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The Impact of Guided Reading Instruction on First Graders Performing Below Grade Level in Reading

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The Impact of Guided Reading Instruction on First Graders Performing Below Grade Level in
Reading

A Project Presented to
The Graduate Faculty of
Minnesota State University Moorhead

By
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In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Masters of Science in
Curriculum and Instruction with an Emphasis in Literacy

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of Guided Reading instruction on first graders performing below grade level in reading in a suburban school in North Dakota. The researcher examined the impact that guided reading plays amongst first grade students performing below grade level in the area of reading. The sample of subjects includes five elementary students in first grade. To analyze the impact of Guided Reading instruction, students' FAST Bridge Learning pre and posttest scores including sight words and sentence reading were compared. The study also compared differences in students' sight words and sentence reading. As Guided Reading instruction was carried out, a significant difference was noted in the words that students were able to read per minute. Recommendations to complement this study to further benefit student reading ability could include the application of Guided Reading as it impacts student sight word reading and sentence reading.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Traditionally, reading instruction throughout the world has been taught as a whole group lesson characterized by each student reading the same instructional text and completing the same activities as one another. This whole group reading process is one that does not meet each student's individual, diverse learning needs.

Under this circumstance, I was motivated to complete this research study knowing that I could impact students' ability to learn how to read. The FAST Bridge assessment program as well as Fountas and Pinnell's approach to guided reading encouraged me to complete this research study. The objective of this paper was to determine the impact that guided reading instruction plays on students reading below grade level compared to teaching students how to read using a whole group reading approach.

Brief Literature Review

Guided reading most often refers to one teacher using a small group instructional approach using a common leveled text to teach students in a particular group. The teacher determines the level of the text before the group instruction takes place. Students in the group are then placed homogeneously based on the classroom, school, and district reading assessments. This small group level placement will be used to determine which reading skills the group will be taught (Schirmer & Schaffer, 2010) By providing our students with the correct leveled reading material, we are able to implement specific reading skills that students need to gain independence in their reading.

Not only is it important to understand why students are given leveled readers, but it is also important to know why guided reading has changed our instructional methods throughout the years. When educators understand the purpose of why guided reading was first established, we are able to understand how it relates to reading instruction that takes place in our classrooms.

According to Stahl (2016), in order to teach primary students comprehension, we must first focus on teaching word recognition, fluency, understanding our students' prior knowledge, what vocabulary they bring to the lesson as well as retrieve from the lesson, and their self-regulation when it comes to reading. After continuous repetition of reading strategies that are designated to each student's specific needs, they are able to apply these strategies to their independent reading.

Lastly, guided reading books should be considered "just right" for the reader. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2012), classrooms are full of diverse children. It is our jobs as educators to accommodate to students' diverse needs by providing them with a small group guided reading group that teaches content geared towards their specific learning needs. Since our students are diverse and learn content at different paces, it is important to understand that groups should be flexible. I have personally implemented flexible grouping during my guided reading instruction and I was able to meet with students from various groups when working on specified skills.

By teaching our students the skills to build a strong reading foundation, they will be able to perform adequate reading practices such as how to read unknown words, how to practice comprehension strategies, and how to learn text characteristics (Kruizinga, 2010). The classroom teacher's position is to group our students homogeneously, understand why guided reading was first implemented in the classroom, teach specific reading strategies, and create flexible reading groups. By working together as educators and students, we are able to provide our students with

the skills they need to be independent readers.

Statement of the Problem

The problem that this research study addresses relates to how guided reading instructional groups benefits students' diverse needs compared to a whole group instructional approach. The participants in the study go through two phases. The first phase monitors how whole group instruction impacts students' ability to learn how to read. The second phase of the study provides students with a guided reading instructional approach.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact that guided reading instruction plays on first graders reading below grade level and how this instruction differed to only teaching a whole group reading instruction approach. Schools around the world have noticed a significant change in their students' backgrounds and their need to master academic skills. This research study used the understanding of students' diverse cultures and backgrounds to help determine the reading material that the researcher used to conduct guided reading instruction groups.

Research Question(s)

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact that guided reading has on students reading below grade level. In order to examine the effectiveness of guided reading implementation, the following question was addressed:

- How does guided reading instruction impact students reading below grade level compared to a whole group reading instruction approach?

Definition of Variables.

For purposes of this study, the following terms were defined:

- **Guided Reading:** Refers to ongoing assessments, analysis of students' reading behavior, intentional and systematic teaching, strategic lesson planning, and specific text selection (Gaffner, Johnson, Torres-Elias, & Dryden, 2014).
- **Benchmark Assessment System (BAS):** Determines students' independent and instructional reading levels as teachers observe students reading behavior one-on-one, engage students in comprehension conversation, and make decisions connecting assessments to instruction (Schaffer & Schirmer, 2010).
- **Literacy Footprints:** A curriculum for classroom, intervention groups, English language learners, and special education students learning to read and write (With, 2019).
- **FAST Bridge assessment:** An online benchmark system that allows the students' earned scores to be categorized based on percentages (FastBridge, 2019).
- **Response to Intervention:** A process used by educators to help struggling students with a specific lesson or content area (Response, 2019).

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the improvement of guided reading instruction on struggling readers not only in this Eastern North Dakota School but also in other elementary schools throughout the district. I hope that this research will encourage other elementary teachers to implement guided reading instruction in their own classrooms. The outcomes to be considered consist of the following: the ability of students learning how to decode new words will heighten; there will be an increase in students' oral reading fluency; it will develop students' ability to self-monitor; teachers will be able to instruct students to search for information in a given text;

teachers will be able to explain the process of predicting; and teachers will have the opportunity to show students how to analyze a text (Gaffner et. al., 2014)

Research Ethics

Permission and IRB Approval. In order to conduct this study, the researcher was able to seek MSUM's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to ensure the ethical conduct of research involving human subjects (Mills & Gay, 2019). Likewise, authorization to conduct this study was provided from the school district where the research project took place (See Appendix D).

Informed Consent. Protection of human subjects participating in research was assured. Participant minors were informed of the purpose of the study via the Method of Assent (See Appendix E) that the researcher read to participants before the beginning of the study. Participants were aware that this study was conducted as part of the researcher's Master Degree Program and that it would benefit her teaching practice. Informed consent means that the parents of participants were fully informed of the purpose and procedures of the study for which consent was sought and that parents understood and agreed, in writing, to their child participating in the study (Rothstein & Johnson, 2014). Confidentiality was protected through the use of pseudonyms (e.g., Student 1) without the utilization of any identifying information. The choice to participate or withdraw at any time was outlined both, verbally and in writing.

Limitations. The limitation that stands out the most in this research study was having a small sample size. This is a limitation that prevents a clear generalized statement regarding the impact that guided reading instruction plays for students reading below proficiency. The number of participants was too small to properly generalize beyond this research study. If a larger sample

size and a greater number of culturally diverse participants took place in the study, there would likely be slight differences in the outcome of the study.

This study was also by the duration of the research, which was a relatively short time period consisting of six weeks. Lastly, another limitation is the fact that only one classroom within the eastern North Dakota school took place in the research. However, it is encouraging to find that the expected outcome of the research study has results similar to larger and more inclusive studies.

Conclusions

Throughout many years, reading instruction has been taught in a whole group setting using the same instructional text for all students. The concern of this study was aimed specifically at changing the approach to teach students, especially those reading below grade level, how to read independently. It is also a method showing general education teachers how to implement a guided reading approach in their own classroom environment.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Guided Reading instruction is an individualized and group instructional approach to teaching and assessing students with varying strengths and needs. This method encourages the teacher to assess student development and then use the information to encourage the student to use reading strategies when they have difficulties reading a passage. Students are grouped based on reading level therefore multiple instruction groups can be performed. The teacher will be providing guided reading instruction with leveled texts that are slightly more challenging enabling students to progress with their reading skills. Fountas and Pinnell (Cannon, 2017) described the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) as a system to determine students' independent and instructional reading levels, a time for teachers to observe reading behaviors in a one-on-one setting, time to engage comprehension, and make decisions that connect assessments to instruction. Guided reading is also used as a time period for teachers to teach students how to decode new words, maintain fluency, self-monitor, search for information in a text, self-correct their errors, predict, summarize, and analyze a text (Gaffner et. al., 2014).

As Schaffer and Schirmer (2010) noted, children come from diverse backgrounds and require specific learning needs. Teachers must accommodate to these needs by targeting instruction to individual needs. This may be accomplished through the use of small group guided reading instruction in a setting, which supports a positive learning framework (PLF) in which students have an environment where they feel safe to explore and learn (Chiarelli, Szabo, & Williams, 2015).

According to recent research, ability grouping is one of the factors resulting in closing the achievement gap between students of different socioeconomic status' (SES) as well as varying background knowledge (Chiarelli, Szabo, & Williams, 2015). The author has concluded that an effort must be made to incorporate small group reading instruction that addresses specific needs to foster the unique developmental path of each student.

Body of the Review

Small Group Reading. In preparation for this study, articles were reviewed that focused on the impact that guided reading has on students reading below grade level. Throughout this literature review, several key points appeared. First, over the past one hundred years, the way reading instruction has been implemented has changed significantly. The current view is that students learn more efficiently in small group settings so that teachers are able to foster each student's unique developmental path (Gaffner et. al., 2014). This has also led to the way teachers teach problem-solving skills based on how to decode new words, maintain fluency, self-monitor, search for information, self correct, predict, summarize, and analyze text. Second, research has focused on the diverse background and specific learning needs of many students (Schaffer & Schirmer, 2010). Lastly, guided reading instruction has been shown to help elementary students strengthen their phonemic awareness, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and fluency based off of small group activities (Makumbila & Rowland, 2016).

All schools require students to improve language skills, gain word recognition, practice fluency, and test comprehension skills. Guided Reading instruction begins as soon as a child enters kindergarten and continues through grade five. As students progress with their reading skills, they will transition through the emergent reader stage, the early reader stage, the transitional reader stage, and end with the fluent reader stage (With, 2019). Students come to

school with diverse backgrounds and specific learning needs, however the guided reading approach is the same. According to Schaffer and Schirmer (2010), guided reading lessons are specifically targeted to students' needs based on the ongoing assessments of each student. Teachers are able to assess students using running records. These running records will help the teacher keep track of omissions, substitutions, words the student is not able to identify, and the student's reading fluency. If a student is unable to recognize 90-95 percent of the words, the text level is considered to be the student's instructional level (Schaffer & Schirmer, 2010). Another way to group students is based on their ability to decode words, preferred language output, and the student's learning style. Teachers have a significant role when completing guided reading instruction groups. Teachers must have ongoing assessments, analyze student reading behaviors, provide intentional and systematic teaching, strategically lesson plan, and make text selections for students (Gaffner, Johnson, Torres-Elias, & Dryden, 2014).

A study was completed in an effort to conduct small-guided reading groups for students performing below grade level. Preservice educators were in charge of teaching small instruction reading groups. The teachers were in charge of planning activities for students to interact with the text in a number of ways to support various levels of learners. The students' tasks were to build on each other's background knowledge as well as work together to provide independent literacy tasks. The teacher was then able to step in and scaffold the students as needed. To prepare for the guided reading instruction groups, teachers needed to make text selections, select lesson objectives, support adequate reading behavior, demonstrate, and question students. Based on the study, it was found that young children who do not progress in reading at the same rate as their peers will likely continue to have difficulty in school without the proper interventions. To assess the current situation, pre-service teachers collaborated with a reading clinic to improve the

reading skills of struggling elementary readers. During the study, ongoing assessments were taken, student behaviors were analyzed, teaching was intentional and systematic, lesson plans were strategic, and text selection was a key component. Preservice teachers focused on teaching comprehension involving critical thinking questions, addressing phonics, analyzing words, and directly teaching vocabulary. During this assessment period, students were also assessed using the BAS assessment as well as the Istation's Indicator of Progress (ISIP) Early Reading computer administered assessment. After the completion of the assessment period, it was found that students receiving reading treatment at an earlier age conveyed better response to intervention. It was also found that students who participated in the reading clinic for a semester grew approximately one month in their BAS guided reading level versus a student who place in the reading clinic throughout the course of a year who grew approximately six months in their BAS guided reading level (Gaffner, Johnson, Torres-Elias, & Dryden , 2014).

Schools around the world have shown that students come to school with diverse backgrounds as well as specific learning needs. We, as teachers, must approach these students with targeted instruction based on their individual needs. Schaffer and Schirmer (2010), have found that teachers are able to help foster their students' learning to read by choosing text that is motivating and meaningful to the student. Lessons are specifically targeted to each student's needs based on the ongoing assessment of each child. Regardless of the student's initial ability and background knowledge, the student will have the opportunity to improve language skills, recognize words, gain fluency, and comprehend what they read. Students must be initially assessed using running records. The teacher will keep track of the omissions, substitutions, words the student is unable to identify, and the student's fluency. If the student is able to recognize 90-95 percent of the words in the given passage, the text level is considered to be at

the student's instructional level. Another way to group students for guided reading levels is to group students based on their decoding skills, preferred language output, and their learning style. After the initial assessment, students are able to begin their guided reading group. Before reading the text, it is crucial to make sure new knowledge is built around the text's subject. Existing knowledge must be activated, and new vocabulary needs to be taught. By completing these steps, motivation is built to read the book and connections to the book will be discussed. During the reading, students were invited to complete a picture walk and to highlight targeted vocabulary. After the text was read, the teacher questioned students' picture walks, asked predictions, and reviewed vocabulary. The result of focusing on a student's diverse background was that students' reading improvement ranged in half-year to two-year progress each year the guided reading instruction was implemented (Schaffer & Schirmer, 2010).

Makumbila and Rowland (2016) also support that students' diverse background play a vital role in a student's guided reading instruction. They have completed guided reading instruction groups three to five days per week for 10 to 30 minutes in order to develop students' phonemic awareness, phonetic awareness, vocabulary, reading, and fluency. During this time, teachers modeled reading instruction based on how to read, how to think, how to summarize, and how to ask questions as they read. During the guided reading sessions, teachers worked with small groups. Children were placed in groups similar to their development of the reading process and their ability to read approximately the same level text. Teachers then introduced stories to help assist children's reading in ways that help them develop independent reading strategies. Each student was in charge of reading the entire text. Makumbila and Rowland (2016) emphasized that it was vital to choose books that are relevant to students' needs, challenging,

and texts that students are familiar with. By choosing books that fit these criteria, students are able to apply their reading strategies to other content areas (Makumbila & Rowland, 2016).

The Guided Reading Approach. Toyama, Hiebert, and Person (2017) conducted a study looking into the purposes for which classroom assessments were used. Throughout the study, it was determined that assessments were vital in helping teachers to make important daily decisions regarding where individual students were at with their mastery based on the curriculum that was provided to them. The study was conducted using informal reading assessments as well as informal reading inventories. The researchers determined that without the proper reading assessments, students were found to read material that was either far below or far above their current level of competence.

Glasswell and Ford (2010) also noticed that students were receiving curriculum that was either far below or far above their current performance level so they came up with the Teaching Flexibility With Leveled Texts approach. The researchers in this study focused on the reasons that teachers and researchers have spent excessive amounts of time, money, and energy when undergoing leveling practices. Schools around the world have been shown to overuse whole-group instruction and instead need to transition into more traditional ability-based small groups. As the study stated, many students who need the most instructional time are the students who are below-level readers and are spending little time actual reading the text in a whole-group setting. This theory is because the texts have been proven to be too difficult for low-level readers to read on their own. Instead, teachers can support readers by developing their reading skills, strategies, and confidence with their reading. Teachers can work with the reader to find a text that is the “right level”, one that the student can read comfortably, and one that the reader is interested in reading.

When students are not provided with reading material that is compatible to their learning level, it is difficult for students to improve with their reading strategies. After discovering that their students weren't progressing in their reading at the rate of other students, Kruizinga and Nathan (2010) studied the implementation of guided reading in first and second grade classrooms at three public schools in the Western Cape of South Africa. It was found that teachers at these schools did not create guided reading groups based on ongoing assessments and instead grouped students based on where they were sitting in class. Teachers at these schools also did not have access to leveled guided reading books. Due to not having a consistent national standard to compare reading levels across schools, having minimal guided reading leveled resources, and not differentiating groups based on their reading levels, South African schools had a difficult time progressing their reading levels.

After recognizing the impact that leveled readers has on students' beginning reading strategies, Schirmer and Schaffer (2010) studied how guided reading impacts students who have specific learning needs. When completing the guided reading intervention, students had daily reading instruction that offered opportunities to practice strategies for word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. The guided reading intervention was shown to be the best instructional method for these students because teachers could choose any type of reading material and teach specific strategies on any given day. The teachers in the study were also found to be able to provide the level of supportive instruction that these students needed to become successful readers.

Not only is it important to partake in specified teaching of reading strategies, but it is also important to conduct assessments to guide our students' learning. Toyama, Hiebert, and Person (2017) conducted a study looking into the purposes for which classroom assessments were used.

Throughout the study, it was determined that assessments were vital in helping teachers to make important daily decisions regarding where individual students were at with their mastery based on the curriculum that was provided to them. The study was conducted using informal reading assessments as well as informal reading inventories. The researchers determined that without the proper reading assessments, students were found to read material that was either far below or far above their current level of competence.

Not only is it important to provide feedback for our students after their reading instruction, but it is also important to provide students with this corrective feedback as they are reading. Kouri, Selle, and Riley (2006) directed a study to better understand corrective feedback strategies and determine their effectiveness while students are reading. Throughout the study, fourteen students with specific language impairment participated. The reason the researchers were interested in the objective of this study was because literacy and language impairment are more prevalent than ever before. The researchers worked together to encourage students to use three cueing systems when reading: graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic. As students completed their oral reading, the researchers gave immediate feedback to half of the participants in the study regarding their oral reading correctiveness. The other half of students received correctiveness later on in the lesson. The research study found that there was a positive effect on accuracy and reading comprehension when researchers provided immediate feedback regarding the student's oral reading.

After analyzing how to apply reading strategies in the classroom, it was important to also view how we as teachers can incorporate corrective feedback in the classroom setting. Anderson, Wilkinson, and Mason (1995) wanted to compare and contrast how corrective feedback looked in a classroom setting. They performed the Effects of an Emphasis on Global Story Meaning

approach. The researchers in the study worked with six third-grade classes with half of the classes receiving teaching emphasis on story meaning and the other half of the classes receiving teaching emphasis on features of language. By focusing on one reading technique versus the other, researchers found that children performed somewhat better than the initial assessments with children in low and average reading groups making the most notable changes.

After discussing a vast amount of information regarding small group reading, we will now discuss situations in which whole group teaching can be transformed into small group reading. The Comprehension Intervention in the Primary Grades approach refers to the fourth-grade slump, which is known as a shift from learning to read to reading to learn. Many schools have a tendency of focusing on whole group read-alouds and shared reading as their way of teaching comprehension to students. Stahl (2016) stated that in order to teach primary students high-level comprehension of complex texts, we as teachers, need to focus on teaching word recognition, fluency, understanding our students' prior knowledge, vocabulary, and self-regulation. As teachers perform small group teaching, they need to take the time to provide comprehension-specific intervention as well. By assessing both listening comprehension and reading comprehension, teachers are able to fully understand a child's needs.

Kontovourki (2012) took the knowledge of applying specific reading techniques and completed a study on how reading leveled books affects third grader's assessment scores. While supervising the study, Kontovourki explained that students, especially early readers, need to be introduced to reading material that is not too difficult to read. If struggling readers are given material that is too hard to read, the text causes a feeling of constant frustration. By presenting our students with these texts, they will be able to perform appropriate reading practices such as word solving, practicing comprehension strategies, and learning text characteristics that support

their reading comprehension. Despite presenting our students with leveled reading material, Kontovourki also states that it is crucial to have students complete self-selection of reading material. By doing so, students can choose books based on their social and cultural roles.

Not only is it important to give our students specified feedback and the reading skills to incorporate into their own learning, but also it is also vital that we have our students develop and implement their own learning goals. Fountas and Pinnell (2012) established a theory that students are able to observe their own individual strengths while working toward further learning goals. During small group reading instruction, students learn to take words apart as well as attend to the meaning of a text. They work to think about the text before they read, attend to the meaning of the text as they read, and share their thinking in a small group after they read. Throughout the guided reading block, teachers need to build a community of readers and writers by teaching students to be engaged and independent with their language and literacy opportunities while the teacher is administering a small reading group. Classrooms have been shown to be full of diverse children. These diverse children require diverse needs. These individual needs can be met in a small-group guided reading group.

Singh, Matson, Cooper, and Adkins (2009) developed the Readability and Reading Levels of Behavior Treatment Plans approach in order to assess if students were taking their reading knowledge and applying it to their every day reading. The approach was formed to analyze 20 behavior treatment plans that were written by professional staff to determine if they were understandable and written at an appropriate reading level. It was found that the direct care staff did not always understand the way the behavior treatment plans were written due to the length of the plan, it was written in the passive tense, and that it was written full of technical

jargon. These behavior plans were difficult for staff to understand since the national average for reading is at the eighth grade level.

Dr. Hastings (2016) also wanted to view how reading instruction was carried out into students' every day lives. Dr. Hastings conducted the Leveled Reading and Engagement with Complex Texts approach. Dr. Hastings wanted to look into further detail to understand the frustration levels of both students and teachers when reading complex texts. She discussed the importance of having students be able to read, think about, and discuss age appropriate complex texts despite their decoding ability. It was found that teachers were presented with reading alternatives to ensure all students have access and experience with age appropriate texts. One of these alternatives were presenting classroom teachers with leveled readers for a differentiated small group guided reading experience.

At times, educators have been opposed to teaching small group reading because of some flaws in the small group instructional approach. Glasswell and Ford (2010) performed the Teaching Flexibility With Leveled Texts approach. The researchers in this study focused on the reasons that teachers and researchers have spent excessive amounts of time, money, and energy when undergoing leveling practices. Schools around the world have been shown to overuse whole-group instruction and instead need to transition into more traditional ability-based small groups. As the study stated, many students who need the most instructional time are the students who are below-level readers and are spending little time actual reading the text in a whole-group setting. This theory is because the texts have been proven to be too difficult for low-level readers to read on their own. Instead, teachers can support readers by developing their reading skills, strategies, and confidence with their reading. Teachers can work with the reader to find a text that is the "right level", one that the student can read comfortably, and one that the reader is

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After incorporating specific reading techniques, the Comprehension Intervention in the Primary Grades approach was implemented. The Comprehension Intervention in the Primary Grades approach refers to the fourth-grade slump, which is known as a shift from learning to read to reading to learn. Many schools have a tendency of focusing on whole group read-alouds and shared reading as their way of teaching comprehension to students. Stahl (2016) stated that in order to teach primary students high-level comprehension of complex texts, we as teachers, need to focus on teaching word recognition, fluency, understanding our students' prior knowledge, vocabulary, and self-regulation. As teachers perform small group teaching, they need to take the time to provide comprehension-specific intervention as well. By assessing both listening comprehension and reading comprehension, teachers are able to full understand a child's needs.

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After becoming more familiar with specific reading strategies and comprehension techniques, Fountas and Pinnell (2012) established a theory that students are able to observe their own individual strengths while working toward further learning goals. During small group reading instruction, students learn to take words apart as well as attend to the meaning of a text. They work to think about the text before they read, attend to the meaning of the text as they read, and share their thinking in a small group after they read. Throughout the guided reading block, teachers need to build a community of readers and writers by teaching students to be engaged and independent with their language and literacy opportunities while the teacher is administering a small reading group. Classrooms have been shown to be full of diverse children. These diverse children require diverse needs. These individual needs can be met in a small-group guided reading group.

Fountas and Pinnell Approach. The Analysis of Two Reading Intervention Programs dives deeper into analyzing the topic of the “reading wars”. When educators have the ability to choose the material that they will teach to at-risk readers, they can become overwhelmed with the amount of choices. It is important for teachers to choose the proper reading material especially for students who are identified as at risk for reading failure. The Fountas and Pinnell guided reading approach were placed as a favorable reading material since it includes more repetition of words and syntactic patterns. This helps students become more familiar with word identification

as well as focusing on comprehension techniques (Murray et. al., 2014).

To better support students with their selection of reading material, Dr. Fountas and Dr. Pinnell teamed up with Scholastic Education and Media Company to launch two new programs to expose students to diverse forms of reading material as well as material that they will be able to connect to based on real-world information. The addition of the program also aligns with Common Core State Standards and helps teachers to guide students as they read. Dr. Fountas and Dr. Pinnell have specified that the content is rich and the material is of high interest to readers. By exposing students to these diverse materials, they will be able to connect the material to what they encounter outside the classroom (PR, 2011).

After implementing small group reading material based on students' specific interests, there was a vast amount of backlash among parents. Fountas and Pinnell were interviewed to discuss the purpose of using the "A" to "Z" gradient as a tool for teachers versus a way to label a child. Fountas and Pinnell stated that at times, teachers inform students of their letter-reading placement, make parents aware of the level, and organize their classroom libraries in this way. Instead of teachers using the "A" to "Z" gradient as a label for students, it should instead be looked at in a way of showing small steps from the easiest to most difficult text. These levels should be used as a way for teachers to learn about the characteristics of each text and level and use this information to inform their teaching decisions (Parrott, 2017).

After further explaining the use of the "A to Z" gradient tool, Fountas and Pinnell also needed to explain why they designed the small group curriculum based on students' specific interests. The role of text levels in literacy instruction was brought to the attention of readers across the nation. Fountas and Pinnell (2019) state that a book is supposed to be chosen in personal ways based on a person's favorite genre or a type of story that the reader loves.

Teachers can support students choosing books that they would like to read by conducting mini lessons that teach students how to choose books for themselves. Reading level labels should not force students to choose certain books to read independently.

While many people around the nation began to understand why Fountas and Pinnell decided to create a small group curriculum based on students' diverse learning needs, many teachers were still overwhelmed by the amount of work that went into preparing these small group lessons. Bonnie Burns (2006) reflected on various strategies to locate a book that is at the right reading level for a given student. She reminded us that there are older formulas, such as Spache and Dale-Chall that require teachers to check each word that was read against a list of up to 3,000 words. Teachers were found to spend a significant amount of time administering these reading assessments. As students are learning to read, they need to practice reading accurately, fluently, and with appropriate comprehension. The Fountas and Pinnell guided reading assessment has been proven to be affective when choosing a book that has age-appropriate content, illustrations, appropriate layout, support curriculum, has language structure, and relates to a student's prior knowledge.

Now that teachers better understood how to assess students, Pinnell and Fountas teamed up with Scharer and Lyons to discuss how students can become engaged readers. Before the article was written, there was numerous backlashes stating that teachers were being "forced" to teach reading by using a scripted reading program against their professional judgment. The authors of the article stated that we must teach students in a small group setting so that we do not spend too much time on whole-class instruction strategies that are too easy for some students and too hard for other students. It was also stated that learning to comprehend is an ongoing process. Students do not learn to decode first then become readers, instead they work on decoding and

comprehending interchangeably (Scharer et. al., 2005).

You may be asking yourself, how are teachers across the nation going to learn these new reading methods? Fountas and Pinnell (2018) believe that all staff at a school work towards more improved literacy instruction by being provided with profession development opportunities and implementing new instructional practices. By doing so, teachers and staff members are able to promote literacy in their school environment. As impactful staff members, it was brought to our attention that every student must have equal access to literacy learning despite their teacher, their classroom, or their grade level. Students and teachers will then work together to integrate new ideas, fuel curiosity, think, talk, read, and write about their world, and learn about diverse topics. In a guided reading approach, students are able to act as powerful agents in their own learning.

Fountas and Pinnell express that reading and writing are interconnected. The authors of the book made sure to work collaboratively with classroom teachers as well as librarians to inform them of how to provide supplemental classroom material. They provided the collaborators with numerous charts, check lists, sample lessons, and a blueprint of a classroom design to ensure that all students were receiving the appropriate content necessary to help their literacy techniques grow (Guided, 2001).

It was time to see how the guided reading approach transformed classroom instruction. The Turning Teachers into Coaches approach was developed in part by The Literacy Collaborative that operates in 300 schools throughout the nation with various instructional programs for different levels of learners. After evaluating primary students' reading skills in the guided reading intervention, it was shown that students' reading skills grew an average of 32 percent over a three year time period. Other studies showed that guided reading impacted standardized test scores, student writing skills, improvements in instruction quality, and positive

outlooks on literacy instruction by both teachers and students. In order to prove that the guided reading approach is affective, there is a strong emphasis on ongoing in-class assessments.

Teachers are able to perform these ongoing in-class assessments by listening to students read short passages and documents (Rebora, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

When comparing the past approaches to implementing guided reading instruction with students reading below grade level, a theoretical framework is needed. To begin, understanding students' diverse backgrounds and prior cultural experiences, must be understood by all staff members in the school that support literacy development. The students' families also need to be implemented in the school microsystem, as they help to foster their student's individual background information as well as support their student's development towards becoming independent with their literacy. The most compelling theoretical explanation comes from Fountas and Pinnell's theory that classrooms are full of wonderfully, diverse students and that instruction is needed to reach all of them (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012).

One key argument raised by Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell (Fountas, 2019), was that parents were concerned that teachers were using the "A" to "Z" gradient scale as a way to label the students in the class. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2017), the "A" to "Z" scale should be used strictly for teachers' purposes of identifying the characteristics of each text and the information to inform their teaching decisions.

When discussing the positive impact that guided reading plays on students reading below grade level, the amount of time and preparation for teachers also comes to mind. Makumbila and Rowland (2016) stated that students could help participate in their preparation to learn by choosing text materials that interest them. Students can also partake in guiding their learning by

building a classroom community and working on building words as well as practicing their independent literacy techniques while the teacher is conducting small group reading instruction (Parrott, 2017).

Research Question(s)

What impact does Guided Reading instruction play on first graders reading below grade level compared to teaching reading using only a whole group reading approach?

Conclusions

The literature discussed in this chapter reveals that students would be expected to respond positively when working in guided reading instruction groups. To make this approach more successful, participating teachers are encouraged to partake in professional development and continuing education courses relating to Guided Reading instructional best practices.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

Teachers around the world have been in a continuous debate regarding which reading instruction technique works best for teaching beginning reading strategies. Some teachers prefer a whole group approach to teaching reading by giving all students the same instructional material. Other teachers take into effect their students' diverse learning needs and provide them with differentiated reading material based on the student's prior knowledge, need to build fluency, specific skills that the student is working towards mastery, and the content of the text. After conducting research, I have gained an interest in learning how guided reading instruction impacts students' specific learning needs compared to a whole group reading approach.

Research Question(s)

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact that guided reading has on students reading below grade level. The following question was addressed:

- How does guided reading instruction impact students reading below grade level compared to teaching reading using only a whole group reading approach?

Research Design

The research design that was used during this study was a Single-Subject A-B research design. During the baseline period, each student was assessed using the FAST Bridge sight word assessment, the FAST Bridge sentence reading assessment, and the Fountas and Pinnell guided reading assessment. Students were then assessed again two weeks later during the baseline

period using the same assessments as the baseline period. After three weeks, each of the students participating in the research study began their guided reading intervention. These students completed the FAST Bridge sight word assessment, the FAST Bridge sentence reading assessment, and the BAS Fountas and Pinnell assessment two weeks into the intervention period. Participants in the study received a final assessment six weeks after the baseline period.

Setting

This study was conducted at an elementary school located in eastern North Dakota. The district consists of approximately 11,000 students in grades kindergarten through 12th grade. There are two high schools, two middle schools, and fifteen elementary schools located in the district. The following ethnicities were reported: 76% Caucasian, 4% Asian, 13% African American, 4% Hispanic, 3% American Indian/Alaska Native, and 0% Pacific Islander. 28.84% of students in the district qualify for free or reduced-price meals (West, 2018).

Participants

The subjects of my study were five randomly assigned students from my classroom of 21 students. Three of the students were females and two of the students were males. All subjects were ages 6 or 7 years old. None of the students are on record as English learners.

Sampling. All five of the students were identified by their teacher as needing additional reading instruction. The identified students were able to read at least a level B on the BAS assessment. This purposeful sampling method was used to monitor the growth that first-grade students, struggling with reading, would make by the end of the study. The names have been changed to protect participant confidentiality.

Five students were involved in the study. Data gathered from FAST Bridge assessments and Fountas and Pinnell guided reading assessments at the beginning of the study determined which students participated in the study. The school reading interventionist met with the classroom teacher to help determine which students would qualify for the study being conducted.

Instrumentation

The students completed an initial FAST Bridge sight word and sentence reading assessment as well as an initial Fountas and Pinnell guided reading assessment to determine the most appropriate guided reading level for their intervention program.

Next, the teacher administered the FAST Bridge sentence reading assessment. Each student in the study was able to partake in this assessment in his or her general education classroom. The teacher was expected to administer the assessment in a one-to-one setting with the student. The general education classroom teacher explained to the student that they would be completing the FAST Bridge sentence reading assessment. They then let the student know that they had one-minute to read as many of the words written in sentence form as they can. It was important to also have the classroom teacher state that if a student did not know a word then they should skip it. When the student reads the first word on the assessment, the teacher set the timer for one minute and pressed start. During the assessment, the teacher followed along with the student and used the teacher copy of the assessment to cross out words that the student read as incorrect. When the minute was over, the teacher counted how many words the student read correctly and placed the number of words at the top of the assessment next to the student's name and the date. An example of the FAST Bridge sentence reading assessment is located in Appendix B.

Lastly, the general education teacher and each participant in the study were able to partake in a BAS Fountas and Pinnell assessment. It was important that the teacher and the student were in a one-to-one setting for the assessment. The teacher began by explaining to the participant that they are going to be reading a book today. The teacher then placed two books, one nonfiction and one fiction, on the table for the student to choose from. The student decided which book they would like to read to the teacher. The researcher, also known as the classroom teacher, then told the student to begin reading the book when they are ready. As the student read the text aloud, the classroom teacher followed along on the teacher copy of the assessment. For every word that the student read correctly, the teacher placed a check mark above the corresponding word. For every word that the student read incorrectly, the teacher wrote the word that the student said instead and placed it above the correct word on the assessment. When the student completed the oral reading section, the teacher then asked the student five to six comprehension questions based on the text that was read. After the assessment, the teacher counted the words that were read correctly and divided the number by the total words in the book. If the student read 95 percent or more of the words correctly, the teacher then gave the student another book to read at a higher guided reading level. If the student read below 95 percent, the teacher considered this to be an instructional book for this student. Lastly, the teacher also wanted to consider the score of the comprehension portion of the assessment. If the student was able to comprehend the story, the teacher considered the book to be a good fit book or challenge the student to read a more challenging book. If the student was unable to comprehend the story based on the questions provided, the teacher would have the student work on a guided reading level that is lower than the book that was provided. The teacher then wrote these assessment

scores on the front page of the assessment next to the student's name and the date. An example of the BAS Fountas and Pinnell assessment can be found in Appendix C.

Students participating in the research study met during their classroom guided reading block, each day of the week for fifteen minutes. These students met with their classroom teacher to complete one lesson from the Literacy Footprints curriculum per day.

Data Collection. At the beginning of the study, each participant in the study was able to partake in an initial FAST Bridge sight word assessment, FAST Bridge sentence reading assessment, and a BAS Fountas and Pinnell assessment. These initial assessments served as a baseline for the study. During the following weeks, students were tested on the same assessments every other week. During the last week of the research period, all participants in the study completed a final assessment using the FAST Bridge sight word assessment, FAST Bridge sentence reading assessment, and the BAS Fountas and Pinnell assessment.

Data Analysis. The data that was found in the completed study takes place in three separate scatter plot graphs consisting of a graph for the FAST Bridge sight word assessment, the FAST Bridge sentence reading assessment, and the BAS assessment.

For the FAST Bridge sight word assessment as well as the FAST Bridge sentence reading assessment, each graph consisted of an x-axis representing the six weeks in the research study period. The y-axis consisted of lines that represent the number of words read per minute ranging from zero words to 40 words. The first three weeks were documented based on each student's assessment data before the intervention took place. Students' scores were averaged each week to provide one data point.

For the BAS reading assessment, there is one scatter plot graph with each of the participant's data represented. On the x-axis of the graph, there is six weeks represented since this is the duration of the study. On the y-axis, there are letters A through I representing the reading level progression that is typically made throughout a student's first grade year.

Throughout the first three weeks of the study, each student's baseline scores were graphed using various color points to represent each student taking place in the study. At the end of the study, we were able to see each student's plotted points and determine how the guided reading intervention impacted their growth in the area of literacy.

Research Question(s) and System Alignment.

Table 3.1.

Research Question(s) Alignment

Research Question	Variables	Design	Instrument	Validity & Reliability	Technique (e.g., interview)	Source
How does guided reading instruction impact students reading below grade level?	Dependent variable: reading level progression Independent variable: Literacy Footprints curriculum	Single Subject A-B Design	Dependent variable: Fountas and Pinnell guided reading assessment and FAST Bridge assessment on sight words and sentence reading Independent variable: leveled books in the Literacy Footprints	As a form of reliability, assessment scores will be placed in the data table on the last day of each assessment week.	The techniques that will take place are formative and summative assessments.	There will be five participating students.

curriculum,
presented in
the
Appendix

Procedures

When completing the initial FAST Bridge sight word assessment, each of the participating students sat down with their classroom teacher in a one-to-one general education classroom setting. The classroom teacher told each of the students that they would have one minute to read as many of the sight words as they can. The teacher explained that if a student does not know the word, they are expected to skip it and move on to the following word. Once the student read the first word on the assessment, the teacher set the timer for one minute and clicked start. As the student read the words, the teacher kept track on a teacher copy of the words that the student read correctly and the words that the student read incorrectly. At the end of the minute, the student stopped reading and the teacher counted how many words the student read in a minute. The teacher then recorded the number of words that the student read correct and wrote it on the top of the student's assessment sheet next to the student's name and the date. An example of the FAST Bridge sight word assessment is located in Appendix A.

This research study was administered over a six-week time period. Five students, who fit the study criteria, in the first grade, were invited to participate in the research study. The five participants received guided reading intervention each day of the school week in their general education classroom. The participants met with their classroom teacher for 15 minutes per day for guided reading instruction during their school's English Language Arts time period.

The intervention group of five students received instruction during the guided reading intervention block using the Literacy Footprints curriculum. The classroom teacher has partaken in multiple Literacy Footprints training courses prior to this research study.

Participants in the research study began the research study by completing assessments using the FAST Bridge sight word assessment, the FAST Bridge sentence reading assessment, and a BAS Fountas and Pinnell assessment. The first three weeks of the study consisted of establishing baseline data and beginning implementing guided reading stations by having students explore iPad apps, complete word sorts using the Words Their Way curriculum, and silently reading books throughout the classroom. Meanwhile, the classroom teacher used the BAS Fountas and Pinnell assessments to assign students to the appropriate guided reading instructional levels.

Throughout the following three weeks, students met with their general education classroom teacher to complete one Literacy Footprint lesson per day. The classroom teacher assessed each participant in the study at the end of weeks two, four, and six using the FAST Bridge sight word assessment, the FAST Bridge sentence reading assessment, and the BAS Fountas and Pinnell assessment to determine the progress that was made throughout the intervention time period. At the end of the six-week research period, the classroom teacher compared students' initial, weekly, and summative assessment data to determine the growth since the start of the intervention.

Ethical Considerations

Permission was obtained from the school district as well as participants and parents to conduct this study. Permission was received from the Superintendent of Instruction as well as the building principal at the school where the research was conducted.

Each human subject was protected during the completion of this study. Participants and their parents were informed of the research, the procedures that were involved, and both the risks

and benefits of the study. Confidentiality was protected by not disclosing specific information. The choice to participate or withdraw at any time was given both verbally and in writing.

Conclusions

In the past, reading instruction has been taught using a whole group lesson approach with each student being presented with the same instructional text and the same activities as one another despite their literacy abilities. After discussing the impact that small group guided reading intervention plays on students reading below grade level, we will now take a look at how this approach impacted students in an eastern North Dakota school. See chapter four for the results of this research study.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Description of Data

Each individual participant in the study began by completing a pre-assessment using the Fountas and Pinnell BAS assessment. Participants met with their general education classroom teacher to individually read a leveled text without guidance or support. During the assessment, the classroom teacher recorded students' reading errors using the Fountas and Pinnell BAS reading assessment to determine the student's accuracy throughout the reading. After the reading took place, the general education classroom teacher asked a series of comprehension questions to determine each student's understanding of the text that was read. The classroom teacher then calculated each student's accuracy by taking the words read correctly and dividing it by the total number of words in the text. This number was then used for the classroom teacher to determine each student's independent reading level. If a student was able to accurately read 95 to 100 percent of the text, the classroom teacher then conducted a Fountas and Pinnell Guided Reading assessment at one level higher than the previous leveled text. When participants read below 94 percent of words correctly, this text level was considered to be the student's instructional Guided Reading level. First grade students are expected to begin the school year reading a Fountas and Pinnell BAS level D. All participants in the study were reading below a level D at the pre-assessment period. These students were then placed in the same Guided Reading group.

Students not only completed a Fountas and Pinnell Guided Reading assessment but they also partook in a pre-assessment in the areas of sight word identification and sentence reading using the FAST Bridge assessment. Each participant met in an individualized setting with the

classroom teacher. During the sight word identification assessment, students were given a list of sight words. Students read as many sight words as they were able within a one-minute time frame. After the completion of this assessment, participants moved on to the sentence reading assessment. The general education classroom teacher provided participants with a booklet containing one sentence on each page. Students read as many sentences as they could in the one-minute time frame provided. The general education classroom teacher used the computer to click on words that the student read incorrectly. The student's number of words read per minute using a sentence reading was the calculated.

During the first three weeks of the study, students were taught using a whole group reading instruction approach. Throughout this time period, participants of the study joined in with the other 16 students in their class to participate in a one hour English Language Arts block. Over the span of the 60 minutes, the teacher began by having students fill in missing letters on a sentence to decipher what the morning message read. Students worked hard to identify the sight words provided, the spelling blends and digraphs located in the message, and read the message after it was filled in. After the morning message, the classroom teacher reviewed how to write one letter of the alphabet per day. This time was also used to compile a list of words that begin with the corresponding letter. The classroom teacher then had students transition to the whole group rug to read a book and focus on the visualization and text-to-text connection comprehension strategies. Once the book was finished and students shared their comprehension techniques, the classroom teacher had students return to their desk to complete a poetry mini lesson. During this time, students worked together to read the poem provided, determine the rhyming words located in the poem, highlight given spelling sorts, count the syllables in the lines of the poem, and illustrate the poem based on their visualizations while reading. Afterwards, the

classroom teacher gathered students at the whole group rug to teach a given spelling sort. Students participated in the lesson by writing the words in their planner, separating the sounds into phonemes or units of sound, completing written activities, and using the words in a sentence. Throughout the whole group English Language Arts block, the classroom teacher worked hard to incorporate the five areas of reading to help each student grow with their ability to read independently. Although the classroom teacher was carrying out instruction to fidelity, it was challenging to differentiate the instruction to students' given needs given there were 21 students in the class.

After the third week of the research study, the classroom teacher began implementing guided reading instruction to help support participants' diverse reading needs. The researcher saw a growth in participants' confidence as a whole. The general education classroom teacher used the guided reading period to review previously taught sight words by writing and reading them, introducing new vocabulary in the given text, reading the given text with some support by the researcher, practice comprehension strategies, learn how to read and write new sight words, practice phonemic awareness strategies, and write about the corresponding text. The researcher, also known as the classroom teacher, found that they could differentiate the course content to meet each student's diverse needs.

Results

During the fall trimester, first graders are expected to identify 17 sight words and be able to read 14 words written in sentence form within a one-minute time frame. Participants in the study averaged reading 13.2 sight words and reading 9.2 words written in sentence form within a one-minute time frame.

Table 4.1

Baseline Assessments

Participant	BAS Fountas and Pinnell	FAST Bridge Sentence Reading	FAST Bridge Sight Word Identification
Student A	B	6	5
Student B	B	4	7
Student C	B	16	14
Student D	B	9	19
Student E	B	11	21

After two weeks of teaching whole group instruction, the study participants were assessed using the BAS Fountas and Pinnell assessment, the FAST Bridge sentence reading assessment, and the FAST Bridge sight word identification assessment. Data showed that each participant was making adequate progress towards the year-end goal of reading proficiently at a BAS Fountas and Pinnell level I.

Table 4.2

Week Two Assessments

Participant	BAS Fountas and Pinnell	FAST Bridge Sentence Reading	FAST Bridge Sight Word Identification
Student A	B	8	4
Student B	B	9	9
Student C	B	17	20
Student D	B	11	21
Student E	B	14	24

At the end of the fourth week of the research study, participants completed the FAST Bridge sight word identification assessment, FAST Bridge sentence reading assessment, and a BAS Fountas and Pinnell assessment. The classroom teacher recorded students reading 20, 17, 26, 26, and 28 sight words per minute according to data taken using the FAST Bridge sight word identification assessment. Participants were able to read 12, 13, 19, 20, and 19 words correctly when written in sentence form using the FAST Bridge sentence reading assessment. After completing the BAS Fountas and Pinnell assessment, data showed that each participant read a level C text independently and were assigned a level D instructional text level. Students were shown to grow a vast amount in each assessment area compared to the previous assessments.

Table 4.3

Week Four Assessments

Participant	BAS Fountas and Pinnell	FAST Bridge Sentence Reading	FAST Bridge Sight Word Identification
Student A	C	12	20
Student B	C	13	17
Student C	C	19	26
Student D	C	20	26
Student E	C	19	28

After completing two more weeks of guided reading lessons using the Literacy Footprints curriculum, students completed a post-assessment to conclude the research study. During this time, students read 25, 26, 30, 31, and 34 sight words per minute as determined using the FAST Bridge sight word identification assessment. Participants then read 15, 18, 22, 25, and 22 words correctly when written in sentence form according to data taken using the FAST Bridge sentence

reading assessment. Lastly, each student was recorded to be independently reading a level D text after completing the BAS Fountas and Pinnell assessment. This data shows a significant increase since the beginning of the guided reading intervention period.

Table 4.4

Post Assessments

Participant	BAS Fountas and Pinnell	FAST Bridge Sentence Reading	FAST Bridge Sight Word Identification
Student A	D	15	25
Student B	D	18	26
Student C	D	22	30
Student D	D	25	31
Student E	D	22	34

Implications

Based off of data collected throughout the whole group reading instruction time frame and the Guided Reading small group instruction time period, participants were found to respond positively to the given instructional material. According to the FAST Bridge sight word identification assessment, FAST Bridge sentence reading assessment, and the BAS Fountas and Pinnell assessment, it was found that participants grew the most with their reading during the Guided Reading intervention time period.

CHAPTER 5

ACTION PLAN AND PLAN FOR SHARING

Action Plan

The Guided Reading instructional strategy is a well-known approach for providing small group individualized reading instruction in elementary classrooms. The purpose of this study was to determine how a guided reading instructional approach benefits first grade students reading below grade level compared to learning how to read using a whole group literacy instructional approach. Before the study was carried out, it was anticipated that participants' reading scores would increase due to the small group, individualized instruction that would be provided by implementing a Guided Reading instructional approach. After evaluating the results from the conducted study, an increase in reading scores was found after Guided Reading was implemented. There were three factors that are thought to relate to the increase in students' scores presented by the study.

The first factor related to students coming from diverse backgrounds. At the beginning of the study, it was found that students require specific learning needs. The general education classroom teacher was able to accommodate to each participant's specified learning needs then use this information to target Guided Reading group instruction. Based off of this information, it was also found that students progressed through the Guided Reading lessons at different rates due to their diverse background knowledge. The general education classroom teacher was also fond to implement a positive learning framework (PLF) so that students had an environment in which they felt safe to explore and learn. The classroom teacher will continue to use data from the FAST Bridge sight word assessment, FAST Bridge sentence reading assessment, and BAS

Fountas and Pinnell guided reading assessment to help determine students' specified learning needs and group students based on their specific learning needs.

The general education classroom teacher not only took into aspect that students come from diverse backgrounds, but they also implemented ability grouping based on students' specific learning needs.

Not only did the classroom teacher take students' diverse backgrounds into aspect when planning Guided Reading groups, but the teacher also used ongoing assessments to determine if students were continuing to grow in their reading. Although all participants continued to grow in their reading throughout the study, the classroom teacher planned to change the Guided Reading intervention slightly if students did not make adequate growth. It is important for teachers to continue to monitor their students' growth in the area of reading.

The classroom teacher also provided each participant with corrective feedback on small group observations, BAS Fountas and Pinnell assessments, FAST Bridge sight word identification, and FAST Bridge sentence reading. The teacher used feedback such as correcting students when writing sight words, helping monitor students' comprehension answers, and correcting students when they sounded out a word incorrectly. The researcher, also known as the classroom teacher, would also make sure to provide many comments using positive praise to encourage students and their ability to grow in reading.

It was evident in this study that Guided reading small group instruction had an effect on readers' reading growth. Participants did show reading improvement when taught using a whole group reading instructional approach however, students' reading improved significantly when Guided Reading was implemented.

Overall, the benefit of using a Guided Reading small group instructional approach can plan an essential role in increasing students' reading assessment scores in a first grade classroom. It is recommended that the researcher continue to use a Guided Reading small group instructional approach. As Guided Reading is being implemented, the classroom teacher should continue to take students' diverse learning needs, formulate ongoing assessments, and provide corrective feedback into consideration because they have been proven to have a positive influence on students' reading growth.

Plan for Sharing

Going forward, not only should the researcher continue to implement a small group Guided Reading instructional approach, but they should also share the overarching information found in the research study with their grade level colleagues. Grade level colleagues can gather together in a professional learning community (PLC) to share the information based on how Guided Reading instruction impacts first graders' ability to read. During this PLC meeting, the team can also work to discuss how to implement the FAST Bridge sight word identification assessment, FAST Bridge sentence reading assessment, and the BAS Fountas and Pinnell assessment. The researcher can then help colleagues to use this data to form ability-based Guided Reading groups. In the following PLC meetings, the group can determine what information will be taught in the Guided Reading groups, how often to assess students, and various interventions to incorporate into the instructional material for students reading below grade level.

After sharing the research information with other grade level colleagues, the researcher can then bring this information to a district English Language Arts meeting with the district coordinator and other first grade teachers across the district. Similar to the PLC meeting with colleagues, the researcher can help other educators across the district to determine the

information that will be taught in the Guided Reading small group, how to assess students and how often to conduct the assessment, and how to implement various interventions, strategies, and skills to help students grow with their reading instruction.

By sharing the information that was found in this study, first grade educators will be able to incorporate Guided Reading instruction into their teaching to help first grade students reading below grade level.

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Appendix A

FAST Bridge Sight Word Assessment

Sight Words Report

80 Items correct out of 87
 92% accuracy
 80 correct per min.
Low Risk


The subtest assesses a student's ability to recognize 50 (kindergarten) or 150 (1st grade) of the most 'high-frequency' words.

Correct Items: not just your out by on to two big had up like was did we my what for him can be it she at all in but you food the too or is so are will he some me if a day have one and make look little school them most home from when family said put down into people tell their time how there end this help room book now has as of it's over long with don't keep

Incorrect Items: I off next work they house need

Not Attempted: about back then his door that very say more its old first good than under because light went after only each red may does us any way never well must sea took before run play last night would show right other also here thing soon eat small who again much got four many made could today let which air try find best mother

Items After Mark Last Letter


Progress Monitoring Form 1

too	make	my	one	we
to	in	so	had	but
some	two	day	on	for
all	a	can	I	have
is	if	school	what	was
she	look	at	by	will
big	be	he	just	out
like	you	little	are	your
it	not	food	him	me
and	the	or	up	did

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Student Form: Sight Words (50)

Appendix B

Copy of the FAST Bridge Sentence Reading Assessment

Sentence Reading Report

103 items correct out of 104 99% accuracy 103 correct per min. Low Risk

The subtest assesses student's reading rate and accuracy.

Item: Kate and Spot live together They live with their mom and dad It is a great family Kate is two years old Spot is her dog He is nine years old They love to play together all day But every day Kate has to nap Kate did not want to nap But Spot did He was too old to play all day He wanted a nap Kate should take one too After their naps they could both play Spot went over to his bed He got in and shut his eyes Kate gave his leg- a tug She wanted to play Spot did not

Incorrect Items: leg

Not Attempted: look at her He did not even turn his head Kate thought about what to do She got in her bed too She shut her eyes just like Spot Spot got up Kate woke up a little bit later She did take a nap Now she had even more energy She got out of bed Kate began to run around the house Spot could not keep up


Screening Form I

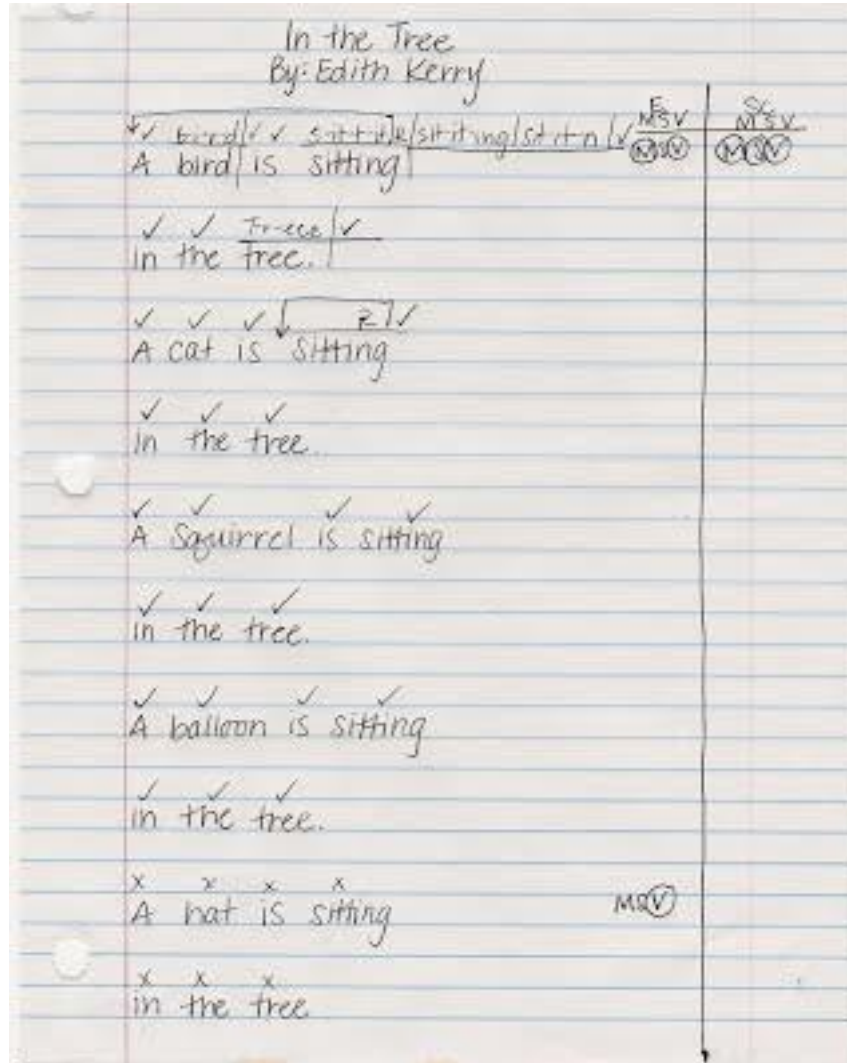


Kate and Spot live together.

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Page 1
Test of Sentence Reading

Appendix C

Copy of the BAS Fountas and Pinnell assessment



Recording Form
The Nice Little House • LEVEL D • FICTION

Student _____ Grade _____ Date _____

Teacher _____ School _____

Recording Form

Part One: Oral Reading

Place the book in front of the student. Read the title and introduction.

Introduction: In this story, each animal went into a little house and said, "What a nice little house!"
Read to find out what happened when all the animals went in.

Page	Text	Sources of Information Used									
		E	SC	E		SC					
				M	S	V	M	S	V		
2	The horse went in the little house. "What a nice little house!" said the horse.										
4	The cow went in the little house. "What a nice little house!" said the cow.										
6	The pig went in the little house. The pig said,										
Subtotal											

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Appendix D

September 1, 2019

110 3rd Ave North
Horace, ND 58047

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your student has been invited to participate in a study to determine how Guided Reading impacts his or her literacy techniques.

Your student was selected because he/she is in my general education classroom. If you decide to participate in this study, please understand that your student will be asked to complete the same tasks that are typical classroom activities that involve no risk to your student.

1. Your student will partake in a Guided Reading instructional group for 15 minutes per day each day of the school week during our class Guided Reading block.
2. Participants in the study will be given an assessment once per week to determine their area of growth in based on sight word reading, sentence reading, and their oral fluency reading.

Although Principal Carol Zent has granted me permission to conduct this study, since this information is being used to help me complete my master's degree at Minnesota State University Moorhead, I need parental consent to use the information in my final paper to complete my degree. If you sign this form, you are giving me consent to use the information that I gather. All information that is used will be kept confidential and no names will be used throughout the paper. Please note that your student can choose to not participate at any time without any consequences.

Please feel free to ask any questions regarding this study. You may contact me at LSUCKOW@west-fargo.k12.nd.us. You may also contact my course professor, Ximena Suarez-Sousa at 218-477-2007 or suarez@mnstate.edu.

You will be offered a copy of this form to keep and refer to. You are making a decision of whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate in the study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Signature of Course Professor

Date