

The Impact of Guided Reading Instruction  
on Second Grade Students' Reading Comprehension

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## **Abstract**

The quasi-experimental study determined the effect of guided reading instruction on second grade students' comprehension. The null hypothesis was that there will be no difference in the population mean Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment reading levels between second graders using Guided Reading and similar second graders using a customary approach. The participants included seven second grade students who received the intervention and seven second grade students who were in the control group in a general education setting. The instrument used was the Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) Benchmark Assessment. Likely because of the small sample size, the null hypothesis could not be rejected. There was, however, practical significance of guided reading intervention on students' reading levels due to a medium effect size.

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

In primary elementary grades, students are “learning to read.” Once students enter third grade, this objective changes, and they start “reading to learn.” When students’ reading ability is below average, the task of learning from their reading becomes challenging as they enter intermediate grades. Additionally, research explains that students who struggle with reading comprehension will have difficulty later in life, such as in high school and/or in the workplace. Struggling readers may also have later problems with behavior and retention (Gentilini and Greer 2020). Because of this, elementary teachers are faced with the challenge of supporting struggling readers and preventing reading deficits.

In the researcher’s school, all reading teachers utilize the reading workshop model, and small groups during reading workshop are expected by the administration. A researched-based small group intervention is essential to meet the needs of struggling readers. One small group intervention that has been proven to increase the reading comprehension of second-grade readers is guided reading. (Young, 2019).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the researcher has continued to conduct virtual small groups; however, she has not been regularly implementing a structured guided reading intervention. The researcher became interested in the guided reading approach after receiving professional development training through her school and researching this small group structure. Additionally, this approach can be implemented through both virtual and hybrid learning, so the

researcher can use this intervention over the course of multiple weeks, which is why she decided to look further into this intervention.

A review of guided reading suggested that it could be a method to improve students' reading comprehension (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborne, 2003). The researcher conducted a study in a second-grade classroom to determine the impact of guided reading on students' reading comprehension.

### **Statement of Problem**

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of guided reading instruction on second grade students' reading comprehension as demonstrated by the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark assessment data.

### **Null Hypothesis**

There will be no difference in the population mean Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment reading levels between second graders using Guided Reading and similar second graders using a customary approach.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Guided Reading:* Guided reading is operationally defined as an instructional approach where the teacher works with a small group of 3-4 students. These students are reading on a similar reading level, and the teacher provides instruction on a reading strategy with an instructional-level text to support reading proficiency.

*Reading comprehension:* Reading comprehension is understanding what is read. In this study, reading comprehension is measured by the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark assessment. The

assessment is given prior to the guided reading intervention and after students received the intervention to determine the students' current reading level.



## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The purpose of this literature review is to examine reading comprehension, including how it is taught and interventions that have been used with students. Explicitly teaching reading comprehension is a vital component of a school's reading program, and this literature review will focus on defining and explaining reading comprehension. Armbruster, Lehr, and Osborn (2003) explain, "Text comprehension is important because comprehension is the reason for reading" (p. 57). The first section of this literature review defines reading comprehension and explains the history of reading comprehension, including how it is taught now. The second section of the literature review discusses why reading comprehension matters, and the third section describes factors that impact reading comprehension. The fourth section of the review mentions consequences of poor reading comprehension, and the fifth section explains studies and interventions that have addressed reading comprehension. The sixth and final section discusses what researchers might do next and concludes the literature review.

#### **What is reading comprehension?**

##### **Definition**

Reading comprehension is a term used by educators, administrators, other professionals, and parents to describe what a child understands when he/she reads. In simple terms, "reading comprehension is the reason for reading" (Armbruster, Lehr, and Osborn, 2003, p. 48). Students may be able to read the words in a text without understanding what they are reading; if this is the case, then they are not truly reading. Reading comprehension can also be explained as the execution and integration of many cognitive processes (Kendeou et al., 2014). Furthermore, there

are lower-level processes and higher-level processes involved in reading comprehension (Kendeou et al., 2014). Students combine these cognitive processes to comprehend the text that they are reading, but there are many steps that they must engage in to achieve comprehension of a text. For example, for a student to understand a sentence, he/she must “visually process the individual words, identify and access their phonological, orthographic, and semantic representations, and connect these representations to form an understanding of the underlying meaning of the sentence” (Kendeou et al., 2014, p. 10). It is not enough for a student to just comprehend and understand a sentence; students must be able to understand the text as a whole to reach full comprehension (Kendeou et al., 2014). As they are reading, students need to connect individual ideas to create a mental representation of the text. Many factors contribute to this process, “including reader characteristics, text properties, and the demands of the reading task” (Kendeou et al., 2014, p. 10). Students must put together all that they know about a text, including the words on a page, pictures, text features, etc. to fully comprehend what they are reading.

Good readers, those who achieve reading comprehension, can be described as purposeful and active in their reading. These readers have a reason for reading a text, whether it be to learn information from a nonfiction text, to read for entertainment from a magazine, or to read a novel for the enjoyment of literature (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2003). By establishing a purpose for reading, students can aim to fulfill this purpose and use comprehension strategies to achieve it. Additionally, good readers are active. As they read, they are actively using strategies that they have learned, such as making a text-to-self connection to the book or understanding the vocabulary (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2003). Teachers can provide instruction to improve comprehension, and this instruction has occurred for many years. Teachers are learning how to

more effectively teach reading comprehension strategies as more data and research becomes available.

### **Instruction**

Reading comprehension has been studied, thought about, and taught for many years due to its importance. The history of reading comprehension is important to understand, especially highlighting what has been successful in years past. Dole and Duffy (1991) explain that “the reading comprehension curriculum that exists in American schools today was built from the strong behavioral and task-analytic notions about learning that prevailed throughout the early and middle parts of this century” (p. 240). Dole and Duffy are referring to the beginning and mid-1900s. The task-analytic behavior that researchers and educators believed to occur during reading was like an assembly-line model of skills acquisition. It was assumed that each skill and subskill could be mastered, and that this equaled reading comprehension. Subskills included sequencing events in a story, predicting, drawing conclusions, finding the main idea, etc. (Dole & Duffy, 1991). Furthermore, schools and teachers focused on using decodable texts and reading nonsense words, which undermined students’ use of cross-checking, which is when students use the pictures on the page and the letters that create the word to determine the unknown word (Allington, 2013). While these ideas about reading comprehension and how to teach reading comprehension were widely believed and applied, there were people who began doubting these ideas (Dole and Duffy, 1991). While decodable books are still used in combination with other teaching techniques and resources, reading comprehension is taught differently today.

In more recent years, teachers focus on motivating and engaging students during their daily reading block (McLaughlin, 2012). Teachers take effective instructional action to support their students’ reading comprehension. This includes, but is not limited to, planning lessons,

selecting texts and means of instruction, providing information to students, monitoring students' understanding, and scaffolding (Dole & Duffy, 1991). There is a small number of reading strategies that teachers focus on during instruction with students, such as determining importance, summarizing information, drawing inferences, generating questions, and monitoring comprehension (Dole & Duffy, 1991). Teachers use many techniques to teach these strategies to students to support reading comprehension. Teachers may teach text comprehension strategies through explicit instruction and cooperative learning and/or helping students use strategies flexibly and in combination with each other (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2003). Teachers can use the modeling or "think aloud" method to demonstrate how to think about a text and apply a reading strategy to make meaning of the text. Teachers can also "lead students in a discussion about the meaning of what they are reading" (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2003, p. 55). In addition to modeling and discussing texts with students, teachers can also help students make text connections, such as text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world, and support students in asking questions about the text to gain a deeper understanding of what they are reading. Teachers may also use methods such as small group instruction, guided reading interventions, read alouds, questioning, and vocabulary instruction (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2003). Additional teaching methods for teaching reading comprehension and reading strategies include reciprocal teaching and collaborative strategic reading. Both techniques put the students in charge of their own learning and use student roles/jobs to support students taking charge of their own reading and making meaning from the text (Okkinga et al., 2018).

When teaching students reading comprehension strategies, teachers need to promote effective reading behaviors. This includes providing time for students to read and write. Students need ample time to practice the skills and strategies that they have learned, which means that

teachers should provide them with independent reading time. Students also need to be engaged in actual texts, rather than looking at worksheets or completing handouts. They should spend two-thirds of every lesson engaged in these texts. Students should have texts that they can read with 98% word recognition accuracy and 90% comprehension (McLaughlin, 2012). Students should also take books home daily so they can practice the strategies that they are exposed to during the school day. Students should have at least one book that they can read and one book that they want to read. (McLaughlin 2012). After providing students with instruction on reading strategies and promoting positive reading behaviors, teachers can assess students' reading comprehension and determine if the current instruction is effective.

### **Assessment**

Reading comprehension is assessed in many ways, and many assessment tools are currently used by educators. The Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) Benchmark assessments are running record assessments which focus on word recognition and accuracy. These assessments are given 1:1 to a student by a teacher or trained staff member. Teachers can find a student's independent, instructional, and frustration reading level by completing a F&P running record with the child and asking comprehension questions. Teachers may also use informal running records to track a child's reading habits and behavior and to note comprehension of a text. Another assessment that can be used to assess reading comprehension is the DIBELS assessment, which stands for Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills. DIBELS assesses components of reading including accuracy, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. School districts or individual schools may also use the Reading Inventory assessment (RI, formerly known as the Scholastic Reading Inventory), which provides students and teachers with a Lexile level, which is a text measure that represents a text's difficulty on the Lexile scale. This Lexile level can then be used

to find books that are appropriate for a student; the book's Lexile level should be close to the student's Lexile level from the RI to ensure that it is a book that the child can read accurately and comprehend well. In addition to these assessments, teachers may also create their own assessments to measure a student's comprehension of a text. Teachers may create multiple-choice, short-answer, fill-in-the-blank, or written response questions to assess a student's comprehension of a text they read.

### **Why does reading comprehension matter?**

Jiang and Logan (2019) explained, "Poor reading comprehension among U.S. children and youth is an ongoing concern; indeed, nationally representative data show stagnant performance in reading achievement over the past decades (Snyder, de Brey, & Dillow, 2016), with only about one third of fourth graders exhibiting proficient reading skill" (p. 2812). Research has found that early reading difficulties are a strong indicator for later reading achievement and overall academic performance (Gentilini and Greer 2020). Gentilini and Greer (2020) explain that "compared to students with higher literacy achievement (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2010; Miles & Stipek, 2006), three-fourths of students considered poor readers in third grade are also classified as poor readers in high school, demonstrating higher rates of retention in grade and more behavioral and social problems in successive grades" (p. 327). If children experience trouble with reading comprehension in early grades, they will continue to struggle with reading until effective instruction or an appropriate intervention is put into place.

Jiang and Logan (2019) also explained that "poor reading achievement is associated with adversities in a number of areas, including educational progress, employment opportunities, and health outcomes (Ritchie & Bates, 2013)" (p. 2812). Researchers also found that striving readers later lack the reading competence that they need for college and the workplace (Gentilini and

Greer 2020). It seems, however, that not all schools are following research on best practices for reading instruction, teaching reading comprehension, and engaging readers. Allington (2013) explained, “The bad news is that almost no schools in the United States have anything in place that much looks like what the research says young children need to become engaged readers” (p. 520). This fact makes it even more important for educators and researchers to understand reading instruction and implement effective ways of teaching it in today’s schools.

### **What factors impact reading comprehension?**

As mentioned before, many schools do not have routines or expectations put in place that support young students to become engaged readers. Some of schools’ most struggling readers are being taught by paraprofessionals, rather than expert teachers. If this is the case, then the neediest students are not receiving instruction from the most qualified educators (Allington, 2013). Struggling readers are also often asked to read texts that are too difficult for them. They need to work with texts that they can read with 98% accuracy (Allington, 2013). Another problem happening in schools is that struggling readers are engaging in tasks that involve little reading; they need enough time to read to improve their accuracy and comprehension (Allington 2013). Additionally, some students struggle with comprehension because they have poor vocabulary. They may have adequate decoding, but they do not know what the words mean (Spencer, Quinn, & Wagner, 2014). Spencer, Quinn, and Wagner (2014) explain that “the transition from first to second grade is marked by a greater influence of oral language skills on reading comprehension” (p. 7). If students are not familiar with or exposed to a variety of words, then they will have more difficulty comprehending texts that include those words.

### **What are studies and interventions that have addressed reading comprehension?**

Many studies conducted have focused on classroom interventions to improve reading comprehension. For example, Jiang and Logan (2019) found that language-focused classroom intervention is one type of intervention that has supported students with reading comprehension. Boulware-Gooden et al. (2007) also found that metacognitive and vocabulary instruction is beneficial; students who receive the vocabulary and reading comprehension intervention exhibited greater comprehension gains than those students who did not receive this intervention. Fien et al. (2011) focus on read alouds with a component of small-group vocabulary instruction. The researchers study classrooms that include whole-class read aloud instruction with small group vocabulary instruction, and Fien et al. (2011) explained that “the small-group intervention effect on increased vocabulary and expository retells was an added value above and beyond the benefit of the whole-class instruction alone” (p. 315)

Guided reading is another instructional method that Young (2019) found increased students’ reading comprehension. Gentilini and Greer (2020) also studied the impact of silent reading time and discovered that students enjoying reading, and spending time reading independently could improve reading comprehension and vocabulary. Lastly, Ness (2016) found that inquiry-based reading instruction supports students’ reading comprehension. He explains, “As students generate heavyweight and lightweight questions within and beyond the texts they encounter, their comprehension improves and they become focused, purposeful readers” (Ness, 2016, p. 194).

The findings of these and other researchers have yielded suggestions for educators regarding how to support and improve students’ reading comprehension.



### **What Might Researchers Learn Next?**

Moving forward, educators can change instructional plans to best meet the needs of struggling readers. Allington (2013) explains, “We can change the future for struggling readers. However, to do so requires that we rethink almost every aspect of the instructional plans we currently have in place” (p. 527). Allington (2013) also purports that the following are some of what might be eliminated from schools to better support students: workbooks, test preparation, paraprofessionals serving in instructional roles, and expenditures for computer-based reading programs. Educators and researchers should continue to study school-based interventions to find effective interventions for students, which then need to be implemented in schools. This researcher intends to apply current information to determine if she can improve reading comprehension in her second-grade students.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODS**

The purpose of this research was to determine the impact of guided reading intervention on a second-grade student's reading comprehension as measured by the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment compared with a similar group of second graders using the customary approach.

#### **Design**

A quasi-experimental, two-group, pre-post design was used to determine the relationship between the guided reading intervention and the students' reading comprehension. The independent variable was the reading method (customary or guided reading intervention). The dependent variable was the students' Fountas and Pinnell reading levels and reading comprehension. The study compared the students Fountas and Pinnell instructional level prior to the intervention with their level after the intervention. The study also included a control group of students who did not receive the intervention, but rather, received a customary approach. These students were also assessed with the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment prior to and after the study.

#### **Participants**

The participants in this study included seven second grade students in one homeroom class in a Harford County public school. These students received guided reading instruction in the general education setting during the reading block. In the intervention group, there were six female students (86% of the group) and one male student (14% of the group). The sample was convenience. One female student had an Individualized Education Program (IEP). All students

were reading below grade level on the Fountas and Pinnell preassessment. In the control group, there were seven second grade students from two other second grade homerooms. These students were selected based on their similarity in reading levels to the treated group. This control group included four girls (57% of the group) and three boys (43% of the group) who were reading at similar levels as the second graders who received the intervention.

### **Instrument**

Two instruments were used in the study. The first instrument used in the study was the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment. The assessment was administered one-one-one to all students in the study prior to the start of the intervention to determine their instructional level. The Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment kits include fiction and nonfiction texts for Levels A-Z. The researcher used a teacher's scoring sheet to keep track of decoding, and then the student was asked comprehension questions based on the text. At the end of the study, all students were assessed one-on-one a second time to determine their instructional level after receiving the intervention or the customary approach.

Because of the small samples, the F&P levels were condensed into two categories based on professional teacher judgment, as recommended by the "F&P Text Level Gradient," low (levels A-G, pre-grade1 through mid-grade1) and high (levels H-J, mid-grade1 through end of grade1).

The second instrument used in the study was leveled classroom library books. These classroom library books have a level that corresponds with the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment. The researcher chose books from the library for the guided reading intervention that were on or near the students' instructional reading level.

## **Procedure**

Baseline data was collected at the beginning of this study to determine the students' independent reading level. Once determined, the researcher created two small, guided reading groups of similar reading abilities. Over the course of five weeks, the groups met four times per week for 10-15 minutes per session.

Each guided reading lesson ran for two days. On the first day, students did a “sneak peek” of the book, noticing the title, cover, back cover blurb, and identifying keywords throughout the story. Then, the students independently read the book. The students participated in a discussion with the researcher. On the second day, the researcher modeled a focus skill or strategy. Then, the students independently reread the story while practicing the skill or strategy. This procedure continued for the duration of the intervention. At the end of the five-week intervention, data was collected again using the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment. This data was used to determine if students had an increase in their reading comprehension and reading level from the beginning of the study to the end of the study.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of guided reading instruction on seven second grade students' reading comprehension. The Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment was the instrument used to determine the students' independent reading level.

*Table 1*

*Data for Churchville Elementary School 2019 (enrollment 2020) from the Maryland Report*

#### *Card Website*

<i>Outcome</i>	<i>Pct proficient</i>		
Math	54.3		
Reading	68.0		
Science	39.7		
Growth percentile math	57 <sup>th</sup>		
Growth percentile reading	66 <sup>th</sup>		
Access to good curriculum	100%		
Students absent <10 days	92%		
School survey-students	8.1/10		
School survey-educators	9.0/10		

  

<i>Pct proficient by subgroup</i>	<i>Math</i>	<i>Reading</i>
Black	23.1	38.5
White	57.9	70.8
Special Education	0	10.0
Poverty (FARMS)	19.0	33.3

  

<i>Number enrolled by race</i>	<i>Number</i>
Asian	<10
Black	11
Hispanic	10
Multi-race	22
White	326
All	370

  

<i>Compared to Similar Schools</i>	<i>Pct of Total Possible Points</i>	
	<i>Churchville</i>	<i>Similar Schools</i>
Achievement	65.8	67.2
Achievement Progress	70.0	66.9
School Quality	91.0	89.5
Overall	77.2	75.6

Maryland comparison schools matched on grade span, race, poverty, ELL, and special education.

Table 1 displays a summary of proficiency from the researcher's school from 2019 in major academic content areas, subgroups in math and reading, and overall points compared to

other schools. It also shows the number of students enrolled by race in 2020. This information indicates that the researcher's school is overall high achieving, affluent and minimally diverse. However, there is diversity at the school based on students' socioeconomic status. Table 1 shows how poverty adversely affects student achievement. Students generally are in attendance, and the school quality is high. Both students and educators have positive feelings about the school, as demonstrated by the students and staff survey shown in Table 1.

*Table 2*

*Pre and post Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment scores*

	pre	group		Total
		Control	Treated	
low		71.43	71.43	71.43
high		28.57	28.57	28.57
Total		100.00	100.00	100.00

Pearson chi2(1) = 0.0000 Pr = 1.000

  

	post	group		Total
		Control	Treated	
low		57.14	28.57	42.86
high		42.86	71.43	57.14
Total		100.00	100.00	100.00

Pearson chi2(1) = 1.1667 Pr = 0.280  
Cramér's V = 0.2887

Table 2 shows the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment pre- and post-assessment results for the treated and control groups. There were seven students in each group, and the students' scores on the preassessment were identical with 71% in the low reading category and 28% in the high reading category. For the preassessment, the Chi-square statistic is zero and the null cannot be rejected. The control and treated groups were identical on F&P reading levels at the time of the preassessment.

On the post assessment, the control group had 57% of students in the low F&P score range, while the treated group had 71% in the high reading score range. The p-value for the

discrepancy in percentages is  $.28 > .05$ . So, the researcher still cannot reject the null hypothesis that differences in the column percentages are not statistically significant by row. However, the effect size is 0.29, which indicates a medium effect of guided reading on students' independent reading levels. Therefore, the main reason for the non-significant difference in reading levels was likely the small samples, rather than a lack of treatment effect. This indicates that the differences in reading categories is of practical significance or importance.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION**

The descriptive study aimed to determine the impact of guided reading instruction on second grade students' reading comprehension as demonstrated by the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark assessment data. The data results indicated that 71% of the students in the treated group scored in the high reading score range on the post-assessment, whereas 43% of the students in the control group were in the high reading score range. The data indicates a medium effect size of guided reading on students' independent reading levels, and therefore the difference in reading categories is of practical significance or importance, although the difference did not reach statistical significance, most likely due to the small samples.

#### **Implications of Results**

The data implies that the guided reading intervention may have had a positive impact on second-grade students' reading growth. This implication can be supported by the data shown in Chapter IV. On the Fountas and Pinnell preassessment, 71% of students in the treated group scored in the low reading range. On the post-assessment, after five weeks of guided reading instruction, 29% of students were in the low reading range, while 71% of students were in the high reading range. In the control group, 43% of students scored in the high reading range on the post-assessment. Five of the seven students in the treated group had an increase in their F&P score. Of these five students, two of them grew two reading levels, and three of them grew one reading level. Since these students made growth on the Fountas and Pinnell assessment, it can be determined that their reading comprehension increased, along with their fluency and accuracy.



The researcher can also imply from the results that students might need more time in the guided reading intervention to grow more levels. The intervention lasted for only five weeks, with some in-person and some virtual instruction, and students met with the researcher four times per week due to the hybrid learning schedule. Additional days/weeks in the intervention may have increased students' scores.

The researcher observed students with high engagement and motivation during the brief 10-15-minute guided reading lessons. Students enjoyed more individualized attention, participated by raising their hand or turning and talking, and wanted to read to the researcher. It can be implied that the short and succinct lessons may be a powerful instructional strategy for some students.

### **Theoretical Consequences**

Based on the literature review in Chapter II, it was concluded that guided reading would be a beneficial intervention for students. Although the results from this study show a medium effect size of guided reading on students' independent reading levels, it is important to consider the threats to validity that may have impacted the post-assessment scores.

Guided reading is an instructional method that reading teachers use to improve students' reading comprehension instruction (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2003). In the literature review, the researcher explained that Young (2019) found that guided reading increased students' reading comprehension. This study explained that "increased time spent in guided reading can have a large positive effect on students' reading ability" (Young 2019 p. 128). Young also mentions that guided reading needs to be rigorous, occur frequently, and last for an appropriate duration. This specific study was yearlong. In the researcher's situation, there were times during

the study when the students did not meet for the full 10-15 minutes due to scheduling changes, student or teacher interruptions, or technological delays. The study began with students meeting 100% virtually and ended with students in the classroom two days per week. The inconsistencies of the lesson structure and teaching situation may have affected students' scores.

Before each guided reading intervention, the researcher described the purpose for reading. Students knew whether they were focusing on looking at details in the pictures, making predictions, noticing how the character's feelings change, etc. As mentioned in the literature review, good readers have a reason for reading the text, and they are purposeful and active in their reading (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2003). Students then aim to fulfill this purpose. This was the case during each guided reading intervention session. Students knew what their purpose was as a reader, and they used skills or strategies to reach their goal. The results of the study provide support of this idea; students became more purposeful readers, and their reading comprehension increased because of this.

### **Threats to Validity**

There were multiple threats to validity within this study. One threat to validity was sample size. This study occurred in a second-grade classroom with seven students, and seven students of similar ability were the control group from another classroom. This small sample size impacts generalizing the results to other elementary school-aged students.

Another threat to validity is the reading levels of the students in the study. All the second-grade students in this study, both in the treated group and in the control group, were reading below grade level. Having a larger sample size or including students at different reading levels

may have helped to determine if guided reading is beneficial for all students, regardless of reading level.

The biggest external threat to validity of this study was the combination of virtual and in person learning. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the guided reading instruction occurred virtually for the first two weeks. After that, students were in person two days per week and at home two days per week. This change in routine and schedule made the guided reading intervention more difficult to implement seamlessly.

Student attendance was another threat to validity. Because of the mix between in person and virtual school days, some students were not in attendance for each guided reading intervention. This caused students to miss key information about the book we were beginning or kept them from receiving the same amount of instruction as other students who were in full attendance.

The last threat to validity was the noise and disruptions that occurred both during virtual learning and in the classroom. When students were at home, they had siblings and other background noise, such as from a television, as a distraction. Students did not always have their cameras on, so the researcher was not always able to tell what the students were doing independently. Additionally, once in the classroom, the researcher was re-establishing routines and procedures since it had been multiple months since students had been in the school building. Because of this, some time was taken from the guided reading instruction to address behaviors, redirect students, or provide clarification.

In summary, all these threats to validity mentioned affected the implementation of the guided reading intervention to its fullest potential. These threats to validity may have impacted the students' reading scores, and therefore, their reading comprehension.

### **Connections to Previous Studies/Existing Literature**

Guided reading intervention, along with additional instructional strategies, have been used by teachers to support students' reading comprehension (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2003).

Research has found that early reading difficulties are a strong indicator for later reading achievement and overall academic performance (Gentilini and Greer 2020). In this study, more students had improved reading comprehension with their postscores than those who did not, which indicates that a guided reading intervention is a positive instructional tool for teachers and a beneficial strategy for students. This intervention also occurred in second grade, which allows teachers to identify students' needs and address them before the students move into upper elementary grades.

The guided reading study that was explained by Young and mentioned in the literature review took two approaches to guided reading instruction. Both approaches were effective in impacting students' reading ability (Young, 2019). Perhaps if the researcher followed one of these approaches more specifically, then the treated groups' scores may have been even higher.

Lastly, as stated in the literature review, teachers take effective instructional action to support their students' reading comprehension. This includes, but is not limited to, planning lessons, selecting texts and means of instruction, providing information to students, monitoring

students' understanding, and scaffolding (Dole & Duffy, 1991). During the guided reading intervention, the researcher intentionally planned lessons to meet students' needs while frequently monitoring their understanding. This instructional action was put into place to best support the students' reading comprehension and move them up levels within the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark assessment.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Future researchers should continue to study the impact of guided reading instruction on students' reading comprehension. There are many considerations that future researchers should keep in mind as they are implementing guided reading.

One idea to consider is the sample size used for a study on guided reading. Ideally, a researcher should try to work with a larger sample size so the results can be generalized for students of similar age and reading ability. Related to larger samples is expanding the study to a diverse group of schools to measure the effect of moderating variables such as demography on the treatment and the outcomes.

Another idea to consider is the environment in which the guided reading is occurring. Ideally, the guided reading intervention should occur in a classroom with minimal distractions and with the teacher's full attention. If the teacher is frequently addressing other students' needs or being pulled from the small group, then the students in the intervention might not be benefitting as much from the intervention as they could be without these distractions.

Lastly, future researchers may want to implement this study over a longer period of time. By implementing this intervention over additional weeks, researchers may find more information about how guiding reading affects students.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to determine if guided reading instruction would improve students' reading comprehension. The study suggests that a guided reading intervention positively impacts second-grade students' reading comprehension. The data shows that guided reading had a positive effect on students' reading levels and reading comprehension. Teachers may consider implementing guided reading into their classrooms to improve second-grade students' reading comprehension.

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