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Introduction

Guided Reading provides a wealth of ideas and activities for using leveled books for guided reading and other activities in a balanced literacy program. This book provides an explanation of what guided reading is and presents a lesson format that can be used with any leveled book. Specific lesson plans in the book provide you with a better understanding of the process. You will find activity ideas to do with your students before, during, and after guided reading and follow-up activities to extend students' interactions with the books.

Although leveled books are primarily used for guided reading, they can be used for other reading formats. The Using Leveled Books for Other Reading Formats section (pages 43–47) explains some ways to use leveled books for other reading formats, such as shared reading and independent reading.

The Assessment section (pages 48–57) provides various ways to assess students' reading levels and behaviors. Running records is a common method used with guided reading. A brief explanation and sample running record form provide an overview of this method of assessment. Anecdotal records, reading inventories, and checklists are other ways to monitor students' reading abilities. Copy the reproducibles (pages 51 and 53–57), and use them to assess your students.

At the end of the book, you will find lists of over 200 fiction and nonfiction leveled student books offered by Creative Teaching Press. These books have been carefully developed to provide readers with text they can successfully read on their own. Each book is leveled from A–Q (A being the easiest). Each list is ordered by book level and includes a brief description of the subject matter that each book covers. Approximate grade levels for each book are also provided as a guideline.

The activities and innovative ideas are great for new teachers and experienced teachers who are already doing guided reading groups but want to enhance student learning. With all this information at your fingertips, you are now ready to conduct guided reading groups with your students!



Building a Balanced Literacy Program

The development of skills and strategies is an ongoing part of a balanced literacy program and occurs within the context of the reading and writing students are doing in the classroom. Skills can be taught formally when students experience specific difficulties or when you anticipate difficulty with a particular text. Skills are tools that learners use to make sense of a story when they read and to communicate effectively when they write. Most importantly, skills become strategies when learners apply them to solve their reading and writing difficulties. Developing strategies should be the focus of all skill instruction. See pages 8–10 for reading strategies and page 12 for a list of focus skills.

The components of a balanced literacy program include

Reading

- modeled reading (read aloud)
- shared reading
- guided reading
- independent reading

Writing

- writing aloud
- shared writing
- guided writing
- independent writing



Reading Components

It is important to engage children in a variety of reading formats so they will gain the support and background they need in order to become proficient readers.

Modeled Reading—Read Aloud

Reading aloud is an important part of a balanced literacy program. Read to students several times a day in the classroom, and encourage parents to spend at least 15 minutes a day reading to their children at home. Reading aloud makes a significant impact on the developing reading skills of young children. It builds comprehension, vocabulary, and listening skills, and it exposes students to good literature written on a level higher than their instructional level.

Enrich your program by choosing read-aloud titles that extend student learning. Students will gain information and knowledge they can access when working on their own. For example, by reading *From Seed to Plant* by Gail Gibbons, you introduce background knowledge and vocabulary relating to the life cycle of plants. This extends learning in *The Seed Song* from the *Learn to Read* series. Or, by reading aloud several versions of *City Mouse and Country Mouse*, you acquaint students with the story, supply background knowledge, and introduce important vocabulary. This introduction will help a student independently read the version of the book matched to his or her instructional level.

Shared Reading

Shared reading is a powerful tool for teaching students what reading is all about. Students at all developmental levels are invited to join in the reading of a Big Book, poem, chant, or pocket chart story. The enlarged print in shared reading materials encourages the whole group to participate. Modeling and student participation occur simultaneously. The emphasis during these sessions is on the joy and satisfaction of reading.

Lead students to make predictions about the story, identify familiar words and phrases, recognize new words and phrases, and read character names. Introduce text by pointing out features such as title, author, illustrator, and illustration style. Have students make predictions about the text by answering open-ended questions such as *What do you think this book will be about? Where will it take place? Who are the characters?* Depending on the skills emphasized, you may discuss the title page, the page count, and features of print such as indented lines, capital letters, and punctuation. Students enjoy reading Big Books again and again during shared reading, and those books become favorite choices during independent reading.



Guided Reading

Guided reading is a small-group instructional model that allows the teacher to select appropriate text for a small group of students (who are similar in strengths and needs) to provide instruction that targets specific reading strategies. The purpose of guided reading is to encourage independent reading. The focus is on mastery of reading strategies and elements of literature.

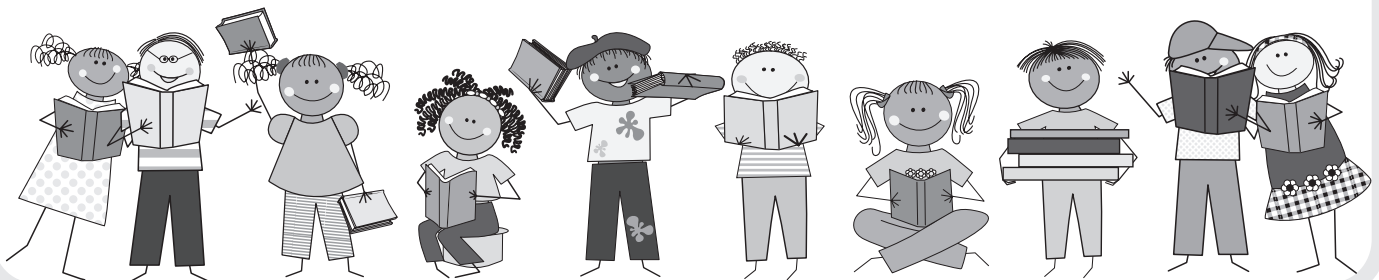
During guided reading, work with small groups of students who each have a copy of the same book. A guided reading session is a good time to model and reinforce emergent-level strategies such as one-to-one correspondence, return sweep, locating known and unknown words, letter/sound correspondence (phonics), context clues, and visual searching.

As students develop fluency, give them a book they have not read before that matches their instructional level. Have each student work through the text while getting support from you and other readers. Discuss with students the strategies that help them comprehend the reading selection. This is where the real work of reading occurs. After several successful readings of the book, students can take the book home to read to their parents.

Independent Reading

Students need many opportunities to read independently. Create a print-rich, reader-friendly classroom by making the following materials accessible:

- Big Books from previous shared reading sessions
- little books mastered during guided reading
- student-created books modeled after shared Big Books
- previously introduced pocket chart sets
- wall stories, story murals, and poetry charts
- trade books with text suitable for readers of different levels
- a listening post with appropriate trade books



Writing Components

Reading and writing are inseparable in a balanced literacy program. They are mutually supportive processes—growing expertise in one area influences the other. Encourage students to write through writing aloud and shared, guided, and independent writing sessions.

Writing Aloud

Write on a chalkboard or chart in front of students, and “think aloud” about the text as you write. This provides a powerful model on how to write and exposes students to writing conventions such as spacing, punctuation, capitals, and spelling. Many teachers write the morning message (a brief description of what is happening in the classroom or other noteworthy events) “aloud.”

Shared Writing

During a shared writing session, students write with you—it is a collaborative effort. As you guide the process, students supply ideas and input. Invite students at all developmental levels to participate. Shared writing offers an ideal way for students to write original stories, thank-you letters, invitations, poems, class news, and information books or to write about shared experiences such as guest speakers or field trips. Use shared writing to create innovations and retellings of books students enjoyed during shared reading.

Guided Writing

During a guided writing session, the student does the writing while receiving support and guidance from you and other students. On the emergent level, the guided writing session may be fairly structured. For example, group members could repeat and write the same sentence of a writing frame. You may comment on what the writers are doing correctly and supply missing elements to complete the sentence.

Independent Writing

A language-rich environment is not complete without many opportunities for students to write on their own. Encourage writing with journals, reading response logs, dramatic play centers with writing supplies, classroom mailboxes, student writing boxes, and observation journals in the science center. The simple text and patterned language in leveled books provide a secure and inviting framework for students’ written responses. After they read the books, some students will spontaneously adopt the language pattern and write their own versions.



Reading Strategies

Learning to read is a complex process that requires more than just looking at letters on a page. It requires a person to recognize written symbols (letters of the alphabet), associate sounds to symbols, blend sounds to form distinct units (words), organize the units into strands (sentences), and translate the strands into a coherent and meaningful message. To read successfully, a student must master the following skills:

Visual Scanning

Recognize individual letters, letter order, and whole words.

Sounding Out

Match distinct sounds to written symbols and combine those sounds and symbols together to form words.

Analyzing Sentence Structure

Use rules of grammar, mechanics, and spelling to connect words to form sentences.

Deriving Meaning from Text

Rely on prior knowledge and real-life experiences to see and understand the written message.



Learning to read is not an automatic process—it must be taught. Students need practice looking at, listening to, and deriving meaning from words. They need to understand how a message they say aloud can be communicated through symbols on paper.

Successful readers use a variety of techniques or reading strategies to help them scan text, sound out letters, analyze sentence structure, and “translate” the sentences into a meaningful message. These strategies can be grouped into three distinct categories, or cueing systems—semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic.

Semantic Strategies

Students “read for meaning” and identify unfamiliar words by

- using clues in the pictures and in the context of the story (picture clues, context clues)
- comparing what they are reading to what they already know (prior knowledge)



Syntactic Strategies

Students study sentence structure and identify unfamiliar words by

- looking at verb tense and subject–verb agreement (grammar)
- attending to predictable language patterns in written text (grammar)

Graphophonic Strategies

Students associate spoken sounds with printed letters. They identify unfamiliar words by

- sounding out individual letters and letter combinations (letter sounds)
- looking at letter sequence and “chunks” of the word (letter patterns)

Semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic strategies are interdependent. When a student reads, he or she usually relies on more than one cueing system at a time. Consider the following sentence:

I can read a book.

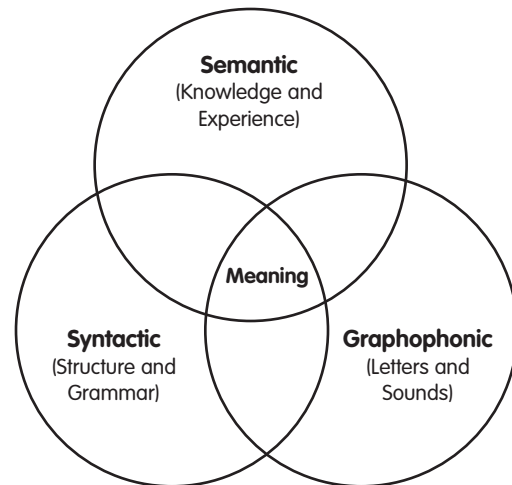
If a student is unfamiliar with the underlined word, he or she can use semantic strategies (context clues, prior knowledge) to identify the word as *read*. However, one can also *make* a book, *drop* a book, *cover* a book, and so on. By using graphophonic strategies to sound out the letter *r*, the student has a better chance of identifying the word correctly.

But what about the following example:

Yesterday, I read a book.

Semantic and graphophonic strategies are not enough. The student also needs syntactic cues to identify the word as past tense and to pronounce it correctly—*/red/* instead of */reed/*.

Beginning readers must be able to use all three cueing systems in a coordinated way. By cross-checking cues as they read, students confirm their understanding and gain competence in all three areas.



Reading Strategies Reminder

The first step in becoming a strategic reader is figuring out ways to decode and define new words. In order for students to comprehend what they read, they must first have the ability to decode unfamiliar words and determine their meaning. Students must monitor their reading to make sure that the words make sense, sound right, and look right. The key is for students to have a variety of strategies at their fingertips that they can internalize and use independently when they encounter new or difficult words.

In advance, make a class set of the Reading Strategies Bookmark (page 11), and copy each strategy from the bookmark onto a piece of chart paper. Cut out the bookmarks. Give each student a bookmark to decorate. Then, use the information at the bottom of this page to introduce each strategy. Explain how a strategy is used during reading. Provide examples to help students understand each strategy. Invite them to use their bookmark during guided reading or their independent reading.

Reread the sentence.

Remind students to reread the sentence more than once and think about what word might make sense.

Sound out the word.

Show students how to blend the sounds of the word together and try to pronounce it.

Use picture clues.

Encourage students to review the pictures on the page and see if the pictures provide any clues to help them figure out the unfamiliar word.

Look for "chunks" in the word.

Have students look for letter chunks (parts) in the word that might be familiar. Invite them to read each chunk separately and then blend the chunks together to sound out the entire word (e.g., unknown word: **fantastic**; chunks: **fan-tas-tic**).

Connect to a word you know.

Tell students to think of a word that looks like the unknown word. Have them compare the two words and use the known word to figure out the meaning of the unfamiliar word (e.g., unknown word: **judgement**; known word: **judge**).

Read on for clues.

Tell students that when they reach an unfamiliar word, they should read on a bit and try to think about what might make sense. Then, have them go back and reread the sentence with the word they think makes the most sense.



Reading Strategies Bookmark

Reread the sentence.

Sound out the word.

Use picture clues.

Look for "chunks"
in the word.

Connect to a word
you know.

Read on for clues.



Reread the sentence.

Sound out the word.

Use picture clues.

Look for "chunks"
in the word.

Connect to a word
you know.

Read on for clues.



Focus Skills

The following is a list of skills to introduce and teach during guided reading sessions.

Emergent Readers

Locating the front and back of the book

Locating the title and title page

Locating the top and bottom of the page

Locating where to begin reading on a page

Understanding left-to-right progression and return sweep (directionality)

Grasping the concept that print conveys meaning

Identifying word spacing

Finding the first and last word in a sentence

Having one-to-one correspondence

Recognizing letters

Understanding basic punctuation (period, question mark)

Reading high-frequency words

Early Readers

Building prior knowledge

Developing knowledge of concepts of word space, first/last word, one-to-one correspondence

Beginning to use reading strategies

Taking risks without fear of making errors

Using pictures as means of cross-checking

Using first and last consonant to sound out word

Retelling the story

Correctly using punctuation marks

Correctly using lowercase and capital letters

Reading for meaning

Self-correcting

Integrating strategies by using one strategy to cross-check another

Inferring more from the text to fully comprehend the author's intent

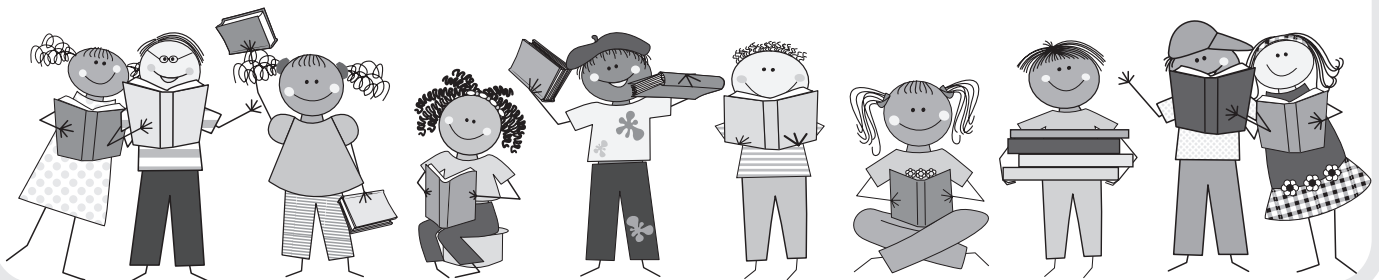
Fluent Readers

Increasing fluency

Increasing ability to read text independently

Integrating reading strategies

Understanding basic literary elements



Guided Reading

There are several positive benefits from guided reading.

- It helps deepen understanding of the text.
- It presents many opportunities for specific teaching in context as necessary.
- It encourages silent reading.
- It allows the teacher to more accurately address students' needs by grouping students of similar ability together.

Preparing for Guided Reading

- Determine each student's reading level by completing a running record (see pages 48–50).
- Select text at the student's instructional level (90–94% accuracy).
- Organize students into groups of four to six based on their current reading level. Groups can also be organized by students' need to learn a specific reading skill or strategy. For example, you may meet with a group of students who all need practice with the reading strategy of using a picture clue.
- Choose appropriate text and format for each reading level, and choose current strategy use for each group of students.
- Give each student a copy of the same text. Have groups work with you or with each other to read text at their instructional level. When students are reading at 95–100% accuracy rate, they are at mastery level. Students who read below 90% accuracy rate are at frustration level.

Tasks to Complete During Guided Reading

- Assess the developmental level of the students.
- Identify the focus reading strategies and appropriate skill work for each group.
- Constantly monitor and evaluate the students' progress using both formal (reading records) and informal (observational checklists) methods.



A Guided Reading Lesson Format

The following pages describe a sample format to use for each guided reading lesson. Choose an appropriate book for your reading group, and follow the five steps. Remember that this is just a guideline; you may need to modify these steps to meet the needs of your students. The sample lessons on pages 16–23 contain examples of how to use the same guided reading lesson format with different leveled books. Use the template on pages 24 and 25 to write your own guided reading lesson plans.

1 Story Introduction

- Read the title and the author and illustrator's names.
- Talk about the cover illustrations.

2 Story/Picture Walk

- Assess students' prior knowledge.
- Cover text if desired, and have students predict the story line through the pictures.
- Highlight and clarify new vocabulary and concepts.
- Explain unusual language or language patterns.
- Model and call attention to appropriate reading strategies.

3 First Reading

The teacher models reading. (The teacher has the only copy of the book.)

- Model the language patterns and concepts about print.
- Model the awareness and use of reading strategies.

Students read silently, or the teacher reads aloud as students follow along. (Each student has a copy of the book.)

- Ask focus questions.
- Guide students to silently read a selection.
- Discuss the meaning of text, and invite students to read aloud to confirm their answers.

