Improving Students’ Reading Comprehension: Traditional Reading Instruction Versus Guided Reading Instruction

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine two reading instruction methods taught by one classroom teacher in an inner-city school located in a low-income area. The objective of this research study was to investigate whether guided reading instruction increased students’ reading comprehension levels more than traditional reading instruction. Data included three reading comprehension assessments (pre-intervention, mid-intervention and post intervention) in a 12 week study. The student participants were comprised of 14 grade 2 students (six girls and eight boys) from diverse ethnic and language backgrounds. The instrument used to collect data pertaining to the participants’ reading comprehension levels was the *PM Benchmark Kit 2* (Randell & Smith, 2003). After six weeks of traditional reading instruction, students’ reading comprehension scores showed little improvement and two students did not improve at all. After six weeks of guided reading instruction every student had increased their reading comprehension levels and the data indicated a much greater increase in the students’ over-all reading comprehension scores. Quantitative results indicated there was a significant improvement in students’ reading comprehension skills when examined over this six week period. Other positive outcomes from the study were that students’ self-confidence increased as they now saw themselves as *readers* and they became much more excited and motivated to read books. The students gained many benefits when the teacher incorporated guiding reading instruction into their regular literacy program.
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Chapter 1: Problem to be Investigated

Purpose of the Study

The problem investigated in this study was the poor reading comprehension abilities among the majority of Grade 2 students at an elementary school in British Columbia. This affected academic growth in other subject areas. At this elementary school, the majority of Grade 2 students had not been meeting the Grade 2 expectations in reading as evidenced by Benchmark Kit 2 reading assessments scores (Randell & Smith, 2003).

For students to be reading at a Grade 2 level they need to be reading and comprehending at story level 17. The Grade 2 students were assessed in September 2008, and 81% of these students were reading below Grade 2 level. The subsequent class of Grade 2 students at this school was assessed in September 2009, and 76% of the students were reading below Grade 2 level. These statistics indicated that an alarming number of Grade 2 students were struggling with their reading comprehension skills. It was vital that educational providers worked to improve students’ reading comprehension levels before they fell too far behind and were unable to catch up (Iaquinta, 2006). Torgesen (1998) confirmed this statement, and declared that when students get off to a poor start in reading they rarely catch up. The difference in reading levels became more pronounced as they progressed through the grade levels (Torgesen, 2006).

The purpose of this study was to find a way to increase reading comprehension in Grade 2 students. The past three years, in the Grade 2 classroom at this elementary school, the primary reading method used was traditional reading instruction. The author implemented guided reading instruction in the Grade 2 reading program in an effort to improve the students’ reading comprehension scores and to teach students thinking strategies designed so they would be able to
make meaning of the text. Fountas and Pinnell (1996) believed that all reading instruction was important at every grade but guided reading was the foundation of a reading program. By comparing traditional reading instruction and guided reading instruction, the author was able to determine the better instructional method to improve students’ reading comprehension levels in the Grade 2 classroom.

**Justification of the Study**

“Reading is essential to be successful in our society” (Bruce et al., 1998, p.1). Reading is not just a skill learned and used by school children: it is used throughout life to gain information, accumulate knowledge and communicate (Bruce et al., 1998). There is a great emphasis in classrooms across Canada to ensure all students learn to read by third grade (Torgesen, 2006). Elementary students need to build a solid foundation of reading skills in the first three years in the primary grades or they will struggle throughout their academic and adult life (Torgesen, 2006).

There continues to be overwhelming evidence of the importance of students’ ability to read in the early grades. Iaquinta (2006) stated that a poor first grade reader is 88% more likely to remain a poor reader in fourth grade. Brink (2006) suggested that the early primary grades (1, 2 and 3) should be the focus for the prevention of reading difficulties. The 2003 International Survey results indicated that approximately one million British Columbians of working age (16-65) had low literacy skills that prevented them from understanding and using basic information (e.g. news stories and instruction manuals), and that they faced challenges dealing with pressures of everyday work and life (Brink, 2006). Therefore, the challenge facing teachers is how to respond to the needs of diverse and at risk learners so they are able to read at their grade level in the regular classroom.
Traditional reading instruction had been the primary reading instruction method in the Grade 2 classroom in this study. In September 2010, a new reading instructional method known as guided reading was implemented for six weeks. Previously implemented in other primary classrooms in this school district, guided reading instruction has led to an increase in students’ reading abilities and reading comprehension levels.

Struggling readers need early intervention to help them become successful readers and guided reading instruction may be the key to helping them improve their reading comprehension (Torgesen, 2006). Tobin and McInnes (2008) suggested that guided reading was an important reading instructional practice because it provided for different kinds of learning in several ways and provided varying levels of support depending on the needs of the student. Guided reading provided support for students who struggle and additional challenges for children who catch on quickly (Cunningham, Hall & Cunningham, 2002; Heilman and Rupley, 1990).

An important component of guided reading was small group instruction, as it effectively reduced the number of struggling readers (Torgesen, 2006). Guastello and Lenz (2005) stressed that reading instruction must be relevant, at the appropriate instructional level, and it utilizes thinking strategies, all of which are key components of guided reading. A young student who was taught in an environment filled with books and conversation and who had numerous experiences and opportunities to predict, infer, connect and ask questions would be more able to easily comprehend what they read (Gear, 2006).

With an increasing number of struggling students in the classroom, it was apparent that the traditional reading instruction method was not meeting the reading needs of many students. Guided reading, an alternative method of instruction, may be an improvement and should be investigated. Therefore, a research study that examined whether guided reading increased
students’ reading comprehension more than traditional reading instruction was a credible and valuable project.

**Research Question and Hypothesis**

The author has developed the following research question as an area of interest to investigate: Does guided reading instruction lead to larger increases in primary school children’s reading comprehension levels than a traditional reading program?

The author hypothesized that there would be a small increase in students’ comprehension levels from September to October after using the traditional reading instruction but there would be a larger increase in their comprehension levels after implementing guided reading instruction from November to December.

**Definition of Terms**

Definitions of key terms used in this research were provided to ensure understanding.

*Traditional reading instruction* was defined as the explicit teaching of basic literacy skills: reading, writing and speaking. In traditional reading instruction, phonics was taught to the whole class, and the classroom teacher designed her reading instruction around the largest group of students that were at the same level. Students received whole class reading instruction but were reading different stories from the same reader according to their range of reading abilities.

*Guided reading instruction* was defined as a balanced literacy based method of instruction utilizing small group instruction, individualized reading groups, continuously building on skills the students have using short simple lessons connecting, predicting, questioning and retelling the text.
**Phonics** was defined as the relationships between the letters of the alphabet and the sounds that they make.

*Reading comprehension* was defined as creating meaning through reading the text by connecting, predicting, and questioning.

*PM Benchmark Kit 2* was defined as an assessment instrument that tested reading vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

A *resource room teacher* was defined as a teacher that provided special instruction to students in an individualized or small group setting for a portion of the day.

An *Educational Assistant* (EA) was defined as an adult worker that supported the teacher working with individuals or groups of students. She worked alongside and under the guidance of teachers.

A *participant* was defined as a student whose parent had given consent for that student to participate in this research study.

A *non-participant* was defined as a student whose parent had not given consent for that student to participate in this research study.

**Brief Overview of Study**

The author tested two different reading approaches (traditional reading and guided reading) to determine which instructional method produced the larger increases in a participant’s comprehension level. The study took place from September 2010 to December 2010 in a Grade 2 classroom in an elementary school in British Columbia.

Between September 20, 2010, and October 29, 2010 (six weeks), traditional reading was taught for one hour a day, four days a week. Between November 1, 2010 and December 10, 2010 (six weeks), guided reading was taught for one hour a day, four days a week. The resource room
teacher assessed the participants and non-participants using *PM Benchmark Kit 2* at the beginning of the study and determined a pre-intervention reading comprehension level. Participants and non-participants were tested again during the week of October 25-29, 2010, to obtain a mid-point reading comprehension level after traditional instruction, and again during the week of December 6-10, 2010, after guided reading instruction and obtained a post-intervention reading comprehension level. The data from the reading comprehension assessment tests were then entered into Microsoft Excel 2007 and the data were displayed on four tables, a box-plot and whisker graph and a scatter plot graph. The researcher used the data from the tables, box-plot and the scatter plot graphs to determine whether guided reading instruction produced a larger increase in students’ reading comprehension than traditional reading instruction.
Chapter 2: Background and Review of Related Literature

One of the most challenging tasks a primary teacher has is that of teaching children to read. The controversy of how to best teach students to read has been debated for many decades. Unfortunately, no one has discovered the magic ingredient of reading that causes the parts to all snap together as a whole (O’Connor, Jenkins, Cole, & Mills, 1993).

There has been extensive research about struggling readers and instructional methods that improve students’ reading skills. Early identification of children with reading difficulties in the beginning primary grades is crucial. Just as critical is a solid reading instruction program that meets the needs of all students in the classroom and supports them in their reading. Today, there is strong evidence from numerous research studies which confirms the effectiveness of guided reading instruction in the primary grades. This review of literature provided insight for teachers on how to best teach and support struggling readers in the primary classroom. More importantly, the studies focused on important components of guided reading instruction. Incorporating these components into a literacy program met the diverse needs of all students in the classroom.

The literature review began with an examination of studies directly related to this study’s research question: “does guided reading instruction lead to larger increases in primary school children’s reading comprehension levels than a traditional reading program?” The first four articles focused on the guided reading components that have produced encouraging results. The last two articles examined the other important reading components such as phonics and decoding skills that must be taught, in order for beginning readers to learn to read successfully.
Studies Directly Related

Annie Fisher’s (2008) study investigated three research questions. The first question was, “What does guided reading with fluent readers look like in a sample of real classrooms” (Fisher, 2008, 25)? The second question was, “do guided reading groups offer a positive opportunity to develop critical and analytical reading” (Fisher, 2008, p. 25). The third question was, “how far were the case study teachers using guided reading in order to develop those skills” (Fisher, 2008, p. 25)?

To answer these questions, Fisher selected three teachers working with grades 2, 4 and 6 from urban and rural primary schools. All three teachers followed the National Literacy Strategy approach to guided reading. Data results for Fisher’s study (2008) were based on three separate case studies. In case study one, there were six grade four students who were fluent readers, (three boys and three girls) from an urban primary school. Case study two was comprised of the five most fluent Grade 6 students from a rural primary school. The third case study included five Grade 2 students who were very fluent readers from a rural primary school.

Qualitative data were drawn from video-taping participants during “live-teaching” of guided reading lessons and through semi-structured interviews with the three teachers involved in the study. Fisher compared and contrasted the interviews and observations in detail and then coded and analyzed the data.

Fisher (2008) arrived at four conclusions from the data of this study. First, guided reading instruction may work well for some teachers but not for others. Second, all three teachers benefited from conducting guided reading. However some of the teachers did not analyze how the children created meaning of what they read nor were they taught appropriate strategies to enhance analytical and critical thinking responses. Third, the three teachers had difficulty when
they used guided reading as a means of developing interpretive and evaluative comprehension. Fourth, to create thinking classrooms, teachers required good in-service support, which should be ongoing, reflective and collaborative. Fisher demonstrated the importance of teaching guided reading by engaging students in higher order questioning and deeper understanding through dialogue about the text in order for students to comprehend what they had read.

One limitation as addressed by Fisher (2008) was that it was a very small scale study which allowed only tentative conclusions to be drawn. Fisher did not disclose the participants’ geography, school area, ethnicity and cultural identity. The results may not be applicable to all social classes of students. The sample of students in Fisher’s study was all at the same reading level and already fluent in reading. Students’ abilities and the classroom culture may have influenced the results. The difference in the teachers teaching experience would have also influenced the results of the study. Although there were some limitations, Fisher brought to light that there needed to be more studies on effective instructional methods of teaching guided reading. Teachers must be willing to let go of the old literacy framework, and move on to the new practice, where students are learning to think about their thinking and gain a deeper understanding of their reading.

Tobin and McInnes (2008) stated that it was critical to respond to the literacy needs of the diverse and at-risk learners in the regular classroom. The purpose of this study was to examine how differentiated instruction could provide an environment that would foster success for all students (Tobin & McInnes, 2008). Based on responsive literacy teaching, differentiated instruction was where teachers created learning situations that engaged and prompted learners to problem solve (Tobin & McInnes, 2008).
Tobin and McInnes (2008) selected ten teachers from Aberdeen School District (pseudonym) to initiate differentiated instruction into mixed Grade 2 and 3 classrooms. University researchers collected data through observational field notes, video recordings of the classrooms, audio recordings of interviews with teachers and students, and student work samples (Tobin and McInnes, 2008).

Tobin and McInnes (2008) concluded that a differentiated instruction approach engaged “all literacy learners across the ability and diversity spectrum” (p. 9). They also found evidence that suggested that differentiated instruction allowed teachers to assess, accommodate and celebrate the differences among students in creative ways to promote success for all learners (Tobin & McInnes, 2008).

A strength in Tobin and McInnes’ (2008) study was that they described in great detail differentiated instruction and demonstrated two ways in which it could be effectively implemented. It would be easy to implement this style of instruction into a classroom because of the detailed steps explained in the study. Another point of Tobin and McInnes’ study was that the number of classroom observation visits was high and formal and informal interviews were conducted by the same observer throughout the entire study to maintain reliability. Through the use of semi-structured interviews the interviewer was able to ask for more information while students answered questions. This allowed the researcher to gain a better understanding of students’ responses (Tobin and McInnes, 2008).

There were a few limitations to Tobin and McInnes’ (2008) study. There were concerns pertaining to validity as the authors did not mention how the students were chosen for this study, or the diversity of the students in the study. There were many unknown variables in Tobin and McInnes’ study which included whether all teachers had the same teaching experience, the same
school budgets or similar class compositions. These variables could have made a huge difference in the students’ learning. Beginning teachers lacked the classroom experience and knowledge possessed by teachers who had been teaching for many years. School budgets could have been used to promote different areas of interest to the school. One school may have had an initiative to improve math and buy new books and materials for math rather than spending it on literacy and purchasing new updated readers and materials to improve reading. One classroom could have had a substantially higher number of ESL (English as a second language) students or boys who might not learn as quickly as a classroom of girls.

This article was relevant to the author of the present study as many of the key components of differentiated instruction (small flexible groupings, adaptations so all students were engaged and successful, allowing students to show their knowledge in creative ways) were very similar to the guided reading instruction. Tobin and McInnes (2008) recognized that the key to improved student achievement was improved reading instruction, which was achieved through differentiated instruction.

Malik’s (1996) study focused on teaching Grade 4 students to read for meaning. Malik tried to identify the important factors of guided reading that improved students’ reading comprehension skills. Students were taught four reading strategies to use to help them make sense of the text. These strategies were employed when students engaged in daily independent reading, read with partners, read and made sense of the daily morning message and when they had individual reading conferences with the classroom teacher.

Malik’s (1996) study consisted of twenty-five Grade 4 students in one public elementary school in Brooklyn, New York. There were both female and male participants; however, the number of each gender, race or ethnicity of the participants in this one year study was not stated.
The focus of Malik’s (1996) study was to identify which students had difficulty making sense of what they read. Malik found that these students were missing a variety of strategies that were necessary to have the knowledge of letter-sound associations and make sense of the text. Malik used a morning letter to students that explained what was happening in their classroom that day. The teacher manipulated the reading level, vocabulary and the complexity of the syntax to challenge the students in the study.

Informal assessment included notes from the classroom teacher’s observations during reading groups. Formal assessments included standardized testing using the Rhode Island Test of Language Structure (RITL) and video tapes of students reading two books: one at the students’ reading level and the other more challenging for the students to read, to see which reading strategies the participants had mastered and which ones they still needed to develop.

The results of the study indicated that students became better at their understanding of the written language. The RITL standardized test indicated there was an increase of an entire standard deviation. Testing also suggested that students made fewer errors when reading and understood what they read. Students became more competent readers who were less dependent on the teacher and began to apply reading strategies to make meaning of the text not only in language arts but also in other subjects in school.

There were some limitations to Malik’s (1996) study. The subject population was not representative of many other districts due to such factors as geography, school area, ethnicity and cultural identity. The study was also limited to one small sample size of twenty-five students in one school. With a small sample size, the researchers were not able to generalize the results. There were some concerns about the administration and data collection in this study as the methods were not clearly explained. It is not known how many times throughout the year the
participants were given standardized tests or video-taped or by whom. The findings of Malik’s study were relevant to the author of this study as the findings supported the hypothesis that reading strategies helped students make meaning from the text, and improved their reading comprehension.

Conklin and Wilkins’ (2002) study focused on a school-based intervention program to increase Grade 4 students reading levels through the implementation of the Four-Block Framework which included guided reading, working with words, writing and self-selected reading. Conklin and Wilkins’ study was conducted for eighteen weeks.

Conklin and Wilkins’ (2002) study group consisted of twenty three fourth grade students from a low income school in a Midwestern rural community. Conklin and Wilkins collected information by administering a pre-study questionnaire to identify students’ attitudes towards reading, reading habits, and interests. The classroom teacher observed students reading aloud and assessed their reading levels before the study. Three instruments were used to score reading skills throughout the study. The first tool was the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) which included leveled stories that student’s read aloud. A DRA Comprehension Rubric was used to determine the participant’s reading comprehension, and a DTA Continuum was used to track each student’s reading progress. The second instrument was a checklist that determined the skills each participant still needed to learn. The third measure was a post-questionnaire used to assess reading growth and to see if students’ attitudes towards reading, reading habits, and interests had changed.

Conklin and Wilkins (2002) interpreted their data to conclude that ninety-five percent of the students demonstrated growth in their reading levels over the study year. There were
improvements in the areas of reading comprehension, sounding out words and reading out loud. Students’ attitudes towards reading had also improved.

Conklin and Wilkins’ (2002) findings were relevant to the present study as the results addressed struggling readers and their sample of participants was similar to the student sample of this study. The findings were also relevant as both studies use guided reading as an intervention method. A limitation noted by Conklin and Wilkins was the short time period which did not allow the accurate comparison of standardized test scores.

Studies Tangentially Related

Baker (2007) stated that the purpose of her study was to provide education professors who taught early literacy method courses for pre-service teachers with strategies on how to best support struggling Grade 1 students. Her study dealt with three main challenges for beginning teachers in reading instruction. First, beginning teachers need to fully understand how to assess and enhance phonemic awareness in young students (Baker, 2007). Second, beginning teachers must learn how to effectively teach alphabetic relations as part of the early literacy curriculum (Baker, 2007). Third, education professors must ensure that beginning teachers have the background knowledge to meet the instructional needs of students from diverse ethnic language backgrounds and special needs children in early primary classrooms (Baker, 2007).

Baker’s (2007) participants consisted of 87 struggling Grade 2 students from 12 low-income schools. Quantitative data were collected by recording the number of errors made while a student read a story with certain token words, which determined if they recognized certain word structures (Baker, 2007). A second test was used to determine the percentage of children who recognized each grapheme-phoneme combination (Baker, 2007).
The data from Baker’s (2007) study presented two findings: there was a gap in struggling readers’ understanding of basic sound-to-letter correspondences, and 45% of the struggling readers could not recognize initial consonants by the end of Grade 1. Based on these results, the author emphasized the need for beginning teachers to understand language development in young children, including how to assess it and teach it, so that students could develop good word recognition and comprehension skills in order to begin to read (Baker, 2007).

There may have been some internal threats to validity in this study as Baker (2007) did not indicate who the testers were and whether the testers were instructed to mark the same way. Since the author did not disclose the grade or subject the volunteer study teacher regularly taught, the results may have been additionally influenced by instructional differences. The results from Baker’s study provided insight into the importance of incorporating word structures and phonemes into the Kindergarten and Grade 1 programs. This information was relevant to the author of this study as this data helped identify what remediation needed to take place in order to develop and improve phonemic awareness building tasks for the struggling students in her classroom. These skills were important for all primary teachers and educators to consider when they reflected on their own teaching.

Chard and Kameenui (2000) conducted a study that examined first-grade classrooms to identify if struggling readers had the building blocks (phonemic awareness, alphabetic knowledge and decoding skills) needed to engage in reading tasks, and to research the actual amount of time struggling readers spent orally reading during a teacher directed lesson.

The sample group consisted of 65 struggling first-grade readers, in 20 classrooms across three public school districts in the Pacific Northwest (Chard & Kameenui, 2000). Data was gathered over a twelve week period during teacher-led reading lessons (Chard & Kameenui,
Quantitative data were collected through a special instrument designed specifically for this study: a Student Instructional Response Observation System (SIROSS) to document students’ oral reading. Multi-Option Observation System software was used in conjunction with the SIROSS to gather data on components such as content (letter-sound, word-word part, and sentence-phrase), accuracy, frequency and the reader (Chard & Kameenui, 2000).

Chard and Kameenui (2000) concluded that the students did not make adequate progress in reading fluency performance because the general frequency of oral reading occurrences were very low. The authors concluded that reading instruction had to be improved to promote beginning reading skills, and teachers had to provide more opportunities for students to apply and practice their knowledge and reading skills during teacher directed lessons (Chard & Kameenui, 2000).

Chard and Kameenui’s (2000) study was limited in two aspects. First, the comparatively small teacher sample composed of volunteers who were aware that they were being observed may be unrepresentative of the larger first-grade teacher population. Second, the small sample size of one of the participant groups made it difficult to make statistical comparisons of the frequency of oral reading between groups and the progress on student reading measures (Chard & Kameenui, 2000). This was a limitation to the study that Chard and Kameenui acknowledged.

A strength of Chard and Kameenui’s (2000) study was that they gave a detailed description of how the data was collected, coded, and analyzed to ensure reliability of the study results. Four tables of descriptive statistics that presented the mean, median, standard deviation and range of each measure were included. These tables provided a good indication of the progress of the student readers. Chard and Kameenui’s findings were relevant to the present study, as the results addressed struggling readers. Chard and Kameenui’s sample of participants
was similar to the sample of participants of the present study. The findings were also relevant to the author of this study in her role as a teacher of an early primary reading class.

Chard and Kameenui (2000) provided evidence that phonemic awareness, alphabetic knowledge and decoding skills were very important in acquiring beginning reading skills. Therefore, Chard and Kameenui’s findings were a valuable reference for future research on the topic of struggling students with reading difficulties.

There is good reason to believe that reading instruction, particularly, in reading comprehension will improve as more relevant findings are made through research. Once the findings in the research are translated into practice, teachers will be better prepared to teach reading comprehension to students to improve their reading skills.
Chapter 3: Procedures and Methods

Description of the Research Design

The focus of this research study was to examine whether guided reading instruction increased elementary students reading comprehension more than a traditional reading instruction. To collect quantitative data throughout the 12 week study, potential participants were assessed by the resource room teacher using the *PM Benchmark Kit 2*, a reading level assessment tool from Nelson Publishing (Randell & Smith, 2003). Each potential participant read a levelled story aloud to the resource room teacher and she coded, scored and analyzed the students’ reading comprehension levels. Testing the students three times over the 12 week study showed the progress of the students’ reading comprehension levels.

Description of the Sample

The sample in this study was comprised of 14 second-grade students from one classroom in an elementary school in British Columbia. This elementary school was an inner-city community school, composed of 300 students from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds, with over 35% of the school population being First Nations. The Grade 2 participants in this sample were both male and female, between the ages of 7 and 8 years old, enrolled in the September 2010- June 2011 school year. The participants were from diverse ethnic and language backgrounds and reading comprehension abilities varied widely among the students. The author was the classroom teacher for these students.

Description of the Instrument Used

The instrument used to collect data on the students’ reading comprehension levels was the *PM Benchmark Kit 2* (Randell & Smith, 2003). Inside the *PM Benchmark Kit 2* were 30 levelled reading running record forms (Appendix A) and 30 levelled stories, ranging from
emergent level to Grade 5 (Randell & Smith). Each story had a matching levelled reading running record form. These reading running record forms and stories were used for coding, scoring and analyzing the students’ reading levels. It used the standard coding conventions. Evaluating a student’s oral reading also provided information regarding the students’ attitude, fluency, application of reading comprehension strategies and reading behaviours.

**Explanation of the Procedures Followed**

The procedures used were designed to reach the research objective: to investigate whether guided reading instruction increased Grade 2 students’ reading comprehension more than traditional reading instruction. The author took on the role of the both researcher and teacher in this action research project. To help clarify the roles of each, the tasks were divided, and are presented below under the respective sub-headings.

**The role of the researcher.**

In September 2010, the author arranged an afterschool meeting with the principal of the school. At this time consent was requested to conduct a research study using only the Grade 2 participants’ reading comprehension scores. The study was to take place between September 2010 and December 2010 in a second grade classroom.

In September 2010, the researcher arranged an afterschool meeting with the resource room teacher at the elementary school. At the same time, the resource room teacher was asked to hand out the research consent forms (see Appendix B) in the second week of September. The resource room teacher was also asked to collect the consent forms and check off the participants’ names that had returned consent forms. The author and the resource room teacher set up an assessment schedule for the 2010-2011 school year. At this elementary school the standard procedure was that the resource room teacher was responsible for assessing all Grade 1 and 2
students’ reading abilities. This was done to ensure that all students were assessed consistently by the same teacher. The reading assessment schedule coincided with the research study dates: September 20, 2010, October 29, 2010, and December 10, 2010. The resource room teacher was asked to record the participants’ reading comprehension level scores on the reading level table for the researcher (Appendix C). The reading comprehension scores of the participants were collected in an afterschool meeting at the end of the study on December 10, 2010.

During the second week of September 2010, at the end of the day, the teacher left the classroom and the resource room teacher came into the Grade 2 classroom and handed every potential participant a consent form in a sealed envelope to take home to their parents (Appendix B). All forms were to be returned to the school office and put into a mail slot in a sealed bin. Each day the box was emptied by the resource room teacher and she checked off the participants’ names and gave the consent forms and the check list to the principal in the school office where they were kept in a locked filing cabinet.

All participants were individually assessed during the week of September 20, 2010, by the resource room teacher in a quiet distraction-free room. Each student individually read a benchmark levelled story aloud to the resource room teacher, who used standard coding conventions to record the participant’s reading on the matching level running record and assessment form (Appendix B). The resource room teacher totalled the number of errors in the error column and determined the accuracy percentage of the participants’ reading by using the accuracy rate scale at the bottom of the reading record form. If the participant scored less than 90%, then the text was too difficult and the participant had a difficult time comprehending the story. The participant was then assessed on a lower level story. A score of 90-94% indicated the story matched the participant’s reading level and that he or she had satisfactory comprehension.
If the participant achieved 95-100%, the story level was too easy and the participant was assessed on the next higher level story. All of the potential participants were assessed and the reading comprehension level scores were recorded. These were the standard forms used by the resource room teacher every year to record the reading comprehension levels.

The role of the teacher.

Participants and non-participants were taught using traditional reading instruction beginning September 20, 2010, for one hour a day, four days a week for six weeks. All lessons were taught in accordance with the learning outcomes of the Grade 2 language arts curriculum. The participants and non-participants were given whole group reading instruction and they read a variety of stories from a basal reader aloud to the teacher. The participants and non-participants were given whole class phonics instruction. Participants and non-participants worked on phonics worksheets and completed reading comprehension worksheets independently at their desks. The educational assistant (EA) helped participants and non-participants that needed support with their work. This process was the routine for traditional reading instruction for the six weeks. The resource room teacher reassessed the participants and non-participants during the week of October 29, 2010, and their reading comprehension levels were recorded.

Guided reading instruction began November 1, 2010, and ended December 10, 2010. Participants and non-participants were organized into four small reading groups based on their reading levels, with four to five students in each group. The classroom teacher and the EA gave identical guided reading instruction at their reading level each day. One group of students read with the teacher and another group read with the EA. The other two groups of participants and non-participants worked at centers where they played sight word and phonics games or read silently by themselves or with a partner. During the six weeks, the participants and non-
participants continued to learn, review and practice comprehension strategies (connecting, predicting, and questioning). The teacher and the EA worked with one reading group for 30 minutes, then the reading groups shifted and the participants and non-participants that were previously reading went to centers and the participants and non-participants that were in centers read with the teacher or the EA. Guided reading instruction occurred for one hour a day, four days a week for six weeks. The resource room teacher reassessed the participants and non-participants in the week of December 8, 2010 and the reading levels were recorded.

The role of the researcher.

The author arranged an after school meeting for December 15, 2010 with the resource room teacher. It was agreed in September that the resource room teacher would present the reading comprehension level scores of the study participants to the researcher without any names to ensure anonymity. The scores were delivered in a sealed envelope to the researcher (Appendix C).

The three reading comprehension level scores (pre-intervention, midpoint and post-intervention) were entered into Microsoft Excel 2007 and saved on the "U" drive, a secured password server site at Vancouver Island University. The data were displayed on four tables, a box-plot and whiskers graph and a scatter plot graph. The data were analyzed to examine whether guided reading instruction increased elementary students’ reading comprehension more than traditional reading instruction.

Discussion of Validity

To assess the changes in the students’ reading comprehension level the author took care to minimize threats to validity. The *PM Benchmark Kit 2* was field tested with students of an appropriate reading age to guarantee the suitability and readability of the text for a particular
level (Randell & Smith, 2003). The same *PM Benchmark Kit 2* was administered in all three benchmark test periods by the same resource room teacher in the same quiet room free from distractions. The students were benchmarked in the morning, ensuring all students had breakfast before taking part in the test. Each student was benchmarked for 20 minutes. If the resource room teacher needed more time benchmarking the student, testing continued the next day.

**Description and Justification of the Statistical Techniques Used**

The reading running record form and levelled storybooks in the *PM Benchmark Kit 2* were used to acquire accurate data in order to assess changes in the participants reading comprehension levels. The resource room teacher benchmarked the students three times throughout the study: September 20-25, 2010, to get a pre-intervention reading comprehension level score; October 25-29, 2010, to record the growth in reading comprehension after traditional reading instruction; and December 6-10, 2010, to get a final reading comprehension level score after guided reading instruction.

The three reading comprehension level scores (pre-intervention, midpoint and post-intervention) were entered into Microsoft Excel 2007. The data were displayed on four tables, a box-plot and whiskers graph and a scatter plot graph.

The data presented on the four tables and two graphs provided evidence for the author to answer the research question: Does guided reading instruction increase students’ reading comprehension levels more than traditional reading instruction?
Chapter Four: Results

This chapter contains the results, utilizing the statistical methods described in chapter three. Data were produced by three reading comprehension scores from each of the 14 Grade 2 participants. The participants were comprised of six girls and eight boys.

The instrument used to collect data pertaining to the participants’ reading comprehension levels was the *PM Benchmark Kit 2* (Randell & Smith, 2003). The three reading comprehension level scores (pre-intervention, mid-point and post-intervention) obtained from each participant were entered into the Microsoft Excel 2007 software. The data from all three test periods were analyzed and displayed on Tables 4.1 to 4.4 and Figures 4.1 and 4.2 included in this chapter.

Table 4.1 shows the reading comprehension level scores of all students at the beginning of the study (baseline testing) after six weeks of traditional reading instruction and after six weeks of guided reading instruction. Table 4.2 shows the difference in reading comprehension level scores between baseline testing and after six weeks of traditional reading instruction and after six weeks of guided reading instruction. Table 4.3 shows the scores of students who were below average test level scores at the beginning of the study (baseline scores), after six weeks of traditional reading instruction and after six weeks of guided reading instruction. Table 4.4 shows the scores of students with above average test level scores at the beginning of the study (baseline scores), after six weeks of traditional reading instruction and six weeks after guided reading instruction.

The box-plot and whisker plot (Figure 4.1) displays reading comprehension test scores at each testing interval. The box-plot is a convenient way to graphically display groups of numerical data. The whiskers showed the overall range of observations (minimum and maximum) while the bottom and top of the box indicates the 25th and 75th percentile, respectively, and the band near the middle of the box is the median. The spacing between the
different parts of the box indicates the spread in the data and showed whether the results were skewed in any way. This graph displays the results for survey times (baseline, traditional and guided) on the horizontal axis. The vertical axis presents the students’ reading comprehension levels. The box-plot (Figure 4.1) graph in this study illustrates the following: the range of reading comprehension levels, the median reading comprehension level and the standard deviation. Comparing several box-plot graphs is a useful way of spotting differences in distributions.

The scatter plot (Figure 4.2) graph shows the relationship between the baseline reading comprehension level scores and the increases after six weeks of traditional reading instruction and after six weeks of guided reading instruction.
Table 4.1

Reading Comprehension Level Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant #</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Guided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Minimum  | 2 | 3 | 6 |
Maximum   | 26| 28| 29|
Average   | 11.4 | 12.6 | 15.9 |
Standard Deviation | 7.14 | 7.43 | 6.51 |

Table 4.1 shows the reading comprehension level scores of participants at the beginning of the study (baseline testing), after six weeks of traditional reading instruction and after six weeks of guided reading instruction. Scores ranged from a low of 2 during baseline testing to a high of 29 after guided
reading instruction and averaged 11.4, 12.6 and 15.9 for baseline, traditional and guided reading instruction respectively. The participants’ reading at a lower level improved more than the participants who were reading at a higher level. The lowest levelled participants improved 1 level after traditional reading instruction and 3 levels after guided reading instruction. The most advanced reader improved 2 levels after traditional reading instruction and 1 level after guided reading instruction.

Table 4.2

*Differences In Reading Comprehension Level Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant #</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Guided</th>
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</thead>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>+ 2</td>
<td>+ 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>+ 2</td>
<td>+ 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Minimum  + 0 + 1
Maximum  + 2 + 8
Average + 1.2 + 3.3
Table 4.2 shows the differences in reading comprehension level scores between baseline testing, after six weeks of traditional reading instruction and after six weeks of guided reading instruction. After traditional reading instruction, reading comprehension level score differences ranged from 0 to 2 and averaged 1.2. After guided reading instruction, comprehension level score differences ranged from 1 to 8 and averaged 3.3. The participants’ reading comprehension level scores show a greater increase after guided reading instruction compared to traditional reading instruction.

Table 4.3

*Participants Below the Average During Baseline Testing*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant #</th>
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<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Guided</th>
<th>Difference</th>
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</thead>
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<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 shows the participants below the average in test level scores at the beginning of the study (baseline scores), after six weeks of traditional reading instruction and after six weeks of guided reading instruction. Reading comprehension level score differences ranged from 0 to 2 and averaged 1.2 after traditional reading instruction and after guided reading instruction the reading comprehension level scores ranged from 2 to 8 and averaged 4.4.
### Participants Above the Average During Baseline Testing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant #</th>
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<th>Difference</th>
<th>Guided</th>
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<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Minimum: 15, 16, 1, 18, 1  
Maximum: 26, 28, 2, 29, 2  
Average: 18.3, 19.8, 1.7, 21.7, 1.8

Table 4.4 shows the participants above the average in test level scores at the beginning of the study (baseline scores), after six weeks of traditional reading instruction and after six weeks of guided reading instruction. Reading comprehension level score differences ranged from 1 to 2 and averaged 1.7 after traditional reading instruction and after guided reading instruction the differences in reading comprehension level scores ranged from 1 to 2 and averaged 1.8.
Figure 4.1 Increase in Reading Comprehension Level Scores

Figure 4.1 is a box-plot and whisker graph displaying reading comprehension test score levels at each testing interval. The first box-plot depicts the baseline reading comprehension level scores of the participants in this study. The graph indicated that there was a very wide spread in level scores and that three quarters of the participants were reading below level 17 which is beginning Grade 2 reading level by *PM Benchmark Kit 2* standards. In the second box-plot, the median shows that after traditional reading instruction there was little change in the participants’ reading comprehension level scores. In the third box-plot, the median had risen 5 reading levels which indicated that there had been a significant increase after guided reading instruction. The spread of reading comprehension level scores was much smaller indicating that more participants were reading at similar levels.
Figure 4.2 Individual Increases in Reading Comprehension Level Scores

Figure 4.2 is a scatter plot showing each individual participant’s level scores. The scatter plot shows the relationship between the baseline reading comprehension level scores and the increases after six weeks of traditional reading instruction and after six weeks of guided reading instruction. The data indicated that after traditional reading instruction the majority of the participants’ reading comprehension level scores improved one or two levels and two participants did not improve at all. The diamonds depict the scores after guided reading instruction. This graph shows that there was a greater improvement in the participants’ reading levels after guided reading than after traditional reading instruction.

The findings reported in this chapter will be expanded in Chapter Five. In addition, discussion of the recommendations and limitations arising from the findings will be reviewed.
Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions

Summary of the study

The purpose of the current study was to find a way to increase reading comprehension in one Grade 2 classroom in an elementary school in British Columbia. The researcher focused on the following question: does guided reading instruction lead to greater increases in primary school children’s reading comprehension levels than traditional reading instruction?

Between September 20, 2010 and October 29, 2010 (six weeks), traditional reading instruction was taught for one hour a day, four days a week. Between November 1, 2010 and December 10, 2010 (six weeks), guided reading instruction was taught for one hour a day, four days a week. The resource room teacher assessed the participants using PM Benchmark Kit 2 at the beginning of the study to determine a pre-intervention (baseline) reading comprehension level scores. Participants were tested again during the week of October 25-29, 2010, to obtain mid-point reading comprehension level scores after traditional instruction, and again during the week of December 6-10, 2010, after guided reading instruction to acquire post-intervention reading comprehension level scores. Using the three reading comprehension level scores (baseline, after traditional reading and after guided reading) along with the findings of the literature reviews in chapter two, the author was able to make some recommendations for other elementary Grade 2 classroom teachers who wish to improve students’ reading comprehension skills.

Discussion of the Findings

It has been a continuing problem for teachers in this elementary school to teach reading comprehension to a wide range of abilities in the same classroom. School classrooms may have
20 or more students of differing reading levels, and teachers are stressed by the problem of how to meet all of the students’ needs. The reading comprehension levels of the Grade 2 participants in this study ranged from level 2 (Kindergarten level) to level 26 (Grade 4 level).

This study provided several interesting results. The data illustrated that there was an increase in participants’ reading comprehension level scores in both the traditional reading instruction and guided reading instruction. However, the guided reading instruction resulted in a greater increase in the participants’ reading comprehension level scores.

After traditional reading instruction, the majority of the participants’ reading comprehension level scores improved one to two levels and two participants did not improve at all. For traditional reading, the participants received whole class reading instruction but were reading different stories according to the range of their reading abilities. The participants were divided into three groups with a wide range of reading abilities (0-6, 7-10, 11-30). With this range of reading levels it was very difficult to ensure that every participant understood the lesson and learned the skills when the teacher taught the whole group together. The story levels may have been too high or too low for the participants. The low reading level participants were given stories that were not close to their reading level because the majority of the participants were reading at a higher level. It may have been difficult for the participants to keep up with the reading and their group lessons. If the material was too difficult the participants may have become frustrated and lost confidence in their abilities and saw reading as a negative experience.

It was interesting to note the wide range of reading comprehension levels among all participants during all test periods. This result revealed one of the challenges presented to the classroom teachers who must find ways to improve reading skills for students with very low abilities while also challenging the advanced students.
In traditional reading instruction, phonics was taught to the whole class, and the classroom teacher designed her reading instruction around the largest group of participants that were at the same level. Unfortunately, the instruction could be too difficult for the low group to learn and too low for the high group so they were not challenged. The participants reading at the lowest comprehension level showed little improvement after six weeks of traditional reading instruction. Some participants may have been beginning to learn to identify basic sight words and to put alphabet sounds together to form words. Other students may have had a large sight word vocabulary which made it easier to read and understand the story. The teacher had to be sensitive to individual differences and needs and had to modify the instruction and monitor improvement in both teaching and learning (Torgesen, 2006). This was very difficult to do with such a wide range of reading comprehension levels in one classroom.

The greatest increase in participants’ reading comprehension scores was found after guided reading instruction. The small individualized reading group instruction and the levelled texts that were matched closely to the participants’ reading ability allowed the teacher to help participants apply reading strategies so that they were able to make meaning from print (Fountas and Pinnell, 1996). The participants who were not reading after traditional reading began to show small but significant improvement after guided reading. These participants were able to read successfully with leveled readers chosen at their reading level. Participants who identified themselves as capable and successful readers engaged more readily in literacy activities (Guastello & Lenz, 2005). The improvement after guided reading instruction could be linked to the small, similar ability groups. Small reading groups with similar abilities allowed a teacher to teach a specific skill or reading strategy rather than re-teaching it to the whole class.
Tobin and McInnes’ (2008) research findings were similar to the present study as many of the successful key components of differentiated instruction (small flexible groupings, leveled readers, all students engaged) were very similar to the guided reading instruction and yielded participants’ success in reading comprehension. Teaching in small groups, in which students were at similar levels encouraged learning, promoted success and resulted in positive experiences for students (Tobin and McInnes, 2008). After the end of guided reading instruction, participants had learned and practiced four reading strategies (connecting, predicting, questioning and retelling). These reading strategies may have enhanced the participants’ abilities to decode words and understand the text.

Being able to incorporate the reading strategies may have encouraged participants to read more challenging stories at higher levels. Guastello & Lenz (2005) acknowledged that reading strategies can be taught and practiced with the teacher observing and watching what strategies the students understood and what strategies they still needed to practice. This was possible with a guided reading approach. Heilman and Rupley (1990) stated that reading strategies were purposeful. They slowed the reader down and made students pay attention and increased their reading comprehension.

**Limitations**

This study generated very positive results for guided reading instruction; however, the limitations of the study need to be addressed. First, the length of time for this study may not have been sufficient to allow participants to deepen their understanding of the reading strategies and incorporate them independently into their daily reading lessons. Second, the small sample size of 14 participants, allowed the researcher to draw only tentative conclusions which appears to be typical of studies of this type. The small-scale study may not have provided an accurate
source of data even though the results indicated sufficient increases in the participants reading comprehension level scores after guided reading. Third, guided reading instruction was taught after traditional reading instruction. After six weeks in the classroom, participants were accustomed to the teacher’s expectations and routines for reading instruction. If guided reading was taught first, when participants were not familiar with the teacher’s classroom expectations and rules, the results may have been very different. Also, the participants received phonics instruction first. Participants learned and practised sight words and decoding skills for six weeks. As the participants learned new strategies in guided reading they continued to review and use the old learning from traditional reading instruction, resulting in a cumulative effect on their learning. If guided reading had been taught first the study may have had very different results.

**Recommendations for practice**

The results provide evidence for several suggestions for Grade 2 teachers to improve their methods of teaching reading. Based on the positive outcomes of this study the author has made the following recommendations. Reading instruction should incorporate the successful key components of small, similar ability groupings, leveled readers, engaging participants in learning and practicing reading strategies (connecting, predicting, questioning and retelling) to achieve the desired outcome. These components increase participants’ reading comprehension. Teacher-directed instruction is more effective because of the opportunity to work with a small group of participants who read at similar levels. It is easier for a teacher to work on specific reading skills and strategies and keep participants engaged when working in smaller groups. This also enables participants to focus and follow along as another participant reads aloud. Small, similar-ability groupings, levelled books and teacher-directed instruction makes it possible to meet the needs of the struggling readers and also the needs of all of the other students in the class as they are able
to continue at their own pace. An important component of guided reading is the leveled stories. It is recommended that the teacher has a collection of stories at different reading levels to accommodate the wide range of reading abilities to meet the diverse needs of the students in the classroom. The leveled stories ensure success for all students which encourage a love for books. Instilling an enjoyment of reading in the early grades may build a strong foundation for future reading success in the older grades.

The results of this study demonstrate the importance and effectiveness of incorporating guided reading into the primary language arts program. Reading instruction in the primary grades develops phonics skills, builds decoding skills, and teaches young readers how to comprehend what they are reading, but there is also a need to encourage teachers to try other forms of reading instruction to enhance the students reading skills.

The author recommends teachers and EAs attend courses and workshops on guided reading instruction and on the application of teaching reading strategies. The teacher and EA would then be teaching with similar techniques and strategies.

Since reading strategies are a key element of the successful guided reading approach used in this study, the results suggest that it would be very valuable if reading strategies are taught in Kindergarten and Grade 1 indirectly and directly. This will enable a teacher to model strategies and ask students to make connections and predictions as the teacher reads stories aloud to the students. The sooner students learn how to use comprehension strategies, the better chance they have at succeeding at reading in higher grades.

Finally, it would be invaluable to incorporate other essential literature components into the classroom reading program. Incorporating 15-20 minutes of silent reading each day into the classroom schedule, integrating sufficient time for a teacher to read aloud a story everyday and to
model reading strategies as it is read and including a home-reading program so that participants are reading every night could make a difference. These supports would increase the participants’ reading comprehension skills even more.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

The results of this study suggest several avenues for further research. In a future study, the time line could be extended to one year rather than the short time span of six weeks to show the true benefits of guided reading. The findings of this study are very positive and warrant further study with a larger number of participants and a longer duration to achieve reliable and valid results.

Participants’ birthdates play a significant role in their maturity level, ability to sit still and to concentrate for long periods of time. A participant that had a birthday in late December is eleven months behind participants who were born in January. A longer study would allow those participants with late birthdays to mature. The researcher could also reverse the order of the reading instruction and teach guided reading first to see if that would have an effect on the effectiveness of the two instructional methods.

At the beginning of the school year there are new routines and expectations for the participants to learn. The participants are still learning these as they begin reading instruction and the newness of the classroom and teacher may have an effect on their learning. Also, the participants receive phonics instruction during traditional reading instruction. Participants learn and practice sight words and decoding skills for six weeks. As the participants learn new strategies in guided reading they continue to review and use the old learning from traditional reading instruction, resulting in a cumulative effect on their learning.
Further research is needed in the area of reading instruction practices for struggling readers. In particular, research examining the relationship between teacher training and effective reading comprehension instruction. Teaching children how to read requires teachers to be up-to-date with new reading theories and knowledge to teach the strategies in the most effective manner. It is important that teachers teach students to be thinkers and comprehend what they read.

**Conclusion**

This study explores whether guided reading instruction increases students’ reading comprehension more than traditional reading instruction. The results indicate that guided reading instruction is a more effective reading instruction than traditional reading instruction to increase participants’ reading comprehension. The data also reveals that the students below average increase their reading comprehension level scores more than those students that are reading above average. The researcher had the opportunity to examine an area of professional practice that needed improvement. With these positive results the researcher hopes to raise awareness in her school and other similar schools so that other teachers can begin to incorporate guided reading components (small similar-ability groupings, leveled readers, engaging participants in learning and practicing reading strategies) into their reading program to meet the needs of all students in their classroom. Teachers must realize that all students learn differently and it is their responsibility to help each student to be successful and encourage life-long learning.

The literature reviews provided the author with a fuller understanding of how struggling students read. The author has also gained more expertise in the effective way to teach guided reading strategies (connecting, predicting, and questioning) which she will also apply to the students’ reading lessons.
Overall, students benefited from participation in this research study and the author will continue to use guided reading for the duration of the school year to further improve the students’ reading comprehension. In the future, the researcher will collaborate more with other teaching professionals and colleagues to mutually increase their knowledge and understanding of students’ learning in the area of reading instruction. Now it is time to teach other teachers how to help struggling students become competent life-long readers.
References


Conklin, S. & Wilkins, K. 2002(5) *Improving student reading skills through the use of guided reading*. Saint Xavier University, Master of Arts Action Research and Skylight Professional Development Field-Based Masters Program, Chicago. ILL.


Level 10: The helpful bulldozer

READING RECORD

Book Introduction: This book is about a bus, a helicopter, and a bulldozer. The helicopter and the bulldozer solve the problem of a tree on the road.

Page 2

The blue bus went up the road to town.

The helicopter saw the bus.

He came flying down.

4

"A tree has come down

on the road by the big hill."

said the helicopter.

"You can't go to town today!"

"But I have to go to town," said the bus.

6

"Come and have a look at the tree."

said the helicopter.

"I will show you where it is."

7

They went to see the tree.

8

"Oh, yes!" said the bus.

"That tree is in my way.

Who can help me?"

9

"I will go and get the bulldozer,"

said the helicopter.

"He is making a new road down by the river."
Appendix B: Consent Form

“IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION: TRADITIONAL READING INSTRUCTION VERSUS GUIDED READING INSTRUCTION”

September 2010

Parent Copy

Janet Kawaguchi                 Harry Janzen. Ph. D., Supervisor
Masters of Education Student     Dean of Faculty of Education
Vancouver Island University     Vancouver Island University
jkawaguchi@sd68.bc.ca            (250) 740-6220

I am a student in Masters Educational Leadership Program at Vancouver Island University. This program requires me to gain applied experience in designing and conducting research. As such, I have designed a research project to study the use of traditional reading instruction and guided reading instruction to Grade 2 students to examine which reading instruction method leads to a larger increase in the students’ reading comprehension levels.

During this study, your child will have his/her reading comprehension assessed three times. All students in September 2010 are assessed on their reading by the resource room teacher. Assessment consists of the student reading a short story to the resource room teacher for a period of no more than 20 minutes. This assessment information enables the classroom teacher to provide different levels of support, and to better meet the needs of all students in the classroom. Once the reading assessments are completed, all students will receive traditional reading instruction for six weeks. Then, the students will be re-assessed. Then, all students will be taught guided reading instruction for six weeks. Following this, all students will be assessed one more time.

As a researcher, I want to analyze the data to formally examine which method of reading instruction led to a greater improvement in the Grade 2 students’ reading comprehension:
traditional or guided reading instruction. My goal is to improve my reading instruction and to increase the students’ reading comprehension skills.

I require permission to obtain the student’s reading assessment level scores from the resource room teacher in September 2010, October 2010, and December 10, 2010.

There are no known harms associated with your child’s participation in this research. The potential benefits are that the information from the reading assessments will allow the classroom teacher to teach reading and thinking strategies and to provide reading instruction at the appropriate instructional level. By knowing the students’ reading levels they can be placed in small reading groups with other students at similar reading levels and read books at their reading level. This will help improve a student’s reading comprehension level.

All records of participation will be kept strictly confidential, such that only I, the resource room teacher and Mrs. Green (the principal) will have access to the information. Data will be stored in a locked cabinet in Mrs. Green’s office. The data will be destroyed by shredding at the end of the project (approximately June 30, 2011). Electronic files will also be deleted at that time. The results from this study will be reported in a written research report and will be presented in a culminating public presentation.

Your child’s participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw your child at any time for any reason without explanation and without penalty. Your child may choose not to answer any question that makes him/her feel uncomfortable.

If you should have any concerns about your child’s treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Officer, by telephone at 250-753-3245 (ext. 2665), or by email at reb@viu.ca.

If you have any questions about this research project, or would like more information, please feel free to contact me at jkawaguchi@sd68.bc.ca.

I have read the above form, understand the information read, understand that I can ask questions or withdraw my child at any time. I give consent to J. Kawaguchi to obtain my child’s reading assessment levels scores from the resource room teacher for reading comprehension assessments completed in September 2010, October 2010, and December 6, 2010.

_______________________________________  __________________
Participant’s Signature                Date

Keep This Copy For Your Records
## Appendix C: Coded Reading Level Table for Researcher

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<th>December</th>
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