

## Making Guided Reading Work

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The focus on literacy has increased over the past several years. With each new idea presented many teachers find themselves saying, "That is a great idea, but what do I take out of my day to add that in?" The expectation that teachers need to be doing Guided Reading in their classrooms can be very overwhelming, particularly to SK teachers. Kindergarten is unique. We have our students for half the time that the other grades do, we are teaching rules and routines to children that have never been in a formal school setting all while managing the mounds of paper work and dealing with parents who are sending 'their baby' off to school for the first time. There is a lot of research that states that Guided Reading helps to improve literacy but fitting it into your already packed day may seem almost impossible. In this article we have outlined a plan that we have developed through trial and error, which has enabled us to implement Guided Reading successfully at Templemead School.

Before implementing a Guided Reading Program in our classrooms there were many things we had to consider. When planning for Guided Reading, ask yourself these questions. Are you comfortable working in a small group while other students work independently? Is your classroom set up in a way and have the space that allows you to work in a small group separated somewhat from the other children? Are your students' oral language skills well developed enough to move away from the oral into focusing on print? Does your school/classroom have the leveled texts needed for Guided Reading? If your school doesn't have the leveled texts, do you have volunteers to photocopy black line master books, collate them and staple them?

We believe that the key to a successful Guided Reading program in Kindergarten is establishing a routine that allows for a block of uninterrupted time to work in a small group situation. This may seem unmanageable in Kindergarten especially with the large class sizes many of us have today, but we found that by planning Guided Reading time right from the start of the year it was manageable. It is easier to plan to include this time right from the start of the year rather than trying to fit it in later. Establishing a routine that encourages independence is crucial from the first day of school.

We found that **Name Bags** are a way to establish a good routine as all children are working on the same task. After a few days of working with our students to set our expectations, we saw how quickly our children were able to work independently on them. Children chatted with each other as they worked, but we made our expectations clear and monitored the noise carefully in the beginning. The children soon learned what was acceptable and what was not during this 20 minute time period. The key was to **let them work on their own**. We busied ourselves with housekeeping items so that the children didn't rely on us at this time. We started from the beginning of the year telling them that Literacy Centers were a special time because they got to work by themselves not with the teacher. We explained that they should only approach us in an emergency. We chose the area of our classroom where we would be doing Guided Reading and situated ourselves there as much as possible during this time so that the children got used to seeing us but not bothering with us.

As mid-October approached we started to introduce independent **Literacy Centers** slowly to replace the Name Bags. We found that using a rotation system was helpful. We grouped our kids by reading ability and introduced the centers one at a time. In a half day class we have five groups, one for each day of the week. Each child reads with us once a week. A full day class may want to do a Literacy Center rotation twice in a day in order to fit in 2 Guided Reading groups per day. We found using a bucket system to be helpful. We have 5 groups, so we put five buckets out and labeled them with the kids' names. Each day we just move the materials into the next bucket as a rotation.

The center we introduced first was **Read The Room** (using fancy pointers). We worked closely with the group while the others were doing Name Bags. We worked with a new group each day to Read The Room so that everyone understood what was expected during this time. Once all groups had learned about Read The Room we sat at our Guided Reading area and watched for about a week giving reminders to those who needed them.

The next center we introduced was **Write The Room**. At this point we had 3 groups doing Name Bags, one group doing Read The Room and we began to work with a group to Write The Room. We gave the children clipboards and showed them how to write words they saw around the room. Again, we spent time with each group at the center throughout the week so that expectations were clear.

The next center we introduced involved an **Emergent Reader** (a pattern story with the same word missing on each page). We made our own books leaving out a Popcorn Word or downloaded some from the web. Before hand, we printed the missing word on the lines in highlighter so the kids just had to trace them. At the start of the year our goal is to have them work independently so if the word is already there to be traced they will have no trouble. As the year progresses we start just printing the word on the first page. We have found it is helpful to do read the book as a class each day, the week before it is a Literacy Center. During this week one group was doing Read The Room, one group was doing Write The Room, one group was working with us on an Emergent Reader and the other 2 groups were doing Name Bags.

**Journal** is the next center that we introduced. We encourage our students to 'kidwrite' a story in their journal. We find this center is often the most difficult to implement as many children are nervous about writing. Lots of encouragement and lots of praise works wonders! We accept anything and everything as, "The best writing we ever have seen!!"

#### By Mid-November

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Group #1	Teacher	Name Bags	Journal	Write The Room	Read The Room
Group #2	Read The Room	Teacher	Name Bags	Journal	Write The Room
Group #3	Write The Room	Read The Room	Teacher	Name Bags	Journal
Group #4	Journal	Write The Room	Read The Room	Teacher	Name Bags
Group #5	Name Bags	Journal	Write The Room	Read The Room	Teacher

By mid-November our routines are well established, our expectations are clear and although the noise level is usually louder than we like, we were ready to begin working with one group a day. We have spent so much time explaining that this time is their time and not time to work with the teacher that they require very few reminders to not interrupt us. Once we feel comfortable we introduce different types of 'hands on' Literacy Centers during this time as well.

#### Oral Language Development and Phonological Awareness Activities

When we have established a good routine with our students and they are working independently we need to determine what our students will be doing during this small group Guided Reading time. Before beginning Guided Reading with our students it is important that their oral language skills are strong. Children still developing oral language skills benefit more from small group oral language development. At our school, students do not participate in actual Guided Reading until their oral language skills are well developed. These students still meet with us for what we call Guided Reading time but our focus is on the activities listed below. Although oral language is a focus during most of our day we have found success in meeting with children or similar abilities in small groups to work on areas of weakness. As a student's oral language develop we move them into traditional Guided Reading using leveled text.

#### Nelson Mondo *Let's Talk* Resource

This kit consists of a large flip book of pictures along with lesson plans that introduce standard oral English language sentence structures, develops oral comprehension and links thought, talk and print while building vocabulary. It is ideal for small group oral language instruction. This valuable resource for Kindergarten and Grade 1 will be in all schools in the coming school year.

Word Counting: Give the children an Elkonin box and 3 tokens. Have children put a token in each box from left to right to count words as you say them orally. Begin with one -syllable words like: run, jump, walk, start. Move onto 2, one- syllable words like: run fast, jump high, play nice. Next introduce 3, one- syllable words like: I can jump, swim fast please, jump high now. Once the children have mastered this use the student names in the class before moving on to words with more than one syllable. The goal here is to teach children that one word spoken is one word heard. In the beginning many of your children will assume that 2 syllable words are 2 words.

Rhyming: Gather objects that rhyme or purchase rhyming games that include real objects and work with the group to encourage listening for and hearing rhymes orally. Once the children have mastered rhyming with real objects you can move to flashcards with pictures on them.

Blending: Use two Dinky Cars to show the children how to blend onset and rhyme. Example: cat. One car is the *c*, the other is the *at*. Say /c/ as you drive the /c/ car into the /at/ car and smash them together and it says *Cat*.

Initial Sounds: Gather objects or purchase games that encourage the students to sort objects by the same initial sound. This can be done with ending sounds as well.

### Guided Reading

When the students in our class begin actual Guided Reading lessons, pattern text with good picture support is a must. We want our students to learn to use picture clues right from the start so that they don't learn to rely strictly on the print. Phonics books are great for teaching sounding out strategies but it is important children learn to use context first so that comprehension is not compromised by the sounding out process. We are always sure to include both fiction and non-fiction texts in our lessons. Once we have chosen a good book we must determine a good mini lesson to use with the book.

### The Guided Reading Session

#### Concepts Of Print

At the start of the Guided Reading session we go over the basic concepts of print with the students. Although we teach these concepts to the large group during Shared Reading we find it helpful to reinforce them in a small group setting. We have our students point to the following on their own copy of the book to be used for Guided Reading: cover, back, spine, title, author and illustrator, title page, what page to read first, what part of the page tells the story and finally, which word to read first.

#### Building Prior Knowledge

We look at the cover of the book with our students and ask them to predict what they think the book might be about. We then lead a brief discussion to determine what our students already know about the things seen in the picture on the cover of the book.

#### Picture Walk

The picture walk is an essential component to our Guided Reading session. We encourage the students to talk about what they see in the pictures using a "First/Next/Then/Finally" framework. During the picture walk we are sure to implement any new vocabulary along with any words that we want the children to remember when they read. Introducing the words in the text is very important for early readers that are just learning that text represents the pictures and do not yet have the ability to sound out words. These children are just becoming familiar with using books so it is very important that the pattern text is introduced during the picture walk so that they are successful during the first reading. As our students' skills increase we find that introducing the pattern text during the picture walk is not necessary.

Example: In a story where the pattern text is *The dog is...* We prompt the students with *The dog is* for every page during the picture walk. We have them repeat *The dog is* and then they can add in what the dog is doing.

#### Reading The Text

Each student starts with the cover of the book and we encourage all of them to read the text on their own using what they remember from the picture walk. Some students need us to establish the pattern of the text while others pick up enough from the picture walk to just "read" the text. Very beginning readers usually need our full support to be sure they are touching each word as they read. We find that chorally reading with this type of group so that we can more closely monitor their behaviors is best. While the students are reading the book we listen to them and guide them through it. We look at what they do when they come to a word they don't know and encourage them to use different strategies such as looking at the picture, looking for words that they know and sounding out the words.

## The Mini Lesson

For each book we choose one teaching point (mini-lesson) for each Guided Reading lesson that will extend the knowledge of the children in the group.

### Sample Mini Lessons

- Counting Letters And Words On The Pages: Students to turn to a particular page and count the words and then the letters. We extend this by asking the students to frame (with index fingers) a particular word on the page (*Ex. Please frame the word dog.*), then ask them how they know that the word framed is the word *dog*. A correct response would be: *It says dog because it has a /d/ or a d at the beginning.*
- Look For Popcorn Words: We have the children look through the text and frame words from the Popcorn Song. When they find the words we have them sing their way to the word on a small version of the Popcorn Song.
- Looking For Words That Are The Same: We have the children frame a word in the text and then challenge them to find another word in the text that is the same. We also help them realize that words can be the same even if there is a capital letter at the beginning of one of the words and a small letter at the beginning of another.
- Punctuation Marks: We look through the book exploring and talking about the marks on the page. We encourage our students to re-read pages to be sure their voices match the marks on the page.
- Chunking: We look for little words inside big words and teach them out how to use chunks to decipher new words. Popcorn Words and word families are easy chunks to find in emergent leveled text.
- Learning New Letters and Sounds: Using our phonics program (Jolly Phonics) we introduce a particular letter and sound using the text and challenge the students to find the letter as many times in the text as they can.

## Re-Reading The Story

After the mini-lesson we guide our students through a re-reading of the text. We support the individual needs of each student and encourage them to take risks such as sounding out words that they forget. We always watch out for the students that listen to their friend read the word they are stuck on and then just repeat it. This is a strategy that the student is using but we encourage him or her to try other strategies as well. We find it helpful for beginners to establish the pattern again before they begin to re-read the text.

## The Retell

During the first few stories we retell with our students we usually have to use the pictures in the book to encourage them to retell the story. We help our students to use "First/Next/Then/Finally" language to retell all the key events in the story. As our children's abilities increase we begin to encourage them to retell the story without the book in front of them.

### The Guided Reading Model

The above Guided Reading model has the students working with a different new book each week when they meet with you. There are many other Guided Reading models, but most of these models have the children working in the same book for an entire week and most of our schedules don't allow for that much time. These models, that are designed for full-day every day Kindergarten programs, have the teacher using the text as a springboard for the following types of lessons: phonemic awareness, making words activities, printing letters/words activities, sight word activities. As teachers of half day programs and full day every other day programs we do all of those things through our learning center times, shared reading and writing sessions, morning messages as well as during large and small group activities.

### Guided Reading For Struggling Readers

Each year we all have students in our classes that are struggling to learn to read. We have found that these students benefit from extra Guided Reading sessions using texts we have used as a class for Shared Reading lessons. Most predictable leveled big books are sold with several smaller versions for children to use as lap books during lessons. We use these lap books with children who are struggling to learn to read. Using the above Guided Reading model with a book that the child is familiar with helps build skills and more importantly confidence. This child has already

participated in the large group lessons with the text and will be able to build up his confidence by re-doing the lessons with you independently or in a small group.

If you do not have access to leveled texts at your school there are many websites that have books that you can download and photocopy for your students. If you have enough books at your school you may wish to send the book home with your students along with a letter to parents giving them ideas to do with their child at home to reinforce skills being taught at school. This letter would be good to add to your Take Home Reading Program as well.

#### Websites With Emergent Readers To Download

[http://www.hubbardscupboard.org/printable\\_booklets.html](http://www.hubbardscupboard.org/printable_booklets.html)

<http://www.kinderbeesprintables.com/printablesindex.html#september>

<http://www.marCIAS-lesson-links.com/VeryEmergentReaders.html>

#### Books To Use For Guided Reading Lessons

Sunshine Series (Wright Group) (McGraw Hill Ryerson Catalogue)

Kindergarten Collection Of Little Leveled Books (Nelson Catalogue)

Ginn Reading Steps (Pearson Catalogue)

#### Reading Activities For Early Emergent Readers To Do At Home

Please have your child read and re-read this story using his or her finger to track the print. Many children at the early emergent stage of literacy development enjoy memorizing stories that they hear. This is a very important step in the learning to read process. Encouraging your child to track print will guide him or her from the early stages of memorization to an understanding that print carries meaning.

#### Concepts About The Book

- Cover (Title)
- Back of The Book
- Spine
- Title Page (Title, Author & Illustrator, Picture Hint)
- Where the story is told (the words, not the picture)
- Where you begin reading the story

#### Concepts About The Print

- Capital Letters
- Spaces
- Periods and Other Punctuation
- Counting Letters (used to make words)
- Counting Words (letters squished together to make words)

#### Phonics (Jolly Sounds)

- Identification of, sound of and printing of letters from book

#### Popcorn Words (Sight Words)

- Look for Popcorn Words in the book

#### Reading Strategies

- Open to a page and say the name of something in the picture. Ask your child to frame the word in the text that names the item you said. Ask your child to explain why it is the framed word. (the beginning sound tells them)

Please note that the WBTT (Web Based Teaching Tool) has many other good suggestions for making a home-school connection.