



RESEARCH
REPORT

Discovery Links

Executive Summary

Introduction

Guided reading is an instructional approach that supports students in developing strategies for independently reading increasingly challenging texts with comprehension and fluency. It involves “a teacher and small homogeneous group of children talking, thinking, and reading through a text which offers manageable challenges for each reader. The teacher’s role is one of support, ensuring that the children read with comprehension.” (*Mooney 1990*) Each student has his or her own copy of the book. Grouping is dynamic and includes students who are at a similar developmental level and share needs and behaviors at a particular time. (*Parke 2002*)

Newbridge Discovery Links® Nonfiction Guided Reading is a comprehensive nonfiction guided reading program that integrates guided reading strategies with standards-based social studies and science content to help students build fluency in reading and writing informational text.

Informational text:

- is the key to success in later schooling.
- is ubiquitous in society.
- is preferred reading material for some children.
- often addresses children’s interests and questions.
- builds knowledge of the natural and social world.
- may help build vocabulary and other kinds of literacy knowledge. (*Duke & Bennett-Armistead 2003, pp. 20–23*)

The purpose of this document is to demonstrate how *Discovery Links* Nonfiction Guided Reading was developed to “link” research on effective reading instruction and the guided reading approach. To clearly address the research recommendations of the National Reading Panel, this document is organized into the following areas of reading instruction—Phonemic Awareness and Phonics, Vocabulary, Fluency Instruction, and Text Comprehension.

The format of each instructional area includes the following sections:

Research Findings

This section references specific recommendations of the *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read* and *Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read* and cites recent research studies and summaries.

Research Implications

This section highlights specific instructional features of the guided reading books and lessons that illustrate how *Discovery Links* addresses the research recommendations.

Key Research Findings in Support of Newbridge Discovery Links®

Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction

Research Findings

- ✓ Phonemic awareness is important because: it improves children’s word reading and reading comprehension; it helps children learn to spell. (*Put Reading First 2001, p. 10*)
- ✓ It is important to emphasize that systematic phonics instruction should be integrated with other reading instruction to create a balanced reading program. Phonics instruction is never a total reading program. Phonics should not become the dominant component in a reading program, neither in the amount of time devoted to it nor the significance attached. It is important to evaluate children’s reading competence in many ways; not only by their phonics skills but also by their interest in books and their ability to understand information that is read to them. By emphasizing all of the processes that contribute to growth in reading, teachers will have the best chance of making every child a reader. (*National Reading Panel 2000, Chapter 2, p. 136*)
- ✓ [Instruction] that heightens phonological awareness and that emphasizes the connections to the alphabetic code promotes greater skill in word recognition—a skill essential to becoming a proficient reader. (*Blachman 2000, p. 495*)
- ✓ Results indicate that phonological abilities were highly associated with word decoding but did not have an additional influence on further development of word decoding after first grade. For reading comprehension, word decoding and vocabulary, and listening comprehension appeared to exert additional influences on its further development after first grade. (*de Jong & van der Leij 2002, p. 51*)
- ✓ NRP findings indicate that small groups are the best way to teach phonemic awareness to children. Also small groups facilitate greater transfer to reading than [individual or full classroom instruction.] (*National Reading Panel 2000, Chapter 2, p. 42*)
- ✓ Along with phonics instruction, young children should be solidifying their knowledge of the alphabet, engaging in phonemic awareness activities, and listening to stories and informal texts read aloud to them. They should also be reading texts (both out loud and silently) and writing letters, words, messages, and stories. (*Put Reading First 2001, p.15*)
- ✓ Research indicates that children need to develop phonemic awareness and sequential decoding and have regular opportunities to apply their phonics skills. The research however, does not support a narrow reliance on isolated phonemic awareness and synthetic phonics instruction with highly decodable text as the only or even the best way to teach phonics, let alone reading. (*Cunningham & Cunningham 2002, p. 106*)

Research Findings

- ✓ Phonics instruction helps children learn the relationships between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language. Phonics instruction is important because it leads to an understanding of the alphabetic principle—the systematic and predictable relationships between written letters and spoken sounds. (*Put Reading First 2001, p. 19*)
- ✓ All instruction, including phonics instruction, must help learners develop cognitive clarity and become engaged with what they are learning. All instruction, including phonics instruction, must be as multifaceted and multilevel as possible. Guided reading, self-selected reading, and writing instruction are the methods and components of a complete reading program that best follow these general principles of teaching. (*Cunningham & Cunningham 2002, p. 106*)

Research Implications

Discovery Links Nonfiction Guided Reading for emergent and early readers engages students as they read developmentally appropriate texts in a small group setting. The instruction helps students in their growing knowledge of letter/sound relationships and in their use of letter/sound relations to predict and check meaning as they read.

- Emergent and early level guided reading nonfiction books feature repetitive language and syntactic structures to support phonemic awareness and phonics instruction in the small group setting.
- Each lesson highlights Text Features to help the teacher identify opportunities to observe and support the students as they apply phonemic awareness and phonics skills and strategies appropriate for their stage of reading development.
- Phonemic awareness is taught with letters in words to emphasize the connections of the sounds and the alphabetic code.
- Phonemic awareness and phonics activities within the guided reading lessons focus on specific word parts such as: digraphs, initial consonants, vowels, letter clusters, silent c, consonants, suffixes, and blends.
- Suggested lesson prompts encourage students to monitor their predictions by checking letter/sound information and meaning.
- The Teacher’s Notes for each book explicitly model ways to guide students to recognize and use semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic cues to make meaning from nonfiction text.
- The Student Oral Reading Assessment serves as a tool for teachers to observe and assess an individual student’s use of cueing systems.

Vocabulary Instruction

Research Findings

- ✓ Both vocabulary and comprehension involve the meaning of the text, albeit at different levels. Vocabulary is generally tied closely to individual words whereas comprehension is more often thought of in much larger units. To get to the comprehension of larger units requires the requisite processing of the words. Precisely separating the two processes is difficult, if not impossible. (*National Reading Panel, Chapter 4, p. 15*)
- ✓ Vocabulary can be developed indirectly, when students engage daily in oral language, listen to adults read to them, and read extensively on their own and directly, when students are explicitly taught both individual words and word learning strategies. (*Put Reading First 2001, p. 45*)
- ✓ Vocabulary instruction is most effective when learners are given both definitional and contextual information, when learners actively process the new word meanings, and when they experience multiple encounters with the words. (*Graves & Watts-Taffe 2002, p. 143*)
- ✓ The focus of the present study is incidental learning from verbal contexts, although we also examine the effects of combining this with contextually relevant direct explanation. Children acquired new vocabulary from listening to stories, with both frequency of exposure and teacher explanation of the target words enhancing vocabulary learning. (*Penno, Moore & Wilkinson 2002, p. 23*)
- ✓ Graves and his colleagues (Graves et al. 2001) suggest different methods for different learning goals, including teaching students to read words already in their oral vocabularies, teaching new labels for known concepts, teaching words representing new concepts, and clarifying and enriching the meanings of already known words. (*Graves & Watts-Taffe 2002, p. 143*)

Research Implications

Discovery Links Nonfiction Guided Reading provides opportunities for teachers to plan and anticipate direct and indirect vocabulary instruction and for students to apply new vocabulary words in reading, writing, and speaking contexts.

- Nonfiction guided reading books were designed to include content related specialized vocabulary words, which are displayed in bold print, explained in context, and defined in the glossary.
- Suggested teacher prompts and questions support students in using word learning strategies and context to determine meanings.
- Nonfiction guided reading books were designed to include high-frequency words for repeated exposure to familiar words.
- The before-reading book introductions help students build connections between their own vocabulary knowledge and the book concepts and help teachers focus on specialized vocabulary in the discussion.
- Rereading the guided reading book provides multiple encounters with the words to help students process new word meanings and enhance their understanding of concepts.
- Content-area reading and writing activities provide opportunities for students to write and practice the vocabulary words from the book to increase their reading, speaking, and writing vocabulary.

Fluency Instruction

Research Findings

- ✓ Fluency is the ability to read a text accurately and quickly. Fluency is important because it provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension. Because fluent readers do not have to concentrate on decoding words, they can focus their attention on what the text means. (*Put Reading First 2001, p. 22*)
- ✓ Adequate progress in learning to read English (or any other alphabetic language) beyond the initial level depends on sufficient practice in reading to achieve fluency with different kinds of texts written for different purposes. (*Snow, Burns & Griffin 1998, p. 223*)
- ✓ You can help your students become more fluent readers (1) by providing them with models of fluent reading and (2) by having students repeatedly read passages as you offer guidance. (*Put Reading First 2001, p. 26*)
- ✓ The panel concluded that guided repeated oral reading procedures that included guidance from teachers, peers, or parents had a significant and positive impact on word recognition, fluency, and comprehension across a range of grade levels. (*National Reading Panel 2000, p. 12*)
- ✓ Teachers should formally and informally assess fluency regularly to ensure that students are making progress.... The most informal assessment is simply listening to students read aloud and making a judgment about their progress in fluency. Other procedures that have been used for measuring fluency include Informal Reading Inventories, miscue analysis, and running records. (*Put Reading First 2001, p. 22*)
- ✓ Repeated reading provides students with the necessary practice to build fluency, acquire new information, and maintain established information. (*O'Shea, Sindelar & O'Shea 1985, p. 140*)
- ✓ Students profited when encouraged to apply a specific oral reading strategy while engaging in small-group reading instruction. This technique proved to be a simple, effective addition to the teachers' ongoing reading program. (*Allinder, Dunse, Brunken & Obermiller-Krolikowski 2001, p. 54*)

Research Implications

Discovery Links Nonfiction Guided Reading small group instruction engages students in reading different types of nonfiction texts for different purposes as they build reading fluency.

- Students have opportunities to listen to the teacher and other students orally read the text or parts of the text in a small group setting.
 - The teacher guides students as they are invited to orally reread the text or parts of the text.
 - The purpose of the guided reading lesson may be to help students learn to adjust their reading rate and style of reading for different purposes.
- The teacher observes and assesses students' oral reading fluency and uses a variety of assessment tools—observation checklists, student oral reading assessments.
 - Specific oral reading strategies that are taught and practiced in the guided reading lessons include:
 - adjusting reading rate according to material or purpose
 - using punctuation to chunk language
 - attending to sentence structure
 - changing expression and pace according to style of text and author's voice

Text Comprehension Instruction

Research Findings

- ✓ Text comprehension is important because comprehension is the reason for reading. Text comprehension is purposeful and active. (*Put Reading First 2001, p. 57*)
- ✓ The model of comprehension instruction we believe is best supported by research does more than simply include instruction in specific comprehension strategies and opportunities to read, write, and discuss texts—it connects and integrates these different learning opportunities. We suggest an instructional model including the following five components:
 1. An explicit description of strategy and when and how it should be used.
 2. Teacher and/or student modeling of strategy in action.
 3. Collaborative use of strategy in action.
 4. Guided practice using the strategy with gradual release of responsibility.
 5. Independent use of the strategy. (*Duke & Pearson 2002, pp. 208–209*)
- ✓ A set of specific comprehension strategies that have firm scientific basis for improving text comprehension include: monitoring comprehension, using graphophonic and semantic organizers, answering questions, generating questions, recognizing text structure, summarizing. (*Put Reading First 2001, pp. 49–53*)
- ✓ ...effective teachers of comprehension enact practices that reflect the orchestration of knowledge about readers, texts, purposeful activity, and contexts for the purpose of advancing students' thoughtful, competent, and motivated reading. (*RAND Reading Study Group 2002, pp. 29–30*)
- ✓ [Teachers] can guide students to analyze the reading task, to make efficient plans for purposeful reading, and to use appropriate strategies to enhance their ability to comprehend and reason from the text. (*Tregaskes & Daines 1989, p. 58*)

Research Implications

Discovery Links Nonfiction Guided Reading explicitly teaches comprehension strategies to support students in monitoring and building comprehension with nonfiction texts.

- Lessons focus on specific comprehension strategies—using background knowledge to make connections, predicting, integrating, visualizing, questioning, making inferences, summarizing, determining what is important, and self-correcting.
- During the guided reading lesson, the teacher guides the students as they practice and apply comprehension strategies while reading appropriate instructional level nonfiction texts.
- The before reading book introductions help students build connections between their own background knowledge and the book concepts while helping them set a meaningful purpose for the reading.
- Lessons are structured in a sequence to engage students before, during, and after reading to gradually release responsibility for comprehension strategy use to the students.
- Suggested lesson prompts and questions help students flexibly use strategies to comprehend and engage in meaningful discussions to communicate understanding.
- Nonfiction text structures and features are specifically taught to help students learn to access and process informational text.
- Graphic organizers with each guided reading lesson help students focus on text structure and provide them with tools to process and apply their learning to demonstrate comprehension.

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