



# Guided Reading, Literature Circles, and Reading Workshop



**T**his past summer, I had the privilege of taking part in the North American Division (NAD) Office of Education Elementary Reading Textbook Revision Committee. The focus of the committee was to create a new reading series that meets the standards of the NAD and that reflects current research on literacy. The NAD has been working with a publisher, Kendall/Hunt, in Dubuque, Iowa, to produce a

new curriculum that is specifically designed to meet the spiritual and cultural requirements of our schools as well as the literacy needs of our students. It is the purpose of this article to familiarize teachers with terms and practices that will make the implementation of this new curriculum as effective as possible.

Curriculum materials and instructional strategies have been selected that foster independent reading skills and a lifelong love of reading. One specific area that is being addressed is the best method for reading skill instruction. Sev-

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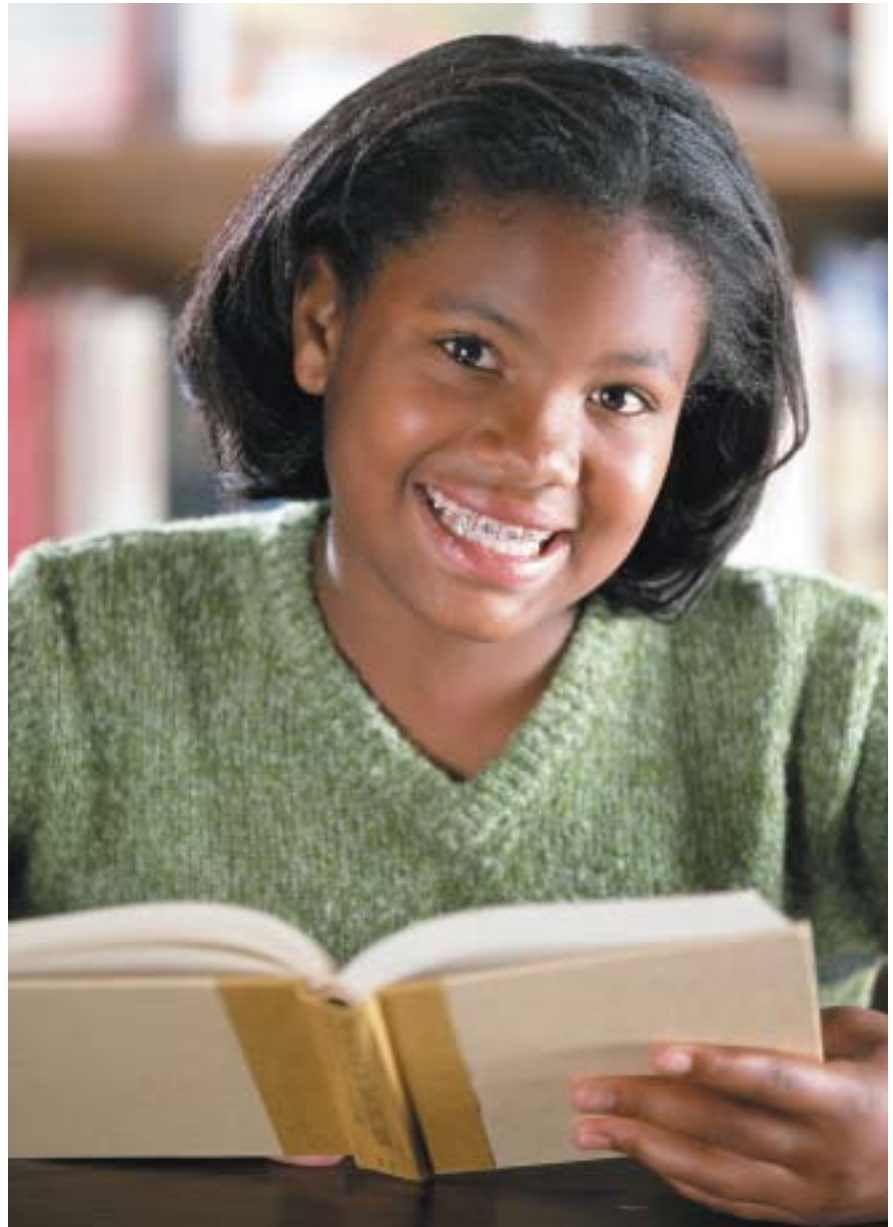
eral methods have been identified, supported by research-based “best practices,” that will be easy to adapt in classrooms with a wide range of reading abilities and/or grade levels. These formats are, in many ways, similar to methods already being used in many of our schools. However, some changes are being made to reflect what we currently know about successful reading instruction. This article will focus on three suggested formats for the delivery of reading instruction: Guided Reading, Literature Circles, and Reading Workshop.

### **Guided Reading**

Guided Reading is the heart of the reading program. It is in many ways similar to the basal reading lessons in the current NAD reading program. According to Cunningham, Hall, and Simon, “In Guided Reading, teachers choose material for children to read and a purpose for reading, and then guide them to use reading strategies needed for that material and that purpose.”<sup>1</sup> The main focus is on the development of comprehension strategies. “When you read, you do two things simultaneously—you say the words, and you ‘think about’ what you are reading. Saying the words aloud (or to yourself if you are reading silently) is the word identification part of reading. Understanding the meaning the words convey is the comprehension part.”<sup>2</sup>

Fountas and Pinnell provide an outline for the Guided Reading process in *Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children*.<sup>3</sup> During Guided Reading, the teacher meets with small groups of students of similar reading ability for direct instruction in reading, while other students work independently in learning centers. Instructional-level materials may include basal readers, anthologies, trade books, big books, magazines, etc. The lesson plan usually incorporates “before,” “during,” and “after” reading segments, with the “before” and “after” sections lasting about five minutes and the “during” segment lasting 15-20 minutes.

During the “before” phase, the teacher introduces the book or text. To



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facilitate comprehension, he or she may take the students on a “picture walk” through the book or have them examine the cover to connect the students’ prior knowledge and personal experiences to what they will be reading. As they look at the pictures together, they try to predict what the story will be about. This gets students engaged and asking questions, and

heightens interest in the book. A teacher may ask questions to set a purpose for reading and to build anticipation. Sometimes, the teacher engages in specific comprehension strategy instruction by having students use picture cues, read to the end of the sentence and re-read, summarize, use sound-letter or rhyming cues, and “chunking” or breaking the word apart. During this time, the teacher may also introduce new vocabulary and familiarize the students with any unfamiliar concepts in the book.

During the second segment of the Guided Reading lesson, the “during” phase, students take turns reading the

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selection. The teacher listens, guides, helps, and praises them as they read. Assessment also occurs during this time, in the form of running records<sup>4</sup> (notes taken on children's reading habits and progress). Teachers can use many grouping variations for this time segment. Students may read independently, in small groups with the teacher (shared reading), or they may be encouraged to *partner-read*, *echo-read*, or *choral-read*. In *partner reading*, two students sit shoulder to shoulder and take turns reading a page or a paragraph, helping each other with difficult words. *Echo reading* also uses partners, with the more proficient reader reading a sentence first, followed by the less proficient reader. Students are encouraged to "track" their reading, placing a finger or pointer under the words as they read them. This method helps students gain confidence in reading aloud, learning new sight words, and learning correct pronunciation and expression. In *choral reading*, a group or pair of students read softly aloud simultaneously. *Scaffold reading* is a variation of this approach. One student reads "underneath" the other student, saying the words simultaneously but more quietly and supporting the other reader through difficult or unknown text.

This enables the struggling reader to comprehend and enjoy more difficult text without slowing down the reading process.

During the third or "after" phase of the lesson, the students engage in closure activities. During discussion of the text, students are asked to connect the story to their own lives. The teacher may also review skills and strategies introduced in segment one or assign written extension activities such as response to the story, keeping a journal, or interactive writing. During interactive writing, the group composes a piece together, usually recorded by the

teacher on large chart paper. As the teacher records the students' responses, the students fill in words, letters, or punctuation. Other activities include art, sketching, drama, reader's theatre, and graphic organizers.

Below is a sample Guided Reading lesson for 1st graders using the book *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?*<sup>5</sup>

**BEFORE:**

1. Introduce the book. Read the title and the author's name (Bill Martin, Jr.). Ask "Can you guess who the illustrator is?" (Eric Carle)



2. Talk about the book. "This is like a song or poem about animals of different colors."

3. Conduct a picture walk, reading a few pages aloud.

4. Introduce vocabulary and comprehension strategy. "What pattern do you see in this book? What keeps repeating?" Review sight words on index cards they are to use later in their writing: *what, do, you, see, I, at, me*. Notice the rhyming words *see* and *me*.

#### **DURING:**

5. Teacher reads book to students.

6. Students choral-read book.

7. Teacher takes notes while students are reading.

#### **AFTER:**

8. Students respond to the story by placing felt pieces about the story on a board as the teacher rereads the story.

9. Students write a new line to the story and illustrate it, i.e., "Lion, lion, what do you see? I see a yellow cheetah looking at me." "Green fox, green fox, what do you see? I see a lion looking at me." These pages can be bound into a new book for classroom use.

10. Read a related book such as *Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?*<sup>6</sup>

#### **Literature Circles**

Students need to practice the skills and strategies introduced in Guided Reading. Literature Circles, small groups (three to six students) that are formed around a particular text choice, are one way students can apply what they have learned.<sup>7</sup> Materials may include trade books, both fiction and nonfiction, poetry, content texts, magazine articles, etc. Typically, the teacher puts together sets of materials (four to six copies) that are related by a common theme or author. Students choose which text to read, and all students reading a common text are grouped together. (Schlick Noe's Website contains many helpful tools for literature circles.<sup>8</sup>)

The Literature Circle format is very simple, yet fosters learning. Students are assigned a chapter or chunk of text

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to read individually and are asked to bring their responses to the discussion circle. The students must make preparation through their responses so they

have something to bring to the discussion. The better prepared their responses, the better the discussion and more learning that occurs. Prompts are one example of a response. Students are asked to complete prompts such as: "I thought . . .," "I liked . . .," "I wonder . . .," "I felt . . .," "I noticed . . .," "I predict . . .," "A connection is . . .," "My favorite person is . . .," "A question I have is . . .," "If I could change . . ."

Students may also be given Post-It notes to write down ideas, words that



are interesting or that they do not know, and favorite quotes or questions to bring to their group. They don't have to write in the book and can find the quotes easily, as the Post-It serves as a bookmark, too. Making and decorating bookmarks based on certain chapters of the book is a traditional response in Literature Circles as well and encourages student creativity. It can be done at the beginning or end of the book as part of a celebration.

Discussion logs are perhaps one of the most important components of the Literature Circle. Using these record sheets, students enter their name, the date, which chapter they are reading, and a written response such as a list of words they wonder about; questions they have; or how the story relates to their lives, to something going on in the world, or to something else in the book. Responses can be as simple as a journal entry for each chapter. A variety of responses can be used throughout the reading of the text. This format can be applied across the curriculum in Bible, science, or social studies.

I really enjoyed using this format with my upper-grade students when we read the book *A Thousand Shall Fall*<sup>9</sup> by Susi Hasel Mundy. The students asked many thought-provoking questions, learned interesting answers to them, and acquired new vocabulary. Most importantly, they learned from one another. There were moments when discussion stopped and they weren't sure of themselves, and moments when I wasn't sure of myself, but when they had new insights to share, they really shone. I particularly enjoyed this experience because it allowed me to shed the role of "Container of All Knowledge and Wisdom," and put the power in the students' hands. I finally understood the meaning of teacher as facilitator, and was reminded that truth belongs to all of us, not just to those in authority.

### Reading Workshop

During Reading Workshop, emergent readers may choose what they want to read. Using Reading Workshop in conjunction with Guided Reading or

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Literature Circles has been found to be more effective than a Guided Reading program alone, especially for struggling readers. In addition, it helps students who have not developed a love for reading, but who possess strong reading skills. Its strength lies in its allowing students to self-select their reading, for research shows that choice increases motivation. Furthermore, it helps students concentrate on comprehension or gaining meaning from the text. They develop fluency and confidence as they read material on their independent reading level.

Below is a sample format for Reading Workshop:

#### Teacher Read-Aloud:

The teacher reads aloud to students from a variety of materials, including different genres, themes, and authors.

#### Children Reading:

Students self-select books or other materials on their own reading level to read independently.

#### Children Sharing:

Several students share what they are reading with their classmates.

To adapt Reading Workshop to multigrade classrooms and a variety of reading levels, Cunningham, Hall, and Sigmon recommend teaching young children, in particular, three ways to read<sup>10</sup>:

- "Pretend read" by telling the story of a familiar storybook;
- "Picture read" by looking at a book about real things with lots of pictures and talking about all the things you see in the pictures; and
- Read by reading all the words.

### Conclusion

Teachers need to provide Guided

Reading instruction as well as an opportunity for students to apply what they learn in Literature Circles and/or Reading Workshop. Some teachers have found success in merging the Literature Circles and Reading Workshop. Another option is to integrate Literature Circles into content-area subjects such as science, social studies, or Bible. Every instructional plan should address both strategy instruction as well as practice in a variety of formats, as it draws students closer to God and inspires a lifelong love of reading. ✍



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