Teacher Perspectives of Their Implementation of Guided Reading Instruction

Kristi Presley
kristi.presley@lmunet.edu
Final Dissertation Approval  
Form 11  

Teacher Perspectives of their Implementation of Guided Reading  

Instruction  

Dissertation Title (Must be typed)  

This is to certify that I have examined this copy of the doctoral dissertation by  

Kristi Presley  

Candidate’s Name  

and have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.  

Committee Chair  

Date  

Committee Member  

Date  

Committee Member  

Date  

EdD Program Director  

Date  

Dean, School of Education  

Date
TEACHER PERSPECTIVES OF THEIR IMPLEMENTATION
OF GUIDED READING INSTRUCTION

Dissertation

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
in the Carter and Moyers School of Education
at Lincoln Memorial University

by

Kristi D. Presley

December 2019
Dedication

*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.* ~Philippians 4:13

*For I am the LORD your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you,*

*Do not fear; I will help you.* ~Isaiah 41:13

All praise and glory to Jesus, my Lord and Savior. Without Him, I am nothing, and it was only with His help that I was able to finally finish. I dedicate this to my late parents, Larry and Thelma Waddle. They have been the greatest influences on my life, and though they have already left this earthly world for their heavenly home, their love for me and the impact that they made on my life remains a constant. Mama and Daddy, I love you forever, and because of Jesus, I will see you again one day.

To my sweet husband, Andy, thank you for your steadfast love and encouragement of me every day and especially throughout this entire process. You have prayed for me, cheered me on, wiped my tears, and endured endless hours of me staring at a computer. I love you with all my heart, all my soul, for always, and forever.

To my awesome brothers, Robby and Toby – I love you. I’m the luckiest little sister in the world. You two will always be my heroes. To my nieces, Anna and Emma - I love you to infinity and beyond. Thank you for always loving and encouraging me.

Special thanks to my dear friends and colleagues: Dr. Angie Baker, Dr. Wendy Carpenter, and Beverly Chandler. I so value each of you and your knowledge of reading instruction, but it is your friendship that I treasure the most.

Thank you to Dr. Lynn Burger and Dr. Michael Burger for your patience and understanding through the deaths of my parents. You both encouraged me to take a break, and then you never stopped encouraging me to come back and finish.
Acknowledgments

To all the teachers who gave their time to participate in my study and share their perspectives, thank you. It is you, the teachers, who are doing the real work as you mold and shape young minds. Never underestimate the impact of your work – on your students as well as your colleagues.

To Dr. Julia Kirk, the chair of my committee, thank you for all of your guidance and support. You helped me to narrow my focus and to cross the finish line, and I am forever grateful to you.

To my committee members, Dr. Shannon Collins and Dr. Jill Leonard, thank you for your willingness to serve on my committee and for sharing your knowledge of qualitative research and literacy with me throughout this process.
Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of guided reading in the classroom and the perception teachers had related to their own self-efficacy in their implementation of guided reading instruction. Using an interpretative qualitative methodology, this researcher interviewed twelve teachers in Tennessee concerning their implementation of guided reading instruction in their classrooms. This researcher designed and utilized a Guided Reading Fidelity Checklist for the purpose of analyzing the collected data. This researcher identified misalignments regarding the fidelity of the implementation of guided reading instruction. The findings of this study demonstrate a need for teachers to have further understanding and clarification in how to implement guided reading instruction with fidelity.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I: Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of the Terms</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II: Review of the Literature</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies on Reading</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced Literacy Framework</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided Reading Defined</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grouping</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Selection</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Guided Reading Lesson</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers Perceptions of Reading Instruction</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Perceptions of Guided Reading Instruction</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Self-Efficacy of Guided Reading</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter III: Methodology</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants of the Study</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical Methods</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

Table | Page
---|---
Table 1. Number of Students and Faculty of the Participating School Districts | 56
Table 2. Demographics of the Participating School Districts | 57
Table 3. Demographics of Participants in the Study | 58
Table 4. Participant’s Reported Confidence in Implementing Guided Reading Instruction Effectively | 74
## List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1. Participants’ Total Years of Teaching Experience</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2. Participants’ Years of Experience in Teaching ELA or Reading Instruction</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3. Alignment of Fidelity of Guided Reading Implementation</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4. Participants’ Responses for How They Determined Their Students’ Reading Levels</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5. Participants’ Description of a Typical Guided Reading Lesson</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6. Participants’ Responses for How Often Students Experienced a Guided Reading Lesson Each Week</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter I: Introduction

A great place to learn how to ride a bicycle is on a bicycle, and a great place to learn to how to read a book is in a book! Guided reading has been said to be a key component in a comprehensive framework for literacy instruction (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Because of the individualized instruction that guided reading offered, it has been considered to be a best practice for educators to use to teach reading (Odell, 2012).

The techniques used during guided reading instruction may look like typical reading instruction techniques, but the purposeful grouping of the students by their instructional level and selecting just-right texts were a few elements that set guided reading apart from other components of balanced literacy. In contrast to learning isolated skills such as memorizing high frequency words, learning the rules of phonics, or learning vocabulary words out of context, guided reading instruction provided opportunities for students to apply those skills they have learned in isolation, including decoding and reading comprehension strategies with text that is slightly challenging for them, based on their individual instructional reading levels (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). According to Fountas and Pinnell (2012), the purpose of guided reading was to increase students’ reading ability by providing opportunities to engage with text as the teacher coached them through learning and applying comprehension strategies that students should be using as they were thinking within the text, about the text, and beyond the text.

Another benefit of guided reading was that it addressed students’ individual needs. Parker, King, and Holt (1953) shared an anecdote that exemplified how diversified the needs were of students in a single classroom. After hearing from a speaker that there were potentially eight to ten different reading levels in any one classroom, ninth-grade
teacher Ruth Holt decided to assess each student’s reading level to determine the number of levels in her English class. She was shocked to discover that students in her class were reading on ten different levels, just as the speaker had suggested (Parker et al., 1953). Additionally, Parker, et al. (1953) relayed a story of Abraham Lincoln. In the story, someone asked Mr. Lincoln, “Abe, how long should a man’s legs should be?” Lincoln replied, “Long enough to reach the ground.” The speaker went on to create an analogy with this story and stated:

If we accept this analogy in reading – in all learning, for that matter – we will stop trying to pour thirty-five students into one single mold of one textbook just because they are sitting in the same classroom. Instead, we will provide each student with material that will allow his ‘reading legs’ to reach the solid ground of comprehending what he reads, – regardless of how far down or how far up that may be. Further, we will provide him with the opportunity to progress to higher reading levels, if, as and when his ‘reading legs’ grow. (Parker et al., 1953, p. 179)

In any given classroom, reading levels will vary. Guided reading provided teachers the opportunity to meet students at their instructional level and nurture them as individual readers. “Implementing guided reading instruction results in students who are more efficient and capable readers” (Heston, n.d., p. 19). At the time of this study, guided reading was the component of a balanced literacy approach that addressed each student’s individual needs.
Statement of the Problem

Post (2015) stated that 14% of the adult population (thirty-two million adults) could not read. Post also stated, “What’s more shocking is that we haven’t moved the needle in 10 years” (Post, 2015, para 2). Additionally, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) reading test, which tests 10,000-20,000 students, indicated that 34% of fourth graders and 36% of eighth graders performed at or above the Proficient achievement level in reading (2015). “Sixty-five percent of all U.S. fourth graders scored ‘below proficient,’ which means that they are not reading on grade level” (The National Children’s Book and Literacy Alliance, 2018, para 1). Though the statistics were markedly low, there has been improvement in America since 1992 when 72% of fourth graders and 71% of eighth graders were reading below proficiency. Despite the small improvement over the previous fifteen years, America continued to have far too many students reading below grade level (NCES, 2013). The 2017 Nation’s Report Card included charts that seemed to show that America was finally seeing gains in reading. While the headline for the national scores at a glance stated, “Increase in 2017 average reading score for the nation at grade 8 compared to 2015; no changes for reading at grade 4 or mathematics at either grade” (NCES, 2017, para 1); there was only a one-point increase for students in 8th grade. “Compared to the initial assessments in the early 1990s, average scores for both subjects were higher at both grades” (NCES, 2017, para 2). The report card also had charts to show this supposed growth. One difference between the data on the chart from 1990 and the data from more recent years was that accommodations were not permitted in 1990, but accommodations have been permitted
in recent years. Students were barely making any gains at all, even with permitted accommodations (NCES, 2017).

At the time of this study, teachers were being advised to utilize more complex texts in their classrooms. According to Allington (2013), “Too many struggling readers have desks full of grade-level texts that they cannot read accurately, texts that will foster neither engaged reading nor reading development” (p. 524). When states adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2011, there was a call for the use of more complex texts in classrooms. With CCSS, the demand for close reading of complex text became more of a focus. Yet, in Appendix A of the CCSS, the standard’s authors stated, “Students reading well above and well below grade-band level need additional support” (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010, p. 9). The authors also indicated that higher level students needed to have opportunities to access text with sufficient challenge while struggling students should be given the supports needed to prepare them to eventually read text that is on their grade level. Because this information was not specifically stated within each grade level’s standards and because teachers were charged to teach the standards for their individual grade level, teachers may have neglected to provide students with opportunities to read text that was on their instructional level.

One solution to addressing the stagnant growth in reading performance was the utilization of guided reading instruction. Guided reading instruction, when used within a balanced literacy framework, was a strategy for teachers to help students to become proficient readers. At the time this study was conducted, “Too few studies (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009; Ford & Opitz, 2008) have been conducted on what teacher perceptions of guided reading were. The researchers of those studies discussed the need for teachers to
gain more knowledge of the components and framework of guided reading” (Reeves, 2011, p. 19).

While balanced literacy was widely recognized in the field of education as an approach to literacy, there were researchers who opposed balanced literacy – including guided reading instruction. Even those who opposed a balanced literacy approach, typically favoring a systematic plan of phonics instruction, recognized one problem that could be impacting the progress of literacy. Moats (2000) stated, “Unfortunately, many who pledge allegiance to balanced reading continue to misunderstand reading development and to deliver poorly conceived, ineffective instruction” (p. 11). Even the best instructional strategies are not effective if they are implemented incorrectly or without fidelity.

Willis (1995) described whole language as an approach in which “meaning is paramount. Rather than learning phonics skills out of context, children were taught about the parts of language while they pursue “authentic” reading and writing” (par. 3). Balanced literacy, however, was not a synonym for whole language. Rachael Gabriel (as cited in Strauss, 2018) provided clarification on components of balanced literacy as compared to whole language when she said, 

Balanced Literacy was intended to ‘balance’ several aspects of instruction which scientific research highlighted as important, but in tension: reading and writing (instead of focusing heavily on reading at the expense of writing); teacher-directed and student-centered activities (instead of being totally student-led inquiry, or complete teacher-directed explicit instruction); whole group, small group and independent configurations (instead of all one or another), and skill-
focused (e.g. phonics) and meaning-focused (e.g. comprehension) instruction.

(par. 14)
In guided reading, students would be engaging in the application of skills within the context of reading an authentic text, but guided reading was only one component of the balanced literacy approach.

In an ongoing effort to discredit all things whole language, Moats (2007) included guided reading among the components of whole language that were contradictory to what Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR) required for teaching comprehension skills and strategies. Moats (2007) charted a comparison of SBRR and Whole Language Derivatives. In her comparison of comprehension skills and strategies used within the two approaches, she included guided reading instruction among the attributes of whole language as she listed the following information. Teachers were instructed to use activities known as choral reading, shared reading, and guided reading and teacher modeling (thinking aloud) was the primary instructional strategy. Leveled book reading, big books, and independent trade book reading were all used; student book choice was emphasized (Moats, 2007). Though leveled book reading was an important part of guided reading in order to match appropriate texts to meet individual student needs, the other whole language components Moats (2007) included were unrelated to guided reading. While guided reading may not include a planned progression of strategies or a teacher’s edition to guide every step, analyzing text structure and applying subskills, such as main idea and theme, were actually examples of what makes guided reading so purposeful – students applying skills. In this researcher’s experience as a teacher, the modeling of the planned progression of strategies would happen in a whole group setting with an on-
grade-level text. Then, in the guided reading small group, students would have an opportunity to be coached by the teacher as they applied learned strategies.

Prior to conducting this study, this researcher had been an instructional coach in public schools for five years. Three of those years were spent at three schools, one year as a district level instructional coach (serving ten K-8 schools, one K-5 school, one 6-8 school, and one high school), and one year as an instructional coach at one school. These instructional coach positions were in two separate districts and both of those districts had an expectation that guided reading would be conducted in classrooms. It was considered a non-negotiable practice; every teacher was expected to do guided reading. During this researcher’s experience as an instructional coach, this researcher witnessed several occasions in which teachers had misinterpreted how guided reading was supposed to be implemented. Some examples of this included meeting with more than six students at a time, using on grade level or complex text (as opposed to text that matched the readers’ instructional levels) during the guided reading lesson, having the students take turns reading (round robin style), or meeting with students infrequently. In both districts, training was provided to teachers on how guided reading should be done. In one district, an outside consultant came in to model guided reading lessons as teachers observed, followed by a question/answer session for the teachers. In that district, each school was equipped with a bookroom with leveled books from the text gradient developed by Fountas and Pinnell (2012). Yet, even with training, modeling, and the support of an instructional coach, this researcher often witnessed the guided reading strategy being implemented without fidelity. The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of
guided reading in the classroom and the perception teachers had related to their own self-efficacy in their implementation of guided reading instruction.

**Research Questions**

This researcher wanted to understand teacher perceptions of guided reading to evaluate how closely their perceptions impacted implementation of guided reading as a best practice. To guide this study, this researcher asked the following research questions.

**Research question 1.** According to interviews of K-6 ELA teachers in four Tennessee school districts, what were teachers’ self-efficacy related to the best practice of guided reading instruction?

**Research question 2.** According to interviews of K-6 ELA teachers in four Tennessee school districts, how did teachers perceive they were implementing guided reading in their classrooms?

**Theoretical Framework**

“The process of designing a qualitative study begins …with the broad assumptions central to qualitative inquiry, a worldview consistent with it, and in many cases, a theoretical lens that shapes the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 42). Bandura, in his Social Learning Theory (1977), suggested that a person’s ability to put action towards completing tasks was contingent upon their motivation for doing the task and that motivation could be driven by various factors that affected their own self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1977), “Not only can perceived self-efficacy have directive influence on choice of activities and settings, but, through expectations of eventual success, it can affect coping efforts once they are initiated” (p. 194). People with a strong
self-efficacy approached tasks with a different level of effort than those with a low self-efficacy.

Bandura (1977) based his theory on the assumption that psychological procedures developed and strengthened expectations of personal efficacy. Bandura (1977) illustrated an example of one psychological procedure as it related to self-efficacy as he explained that an outcome expectancy is defined as an estimation by a person’s belief that a specific behavior would lead to a certain outcome while an efficacy expectation was a person’s opinion of whether or not they could have done the required behavior in order to lead to the outcome (Bandura, 1977). A person’s efficacy expectation derived from his or her own beliefs about what he or she can and cannot achieve. Efficacy expectations set the bar for what the person believed he or she could accomplish within the tasks required in order to achieve a goal. Specifically, Bandura (1977) stated, “Expectations of personal mastery affect both initiation and persistence of coping behavior” (p. 193). If a person had outcome expectations, rather than efficacy expectations, they had a belief that if they completed certain steps or tasks, the outcome would naturally happen as it was supposed to. Perceived self-efficacy could have had a direct influence on a person’s choice of activities or even the choice to attempt an activity or task. People tended to avoid situations that they believed were beyond their abilities or coping skills, but if they already believed they can handle the task at hand, they were more likely to attempt the task (Bandura, 1977).

According to Bandura (1977), there were four main sources of efficacy expectations: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. A person’s performance accomplishments, including previous success
at accomplishing certain tasks, increased his or her mastery expectations while repeated failures lowered them. When a person experienced an extensive amount of repeated success, they were not defeated when they did occasionally experience failure. This repeated success lead to an enhanced self-efficacy that increased coping skills and perseverance. This enhanced self-efficacy eventually began to generalize to various situations, even those situations where the person once felt self-debilitated by their personal inadequacies (Bandura, 1977).

People who gained confidence to attempt certain tasks by watching others do it first, gained self-efficacy through vicarious experience. They believed that if someone else could do it, they should be able to do it, too. This gave them enough confidence to at least make an attempt (Bandura, 1977). If the model experienced adversity in the attempt of the task, but worked through it using coping mechanisms and perseverance, the observer also learned from the model how to handle adversity themselves.

Some people could be convinced that they could do something if someone verbally persuaded them to do so, even if they lacked self-efficacy with that task. Also, people who could be convinced that they possessed the ability to master a difficult situation and were provided with some type of assistance for getting started with a task were more likely to persevere through adversity than people who only had assistance for getting started with a task (Bandura, 1977). The influence of verbal persuasion on self-efficacy may vary depending on the credibility of the person doing the persuading. A believable persuader was more likely to have an impact on a person’s self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977).
Emotional arousal could also affect perceived self-efficacy in coping with intimidating circumstances. When people experienced emotional arousal, fear took over. They may have completely avoided tasks that sparked a sense of fear or uncertainty. Modeling provided a way to extinguish anxiety arousal, but the experience of mastery had an even greater impact for decreasing feelings of fear and intimidation. If a person’s emotional arousal could be reduced, then so would their avoidance behavior (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy varied from person to person and was constantly being developed in each of us through our experiences, how we dealt with them, and their outcomes (Bandura, 1977). A person’s self-efficacy could be improved by positive outcomes from tasks that were simple, but self-efficacy was heightened even more when positive outcomes were a result of challenging tasks (Bandura, 1977). High self-efficacy helped to determine a person’s mindset and motivation to begin a task, and it fostered coping skills and the ability to persevere, even in those who were uncomfortable or unfamiliar with tasks required (Bandura, 1977).

A teacher’s self-efficacy could impact their effort towards trying new strategies or implementing strategies that may take time to perfect, like guided reading. Because guided reading looks different in every classroom, it may be difficult for those teachers, who need to see it in action before they can feel confident to attempt it on their own, to try to replicate what they had seen in someone else’s classroom. Teachers with a higher self-efficacy are likely to continue to implement guided reading instruction with fidelity, even though the results from guided reading instruction may take long periods of time to develop. Understanding teacher perceptions of their implementation of guided reading in their classrooms could help teachers understand their self-efficacy in using this particular
strategy to teach reading. As with any instructional strategy, the fidelity in which the instructional strategy is implemented is critical. The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of guided reading in the classroom and the perception teachers had related to their own self-efficacy in their implementation of guided reading instruction.

**Significance of the Study**

At the time of the is study, this body of literature was very limited with only a few researchers having studied teacher perceptions of guided reading. While there were many articles related to how guided reading should be conducted in classrooms as well as the impact of guided reading on students’ literacy, the notion of investigating teacher perceptions of their implementation of guided reading was a topic with a narrow amount of literature available. This study added to the literature on teacher perceptions of guided reading instruction in their classrooms, and has revealed misalignments that teachers had about guided reading instruction, and thus, provided a foundation for a dialogue to address teachers’ needs so that they may effectively implement guided reading in practice.

Knowing that self-efficacy affects a person’s ability to progress forward in attempting something new (Bandura, 1977), it may important to explore how self-efficacy could impact the progress of implementation of guided reading instruction effectively in English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms. Having a clear understanding of educational practices does not necessarily lead to full implementation of those practices in a classroom. If self-efficacy truly does play a part in a person’s ability to try, to put action to new learning, then supporting teachers’ self-efficacy needs to be a topic of discussion in education. It was this researcher’s hope that districts and school
administrators, as well as instructional coaches, will be able to use this study to further understand teacher self-efficacy as it impacts the effectiveness of the implementation of guided reading instruction. Furthermore, this researcher was optimistic that as an understanding of teachers’ self-efficacy as it related to the implementation became evident, that district leaders, principals, and instructional coaches would be able to better support teachers and consequently improve guided reading instruction in the classroom.

**Description of the Terms**

**Guided reading.** Based on the work of Fountas and Pinnell (1996), this researcher defined guided reading as an instructional strategy that was one component of a comprehensive framework for literacy instruction. In guided reading, teachers meet with homogeneously grouped students in a small group setting to work through text that is on or near the group’s instructional reading level.

**Running record.** Fountas and Pinnell (1996) defined a running record as a reading assessment that is used to determine a student’s accuracy rate, fluency, and comprehension. Running records were leveled on an A-Z leveling system that is known as a guided reading level. A student’s accuracy, rate, and comprehension determined their instructional reading level and their independent reading level (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). During a running record, the teacher had a script of the text being read by the student. As the student read, the teacher marked the script. The teacher interpreted the markings on the script to determine the number of errors and to determine the student’s accuracy rate. The teacher used the marks to reflect on what the student’s errors were and made plans for future instruction for the individual student.
Instructional reading level. Fountas and Pinnell (2009) defined an instructional reading level by the following criteria when a running record had been administered:

- At levels A-K: 90-94% accuracy with excellent or satisfactory comprehension or 95-100% accuracy with limited comprehension
- At levels L-Z: 95-97% accuracy with excellent or satisfactory comprehension or 98-100% accuracy with limited comprehension (p. 1)

Text selection. Different groups within the same class read different texts while they were in the guided reading lesson (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). The act of choosing the text for students in their guided reading lessons was text selection. Teachers selected texts for each guided reading group based on their students’ instructional reading levels.
Chapter II: Review of the Literature

The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of guided reading in the classroom and the perception teachers had related to their own self-efficacy in their implementation of guided reading instruction. There were very few researchers who had investigated teacher perceptions of their implementation of guided reading even though guided reading was a strategy that was considered a best practice in reading instruction. This researcher revealed the continuous problem of students reading below grade level, the definition of guided reading, teacher perceptions of how guided reading was being implemented in classrooms at the time of this study, and teacher self-efficacy in implementation of guided reading instruction through the following literature review.

Policies on Reading

Decades of focusing on reading proficiency have not resulted in a nation of proficient readers. The Education Commission of the States (ECS) reported a snapshot of the progress of education reform in America. The report detailed:

- The long-term trend in National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading assessments demonstrated that the literacy of 13- and 17-year-olds has stagnated for close to four decades.
- At age 9, the average NAEP reading score in 2008 was 12 points higher than in 1971. However, this increase was still below proficient.
- The Black/White 3rd-grade reading gap narrowed by 20 points from 1971 to 2008, the 8th-grade gap narrowed by 17 points and the 12th-grade gap was reduced by 24 points.
The 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) revealed that 30 million American adults scored at “below basic” — meaning they could perform no more than the most rudimentary literacy tasks.

(ECS, 2011, p. 2)

As percentages in reading proficiency continued to remain stagnantly low, state and local policy makers and lawmakers developed policies and laws to attempt to enforce an increase in reading achievement. Regardless of what these policies and laws stated, the enforcement of them has made little to no impact on reading achievement across America. The National Conference of State Legislatures stated, “In 2015, roughly two out of three fourth-graders failed to score proficient in reading” (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2018, para 5). The ECS reported the following concerning the identification of, intervention for, and retention of struggling readers in the preK-3 grades:

- Thirty-six states plus the District of Columbia required a reading assessment in at least one grade, preK-3, with the primary purpose to identify reading deficiencies. The assessments were a mix of state-mandated and locally determined approaches.
- Thirty-three states plus D.C. required or recommended that districts offer some type of intervention or remediation for struggling readers for a P-3 grade. Some states required specific interventions while others let districts choose from a list of suggested interventions.
Sixteen states plus D.C. required the retention of third-grade students who did not meet grade-level expectations in reading. Three additional states allowed students to be retained based on a recommendation from teacher, parent or superintendent (Workman, 2014, p. 1).

Taking a closer look at the state utilized for this study, Tennessee required all students to be assessed in reading in third grade. The Tennessee Department of Education also implemented Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI²) to address individual student needs. As explained in Tennessee’s *Response to Instruction and Intervention Framework* (2016), Tier 1 included the entire student population. Tier 1 involved differentiated instruction within the regular classroom setting. Tier 2 was a supplemental service for students falling between the 11th and 25th percentile, while Tier 3 was a supplemental service for students falling between the 1st and the 10th percentile, according to a state-approved universal screener. During the time that students spent in a Tier 2 or Tier 3 group, they were frequently assessed for progress monitoring. Student support teams utilized the data points collected during progress monitoring to make decisions for individual students, moving them in and out of the tiers as needed. If students continued to decline in their progress, they were ultimately referred for testing for a specific learning disability. Also, Tennessee Code Annotated (TCA, 2011) was revised so that third graders not performing at the proficient level in reading were provided opportunities to be promoted to the next grade level if appropriate measures for intervention had been made:
Students will normally progress annually in sequential order from grade to grade. The professional staff will place students at the grade level best suited to them academically, socially and emotionally. Retentions may be made when, in the judgment of the teacher, such retentions are in the best interest of the students. Decisions to retain are subject to review and approval of the principal after consultation with the teacher. However, no student enrolled in the third grade shall be promoted unless the student has shown a basic understanding of curriculum and ability to perform the skills required in the subject of reading as demonstrated by the student's grades or standardized test results. This requirement shall not apply to students who are participating in a Board approved research-based intervention prior to the beginning of the next school year or to students who have IEPs pursuant to 20 U.S.C.§ 1400 et seq. The director shall report, at least annually, on any intervention programs available to students in the third grade and recommend any new programs or the modification of any existing programs to better serves these students.

(TCA § 49-6-3115)

Lawmakers developed these policies because students were not reading on grade level, and most of the policies focused on whether students were reading on grade level by the third grade. The third grade year was a critical one in a student’s educational career because students who were not reading proficiently by the end of third grade were more likely “to have ongoing academic difficulties in school, failure to graduate from high school on time and chances of succeeding economically later in life” (Fiester, 2013, p. 3).
In an ECS Report, Workman (2014) included the following information concerning the repercussions of students not reading proficiently by third grade:

- Children who are not reading proficiently by third grade were four times less likely to graduate high school on time.
- More than half of all students (63%) who did not graduate from high school on time were not reading proficiently in third grade.

Workman (2014) also stated that if students did not have proficient reading skills by third grade, their ability to advance through school and meet future grade level expectations was reduced significantly. Additionally, Workman (2014) shared that those students were also at a greater risk of dropping out of school and their lack of reading proficiency put them at a higher risk for unemployment and criminal activity.

**Balanced Literacy Framework**

When working with children and learning, there were no givens because all children are different and learn in different ways. There was no specific recipe of instructional strategies that worked best for every child in every classroom (Pressley, 2008). The idea of a balanced approach to literacy was to meet the needs of most children since it provided several different paths to developing literacy (Pressley, 2008). A balanced approach to literacy was meant to be a flexible approach to reading, and that balance meant different things for different children and their individual needs (Zygouris-Coe, 2001). The balanced approach recognized that students had differences, and it provided an alternative for teachers to provide differentiated instruction (Pressley, 2008). The flexible framework of balanced literacy presented a practical method for students to
reach success in literacy, a necessary component for a successful life in society (Rennick, 2003).

In a balanced literacy program, the teacher met with students in various configurations to provide instruction and to support their learning. Consequently, effective classroom management was a factor that could have impacted the success of a balanced literacy classroom, since all the various components required the students to work directly with the teacher at times and at other times to work independently or with other students (Naples-Nakelski, 2003). Teachers set clear guidelines for students working independently during the small group time so that the small group time was not interrupted (Naples-Nakelski, 2003).

Depending on the author, the components included in a balanced literacy framework varied (Pressley, 2008, p. 1). Teachers of balanced literacy instructional programs were characterized by the following seven attributes: (a) demonstrates instructional balance, (b) extensive use of scaffolding, (c) encouragement of self-regulation, (d) thorough integration of reading and writing activities, (e) masterful classroom management, (f) high expectations for all students, and (g) awareness of purpose (Stahl, McKenna, & Pagnucco, 1994).

At the time of this study, Fountas and Pinnell (1996) were considered to be leaders in literacy in America. Not only did they scale up their work in New Zealand with Reading Recovery, creating a reading (and text) leveling system (the A-Z leveling system) for guided reading, but they were also strong advocates of a balanced literacy framework. According to Fountas and Pinnell, who adopted the Ohio State University Literacy Collaborative Framework as a comprehensive balanced literacy framework, there were eight components of balanced literacy (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Among
those eight components were read alouds (now termed interactive read alouds), shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, shared writing, interactive writing, guided writing or writing workshop, and independent writing (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Each component addressed literacy from different perspectives and comprised different levels of student support. While guided reading was only one component within the reading instruction of a balanced literacy framework, Fountas and Pinnell concluded that a balanced literacy framework supported the different needs of students and offered teachers the components that should be included within the daily reading lesson in order for students to become successful readers (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

The interactive read aloud, another component in a balanced literacy framework, required students to listen and respond to complex text that was one to two levels above their grade level (Tennessee Department of Education, 2017). The teacher selected a variety of both fiction and non-fiction texts –for special features. These texts were then reread for different purposes over a period of several days. Interactive read alouds were also as a time to build knowledge related to the content standards at the grade level or pertaining to life skills and character building. Teachers crafted high quality questions to accompany the portion of the text that is read each day. Teachers also planned ahead the thinking that they would want to do aloud in order to model for their students the thinking process that good readers do to make meaning of the text. While the students built their content knowledge and vocabulary through engagement with a high-quality text, they were using and observing multiple reading comprehension strategies at work simultaneously. Comprehension strategies and skills were not modeled in isolation of one another, but rather when necessary and natural within the text. On any given day of engaging with the selected text, students observed their teacher modeling a variety of
comprehension strategies and skills that were necessary to tackle that portion of the text for that day. Although the teacher did ask questions of the students as he/she read, the teacher was responsible for doing the reading and rereading of the text (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Shared reading was a time for students to engage with grade-level text. During this component of a balanced literary approach, every student must have access to the text as they are meant to read along with the teacher. For lower grade students, a big book was used or a digital text was projected on a screen for all to see and read from simultaneously. As students gained the ability to track texts, teachers provided individual copies of the shared reading text. Just as with the interactive read aloud, the teacher crafted high quality questions and think-alouds, which allowed the teacher to model appropriate comprehension strategies and skills. Unlike interactive read alouds where the teacher was responsible for the reading of the text, with shared reading, the students shared the reading responsibility of the reading. Teachers chose from among several options such as choral reading, echo reading, or partner reading. Also, in shared reading, when opportunities to model decoding or word attack strategies came about, the teacher would choose to model how to use those strategies or he/she would coach the students to apply those strategies within the text. Because the text was on grade level, it was an appropriate time to have students attempt the words on the page with the support of the teacher (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Independent reading was a time set aside each day for students to read independently or with a partner at their independent reading level. A student reading at an independent reading level had a higher than a 95% accuracy rate, and they were able to competently comprehend the text without additional support. Students may select books
from a certain range of difficulty, or the teacher may pre-select books for students (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

To utilize the gradual release of responsibility, (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) or I do, we do, you do (Fisher & Frey, 2013), the teacher slowly weaned off support so that students achieve independence. Interactive read alouds were largely an I do activity, wherein teachers spent a great deal of time modeling comprehension strategies with a text that was one to two grade levels above the students’ grade level. Shared reading was more of a we do activity, in which the teacher and the students were both sharing the responsibility of the reading an on-grade-level text together. Ultimately, independent reading was the you do activity where students worked through independent reading level text on their own, and the text was at their individual independent reading levels.

In the range of reading instruction within a balanced literacy framework described above, guided reading fit in between the shared reading and the independent reading. It was the bridge between the we do and the you do. Guided reading gave students the opportunity to engage with texts at their instructional level. This meant the text was appropriately challenging and the students would face some difficulty in reading it; though, they would work through the text with the guidance and support of the teacher coaching them through the text (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

**Guided Reading Defined**

Ford and Opitz (2011) defined guided reading as “reading instruction in which the teacher provides the structure and purpose for reading and for responding to the material read” (p. 226). Guided reading was founded in New Zealand-based balanced literacy and Reading Recovery programs, and it was a key instructional component of reading with children. Gabriel (as cited in Strauss, 2013) stated, “Reading Recovery is the only reading
program that has received the highest rating for evidence of positive effects from the Institute for Education Science’s What Works Clearinghouse” (par. 5). Fountas and Pinnell introduced guided reading to the United States in 1996 with their first publication, *Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Students*. Guided reading was one component of a comprehensive framework for literacy instruction, and the practices within guided reading aligned with the recommendations on literacy as suggested by the International Reading Association/The National Association for the Education of Young Children, and the National Council of Teachers of English (Iaquinta, 2006). Guided reading was where students were given an opportunity to move forward in their reading levels, and most importantly – catch up, if they were reading below grade level. Small-group instruction has existed for quite some time in the United States, since the late 1800s, when educators began to notice the varying abilities among students in the same grade level (Pinnell & Fountas, 2010). Guided reading is a form of small group instruction.

Students in each grade have always had varying reading levels. The primary years have been the focus for preventing future difficulties in reading, and research conducted over the past two decades has shown that children who have a rocky start in reading seldom have a chance at ever catching up (Iaquinta, 2006). The needs for students at different reading levels also varied. When teachers identified the students’ instructional levels, “the text gradient allowed teachers to match texts to students’ reading levels and work so that it increased their ability” (Pinnell & Fountas, 2010, p. 5).

Along with the CCSS came the call for teachers to expose students to high quality, rich, and complex texts through close reading; yet “the proposition that poor readers made stronger comprehension gains by reading in grade level texts with
appropriate support (e.g., assisted reading) was not borne out here” (O’Connor et al., 2007, p. 483). Fountas and Pinnell stated, “With texts that are too difficult, students can’t learn how to read better” (2001, p. 217). Exposing students only to complex text left them feeling fatigue or frustration from attempting to read text that was too difficult. Glicking and Armstrong (1978) discovered that when tasks were too difficult, the students’ behavior and task completion were very low. At the same time, when tasks were too easy, students often became involved in off-task behavior; yet, when tasks were presented at students’ instructional levels, with just the right amount of challenge, there was a higher percentage of task completion, task-comprehension, and on-task behavior (Glicking & Armstrong, 1978). Treptow, Burns, and McComas (2007) replicated Glicking and Armstrong’s work (1978) where they found that “comprehension was highest at the independent level and lowest at the frustration level” (p. 159). Additionally, for students who were reading below grade level, exposure to complex text alone was not enough to help those students increase their reading levels and become competent to read grade level text independently (Allington, McCuiston, & Billen, 2015). The effectiveness of guided reading instruction could simply have been that the instruction was provided at students’ individual instructional levels, which increased comprehension. Glicking and Armstrong (1978) also reported a noted finding in their study concerning students’ on-task behavior. When the reading was provided to them at their instructional level, rather than their independent or frustration levels, students were increasingly more on task and engaged in the learning. Referring to guided reading, Pinnell and Fountas (2010) stated,

The framework provides for rich language-based experiences with a variety of texts in whole-group, small-group, and individual settings. The guided reading instructional framework includes interactive read-aloud
and reading workshop minilessons in whole-class groups, literature
discussion in small heterogeneous groups, guided reading in small
homogenous groups, and individual reading conferences. (p. 3)

In a classroom where balanced literacy was implemented with fidelity, texts of varying levels were used with different purposes and, depending on the activity, the students were in a whole-group or small-group setting. Guided reading usually was done with small groups of students with similar reading levels and/or needs (Iaquinta, 2006). “It [guided reading] has become one of the most important contemporary reading instructional practices in the U.S” (Iaquinta, 2006, p. 413).

Researchers have shown that students in classrooms in which guided reading was used showed an improvement in comprehension skills, higher fluency levels, and an increase in overall test scores (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009). Guided reading offered the opportunity for true differentiated instruction in that teachers were meeting students exactly where they were, at their individual instructional reading levels, and teachers were coaching them through decoding and comprehension of text while teaching them the good habits and strategies of competent readers. Skillful teaching was found to be the crucial element that helped young readers learn the strategies that helped them to become independent readers (Iaquinta, 2006). Wiggins (1994) revealed that below level students who were in traditional reading classrooms actually fell further behind than below level students who were given opportunities in guided reading instruction. Furthermore, guided reading instruction was found to be a proactive approach in that being responsive to student needs by using a high-quality teaching framework, teachers saved time in the long run by reducing the need for remediation (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009).
Guided reading provided teachers the opportunity to differentiate instruction to meet each reader’s specific needs. The teacher became the facilitator of learning as he or she coached the students to apply reading comprehension strategies (Schulman & daCruz Payne, 2000). The guided reading approach “respects the belief that every child is capable of learning to read and recognizes that children learn to read at varying rates of development” (Schulman & daCruz Payne, 2000, p. 12). Guided reading promoted independent reading, and when students began to read independently, they developed their fluency, became independent problem-solvers, and gained an appreciation for reading (Naples-Nakelski, 2003). In the small group setting, the teacher could easily remediate when students made errors in reading or in comprehension of what they had read. Guided reading provided instruction for teaching students how to learn to read as well as how to read for learning. The guided reading lessons may have looked different because of the differences of students’ abilities at different levels, but the big idea with guided reading was that children increased their reading ability when they were presented with appropriate levels of challenge and supported within the guided reading time (Schulman & daCruz Payne, 2000). The beginning steps to the implementation of guided reading required teachers to assess their students to identify their instructional reading levels. Once the teacher knew the instructional reading levels, the teacher developed his or her groups. Guided reading is a time of coaching students as they engaged with text that was just right for them individually – not too easy, not too hard. This work at the students’ instructional level gave them the right amount challenge to allow the students to apply their comprehension strategies with a slightly difficult text – just difficult enough to provide that challenge (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).
Grouping

An ideal size for the guided reading group was a group of five or six students (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). Students were placed into guided reading groups in a homogeneous manner, but the guided reading groups were shifted and reformed throughout the school year in order to meet the constantly changing needs of all the students (Schulman & daCruz Payne, 2000). Fountas and Pinnell (1996) suggested for a powerful guided reading practice to meet with groups more than twice a week and the guided reading lesson could last from 20-30 minutes. Because there was not a defined number of times a teacher should meet with students for guided reading instruction, the teacher could choose to differentiate the number of times they meet with groups depending on how much guided reading they need. For instance, if a student is reading above grade level, then they do not need guided reading as often as a student reading below grade level (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). The teacher would meet with each group two to three times per week, but potentially more often with students who were reading below grade level (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Schulman & daCruz Payne, 2000). Teachers provided guided reading instruction that would be scaffolded and tailored to meet individual student’s needs so that each student had the opportunity to become independent, fluent, silent readers through applying a variety of effective reading strategies (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). The needs of the students were determined by using a variety of assessment tools including running records, benchmark assessments, and observation surveys (Fawson & Reutzel, 2000).

Most of the literature concerning guided reading had to do with the early grades. Still, students of any age would benefit from being coached through a text that was appropriately challenging and based on individual students’ instructional reading levels,
especially if the student was reading below grade level. Guided reading had the potential to increase all students’ reading levels, including students at the upper elementary level (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009). There was a heavier focus on the implementation of guided reading in the early grades during the learning to read years, although middle school students who struggled with independently reading text that is on their grade level would have potentially gained from the benefits of guided reading. Fountas and Pinnell (2001) specified that upper elementary students needed time with the teacher in order to learn how to be competent readers, and guided reading was the best setting to accomplish that goal because students could take what they learned during the guided reading lesson and apply it in during other parts of the reading lesson. Key characteristics of guided reading included: working with groups of no more than four to six students, using texts at the instructional level of the students in the group, focusing on the reading strategies students need at that point in their development, frequent and consistent progress monitoring, keeping the groups flexible and dynamic, and striving to build independent, fluent readers (Rog, 2003).

Students’ reading skills were assessed at different points throughout the school year (Hulan, 2010). Students were placed into homogeneous groups with other students who had similar reading levels and needs. “Teachers ensure a ‘just right’ match of text with students’ reading needs and behaviors” (Fawson & Reutzel, 2000, p. 85). In the guided reading group, students were guided through how to talk, read, and think their way through text (Fawson & Reutzel, 2000).

As teachers observed their students frequently in guided reading lessons and systematically assessed them to check for progress, teachers were able to change the groups as necessary. The grouping was dynamic or flexible, and groups were expected to
change (Iaquinta, 2006). This allowed teachers the flexibility to make changes when necessary for the sake of continued differentiation. The guided reading group provided ample opportunity for the teacher to observe students reading text with an appropriate level of challenge and to make instructional decisions for students (Iaquinta, 2006).

The small groups were homogeneous in that the students in the group read at about the same level and also had similar instructional needs (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). The placement of students in groups was ever changing. As students made progress at different rates, they were regrouped to ensure that they remained in a group with similar instructional needs (Hulan, 2010). Because the pace at which each student varied, the groups did not remain the same for the entire school year. If the teacher noticed that a student seemed to be either struggling too much with the text or not challenged enough, the teacher may have chosen to do an additional assessment to check the student’s reading level. As students’ reading levels changed, they were moved into different groups as needed (Hulan, 2010).

The students who were together in a guided reading group were reading at or near the same reading level. The small-group instruction design of guided reading has been shown to be effective because teachers could focus heavily on what students needed in order to propel them forward in their reading level (Iaquinta, 2006). Because students on the same or close to the same reading level had many similar needs, the design of guided reading instruction allowed teachers the opportunity to differentiate for all his or her students by meeting individual needs within the small-group guided reading lesson.

Guided reading was a challenge to make multilevel because any one selection of text may not exactly fit an entire group of students’ instructional level. Teachers usually had to be creative in order to meet all their students’ needs. Some teachers chose to
schedule guided reading during a time when they had an instructional assistant in the room (Cunningham, Hall, & Cunningham, 2008). Another option for teachers was to differentiate for their guided reading groups with flexible grouping, including differentiation of time spent with each group of students. An important part of guided reading was that teachers identify students’ instructional reading levels first by assessing each student using a running record. “If running records are taken in a systematic way, they provide evidence of how well children are learning to direct their knowledge of letters, sounds, and words to understanding the messages in the text” (Clay, 2002, p. 49-50). Fountas and Pinnell (2012) developed a text gradient or leveling system to match instructional levels of students. Instructional levels were identified by assessing students with a running record. The goal of using a running record was to find the student’s instructional level. From the running records, specific needs were identified. Once a teacher knew the needs of the students, the plan to meet all those needs would be put into place (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Creating an effective schedule for guided reading was necessary. Within the schedule, the teacher also planned what students were doing when they were not at the guided reading table. When the teacher organized the groups for her guided reading instruction, he or she then determined which texts would be appropriate for each group (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

**Text Selection**

In a guided reading lesson, students were grouped together according to their instructional reading levels. The students in each guided reading group were able to read similar levels of text with support and utilized similar reading processes (Hulan, 2010). With similar reading abilities, it was likely that many of the needs of the students were also similar. If one student had a particular need that was different from the rest of the
group, the teacher managed to coach that individual student in the small group setting. In preparing for the implementation of guided reading, the most important duty of the teacher was selecting the right text (Burkins & Yaris, 2016). The text should have been slightly challenging for the students in each group. Therefore, each group might have been working through different texts, depending on the reading level of the students in each group. In the guided reading lesson, students made their way through a cold read of the text with the support and guidance of the teacher (Schulman & daCruz Payne, 2000).

Texts that can be read with 95% accuracy are related to improved reading achievement. “Texts that are read with either significantly lower or higher levels of accuracy fail to produce positive effects as large as the ‘just right’ being texts that can be read with 95% accuracy or higher” (Allington et al., 2015, p. 499). The text must match students’ reading levels in order for them to be engaged in text while self-regulating and building vocabulary and content knowledge (Allington et al., 2015).

During the guided reading lesson, teachers should be using a variety of texts, but those texts may vary from group to group, depending on the level of the readers at the small-group table. The texts that students read while they are in guided reading were specific to each group in that they provide “just the right amount of challenge (not too hard and not too easy)” (Iaquinta, 2006, p. 414). In an article concerning literacy in the early grades, Fawson and Reutzel (2000) stated that for effective guided reading instruction, it is critical to have access to many texts at various levels across the A-R text gradient because of varying student needs. The text gradient Fawson and Reutzel referred to is the text leveling system that Fountas and Pinnell (2012) developed to match instructional levels of students. Having a wide variety of texts across all levels (A-Z) ensured that teachers had the materials necessary to reach any student’s needs. Teachers
should model the specific skills and strategies that students should be using in order to fully comprehend the text (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). After the teacher modeled the strategy, the teacher directed the students to practice the strategy. With a *just right* text in the guided reading lesson, students should be able to practice applying the skills or strategies while being challenged enough without them becoming frustrated. As the guided reading group progressed through different texts, the teacher would reinforce the use of strategies that the group have worked on in previous texts (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). Students who were reading books that were too challenging may have been able to get through the book, but their comprehension may have been compromised because their focus turned from trying to understand what they had read to decoding and chunking text that was far too challenging (Handy Helpers for Guided Reading, 2011). The selection of the text should be based first on the similar reading level of the students in the group (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Contrary to the approach of using a basal text, which is an on-grade-level text which focuses only on one skill as you read through a text, in guided reading, the teacher focused on all applicable skills that could be taught with that specific text. During the guided reading lesson, the teacher was aware that students were using multiple comprehension strategies, and the teacher was attentive for ways to support students as they engaged with the text (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). With any text, the range of skills and strategies used to process information can be great in number. For each guided reading lesson, there should be only a few strategies for the students to focus on as they read (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). The deciding factor of which strategies to use should come naturally with the reading of the text. The students should be utilizing whatever strategies are necessary for them to tackle and comprehend the text – not the skill or
strategy of the day (or week). Hulan (2010) stated that students develop understanding of text through discussion. Discussions about text helped students to form a deeper level of comprehension of what they had read. The discussions allowed them to make connections to their prior knowledge as well as assimilate new information (Hulan, 2010).

**The Guided Reading Lesson**

According to Fawson and Reutzel (2000), guided reading lessons were broken down into three segments: before, during, and after reading. Before reading the text, the teacher provided a brief introduction to the story and lead a short discussion that activated prior knowledge and expanded background information for the text. During the reading, the teacher should observe students as they work through reading sections of the text and talk about it. When a student needed support, the teacher was there to provide whatever support was needed to help the student become independent and fluent. After the reading, the teacher may have invited the students to participate in an extension activity related to the text or a strategy the students used while reading the text (Fawson & Reutzel, 2000). During a guided reading lesson, students chose from and applied a variety of reading strategies (Fawson & Reutzel, 2000).

Because each group of students comes with a particular set of needs, every guided reading lesson should be different. The groups of students, at the different levels, have varying strengths and weaknesses. Guided reading, then, by design, is not a thing but a process. The teacher had to know at which point to introduce which skills based on the needs of the students in each group (Iaquinta, 2006).

In the guided reading lesson, teachers should be prompting students before, during, and after the reading. Throughout each portion of the lesson, the students began
to “develop a network of strategies that allow them to attend to information from different sources” (Iaquinta, 2006, p. 415). Students were given opportunities in the guided reading lesson to learn, and do what readers do before, during, and after reading.

“Depending on the text being read, the comprehension strategies being taught, and the reading levels of the children, a great variety of before-, during-, and after-reading variations are used” (Cunningham et al., 2008, p. 22). Before the guided reading lesson, the teacher should introduce the text while building prior knowledge and leading students to make connections to other texts that the group have experienced (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). Also, before students read the text, the teacher should lead them through accessing and building prior knowledge, making connections to personal experiences, and developing vocabulary that is essential for comprehension, making predictions, and setting purposes for their reading (Cunningham et al., 2008). Cunningham et al. (2008), developers of the Four Blocks Literacy Model, defined the goals of the guided reading block as:

- To teach comprehension skills and strategies.
- To develop background knowledge, meaning vocabulary, and oral language.
- To teach children how to read all types of literature.
- To provide as much instructional-level reading as possible.
- To maintain the motivation and self-confidence of struggling readers.

(p. 22)

During the guided reading lesson, students should read a short piece of text aloud softly while the teacher listens. Students should read the text simultaneously (Fountas &
Pinnell, 2001). The teacher may signal one student to read a little louder so that the teacher can focus in on that particular student. Teachers should use strategies that allow students to apply self-monitoring skills to ensure comprehension as they read the text. Also, during the guided reading lesson, the students should ask questions to get clarification as they are processing what they are reading. Additionally, during the guided reading lesson, a teacher should observe reading performance as students read softly. Throughout the lesson, the teacher should prompt or coach the student with comprehension strategies or take anecdotal notes about individual students or the entire group. The teacher leads discussion around excerpts of the text that were read and utilize portions of the text to teach additional skills (Schulman & daCruz Payne, 2000).

After the reading, there should be a discussion about the text. The conversation should surround the comprehension of what the students have read, but the teacher also should lead the conversation to include discussion surrounding the focus of the lesson - specific skills or strategies that the students need practice with applying. “Discussion gives us a space for the manipulation of thoughts; formulation of new understandings and confrontation with conflicting ideas” (Hulan, 2010, p. 42). Just as in a regular lesson, teachers must ask the right kinds of questions to get students to think so that the responses require the students to think about and build on what they have read and understood during the guided reading lesson. “A clear educational indicator of the degree of openness of the discourse is the pattern of teacher questioning and pupil response” (Skidmore, Perez-Parent, & Arnfield, 2003, p. 48).

The teacher’s instruction during the guided reading lesson, the just right text, the amount of time spent in guided reading, and the students selected to be in each group are all components that make up the guided reading experience that effectively nurtures and
supports both reading and readers (Ford & Opitz, 2011). The reading behaviors and process that teachers hope students will put into practice when they are reading independently are reflected during the guided reading lesson (Handy Helpers for Guided Reading, 2011). “If the reading process is fragmented, carried by the teacher, or uneven during guided reading, students are likely to transfer this inefficiency to their independent application” (Handy Helpers for Guided Reading, 2011, p. 147). In the guided reading lesson, teachers should model and explicitly teach comprehension strategies such as inferring, synthesizing, analyzing, and critiquing. Teachers should prompt students to apply the comprehension strategies as appropriate to the text they are reading. A highly effective approach for helping students recall information, generate questions, and summarize texts is to teach a combination of comprehension strategies (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000).

Guided reading is unlike using a typical basal text where there is only a focus on certain comprehension strategies in a particular lesson or even unit. Reading requires the constant use of multiple comprehension strategies. During reading, the systems of strategic actions take place in the brain, and a proficient reader’s brain develops a network like a computer – only faster and more complex (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). “The brain learns, making new connections constantly and expanding the system” (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012, p. 273). Because students were accessing text at their instructional level during guided reading, guided reading provided them an opportunity to try out multiple comprehension strategies without risk of fatigue or frustration from attempting to read text that is too difficult. The teachable moments to show students how to use the comprehension strategies should be with a just right text in their hands. The guided
reading lesson provided a meaningful reading opportunity for students to engage with and experience text (Pinnell & Fountas, 2010).

As students read and discuss, the teacher should observe the students by listening to the questions they ask, noticing the students’ responses to the teacher’s demonstration of skills and strategies, listening to students’ conversations with one another, reading what the students write in response to text. Teachers must know how to prompt and guide students during guided reading (Iaquinta, 2006). The teacher also should observe the students reading both silently and orally (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001).

According to Fountas and Pinnell (2001), strategies for reading comprehension were the focus of the guided reading lesson. These included information-gathering strategies, predicting strategies, phrasing and fluency strategies, and adjusting strategies. The guided reading lesson was where students learned how to self-monitor their own reading for understanding (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). The discussion that students and teachers engaged in during the guided reading lesson could be a powerful time of learning. “Discussion can lead to the construction of new understandings through ‘the improvement of knowledge, understanding, and/or judgement’” (Hulan, 2010, p. 43). Deep, rich discussions about text allowed students to activate their background knowledge to help them interpret text (Hulan, 2010).

Integrating content into guided reading instruction was one way for teachers to maximize time. This also promoted the idea of reading to learn vs. learning to read (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009). Guided reading was an appropriate time for students to be learning content as they read. It was important that the text presented to students was on their instructional level. Finding the right text on the students’ instructional level could be challenging, especially if the teacher was also trying to maximize the guided reading time.
to teach content. Aside from allowing students to access text that supported content
to science and social studies, providing a wide variety of materials and
maintaining the confidence of struggling readers were two goals within guided reading
(Cunningham et al., 2008).

The guided reading lesson should be scaffolded where teachers provide necessary
supports throughout the lesson. Scaffolding allowed teachers to see where students were
developmentally and to make a responsive plan for instruction to get them where they
need to be (Ford & Opitz, 2011). The text should be introduced and read by the students,
and often they read it silently and independently. The teacher would listen in as students
read to themselves. The students were responsible for reading the text – not the teacher.
“Too often, we took the wheel and led students through predetermined lessons. In
contrast, the concept of guided reading challenged us to think deeply about how to help
students become independent, strategic, and self-extending readers” (Villaume &
Brabham, 2001, p. 260). In guided reading, all students should access the text for the
maximum amount of time. There was no round robin reading where students waited for
their turn to read aloud (Pinnell & Fountas, 2010). Instead, students read together
chorally with other students, or they may have read softly or silently to themselves. Every
student was actively engaged with the text during the entire guided reading lesson.

Throughout the reading, the teacher should be explicitly teaching strategies that
lead to comprehension of various types of text. The teaching points in a guided reading
group were based on what the group’s needs were, and within the group, the teacher may
assign oral and/or written responses. At the end of the guided reading lesson, the teacher
may also lead the students in word work that is supportive of their reading level (Fountas
& Pinnell, 2001).
Instructional decisions should be made based on ongoing assessments of students and their needs (Presley, 2008). They were not dictated by right answers. Instead, teachers should resist adopting a set of specific procedures that limit the expanding understandings and the potentials of guided reading (Villaume & Brabham, 2001). Guided reading, driven by individual student needs, required flexibility in the strategies and practices that teachers utilized within each lesson. These strategies and practices may have changed from day to day and even from group to group. Because guided reading groups were created and revised on assessment-informed instruction, they would be ever changing (Hulan, 2010). Although teachers could use running records to determine instructional level for their students, the opportunity to constantly assess students during the guided reading lesson offered teachers a chance to be alerted when students were advancing or struggling through the text. The small groups in guided reading were fluid and flexible, ever-changing based on assessment data. This is very different from the ability groups of the past (Ford & Opitz, 2011).

Students respond to text in a variety of ways. Students who read below grade level may tend to use a limited number of reading strategies because they need exposure to and scaffolded opportunity to practice other reading strategies (Hulan, 2010). Guided reading provided a time for such students to gain that exposure and have opportunities to learn how to respond to text that is on their instructional level with the teacher in close proximity to offer support as needed. “The success of a reader (defined here as comprehending texts on or above grade level) may be a direct reflection of a student’s ability to respond to text in various ways” (Hulan, 2010, p. 61). Guided reading allowed students to apply comprehension strategies with a text that was appropriately challenging.
Researchers suggested a direct correlation between how much time students spend in peer discussion and how much they value reading (Hulan, 2010).

Discussion about text promoted higher-order thinking and deeper levels of understanding. It also helped students to develop a perspective of their own while gaining an appreciation for different perspectives around them (Hulan, 2010). The discussion that occurred in a guided reading lesson forces them to think about the text as they are reading. If students are not thinking about what they are reading, then they are not comprehending what they are reading. Guided reading provided the opportunity for students to think through text that is at their instructional level with the support and guidance of a teacher.

Teachers Perceptions of Reading Instruction

Joshi et al. (2009) gave 78 college and university instructors who were responsible for teaching reading classes to preservice teachers the Survey of Language Constructs Related to Literacy Acquisition. Of the 78 participants, 68 of them already held a doctoral degree, and the other 10 were in the process of obtaining their doctoral degree. At the time of the study, the 78 participants were teaching 2 to 4 reading classes to preservice teachers across 30 different universities and community colleges in the southwestern United States. All 78 participants considered themselves well prepared to teach reading. Despite the level of education of these professors, Joshi et al. (2009) found that their level of understanding of specific skills within reading was lacking. Additionally, Joshi et al. (2009) replicated their study with 40 participants from 12 different universities from a midwestern state. All 40 participants in the replicated study also held doctoral degrees. Again, Joshi et al. (2009) found that the participants in the replicated study also were also lacking in understanding of basic skills within reading.
These basic skills included the specifics of phonics and phonemic awareness, the rudimentary elements of learning to read. Joshi et al.’s (2009) findings brought about an awareness that preservice teachers may be unprepared for teaching reading due to the lack of understanding that the instructors themselves have about basic reading skills.

Furthermore, Mather, Bos, and Babur (2001) found that “both preservice teachers and inservice teachers had positive perceptions about the role and importance of implicit, holistic instruction in reading development” (p. 478). This study of teacher perceptions included 293 preservice teachers and 131 inservice teachers. The inservice teachers taught in grades K-3 at four metropolitan and six rural elementary schools in the Southwest. Data were collected from the preservice teachers and inservice teachers by both a perception survey as well as a knowledge assessment. When it came to teaching basic skills, there was a disparity among the responses between the preservice teachers and inservice teachers with 57% of the inservice teachers stating that they believed basic skills should never be taught in isolation, but rather multiple skills taught at the same time within context. In comparison to 65% of the preservice teachers that thought basic skills should never be taught in isolation (Mather et al., 2001).

Likewise, Perkins (2013) interviewed student teachers, or preservice teachers, to inquire about their perceptions of teaching reading. The study included 12 people – six people from two different cohort groups. Each group had gone through training to become a teacher as well as a one-year of postgraduate course. Within each cohort group of six, three of them were being trained on how to teach early years, defined as students ages 3-7, and three of them were being trained on how to teach primary years, defined as students ages 7-11. The student teachers were interviewed in such a way that allowed them to describe reading and the teaching of reading within a social construct. The
student teachers’ responses reflected a mindset of thinking that the way they were taught how to read was the way that you should teach others to read. Also, in the study by Perkins, after a 3-month period of training, the students expressed that they realized that putting their knowledge into practice was something completely different than just learning about it in a situation where they were the student (Perkins, 2013). Perkins (2013) found that student teachers were most concerned about knowing how to go about teaching reading. Perkins (2013) concluded that student teachers knew nothing else other than the prescribed training that was offered to them, and “their experience of reading does not enable them to critique any model of reading given to them” (Perkins, 2013, p. 304).

Additionally, Spear-Swerling and Brucker (2005) found that nearly half of their participants were considered to have a low-background for teaching reading, but they all held credentials for teaching. There were 132 participants in the study, and they were all graduate students from the School of Education at a state university in the northeastern United States. Out of the 132 participants, 119 were already licensed teachers, and the 13 remaining were in the process of initial teacher licensure. Nearly half of the participants were already in teaching positions in high-poverty urban districts or with severely impaired readers in special education. Many of these teachers held teaching degrees that did not have a focus on reading instruction.

Moreover, Spear-Swerling and Brucker (2005) found a discrepancy between information that was learned in teacher preparation programs and basic research findings. Specifically, “teachers were confused about the role of context in skilled reading” (Spear-Swerling & Brucker, 2005, p. 291). While they could cite information about specific programs that they had been taught to use during teacher preparation courses, their
comments did not connect isolated teaching of skills with applying those skills within the context of actually reading text (Spear-Swerling & Brucker, 2005). Moreover, Spear-Swerling and Brucker (2005) found, “Educators responsible for reading instruction with beginning or struggling readers may lack literacy-related disciplinary knowledge, especially if they are teachers with limited course preparation and experience” (p. 291).

Similarly, Perkins (2013) cited two main issues that emerged from her data collection from student teachers. The first was that student teachers seemed so involved in trying to understand the how of specific reading systems that they really did not have time to reflect on the process of learning to read and understand why certain practices were part of the reading systems they were being taught. According to Perkins, “This has implications for the professional nature of teaching” (2013, p. 304). The second issue that Perkins found was student teachers’ growing confidence as teachers of reading. As stated by Perkins, this confidence “came from their understanding of what it is they are teaching when they teach reading and of making the connection between their theoretical understanding, informed by their own experiences and learning how to put that into practice in the classroom” (2013, p. 304).

As teachers reflect on their own perceptions of literacy instruction, it is important to also consider how they perceive professional development opportunities that are meant to strengthen them as reading teachers. Spear-Swerling and Brucker’s (2005) results “confirm the viewpoint that teachers need more intensive preservice preparation related to reading as well as ongoing professional development” (Spear-Swerling & Brucker, 2005. p. 291). Morewood, Ankrum, and Bean (2010) conducted a study of teacher perceptions of professional development and their knowledge of content, pedagogy, and curriculum. Teachers were asked about their knowledge of content, pedagogy, and
curriculum, and most of the teachers responded that they felt like they were knowledgeable in content. In several of the responses across the board, teachers additionally added that their experiences deepened their understanding of content, pedagogy, and curriculum. The participants in the study included seven teachers at a high poverty school in a small city in Southwestern Pennsylvania. The teachers taught in grades 1-3 and special education. All of the participating teachers completed a pre-observation interview, a classroom observation of a literacy lesson, and a post-observation interview.

Additionally, Morewood et al. (2010) found that while all of the teachers responded that professional development did have an influence on their knowledge of content, pedagogy, and curriculum, there was a range of responses for each of the categories. A recommendation of the study was that individual teacher needs should be considered when planning professional development for teachers (Morewood et al, 2010). Furthermore, in the same study, most of the teachers reported that professional development did have an influence on their knowledge of content, pedagogy, and curriculum because it was related to their teaching experiences and teacher learning, and according to the authors, “This suggests that teachers do connect the information provided in professional development sessions to their previous teaching experiences and teacher learning to provide high-quality reading instruction” (Morewood et al., 2010, p. 216). Most teachers were eager to gain literacy-related knowledge if they understand how it can lead to successful reading instruction (Spear-Swerling & Brucker, 2005).

As teacher perceptions are revealed, it is important to consider the background, training, and experiences that have equipped them to implement guided reading instruction. Mather, et al. (2001) cited several researchers as they stated, “Many general
education teachers lack essential knowledge for teaching children who struggle to learn. Therefore, teacher preparation and professional development programs are critical for reducing the incidence of reading failure” (p. 480). Because struggling readers often do not catch up and continue to struggle throughout school, early intervention from high quality teachers is necessary (Mather et al., 2001).

**Teacher Perceptions of Guided Reading Instruction**

“Too few studies (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009; Ford & Opitz, 2008) have been conducted on what teacher perceptions of guided reading are” (Reeves, 2011, p. 19). Ferguson and Wilson (2009) reported, “Teachers at all levels gave the benefits they saw in the guided reading experience” (p. 300). In the same study, the teacher participants received a variety of training on the guided reading framework. The researchers also showed that primary teachers were more likely to implement guided reading on a daily basis than upper elementary or middle school teachers. Teachers also expressed not having enough time to implement guided reading. Teachers need to be supported in making sure there is time for guided reading instruction (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009).

With the implementation of the CCSS and other similar standards adoptions, there came a demand for increased text complexity at all grade levels. In fact, none of the CCSS or similar standards included the use of instructional level text or small group instruction even though “many literacy experts warn that frustrating beginning readers can prove disastrous” (Handy Helpers for Guided Reading, 2011, p. 147). The expectation for complex text may have impacted how teachers perceived how they should implement guided reading instruction.

Although Fountas and Pinnell (1996) provided clear guidelines on how to implement guided reading instruction, there seemed to be a variety of interpretations of
what guided reading actually looked like in classrooms. It was possible for guided reading to look different in classrooms. Not every classroom had the same number of students. The range of reading levels also varied from classroom to classroom. One classroom could have had three small groups, while another might have had four small groups, which would all have been determined by the students’ instructional reading levels. Regardless of these differences in classrooms, all of the critical components of guided reading instruction should still be there – or it should not be called guided reading. In a study of teacher perceptions of guided reading, Reeves (2011) asked 45 teachers in an urban K-6 school in Western New York what their purpose for guided reading was, and among the answer choices were “provide demonstration of skills, strategies, responses, and/or procedures; provide interventions around scaffolded instruction for students; facilitate a group response between students around a shared text; or facilitate a group response between students around multiple texts” (Reeves, 2011, p. 12). Two-thirds of the teachers responded that the primary purpose of guided reading was for demonstrations (Reeves, 2011).

Ford and Opitz (2008) investigated primary teachers on a national scale in an effort to discover teacher perspectives of guided reading. When responding to a questionnaire about what the purposes of guided reading were, two-thirds of the teachers responded that guided reading was for demonstrations or teacher modeling of skills and strategies. Other responses also included providing interventions around scaffolded instruction (18%), facilitating a group response around a shared text (12%), and facilitating a group response between students and multiple texts (3%). “The very term ‘guided’ suggests a type of instruction that would be less about modeling and more about
coaching” (Ford & Opitz, 2008, p. 314). The teacher coached and provided support as the students applied strategies as they were reading. (Ford & Opitz, 2008).

Additionally, Ford and Opitz (2008) asked a question about each teacher’s grouping technique for guided reading. The responses included several variations. One-fifth reported using five or more guided reading groups, and another fifth reported using one or two groups. Homogeneous groupings were used by most of the teachers surveyed. Of the homogeneous groups, 60% of the students were grouped by developmental level, 40% of them were grouped by needs, and 6% were grouped by other methods not listed in the study. It was noted in the study that 22% of the teachers also reported using heterogeneous groupings for guided reading. There was also a variation between how often and for how much time teachers met with groups each week as well as how often they changed their guided reading groups throughout the year. Ford and Opitz (2008) stated, “As we see it, the main challenge is how to help teachers understand that purpose is what should guide group formation, membership, and duration” (p. 317).

Teachers organized their groups in various ways and for various purposes. Reeves (2011) asked teachers how they grouped students and how often they met with the groups. “Of the teachers using homogeneous grouping, 60% grouped students based on developmental levels, 40% by needs, and 6% by other methods” (Reeves, 2011, p. 13). The range of reasons of how students were grouped showed how guided reading could be implemented in different ways. In the study by Reeves (2011), there was also a big difference in how many times the teachers met with their groups each week. Some reported meeting with them every day. Others reported meeting with them once or twice a week.
Ford and Opitz (2008) also asked teachers what texts they used for guided reading instruction. Fifty-six percent of the teachers reported usually using little books, 43% using trade books, and 32% using basal texts. The little books or leveled readers usually came with the basal textbook series. These leveled readers were provided to each classroom teacher, and they were usually organized in small group sets of six. The text level of the leveled readers, or little books, ranged from around one grade level below and one grade level above the grade of the students. Trade books were books that were marketed for the general public, but teachers sometimes used them to build content knowledge in their classrooms. Basal texts were the textbooks that were provided to most classrooms. The material in the basal text was on grade level, and typically, each student in the room had a copy of the basal text. The researchers also reported that all students read texts at their instructional level 58% of the time. Ford and Opitz stated, “We must consider whether teachers need help identifying the levels of the texts they are using, accessing the performance levels of the students with whom they are working or both” (2008, p. 319). Teachers were also asked how they assessed students during guided reading. Seventy percent of the teachers reported using daily observations and/or running records, and 45% also used assessments built into reading programs. Thirty-two percent of the teachers reported conducting running records monthly, 33% reported conducting them more than monthly, and 36% of them reported conducted them less than once a month (Ford & Opitz, 2008). Ford and Opitz provided evidence that teachers may interpret instructional strategies like guided reading differently from each other.

In a similar study, Ferguson and Wilson (2009) surveyed 19 primary teachers and 21 upper elementary teachers from the same school district. Fourteen of the primary teachers and five of the upper elementary teachers reported using guided reading on a
daily basis. In the teachers’ responses of what guided reading looked like in each of their classrooms, there was wide variety of responses. The design of the guided reading time looked different in each classroom. From differences in how often teachers met with students to how teachers grouped their students for guided reading instruction, nothing seemed consistent. One teacher reported having received training on guided reading while learning about a Balanced Literacy Approach, but she did not use it with her students. Another teacher reported doing a mini-lesson on the focus skill of the week (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009). Examples like these show that teachers could misinterpret what guided reading was meant to be: teachers guiding and coaching students as they apply all necessary skills within an appropriately challenging text. Additionally, Reeves (2011) found the largest group of teachers (53%) surveyed used the book leveling system from their basal programs. Reeves did not report whether the other books that were being used (trade books, used basal texts, or supplemental basal materials) were just right texts according to students’ instructional levels.

In education, there were always trainings for teachers to have opportunities to learn best and promising practices. Joyce and Showers (1995) identified the chances that various teacher training or staff development would lead to implementation in the classroom. In the case of educational practices, simple presentation of theory of best practices, which according to Joyce and Showers (1995) referred to training, only lead to a 5-10% chance of implementation in the classroom. Modeling, or as Bandura (1977) referred to it, learning through vicarious experience, only resulted in about a 5-10% chance of implementation after the learning. Practice and feedback with new learning created about a 10-15% chance of implementation. In contrast, learning with the support
of coaching or study teams created an impact of about 80-90% chance of implementation (Joyce & Showers, 1995).

In most of the literature reviewed (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009; Ford & Opitz, 2008; Naples-Nakelski, 2003; Reeves, 2011), teachers had received training on how to implement guided reading. Yet, according to the research, training provided may not have been enough for guided reading to be implemented with fidelity. “If we want teachers to implement guided reading in ways conducive to the growth of student reading capabilities, they need a deeper understanding of what guided reading means as well as the procedural framework involved” (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009, p. 303). The potential for students to experience growth as readers was greater when teachers felt secure in using guided reading to meet the needs of her students (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009). Teachers with knowledge, expertise, and understanding of how literacy develops were the teachers who were best equipped to deliver high-quality, balanced literacy instruction (Atwood, 2002).

Atwood (2002) stated, “Highly effective teachers, through balanced literacy programs, immerse their readers in authentic literacy-related experiences and extensive explicit teaching” (p. 30). Allington (2002) found that exemplary teachers had their students doing more guided reading, more independent reading, and more social studies and science reading than students in lower performing classrooms. Allington (2002) also found in exemplary classrooms that students had frequent exposure to easy texts that allowed them to build fluency, comprehension, and success. Those exemplary teachers acted on students’ success to create multi-level curricula to meet all the diverse needs of every student. In those same classrooms, it was noted that the students consistently outgained average-achieving and lower-achieving students (Allington, 2002).
Furthermore, Allington found that, “motivation for reading was dramatically influenced by reading success” (Allington, 2002, p. 743). Allington also stated, “Students need enormous quantities of successful reading to become independent, proficient readers. By successful reading, I mean reading experiences in which students perform with a high level of accuracy, fluency, and comprehension.” (Allington, 2002, p.743). Allington went on to say that complex text may be appropriate for instruction, but developing readers need more high success reading than text that is too complex, because “It is the high-accuracy, fluent, and easily comprehended reading that provides the opportunities to integrate complex skills and strategies into an automatic, independent reading process” (Allington, 2002, p. 743).

**Teacher Self-Efficacy of Guided Reading**

Yanez (2015) found that the influence of teachers’ self-efficacy on their implementation of guided reading with struggling readers “raise questions about how the continuous support teachers receive through staff development influences the instructional decisions they make in guided reading” (p. 145). A teacher’s knowledge of how to implement an instructional strategy and how they implement that strategy in their classrooms can sometimes be two separate things that do not align. Reeves (2011) in her study of teacher perceptions of guided reading, found there were discrepancies between teachers’ knowledge of guided reading and how they implemented guided reading in their classrooms. Reeves (2011) found that although teachers reported being educated on guided reading that many were not implementing guided reading correctly in order to be the most beneficial for students.

In another study about perceptions of teacher needs to effectively implement balanced literacy instruction in secondary schools (grades 7-12), a specialist stated that
while she felt like her district had explained the Balanced Literacy/Workshop Model to a great extent, she often did not see it being utilized when she visited classrooms (Coker, 2015). The data in the study were collected via online or face-to-face interviews, classroom observations, and journal entries that were tagged then coded. The interviews included ELA teachers, literacy specialists, and school administrators. In the same study, every teacher who participated mentioned needing direction on how to effectively implement balanced literacy instruction within a 45 or 50-minute class period (Coker, 2015). According to Coker (2015), teachers needed an explicit, structured how-to guide for the implementation of balanced literacy instruction.

Coker’s (2015) suggestion for providing teachers with an explicit guide was validated by studies like that of Naples-Nakelski (2003), where a lack of consistency in literacy practices across grades one through four was found. “A mixture of phonics, skills and drills, and basals are employed to develop students’ skills according to the taste of each teacher” (Naples-Nakelski, 2003, p. 80). Also, Naples-Nakelski (2003) found that teachers from low performing districts reported that they did not use guided reading very often because of their concerns about student behavior. In the same study, teachers from middle performing districts reported needing more training for them to be more effective with small groups. Most teachers included in the study (86.6% of the 97 participating teachers) held master’s degrees but reported that more staff development and training was needed (Naples-Nakelski, 2003). As with the implementation of any instructional strategy, teachers needed the support of their administration, along with coaching and mentoring while they are becoming more comfortable and confident with implementation (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009).
Conclusion

“A closer look at the teachers’ individual definitions of guided reading followed by their individual practices would allow research to evaluate where the breakdown between communicating the method of reading instruction and sustaining its practice is located” (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009, p. 304). The implications of a study of the influence of teachers’ self-efficacy on their implementation of guided reading with struggling readers “raise questions about how the continuous support teachers receive through staff development influences the instructional decisions they make in guided reading” (Yanez, 2015, p. 143). “Although most educators today would describe their instruction as balanced, there appears to be a lack of formal training that is vital for the implementation of balanced literacy practices” (Naples-Nakelski, 2003, p. 88). Although it was just one component of a balanced literacy framework, guided reading could have had the potential to grow students as readers if teachers could have effectively implemented it well. The process of creating and managing flexible groups, figuring out how to fit every student into guided reading for just the right amount of time each week, with just the right peers (with similar reading ability or needs), and just the right texts is manageable, but it was very much like putting a puzzle together to make it all work together. “Educators cannot afford to allow the limitations mentioned in the survey to hinder guided reading implementation” (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009, p. 304). Teachers who used guided reading appreciated the opportunity it provided them to be flexible and scaffold to meet the variety of student needs in their classrooms (Fawson & Reutzel, 2000). Teacher perceptions of their implementation of guided reading provided an insight to the fidelity in which guided reading was implemented in their classrooms.
Chapter III: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of guided reading in the classroom and the perception teachers had related to their own self-efficacy in their implementation of guided reading instruction. Through an interpretive qualitative design, this researcher identified recurring themes that emerged from participants’ responses during interviews of twelve K-6 ELA teachers in four Tennessee school districts who teach guided reading concerning their perceptions of their implementation of guided reading instruction in their classrooms. “Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). The process of qualitative research involves emerging questions, procedures, and data that lead to the researcher identifying general themes (Creswell, 2014). This researcher utilized the qualitative design of interviews so that the responses gathered from teachers would not be limited. This researcher wanted to provide an opportunity for teachers to elaborate and express their perceptions as freely as possible, and this researcher felt that teachers would speak more openly in an interview rather than if they had been given a survey to fill out.

Research Design

Creswell (2007) stated, “There is no agreed upon structure for how to design a qualitative study” (p. 41). He further explained that generally, qualitative researchers start with a problem, review the literature, ask the questions, gather the data, analyze the findings, and write up the report (Creswell, 2007). Using an interpretive qualitative research design for this study, twelve K-6 ELA teachers who teach guided reading from four school districts in Tennessee were interviewed. “Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing
participants” (Creswell, 2007, p. 38). The participants in the study have all taught guided reading, and this researcher wanted to capture their thoughts and perceptions of their implementation of guided reading instruction through interviews. The interview questions in qualitative research are typically a few open-ended questions that elicit opinions or views from the participants (Creswell, 2014). The interview questions utilized in this study related to both self-efficacy in implementing guided reading instruction effectively, as well as questions that allowed this researcher to see how teachers implemented guided reading instruction in their classrooms. The questions in the interview were mostly open-ended so that participants could elaborate and describe their perceptions of their implementation of guided reading instruction in their classrooms.

**Participants of the Study**

Five school districts were invited to participate in the study, and all five districts agreed to participate. Participants from four of the five invited school districts completed the initial Survey Monkey survey, so the study ultimately included four participating districts. Three of the participating districts were city school districts, while the one was a county school district. In 2018, the average number of students proficient in reading in the state of Tennessee was 32.8% (Tennessee Department of Education, 2018). Table 1 displays the range of number of students and faculty for each of the participating districts.

**Table 1**

*Number of Students and Faculty of the Participating School Districts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Range of Data for the Four Participating Districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students Enrolled</td>
<td>4,012-7,762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of School Administrators</td>
<td>16-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Classroom Teachers</td>
<td>255-491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Additional Staff</td>
<td>61-104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 displays the range of demographic data for each of the participating school districts including the percentage of subgroups as well as the percentage of students performing on or above grade level on the 2018 ELA Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) assessment.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Range of Percentages for the Four Participating Districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Black, Hispanic, Native American Students</td>
<td>6.9%-27.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>34.6%-42.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of English Language Learners</td>
<td>0.7%-4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>12.9%-18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Male Students</td>
<td>50.5%-52.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Female Students</td>
<td>47.55%-49.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Students Performing on or Above Grade Level on the 2018 ELA</td>
<td>29.8%-50.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Arts TCAP Assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Tennessee Department of Education, 2018)
All 12 of the participants interviewed in the study were ELA teachers in a public school in one of four districts in Tennessee, and they all taught within the K-6 grade band (see Table 3). All participants declared on the initial Survey Monkey survey that they used guided reading instruction in their classrooms. Participants created pseudonyms, which were used in place of their real names for maintaining confidentiality within the study. This researcher coded each of the pseudonyms with a number to correspond to the school district in which the participants taught. Each pseudonym was also coded with a letter to indicate the order in which the participants were interviewed.

Table 3

Demographics of Participants in the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Grade the Participant Taught</th>
<th>Years of Teaching Experience</th>
<th>Years of ELA Teaching Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mac 1A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathryn 1B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten Lover 1C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veronica 2A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth 2B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy 2C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. S 3A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3rd-6th SPED</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane 2 3B</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher0928 3C</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane 4A</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.L. 4B</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HWP 4C</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The participants’ years of teaching experience ranged from one to 41 years. Of the 12 participants in the study, six of them had 15 or more years of teaching experience, five of them had five to 14 years of experience, and one of them had only one year of experience. Figure 1 shows the total number of years that each participant had taught. The participants had a combined total of 197 years of teaching experience.

*Figure 1. Participants’ Total Years of Teaching Experience.*

Teachers were asked how many of their years of experience were spent specifically teaching ELA or Reading. This question was asked because of this researcher’s awareness that teachers in grades K-6 are certified to teach all subjects in Tennessee, and this researcher wanted to know if there was a notable amount of difference between the participants’ total years of teaching experience versus their years of experience in teaching ELA or reading instruction. Of the 12 participants in the study, four of them had 15 or more years of ELA or reading instruction teaching experience, seven of them had 5-14 years of experience, and one of them had only one year of
experience. Figure 2 shows the number of years that each participant had taught ELA or Reading Instruction. The participants had a combined total of 187 years of experience in teaching ELA or reading instruction (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Participants’ Years of Experience in Teaching ELA or Reading Instruction.

Data Collection

This researcher developed an interview protocol (see Appendix A) to be used for collecting responses from the participants. Based on the work of Fountas and Pinnell (1996) and Bandura (1977), the questions pertained to how teachers organized groups, selected texts, and conducted lessons for guided reading instruction. Additionally, questions related to the teachers’ self-efficacy of implementing guided reading instruction. The questions were open-ended so that the participants could elaborate on their process. To validate the interview protocol, this researcher facilitated a pilot group of individuals who currently used or previously used guided reading instruction in their
classrooms to review the interview protocol and provide feedback to this researcher on
the interview protocol. The pilot group was asked to provide feedback concerning the
quality of the interview protocol. After receiving feedback from the pilot group, revisions
were made to the interview protocol. Among the revisions were changes involving the
order of the questions for a more coherent flow of the interview and rewording of a few
questions for clarity. One addition was made concerning the use of data to make
decisions in the changes of the guided reading groups throughout the school year. Two
members of the pilot group suggested that this researcher include a question about
perceived effectiveness, but that suggestion did not result in a change in the interview
protocol. This researcher determined that the study was not focused on the effectiveness
of guided reading, but rather teacher perceptions of how they implement guided reading
instruction in their classrooms.

The interview protocol consisted of twenty questions. Question 1 pertained to the
participant’s pseudonym. This pseudonym was used in place of the participant’s name for
confidentiality purposes. Questions 2-5 were related to how long the participants had
been teaching, what grade they taught, of the years they had taught – how many of them
were spent teaching ELA or reading instruction, and did they implement guided reading
instruction in their classrooms. Questions 6-9 pertained to the participant’s self-efficacy
in implementing guided reading instruction. Questions 10-19 were associated with how
the participant organized, prepared for, and implemented guided reading. Question 20
related to the barriers that participants perceived as hinderance to being able to
implement guided reading instruction.

To begin the data collection process, this researcher sent an email to the directors
of schools at five school districts in Tennessee to ask permission for their district to
participate in a research study (see Appendix B). All five school districts granted
approval for this researcher to conduct the study and provided a point of contact within
the district to disseminate the link to the Survey Monkey survey (see Appendix C) to all
K-6 ELA teachers in their districts, but participants only responded from four of those
districts. Upon Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, this researcher then sent an
e-mail to the designated contact person for each school district. This e-mail contained
information about the study to be shared with all K-6 ELA teachers in their district, and it
included a link to a Survey Monkey survey, and a deadline date for participation set two
weeks from the date of the e-mail. The invitation to participate included a window of two
weeks, May 13, 2019-May 28, 2019, which fell at the very end of the school year. The
two-week deadline was created to make sure that all interviews could be conducted, and
transcripts could be reviewed by each participant before the end of the school year.

The Survey Monkey survey was completed by teachers who volunteered to
participate in the study, and it included a question that served as the participants’
informed consent (see Appendix D). A yes response to the informed consent question on
the survey signified that they were the participant was 18 years or older and that they
agreed to participate in the study. Also included on the survey was a question prompting
the participating teacher to select a pseudonym that would be used in place of his or her
name for the purpose of maintaining confidentiality. Additionally, the survey had a
question that asked if the respondents implemented guided reading instruction in their
classroom. Because the study concerned the implementation of guided reading
instruction, if respondents answered no to the question of whether or not they
implemented guided reading instruction, then they would not be included in the study,
and the survey would end. The Survey Monkey survey also contained this researcher’s
contact information for each of the participants. This researcher used the information gathered on the Survey Monkey survey to contact participants.

Upon the closure of the two-week window, there were not enough participants collected to do the study, so the window remained open until enough participants were collected to begin the study. By, Wednesday, May 29, 2019, thirteen teachers had completed the survey, and this researcher had enough voluntary participants to begin interviewing at least two participants from each participating school district. Three participants from each district were selected to participate according to the order in which they completed the survey. This researcher contacted the first two volunteering participants from each district who completed the survey in order to access a sampling of participants across all the participating school districts. This researcher kept the window open in hopes that others would volunteer to participate. Between May 29, 2019 and June 18, 2019, two more participants completed the survey. This researcher closed the survey on June 19, 2019. The survey was open for a total of five weeks, and there were a total of 15 teachers who completed the survey to participate. One of those the 15 selected no in response to the question concerning whether they implemented guided reading instruction. That participant was not chosen to participate in the study.

This researcher scheduled a time to conduct a brief interview with each volunteering teacher. Each of the interviews were conducted in quiet, private locations (e.g., classrooms, coffee shops, or restaurants) or through a phone conversation. The location of the interview was determined by the participant. Before conducting the interview, this researcher read a brief introduction to the study that included a reminder for the participant that they had already signed the informed consent when they completed the Survey Monkey survey. This researcher used an interview protocol to
guide the interview. Most of the interviews lasted from 10-15 minutes, except one interview that lasted 43 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded using a Sony ICD-UX560 Stereo Digital Voice Recorder with an ECMCS3 clip-on stereo microphone. The audio recorder was not connected to the internet.

After all interviews had been completed, this researcher prepared the data by downloading the audio recording to a digital file on this researcher’s external hard drive. The audio recording of each interview was transcribed with the help of the free version of NCH software, Express Scribe. Express Scribe allowed this researcher to slow the speed of the audio file down for clarity or quickly pause and play the audio file while transcribing. After interviewing eight participants, two from each district, and transcribing the eight interviews, this researcher reviewed the data to check for saturation. Saturation was defined by Glaser and Strass (1967) as when the researcher “sees similar instances over and over again, the researcher becomes empirically confident that a category is saturated” (p. 61). After conducting eight interviews, two interviews from each participating district, this researcher felt that the data revealed several responses from the participants that indicated saturation. This researcher continued by interviewing four more participants, one more participant from each of the four districts so that this researcher could be certain that the point of saturation had been reached. In doing the last round of interviews, this researcher felt confident that the point of saturation had been reached in the data collection, and no further interviews were conducted. This researcher interviewed a total of 12 participants. After stopping the data collection, this researcher began to analyze the responses.
Analytical Methods

Once the interviews were transcribed, this researcher sent each participant a PDF copy of their interview transcript for review. During the process of interviewee transcript review, the participants read the transcript of their individual interview. If the participant wanted to clarify anything that was transcribed from the audio recording, the participant emailed those clarifications to this researcher. Three of the participants sent clarifications for a few of their responses. These clarifications were added to the transcript and returned to the participant for a final review. All of the participants verified that their transcriptions were accurate. This researcher then took the transcriptions for each participant and put the responses for each interview question into a table. Then, this researcher noted on the table which interview question number matched which participant’s response. The table’s headers included each participant’s pseudonym and response, and the question was noted above the table. While most of the interview questions required specific and simple responses that did not require any interpretation, the responses for a few of the questions required some interpretation. Question 1 pertained to the participants’ pseudonyms, and it did not require analyzation. Questions 2-5, 7, 12-13, 15, and 17-18 required simple, basic responses that could easily be charted, while questions 6, 8-11, 16, and 19-20 required interpretation.

This researcher then analyzed one question’s set of responses at a time. For questions 2-5, 7, 12-13, 15, and 17-18, this researcher charted the responses and then wrote a narrative to explain the findings for each question. Questions 2-5 pertained specifically to the demographics of the participants. For the responses given for questions 6, 8-11, 14, 16, and 19-20, this researcher identified emerging themes from the responses and coded them by using the coding software, MAXQDA. The codes were developed
from the emerging themes of the responses for each question. This researcher organized
the data by identifying the recurring themes found (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This
researcher then further analyzed questions 10-19, which pertained specifically with the
implementation of guided reading. This researcher developed a Guided Reading Fidelity
Checklist (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Fountas & Pinnell, 2012;
Schulman & daCruz Payne, 2000; Hulan, 2010, Allington et al., 2015) (see Appendix E),
to determine if the responses from the participants were aligned with what this researcher
had found in the literature to be recommended practice for the implementation of guided
reading instruction. The responses from the questions 10-19 were analyzed by this
researcher by comparing the responses with the Guided Reading Fidelity Checklist (see
Appendix E). The responses for questions 10-19 were then coded with two simple codes,
yes or no, to note whether the participants’ responses aligned with the recommended
practices of guided reading implementation.

Trustworthiness

For each interview, this researcher utilized an interview protocol that was read to
each participant during the interview. The interview protocol included the questions,
which were all asked of the participants in the same manner. Additionally, this researcher
conducted interviewee transcript review (Hagens, Dobrow, & Chafe, 2009) for accuracy
of the transcript of each interview by sending a PDF to each participant to verify that the
transcript of their interview was accurate. The PDF included a place for the participants
to sign to verify that the transcript was accurate. The participants emailed the signed PDF
back to this researcher. If any changes needed to be made to the transcription, this
researcher made the changes in the transcription and resent it to the participants for
verification again.
Furthermore, the participants were a sampling across four different school
districts in Tennessee. The participants from the four districts varied in grade levels
taught and years of experience. Their experiences included a variety of grade levels
taught, years of experience, as well as, exposure to professional learning opportunities
about implementing guided reading instruction.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations are conditions that were out of this researcher’s control (Simon, 2011, p. 1). Limitations for this study included the fact that teachers may have been influenced
by the leadership in their district to participate, even though the interviews were voluntary. Also, the participants’ level of training in guided reading instruction varied
because of different background experiences and potentially because of varied
expectations throughout the participating districts.

Delimitations are choices made by this researcher pertaining to the study (Simon, 2011, p. 1). The delimitations of the study were that this researcher chose to only include
participants who were all ELA teachers within grades K-6 in Tennessee. This researcher chose to only interview K-6 teachers who implemented guided reading instruction in their classroom. Also, the timeframe for responding to the interview was only two weeks. Additionally, the timeframe for conducting interviews for the study lasted three weeks. The final delimitation was that there were only four participating school districts involved in the study. The limited population of the study as well as the specific region selected for study could make the generalizability of this study weak.

Assumptions and Biases of the Study

This researcher assumed that all teachers interviewed for the study implemented, or attempted to implement, guided reading in their classrooms because in the initial
survey, they all responded that they implemented guided reading instruction in their classrooms. This researcher also assumed that all teachers interviewed for the study responded honestly in reference to classroom practices they were implementing.

“Researchers bring their own worldviews, paradigms, or set of beliefs to the research project, and these inform the conduct and the writing of the qualitative study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 15). This researcher has a background in instructional coaching, and the coaching experience included working with, observing, and training teachers on how to implement guided reading instruction. Because of this researcher’s experiences in classroom observations and working with teachers, this researcher’s personal feelings about the importance of implementing guided reading with fidelity does present a bias for this research. To limit the effect that bias had on the data collected, the data were coded based on what was found in the literature to be appropriate practices for guided reading instruction.
Chapter IV: Analyses and Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of guided reading in the classroom and the perception teachers had related to their own self-efficacy in their implementation of guided reading instruction. At the time of this study, there was a limited amount of literature concerning teacher perceptions of guided reading instruction. This researcher hoped that the study would have the potential to reveal information concerning any misalignments that teachers may have had about guided reading instruction, and thus, provide a springboard for conversations concerning how to address teachers’ needs so that they may effectively implement guided reading in their classrooms.

Participants in the study included 12 K-6 ELA teachers from four school districts in Tennessee who implemented guided reading instruction in their classrooms. Participants were interviewed by this researcher. The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed by this researcher. Each participant reviewed the transcript of their interview for clarity and provided revision, if necessary.

Data Analysis

At the time of the study, all 12 participants taught ELA or Reading in a public school in one of four districts in Tennessee. To begin the interview, participants created pseudonyms, which were used in place of their real names for maintaining confidentiality within the study. This researcher coded each of the pseudonyms with a number to correspond to the school district in which the participants taught. Each pseudonym was also coded with a letter to indicate the order in which the participants were interviewed. A chart of all pseudonyms can be found in Chapter 3.
This researcher placed each of the responses from the interviews into one large table and sorted by question number. Then, this researcher divided the large table into separate data tables by each question in the interview protocol. This allowed this researcher to read through and synthesize each of the participants’ responses, one question at a time. Using the MAXQDA coding software, this researcher was able to use open coding to sort through and identify common themes in the participants’ responses. By using the coding software, this researcher noted several different codes within the participants’ responses. Several of their responses included more than one answer. This researcher did a simple tally for the responses for questions 2-5, 7, 12-13, 15, and 17-18, while questions 6, 8-11, 14, 16, and 19-20 required interpretation by this researcher to determine which codes to use for the responses. After coding the data, this researcher analyzed the coding to begin writing the narrative to answer the research questions for the study. Because the participants gave several responses for some questions, this researcher took the information that emerged from coding and created charts to help the reader to understand the data more clearly.

In order to validate whether there was an alignment between the practices that were shared by the participants and what experts recommended for guided reading instruction, this researcher created a Guided Reading Fidelity Checklist (see Appendix E). The Guided Reading Fidelity Checklist included best practices for implementing guided reading instruction such as how to determine students’ instructional reading levels, how to group students, how many students should be in a group, how long the guided reading lesson should last, as well as the practices that should take place during the guided reading lesson (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Fountas & Pinnell, 2012; Schulman & daCruz Payne, 2000; Hulan, 2010, Allington et al., 2015).
This researcher took the data table for questions 10-19 and created a separate document to note the alignment of fidelity of each participant’s response. On the new document, this researcher added a column to the right side of each table to make a place for this researcher to note whether each participant’s response to each question was aligned with the recommended practices for implementing guided reading instruction. This researcher reread each participant’s response, individually, to determine if their response was in alignment with the recommended guided reading practices, and this researcher marked each response as a yes or no. If this researcher marked yes, then the participant’s response indicated that what they aligned with the recommended practices for guided reading for that particular component. If this researcher marked no, then the participant’s response did not include the practices that were recommended for guided reading for that particular component. This researcher then created a percentage of yes and no responses for each question and summarized the percentages on the Guided Reading Alignment Check Summary (see Appendix F). This researcher’s analysis of the alignment of fidelity of implementation of guided reading instruction provided a deeper level of understanding of the teachers’ perceptions as she considered the findings for each of the research questions.

**Research Questions**

**Research question 1.** According to interviews of K-6 ELA teachers in four Tennessee school districts, what were teachers’ self-efficacy related to the best practice of guided reading instruction?

The participants were asked a set of questions that pertained specifically to their self-efficacy as it related to their implementation of guided reading instruction. Before asking specific questions related to their self-efficacy, participants were asked about any
training that they had received on guided reading instruction. All 12 participants stated that they had received some training that had been provided by their school districts.

Participants were then asked how confident they felt in their ability to implement guided reading instruction effectively. Ten of the 12 participants expressed having a high sense of confidence in their ability to implement guided reading instruction effectively. One participant stated that she was not as confident as she would like to be, while another participant stated that she had a medium grasp on guided reading.

After determining the participants’ confidence level, they were asked if there was any area in which there was a need for specific additional support in order for them to implement guided reading instruction more effectively. Four of the participants stated that they could use support in knowing how to meet all of their students’ needs, particularly their lowest and highest students. Jane 4A stated, “I could always use some additional training to meet those students who are performing below grade level significantly or those that are performing significantly like, above grade level- how to challenge and extend their learning and move them forward.” Participants reported other areas of need including learning more about how to teach comprehension, classroom management, access to materials, including books that were on specific topics, making guided reading work in upper grades, and making it all fit within time constraints.

The participants were then asked what their preferred method of learning would be, if they desired further learning, in how to more effectively implement guided reading instruction. Nine of the 12 participants responded that they would want to see someone else teaching guided reading. Kindergarten Lover 1C expressed:

I’d like to go and watch someone – teacher observation. There’s a couple of people that I would like to go and watch to see how they do it. But, I think teacher
observation because you can gain so much from watching what others do, and even just having time to sit down and talk to teachers and share what we do on your grade band.

Nine of the participants stated that they would prefer to watch someone conduct a guided reading lesson. For one participant, a real-life model was preferred over a model lesson on a video. Amy 2C stated, “I think we’ve all sat through those perfect videos, and it’s just not real life.” Amy 2C went on to explain that she preferred going and watching teacher leaders do whatever it was she was trying to learn more about. Other preferred methods of learning included working with a coach or a team, a traditional workshop or training, an online webinar, or having a chance to learn alongside someone in a hands-on setting, with a coach or mentor walking them through each step to take and how to address specific deficits with students.
This researcher determined that the participants in the study had a high self-efficacy related to guided reading instruction based upon the participants’ overwhelming responses of being very confident in their ability to implement guided reading instruction.

Table 4 shows the participant’s responses as they described how confident they were in their ability to implement guided reading instruction effectively. Also, most of the participants reported that if they were going to learn more about implementing guided reading, the majority of the participants interviewed would prefer to learn through vicarious experience.

Table 4

*Participant’s Reported Confidence in Implementing Guided Reading Instruction Effectively*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mac 1A</td>
<td><em>I feel fairly confident that I know what to do.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathryn 1B</td>
<td><em>I feel extremely confident in – I have - I love to teach kids to read,</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>and I’ve been real successful with it.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten Lover 1C</td>
<td><em>Oh, I feel good about it.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veronica 2A</td>
<td><em>Fairly confident.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth 2B</td>
<td><em>I feel very confident.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy 2C</td>
<td><em>I feel very confident in my ability.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. S 3A</td>
<td><em>Not as confident as I’d like to be.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane 2 3B</td>
<td><em>I feel pretty confident.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher0928 3C</td>
<td><em>Very confident.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane 4A</td>
<td><em>Oh, yeah, very confident, very confident.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.L. 4B</td>
<td><em>I feel pretty confident in it.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HWP 4C</td>
<td><em>I feel like I have, I guess a medium grasp on guided reading.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research question 2.** According to interviews of K-6 ELA teachers in four Tennessee school districts, how did teachers perceive they were implementing guided reading in their classrooms?
This researcher designed the interview questions so that as participants responded, this researcher would be able to gain an understanding of how the participants implemented guided reading instruction in their classrooms. The questions were also created in parallel to the Guided Reading Fidelity Checklist (see Appendix E). This researcher used the Guided Reading Fidelity Checklist to determine if there was alignment of fidelity with what was being shared by the participants for each question. The level of alignment for each question was placed in a graph (see Figure 3).

![Figure 3. Alignment of Fidelity of Guided Reading Implementation.](image)

Regarding how the participants determined their students’ reading levels, there was a wide range of responses. Seven of the participants reported that they used multiple sources of data to determine their students’ reading levels, and among the most frequently
used sources of data for determining students’ reading levels were computerized assessments and program screeners. The program screeners came with a specific series or reading program that had been purchased by schools and/or districts. One-third of the participants stated that they used the number of high frequency words, sight words, or Fry Words, that students knew to help them identify students’ reading levels. High frequency words, sight words, or sometimes called Fry Words were all words that were very common and seen frequently in text. Many of those types of words not words that can be decoded, but rather, words that must be memorized by students and read with automaticity instead of sounding out. Three of the participants reported using running records, but two of them indicated that they would use them later on in the year rather than to determine initial reading levels at the beginning of the school year. Jane 4A described the various things that she took into consideration as she determined her students’ reading levels as she stated, “I use that [a computerized assessment] and just classroom observation of the kids, and you know, as far as sight words and that kind of thing.” The recommended practice for determining students’ instructional reading levels is to administer a running record. The alignment for fidelity in this area was only 16.7% of the participants reported administering running records to determine students’ instructional reading levels (see Figure 3, p. 75).
Mac 1A and Kindergarten Lover 1C were the only participants who reported the use of running records for determining students’ instructional reading levels at the beginning of the year. A third participant, Kathryn 1B, mentioned using running records at the end of the year, but not for determining students’ instructional reading levels at the beginning of the year. Other responses for how the participants determined students’ reading levels included letter identification or phonics/phonemic awareness, teacher observation, writing assessments, spelling inventories, and a specific book selected by the teacher (see Figure 4).

![Figure 4](image-url)  
*Figure 4. Participants’ Responses for How They Determined Their Students’ Reading Levels.*
In describing what a typical guided reading lesson looked like in their classroom, participants shared a myriad of practices (see Figure 5). All 12 of the participants reported various types of reading during the guided reading lesson. Among these types of reading was reading a leveled reader, reading an on-grade-level text, reading a familiar book, students reading aloud, students reading to themselves, and teachers listening to students read.

![Figure 5. Participants’ Description of a Typical Guided Reading Lesson.]

Aside from some type of reading during guided reading lesson, the most commonly reported response was some type of frontloading before reading a book. One example of this frontloading came from Mac 1A, as she stated:

We talk about the title of the book. We make predictions about what the book is going to be about, or what we expect to read about. I will also have them – I will introduce vocabulary words that I may see that they need some help with. We
code words, so we may code that vocabulary word just to help them remember it, and we talk about that.

Nine participants described practices that they used during frontloading, such as: introducing the book by going over the title, making predictions about the book, doing a picture or book walk, and introducing vocabulary words that the students would encounter in the book so that they would be prepared when they came upon the words as they read. Eight of the 12 participants shared that during guided reading they asked students questions to determine whether they comprehended what they were reading. Some of those participants mentioned specific questions that went with the book, while others described coming up with their own questions to ask the students to check for comprehension. As HWP 4C described a typical guided reading lesson in her classroom, she shared, “So, I’m trying, kind of, listen to all the kids reading at once, also, while asking the comprehension questions that get them through the rest of the book.” Five participants described having discussions about the text that the students were reading during guided reading. Three of the 12 participants said that their guided reading lesson included some type of practice with high frequency words or sight words. Additional outlying practices that were mentioned only once included the use of graphic organizers, phonics instruction, letter/sound practice, and writing.

When this researcher analyzed each participant’s responses in comparison to the Guided Reading Fidelity Checklist (see Appendix E), this researcher determined that each participant had some component that was a recommended practice. Although, for some of the participants’ responses, it was unclear as to who was primarily doing the reading during guided reading instruction. This researcher was intentional in asking the participants to describe a typical lesson, wanting to avoid prompting the participants in
any way. This researcher chose to do this instead of asking them to give a ratio or percentage of who was reading during guided reading – the teacher or the student – because this researcher wanted to avoid prompting the participants in any way. One of the participants reported that she would read the book one time first for the students, and most of the participants used the phrase, “We read,” as they described reading during guided reading instruction. Veronica 2A described her guided reading lesson as she stated,

It’s really just one big lesson for the whole week, and then broken into subparts to try and meet with every single kid. But a little intro, and then depending on the ability level either reading it whole group, reading it one-on-one, or letting them independently read. And then, we go back and we read certain passages within the text that we thought were more difficult.

Guided reading provides an opportunity for students to engage in the reading of text that is on their instructional level – just slightly more challenging than their independent reading level - while being coached through comprehension strategies that they should be using as they are thinking within the text, about the text, and beyond the text (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2012). During a typical guided reading lesson, the teacher is there to provide support when needed. Thus, the term guided reading. Because each participant noted at least one component of a recommended practice for guided reading instruction, there was a 100% alignment.
In response to how many times each week students experienced guided reading instruction, the participants gave a variety of responses (see Figure 6). Four of the participants stated that students in their classes experienced guided reading daily and two of the participants stated that their students experienced guided reading three times each week. One participant stated that her students experienced guided reading three to four times per week and another participant stated that her students experienced guided reading two to three times per week. One participant shared that her students would experience guided reading only one time per week. Three of the participants shared that they differentiated how many times per week their students experienced guided reading based on the students’ reading levels. Two of those teachers shared that their lower students would experience guided reading daily while their medium and higher students would experience guided reading three to four times per week. The other teacher who reported differentiating the number of times her students experienced guided reading stated that her lower students would experience guided reading three to four times per week while the medium and higher students would experience guided reading one to two times per week.

![Differentiated time based on student need](image)

*Figure 6.* Participants’ Responses for How Often Students Experienced a Guided Reading Lesson Each Week.
Overall, only three of the participants were differentiating for their students regarding how often their students experienced a guided reading lesson each week. The recommendation for how often students should experience guided reading each week was at least two times (Schulman & daCruz Payne, 2000). There was a 91.7% alignment with how often the participants’ students experienced guided reading each week.

The participants reported the length of time that the guided reading lessons lasted in their classes ranged from 8 minutes to 45 minutes. Six of the participants stated that their guided reading lessons lasted 20 minutes. Two of those six reported that time allotted might increase or decrease, depending on daily circumstances. Four of the participants stated that their guided reading lessons lasted 15 minutes each. One of those four shared that she differentiated how long she kept each group depending on the students’ needs. Students who were on lower reading levels would get more time than students who were on higher reading levels. Additionally, two of those four participants who reported 15 minutes as how long their guided reading lessons lasted also shared that they may get less lesson time (8-15 minutes; 10-15 minutes), again depending on daily circumstances. One participant reported that her guided reading lessons lasted 45 minutes, and another shared that her guided reading lessons lasted 30 minutes each. The recommended amount of time for a guided reading lesson is at least 20 minutes. There was a 50% alignment for the reported length of time of the guided reading lessons.

When asked how students were placed into groups for guided reading, all 12 participants reported using various types of data to determine their groupings, many using multiple data sources in making grouping determinations. Also, there was an assortment of data in which the participants used to determine student groups. Several of the participants indicated that they used a variety of data. The data sources included ability or
reading level, spelling inventories, running records, high frequency word/sight word/Fry word data, letter/sound or phonics/phonemic awareness data, and data received from a program screener or computerized assessment. In addition to data from checklists or assessments, five of the participants specified that they used teacher observation of students’ reading to determine how to group students, two of the participants shared that they used student behavior to help determine their groups, and two of them noted that they grouped the students heterogeneously. To get a better sense of how their guided reading groups were designed, participants were asked how many students were in their guided reading groups. All but one reported having anywhere from three to six students in each guided reading group, and four of those eleven participants indicated that they differentiated the size of the group depending on the reading or development level of the students. One participant reported having six to seven in a group. The recommendation for the size of a guided reading group was no more than six students in each group (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). There was a 91.7% alignment with how many students were in the participants’ guided reading groups.

The recommended practice for grouping students was to place students who had similar instructional reading levels in the same group. If teachers utilized running records to determine students’ reading levels, they could have also used that information to help them determine their student groups. There were four participants who used any type of data pertaining to students’ reading levels to determine their groupings. There was a 33.3% alignment with how teachers decided to group their students for guided reading.

When asked whether reading groups changed throughout the school year, and if so, how those changes were determined, all 12 study participants responded affirmatively. Participants' reading groups did change throughout the school year, and a
variety of rationales were given as to how those changes were determined. Ten of the 12 participants stated that they made changes to their groups based on their own observations of students as they were reading. If a student struggled in the assigned group, that student was moved to a lower group. Likewise, if a student excelled in the assigned group, the teacher would move that student to a higher group. Five of the participants reported using a program screener to determine changes in their guided reading groups. Amy 2C reported, “Absolutely, they change – based on their performance, their confidence - just as they grow, they move.” Five of the participants used a computerized test to determine any changes. Veronica 2A shared that in addition to a computerized test, she also determined those changes according to how the students have performed in the previous group:

I also base it on how they have done in their specific group throughout that time period – 4 weeks, 9 weeks, whatever. I try to look at them in-depth at least once every 9 weeks. I mean, I’m constantly looking at them and saying, “Well, this friend is doing a little bit better, so we’re going to bump them up. Then, if they don’t do well, then they go back to their original groups.” So, it’s very fluid grouping, but about once every 9 weeks is when the major changes happen.

Two participants stated that they used running records to determine any changes in the groups. One teacher stated that she would consider students’ requests to be in a group with friends. Kathryn 1B shared that she would consider students’ requests to be in a group with friends as she stated:

But, there are times that I just kind of revamp when I’m looking, knowing that I think about not only how is it going at guided reading, but how are these kids working together with partners. And then, knowing also, respecting their words
and wishes that they do want a chance to work with somebody else. Like, “Well, this might work. I’ll try it.

The recommendation was for guided reading groups to be changed throughout the school year, depending on the changes in students’ reading levels. There was a 41.7% alignment with how the determination was made to make changes in the guided reading groups throughout the year. Most of the participants did say that their groups changed throughout the year, but those changes were not all necessarily based on students’ reading levels.

The participants shared the types of materials that they used during guided reading. All but one said that they used some type of leveled reader during their guided reading lessons. The leveled readers either came from the leveled reader set that accompanied the adopted basal reading series, from the school’s bookroom of leveled text, or from online websites with leveled text, specifically, the Reading A-Z website. In contrast, Mrs. S 3A cited a particular reading program that she used during guided reading time that included letter identification, phonics, phonemic awareness, word work, and fluency, as she specified, “I’ll use their sight word cards and their sound cards, as well as, student workbooks and readers in order to make sure the students are getting all the information in multi-sensory format.” Six of the 12 participants stated that they used some type of flash cards to help students practice high-frequency or sight words. Four of the 12 participants noted that they used some type of phonics instruction materials during their guided reading lessons. Three of the 12 participants reported using some type of tactile materials such as fuzzy letters, sand, playdough, letter beads, whiteboards, and dry erase markers. Two of the 12 participants stated that they used letters for building words. Amy 2C reported that she used leveled readers, but she also added other materials that she would use during guided reading instruction. “There’s magnetic letters and
sometimes sand, sometimes playdough, a dry erase board and a marker… magnifying glasses, sometimes with like – without the glass in it – so they’re looking closer at a word or they’re pointing at it” (Amy 2C). Other materials that were mentioned only once included books that pertained to students’ interests, whisper phones, and lessons from Institute for Learning Units. As for the level of the texts that they used during their guided reading lessons, three teachers shared that text level depended on and matched the reading level of the students in each group. Three of the participants listed on-grade level text, or levels that were appropriate for students to be reading within their grade level. The recommendation was for the texts being used to match the just right instructional levels of the students. There was a 91.7% alignment with what kind of materials were being used during the guided reading lessons.

Five of the participants stated that they used on-grade level text, while two of the participants shared that they used above-grade level text, one participant stated that she used on or above grade-level text, and one participant noted that she used below-grade level text. Also, three of the 12 participants said that they selected text based on what they had observed of the students in the guided reading groups. When asked if there was a difference in the texts that the participants used for the different guided reading groups in their classes, 11 of the 12 participants responded, “Yes,” and one participant responded, “No.” Ten of the 11 participants who responded, “Yes,” also specified that the texts were different levels. The recommended practice for the level of text being used for guided reading instruction was that the text directly match the instructional reading levels of the students in the group. Again, the recommendation was for the texts being used to match the just right instructional levels of the students. There was a 25% alignment pertaining to the level of the text that was being used for guided reading instruction; yet,
in response to whether the level of the texts differed for each of the groups, there was an 83% alignment with the participants’ utilization of different texts for each guided reading group.

The interview was completed with a final question pertaining to barriers that the participants had encountered in implementing guided reading instruction effectively. The most predominant barriers reported were time and classroom management. Eight of the 12 participants shared that it was hard to cover all required elements of the guided reading lesson in the allotted time. Veronica 2A was one of the participants who reported time as a barrier as she reported:

Time. Time is just – there’s never enough of it. You know, you feel like you spend X amount of time with one group and another group is…is being hindered because they didn’t get as much time or they didn’t get as much instruction because maybe the rest of your children have gotten a little squirrelly. And so then, you’re having to deal with a behavior issue as well. That’s always been an issue for me is how do I make sure the other children are being held accountable for their work while I’m worrying about the kids at my kidney bean table or my rectangular table. I would say those are the – time and just making sure I’m holding everyone accountable.

H.L. 4B also reported time as her biggest barrier and she went on to explain, “Time. Because we already are working on writing as well, and so, just having the time to be able to sit and do a guided reading group.” Jane 4A summed up the feelings about time as a barrier when she said, “Time is just the evil of all evils when it comes to teaching. There’s never enough time in the day.”
Likewise, eight of the participants said that classroom management was a barrier, with many of them expressing how difficult it was for them to manage all of the other children who were working in independent groups while they were conducting a guided reading group. Aside from managing student behavior, some of the participants mentioned a need for quality, appropriate tasks for the other students to be engaged in during the independent groups, or centers, while they were busy leading the guided reading group. H.L. 4B shared, “Being able to actually just sit with that group and manage what they’re doing, and then having my other students work independently and actually get something done.” Likewise, Ruth 2B reported, “I think the main barrier that I feel like is just that managing the classroom as a whole group as you’re working with groups.” Kathryn 1B stated that it was not a problem for her, but it was a common problem that she had seen with student teachers as she said, “But I know a problem that I see with my student teachers is just the management, the classroom management of making sure everything out here (independent activities) is under control while you’re here (at the guided reading table).” In addition to time and classroom management, three of the participants felt that having access to materials was a barrier that they had encountered. These participants specified the need for accessing leveled texts that were appropriate for their students as a barrier. One of those teachers also added that she would like to have a wider selection of books on specific content area topics that she needs to teach.

As the participants shared their perceptions concerning how they implemented guided reading instruction in their classrooms, all of them reported some type of reading going on during guided reading instruction. While reading was the ultimate goal, this researcher was unable to determine exactly who was doing the reading. Additionally,
there was a wide variety of alignment of fidelity of implementation of the various components of guided reading. The participants’ perceptions provided insight to misalignments that might exist concerning the implementation of guided reading instruction.

Summary of Results

During the interviews, participants shared how they implemented guided reading instruction in their classrooms as well as how confident they were in their abilities to implement guided reading instruction effectively. As participants responded to the interview questions, they were able to describe what guided reading looked like in each of their classrooms, and how they made instructional decisions, planned for, and implemented guided reading instruction.

Ten of the participants had a very high self-efficacy for how they implemented guided reading instruction. Although the participants’ perception of their self-efficacy was high as it pertained to their implementation of guided reading instruction effectively, when this researcher compared the participants’ responses with the Guided Reading Fidelity Checklist (see Appendix E), there were a few areas in which the instructional practices that were shared by the participants did not align with the recommended practices for guided reading instruction. As for alignment of how the participants described a typical guided reading lesson, each participant mentioned at least one component that would be considered an appropriate practice during the guided reading lesson. For this reason, this researcher marked the alignment as 100%, but there were practices that were mentioned that were not appropriate for guided reading instruction. Other areas of strong alignment (91.7%) with the recommended instructional practices for guided reading had to do with how often children experienced a guided reading lesson
each week, how many students were in each of the guided reading groups, and what materials were being used. According to the Guided Reading Alignment Check Summary (see Appendix F), the participants were doing some components very well; yet, there were misalignments about some of the components of guided reading instruction. The least amount of alignment involved how the participants determined their students’ instructional reading levels with only 16.7% alignment.
Chapter V: Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of guided reading in the classroom and the perception teachers had related to their own self-efficacy in their implementation of guided reading instruction. At the time of the study, reading instruction was on the forefront of action to remedy underachievement in reading. Using Bandura’s Social Learning Theory as a framework, this researcher sought to understand teacher perceptions of their self-efficacy in implementing guided reading instruction in their classrooms. Bandura (1977) suggested that a person’s performance accomplishments, including previous success at accomplishing certain tasks, increased their mastery expectations while repeated failures lowered them. When a person experienced an extensive amount of repeated success, they were not defeated when they occasionally experienced failure. This repeated success lead to an enhanced self-efficacy that increased coping skills and perseverance. This enhanced self-efficacy eventually began to generalize to various situations, even those situations where the person once felt self-debilitated by their personal inadequacies (Bandura, 1977).

Discussions of the Study

According to Bandura (1977), people who gained confidence to attempt certain tasks by watching others do it first, gained self-efficacy through vicarious experience. They had an idea that if someone else could do it, they should have been able to do it, too. This gave them enough confidence to at least attempt to try or learn something new (Bandura, 1977). If the model experienced adversity in the attempt of the task, but worked through it utilizing coping mechanisms and perseverance, the person watching also learned from the model how to deal with adversity themselves.
The participants in the study had high self-efficacy in how they implemented guided reading instruction though there were misalignments that were revealed by the data collected during the interview process related to guided reading implementation. This researcher compared the participants’ responses for each question to the Guided Reading Fidelity Checklist (see Appendix E) to determine alignment of fidelity in how the teachers were implementing guided reading instruction. The Guided Reading Alignment Check Summary (see Appendix F) allowed this researcher to identify misalignments that the participants might have had about implementing guided reading instruction with fidelity.

This study has revealed several misalignments about implementing guided reading instruction effectively and with fidelity. According to the Guided Reading Alignment Check Summary, the least amount of alignment concerned the way participants determined their students’ instructional reading levels. Because determining students’ instructional reading levels is the foundation for process of creating groups and selecting just right text for each group to access, it is the first step in making effective instructional decisions.

These misalignments were determined by checking for alignment between recommended practices for guided reading and the participants’ responses during the interview. Among the lowest areas of alignment, there was a 41.7% alignment in the way teachers determined changes in the guided reading groups throughout the year. Most of the participants said that their groups changed throughout the year, but those changes were not based on students’ reading levels, according to any specific data. Similarly, there was a 33.3% alignment in the way teachers decided to group their students for
guided reading. There were very few participants who used any type of data pertaining to students’ reading levels to determine their groupings. There was a 25% alignment pertaining to the level of the text that is being used for guided reading instruction. Finally, of the responses from the 12 participants, the least amount of alignment with recommended instructional practices for the implementation of guided reading instruction involved the way students’ reading levels were determined; 16.7% of the participants reported administering running records to determine students’ instructional reading levels (see Figure 4, p. 77).

One of the misalignments participants had was related to how to identify students’ instructional reading levels. Knowing the students’ instructional reading level was an important component in the recommended practices for guided reading instruction (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Although three of the participants mentioned the use of running records, only two of those three participants, 16.7% of the participants, used running records to identify students’ instructional reading levels. The other participant who mentioned using running records only used them at the end of the year rather than at the beginning of the year. Utilizing running records is the recommended practice for determining students’ instructional reading levels (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). When used correctly, there is no guesswork in grouping students, or which text each student/group needed to access during the guided reading instruction time. Students would not waste time working in a text that did not match their instructional reading levels. Five of the participants in the study taught kindergarten, and understandably, most kindergarteners would not be reading on any level at the beginning of the school year; although, if they knew any high frequency words at all early on, or if the students had any exposure to
letters and sounds prior to entering kindergarten, they would be able to muddle through a
level A or even a level B text by using the high frequency words and picture clues.

Similarly, another misalignment that was revealed concerned how the teachers
initially grouped the students for guided reading instruction and how they determined
changes in the groupings throughout the school year. This misalignment was a byproduct
of the lack of utilizing running records to identify students’ instructional reading levels.
Students should be grouped according to their instructional reading levels that were
determined by administering running records (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). The teachers in
this study reported using data sources that included ability or reading level, spelling
inventories, running records, high frequency word/sight word/Fry word data, letter/sound
or phonics/phonemic awareness data, and data received from a program screener or
computerized assessment to determine their groupings. In addition to using data from
checklists or assessments, five of the participants specified that they used teacher
observation of students’ reading to determine how to group students, two of the
participants shared that they used student behavior to help determine their groups, and
two of them noted that they grouped the students heterogeneously. Students should be
grouped homogeneously by their instructional reading levels. As students’ reading levels
change throughout the year, the guided reading groups would also need to change in
order to meet every student’s needs (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Likewise, another misalignment that teachers had about guided reading was what
level of text they should be using during the guided reading time, or rather, the
importance of making sure that the level of the text matches the instructional level of the
students. Only 25% of the participants, or three participants, stated that the level of text
used during their guided reading groups matched the reading levels of the students in the groups. This meant that nine participants did not match the text to the reading level of the students in each reading group. According to Fountas and Pinnell (1996), instructionally leveled text was just slightly challenging enough to provide the students with productive struggle and an opportunity to apply comprehension strategies that they have learned. When the text is just right for the students’, there is no need for a great amount of frontloading. The challenge would be appropriate enough for the student to navigate his or her way through the text by applying strategies that have been learned during other types of reading in the classroom. When a student struggles, the teacher is there to provide the necessary supports by coaching students through the strategies they should be using to both decode and comprehend what they are reading.

Another misalignment that was revealed was how teachers should be using the time during the guided reading lesson, specifically, the length of time teachers were having students engage in the reading of text during the guided reading lesson. This researcher made this determination based on the responses gathered as the participants described a typical guided reading lesson in their classrooms. Time was the primary barrier that participants reported when asked what barriers they had encountered in implementing guided reading instruction; yet, most of the participants also shared that they did some type of frontloading, including introducing the book by going over the title, making predictions about the book, doing a picture or book walk, and introducing vocabulary words that the students would encounter in the book so that they would be prepared when they came upon the words as they read. These are not bad practices, but it is likely that students will engage in frontloading of text during other reading instruction
such as interactive read aloud, shared reading, or close reading. In guided reading, teachers could quickly introduce students to the text by going over the title and looking at the cover for just a few seconds, then the students could spend the bulk of the time during the lesson engaged in reading the text. Six of the participants reported 20 minutes as the length of time that they had to conduct a guided reading group. With the exception of one participant, a special education teacher who served her students in 45-minute blocks, the other remaining five reported having guided reading lessons that lasted 8-15 minutes. Fountas and Pinnell (1996) recommend at least 20 minutes for a guided reading lesson.

Another misalignment regarded who does the reading during guided reading instruction. This researcher was intentional in asking the participants to describe a typical guided reading lesson rather than asking them specifically, “Who does the reading during the guided reading lesson?” This researcher did not want to prompt the participants in any way and felt that asking the participants to describe would eliminate any chance of prompting or suggestion on this researcher’s part; though, that decision did leave some remaining questions. A few of the teachers mentioned reading for or with the students. Most of them used the phrase, “We read,” as they spoke about reading the text during a typical guided reading lesson. It was difficult for this researcher to determine who was doing the reading, but it must be made clear for teachers that guided reading is a time for the students to be reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001, 2012). The guided reading instruction time needs to be spent with the students accessing and reading text. When the text matches the students’ instructional reading levels, there is no need for a great amount of frontloading. When time is the biggest barrier to implementing guided reading
instruction effectively, teachers should be most concerned with having students engaged with the text the majority of the time.

The perceptions shared by the participants of the study showed that the participants had a very high self-efficacy of their implementation of guided reading instruction. Moreover, those perceptions exposed that misalignments existed between how teachers said they were implementing guided reading instruction and the recommended practices for implementing guided reading instruction with fidelity. Consequently, this researcher proposed possible implications for practice.

**Implications for Practice**

Teachers will always be charged with the task of improving reading proficiency and achievement. If guided reading instruction is a best practice for improving students’ reading abilities, teachers need to have the necessary supports in order to implement guided reading effectively and with fidelity. Also, the data has revealed that there may be misunderstandings that could cause misalignment of fidelity. Therefore, the first step would be to ensure that every teacher really understands how and where guided reading fits in within the entire spectrum of their reading instruction.

Most of the participants stated over and over that they would prefer to learn more about guided reading by actually seeing someone do it. Thus, it would be beneficial for teachers to have an opportunity to see guided reading instruction in action. As teachers observe guided reading lessons in action, it is still critical that they have the prerequisite understanding underpinning the teacher’s actions during the guided reading time.

Nine of the 12 participants in the study reported that they did some type of frontloading at the beginning of the guided reading lesson. There should be a minimal
amount of frontloading if the text is on the students’ instructional level; the students will not need a huge amount of frontloading to make them ready to read the book. Knowing the students’ instructional levels ensures that the text will provide just enough challenge without frustrating the student. When a student misreads or misunderstands what they have read, then the teacher steps in to guide the student and get them back on track.

The least amount of alignment pertained to determining students’ instructional reading levels. This was concerning because determining the students’ instructional reading levels is the first step in making instructional decisions for guided reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Unless teachers are doing that component well, they cannot group the students correctly or select the just-right text for them. School administrators could use the Guided Reading Fidelity Checklist (see Appendix E) to help them to support teachers as they implement guided reading in their classrooms. The Guided Reading Fidelity Checklist could serve as a springboard for conversations between administrators and teachers concerning guided reading and discovering possible areas of support that are needed. Then, it could be a useful tool to help both administrators and teachers to reflect upon when analyzing if guided reading instruction is being implemented with fidelity, and it could provide the school administrators with some insight into how they can help direct teachers who may have misconceptions about guided reading.

Teachers cited time as one of the barriers to implementing guided reading instruction effectively. Thus, administrators could also provide support by ensuring that teachers have an appropriate length of time allotted in their weekly schedules to serve the students in guided reading instruction. In addition to time, administrators also need to
ensure that teachers have access to *just right* texts for the students in their class, as opposed to only the books that came with the reading series for that grade level.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This researcher’s current study added to the very small body of research pertaining to teacher perceptions of their implementation of guided reading instruction, but it could serve as a foundation for future studies. Researchers may follow this study in order to add to the insufficient amount of research concerning teacher perceptions of their implementation of guided reading instruction. The value of this study lies in identifying teacher understanding of their instructional practices. Future research surrounding teacher perceptions of their implementation of reading instruction presents an opportunity to recognize areas in which teachers need more support in implementing those instructional practices with fidelity.

Future researchers may build on the findings of this study by observing teachers during guided reading instruction to check for the fidelity of guided reading implementation. In this study, this researcher asked the participants to describe what a typical guided reading lesson looked like in their classrooms. If this researcher had been able to observe them in their classrooms for herself, she would have had a better understanding of what guided reading in each of the participants’ classrooms actually looked like. This researcher was intentional in asking the participants to describe what it looked like rather than prompting them with choices of who was doing the reading during the guided reading time, the students or the teacher; still, it was difficult to determine who was primarily doing the reading from the participants’ responses as they described a typical guided reading lesson during the interview.
Future studies may also be conducted with a larger sampling of participants across a larger number of participating school districts or number of schools. Districts could also consider collecting data within their own system to determine areas of need for support for teachers. Future studies could also include a sampling with proportional or equal number of participants for each grade level within the K-6 grade band to give a clearer picture of guided reading across all grade levels. This might give an insight to certain grade levels or grade bands that may need a greater level of support. Additionally, because different states and districts have different views on instructional practices related to guided reading, future studies concerning teacher perceptions of guided reading in different regions or states would be another potential direction for future study.

Finally, future studies could be done to examine the effectiveness of guided reading or the Balanced Literacy Approach as a whole. Studies could also be done to compare the effectiveness of guided reading instruction versus other best practices. Until reading proficiency improves drastically in America, we will always be searching for the best strategies that will create a positive impact on student achievement in reading.

**Conclusion of the Study**

As a former instructional coach, this researcher was often called upon to help teachers with their implementation of guided reading instruction. While working with teachers, this researcher also noticed misalignments that some teachers had with implementing guided reading instruction with fidelity. For this reason, this researcher had a high interest in teacher perceptions of their implementation of guided reading instruction. As an instructional coach, this researcher often encountered teachers who had a very high confidence in their implementation of instructional strategies.
While the participants in the study felt very confident and had a high self-efficacy in their abilities to implement guided reading instruction effectively, this researcher found several areas of misalignment between some of the instructional practices that were shared by the participant and the Guided Reading Fidelity Checklist (see Appendix E). This researcher did not evaluate how the participants developed their sense of confidence, but throughout the interviews, several of the teachers gave examples of student growth in their reading levels. The success of seeing students grow as readers could be serving these teachers as a performance accomplishment. While this researcher did not specifically evaluate the effectiveness of guided reading instruction, the question remains as to how much more reading growth had the participants’ students achieved if guided reading had been implemented with total fidelity?

There were several misalignments revealed as this researcher checked the teacher reported practices for alignment with a Guided Reading Fidelity Checklist (see Appendix E). These misalignments were related to determining students’ instructional reading levels, deciding how to group students, determining changes in the groupings throughout the school year, selecting appropriate text for each group, utilizing the time during guided reading for students to be fully engaged in a just right text as the teacher acts as a support for troubleshooting rather than the leader of the reading. Future studies could examine different grade levels, grade bands, districts, regions, or states. This researcher recommends that future studies include an observation component to allow researchers to get a sense of what is going on during the guided reading lesson. Guided reading instruction is so much more than walking into a classroom and seeing a teacher working with a small group at a table. Guided reading instruction is intentional, and it serves a
specific purpose in meeting every student where they are and supporting them through a just right text. An observation component paired with an interview in future studies would allow researchers to ask participants to explain their reasoning and thoughts behind the intentional process of implementing guided reading instruction with fidelity.
References


Heston, K. (n.d.). *Guided reading, fluency, accuracy, and comprehension* [PDF file]. Retrieved from https://minds.wisconsin.edu/bitstream/handle/1793/53230/?sequence=1

Hulan, N. (2010). What the students will say while the teacher is away: An investigation into student-led and teacher-led discussion within guided reading groups. *Literacy, Teaching and Learning, 14*, 41-64.


grade. Retrieved from
https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2015/#?grade=4

https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2017_highlights/

http://thencbla.org/literacy-resources/statistics/


111


Appendix A

Interview Protocol
I am completing my doctoral degree at Lincoln Memorial University, and my dissertation pertains to literacy instruction, particularly teacher perceptions of their implementation of guided reading instruction in their classroom. Thank you for volunteering to be interviewed. On the Survey Monkey survey that you completed, you marked yes on the informed consent question. That was your statement of being 18 years or older and your agreement to participate in the study. Everything you share during the interview will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only.

Again, thank you for being willing to participate in my study. This is my twenty-first year in education, and I am passionate about helping kids learn to read. I want to learn more about teacher perceptions of guided reading instruction because I believe that teachers are the heart of what happens in the classroom. I’m hoping that my research will not only add to the existing research about literacy instruction, but also provide information that will help us to know how to make literacy instruction more effective for pre-service and current teachers.

I will ask a series of questions. Most of them are open-ended, so please feel free to elaborate and explain your responses in detail. I will begin by asking you to state your pseudonym. Because I want everything to remain confidential, I ask that you make up a pseudonym for yourself. Do you have any questions before we begin?

**Introduction**

1. Please state your pseudonym.
2. How long have you been teaching?
3. What grade do you currently teach?
4. Of the years that you’ve been teaching, how many years have you taught ELA (or reading instruction)?
5. Do you implement guided reading instruction in your classroom?

**Self-Efficacy Questions**

6. Tell me about any training you’ve gone through to learn more about guided reading instruction.
7. Describe how confident you feel in your ability to implement guided reading instruction effectively?
8. Within your guided reading instructional practices, where do you feel there is a need for specific additional support in order for you to implement guided reading more effectively?
9. If you desired further learning in how to more effectively implement guided reading instruction, what would be your preferred method of learning?

**Guided Reading Implementation**

10. How do you determine your students’ reading levels for guided reading?
11. Give a brief description of a typical guided reading lesson in your classroom.
12. How often do children experience a guided reading lesson each week?
13. How long do the guided reading lessons last?
14. How do you decide how to group your students?
15. How many students are in your guided reading groups?
16. Do your guided reading groups change throughout the school year? If yes, how do you determine those changes?
17. What materials do you use during the guided reading lesson?
18. What is the level of the text for those materials?
19. Is there a difference in the texts that you use for the different groups in your class?
20. What are barriers that you have encountered in implementing guided reading instruction effectively?

Thank you, again, for your sharing your perceptions today. Here is my contact information in case you’d like to reach me. I will keep your contact information if the need arises for any clarification or additional questions after I’ve transcribed your interview. Is there anything else you would like to add before I turn off the recording?
Appendix B

Email to District Leaders Asking for Permission to Conduct Research
To Whom It May Concern at ______________________ Schools:

My name is Kristi Presley, and I am a doctoral candidate at Lincoln Memorial University. I am writing to ask for permission to conduct research in your school district. Attached you'll find information about my study as well as the required form for ______________ Schools. If you have questions about my study, please feel free to contact me at kristi.presley@lmunet.edu or 423-773-2099.

Thank you,
Kristi D. Presley
Appendix C

Survey Monkey Questions
Do you implement guided reading instruction in your classroom? This study pertains to teacher perceptions of their implementation of guided reading instruction in their classrooms. If you do not implement guided reading instruction, please discontinue the survey. If you have questions pertaining to the study, please contact me at kristi.presley@lmunet.edu or (423) 773-2099.

Thank you,

Kristi D. Presley

1. Name/email address/phone number
2. Informed Consent
3. What is the name of your school district?
4. How many total years have you been teaching?
5. What grade do you currently teach?
6. Are you an English Language Arts (ELA) teacher?
7. Of the years that you’ve been teaching, how many years have you taught ELA (or reading instruction)?
8. Do you implement guided reading instruction in your classroom?
9. What is the best time to call you to set up an interview?
10. Would you rather meet in person (face-to-face) for the interview or do the interview over the phone?
11. For confidentiality purposes, the researcher asks that you create a pseudonym to go by. This pseudonym will be used in place of your real name, and it will be attached to the transcription of your interview. Again, the purpose of your pseudonym is to keep all your information confidential. What pseudonym would you prefer to go by?
Appendix D

Informed Consent
Teacher Perceptions of Their Implementation of Guided Reading Instruction

Information and Consent Form

I, Kristi D. Presley, doctoral student at Lincoln Memorial University, am currently collecting data related to teacher perceptions of their implementation of guided reading instruction. The purpose of the research is to gain an understanding of teachers implement guided reading instruction in their classrooms based on their personal perceptions.

In order to ensure confidentiality as well as to be able to match each participant’s responses to the transcriptions of the interviews, all participants will be asked to give themselves a pseudonym. The pseudonym will be kept with the candidate’s name in a spreadsheet maintained by this researcher and kept with the demographic information that the participant provided. After all interviews have been conducted and the data are analyzed, the spreadsheet will be destroyed. The pseudonym will be kept also with the transcription of the interview. The pseudonym will never be part of the data analysis; it will be used only to correlate the interview transcription.

We are requesting your participation, which will involve participating in a 30-45 minute interview. The interview will be conducted in a quiet setting, and it will be recorded using an audio recording device with a lapel microphone so that the responses can later be transcribed. Prior to the interview, the participant would have completed an eleven-question survey on a Survey Monkey survey. Those eleven questions are focused mainly on the demographics of the participant, and one of the questions related to informed consent. The interview consists of seventeen questions. The first two questions relate to your pseudonym and what you love about teaching. Then, there are four
questions that were related to self-efficacy, and there are eleven questions related to
guided reading instruction. The researcher will use a Sony ICD-UX560 Stereo Digital
Voice Recorder with an ECMCS3 clip-on stereo microphone to record the interviews.
After each interview is conducted, the researcher will then use the free version of NCH
Software, Express Scribe, to transcribe each interview. The researcher will use the
transcriptions of all the interview data from each participant to look for emerging themes
among the responses from all the participants. These themes will help the researcher to
determine conclusions for the research.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose not to
participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. Your
responses during the interview will be kept strictly confidential by attaching to your
pseudonym. All data will be stored in secure computer files and secure storage location.
Any report of this research that is made available to the public will not include your name
or any other individual information by which you could be identified.

This study is considered a human research project; however, the risk to you for
being involved is minimal. If you have any questions concerning the research study or
want a copy or summary of this study’s results, please contact Kristi D. Presley at (423)
773-2099 or kristi.presley@lmunet.edu.

This research has been approved the Lincoln Memorial University’s Institutional
Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this
research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you may contact Dr. Kay Paris,
Chair of the Human Subjects Committee, Institutional Review Board at 423-869-6834.
Additional contact information is available at www.lmunet.edu/administration/office-of-research-grants-and-sponsored-programs-orgsp/institutional-review-board-irb

**BY SUBMITTING THIS FORM, YOU ARE CONSENTING THAT YOU HAVE READ THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM, YOU CONSENT THAT YOU AM OVER 18 YEARS OF AGE, AND YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.**

Name (printed): 
Date: 
Signature: 

___________________________
Appendix E

Guided Reading Fidelity Checklist
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 10. How do you determine your students' reading levels for guided reading? | Instructional reading levels are determined by doing a running record on each child. Students’ reading levels should be determined by using a running record Fountas and Pinnell (2009) defined an instructional reading level by the following criteria when a running record had been administered:  
  • At levels A-K: 90-94% accuracy with excellent or satisfactory comprehension or 95-100% accuracy with limited comprehension  
  • At levels L-Z: 95-97% accuracy with excellent or satisfactory comprehension or 98-100% accuracy with limited comprehension  
  From the running records, specific needs can be identified. Once a teacher knows the needs of the students, the plan to meet all those needs must be put into place (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). |
<p>| 11. Give a brief description of a typical guided reading lesson in your classroom. | Students are engaged in reading the text the entire time. As they are reading, the teacher coaches them and asks questions to promote thinking and to determine students’ comprehension of the text. (Students do NOT take turns reading, and the teacher does NOT read to the students.) Guided reading provides an opportunity for students to engage in the reading of text that is on their instructional level – just slightly more challenging than their independent reading level - while being coached through comprehension strategies that they should be using as they are thinking within the text, about the text, and beyond the text (Fountas &amp; Pinnell, 1996, 2012). |
| 12. How often do children experience a guided reading lesson each week? | At least 2 times per week. The teacher should be meeting with each group two to three times per week, but potentially more often with students who are reading below grade level (Schulman &amp; daCruz Payne, 2000). |
| 13. How long do the guided reading lessons last? | At least 20 minutes. The guided reading lesson could last from 20-30 minutes (Fountas &amp; Pinnell, 1996). |
| 14. How do you decide how to group your students? | Students are grouped with other students with similar instructional reading levels and needs. The small group should be homogeneous in that the students that make up the group read at about the same level and also have similar instructional needs (Fountas &amp; Pinnell, 2001). |
| 15. How many students are in your guided reading groups? | No more than 6 students. An ideal size for the guided reading group would be a group of five or six students (Fountas &amp; Pinnell, 2001). |
| 16. Do your guided reading groups change throughout the school year? If yes, how do you determine those changes? | Groups should change throughout the year depending on the changes in students’ reading levels. The placement of students in groups should be ever changing. As students make progress at different rates, they should be regrouped to ensure that they remain in a group with similar instructional needs (Hulan, 2010). |
| 17. What materials do you use during the guided reading lesson? | Texts that match the “just right” or Texts that can be read with 95% accuracy are related to improved reading achievement. “Texts that are read with |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18. What is the level of the text for those materials?</td>
<td>instructional level for each group. either significantly lower or higher levels of accuracy fail to produce positive effects as large as the “just right” being texts that can be read with 95% accuracy or higher” (Allington et al., 2015, p. 499). The text must match students' reading levels in order for them to be engaged in text while self-regulating and building vocabulary and content knowledge (Allington et al., 2015). With a “just right” text in the guided reading lesson, students should be able to practice applying the skills or strategies while being challenged enough without them becoming frustrated. As the guided reading group progresses through different texts, the teacher should reinforce the use of strategies that the group have worked on in previous texts (Fountas &amp; Pinnell, 2001).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Is there a difference in the texts that you use for the different groups in your class?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F

Guided Reading Alignment Check Summary
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Alignment Expectation</th>
<th>Supporting Research</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 10. How do you determine your students’ reading levels for guided reading? | Instructional reading levels are determined by doing a running record on each child.                   | Students’ reading levels should be determined by using a running record Fountas and Pinnell (2009) defined an instructional reading level by the following criteria when a running record had been administered:  
- At levels A-K: 90-94% accuracy with excellent or satisfactory comprehension or 95-100% accuracy with limited comprehension  
- At levels L-Z: 95-97% accuracy with excellent or satisfactory comprehension or 98-100% accuracy with limited comprehension  
From the running records, specific needs can be identified. Once a teacher knows the needs of the students, the plan to meet all those needs must be put into place (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). | 16.7% | 83.3%|
<p>| 11. Give a brief description of a typical guided reading lesson in your classroom. | Students are engaged in reading the text the entire time. As they are reading, the teacher coaches them and asks questions to promote thinking and to determine students’ comprehension of the text. (Students do NOT take turns reading, and the teacher does NOT read to the students.) | Guided reading provides an opportunity for students to engage in the reading of text that is on their instructional level – just slightly more challenging than their independent reading level - while being coached through comprehension strategies that they should be using as they are thinking within the text, about the text, and beyond the text (Fountas &amp; Pinnell, 1996, 2012). | 100%  | 0%   |
| 12. How often do children experience a guided reading lesson each week? | At least 2 times per week.                                                                               | The teacher should be meeting with each group two to three times per week, but potentially more often with students who are reading below grade level (Schulman &amp; daCruz Payne, 2000).                                                                 | 91.7% | 8.3% |
| 13. How long do the guided reading lessons last?                         | At least 20 minutes.                                                                                     | The guided reading lesson could last from 20-30 minutes (Fountas &amp; Pinnell, 1996).                                                                                                                                 | 50%   | 50%  |
| 14. How do you decide how to group your students?                       | Students are grouped with other students with similar instructional reading levels and needs.           | The small group should be homogeneous in that the students that make up the group read at about the same level and also have similar instructional needs (Fountas &amp; Pinnell, 2001).                              | 33.3% | 66.7%|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. How many students are in your guided reading groups?</td>
<td>No more than 6 students.</td>
<td>91.7% 8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Do your guided reading groups change throughout the school year?</td>
<td>Groups should change throughout the year depending on the changes in students’ reading levels.</td>
<td>41.7% 58.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. What materials do you use during the guided reading lesson?</td>
<td>Texts that can be read with 95% accuracy are related to improved reading achievement. “Texts that are read with either significantly lower or higher levels of accuracy fail to produce positive effects as large as the “just right” being texts that can be read with 95% accuracy or higher” (Allington et al., 2015, p. 499). The text must match students’ reading levels in order for them to be engaged in text while self-regulating and building vocabulary and content knowledge (Allington et al., 2015). With a “just right” text in the guided reading lesson, students should be able to practice applying the skills or strategies while being challenged enough without them becoming frustrated. As the guided reading group progresses through different texts, the teacher should reinforce the use of strategies that the group have worked on in previous texts (Fountas &amp; Pinnell, 2001).</td>
<td>91.7% 8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. What is the level of the text for those materials?</td>
<td>Texts that match the “just right” or instructional level for each group.</td>
<td>25% 75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Is there a difference in the texts that you use for the different groups in your class?</td>
<td></td>
<td>83.3% 16.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>