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## Effects of Guided Reading on Third-grade Students' Reading Ability

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Running head: GUIDED READING AND READING ABILITY

Effects of Guided Reading on Third-grade Students' Reading Ability

Stella Ugonnaya Etumnu

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts in Education

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GUIDED READING AND READING ABILITY

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## GUIDED READING AND READING ABILITY

### **Abstract**

Reading is the key to acquiring knowledge; it opens the door for individuals to successfully learn about any subject area. With the implementation of effective reading instruction, struggling readers can become more effective readers. The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of guided reading, a reading instruction strategy, for third grade students. Specifically, a multiple-baseline-across-participants research design was used to measure changes in fluency and comprehension for the three participants (Nancy, Liz, and Sarah) using a running record. Intervention consisted of three sections; text selection and introduction, silent reading, and reading out loud. Results indicated that guided reading had a variable impact on the students' reading fluency and comprehension. Implications and future directions are discussed.

*Keywords:* Guided reading, reading ability, fluency, comprehension, running record

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## Effects of guided reading on third-grade student's reading ability

### **Literature Review**

Reading on grade level is important to the success of a student's educational career (Laquinta, 2006). Reading opens the door for continuous learning and helps students achieve success at higher academic levels. Inability to read may lead to stunted academic growth, which means the student remains at the same reading and/or grade level. Studies on reading have developed an increased understanding around numerous important elements needed for reading instruction including phonemic awareness, fluency, comprehension, phonics, and vocabulary (National Institute for Literacy, 2008; National Reading Panel, 2000; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Each of the aforementioned elements provide a unique construct and are critical when learning how to read.

For example, phonemic awareness is the ability to understand, use and manipulate sounds. Furthermore, phonemic awareness includes a person's ability to comprehend and manipulate sounds and syllables in words and is a predictor of reading success (Yopp, 1992). When children are incapable of differentiating and properly using the sounds within words (e.g., that the word 'bed' starts with /b/ or that the word 'sad' ends with /d/) the child will have problems identifying and acquiring more knowledge about the essential print to sound connection crucial to reading efficiently. In addition to phonemic awareness, vocabulary, the understanding of the meaning of words, is needed for students to comprehend what is read (Kamil & Hiebert, 2005). Therefore, to read new and advanced texts, students must also learn the meaning of new words contained in the text that may not be part of their oral vocabulary.

Vocabulary is important for reading comprehension, as it is impossible to understand what is read with limited vocabulary knowledge (Hirsch, 2003). Furthermore, comprehension,

the ability to understand words read and appropriately respond to questions about the text (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996), and requires the student understand and make connections with what is read. Fluency, defined by Fountas & Pinnell (1996) as the ability to read text quickly, accurately, and with proper expression. Fluency is an integral part of the reading process because it boosts students' comprehension level, increases vocabulary, and helps students swiftly finish reading assignments. Students who are not fluent readers often struggle to make sense of texts as their attention and concentration is generally more focused on trying to decode the words instead of the underlying information within the text. Preliminary stages of reading fluency happen when students can recognize words instantly without struggling. Being able to read fluently opens up the possibility for students to attain the greatest purpose of reading, which is comprehension (Samuels, 2007).

Fluency is having the ability to easily and effortlessly read texts (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Whereas, comprehension is a reader's ability to understand texts read and respond to questions pertaining to the texts (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Both fluency and reading comprehension go hand-in-hand. For example, fluent readers read with ease without awkward pauses, as a result, their brains can easily comprehend the texts read (Scharer, Pinnell, Lyons, & Fountas, 2005). Therefore, fluency greatly affects comprehension skills and must be addressed when teaching reading to young children.

Reading practice enables a learner to develop expertise, which is similar to the development of other skills that require organization of smaller actions as part of a combined process (Stahl & Kuhn, 2002). For example, an actor rehearses his/her lines, a musician daily goes over pieces that ultimately gets played, and a beginner driver spends as much time as possible behind the wheel to gain the experience needed to be skilled at the task (Rasinski



Homan, & Biggs, 2008). Usually, the process of practicing entails repetition of the actions. In this way also, achieving reading fluency requires practice.

The benefits of implementing fluency based instruction must be recognized and implemented by instructors who have students with reading difficulties. Snow, Burns, and Griffith (1998) suggested teachers use instructional strategies that systematically present daily opportunities for modeling, guided practice, and repeated reading. Modeling (i.e., where a teacher demonstrates the action he/she wants the students to complete) of fluent reading provides the student with an example of how to read precisely, without errors, and with good expression and phrasing. Rupley and colleagues (2009) agree with Mathes and colleagues (2003) on what the most effective teaching strategies for struggling readers. The researchers agree that teacher-directed instructions are the best strategy for struggling readers. For example, Mathes and colleagues (2003) found using teacher-directed instruction to teach struggling readers in a small group was more effective than peer assisted instruction. This is likely because small group instruction is centered on each students' specific needs rather than the entire group.

Struggling readers generally gain more from small group instruction, mainly because the individualized instruction affords the student to be taught at their own level (Klein, 2012). Generally, small group instruction targets students' fluency and comprehension skills as both are crucial components of reading and also the finish line of reading. Non-fluent readers struggle to finish long passages, and often once complete, there is little comprehension. This is because the students put so much time and effort into thinking how to read and have no time to think of what they are reading. Being focused on the first leaves no room for the later and therefore has a negative impact on comprehension. Improving fluency however, leads directly to improved comprehension as the student can easily read texts and therefore make meaning of the text.

Good readers are problem solvers; decoding unfamiliar words using context clues and the meanings of familiar words (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Furthermore, fluent readers are prone to making mistakes too. It is not only unskilled readers who may read in a slow, and arduous way. Skilled readers may read this way too when reading texts containing unfamiliar words or at a higher reading level. Fluency however, makes it possible for students to go from word decoding to reading without practicing beforehand since it directly correlates with word recognition skills (Hirsch, 2003). More effort therefore goes into the student comprehending the text and moving forward rather than being stuck at the same reading level practicing. When this is not possible, it creates an environment where students are unable to focus on other methods to assist them in comprehending the text.

A large study was done by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) focusing on the status of fluency achievement within American education (Pinnell et al., 1995). The study incorporated a nationally representative sample of 4th graders. Results indicated that 44% of the sample were disfluent even though they read texts within their own grade-level and under supportive testing conditions. Pinnell and colleagues (1995) found a strong correlation between fluency and comprehension skills, as students who read more fluently were found to have higher average scores on comprehension tests than their peers who were less fluent. This led the researchers to suggest that slow, less fluent readers tend to have lower comprehension, than faster more fluent readers (Pinnell et al., 1995). Therefore, students who are not fluent may have difficulty understanding what is read.

### **Comprehension**

Comprehension, defined earlier, is the ultimate goal of learning to read yet many young readers struggle with understanding text (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). When students have trouble

answering comprehension questions, potentially implying the text is too difficult; therefore, making it hard for information to be retained. Hurry and Parker (2007) identified three levels of comprehension: literal level of comprehension that leads to a theoretical development, an interpretive level where conclusions are obtained, and an evaluative level where the reader responds personally to the text. Without proper observation, these levels of comprehension could be easily mistaken for the other and as a result students' might be given the wrong instructional help. Therefore, it is paramount to a student's success that teachers know what students reading levels are and how to best support them.

Approaches to learning in which students are advised to talk, read, and think in order to make sense out of words, is what formed the social constructivist perspective view of reading comprehension. The social constructivist perspective is a learning theory that suggests human beings create meaning from an educational experience by learning with others (Vygotsky, 1978). In this type of learning theory, it is possible for students to be taught to analyze text through guided participation, a term coined by Rogoff (1990). Guided participation is where an instructor creates a link from what is known to what is new by splitting the responsibilities for problem solving with readers and then handing the responsibilities over to the students. The guided reading instructional strategy mimics guided participation as it provides students a platform to learn with and from others and how to make sense of texts.

**Comprehension indicators.** Fountas and Pinnell (1996) described five different indicators to assist teachers in determining if children comprehend the text,

an accuracy rate of 90% or above; evidence that children are using the three cueing systems; behaviors that show children are searching for meaning from the text; an

appropriate fluency and phrasing rate; and responses in conversation that indicate the child understood the text (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 138).

These factors serve as a guideline for teachers by giving them the necessary components to look for when assessing comprehension. Furthermore, Fountas and Pinnell (1996) recommended that teachers use a running record to provide evidence showing whether or not the students comprehend the text. Running record is an assessment tool that assists teachers in detecting patterns in reading behavior. Identifying these behavior patterns gives teachers the knowledge on what type of intervention the student needs. For example, a student could be in the habit of speedily reading texts without understanding what was read. By using running records to track students reading patterns, the teacher is better able to identify areas of need and intervene where needed. While using a running record, accuracy rate is calculated by subtracting the total number of errors made from the total number of words in the text. The result is then divided by the total number of words. A reader's accuracy rate according to Fountas and Pinnell (1996), indicates the student's reading level, 95 -100% = independent, 90 - 94% = instructional, rates below 90% = frustrating. With these levels, the teacher is better able to give students suitable texts to read that are neither too complex nor too simple.

When children work with texts that are neither too complex nor too simple they develop a variety of reading strategies. These strategies allow them to be attentive to information from different sources (Iaquinta, 2006). Information from the different sources are divided into three different groups or cueing systems: semantics, syntactics, and graphophonic. The first cueing system is semantic cues (i.e., meaning), which was defined by Routman (1988) as the reader's ability to comprehend occurring events and gain understanding through text and illustrations. Semantic cues stem from prior life experiences of a child. Syntactic cues (i.e., language

structure) originate from a child's oral language formulation knowledge. Fountas & Pinnell (1996) explained that language formulation has structure in order to become language. And lastly, graphophonic cues (i.e., visual information) stems from the connection between letters, words, sounds, visuals, and the knowledge of that connection (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

The cueing systems enables teachers to look for patterns in students reading responses and behaviors. Fountas and Pinnell (1996) mentioned that a student's reading should be reviewed and analyzed for cues used in the reading after the reading record has been documented. Reviewing and analyzing the cueing system allows teachers to target the reader's strengths, tactics, and development or growth. Efficacious readers interdependently utilize the cueing system, while weaker readers use graphophonic cues more. The use of the cueing system is important because it helps the students make more sense of what they are reading and therefore comprehend better.

**Retelling for comprehension.** Retelling is an important part of miscue analysis (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). Gambrell, Kapinus, and Koskinen (1991) recommend students retell after a story is read as this practice improves story comprehension, structure, and oral language complexity. It also, advances reading comprehension in independent and struggling readers. Retelling is used by teachers to gather proof regarding a student's reading comprehension. The process of retelling requires the teacher to listen to the student read a story out loud. Once finished, the student is asked to retell the story in whatever way they can, and the teacher records and analyzes the student's responses. Story retell provides the teacher with the student's understanding of story details, patterns, and overall comprehension. Furthermore, Wilde (2000) suggests that successful retelling involves vigorous teacher and student interaction, where the teacher listens and engages with the reader. The teacher cheers the reader on to enhance and

expatiate on the story read. Retelling gives teachers more details regarding the student's comprehension of the text.

When children possess some or all of the indicators mentioned above (an accuracy rate of 90% on a running record, evidence of the use of the three cueing systems; behaviors that show the search for meaning from text; appropriate fluency and phrasing rate; and responses in conversation) they will be able to understand the text. As the texts become more difficult, students must continue to work toward these indicators which will help them comprehend more difficult texts. Employing small group instructional methods such as guided reading could help students with text comprehension.

### **Guided Reading**

Guided reading is an instructional method utilized with readers of all levels and it has three important purposes: (1) to meet every student's different learning need; (2) instruct students on how to read more complex texts with comprehension and fluency; (3) develop meaning while at the same time using problem-solving methods to unravel unfamiliar words that deal with difficult sentence structure, and grasp unknown concepts and ideas (Laquinta, 2006). For example, the goals in guided reading groups is for teachers to model a strategy and guide students in practice within a small group, so that they can eventually transfer and apply the strategy to unfamiliar texts. Smaller group instruction helps teachers work with students on an individualized basis. Students gain more from this type of teaching strategy and develop concrete relationship with the teacher, and as such increase their reading confidence (Hausheer et al., 2011).

The implementation of guided reading according to Fountas and Pinnell (1996) improves fluency and comprehension skills. This happens due to repeated readings and familiarization

with vocabularies contained in reading passages that are appropriately selected at the student's instructional reading level during guided reading sessions. Appropriately leveled texts provide students with opportunities to enjoy what is being read. Furthermore, students utilizing materials at their instructional level, experience reading success and a positive emotional experience (Lyons, 2003; Pinnell & Fountas, 2012; Scharer et al., 2005). This positive emotional experience can improve memory, fluency, and comprehension as the human brain prefers positive emotional experiences (Scharer et al., 2005). Using appropriately leveled texts is only one aspect of the guided reading instructional process.

The guided reading instructional process begins with educators first assessing students reading abilities. Educators need to be knowledgeable of each readers' progress because students read at varying reading levels. Students who have similar reading needs, learning needs, and at the same level when it comes to text processing are put in small groups. Each guided reading lesson begins with an introduction to the text that is being read, this is done by the teacher. This introduction allows the readers to pay attention to the language and expression used in the text as it is represented by the teacher, which eventually assists them in the development of their reading independence (Frey et al., 2010). Students then read all the text on their own with the teacher there to guide them when needed. Verbal instructor prompts (e.g., review the picture and tell me if it is comprehensible, do you know any part of the words?) can be used when supporting readers to increase engagement and challenge the student's reading skills (Richardson, 2009). The intention is for readers to be able to easily, quietly, and independently read texts with focus on reading more difficult texts. This process is active and ever changing as students are grouped and regrouped and go through constant reviews and examinations throughout the process (Fountas & Pinnell, 2010).

Benefits of employing guided reading groups has been reported by teachers. Ferguson and Wilson (2009) found that teachers reported seeing increased comprehension skills, higher fluency levels, better scores in reading tests, retention of reading strategies, and the chance to identify and target individual student's needs. These results indicate that proper implementation of guided reading could help improve diverse literacy needs of students. However, students who are part of a guided reading group are responsible for utilizing the reading strategies they have been taught on their own. When this happens, it shows that the students are becoming self-dependent and responsible readers who can independently use meaning, structure, and visual cues (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Also, when students become independent after guided reading it sheds a positive light on the effectiveness of the intervention.

Wilson, Martens, and Arya (2005) conducted a study comparing three reading programs including, Reading Mastery, Open Court, and guided reading. Children participated in one of the three reading programs and were scored by the researchers using the Word Analysis subtest of the Woodcock-Johnson psycho-Educational Battery to measure the students use of phonics, accuracy rate, and retelling. Data collected from the students who participated in the guided reading program, showed that they got higher scores than the students from the two other reading programs except for their phonics and accuracy rate. During retelling, the researchers noticed that the students from the guided reading program used details such as the characters, the setting, and half of the plot episodes to retell the chapter from the story (Wilson et al., 2005). Also, students used strategies such as looking for little words, skipping words, sounding words out, chunking words, paying attention to words read and making sure they made sense, and using various phonics cues while reading (Wilson et al., 2005). These are all important strategies that



help students become readers who are accountable for their own reading because they not only learn the strategies, but they also learn when to implement them.

**Guided reading and fluency.** Implementing guided reading is a way to build fluency in young readers. During guided reading sessions, teachers provide children with the opportunity to practice fluent reading. When children are learning to read, they progress through three different levels of fluency; the early level, transitional level, and fluent level (Simpson & Smith, 2002). When teachers use guided reading, they provide children with strategies that help them develop fluency in each of these levels. Teachers present the children with book introductions, strategy checks, and independent reading, along with the opportunity for returning to the text and responding to the text (Simpson & Smith, 2002). Emergent readers may use all of these strategies in one guided reading session, while more advanced readers may only use one or two of them at a time because of the length of the text (Simpson & Smith, 2002).

A study conducted by Nes-Ferarra (2005) additionally looked at the impact of guided reading instruction on fluency. The researcher explained that with practice a reader's fluency is improved allowing the reader to immediately recognize and grasp larger units and phrases within texts. Furthermore, Nes-Ferarra (2005) discovered that personalized reading administered to one student enhanced the student's fluency skills of the student who before the intervention struggled with fluency. Results from the study showed that the student was able to make progress in reading fluency after the guided reading instruction was implemented. Since one student's reading fluency progressed after the one-on-one instruction was implemented, it is possible that other students may also be successful.

**Guided reading and comprehension.** Comprehension plays an important role as this skill is imperative for students to be successful when reading in other content areas. Students

must be able to understand and retain what is read, as such it is important for teachers to seek and implement teaching strategies to help minimize the challenges for struggling readers. Guided reading is one of those strategies. During guided reading, instructors provide learning opportunities to students by selecting texts that are challenging enough for them to read. The instructors then introduce the texts to the students, encourage and guide the students during the reading, create platforms for questions and discussions about the text that forces students to deeply reflect, ask the students to read the texts again, and support their ideas using the texts (Frey et al., 2010). Students become more informed on how prints work and are more capable of making sense of prints when guided reading strategies are implemented (Kasten, Kristo, & McClure, 2005).

### **Summary**

Guided reading is mostly implemented in elementary school classrooms and previous studies found it to be an effective instructional strategy (Wilde, 2000; Wilson et al., 2005). Guided reading provides individualized instruction in the specific areas identified through assessment. Specifically, guided reading may be useful in improving fluency and comprehension. Fluency and comprehension are parts of the guided reading program; therefore, both are examined during guided reading instruction. Guided reading is designed to reach a variety of students by individualizing the instruction to help students fluently read and understand intricate texts, help students make meaning out of unfamiliar words by employing problem solving skills, and also comprehend new ideas (Iaquinta, 2006).

### **Methods**

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect guided reading had on the reading ability of three third-grade students. Furthermore, this study sought to inform teachers and

administrators as to the impact of a guided reading program to help struggling readers. Due to the need for students to be fluent and competent readers, it is important to recognize growth in student's reading level to ensure that they are making gains in reading.

### **Research Question**

Does guided reading impact the reading ability (i.e., fluency and comprehension) of three third-grade students?

### **Hypothesis**

Based on research (e.g., Ferguson & Wilson, 2009; Wilson, Martens, & Arya, 2005), the hypothesis for this study was that implementing the guided reading program would result in an increase of student's reading abilities (i.e., their comprehension and fluency skills).

### **Research Design**

A multiple-baseline-across-participants design was used in this study to determine the impact a guided reading program had on third-grade students' reading abilities. During the study, baseline measurements of students reading abilities were taken until student performance stabilized. Students baseline data stabilized once they obtained a minimum of five data points with a +/-1 fluency score. Each student's baseline performance acted as his or her own control. Once baseline was established, the first student began the intervention while the other students remained in the baseline condition. When the first student demonstrated a therapeutic change in the intervention phase (minimum of 5 data points), the second student began instruction while the third student remained in baseline. The third student started the intervention after the second student demonstrated a therapeutic trend in intervention. Data collected from fluency was used to make decisions and determine the changes between phases. Comprehension was measured, but

only as a secondary measure; therefore, data collected from comprehension was not used to make decisions for movement between phases.

**Independent variable.** The independent variable in this study was the guided reading intervention implemented by the researcher. Laquinta (2006) defined guided reading as an approach that involves the teacher providing scaffolded reading instruction to a small flexible group of students with similar reading abilities as part of their reading instruction. Guided reading instruction was used in this study to teach a small group (i.e., three students) of third grade students who were at the same reading level before the study.

**Dependent variable.** The dependent variable in this study was the students' reading ability. Reading ability is the process of acquiring the skills necessary for reading; that is, the ability to acquire meaning from print (Anderson et al., 1985). Specifically, students' comprehension and fluency skills were used to determine reading abilities and fluency was the primary dependent variable while comprehension was the secondary dependent variable. Both variables were measured with a running record (see Appendix A). A running record according to Fountas and Pinnell (1996), is a tool for coding, scoring, and analyzing a child's precise reading behaviors.

### **Setting & Participants**

This study was conducted at an elementary school located in central California. The district consists of approximately 11,000 K - 12 students, four high schools, three middle schools, and eight elementary schools. The elementary school used in this study consisted of approximately 423 students with the following ethnicities reported: 49% Hispanic, 15% White, 4% Asian, 5% Filipino, 5% Black, 4% Pacific Islander, and 18% reported two or more races.

Furthermore, the school is comprised of 69.3% low-income students based on free- and reduced-lunch status (California Department of Education, 2017).

**Participants.** Three students from a third-grade classroom in the school participated in this study. There are 23 students, 14 boys and 9 girls, in the third-grade class all aged 7 or 8 years old. Of the 23 students, 10 were classified as Caucasian, 8 Hispanic, 1 Pacific Islander, 2 Indian, and 2 Asian American. Nine students are on record as English learners because English is their second language.

The three students included in this study were identified by their teacher as needing additional instruction in reading. The identified students were able to read at least five sentences on a topic. This purposeful convenience sampling method was used in order to see the growth third-grade students struggling with reading will make by the end of the study. The three students that participated in this study were three females (Nancy, Liz, and Sarah) all in third grade. Names have been changed to protect participant confidentiality.

**Nancy.** Nancy is a seven years old female Hispanic student. Nancy was identified by her teacher as needing additional instruction in reading and therefore her teacher selected her to participate in this study.

**Liz.** Liz is a seven years old female Caucasian student. Liz was identified by her teacher as needing additional reading instruction to improve her reading fluency.

**Sarah.** Sarah is an eight years old female Caucasian student. Sarah was identified by her teacher as needing additional instruction in reading and therefore selected to participate in this study.

**Measures**

Running records were used to gather data on student's reading ability. This tool was originally developed for Reading Recovery by Clay (1993), and measures students reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension rates. Running record contains columns for errors and self-corrections (used to determine reading accuracy), column for how each student sounded when reading (used to determine fluency), and column for student's response on the retelling and inference questions (used to determine comprehension). It was administered to the students continuously throughout this study to monitor their fluency and comprehension skills (see Appendix A for sample running record). Fluency was the measure used to determine the changes between phases.

**Validity.** Dentón, Ciancio, and Fletcher (2006) found support for the validity of Running Records; reporting predictive, construct, content, face, convergent, and concurrent validity of the Observational surveys (which includes all the six measures they looked at in their study) noting that it has practical usefulness as a progress-monitoring tool.

**Reliability.** Dentón and colleagues (2006) reported for inter-assessor reliability of running records (referred to as "text reading" in the study) and analyzed the results from the two testers. The result implied that the variables from both testers had high reliability with correlation coefficient value of 0.96 from the first tester and 0.92 from the second tester. Furthermore, Dentón and colleagues (2006) indicated that running records can be administered reliably.

***Inter-rater reliability.*** Inter-rater reliability was conducted for 20% of the assessments by a second observer for a 90% or greater agreement. The classroom teacher served as the second observer in this study and was trained on the running records scoring procedures. Inter-rater

reliability was determined by dividing the total number of agreements between the teacher/observer and the researcher by the total number of observations, and then multiplied by 100. Inter-rater reliability was 93%.

### **Intervention**

During guided reading instruction, the teacher provided texts at the students' reading level, but one that will also give students the opportunity to develop their reading skills (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). For this study, the students participated in a guided reading session that lasted for twenty minutes each session. The instruction featured three components: (1) a three-minute introduction of appropriate level text; (2) ten minutes' silent and loud reading; for this component, the researcher took notes and running records of the students whispered and loudly read texts; (3) a three-minute summary and retelling of the story read. This last component involved the student summarizing (i.e., briefly explaining the plot), retelling (i.e., repeating the story) and answering questions directly related to what they read.

### **Procedures**

Before the reading, the researcher selected texts (i.e., using a different text each time) of appropriate levels for students. The text was introduced to the students by giving them an overview of the text, asking questions, connecting to prior knowledge, and going over new vocabulary in the text. This was done in a group and helped develop the background information each student needed to read the text (Fountas and Pinnell, 1996). The text introduction was brief and lasted for three minutes.

During the reading, each student was given the selected text to read silently for a period of 10 minutes. During this time, the researcher listened to the student's whisper, and took notes.

A logical starting and stopping place of at least 150 words was selected for the student to read aloud (Clay, 1993). Before the student began reading aloud, they were reminded that they will be asked for a retelling once the reading is complete. The researcher then took a running record and recorded only the pages the students were asked to read aloud.

After the reading, a retelling and discussion session was held for 7 minutes with the students. During this session, the students were asked to summarize (i.e., briefly explain the plot) and retell (i.e., to repeat) the story they read in their own words. They were also asked series of inference and critical-thinking questions related directly to what they read to check for comprehension of text. The researcher then took a running record and recorded the student's responses to the questions they were asked, and their summarization of the text/s. The responses were later scored on a scale of 0 to 7 depending on each student's response and their ability to include the key understandings contained in the text (see Appendix A for sample comprehension data collection).

The intervention was implemented daily to allow enough time for baseline to stabilize and distinguish if the intervention was successful. The researcher and the second observer kept track of each student's running record (containing their response during and after the readings) recorded throughout the study. This was then analyzed using the Fountas and Pinnell Guided Reading System (1996).

Using the system, fluency was determined on a scale of 0 to 3 using each student's running record while reading. On the fluency scale, a student who scores zero typically read word-by-word with awkward pausing and no expression; a student who scores a one reads in two-word phrases slowly, but not smoothly; a two was given to a student who reads mostly



smooth and expressive in three- or four-word groups; and a three was given to a student who reads smoothly with expression in large meaningful phrases and at an appropriate rate.

Comprehension was determined using each student's responses to the comprehension questions that was asked after the guided reading session. Student's response was scored on a 0 to 7 scale.

Students who earn zero to three points demonstrated unsatisfactory comprehension, a four shows limited comprehension, a five shows satisfactory comprehension, and a six or seven indicates the student had excellent comprehension.

**Fidelity.** To ensure fidelity of this intervention, progress was closely monitored, adhering to the planned procedure for the research, ensuring that confidentiality is maintained, and disruptions to intervention are avoided. The classroom teacher served as an independent observer during this research and observed at least 20% of the intervention. This was to ensure that the instructional program was implemented as intended. The observer followed the planned procedure for this study and checked off each component of the lesson as it was completed. Percentages of instructional components completed was calculated to assess fidelity of treatment. When there were discrepancies between the two scorers, averages of the scores was used. The researcher also visited the school and implemented the intervention during 99% of the study period to ensure fidelity (see Appendix B).

### **Ethical Considerations**

Prior to commencing any data collection for this study, informed consent was obtained from the school principal, and all participating students' teachers. No reference to individuals or actual students and school name was used to protect confidentiality. All participants were given pseudonyms to protect confidentiality and to provide anonymity. There was no perceived harm or physical injury expected during the intervention. The students attended regular class hours

with no extra class work, as the regular assignment was transferred to this intervention. The teacher and researcher worked together to make sure that the students that participated in this study were not easily distracted by their peers as they were engaged in other classroom activities that requires their utmost attention.

**Validity threats.** Extraneous variables in this study could be a result of instrumentation and researcher bias. Threats to validity were addressed in this study by standardization of procedures and instructions prior to intervention. In this way, every step all participants are treated in the same way without any exception. Data gathered during each intervention session was dated in order to provide an accurate time-line for potential reviewers. Data may represent behaviors or states of mind of students and was considered carefully during interpretation.

Also, an observer was trained on how to administer and grade the running records. The classroom teacher served as the observer in this study. To train her, guidelines on how to administer and grade the running records was given. Afterwards, she practiced the administration and grading process of the measure using students who were not part of this study, ensuring mastery of the process. Follow-up meetings with the teacher were arranged to provide clarity and ensure understanding.

### **Data Analyses**

Running records of each student was taken weekly to establish a baseline before guided reading was implemented and the data was graphed. Data collected from each student was individually and separately graphed so as to visually analyze the changes within and between phases. After baseline stabilized, intervention was introduced, and data was also collected and graphed. Data collected after the intervention were compared with the data collected during the

baseline. The graphed data was visually analyzed, and the percentage of overlapping data was calculated.

### **Social Validity**

At the completion of the study, the researcher had the teacher complete a four-point Likert scale (i.e., 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree) social validity questionnaire (Appendix C). The questionnaire, adapted from Berger, Manston and Ingersoll (2016), consists of nine questions designed to understand the perceived usefulness, significance and satisfaction with the implemented intervention (Kennedy, 2005). The confidential responses from the questionnaire indicate that the intervention was beneficial to the students. Furthermore, the classroom teacher will continue using the guided reading approach.

### **Results**

The results from the study are depicted in Figure 1 below. Figure 1 represents the running record scores of fluency and comprehension for Nancy, Liz, and Sarah. The y-axis represents participants scores on the measure during baseline and intervention. The x-axis represents sessions observed (days). To further explain the data, each participant's results will be described.

Nancy's baseline scores ranged from 2 to 3 on fluency with an average score of 2.4. During intervention, Nancy's fluency score remained consistent at 3 throughout the intervention. For comprehension, Nancy's baseline scores ranged from 4 to 5 with an average score of 4.6. During intervention, Nancy's comprehension scores ranged from 5 to 7 with an average score of 6.3. Liz's baseline score ranged from was 1 to 3 on fluency with an average score of 2. During intervention, Liz's fluency score remained at 3 throughout the phase. For comprehension, Liz's baseline score ranged from 2 to 5 with an average score of 4. During the intervention phase,

Liz’s comprehension score ranged from 5 to 6 with an average score of six. Sarah’s baseline score on fluency ranged from 0 to 1 with an average score of 0.9. During intervention, Sarah’s score went up to 2 and remained constant throughout the phase. For comprehension, Sarah’s baseline score ranged from 2 to 4 with an average score of 3. During intervention, Sarah’s comprehension score ranged from 3 to 5 with an average score of 4 implying Sarah made an increase in comprehension rate after the intervention was implemented.

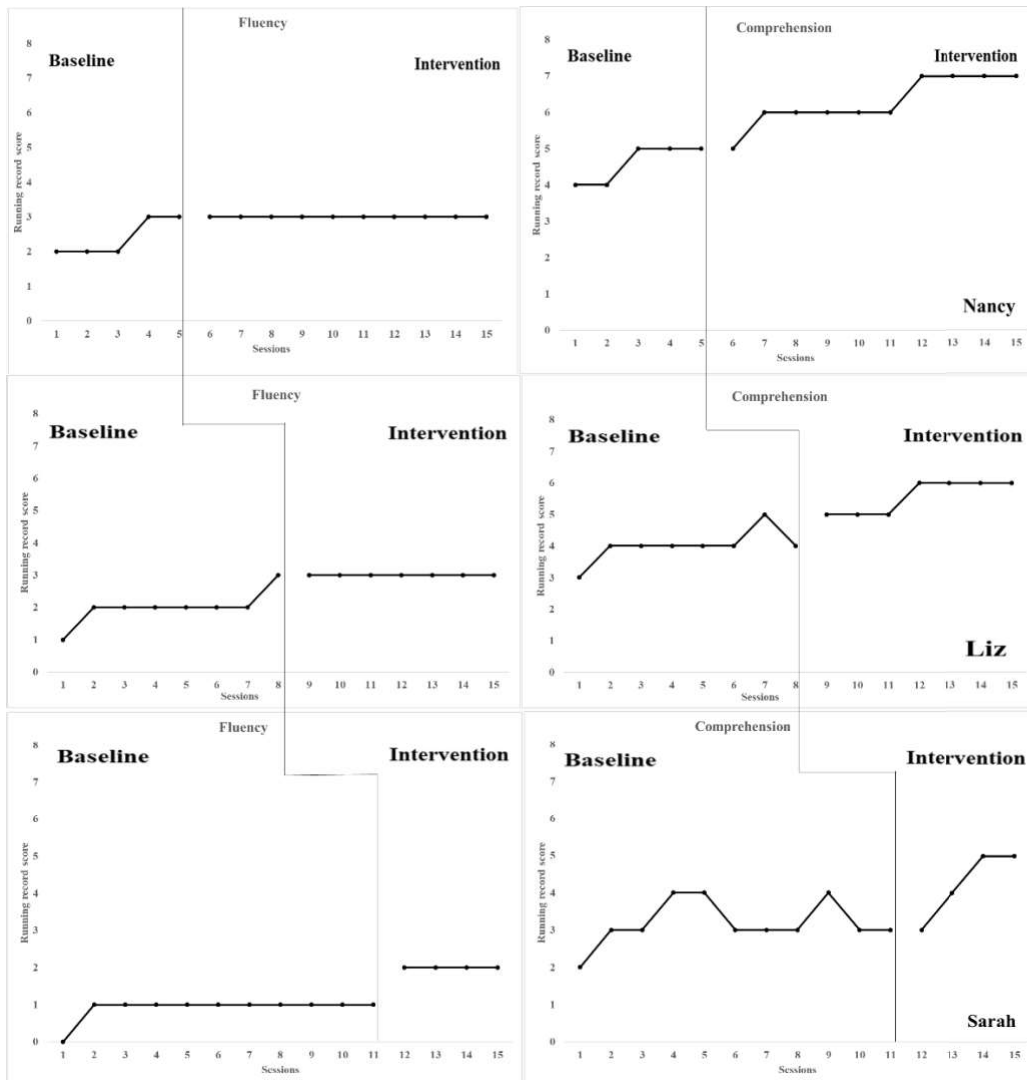


Figure 1: Nancy’s, Liz, and Sarah’s fluency (left) and comprehension (right) scores on running records during baseline and intervention.

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of guided reading instruction on the reading ability of three third-grade students. Using guided reading as the intervention and running records as the data collection tool, student's fluency and comprehension skills were examined to determine the participants reading abilities. Based on other studies (e.g., Ferguson & Wilson, 2009; Wilson, Martens, & Arya, 2005), the hypothesis for this study was that implementing the guided reading program would result in an increase of student's reading abilities (i.e., their comprehension and fluency skills). During the study, fluency was the primary focus, comprehension was analyzed as a secondary measure.

The results of this study suggest that implementing guided reading had a varying impact on the fluency scores of the participants. The percentage of non-overlapping data, in regard to fluency was 0% for Nancy, 0% for Liz, and 100% for Sarah. Sarah's baseline score for fluency started off lower than the other two participants and then her scores improved quickly, with no overlap in her scores from baseline to intervention. Although the percentage of non-overlapping data for the first two participants does not indicate an effective intervention, all three students demonstrated an improvement in their average reading scores. In conclusion, the fluency assessment score revealed that Sarah was the only participant that showed an upward trend in fluency implying that guided reading was beneficial and yielded good results in one out of three participants. This finding adds to the literature (e.g., Kuhn, 2005; Nes-Ferarra, 2005; Rupley et.al, 2009) that support the use of small-group interventions such as guided reading to improve fluency for some students.

On the other hand, for comprehension the non-overlapping data percentages were 90% for Nancy, 57% for Liz, and 50% for Sarah. The results for comprehension indicate that guided

reading was a highly to moderately effective intervention. In reality, the intervention for two out of the three students was moderately effective considering that the overlapping data between the baseline and intervention remained at a relatively small percentage. These results are consistent with findings by Ferguson and Wilson (2009) where teachers reported seeing increased comprehension skills after implementing guided reading.

### **Limitations**

There were several limitations in this study. First, the researcher had a limited timeframe to conduct this study. Therefore, only three students were included in this study as multiple baseline methodology is time intensive. Future researchers might address this by conducting the study over a longer period of time. A longer study would also allow for more students to participate in the study, thus increasing the sample size. Furthermore, the fluency measurement scale (0 to 3) made it challenging to quantify progress of the student's fluency rate. Future researchers should consider using broader measurement scales, and also consider measuring participants' accuracy. Lastly, because the classroom where this study took place did not belong to the researcher, the researcher had to check in with the teacher of the classroom and work out days to conduct the study that does not affect the classroom teachers schedule. Future researchers should consider conducting this study in their own classroom if possible, or in a classroom they have free access to so as to enable them work on their own pace and schedule. Guided reading shows potential as an effective intervention to implement with struggling students if properly monitored.

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**Appendix A**

Sample running record sheet.

Student     K     Grade   3rd   Date   02/07/2018  

Recorder   Researcher   School   \*\*\*\*ton elementary  

**Part One: Read aloud for fluency**

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

Example: Introduction: Ben's family and the other families on the street got a note from their new neighbors. In the note their new neighbors invited them to see their surprise horses. Read to find out what kind of horses they were.

Page #	Start Time ____ min. ____ sec.  Text Title: <u>Our new neighbors.</u> Total Words: <u>200</u>	E	SC	E			S C		
				M	S	V	M	S	V
2	On Saturday morning, Ben saw an envelope on the front steps. "Mom" Dad, polly!! he called. "Look what I found!"	1							
3	Dad read the note that was inside. Hello Neighbors, we just moved into the big house on the corner. Please come to a party next Saturday at 10o'clock. We want to meet you and we want you to meet our horses Max and Flo.								
4	<u>Other</u> "Horses?" Everyone looked at one <b>another</b> . "Horses on our street?" asked Dad.	1							
5	"I hope they're ponies," said Ben. "When we have birthday parties, we can have pony rides."  "I hope they're big white horses," said Polly. "Maybe they'll give us a ride."								
	Subtotal	2	0						

6	“Well,” said Mom, “that house on the corner is just right for horses. It has a big yard. And there’s that red barn in back.”								
7	"Look," said Ben. "The neighbors are reading a note, too!" Mom and Dad called across the street. "Did you get the note about the horses?" Dad asked.								
8	"What do you think it's all about?" Mom asked the neighbor. I don't know," he said. "I don't think that barn IS big enough for horses."								
9	<u>Other</u> <b>Another</b> neighbor popped her head over the fence. "I can- tell you something else," she said. "Every day when I pass that house, I hear loud noises, like someone is hammering." All the neighbors were excited about the mystery.	1							
	<b>Subtotal</b>	1	0						
	<b>End Time</b> ____ min. ____ sec. <span style="float: right;"><b>Total</b></span>	3	0						

\*E: Error. \*\*SC: Self correction. \*\*\*M: Meaning \*\*\*\*S: Syntax \*\*\*\*\*V: Visual

Fluency Score	0    1    2    3	Scoring key
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0. Read word-by- word with awkward pausing and no expression.</li> <li>1. Read in two-word phrases slowly, but not smoothly</li> <li>2. Read mostly smooth and expressive in three- or four-word groups.</li> <li>3. Read smoothly with expression in large meaningful phrases and at an appropriate rate</li> </ul>

**Part Two: Retelling for comprehension**

Have a conversation with the student, noting the key understandings the student expresses. Use prompts/questions as needed to stimulate discussion of understandings the student does not express. Score for evidence of all understandings expressed.

Example:

Key Understandings	Questions	Scores
<p>Recounts most of the important events such as: the new neighbors invited everyone to see their horses; everyone was asking what kind of horses the neighbors had; the horses turned out to be a merry-go-round.</p>	<p>Researcher: What was the mystery in the house?</p> <p>Student: <i>"what the horses were"</i>.</p> <p>R: What did the new neighbors do to get everyone interested in their horses?</p> <p>S: "They had a party to meet their horses".</p>	<p>0    1    2    3</p>
<p>The new neighbors wanted to surprise everyone so they kept the horses a secret.</p> <p>Everyone was wondering about the horses and imagining the kinds of horses they were.</p> <p>Clues before the last page are: "loud hammering noises," "<u>two horses going up and two going down.</u>" "four horses going around and around".</p>	<p>R: What were the people in the neighborhood thinking about the horses?</p> <p>S: "Ponies or big horses".</p> <p>R: what kind of horses do you think were in the barn?</p> <p>S: Needed extra help to respond.</p>	<p>0    1    2    3</p>

Comprehension Score	0    1    2    3	<p>Scoring key</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0. Reflects no understanding of the text. Either does not respond or talks off the topic.</li> <li>1. Reflects very limited understanding of the text. Mentions a few facts or ideas but does not express the important information or ideas.</li> <li>2. Reflects partial understanding of the text. Includes important information and ideas but neglects other key understandings.</li> <li>3. Reflects excellent understanding of the text. Includes almost all-important information and main ideas.</li> </ol>
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<p><b>Guide to total score</b></p> <p>0-3. Unsatisfactory comprehension.</p> <p>4. <b>Limited comprehension.</b></p> <p>5. Satisfactory comprehension</p> <p>6-7. Excellent comprehension</p>
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**Appendix B**

## Intervention fidelity checklist

Pseudonym:

Date/Time:

Session#:

Phase:

<b>Expected Researcher Behavior</b>	<b>Behavior completed? (circle)</b>	
1. Researcher is working with a small group of students with similar reading abilities.	Y	N
2. The researcher engages the students in an introduction to build background knowledge and to develop knowledge of book vocabulary.	Y	N
3. The students are reading the texts to themselves (silently) while the researcher is observing the reader's behaviors for evidence of strategy use.	Y	N
4. The researcher is taking a running record of each students reading.	Y	N
5. The students who are not participating in the guided reading group are engaged in meaningful learning.	Y	N



### Appendix C

#### Social Validity Questionnaire

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement.

Likert 4 points agree/disagree scale.

1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree,

3 – agree, and 4 – strongly agree

Questions:	1	2	3	4
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1 I think the intervention was effective				
2 I found this intervention acceptable for increasing the student's fluency and comprehension skills				
3 Using the intervention helped the students learn strategies that will allow them read difficult texts independently in the future.				
4 I think the student's reading skills would remain at an improved level even after the intervention ends				
5 This intervention helped students receive more individualized time				
6 This intervention quickly improved the student's skills				
7 This intervention helped students learn how to learn from and support each other				
8 I will continue carrying out this intervention myself				
9 I would suggest the use of guided reading to other teachers.				