had been struggling to incorporate guided reading into her literacy instruction for the past several years. She added that she wanted to learn how to manage her guided reading sessions because her English Language Learner (ELL) students really needed help in reading. Another teacher shared that most of her students got off-task very quickly when she worked with one small group at a time. She wanted to know what she could do to keep them focused when they were working independently or at centers. As teachers shared their concerns, I recorded them on a piece of chart paper then referred to them later as I prepared for the full-day professional development training that would take place in October.

Teacher Feedback

At the end of the October training, the teachers were required to complete an evaluation form provided by the administration. Twenty teachers completed the evaluation form. I asked for a copy of these evaluation forms before leaving the school so that I could analyze the data and use the findings in a report for the principal of the school. According to teacher feedback, the most useful part of the professional development training was the use of videos to demonstrate effective guided reading instruction in real classrooms. In terms of the least useful part of the training, three teachers found the following activities unhelpful: 1) lesson planning in the afternoon instead of earlier in the day, 2) covering strategies for students in grades other than their own, and 3) sharing their personal teaching experiences with colleagues.

All but one of the 20 teachers who completed an evaluation form each named one area in which they would like more support. Their comments fell into five categories, as Table 10 shows. This information was useful to me as a researcher because it helped me understand teachers' perceptions of where they need help, supporting the idea that professional development for teachers should be targeted and individualized based on what their teaching behaviors and feedback tell us.

Table 10

Where Teachers Feel They Need More Support

Area of Need	Number of Teachers
Managing the Guided Reading Period <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a schedule • Using data to form groups • Keeping students engaged when working independently 	4
Planning Lessons and Obtaining Materials	5
Understanding Instructional Strategies and Applying Knowledge to Classroom Practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Videos • Support from coach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In-class demonstrations ○ In-class coaching conversations 	4
Learning How to Meet the Needs of Struggling Students and English Language Learners	3
Writing Instruction	3

In addition to this written feedback, many of the teachers verbally shared their appreciation for the workshop and asked if we could continue to work on guided reading together for the rest of the school year. One of the teachers told me she could not wait to get back

to her classroom so she could start to put some of the ideas she had learned into action. She said, "...what you covered today was the first time I had ever heard about guided reading in this way...It just makes so much more sense." Another teacher admitted, "...the part about doing this work with my colleagues, the intervisitations, is a little scary but very powerful. I can't wait to get started because we need help." I found it interesting that more than half of the teachers remarked that they had never really been exposed to this type of professional learning.

Implications of Teacher Feedback for Practice

Findings from the written and verbal teacher feedback have implications for the principal of Maple Elementary as he and his leadership team decide where to focus their professional learning efforts for the rest of the year and in the coming school year. I focus on the leadership team of Maple Elementary because in the district to which Maple belongs, each building principal decides which professional development experiences he will provide for his teachers. These decisions are based on the specific needs of the teacher in his school. In addition, the principal and his leadership team not only set the tone for how teachers are expected to apply professional learning to their practice in the classroom but also evaluate them on their ability to do so.

Findings from my research suggest that Maple Elementary's school leadership team must use a variety of approaches to ensuring that individual teachers receive the professional learning that best meets their needs. First, instead of providing a handful of one-size-fits-all trainings on stand-alone topics, the principal should arrange a series of related professional learning experiences that take place inside and outside of classrooms under the guidance of a literacy coach. Literacy coaches should allay teachers' fears about entering into this work while, at the same time, help teachers build their knowledge of effective guided reading instruction through

self-reflection and collaboration with grade-level colleagues. Second, teachers need help planning lessons and selecting instructional materials that meet the needs of all learners, namely struggling students and students whose heritage language is not English. Maple Elementary's teachers have also expressed a desire to learn which instructional strategies they can use to help students reach the established learning targets.

Professional development efforts around guided reading at Maple Elementary should be composed of several core professional learning events, including weekly classroom intervisitations and debriefs so that teachers can observe some of their stronger colleagues during guided reading. As part of this professional learning experience, teacher teams should also discuss key topics related to guided reading and formative assessment during their grade-level meetings, following a schedule determined before the start of the school year but revised to meet teachers' professional learning needs as the year progresses. Teacher teams should also participate in quarterly professional learning experiences on days designated as full-day professional development days. Information disseminated during these professional development days would provide a framework for the intervisitations and the grade-level discussions that would take place in classrooms, with students, on regular school days. During each of these full-day professional development days, all of the teachers would begin the day by gathering in one location for approximately 90 minutes to learn about a research-based instructional approach related to guided reading, then move to breakout sessions where they would learn more about a guided reading topic of their choosing. The topics for these breakout sessions would be derived from the areas of need identified by teachers (from surveys administered regularly throughout the year) and observations made by the coach and the administrators during instructional walks.

The focal teachers in my study come from diverse racial and sociocultural identities and orientations. The focal teachers did not really communicate their ideas about culturally relevant pedagogy during interviews because I did not ask them about culturally relevant pedagogy specifically. However, observations of teachers' guided reading instruction permitted me to draw some preliminary conclusions about the theories informing their teaching practices. The three focal teachers' actions during their guided reading lessons revealed part of how they perceive their students' ability and how they respond to their students' specific needs.

The three focal teachers' comments during post-observation interviews also helped me better understand their positions on 1) *what* they must teach their students and 2) *how* they approach teaching struggling students. All three teachers acknowledged the fact that their students come from households in which the English language is either not used or poorly used. All three teachers also acknowledged the fact that the dual language program, in which students receive half of their instruction in English and the other half in Spanish during the school year, includes the expectation that, by the end of the school year, these students will reach the same benchmarks in English Language Arts as students in other schools who receive instruction, all year, in English only. Each of the teachers, however, voiced a different opinion about the *possibility* of bringing their students to proficiency in English.

It would do the students and teachers of Maple Elementary an injustice to ignore what the teachers bring to the equation, given what we know about the influence of race and sociocultural identity on a teacher's ability connect with and effectively teach students. While race is not the only factor to consider when thinking about a teacher's approach to employing a culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP), it is a strong factor because racial identity, not to mention how one views culture, influences how one operationalizes CRP. And a teacher's operationalization of

CRP impacts how she teaches, approaches, and interacts with students. For this reason, I would place discussions about the impact of race and social class on the way we teach and lead at the heart of this professional development experience.

This facet of the professional development on culturally relevant pedagogy must be carefully crafted because, for many teachers, the idea of using a culturally specific pedagogy is daunting because it involves discussing issues of race/ethnicity, power, and the historical context of how race/ethnicity and power have shaped the current education system (Landsman & Lewis, 2011). Teachers fear facing conversations about race/ethnicity and power because such conversations can be uncomfortable. These educators also fear the repercussions of “digging up” inconvenient truths from the past about the role of race in the many atrocities that have been committed by Whites against various groups of color. Many teachers also do not see the need for using a culturally responsive approach to teaching (Howard, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 2011; Landsman, 2011; Milner, 2011) because their understanding of its necessity is eclipsed by their privilege (e.g. race, socioeconomic status, education). Without personal experience with being discriminated against on the basis of race/ethnicity or culture, one cannot understand 1) the barriers to success presented by being “othered” by mainstream society or 2) the impact of this “othering” on one’s feelings of self-efficacy. Further, without knowledge of how race plays into the imbalance of power in America, an educator lacks the foundational knowledge needed to understand how race influences a teacher’s experiences and therefore his or her perceptions of students and approach to effectively reaching and teaching students of color (Howard, 1999; Milner, 2011).

Conclusion

Although professional development for teachers is not a new tool, its effectiveness can be continually improved through the application of new, and better, knowledge. While I was not able to observe the long-term impact of my professional development with these teachers, I did learn that teachers at Maple Elementary School are hungry for consistent training on effective guided literacy instruction. From what I observed, I believe that professional development for teachers in this school can have a profound impact on student achievement. It is evident that the teachers in my research school must learn how to use student achievement data and formative assessment data to organize their efforts around improving student achievement in reading. The specific needs of the teachers receiving the training must also remain at the core of the professional development trainings.

CHAPTER 11

STILL SO MUCH TO DO RIGHT HERE

“[Milo’s] thoughts darted eagerly about as everything looked new—and worth trying. ‘Well, I would like to make another trip,’ he said, jumping to his feet; ‘but I really don’t know when I’ll have the time. There’s just so much to do right here.’”

-The Phantom Tollbooth (Norton Juster, 1988, p. 256)

As I neared the end of my dissertation, I still struggled to craft a closing statement that would bring this research to an appropriate conclusion. I could not decide exactly what I wanted to say because there were so many thoughts racing through my mind. After all, I was closing in on the twilight of a long, challenging, exhilarating, and liberating excursion. I had just finished the lengthiest document I had ever written, yet I could not clearly articulate my parting thoughts. Perhaps it was fear. Or it might have been exhaustion.

As my mind searched, my eyes wandered around the room and then I saw it. Sitting on the shelf full of children’s books next to my writing desk at home one of my favorite books, *The Phantom Tollbooth* by Norton Juster (1988). I picked up the book, flipped to the last chapter entitled “Good-by and Hello” and read it. When I finished, I smiled knowingly as I thought, “So *this* is what Milo felt as he sped toward the tollbooth that marked his exit.” The ideas that would bring my dissertation to a satisfying close began to form rapidly in my mind, as if I had been rehearsing them for months.

The Phantom Tollbooth holds a special place in my heart. I read it to my third grade class nearly every year because I wanted to engage the students who were having a hard time getting excited about school. I also wanted to give the students who already demonstrated enthusiasm for school something greater to think about. It is a heartwarming story about a little boy named Milo who was disenchanted by everything and everyone in his life until he found an anonymous

and mysterious gift in his room—a magical tollbooth that transported him to a world where he visited new places and met interesting people. Every place and every person taught Milo something new, including how jumping to conclusions can be dangerous and how things are not always what they appear to be. Milo's encounters were so profound that, upon returning home, he found joy in simple things like the colors of the sky and the thought of taking a walk outside—things he never appreciated before taking his trip.

As I thought about the story's plot, I realized that Milo and I were similar in many ways. Just as Milo's trip had transformed his life, my dissertation experience has transformed my thinking. It has helped me discover a new way of effecting change for students from historically underserved backgrounds. In this program, I have learned how to examine a problem of practice—in this case, underperformance in reading among Black and Hispanic students in poverty—through a theoretical lens and to use inquiry to explore possible causes of the problem as well as possible solutions.

Throughout this dissertation, I have used the “planting seeds” metaphor to explain how the use of guided discussion as formative assessment during guided reading helps teachers teach reading effectively. And, while it may seem that the “planting of seeds” metaphor could be applied to almost any pedagogical effort, it is most applicable to teaching reading because reading is a foundational skill. A child's ability to read is the seed that must be planted first. It is only after the “reading seed” has taken root and stabilized the soil that the other “seeds” of education have a chance to grow. Without the ability to read, a child cannot adequately learn history, math, science, or any other subject. But, with the ability to read, a child can not only learn, but she can even teach herself. This includes any child at any socioeconomic level. Education involves planting many seeds, but reading must come first.

The people and places Milo encountered along his journey planted multiple seeds in him, but without the anonymous gift of the mysterious tollbooth—that first seed—his entire journey would have never occurred. Milo needed someone to plant that first seed. That is why I focused my study on Guided Reading—to contribute to the ability of all students at all levels, both socioeconomic and academic, to embark on their own educational journeys, in school and far beyond.

Unfortunately, students who attend the Maple Elementary Schools of our nation do not have a mysterious portal that sends them to a distant land where they can learn adequate literacy skills. But nearly all those children have a school in which to learn those skills from their teachers. And for many students—and especially those who do not have rich reading environments at home—their school sometimes provides their only chance to acquire these skills. For these children in particular, their literacy instruction must be of the highest quality. And there is no reason it cannot be. High-quality literacy instruction is especially important for K-2 students. Primary grade teachers must be aware of the most effective research-based practices in early reading instruction and know how to execute these strategies in the classroom.

I am confident that the idea of using guided discussion as formative assessment during guided reading will remain at the forefront of the minds of the K-3 teachers at Maple Elementary who participated in the guided reading training given a part of this study. I hope that they continue to explore ways to incorporate research-based instructional strategies, guided by formative assessment data into their lessons. I also hope that these teachers will receive additional high-quality professional development on these skills, which they so greatly need and deserve. Schools such as Maple cannot spare a single minute to inconsistent messages about how to plan and deliver effective guided reading instruction.

I believe that the matrix of Shulman's thinking on teacher knowledge that was introduced in this paper may inspire others to utilize that matrix to develop professional development trainings carefully focused on the specific areas of knowledge in which a teacher might need improvement. Perhaps that will allow those in charge of professional development to craft professional learning that really speaks to today's teachers so that instinct no longer trumps data in the classroom.

Finally, I would like an examination of the policy for infusing culturally relevant pedagogy into the curriculum and instruction requirements in the primary grades to appear prominently in our nation's agenda for reforming all schools, especially high-needs schools that serve students of color and students in poverty. While teachers are held responsible for their students' success, the work of helping children achieve academic success during the early years should not rest solely on the backs of teachers. There is also a need to plant seeds with administrators (e.g. principals, supervisors, superintendents) to ensure that teachers are provided the resources and conditions required to deliver effective reading instruction, culturally relevant pedagogy being a large part of this work. Although we must be realistic about the constraints involved in identifying opportunities for planting seeds that impact school structures and cultures, imagine how identifying these opportunities would benefit students. Education research has come so far, yet there is still so much to do to improve student achievement in reading during the early years.

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APPENDIX A**SURVEY OF GUIDED READING KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES**

Adapted from: Ford, M.P. & Opitz, M.F. (2008). A national survey of guided reading practices: What we can learn from primary teachers. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, 47, 309-331.

The Purpose of Guided Reading

1. Which of the following best describes the primary purpose for your guided reading instruction? (Check only ONE)

- ☐ To provide demonstrations of skills, strategies, responses, and/or procedures to students
- ☐ To provide interventions around scaffolded instruction for students
- ☐ To facilitate a group response between students around a shared text
- ☐ To facilitate a group response between students around multiple texts

2. How often do you connect guided reading to shared reading, independent reading, writing instruction, or content areas (e.g. science, social studies, or math) in your instruction?

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Usually
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Never

3. How much time do you typically have each day for reading/language arts instruction?

- ☐ Less than 30 minutes
- ☐ 30-59 minutes
- ☐ 1 to less than 1 ½ hours
- ☐ 1 ½ to less than 2 hours
- ☐ 2 hours or longer

4. How much of that instructional time do you spend on guided reading?

☐ I do not devote any time to guided reading (skip to question 9)

☐ Very small amount (approximately 10%)

☐ Small amount (approximately 25%)

☐ Moderate amount (approximately 50%)

☐ Large amount (approximately 75%)

☐ I use the entire language arts time to teach guided reading.

5. Do you use themes in your guided reading?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Grouping Students

6. How many guided reading groups do you typically maintain in your guided reading program?

☐ None

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5 or more

7. How many days per week do you typically meet with each group?

☐ 1 day

☐ 2 days

☐ 3 days

☐ 4 days

☐ 5 days

8. How long do you typically meet with each guided reading group?

- ☐ Approximately 10 minutes
- ☐ Approximately 15 minutes
- ☐ Approximately 20 minutes
- ☐ Approximately 25 minutes
- ☐ 30 minutes or longer

9. How many students, on average, are in your guided reading groups?

- ☐ 1 or 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7 or more

10. How do group your students for guided reading? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Homogeneously (all students alike) by independent level
- ☐ Homogeneously (all students alike) by instructional level
- ☐ Homogeneously (all students alike) by need demonstrated in previous lesson
- ☐ Heterogeneously (students of different types) based on nothing
- ☐ Heterogeneously (students of different types) based on _____
- ☐ Homogeneous (all students alike) based on _____

11. Which of the following diagnostic or assessment tools do you use to place your students in guided reading groups? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Records from the previous year
- ☐ Basic running record
- ☐ Individual reading inventory (e.g. _____)
- ☐ Scores from reading program assessments (e.g. DRA, Fountas & Pinnell Assessments)
- ☐ Daily observation
- ☐ Other (specify) _____

12. How often do you normally move students between guided reading groups?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Only after doing benchmark assessments
- ☐ 1 to 3 times per month
- ☐ 1 to 3 times per week
- ☐ 4 or more times per week

Text Selection

13. Check the statement that applies best to the texts used with students during guided reading sessions

- ☐ All of the students in the group read the same book
- ☐ Most of the students in the group read the same book
- ☐ All of the students in the group read different books

14. Check the statement that best applies to your guided reading sessions:

- ☐ Students only read informational texts
- ☐ Students read informational AND narrative texts BUT mostly informational texts
- ☐ Students read informational AND narrative texts BUT mostly narrative texts
- ☐ Students only read narrative texts

15. Who chooses the books used during guided reading?

- ☐ I choose the books
- ☐ The students choose the books
- ☐ We choose the books together

16. Which best describes the levels of the books chosen for guided reading? (Check only ONE)

- ☐ Students read books at their instructional level
- ☐ Students read books at their independent level

17. How often do you use each of the following materials during guided reading? (Give answer for each)

Basal text books

☐ Always ☐ Usually ☐ Sometimes ☐ Seldom ☐ Never

Supplemental basal materials

☐ Always ☐ Usually ☐ Sometimes ☐ Seldom ☐ Never

Trade books (e.g. real books sold in book stores)

☐ Always ☐ Usually ☐ Sometimes ☐ Seldom ☐ Never

"Little" books (e.g. small, short, leveled readers)

☐ Always ☐ Usually ☐ Sometimes ☐ Seldom ☐ Never

Newspapers

☐ Always ☐ Usually ☐ Sometimes ☐ Seldom ☐ Never

Magazines

☐ Always ☐ Usually ☐ Sometimes ☐ Seldom ☐ Never

Poems

☐ Always ☐ Usually ☐ Sometimes ☐ Seldom ☐ Never

Other (specify) _____

☐ Always ☐ Usually ☐ Sometimes ☐ Seldom ☐ Never

Planning for Time When Students Are With You

19. How often do you conduct explicit skills instruction during guided reading?

☐ I do not conduct explicit skills instruction during guided reading (skip to question 24)

☐ Seldom

☐ Sometimes

☐ Usually

☐ I always conduct explicit skills instruction in my

20. How much time do you spend on explicit skill instruction during a guided reading session?

☐ Less than 5 minutes

☐ Approximately 5 minutes

☐ Approximately 10 minutes

☐ Approximately 15 minutes

☐ Longer than 15 minutes

21. Which of the following skills do you teach in your explicit instruction? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Phonics
- ☐ Phonemic awareness
- ☐ Spelling
- ☐ Vocabulary
- ☐ Grammar
- ☐ Comprehension skills/strategies
- ☐ Other (specify) _____

Planning for Time When Students Are Not With You

18. While you are working with a guided reading group, what are the other students usually doing? (Check no more than the three most frequent activities)

- ☐ Working at centers
- ☐ Working independently on seat work (any subject)
- ☐ Working with another adult in a separate guided reading group
- ☐ Working on inquiry project
- ☐ Working on readers/writers workshop assignment
- ☐ Other (specify) _____

If you checked "working at centers" what are the activities students usually do at centers while you are working with a guided reading group? (Check no more than the five most frequent activities)

- ☐ Listening post (books on tape)
- ☐ Readers Theater, puppets, plays
- ☐ Reading and/or writing the room
- ☐ Pocket chart activities
- ☐ Working with word materials
- ☐ Art project
- ☐ Book publishing
- ☐ Buddy reading
- ☐ Discussion groups
- ☐ Science center
- ☐ Social studies center
- ☐ Math center
- ☐ Computer
- ☐ Overhead projector activities
- ☐ Big book stand
- ☐ Other (specify) _____

Assessment Tools and Techniques

22. How do you assess your students' progress in reading? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Conversations (e.g. conferences, group discussions)
- ☐ Observations (e.g. running records, "listening in")
- ☐ Student self-reflections (e.g. exit slips, journal reflections on progress/process)
- ☐ Artifacts of learning (e.g. student work samples)

__ Assessments from reading program (e.g. "end of lesson/unit" assessments)

__ Other (specify) _____

23. How often do you conduct each of these types of assessment? (Circle frequency for each)

Conversations:	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Observations:	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Student self-reflections:	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Artifacts of learning:	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Assessments from reading program:	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Other _____:	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Always

24. Do you utilize discussion during guided reading to assess your students' progress?

__ Yes

__ No

If "yes," how often do you do this?

__ Seldom

__ Sometimes

__ Frequently

__ Always

Final Thoughts

25. How would you rate your **knowledge** of how to conduct guided reading instruction?

__ Very well-informed

__ Fairly well-informed

__ Not very well-informed

__ Not at all informed

26. How would you rate your **ability** to conduct guided reading instruction?

__ Very easy for me

__ Easy for me

__ Somewhat easy for me

__ I am not sure about my ability

__ Somewhat difficult for me

__ Difficult for me

__ Very difficult for me

27. Is there anything not covered by this survey that you would like to tell us about your guided reading knowledge and practice?

APPENDIX B

GUIDED READING OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Focus: Teacher engages students in discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Converses with multiple students at same time ○ Converses with one student at a time 		
Teacher's use of discussion to teach new concepts and conduct formative assessment.	Frequency of Use	Comment
○ Try that again.		
○ Look for a part you know to help yourself figure out that word.		
○ Put your words together so it sounds like talking.		
○ Does that make sense?		
○ What did you notice about...?		
○ How did the writer...?		
○ What are the important...?		
○ What do you think that author...?		
○ What parts of the story...?		
○ How would the story be different if...?		
○ How is the genre helping you...?		
○ Other:		
○ Other:		
○ Other:		

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

APPENDIX C

GUIDED READING INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

In this interview, I am going to ask you some questions about 1) how you implement guided reading in general and 2) how you use discussion during guided reading. Please answer as thoroughly as you can and give examples when possible.

Follow-up on Practice Observed During Lesson

1. When I observed you teaching guided reading, I noticed that you [note teacher behavior related to implementing guided reading in general and using discussion to teach and assess]. Please tell me more about this.

Your Relationship with Your Students

2. Describe your relationship with your students (e.g. how you relate to them, how they receive you, how you get underperforming students to learn, how you challenge advanced learners to reach their full potential).

Your Views on Using Discussion

3. What do you view as the most important thing during discussions with students during guided reading?

Your Habits Around Using Discussion

4. How do you use discussion to teach new concepts to students during guided reading?
5. How do you use discussion to formatively assess students during guided reading?

6. How do you connect your guided reading instruction to shared reading, independent reading, writing instruction, or content areas (e.g. science, social studies, or math)?

Your Struggles and Triumphs Around Using Discussion

7. Name one success story about using discussion in guided reading.

8. Tell of a time when you struggled to use discussion in guided reading.

Final Thoughts

What else would you like to tell me about your knowledge of guided reading and your use of discussion in guided reading?

APPENDIX D

SLIDESHOW: AABHE 2015 PRESENTATION

SOWING SEEDS FOR SUCCESS

GUIDED DISCUSSION AS FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT
IN K-3 GUIDED READING

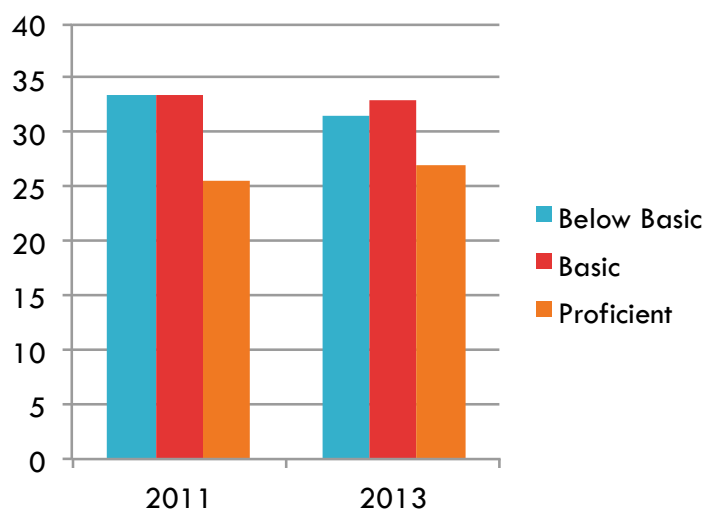
April 10, 2015

Michelle Macchia, Rutgers University

Underperformance in the U.S.

NAEP 2011-2013
Reading, Grade 4
National
"Achievement Level"

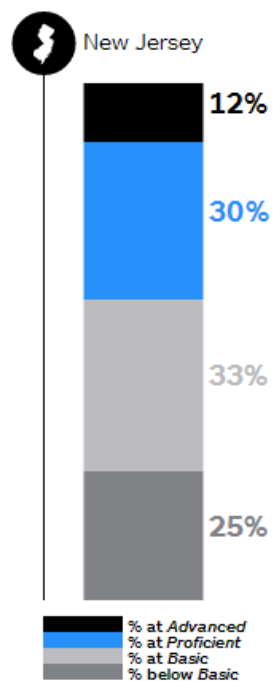
Source: http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2013/#/student-groups



Underperformance in New Jersey

NAEP 2013
Reading, Grade 4
New Jersey
"Achievement Level"

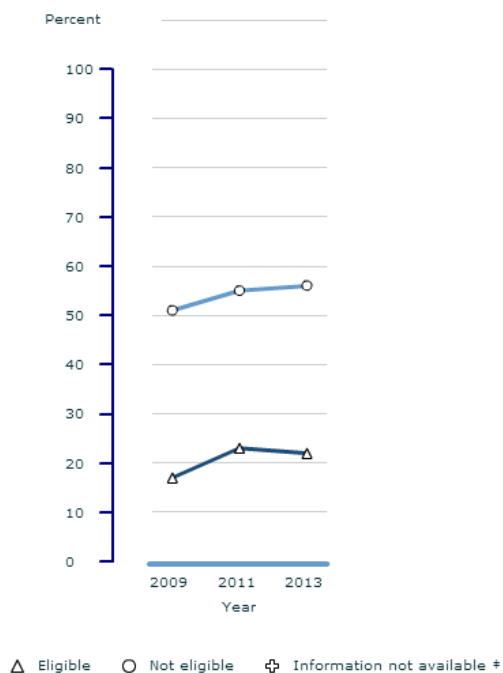
Source: http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2013/#/comparison-graphs?st0=NJ



Underperformance According to SES in New Jersey

NAEP 2009-2013
Reading, Grade 4
New Jersey
"At or above Proficient by SES"

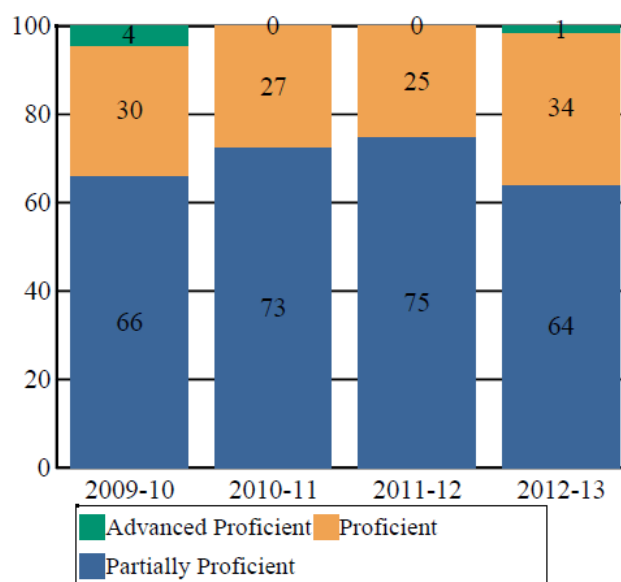
Source: http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2013/#/gains-by-group



Underperformance in Research Site

NJASK
Language Arts Literacy, Grade 4

Source: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/pr/1213/39/394160140.pdf>



Research Questions



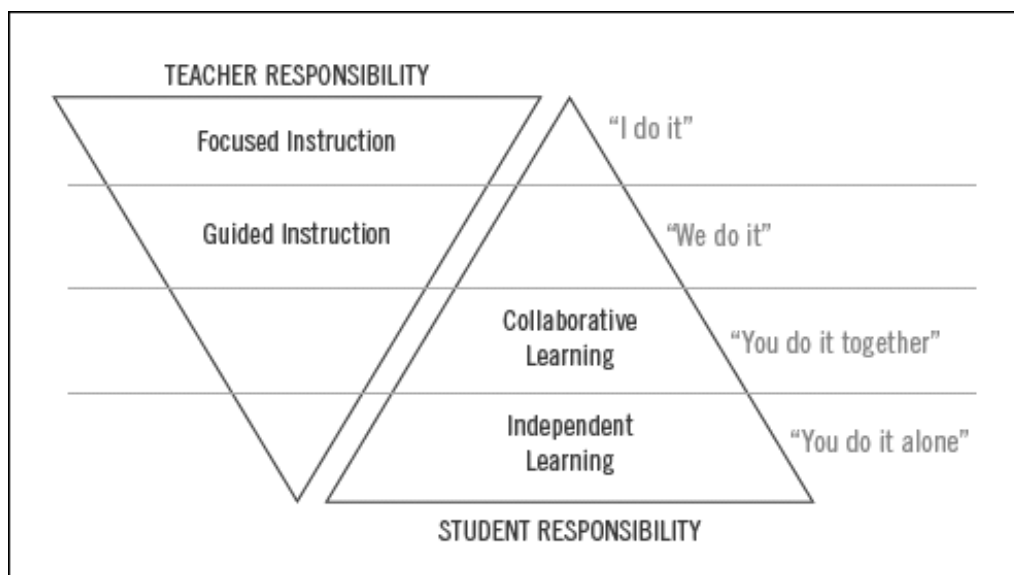
- What do K-3 literacy teachers know about guided reading?
- How do they use guided discussion in guided reading?
- How do they use guided discussion as a formative assessment measure *during* guided reading?

Theoretical & Conceptual Framework



- Social Development Theory (Vygotsky, 1978)
- Subject-Matter Pedagogical Knowledge (Shulman, 1986)
- Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995)
- Guided Reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996)
- Formative Assessment (Black & William, 1998; National Council of Teachers of English, 2013)

Guided Reading Defined



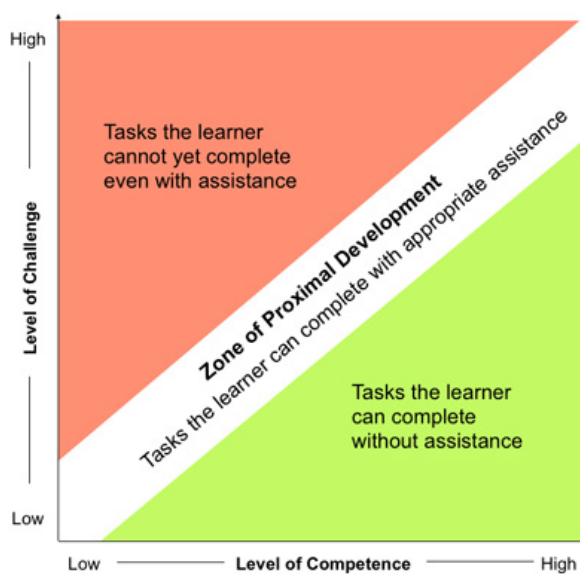
Source: Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2013). *Better learning through structured teaching: A framework for the gradual release of responsibility*. ASCD.

A Typical Guided Reading Lesson



- ☐ Small groups
- ☐ Ability grouping
- ☐ Targeted & individualized instruction
- ☐ Students "move up" as skills increase
- ☐ Formative assessment

Social Development Theory



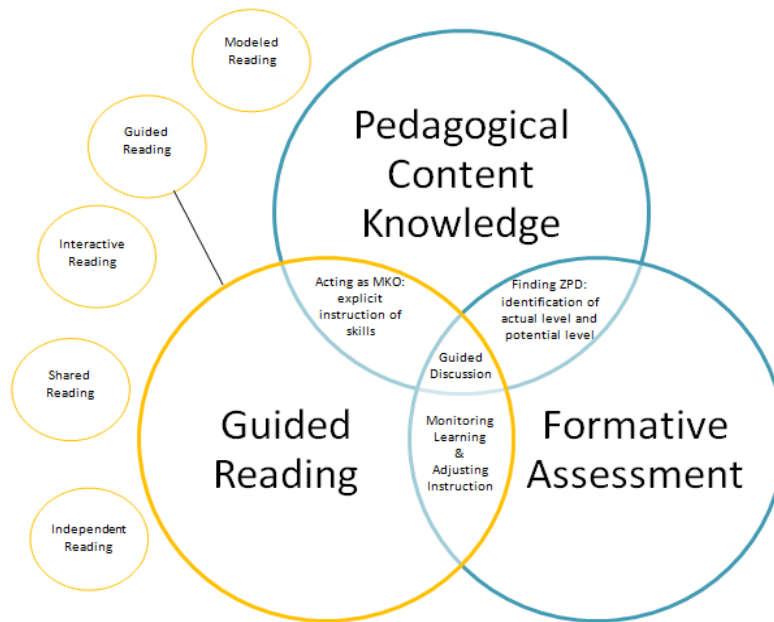
Source: <http://www.reading.org/reading-today/digital/post/rty/2013/09/20/tile-sig-feature-the-digitally-enhanced-zone-of-proximal-development>

Critical Features of Formative Assessment

- Student **ownership**
- Learning goals
- Understanding of student knowledge/skills
- Development of **plans for instructional next steps**
- Student self-monitoring
- Learning goals with specific grading criteria
- **Frequent** assessments
- Relevant **feedback**
- Opportunities to **improve**
- Opportunities to **deepen understandings**
- **Metacognition and reflection**

Adapted from: National Council of Teachers of English. (2013). Formative assessment that truly informs instruction. (Position Statement). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

The Role of Guided Discussion within Guided Reading



Setting

- Traditional, public elementary school
- 627 students in grades K-6
- Demographics (2012-2013 school year)
 - ▣ 74.5% Latino; 23.3% African American; 1.2% White
 - ▣ 92% economically disadvantaged
 - ▣ 5% special education
 - ▣ 65% LEP
- “English-Spanish” bilingual program or “English-only” program

Participants



- ❑ Purposefully selected (22 maximum)
- ❑ Criteria for selection
 - ▣ Teach K-3 ELA
 - ▣ Willing to complete the Survey of Guided Reading Knowledge and Practices
 - ▣ Willing to participate in an interview

Methodology Overview



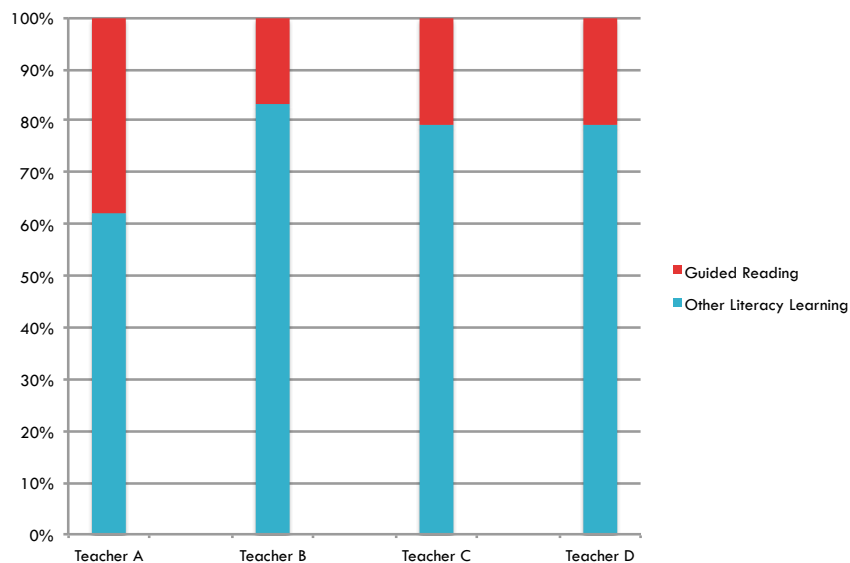
- ❑ Qualitative case study (Merriam, 2009)
- ❑ Multiple data sources (Creswell, 2009)
- ❑ Constant comparison data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)

Study Timeline

Time	Research Activity
March 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory meeting with K-3 literacy teachers; description of study; invitation to participate in study • Survey administered to participants • Begin preliminary analysis of data
Mid-April 2015 - Mid-May 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe selected participants • Interview selected participants • Gather sample lesson plans from participants • Conduct preliminary analysis of data
June 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin professional development training with teachers • Begin intensive analysis of data
July 2015 - August 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft and revise findings • Revise chapters based on findings
September 2015 - October 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise and refine chapters

Preliminary Survey Findings: Time Spent on Guided Reading

Time devoted to guided reading is a concern.

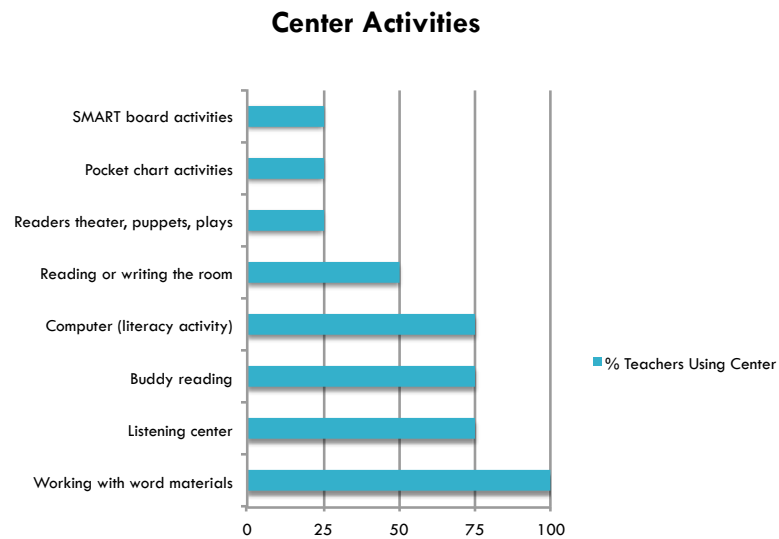


Preliminary Survey Findings: Center Activities

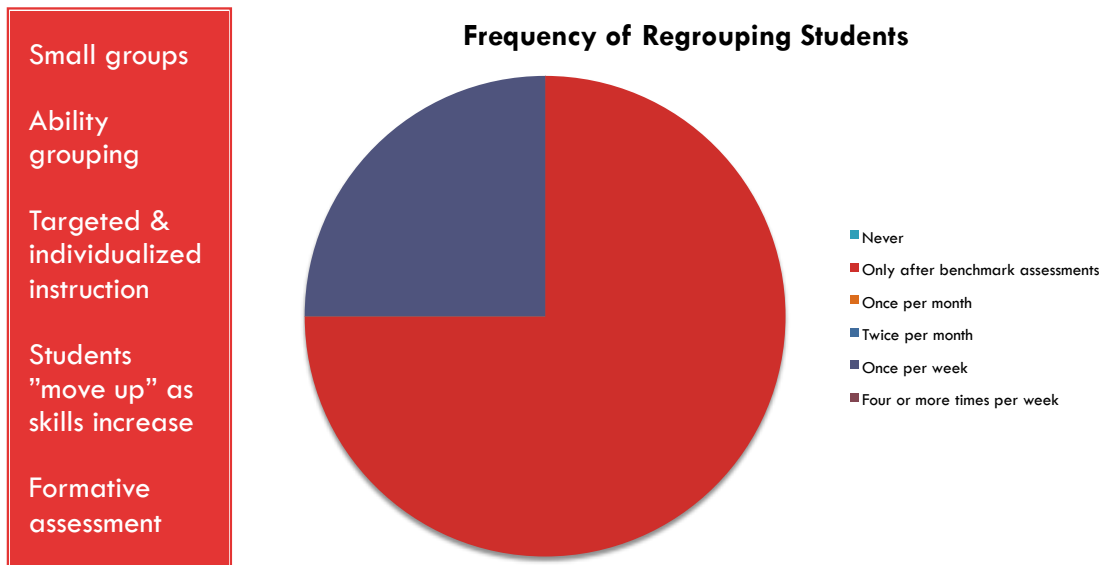
75% of participants use conversations to assess student progress.

BUT

Two of the most widely used centers involve minimal discussion.



Preliminary Survey Findings: Frequency of Regrouping Students

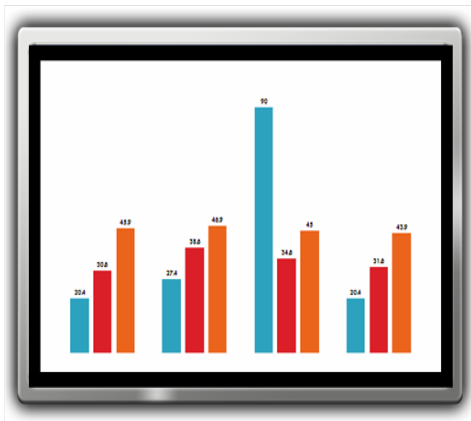


Preliminary Interview Findings



- ▣ Eager teachers
- ▣ Reluctant teachers
- ▣ Absence of guided reading
- ▣ Lesson plan concerns

Highlights from Data



- ▣ Time is a concern.
- ▣ Discussion is not prioritized.
- ▣ Teachers are anxious.
- ▣ Teachers are uncertain.
- ▣ Teachers feel challenged.
- ▣ Planning is a concern.

Next Steps



- ☐ Observe guided reading lessons
- ☐ Interview participants
- ☐ Collect lesson plans

Q & A



- What literacy strengths & weaknesses do your Black students bring with them to college?
- What do you do to help them acquire the skills they need? How do they respond to your coaching?
- What would you like to say to K-12 educators about how they prepare students to read and write?



Thank you

michelle.macchia@gse.rutgers.edu

APPENDIX E

SLIDESHOW: INTRODUCTORY PRESENTATION TO K-3 TEACHERS

SOWING SEEDS FOR SUCCESS

GUIDED DISCUSSION AS FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT
IN K-3 GUIDED READING

September 14, 2015

Michelle Macchia, Rutgers University

Today's Agenda



- I. Introductions
- II. The Study
- III. Definition of Guided Reading
- IV. Questions to Drive Our Learning
- V. Professional Literature
- VI. Debrief and Q & A

Today's Learning Targets



- Understanding of the study and related PD
- Common definition of guided reading
- List of questions that will guide our next session

Icebreaker Activity



What is one of your favorite books?

What drew you to this book?

My Background

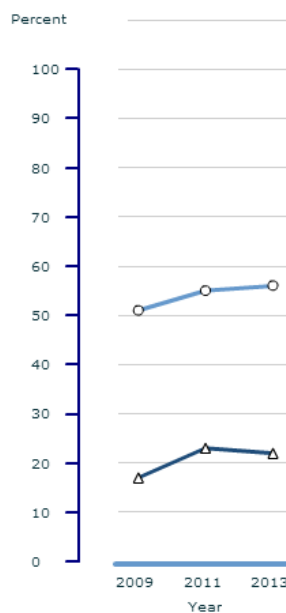


- Homeroom Teacher & Advocate
- Teacher Academy Presenter & Coordinator
- Educational Consultant
- Scholar-Practitioner

Proficiency in Reading According to Family Income

NAEP 2009-2013
Reading, Grade 4
New Jersey
"At or above Proficient by SES"

Source: http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2013/#/gains-by-group



△ Eligible ○ Not eligible ⊕ Information not available †

Research Questions



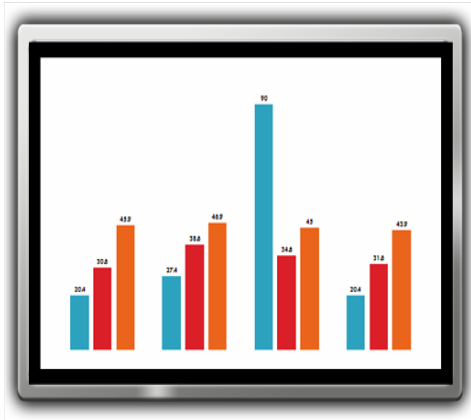
- What do K-3 literacy teachers know about guided reading?
- How do they use guided discussion in guided reading?
- How do they use guided discussion to formatively assess students *during* guided reading?

Theoretical & Conceptual Framework



- Social Development Theory (Vygotsky, 1978)
- Subject-Matter Pedagogical Knowledge (Shulman, 1986)
- Guided Reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996)
- Formative Assessment (Black & William, 1998)

Findings



- ▣ Beliefs impact practices
- ▣ Teacher knowledge varies
- ▣ Time and timing are challenging
- ▣ Improvisation impacts instruction

Snowball Discussion



What comes to mind when you hear the term
guided reading?

1. First, think on your own.
2. When signaled, discuss with **one** other person.
3. When signaled, move with your partner to **find a pair to join your team.**
4. We will share out as a group in 5 minutes.



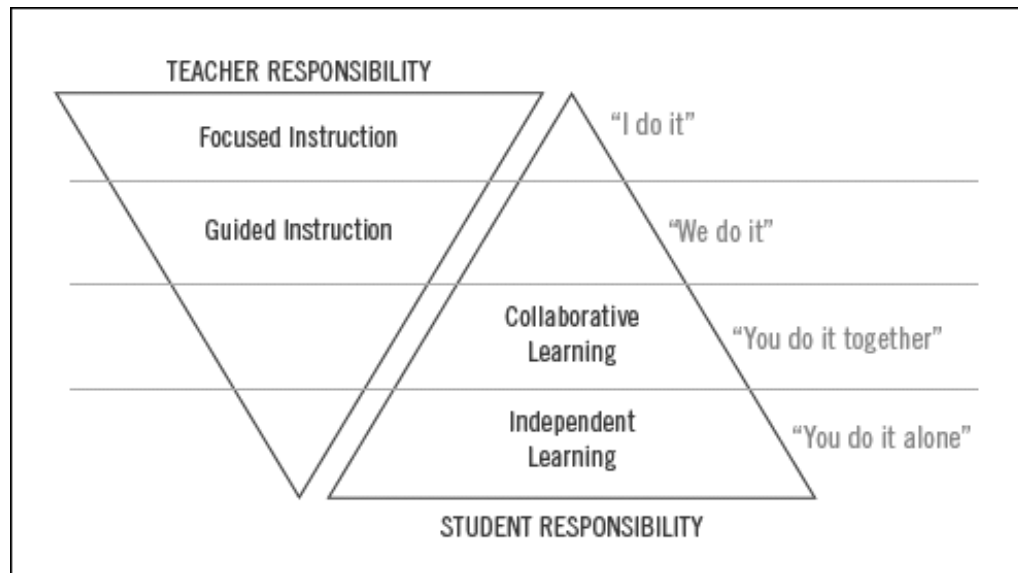
What did you discuss with your
groupmates?

How did your understanding change as
you discussed and listened to others?

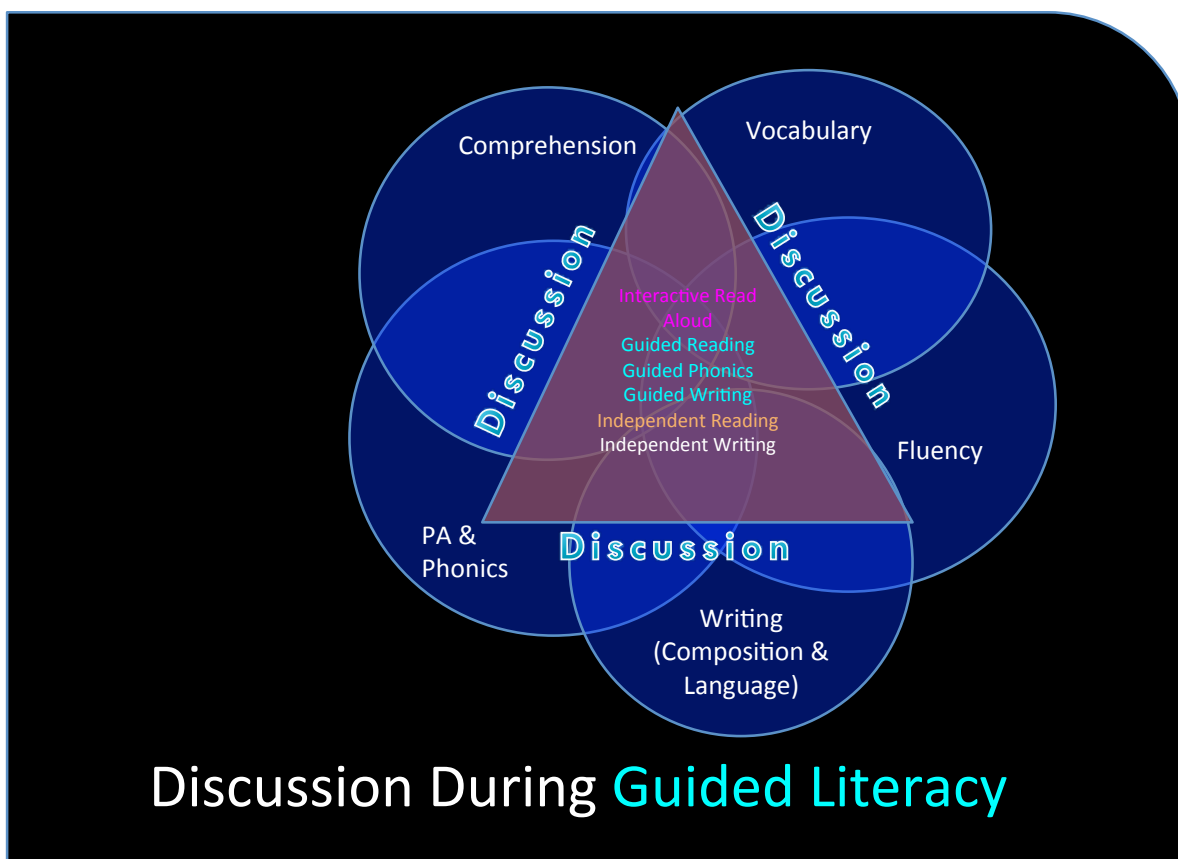
Guided Literacy Defined

- ❑ Teacher-led, small groups; short sessions
- ❑ Reading ability matched to text level
- ❑ Teacher introduces the text
- ❑ Teacher listens to individuals read
- ❑ Teacher prompts students
- ❑ Teacher facilitates conversations about the text
- ❑ Teachers covers phonics, reading & writing
- ❑ Students move up

Gradual Release of Responsibility



Source: Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2013). *Better learning through structured teaching: A framework for the gradual release of responsibility*. ASCD.



Let's brainstorm!

- ❑ Meet with your “same number” teammates.
- ❑ Choose someone to scribe for the group.
- ❑ Create a list of questions/struggles/triumphs related
 - ❑ Guided reading
 - ❑ Any aspect
 - ❑ At least one question about guided discussion
- ❑ We will come back together in 10 minutes.

Professional Literature



Please read the article
*Guided Reading: The Romance and the
Reality (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012)*
in preparation for our October 9th session.



Thank you

michelle.macchia@gse.rutgers.edu

APPENDIX F

**SLIDESHOW: FULL-DAY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING ON
GUIDED LITERACY**

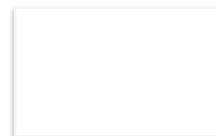
**Effective Guided
Reading Instruction**



**Maple Elementary School
October 9, 2015**

**Michelle Macchia
Rutgers University**

Used with permission from Teaching Matters, Inc.



Agenda		
Time	Topic	Focus
8:45 – 8:50	Welcome & Introductions	
8:50 – 9:10	Snowball: The Romance and the Reality	Context of Guided Reading
9:10 – 9:40	Guided Literacy Basics	Definition, Components, Rationale
9:40 – 11:45	Guided Literacy Through the Grades:	
	Grades K & 1	Concepts About Print, Phonics, Word Solving, Sight Words, and Comprehension
	Break	
	Grade 1 Grade 2 and up	Incorporating Guided Writing Comprehension, Vocabulary, Independent Writing
11:45 – 12:00	Summing it Up	
12:00 – 12:45	Lunch	
12:45 – 1:00	Gallery Walk & Questions	Key Learnings from Today
1:00 – 2:30	Planning for Guided Literacy	Using Guidelines to Create Effective Lessons
2:30 – 2:45	Q & A	



Teacher Competencies: Guided Literacy

Successful Planning:

- Determine student needs based on evidence and developmental level
- Group students appropriately
- Organize texts for appropriate reading level(s)
- Plan and prepare lessons with a clear purpose, incorporating: reading, phonics and writing
- Plan a corresponding independent reading strategy

Successful Teaching:

- Teach vocabulary, word solving and comprehension through meaningful questions and discussion, and other appropriate teaching strategies
- Use time efficiently for attaining lesson purpose
- Establish routines for guided instruction that meets the needs of every learner

Successful Assessment:

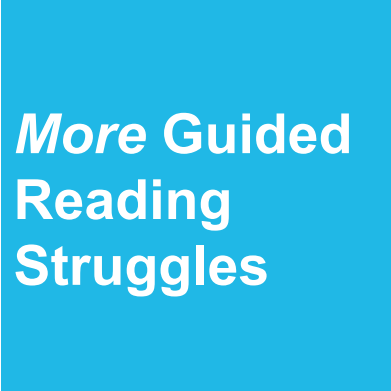
- Monitor student progress using checks for understanding and other formative assessment measures
- Regularly analyze student performance (independently and with colleagues) and use findings to modify instruction and/or move students up

Our Guided Reading Triumphs

- Students like centers
- Grouping students
- Students are progressing
- Daily 5

Our Guided Reading Struggles

- Managing centers
- Time management
- Tech issues
- Response to text
- Expressing thoughts about text in writing
- Text selection
- Providing cognitively challenging instruction



More Guided Reading Struggles

- Teaching students to think deeply and critically
- Supporting struggling students
- Disjointed literacy block
- Distractions that detract from instruction
- Student engagement
- Meeting the needs of ELLs
- Establishing routines
- Missing materials
- Photocopying

Today's Learning Targets

I can...

- Explain the basic rationale behind the principles of guided literacy
- Explain how comprehension learning extends from interactive read-aloud through guided literacy and into independent reading
- Recognize the different foci for guided literacy instruction in grades K-1 and 2-3
- Plan an effective guided literacy lesson for the relevant grade

Activity: Snowballing

Gather your thoughts on the question below in private reflection. Jot down some of these reflections if you wish.

How is Fountas & Pinnell's
Guided Reading: The Romance and the Reality
a response to the challenges teachers face as they
teach guided reading?

How to Snowball

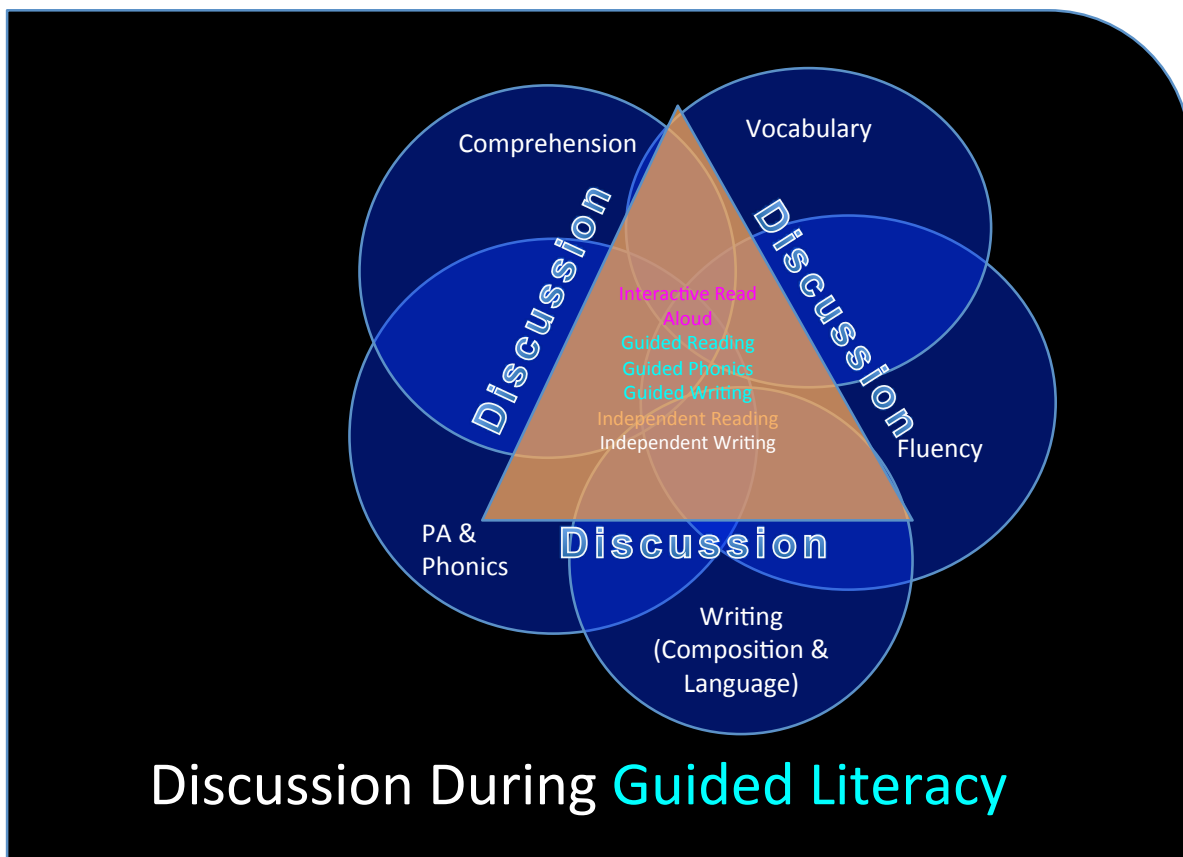
1. Begin a dialogue on the question with one other person (5 minutes).
2. When signaled, you and your partner should join another pair to form a group of four.
3. Discuss the topic with your new group of four (10 minutes).
4. After this second round, we will reflect on the experience.

Discussion

**What big ideas emerged from your discussions
with your groupmates?**

**How did your understanding change as you
discussed and listened to others?**

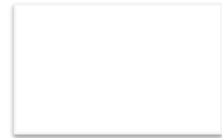
**How did your discussion change as you moved
from a group of two to a group of four?**



Why Data Matters



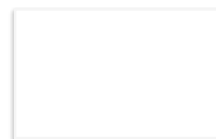
Use Student Data to Optimize Guided Literacy Instruction



Context for Guided Literacy

School Profile

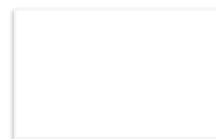
- Approximately 1,239 students (K-5)
- 11% Asian
- 17% Black
- 68% Hispanic
- 2% White
- 28% ELL
- 21% SWD
- 94% FRL Eligible
- Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System



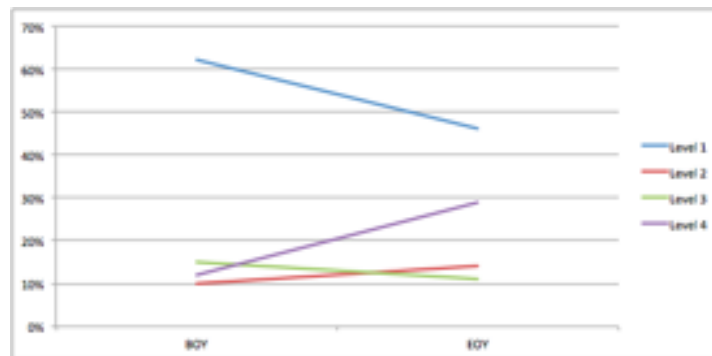
**Context for
Guided Literacy:
Past Performance****New York State Common
Core ELA Test, Grade 3**

	Level 3 (Proficient)	Level 4 (Advanced Proficient)
2012-13	10%	1 %
2013-14	11.5%	0.6%

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/data/TestResults/ELAandMathTestResults>



2014-2015 Reading Performance



2014-2015 Benchmark Assessment Data
Class Y - Grade 1

Beginning of Year

Level 1	44%
Level 2	4%
Level 3	40%
Level 4	12%

End of Year

Level 1	20%
Level 2	16%
Level 3	0%
Level 4	64%

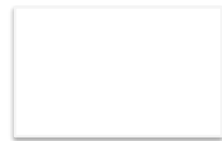
Letting the Data Allow us to Make Informed Decisions

- **Monitor** students' progress on specific ELA measures
- Use **multiple measures**
- **Ensure that teachers understand** how to record and analyze observations in order to inform instructional decisions
- Embed **data discussions** in the PLC discourse
- Use data and observations to **problem-solve**
- **TAKE ACTION & MONITOR** actions taken
- **Progress *children***, not reading groups
- **Strong administrative support** of data process

Guided Literacy



The Basics



“Give One, Get One”

Topic: Guided Reading

1. Write down **three ideas** you have about *Guided Reading*.
2. Circulate around the room, **talking to three different people**.
3. Offer one of the ideas on your list for one of theirs. Be sure to **write down their names**.
4. Back in a large group, **we will share** interesting ideas that we learned from others.



Guided *Literacy* Defined

- Teacher-led, small groups
- Short sessions
- Reading ability matched to text level
- Introducing the text
- Listening to individuals read
- Prompting students
- Conversations about the text
- Phonics, reading & writing

The Context for Guided Literacy

- Daily
- Literacy block or content area
- Timed sessions
- Manageable number of small groups
- Reading stages
- Literature or informational texts
- Lesson over multiple days
- Looks different as the grades advance

Components of Guided Literacy

1. Guided phonics or word study
2. Guided reading
3. Guided writing

Checklist: Effective Guided Reading Instruction (K - 1)

Checklist: [Small Group Lesson] Guided Reading, Phonics, & Writing Lessons

Elements	Notes
1. Students are in a small group (4-to-6) and have been matched with a text that is at their instructional level.	
2. Remainder of class is effectively working at literacy centers, independent/paired reading, or independent/paired writing. The work is meaningful.	
3. Teacher guides students through a preview of the text that stimulates relevant prior knowledge and establishes reading purpose. 4. While reading, students read aloud softly to the teacher when selected. There is NO ROUND ROBIN READING!!!! 5. Students engage in problem solving at points of difficulty, sometimes prompted by the teacher.	
6. While students read, the teacher observes them for evidence of strategy behavior and makes notes about the strategy use of individual students.	
7. Students may reread the text or partner read after they have read the text at least once.	
8. After reading, the teacher directs students to retell the text (narrative) or summarize the important parts of the text (nonfiction).	
9. Teacher has students return to the text for one or two teaching opportunities.	
10. Students engage in sight word and/or phonics work as directed by the teacher such as making words with magnetic letters, writing sight words, or using sound boxes. 11. Students write in response to the guided reading text. At earliest level this will be done collectively (interactive writing) with the teacher and at more advanced levels, students will independently write a multi-paragraph responses.	

Establishing Routines

Considerations

- Where will the guided literacy lessons take place? Where will students sit in this space?
- How will students get to the guided literacy space?
- How will you work with students (format, activities, protocols)?
- What materials will students need during guided literacy?
- Where will these materials be stored?

Guided Literacy & Common Core

- Leveled texts at very early reading stages
- Research on use of leveled texts
- Reading tasks & support at points of difficulty

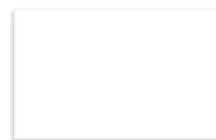
Focal Points for Guided Reading

Lexile	F & P	DRA	Reading Stage	Before Reading	During Reading	After Reading	Characteristics of "After Reading" Comprehension Questions
Up to 100L	A-D	1 - 4	Emergent	Focus on word-solving strategies	Students whisper-read while teacher uses word-solving problems to guide students in decoding challenging words	Students retell problem and solution	Focus on basic understanding of the text
100L – 300L	D-I	4 - 16	Early	Focus on citing evidence and tracking character development: struggles, motivations, triumphs, mental state	Students whisper-read while teacher does targeted word-solving and fluency work with students who need particular support	Students retell what happened, why it happened, and the effect on characters' mental state	Focus on character motivation, struggles, interactions
300L – 500L	I - L	16 - 24	Transitional	Focus on choosing the best evidence, keeping track of multiple sections, plots, and characters	Students read silently while the teacher checks in with students who need particular support	Students retell what happened, why it happened, and the effect on characters' mental states, emphasize connections between earlier and later parts in the story	Focus on connecting earlier and later parts and figuring out how everything works together
500L – 700L	L - Q	24 - 38		Focus on text features, author's craft, and metacognitive work: What can I do to help myself as a reader?	Students read silently then complete a written response to text while the teacher prepares for the "after reading" comprehension conversation	Students engage in comprehension conversation that starts from evidence-based written responses; conversation is fluid and based on data from written responses	Focus on text features and author's craft
700L+	Q+	38+	Fluent	Focus on connecting multiple sources or main ideas Focus on writing concise arguments about abstract concepts, themes, and figurative language	Students read silently then complete a written response to text while the teacher prepares for the "after reading" comprehension conversation	Retell emphasizes character insight, incorporating genre-specific elements, vocabulary, and figurative language from text	Focus on abstract concepts and figurative language, connecting multiple sources, evaluating quality of evidence and argument

**Guided
Literacy in
K - Early 1st
(Pre-A - D)**



**Focus on CAP, Phonics, Word
Solving, Sight Words, and
Comprehension**



Watch the Practice in Action

Pre-A Level Lesson

- Working with Letters and Names
- Working with Syllables
- Developing Oral Language through Level A Book
- Reading (Choral)
- Interactive Writing

Please use the checklist provided as you watch the [video of Jan Richardson teaching a Pre-A guided literacy group](#).

What do you notice and wonder about her instruction?

Concepts About Print Defined

Concepts about print- what we know about print or more specifically written language

- Experiences with print a child has had
- Print (not the picture) tells the story
- Concepts of Print Task
 - Directionality
 - Word sequence
 - Letter order

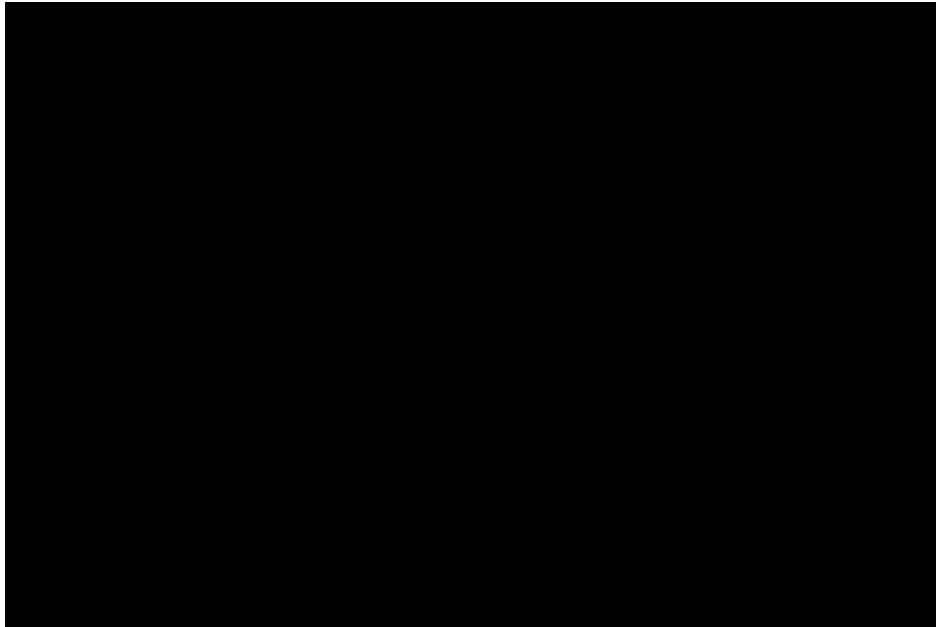
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The Relationship


Phonics, Phonemic Awareness & Phonological Awareness

- A phoneme is an individual unit of sound
- Phonemic awareness involves understanding that words in the English language are built from these individual units of sound
- Phonology is the study of how sounds work together
- Phonological awareness involves understanding that units of sound can be manipulated to serve a variety of purposes
- Phonics refers to the relationship between written letters and individual sounds

Overview of Phonological Awareness

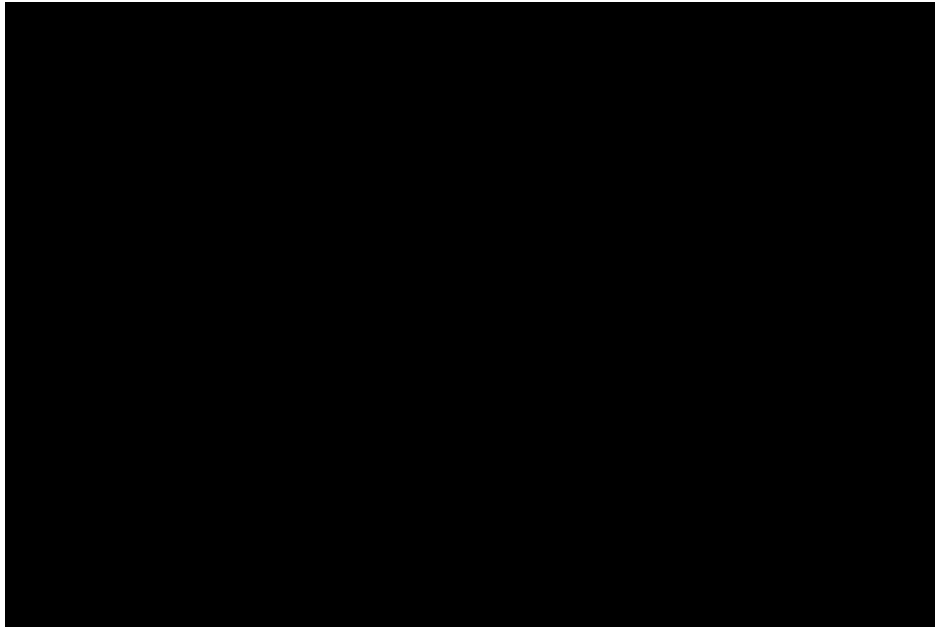


Phonological Awareness Continuum



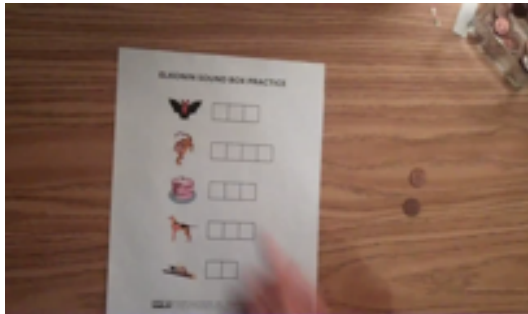
Type	Description	Examples
RHYME	Matching the endings of words	cat, hat, bat, sat
ALLITERATION	Producing groups of words that begin with the same initial sound	ten tiny tadpoles
SENTENCE SEGMENTATION	Segmenting sentences into spoken words	The dog ran away. 1 2 3 4
SYLLABLES	Segmenting words into smaller parts moving to syllabication	/mag/ /net/ /pa/ /per/ /el/ /e/ /phant/
ONSETS AND RIMES	Blending and segmenting the initial consonant or cluster (onset) and the vowel and consonant sounds spoken after it	/m/ /ice/ /sh/ /ake/
PHONEMES	Blending phonemes into words, segmenting words into individual phonemes and manipulating phonemes in spoken words VC, CV, CVC, CCVC, CVCC	/k/ /a/ /t/ /sh/ /i/ /p/ /s/ /t/ /o/ /p/

Phonemic Awareness

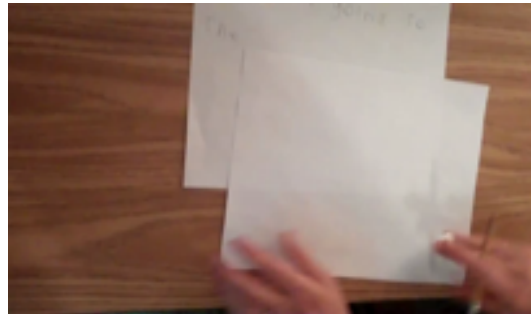


Phonics Strategy in Action

Sound Boxes Lessons



L/S - Sound Boxes: Moving Objects Into Boxes to Represent Sounds



From Moving Objects to Writing Letters

Watch the Practice in Action

Level C Lesson

- Sight Word Review
- Book Introduction
- Text Reading With Prompting
- Teaching to Point
- Comprehension Check
- Teaching New Sight Word
- Word Work - Making Words
- Interactive Writing

Please use the checklist provided as you watch the [video of Jan Richardson teaching a Level C guided literacy group](#).

What do you notice and wonder about her instruction?

4-Step Process

Focus on Sight Words

1. Play “What’s Missing?”
2. Do “Mix and Fix” with magnetic letters
3. Write the word on the table with a finger
4. Write the word on a whiteboard

How an Effective Book Introduction Aids Comprehension

- No book walk
- Thought-provoking question



[Book Introduction by Shadell Purefoy](#)

[Letting the Text Take Center Stage](#)

Focus on Comprehension

Comprehension in Kindergarten Through Third Grade

- Demonstrating comprehension orally and in writing
- Increasingly complex and frequent
 - Doing simple **oral retells**
 - **Providing reasons** for answers
 - Writing about **characters' motives & factual information**
 - Writing **detailed responses to higher order questions** about texts

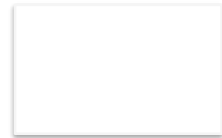
Break

We will resume in 10 minutes.

Guided Literacy in Grade 1 (D - I)



Focus on Incorporating Guided Writing



Guided Writing Defined

- Range of ways in which teachers support developing writers
- Connected to guided reading
- Formal guided writing
- Informal/supported guided writing
- Time varies

Why Do Guided Writing?

1. Management of the writing process
2. Agency
3. Analysis and reflection
4. **Writing in response to text** with guidance

Small-Group Guided Writing



As you watch the video, think about these two questions:

1. What is the writing prompt? How does the teacher introduce the writing prompt?
2. What is students' level of responsibility?
3. How does she guide the students' thinking about what they will write?



Discussion

What was the writing prompt?

How did the teacher introduce the writing prompt?

How did she guide the students' thinking about what they will write?

What is the students' level of responsibility?

Guided Writing Conference



As you watch the video, think about these two questions:

1. How does the teacher support the child's spelling?
2. How does the teacher respond to the student's needs? Think about the language she uses.



Discussion

How does the teacher support the child's spelling?

How does the teacher respond to the student's needs? Think about the language she uses.

**Guided
Literacy in
Grades 2 & 3
(J - Q)**



**Focus on Comprehension,
Vocabulary, and Guided &
Independent Writing**



Focal Points for Guided Reading

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Teaching Comprehension Deeply in Grades 2 & 3 Through Multiple Instructional Activities

Instructional Activity	Group Size	Intention
Interactive Read Aloud	Whole-class	All students learn challenging/complex vocabulary and concepts
Guided Reading	Small-group by reading level	Comprehension conversations targeted to student needs
Writing in Response to Text	Whole-class, small group & 1 to 1	Students articulate in more complex writing what they understand about their reading
Independent Reading	Individual	Students apply what they've learned on their own

**Guided
Literacy in
Grades 2 & 3**

The Lesson

Before Reading:

Brief book Introduction

Preview vocabulary

Question to access schema

During Reading:

Word Solving

Students read text **silently**

Students **write**

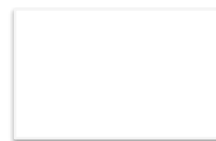
After Reading:

Teacher reads **student responses**

Students and teacher **meet for
comprehension conversation**

**Guided Literacy
in Grades 2 & 3*****After Reading*****Comprehension Conversation**

- Start the comprehension conversation using deep retell followed by factual, inferential and critical questions
- Diagnose student confusion
- Prompt for ideal student thinking/responses



Guided Literacy in Grades 2 & 3

After Reading

Strategy in Action: Comprehension Conversation

Erin Michels Comprehension

- Struggling to build an effective synthesis
- Accustomed to finding evidence, but not from earlier chapters
- Difficulty connecting earlier and later parts of the text

What does the teacher do to help the group at this point of difficulty?



Discussion

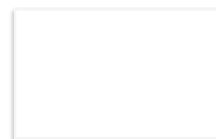
**What does the teacher do to help the group
at this point of difficulty?**

The Power of Prompting

Effective teachers prompt students to do the following during and after reading:

- Connect to earlier events
- Go back to the text
- Think about how the lesson reinforces the taught skill

Erin Michels Comprehension



Discussion

What do you notice about this teacher's prompting strategy?

Erin's Prompts

- What's going on?
- Who was saying that?
- What am I going to say?
- I want big ideas.
- Try it again.
- How can we make that a big idea?
- How can we talk about important parts of the beginning of the chapter in the way of a big idea?
- She was giving a lot of detail; how can we give a big idea of what happened in the very beginning?
- So let's stop. That's the fact in the text, we know that happened. We need to understand the character's actions, understand the why. What is the motive? How do we better understand this by what they are doing?
- Stop. Do you see the difference? Now, after we worked through it, Briana brought it back to the big idea. Precious identified the textual information. She told us the clues in the text and then we worked to figure out why it was happening. We want to think about the why and the how. We want to make it thick and juicy.

The Power of Using Students' Written Responses *Before* Oral Discussion

- Focus of comprehension conversation shifts
- Students demonstrate how well they comprehend
- Written responses and student mastery

Summing Up the A.M. Session

At your tables, create a quick chart and post it before you go to lunch. After lunch, we will do a gallery walk.

Guiding Questions

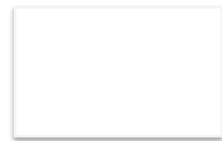
- What new, general information about guided literacy did you pick up during this first part of the workshop?
- What do you notice about the progression of skills from beginning of K to early grade 1?

**Lunch
&
Gallery Walk
(when you return)**

Planning for Guided Literacy



Create Effective Lessons



Planning for Guided Literacy

The Process

1. Decide on students' needs
2. Group students
3. Determine purpose and focus of lesson(s) for each group
4. Select/access appropriate texts
5. Prepare lessons

Early Reading Matters Tracker

Thinking about Planning for Guided Literacy
Instruction

Components of the Lesson Plan

1. Learning target(s) and standard(s)
2. Target audience
3. Instructional text
4. Questions and strategies
5. Activities for before, during, and after reading
6. Possible “next steps”

[Pre-A Guided Literacy Lesson Plan Template](#)

[Emergent \(A-C\) Guided Literacy Lesson Plan Template](#)

[Early \(D-I\) Guided Literacy Lesson Plan Template](#)

[Transitional \(J-P\) Guided Literacy Lesson Plan Template](#)

[Fluent \(Q+\) Guided Literacy Lesson Plan Template](#)

Planning for Guided Literacy

Some High-leverage Instructional Strategies

- Decoding by analogy
- Previewing a text
- Using sound boxes
- Creating text-dependent questions for close reading activities

The rest live here...

25 High Leverage Early Literacy Teaching Strategies

Activity: Planning a Guided Literacy Lesson

Work with grade-level teammates to revise and/or create a lesson plan that contains the following:

1. Learning target(s) and standard(s)
2. Target audience
3. Instructional text and genre
4. Questions and strategies
5. Activities for before, during, and after reading
6. Possible “next steps”

Use the templates provided in your packet:

[Pre-A Guided Literacy Lesson Plan Template](#)

[Emergent \(A-C\) Guided Literacy Lesson Plan Template](#)

[Early \(D-I\) Guided Literacy Lesson Plan Template](#)

[Transitional \(J-P\) Guided Literacy Lesson Plan Template](#)

[Fluent \(Q+\) Guided Literacy Lesson Plan Template](#)

Activity:
Planning a
Guided Literacy
Lesson

For the next 45 minutes, we will work in pairs or individually to:

- Select a text on your level
- Create a sample lesson on your level using the appropriate template (30 minutes)
- Share with your table (15 minutes)

In 45 minutes, we will reflect.

**Did you hit
today's
learning
targets?**

I can...

- Explain the basic rationale behind the principles of guided literacy
- Explain how comprehension learning extends from interactive read-aloud through guided literacy and into independent reading
- Recognize the different foci for guided literacy instruction in grades K-1 and 2-3
- Plan an effective guided literacy lesson for the relevant grade

How did we do?

Closing Thoughts & Next Steps



What connections were you able to make between effective guided literacy instruction and student development in reading?

What will you try in your own classroom?

**Thanks for your
participation!**

michelle.macchia@gse.rutgers.edu

