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Brittany Worthen, Student

Dr. Susan Cantrell, Major Professor

Dr. Kristen Perry, Director of Graduate Studies

# TEACHER DECISION-MAKING IN GUIDED READING

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DISSERTATION

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the
College of Education
at the University of Kentucky

By
Brittany Worthen
Lexington, Kentucky
Director: Dr. Susan Chambers Cantrell Professor of Curriculum and Instruction
Lexington, Kentucky
2021

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

TEACHER DECISION-MAKING IN GUIDED READING

Guided reading provides teachers the opportunity to support students in literacy learning. When planning for and implementing this instructional approach, teachers are required to make various in-advance and in-the-moment decisions that involve responding to students' instructional needs through adaptive teaching. Grounded in sociocultural and social constructivist theories, this study was designed to understand teacher decision-making within the context of guided reading instruction. Several questions were considered for this study: How do teachers make decisions about guided reading instruction? How do teachers make in-advance decisions about grouping, planning, and assessing? How do teachers make in-the-moment decisions about (a) feedback and support for students, and (b) adjusting plans to better meet students' needs?

This research was a collective case study aimed at providing a better understanding of the various decisions teachers make when teaching in a guided reading context. The qualitative case study included video recorded observations, post observation interviews, and a collection of guided reading lesson plans. Qualitative data analysis included open and axial coding as well as an organization of the codes, according to the data, in their respective category of in-advance decision or in-the-moment decision. This methodology enabled a comprehensive analysis of teacher decision-making within guided reading.

Findings pertaining to in-advanced decisions that emerged from the data can be categorized into three overarching themes: teachers used formal and informal assessment data to group students for guided reading and to make instructional plans based on students' needs, teachers utilized a program-influenced structural framework to make decisions about planning for guided reading instruction and lastly, teachers made instructional connections between whole group instruction and guided reading, and also between students and their interests. Although teachers made various in-advance decisions when creating their lessons plans, these decisions were not always grounded in considering students' instructional needs. Findings from the observations and interviews concerning in-the-moment decisions can be categorized under four overarching themes: teachers responded to students by scaffolding instruction, teachers confirmed students' reading and writing behaviors, teachers made thoughtful decisions about instruction, and

teachers felt time restrictions. Although the data exhibited variation across the three teachers, they all showed similarities with in-the-moment decision-making across these four themes.

Implications of this study include more focus on supporting teachers' instructional planning, a refinement of teachers' skills in helping them understand how to best scaffold instruction, and raising awareness to educators, administrators, and stakeholders on how guided reading can provide supportive instruction to meet students' individualized needs. Teachers are faced with an unlimited number of decisions and understanding their decision-making process is important when considering how teachers best meet the instructional needs of all students.

KEYWORDS: Guided Reading, Decision-Making, Adaptive Teaching, Scaffolding, Instructional Needs

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04/16/2021

Date

TEACHER DECISION-MAKING IN GUIDED READING

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04/16/2021
Date

## DEDICATION

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11.

The pursuit of a doctorate was a plan the Lord placed on my heart many years ago and it was His faithfulness that kept me going through the entire process. The Lord provided strength and encouragement, which motivated me to keep taking the next step. For this reason, I am incredibly grateful and dedicate this dissertation to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. All glory and honor to Him!

To my Peanut, Willow Rose. You are my most precious daughter, my treasure, my miracle baby, my hope. You inspire me to be the very best. I dream because I want YOU to grow up dreaming and believing you can do anything you put your mind to. I will never stop believing in you and cheering you on. Dream big, my darling girl!

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

### Rationale

Children's reading and writing development has stood as a national concern over the last century (Williams, 2007). *A Nation at Risk* (1983) cautioned educators that a literacy crisis would threaten the future of our nation. These concerns about early literacy have continued into the twenty-first century with contentions that as literacy demands rise, children are at risk of falling behind if they are unable to meet expectations needed to compete in a literacy-based and technological world (Drew, 2012/2013).

In response to concerns about early literacy, two major federal research review efforts were undertaken near the turn of the century that influenced early reading instruction in ways that remain today. The National Research Council (NRC, 1998) conducted a review of early reading interventions to determine practices that would prevent students' early reading difficulties. Based on this review, the Council made a number of recommendations related to early reading instruction. Following the NRC report, a panel was convened to study research-based instruction and how instructional practices affected students' abilities in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000). The NRP sought to identify practices that worked best for students and helped them to grow as proficient readers, ready to conquer literacy demands faced in a twenty-first-century world. These reports focused on how teachers can most effectively meet students' needs in key components of literacy: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The reports, which emphasized the importance of differentiated

instruction for students in each of the components of reading, influenced literacy programs and practices in elementary classrooms (Almasi et al., 2006). One recommendation emanating from the reports was that teachers implement guided support for students through small group instruction.

### *Guided Reading*

Guided reading, a type of small-group instruction that focuses on differentiating instruction for students based on their individual needs, grew in popularity after the NRP (Fountas & Pinnell, 2010b; Iaquinta, 2006; Lyons & Thompson, 2012). In guided reading, the teacher centers instruction around a specific text (one that provides somewhat of a challenge to students within the small group). Teachers use their expertise to plan and provide instructional strategies differentiated to meet students' needs. During the guided reading process, teachers make in-advance decisions related to grouping, lesson planning, and assessment, as well as make in-the-moment decisions, such as those pertaining to feedback, support for students, and adjusting plans to better meet students' needs. Teachers' decision-making in guided reading is vital to ensure students' development (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017).

Although guided reading currently is used widely in schools, little research has been conducted on this instructional method. More specifically, limited research exists on how teachers implement guided reading and the types of decisions they face when implementing this instructional support. Making decisions in-advance of and in-the-moment for guided reading can be problematic for classroom teachers (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009; Fisher, 2008; Phillips, 2013). Text selection, grouping, and discussion prompts with feedback represent a small fraction of instructional decisions teachers face

when planning for and implementing guided reading instruction. Moreover, research shows that teachers need the knowledge and skills to make these decisions when using guided reading instruction as a literacy practice (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009; Makumbila & Rowland, 2016). If and when teachers do not have the knowledge and skills to make effective decisions for guided reading instruction, students' reading growth is affected in negative ways (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009). It is important for teachers to understand decisions they may face when implementing guided reading instruction so they can effectively respond to students during this instructional process.

***Adaptive Teaching***

Adaptive teaching stems from the work of John Dewey (1933), who believed educators must observe the situation, gather information, and make thoughtful reflections. As teachers make decisions for guided reading, they respond to observations of students and data collected from assessments and instructional tasks. These responsive decisions are made in-the-moment as teachers consider how to adapt their instruction based on students' needs. Teachers may also consider ways to respond to students when planning for future instruction based on previous observations. Prior to teachers adapting their instruction, they must first consider students' interactions within the instructional setting. As Clay (2003) stated, "Teaching is about the interactions of child with task, of teacher with child, and child with child, and how interactions need to be different with different children" (p. 46). In considering these interactions, teachers make responsive decisions based on their professional noticing (Gibson & Ross, 2016). Professional noticing occurs when teachers pay attention and use information about how students respond to and understand what they are experiencing. According to Gibson and Ross

(2016), when teachers assume professional noticing, they 1) Notice children's literacy and metacognitive behaviors during instruction accurately, fluently, and comprehensively; 2) Consider interrelated aspects of children's literacy, metacognitive, and affective behaviors; 3) Hypothesize to interpret and build understanding of children's conceptual understanding and use of cognitive strategies; and 4) Implement in-the-moment instructional moves matched to the immediate needs of the students (p. 183). When teachers use this noticing to adapt instruction that better meets students' needs during instruction, they are engaging in "adaptive teaching," (Gibson & Ross, 2016, p. 181).

Adaptive teaching can happen in-the-moment as teachers respond to students while they are working (Corno, 2008). When teachers adapt their instruction, they make decisions that require a change in the original plan of instruction or break apart the lesson. One study of two classroom teachers teaching literacy illustrated both slight and considerable adaptations were made with students in response to teacher noticing (Parsons, 2012). Teacher decision-making happens at the very start of adaptive teaching, in which teachers first notice student behaviors and continues as teachers are compelled to make a change that would better support the students' instructional needs.

An important component of adaptive teaching involves scaffolding, in which the teacher provides responsive support in a way that helps the student(s) to better understand instruction. "Thus, the type of scaffolding or instructional decisions teachers make during responsive teaching must cohere and be well aligned with the nature of responsive instruction" (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012, p. 60). After teachers notice student behaviors that signal a need for help or attention to a task, the teachers can make the decision to

provide that needed support for students in that moment of instruction. According to Gibson and Ross (2016), "When teachers' in-the-moment responses to students are contingent on student literacy behaviors and integrated with a strong knowledge base for literacy instruction, adaptations or scaffolding are more likely to result in adaptive teaching" (p.182). Providing scaffold support helps teachers to gradually respond to students' needs, in the context of the learning that is occurring.

Teachers must practice adaptive and reflective thinking that in turn, contributes to adaptive teaching and professional noticing (Gibson & Robin, 2016; Hoffman & Duffy, 2016). Reflective thinking requires consequential decision making, in which steps must be taken to determine an outcome (Dewey, 1933). When teachers encounter a "fork in the road" in which they have to make decisions based on the situation at hand, they take into consideration the problem and make decisions reflective of their thinking (Hoffman & Duffy, 2016, p. 173). Decisions reflective of teacher thinking may include but not be limited to teachers adjusting instruction in response to student observations. These reflective decisions describe adaptive teaching, according to Dewey (1933) and help teachers to better meet students' instructional needs.

***Teacher Decision-Making in Guided Reading***

Teachers make in-advance and in-the-moment decisions for guided reading instruction. As teachers plan and prepare to teach guided reading, they take many steps that require them to make decisions about instruction for students. At the start of planning for a guided reading group, teachers must determine how to group students and how their needs will best be met with this instructional approach. Before reading occurs in a guided reading group, teachers select appropriate texts for their students (Fountas & Pinnell,

2017). Moreover, teachers examine selected texts and decide what aspects of the book may present challenges and opportunities for students to learn. Teachers also decide which reading components should be taught all the while considering their strengths, needs, and learning goals (Griffith & Lacina, 2017). The teacher also decides how to introduce the text to each of the groups taught in a way that will engage learners to want to read.

Teachers also make decisions during the execution of guided reading instruction. For example, they must decide whether or not intervention is needed to support specific students, which could require making adjustments to instruction. Additionally, teachers decide whether or not to give feedback to students in the midst of instruction (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017). Teachers not only make decisions about giving specific instructional feedback to students, but they also may choose to respond to students by praising efforts and achievements. Teachers make prompting decisions, such as decisions that support student engagement and decisions that require the teacher to adjust plans to better meet students' needs. According to Almasi and Fullerton (2012), "This is at the heart of responsive teaching: being planful before the lesson and reflective after the lesson, but most important, being responsive *during* the lesson to interject the right type of comment or question at the right time…" (p. 60). Throughout the guided reading lesson, teachers decide whether or not instruction is effective—if students are following along and understanding concepts, strategies, and skills, or whether instruction should be adjusted to better meet the needs of students.

***Summary***

The first chapter of this dissertation aims to provide background information about guided reading instruction and the decisions teachers make in-advance of and in-the-moment of guided reading sessions. Moreover, this chapter aims to provide information regarding teachers' professional noticing and how teachers respond to and adapt instruction for their students. Adaptive teaching is at the crux of guided reading in terms of how teachers pay attention to and observe their students so that instructional decisions can be changed to better meet the needs of all students.

Teachers make various decisions in the planning and implementation of guided reading that require them to consider how students will best learn the components and processes of reading. Research shows that despite the importance of teacher decision making, teachers often lack the knowledge and skills to make effective decisions (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009; Fisher, 2008; Makumbila & Rowland, 2016; Phillips, 2013). While the research on guided reading is limited, it is imperative to understand teacher decision-making and the impact teacher decision-making has on student learning and development in guided reading.

**Background**

Guided reading is a type of instructional support in which teachers provide varied instructional strategies across reading components to meet students' needs in small group settings. A goal of guided reading is to move students towards independence in reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). As a form of small group-based instruction, guided reading helps teachers provide support for various developmental needs in reading (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009; Fountas & Pinnell, 2017). In order to ensure students' individual needs are

met and independence is achieved, teachers make decisions using specifically designed instruction addressing reading strategies and processes.

**Teachers as Decision Makers**

Teacher decision-making is a metacognitive process in which teachers are methodically thinking about how to respond to students in ways that can best support them. Just as students should monitor their thinking, teachers also take on metacognitive responsibilities that entail "identifying appropriate strategies, making moment-to-moment decisions to ensure students' learning, adjusting for individual differences, and much more" (Duffy et al., 2009, p. 242). Teachers make various decisions daily, and these decisions require methodical thinking prior to and during instruction. As Hoffman and Duffy (2016) explain, teachers encounter instances in which they must engage in instructional decision-making and in these moments, they must consider what actions are needed, the possible results of those actions, and if there is need for change in instruction.

The decisions teachers make for guided reading instruction must take into account the needs of all students in the classroom. Typically, students within a guided reading group have similar growth needs that provide the focus for instruction. Moreover, guided reading requires that teachers be intentional about spending time in text within each small group, in which ongoing observations and assessments can occur (Denton et al., 2014). Along with text instruction, the teacher incorporates other literary components such as phonics, word study, fluency, comprehension, and writing to support students' developmental learning. The teacher acts as a guide, observing and tuning into the students, figuring out their instructional needs, and doing so with a purpose (Clay, 1998). Teachers use their professional judgment and experiences to make in-the-moment

decisions during guided reading times. These in-the-moment decisions can consist of teachers making quick adjustments to their guided reading instruction, in which teachers decide to support students the best way they know how (Elliot, 1996). The heart of guided reading truly lies with teachers and the in-advance and in-the-moment decisions they are required to make for guided reading instruction.

## Guided Reading Decisions

Teachers are continuously making decisions, somewhere in the field of 60-100 decisions an hour in some cases (McNergney, Loyd, Mintz, and Moore, 1988). Teachers make decisions before, during, and after instruction is implemented, including when planning for guided reading instruction. When teachers make decisions for and about their students, it is similar to how doctors choose the appropriate prescriptions for their patients; it is critically important to make the right decision for students at the right time (McNergney et al., 1988). Guided reading reflects this analogy in that teachers must make decisions in-advance of and in-the-moment of guided reading sessions that best facilitates students' learning.

### *In-Advance Decisions*

Before implementing guided reading, teachers must make decisions in-advance, including grouping students and planning instruction. When grouping students, teachers must consider assessment data to make sure students are grouped appropriately (Nayak & Sylva, 2013) and must also consider ongoing data information to regroup students as needed (Lyons & Thompson, 2012). Studies have shown where teacher decision-making impacts student learning (Stern & Shavelson, 1983), and this is especially obvious in grouping students. When considering explicit instruction in guided reading, teachers

think about students' learning goals when planning and incorporate exact steps on how instruction should be modeled and taught (Denton, Fletcher, Taylor, Barth, & Vaughn, 2014). These considerations play a role in the pre-planning of guided reading instruction when teachers sit down to create lessons geared toward meeting students' literacy needs.

Moreover, making decisions prior to instruction includes text selection, in which the teacher chooses a leveled text for instruction and for students to read during their guided reading session. Choosing appropriate leveled texts for students proves problematic for teachers, according to Makumbila and Rowland (2016); they need further knowledge in how to select the best books for students. Decisions teachers make prior to implementing instruction plays a vital role in helping students develop the skills they need. "If we want teachers to implement guided reading in ways conducive to the growth of student reading capabilities, they need a deeper understanding of what guided reading means as well as the procedural framework involved" (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009, p. 303).

***In-the-Moment Decisions***

During the guided reading process, teachers make in-the-moment decisions for their students. For example, teachers must draw on their knowledge of students and decide how to best respond- they make decisions about what to do and say and consider previous assessment data to aid in decision-making (Griffith & Lacina, 2017, Ingram, Louis, & Schroeder, 2004). Research suggests that teachers, no matter their wealth of experience, are challenged with time management decisions, which can affect students' learning growth (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009; Melnick & Meister, 2008) and teachers must make time sensitive decisions when implementing guided reading instruction.

During guided reading, teachers may make “in-flight” decisions, making decisions quickly and in-the-moment when teaching is happening (Stern & Shavelson, 1983, p. 283). Such decisions are necessary during guided reading group sessions as teachers work with students as questions arise, strategies are needed, or problems develop from text reading. It is important that the teacher considers the students’ knowledge and understanding when making decisions during the guided reading session.

Other in-the-moment decisions include the teacher deciding how to engage students in discussion and which questions should be asked to extend student thinking and learning. Knowing which questions to ask and how to get students to ask questions themselves stands as a decision-making issue that teachers struggle with (Fisher, 2008). One study showed how teachers used questioning during the guided reading session while also prompting discussion and responding to students’ comments (Phillips, 2013). In this case, the teacher was required to make decisions throughout the questioning process—which questions she would ask and how she would respond to students’ answers. Using professional judgment and pedagogical knowledge was necessary throughout the making of these decisions, while also considering the instructional needs of the students. According to Griffith and Lacina (2017), teachers make decisions about praising, prompting, modeling, teaching, and guiding during a guided reading session. And sometimes, the teacher may decide not to do anything (Griffith & Lacina, 2017). A teacher has the responsibility to observe students as they read independently and consider what the students know and may not know. When making decisions in-the-moment, teachers need to consider such observations, along with background knowledge of students, during guided reading instruction.

Furthermore, the teacher must also make in-the-moment decisions about whether or not a student should be helped, given decoding or other reading strategies, or be told what a word means—all specific kinds of feedback. These examples of teacher decision-making help one to understand how teachers use a metacognitive process, in which they focus in on student responses to then give their own response to best support students (Duffy, et al., 2009). Moreover, teachers make important decisions when giving specific feedback to students—whether the feedback centers on instructional feedback or praise. The teacher may praise the student(s) for their ability to problem solve or gather meaning from the text, or the teacher may help the student work through a problem encountered during text reading. Regardless, teachers' in-the-moment decisions to provide feedback are crucial to the students' learning. Providing feedback to students may provide necessary cues for students to come to a conclusion, take meaning from the text, or decode unknown words. Furthermore, making feedback-type decisions during guided reading allow teachers to help students make connections to the text or help them to use the context to figure out new words. Teacher decisions during guided reading instruction impact students greatly. Simply speaking, "teaching is decision making" (Griffith & Lacina, 2017, p. 501). As stated by Fountas and Pinnell (2017), "The ultimate goal of instruction is to enable readers to work their way through a text independently, so all teaching is directed toward helping individuals within the group build systems of strategic actions that they can initiate and control for themselves" (p. 13). Guided reading aims to provide reading support in a multitude of ways in which teachers make educational decisions based on their knowledge of the process (Griffith & Lacina, 2017).

## Statement of the Research Problem

Reading instruction and reading achievement has been a national concern for decades. To improve reading achievement, it is essential that all children receive excellent reading instruction. Ensuring excellent teaching for children begins when they are young, in their primary stages of schooling. The National Research Council (1998) identified the importance of impactful primary environments in which children would be excited to engage in and learn reading. As a part of the recommendation to provide children with impactful teaching experiences, schools needed to ensure support systems were in place, and that teachers considered and met students' diverse needs (Snow et al., 1998). The National Reading Panel (2000) also identified support as essential for teaching components of reading such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension. One method determined helpful in teaching components of reading was through the use of teaching with guided support, like the support that occurs during guided reading (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Guided reading is a small group approach that enables teachers to address the instructional components recommended by the National Research Council and the National Reading Panel more than two decades ago, which requires that teachers understand how to make the best decisions for teaching students. Despite the popularity of guided reading over the past twenty years, little is known about how teachers make decisions in-advance and in-the-moment of instruction for their students in guided reading groups. There is limited understanding of how teachers form guided reading groups, their instructional planning process, how they assess each student to propel them

forward, how teachers respond to students during instruction, and what kinds of feedback help students in their learning.

Guided reading is a widely used approach for differentiating instruction within small groups, but little published research addresses the ways in which teachers implement guided reading and how teachers make instructional decisions within the guided reading framework. Commercial products and resources have been designed to help teachers use a structured framework for guided reading instruction. It is important for teachers to have professional and pedagogical knowledge of how to implement guided reading instruction for all students without relying exclusively on commercial products that may not be sensitive to students' individual, contextual, or cultural backgrounds or needs.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand how teachers make various instructional decisions in-advance of and in-the-moment about guided reading. Teachers' guided reading lessons were video recorded and teachers were interviewed to gain a better understanding of the types of decisions they made during the guided reading process. Reviewing lesson plans helped the researcher get a better understanding of the types of decisions teachers made prior to the implementation of guided reading and to determine if plans were adjusted to better meet the needs of students. Throughout this study, how teachers made decisions about instructional actions, including praising, prompting, modeling, teaching, and guiding, during a guided reading session was investigated.

This study examined how teachers responded to students by adjusting their guided reading instructional plans to better meet the needs of students. Investigating this topic is important to the educational field of reading in that it can help professional educators understand the types of decisions teachers make during the guided reading process. As noted in one study, “Teachers may need explicit, scaffolded experiences engineered to build their pattern recognition and ability to interpret students’ responses in ways that support effective instruction” (Ross & Gibson, 2010, p. 191). Furthermore, this study could be the foundation for further investigation to see how teacher decision-making in guided reading could impact student learning.

## Research Questions

The main question for this study was: How do teachers make decisions about guided reading instruction? Several sub-questions were also considered for this study:

- How do teachers make in-advance decisions about grouping, planning, and assessing?
- How do teachers make in-the-moment decisions about (a) feedback and support for students, and (b) adjusting plans to better meet students’ needs?

## Definition of Terms

The following terms are mentioned throughout the research:

**Adaptive Teaching:** When teachers adapt their teaching, they respond to students as they are completing tasks. Adaptive teaching requires “reading student signals to diagnose needs on the fly, tapping previous experience with similar learners to respond productively, using teaching experience to respond productively, using teaching

experience to form flexible grouping, and quick responses to learner variation" (Corno, 2008, p.161).

**Comprehension:** Reading comprehension is the understanding that happens when a reader engages with text (Rosenblatt, 1938, 1978).

**Decision-Making:** Teachers make judgements from professional experience by considering student data, work performance, or using their "gut feelings" when creating lessons, working with students, and attending to students' reading needs during guided reading instruction (Prenger & Schildkamp, 2018, p. 735).

**Differentiated Instruction:** Differentiated instruction focuses on and addresses students' specific academic needs. **"**Differentiated instruction requires teachers to consider a multitude of student characteristics when designing lessons and units" (Goddard et al., 2010, p. 342). When instruction is differentiated, the teacher may teach material using different instructional strategies, or the teacher may alter how challenging the lesson is according to students' abilities. The teacher may consider students' interests and abilities when planning lessons.

**Diverse Needs:** There are varying needs each child brings into a classroom, and they include but are not limited to the child's background, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, health impairments, academic or social needs, etc.

**Fluency:** Fluency is reading with speed, accuracy, and prosody. A fluent reader can recognize words during reading. Fluency is considered a crucial part of reading (National Reading Panel, 2000).

**Grade-Level Expectations:** Students are expected to master academic requirements and learning standards for a specific grade level.

**Guided Reading:** Guided reading is small group instruction, in which the teacher centers instruction around a specific text (one that provides somewhat of a challenge to students within the small group). In guided reading, teachers use their expertise to provide instructional strategies to meet students' needs, in which differentiated instruction is planned and implemented. During the guided reading process, teachers are making in-advance decisions related to grouping, lesson planning, and assessment, as well as making in-the-moment decisions pertaining to feedback, support for students, and adjusting plans to better meet students' needs.

**Guided Writing:** When writing is incorporated into guided reading sessions, this is known as guided writing in which students respond in writing to the texts they read (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

**Instructional Support:** Teachers provide instructional support by working alongside students struggling to understand, assist students in reading, and provide attention and care to the needs of the learners in the classroom.

**Literacy: "**The ability to understand, identify, understand, interpret, create, compute, and communicate using visual, audible, and digital materials across disciplines and in any context" (International Literacy Association, 1996-2020).

**Metacognition:** The ability to monitor and track thinking as it is happening. Metacognition is a "strategic process" in which readers track their thoughts to accomplish reading goals (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012, p. 18; Cunningham & Shagoury, 2005).

**Phonemic Awareness:** An understanding of the sounds in spoken language, and the ability to manipulate phonemes in words is an important skill for reading (Ukrainetz et al., 2000).

**Phonics:** The knowledge of alphabetics and the correlation of sounds with letters (National Reading Panel, 2000).

**Professional Noticing**: Professional noticing entails teachers making observations of students and responding to instruction based on these observations (Gibson & Ross, 2016).

**Proficient Reading:** Proficient reading happens when readers engage in and have a wide experience of texts from various genres, can read independently and ask for support as needed, know when something does not make sense, and can use strategies to aid in their fluency and comprehension. "Proficient readers actively engage in building relationships between text information and their own prior knowledge" (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012, Gambrell, Koskinen, & Kapinus, 1991, p. 356; Irvin, 1990).

**Reading Independence:** When children reach independence in reading, this means they can read text fluently—at a good pace, with appropriate rhythm and intonation. The reader can also understand words and sentences within the context of reading. An independent reader chooses to read texts that interest them and texts where information can be learned (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017).

**Responsive Teaching:** This is when teachers respond to students based on observations and data collected from assessments and instructional tasks. Responsive teaching involves teacher professional noticing and responding to students through adapting instruction to better meet students' needs (Gibson & Ross, 2016).

**Scaffolding:** Scaffolding happens when an adult provides support that helps a child perform tasks or achieve goals beyond what he or she is capable of doing on his or her own (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1974).

**Small Group:** A small group in guided reading is comprised of approximately four to six children sharing common academic goals.

**Strategic Reader:** Students that are "actively aware of their goals as readers; they are engaged in making conscious decisions about the reading process and which strategies they are using to attain their goals, and they are monitoring their process" (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012).

**Student Achievement:** Success happens when students meet grade-level standards and show continual growth in academics as measured by informal and formal assessments.

**Teacher Support:** Similar to instructional support, teachers observe (notice) problems that arise and make adaptive decisions that will provide assistance to support students. Teachers may support students by creating a safe classroom environment, scaffolding instruction, answering questions, explaining instruction using varied learning strategies, and providing help as the needs arise (Hoffman & Duffy, 2016).

**Text Selection:** A teacher selects a book (with a copy for each student) that meets the students' reading level as well as highlights teaching points in which the teacher can ask questions and incorporate strategy instruction during the guided reading session (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

**Vocabulary:** Vocabulary is the knowledge of what a word means and the ability to apply that word in other contexts (The National Reading Panel, 2000).

**Word Study:** Word study is the study of a word in how it is formed, patterns it may contain, how it is spelled, and how a known word can relate to other words being read in text (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

## Significance

This study adds to the body of research in the area of guided reading in terms of how teachers make decisions about their instructional approach. Moreover, this study will strengthen the body of literacy research in that there is limited research on teacher decision-making in guided reading instruction. This study is grounded in the assumption that teachers make valuable decisions during the guided reading process that facilitate students' reading development.

Furthermore, the attention to teacher decision-making in guided reading is crucial to students' learning process and holds importance in enabling students to proficient reading. While this qualitative study was small and limited in its generalizability, it is still important in helping teachers and other professional educators understand the process of how teachers make various decisions during the guided reading process. Information from this study is useful in helping teacher educators and school professionals further support teachers in their instructional planning and implementation of guided reading.

## Summary

Guided reading constitutes an instructional reading support in which teachers use their expertise to provide instructional strategies to meet all students' needs. This first chapter not only introduced the topic of this qualitative study, but also sought to provide background information detailing guided reading instruction and how teachers make decisions. Decision-making in guided reading includes those decisions leading up to the implementation of guided reading and decisions teachers make in-the-moment during a guided reading session. Guided reading aims to help students reach independence in reading through "a context for responsive teaching—teaching that is grounded in the

teacher's detailed knowledge of and respect for each student, supporting the readers' active construction and processing system" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017, p. 10). As teachers plan and implement guided reading instruction, they make valuable decisions that impact the learning process. Guided reading instruction provides opportunities for teachers to notice their students and adapt instruction in ways that support their students' instructional needs in reading.

The purpose of this study was to better understand how teachers make various decisions about guided reading instruction. Teachers are responsible for grouping students, planning instruction that meets the diverse needs of all learners, all the while assessing students to ensure continual support happens. This study was significant in that it may provide ground for professional educators to continue using guided reading as an instructional support in reading and also to provide teachers support in their decision-making processes for guided reading instruction. Lastly, this study has significance in that it shows how critical teacher decision-making is during the guided reading process.

# CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

## Introduction

This study explored teacher decision-making in-advance and in-the-moment of guided reading instruction. In this chapter, I present a theoretical framework for teacher decision-making. Following this, I highlight instructional components within guided reading instruction, including essential components of reading as identified by the National Reading Panel (2000). Finally in this chapter, I explain what research says about guided reading instruction, teacher decision-making, and teacher decision-making within guided reading.

## Theoretical Framework for Teacher Decision-Making

The following section gives an overview of the theoretical framework for this study. I discuss sociocultural theory and social constructivist theory as they both relate to teacher decision-making and how students can learn within a guided reading context. These theories intersect with one another by considering how children learn through social experiences and how they are guided through teacher support.

### Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory refers to learning that is socially mediated and occurs through an individual's interactions with their community and within cultural frames of reference (Vygotsky, 1978). Much of the development of sociocultural theory stems from the work of Vygotsky (1978) and his perception that children learn from and are influenced by the world around them. Cultural contexts play a role in a child's development and children create their own knowledge through experiences. People communicate and make meaning from various perspectives which impacts their

understanding (Perry, 2012). Backgrounds, cultural identities, and skill sets impact the ways in which people communicate in the real-world and how they come to learn new things. Furthermore, contexts and people's perspectives also play a role in understanding what is "authentic and meaningful" (Perry, p. 63). Sociocultural theory focuses on the ways in which people interact within their community and culture to influence and shape their development.

Guided reading instruction is grounded within sociocultural theory, which Vygotsky (1978) defines, in part, as development happening in children as they socially interact with more knowledgeable adults. In a sociocultural setting, children's cognitive development involves how a child's thinking matures and develops as they interact with others. Examples include a child learning from an adult in a small group setting, or a child listening to an adult (i.e., mother, father, or teacher) speak, and the child talking back. A child can also listen to an adult read, which plays a role in the child learning to read on her own. The assumption behind these examples is that students learn best through social experiences and activities in which students can make meaning. As teachers make instructional decisions, their perspectives on social interaction, environment, and experience can help them respond to students in ways that best guide and support them.

Vygotsky (1978) coined the phrase zone of proximal development to define the space that exists between what the child truly knows and what the child is capable of understanding—the maturation process that will happen over time (Mestad & Kolsto, 2014). The zone of proximal development describes the space where children grow in their learning with the help of an adult and even with the assistance of a more skilled

peer. In *Mind in Society*, Vygotsky explains that "what a child can do with assistance today she will be able to do by herself tomorrow" (p. 87). When teachers make decisions to guide students, then students grow and learn, both socially and academically. As part of this growth, a child can display knowledge in problem-solving and thinking beyond her current developmental level (Petrova, 2013). Guided reading finds reinforcement in Vygotsky's theory that a child can benefit from the assistance of an adult in the maturation process.

Like Vygotsky, Rogoff (1990) believed children can learn from listening to adults, which helps play a role in children reading on their own. For example, listening to an adult read can provide a model for fluent reading, supporting a child's efforts to read independently. Rogoff also asserted that children can learn when given structured support from an adult. To illustrate, Rogoff gives an example of how an adult provides structured support through scaffolding to help a toddler clean his room. For an adult to scaffold a task such as cleaning a playroom, the adult would first need to define the goal of the task. Next, the adult may divide the goal into parts or "subgoals" that would help the child understand the steps necessary in completing the task (p. 94). With this in mind, from the child's perspective, the overall goal or task assigned seems more manageable. Rogoff discusses the idea of "joint participation," in which the adult assumes responsibility for breaking down the task or challenge into what seems appropriate for the child to handle (p. 93). Providing social interactions supports teachers' efforts in teaching within students' zone of proximal development.

Scaffolding occurs when a more knowledgeable learner assumes responsibility for completing tasks necessary that fall out of the parameters and capabilities of less

knowledgeable learners (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Simply speaking, scaffolding is providing support that helps a child perform tasks or achieve goals beyond what he or she is capable of doing on his or her own (Wood, Bruner, & Ross). Teachers provide scaffolded support in an attempt to address instructional learning that helps students reach independence or an instructional goal. Scaffolding represents learning that is "guided by others" (Stone, 1998, p. 351). The teacher's decision to scaffold instruction can serve as a responsive attempt to problem solve in a given situation. For example, if a student struggles to understand instruction or finds difficulty in reading a text, the teacher can provide support to the student so that he or she can work through those specific challenges. In an effort to further define scaffolding, Wood, Bruner, and Ross identify six components that encompass this term and the relationship that exists between tutor and learner: (1) consider the interests of the learner, (2) simplify the task to the learner's abilities—the teacher will help to fill in the gaps where the learner is struggling, (3) keep the learned focused on the task at hand, (4) give feedback related to the learner and the goal of the task, (5) help manage the frustration level of the learner, and (6) model the task to help in the success of the learner.

Rogoff (1990) reiterates the work of Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) in that adults take on a supportive role for children to help them problem solve or reach a specific goal. Scaffolding instruction involves meaningful interactions with students to support them in reaching a level of independence. In other words, when an adult helps to scaffold within the context of learning, the adult simply provides support to the child on a task that he or she cannot perform independently (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). If a student is engaged in a task and stops because the student is unaware of how to move forward, the teacher

can provide prompts and ask questions that will help students take the next step. Teachers can provide a structure for students that helps give them "cues" such as asking, "What happened next?" or "Who else was there?" (Rogoff, 1990, p. 94). Such prompts can help students problem solve and build on future learning, thereby playing an essential role in students' learning process.

Scaffolding involves considering students’ instructional needs, arranging and making the students’ task manageable, providing support, and motivating students to complete tasks and problem-solve. When a teacher scaffolds instruction, the teacher provides guidance in which there is a gradual transfer of responsibility from the teacher to the student (Wood & Wood, 1996). Teachers make decisions to build upon students’ existing knowledge that motivates them to grow as learners. Instructing students is “about starting where the learner already is and helping that learner to move toward a new degree of control over novel tasks, teaching so that learners are successful and able to say, ‘I am in control of this.’ From there they go on to extend their own learning” (Clay, 1998, p. 3-4).

**Social Constructivist Theory**

Guided reading can also be situated within Social Constructivist Theory, in which children individually construct learning from their existing knowledge. According to Richardson (as cited in Beck & Kosnik, 2006), constructivism asserts that “individuals create their own understandings, based upon their interaction of what they already know and believe, and the phenomena or ideas with which they come in contact” (p. 2). An element of social constructivism suggests that students construct knowledge based on what was previously known (Dewey, 1938).

Social constructivism is not developed solely by a student listening to a teacher's instruction, rather, constructivism is the idea that students understand new ideas in the context of the knowledge they already have (Dewey, 1916). Beck and Kosnik (2006) discuss that children's interactions, environment, conversation with others, and world contribute to their construction of knowledge. This idea is iterated in *Mind in Society*, in which Vygotsky (1978) mentions students already having previous knowledge with things they encounter at school. For example, children begin to learn the alphabet in school, but have previous experiences with letters in their environment before receiving this instruction in a school setting. As students continue building their existing knowledge, it may be necessary for teachers to make decisions reflective of adaptive teaching.

## Adaptive Teaching

Adaptive teaching is positioned within social constructivism (Gibson & Ross, 2016) and can be defined as a "teacher action that was a response to an unanticipated student contribution, a diversion from the lesson plan, or a public statement of change" (Vaughn & Parsons, 2013, p. 81). Dewey (1938) and Vygotsky (1978) suggest that adaptability exists within social contexts in which students and teachers work together to create learning. According to Vaughn and colleagues (2015), "In the context of literacy instruction, adaptive teachers invite collaboration via adaptations, as they engage students in the curriculum and encourage participation in developing and sharing the responsibility of learning outcomes" (p. 541). This description of adaptive teachers is rooted in the work of Dewey (1938) and Vygotsky (1978) on the theory of social constructivism, in which learning happens in social settings. When teachers adapt

instruction, they provide support for students in an attempt to meet their instructional needs. Dewey (1933) poses questions that teachers ask in order to provide the kind of individualized instruction that is inherent to adaptive teaching:

> What do the minds of pupils bring to the topic from their previous experience and study? How can I help them make connections? What need, even if unrecognized by them, will furnish a leverage by which to move their minds in the desired direction? What uses and applications will clarify the subject and fix it in their minds? How can the topic be individualized; that is, how shall it be treated so that each one will have something distinctive to contribute while the subject is also adapted to the special deficiencies and particular tastes of each one? (pp. 276-277).

In striving to meet the needs of students, a teacher considers students' previous and existing knowledge. As a teacher makes decisions to adapt instruction to meet the needs of individuals and groups of students, she contributes to their learning as a response to their instructional needs.

In adaptive teaching, teachers approach students through an accommodating lens so they can help meet students' needs and close the gaps that exist within their understanding of instruction. Researchers posit that adaptive teaching requires knowledge in how to appropriately adjust instruction to better meet the needs of students (Vaughn, 2019). When teachers adapt instruction, they make changes to their previously planned lesson in response to the needs they see arise from students within an instructional setting (Randi, 2017; Vaughn, 2019).

A vital part of a teacher's ability to adapt instruction must first come from his or her professional noticing (Gibson & Ross, 2016), which can be defined as ways that teachers observe student responses throughout instruction to then “accurately and comprehensively” adapt instruction as it happens (p. 181). Noticing how and when students struggle within instruction challenges the teacher to reflect upon the problem and then make immediate and effective decisions for students. Professionally noticing how and when students react goes hand in hand with adapting planned instruction to respond to students and their instructional needs.

According to Gibson and Ross (2016), professional noticing means that teachers pay close attention to students’ responses so they can use learned information to make necessary in-the-moment adaptations to the lesson. The ability to professionally notice is connected with teachers’ abilities to also consider student responses to plan for and adapt instruction appropriately. Noticing students in an instructional setting requires teachers to draw on their pedagogical and content knowledge when thinking about how to best respond to student learning needs. In some cases, these responses are best made when teachers make adaptations, such as scaffolding, that immediately respond to students’ instructional needs. As defined by Gibson and Ross (2016), professional noticing is the ability to:

1. Notice children’s literacy and metacognitive behaviors during instruction accurately, fluently, and comprehensively;
2. Consider interrelated aspects of children’s literacy, metacognitive, and affective behaviors;

3. Hypothesize to interpret and build understanding of children's conceptual understanding and use of cognitive strategies; and
4. Implement in-the-moment instructional moves matched to the immediate needs of students (p. 183).

Noticing students through observations allows teachers to respond in-the-moment, but also allows them to use these noticings for future planning purposes. As teachers consider their professional noticing of students—their constructed knowledge and what they already bring to the table, they can then make decisions in how to best respond to students.

According to Parsons et al. (2018), several scholars interweave the terms adaptive teaching and responsive teaching. Responsive teaching (Kavanagh et al., 2020) can be defined as a teacher's ability to make "instructional decisions that are authentically in response to students' ideas and ways of participating" (p. 95). Boyd (2012), suggests that teachers are *responsive* to teachable moments and respond to student cues. For teachers to respond to students, they must first take notice of how students react to instruction and understand students' previously constructed knowledge. Teachers cannot effectively respond to students if they do not first take the time to observe students or notice student contributions to the given instruction.

Responsive teaching happens when teachers notice their students and tune into students' responses—their ideas, interests, questions, and answers (Jaber, Herbster, & Truett, 2019). Sometimes, it is necessary for teachers to go off plan as they respond to teachable moments presented by unplanned student contributions within instruction (Boyd, 2012). These unplanned moments allow room for responsive teaching to occur, in

which teachers best decide how to respond to students. In a responsive setting, teachers are thoughtfully adaptive as they adjust instruction based on the previous and existing knowledge students have—all situated from a social constructivist stance. Moreover, teachers respond to students as they identify and consider student contributions to the instruction given. Responsive teaching gives students opportunities to take on the role of "active sensemakers," in which they use their experiences and inquiries to grow and learn (Jaber, Herbster, & Truett, 2019, p. 86).

An important factor in making responsive decisions within instruction is the teacher's ability to be thoughtfully adaptive—having awareness of and reflecting on why a decision or adjustment was made throughout a lesson. Being thoughtfully adaptive means teachers know "…*when* to apply 'what' and 'how' knowledge and *when not to*; they know *why* certain knowledge would be appropriate in one situation but not another; and they proactively *look for multiple perspectives and pursue multiple possibilities* because they recognize and respond to the complex needs of their students" (Fairbanks et. al., 2010, p. 167). Thoughtfully adaptive teaching is a metacognitive process, in which teachers consider their knowledge and experience when making decisions (Hoffman & Duffy, 2016). Metacognition is defined as thinking about one's thinking (Flavell, 1976, 1979 as cited in Duffy et al., 2009). In the context of a responsive classroom, a thoughtfully adaptive teacher thinks about his or her thinking throughout the process of working with students to ensure appropriate instructional decisions are made. Moreover, teachers reflect upon such decisions so they can make necessary changes while considering students' interests, background and current knowledge, cultural experiences, etc. to meet their instructional needs (Vaughn, 2015). Furthermore, thoughtfully adaptive

teachers consider how their own experiences and cultural beliefs and assumptions play a role in their teaching decisions—being socially aware of their students (Vaughn & Parsons, 2013). Thoughtful and reflective practice of decisions allows teachers to think about their students' individualized needs and how they can best guide and support them throughout instruction.

Some teaching methods and programs, including highly scripted programs, do not allow for teachers to be thoughtfully adaptive or make decisions based on pedagogical and content knowledge. This contrasts the idea that as teachers notice students' ideas, questions, struggles, etc., they can adapt their instruction to respond to students' instructional needs. According to Duckworth (as cited in Jabar, Herbster, & Truett, 2019), teachers will have a hard time accepting student responses and adapting instruction if they constantly feel they must adhere to a scripted program.

**Summary**

The first section of this chapter discussed the theoretical framework for teacher decision-making, which posits sociocultural theory as a way in which people develop socially as they interact with their community and culture. Sociocultural theory also includes the idea that children cognitively develop as they interact with more knowledgeable peers (Vygotsky, 1978) in settings like that of guided reading. As children develop, the zone of proximal development describes the space in which they grow in their learning with the help of a more skilled peer. Scaffolding represents one way that an adult can help children learn within this zone of proximal development. Other theorists, like Rogoff (1990), also believed that children can learn within their social settings as they are given structured support from an adult.

Another theory discussed involved the social constructivist theory, which also supports guided reading. This theory suggests that children construct learning from their existing knowledge (Dewey, 1916). Adaptive teaching is situated within social constructivism (Gibson & Ross, 2016) and is a part of teacher decision-making centered around students' instructional needs. A vital part of a teacher's ability to adapt instruction must first come from his or her professional noticing (Gibson & Ross, 2016). Once teachers have noticed students' instructional needs, they can then respond in ways that best serves students. As teachers respond to instructional needs, it is important for them to thoughtfully consider and reflect on why they made certain decisions and how those decisions impact students' learning.

## Teacher Decision-Making and Adaptive Instruction

The second section of chapter two presents research on teacher decision-making, adaptive teaching, and scaffolding. In particular, this section highlights studies that showed how teachers made decisions in response to students' instructional needs through adaptive teaching (i.e. scaffolding). This section delves into how teachers responded to students' instructional needs.

Teacher decision-making is defined as an "information-processing activity" where teachers decide upon something and problem solve—they consider student misunderstandings, pick up on student cues, strategize, and select the best solutions to help students (Calderhead, 1981, p. 52). As research on decision-making developed throughout the 1970s, scholars such as Shavelson (1973) and Joyce (1978-1979) asserted the idea that teacher decision-making was an important aspect of a teacher's instructional day. Teachers make decisions in-advance of and in-the-moment of instruction. In fact,

Clark and Peterson (1986) found that teachers made between .5 and .7 interactive decisions (happening in-the-moment) per minute which equated to over 200 decisions in one day. Other research suggests that teachers make in the upwards of 200 plus decisions an hour, equating to over 1,000 decisions per day (Jackson, 1990). As more recent research has developed, it has become apparent that "at any given moment and on any given day, a classroom teacher makes hundreds, if not thousands, of decisions, some of which relate to managing the classroom but most of which relate to instruction" (Griffith, Massey, & Atkinson, 2013, p. 306). According to Westerman (1991), teachers make decisions before, during, and after instruction.

One study concerning teacher decision making, which helped to guide the analysis of this dissertation, examined how one teacher made and reflected upon decisions as she implemented a specific reading program [Reading Recovery] with four students (Elliott, 1996). Within this small case study, results highlighted how teacher decision-making resembled a cognitive process in that the teacher thought about how to best meet instructional needs when responding to students. Elliott states, "…responsive teaching requires that teachers must reason how students are responding and decide what spontaneous, dynamic, and fluid exchanges must take place" (p. 84). This study revealed that, as these exchanges took place, the teacher used her pedagogical reasoning and educational experiences to aid in her decision-making as she responded to students. As the teacher in this study noticed student reactions to the instruction, she then responded in ways that best supported the student(s), much of which involved adaptive teaching (i.e. prompting and scaffolding).

Studies by Griffith et al. (2013, 2016) that examined teachers and decision-making also contributed to this study. In particular, Griffith, Massey, and Atkinson (2013) conducted research investigating the forces that guided decision-making for two first-grade teachers. Data was collected in different phases—through case studies on the two teachers and from a thirty-question survey centered around the teachers' beliefs in their decision-making process. While the study revealed that each teacher made decisions based on various factors (i.e. content knowledge, standards, teaching context), it also revealed that both teachers considered the needs of students when making some decisions. Griffith and colleagues used the data from this research to drive the point that making appropriate teaching decisions proves complex. As Shavelson (1973) states, "Any teaching act is a result of a decision, either conscious or unconscious," and "The basic teaching skill is decision making" (as cited in Griffith et al., 2013, p. 307).

**Teacher Decision-Making in Guided Reading**

Students benefit from guided support, as previously noted by Vygotsky (1978), and guided reading allows teachers to make decisions based on students' needs. For example, in guided reading, teachers make decisions when introducing a new text or leading discussions that encourage students to understand what they read. Other decisions teachers make involve deciding on the types of feedback to give students (Schwartz, 2005). Teaching guided reading requires teachers to make in-advance of and in-the-moment decisions that best serve and meet the needs of all students so they can work within their zone of proximal development.

Several studies highlighted teacher decision-making in-advance of teaching a guided reading session (Denton et al., 2014, Lyons & Thompson, 2012, Young, 2018).

Throughout these studies, when teachers made in-advance decisions in guided reading, they chose to utilize assessment data to group students. However, a past study (Russo, 1978) showed that teachers did not solely focus on assessment data to group students, rather teachers made grouping decisions according to "…students' reading achievement, sex, participation in class, and problematic behavior" (as cited in Borko, Shavelson, & Stern, 1981, p. 456). As mentioned by Borko, et al. (1981), additional in-advance decisions involved planning instruction for each guided reading group. As teachers planned instruction, they incorporated several components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, word study, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and writing) while also considering the needs of all students by differentiating plans.

One study on guided reading reported participants [teachers] making in-advance decisions by pre-planning their instruction in how they wanted to introduce the new text to their guided reading group (Denton et al., 2014). As teachers made additional decisions throughout the study, they chose to utilize running records as a way to assess their students' reading. Teachers then used the assessment data to group students, guide future instruction, select appropriate texts, and help in the decision-making process of planning and creating instructional activities (Denton et al., 2014). Similar findings were shown through another study (Lyons & Thompson, 2012), in that teachers also made in-advance decisions by administering assessments and utilizing the data to form and reform guided reading groups.

While teachers spend a significant amount of time making in-advance decisions for their guided reading groups, they also make various in-the-moment decisions as a guided reading session happens. Shown in one study (Denton et al., 2014), teachers made

in-the-moment decisions about how their students read a selected text (silent reading, one-on-one reading with a teacher, choral reading, etc.). Moreover, when students came upon an unknown word, the teacher encouraged the students to use several strategies and prompted them through scaffold instruction. Other decisions included giving student feedback and praise throughout the guided reading session. To aid in comprehension, the teacher decided to engage in discussions and encouraged students to think about the meaning of the text. The teachers' decisions to adapt instruction through scaffolding further illustrates the ways in which teachers guide students within their zone of proximal development.

As shown in another study (Nayak & Sylva, 2013), teachers made in-the-moment decisions, throughout the delivery of the instruction, to guide students through instruction in a controlled setting of guided reading. This study examined over two hundred elementary-aged students that participated in one of three treatments, one of which was a guided reading intervention. As the teacher listened to each student in the guided reading group read, the teacher then made decisions about student feedback concerning their reading fluency. Also, during instruction, teachers made in-the-moment decisions to informally assess students through peer discussion, which allowed them to check for understanding of the text. Results indicated that students receiving guided reading instruction had improved comprehension more so than those students in other groups.

In another controlled intervention study, Young (2018) studied approximately 80 students who received some form of guided reading instruction. Both the treatment and comparison groups received guided reading instruction; however, the treatment group received more individualized instruction and were met with more frequently by the

teacher. Throughout the treatment group session, the teacher listened to each of the students read. From their reading, it was apparent that students struggled with reading dialogue correctly within the context of the story; therefore, the teacher made an in-the-moment decision to adjust her instruction by adding in a readers' theater. This allowed the teacher to guide students as they practiced reading through dialogue, which gave them the additional practice they needed. Adjusting these plans showed how the teacher provided the kind of individualized instruction needed to support students. As Schwartz (2005) states, "The challenge for all of us as teachers is to continue to refine our personal theories to a point where our teaching decisions can effectively support the literacy learning of all students" (p. 443).

**Adaptive Teaching in Guided Reading**

Meeting students' instructional needs requires that teachers make decisions in-advance of and in-the-moment of instruction and, in some cases, requires the teacher to adapt his or her instruction so students can better understand. Adaptive teaching is a vital part of supporting students (Vaughn et al., 2016) and requires teachers to adjust previously planned lessons so they can respond to changeable moments when encountering students' reactions (Young, 2018). Teachers who adapt instruction consider students' individual instructional needs and find ways to best support them (i.e., through scaffold support). According to Vaughn and colleagues (2015):

> …adaptive teachers are knowledgeable experts who invite collaboration via adaptations to engage students with the curriculum. These teachers continually assess their students to gauge how their instruction can best fit the individual characteristics of each student they serve. Moreover, adaptive teachers encourage

> participation in developing and sharing the responsibility of learning outcomes with their students. In this way, they are persistent in refining their craft, reflecting about learning opportunities, adaptations, and their students' instructional, emotional, and social needs. As a result, these teachers know their students well and can modify their instruction in-the-moment based on this knowledge. Finally, these teachers have a vision articulating what works best for their students, and what they ultimately wish for their students to become as a result of their instruction (p. 545-546).

Adaptive teaching requires decision-making and allows teachers to make the necessary changes to individualize instruction.

Through a multi-case study, Vaughn (2015) used a convenience sample to study two elementary school teachers to determine the kinds of adaptations made and how those teachers used reflective practices upon their adapted lessons. The researcher spent time interviewing and observing within these classroom settings. Throughout the observations, adaptations to the lesson were recorded which were changes made to the lesson that were not pre-planned, thought of on the spot, and a response to the teacher seeking to meet the students' instructional goals. Findings suggested that student learning happened when teachers adapted instruction through scaffolding, providing support to all learners. Furthermore, findings revealed that as both teachers spent time reflecting upon why they made certain adaptations with students, they made such decisions to teach strategies or skills while they also wanted to make connections between the instruction and students. Findings also showed that as teachers reflected on adaptations made, their

main concern was to differentiate instruction so they could better meet students' instructional needs.

In another study concerning adaptive teaching, Nurmi et al. (2013), posited that teacher experience plays a role in how a teacher chooses to adapt instruction for students. This same study, along with other research (Kiuru et al., 2015), considered student populations in classroom settings and how teachers adapted instruction in responding to students' needs. In considering over five hundred Finnish children, these studies showed that teachers spent more time on instruction and responding to the needs of students who possessed poor literacy skills more so than other students. When teachers made adaptations to their instruction, they typically made changes in small group settings in which struggling students received the most help from teachers (Kiuru et al., 2015).

It is relevant to say, however, that teachers cannot always plan for which students they adapt instruction for nor can they prepare for the types of adaptations needed until those moments arise. As Randi and Corno (2000) stated, "No instruction is ever implemented exactly as developers intend, and teachers' own adaptations to instructional innovations become critical components of their outcome effectiveness" (p. 662). Instructional support for students warrants adaptations (i.e., scaffolding) in teaching for students to grow in their reading abilities effectively.

While there is frequent conversation in literature about adaptive teaching, there is a lack of understanding about *how* teachers adapt, reflections of teachers' adaptations, and the "instructional conditions in which teachers adapt" (Parsons, 2012, p. 150). Furthermore, there is little understanding in how adaptive teaching impacts students' learning outcomes (Parsons et al., 2018) in addition to a limited understanding of

teachers' knowledge of what adaptive teaching encompasses (Vaughn et al., 2016). Helping teachers understand the adaptive decisions they make is important to future research and professional development (Fairbanks et al., 2010).

Adaptive teaching can happen within any instructional context; however, guided reading provides a small group approach in which teachers can make instructional adaptations for each homogenous group. In this small group setting, teachers can focus their instruction on the needs within the group, so adaptations are effective and appropriate. While several studies show instructional adaptations with students and instruction (Kiuru et al., 2015; Nurmi et al., 2013; Parsons, 2012; Vaughn, 2015), very few studies discuss how teachers adapt their instruction in guided reading groups.

In one example, Parsons (2012) studied two elementary school teachers and how they adapt their instruction in literacy. This study highlighted one teacher's instructional practice in guided reading and how she adapted instruction for students. Her approach to literacy instruction resulted from supporting a school-wide literacy initiative in that she incorporated guided reading into her literacy block. Of the various tasks the teacher implemented, observations showed that adaptations supported students when needed. Adaptations of the guided reading session included managing time, conducting mini-lessons not planned initially, using what she knew about students to take next steps with her instruction, and modeling or explaining examples of the content (Parsons, 2012). For instance, in one observation conducted, students did not understand an instructional concept; therefore, the teacher modeled an example to show students what she meant. It was not until the teacher taught the concept that she realized how instruction may need adapting.

The previous study reiterates Fountas and Pinnell (2017) in that "There is no script for you to follow in guided reading. The lesson is highly structured and organized to support learning; however, your teaching interactions with students depending on their responses and the goals you see as important for them" (p. 29). Even though Parson's (2012) research used an example of adaptive teaching within guided reading instruction, one cannot generalize that teachers always adapt their instruction in guided reading sessions. Fountas and Pinnell (2017) contend that decision-making is at the core of guided reading. However, can we gather from this that making decisions means teachers will assume an adaptive role as the teacher? Contributing to the research gap that exists within adaptive teaching and guided reading instruction may help educators and professionals alike see how teachers make adaptations to planned instruction in response to students' needs.

**Scaffolding in Guided Reading**

One way teachers provide adaptive instruction is through scaffolding (Parsons et al., 2018), which provides additional support students may need (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). When teachers respond to instruction and adapt instructional plans and methods, they can provide scaffolding for students to perform and master tasks within their zone of proximal development. Students have varying learning needs, and this requires teachers to respond to instructional differences in ways that will help students develop and accomplish tasks set before them (Tobin & McInnes, 2008). Before and during the implementation of instruction, teachers can make decisions that require supporting these varying needs through scaffolding in which teachers model skills the students may need for reading.

As Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) previously suggested in their well-known work, scaffolding instruction for students provides additional support they may need. Guided support woven into teaching helps break down complicated content where students may lack understanding. One study showed where guided support through scaffolding helped kindergarten students make meaning from text in which comprehension once surfaced as an issue (Wiseman, 2011). The teacher from this study modeled reading aloud and thinking aloud and took on a scaffolding role to help students in their understanding of the text. Incorporating scaffolded instruction with her students also allowed opportunities for students to take responsibility for their learning by contributing to and leading discussion.

Even though providing scaffolding support can help students' instructional needs, incorporating scaffolded instruction into the lesson cannot always be pre-planned. As teachers contemplate whether or not they should provide scaffold support for students, they do so in what may seem as on the fly responses (unplanned) (Ankrum et al., 2014). In this study, discussion with students generated reactions from the teacher that helped to prompt students for further detail and understanding of the text read, even though such scaffold responses did not show up in the pre-planning of instruction. In several cases, student answers elicited teacher responses that helped facilitate more-in-depth thinking and understanding.

According to Fountas and Pinnell (2017), teachers can incorporate scaffolded instruction throughout important features of guided reading:

- The teacher selects a text that is appropriate for the group in that it offers a small but significant amount of challenge. Students read the same book so

that they share the experience, and the teaching is meaningful for all members of the group;

- The teacher introduces the text in a way that provides just enough support to allow students to process this more challenging text with accuracy, fluency, and understanding;
- The teacher guides students in a discussion of the text in a way that encourages them to express their thinking and learn from the thinking of others;
- Based on observations of the reading and discussion, the teacher makes specific teaching decisions directed at systems of strategic actions and designed to help students learn something new that they can apply to all of their reading;
- The teacher engages students for a few minutes in quick, hands-on work with letters or words to develop the students' flexibility and word analysis skills (p. 12-13).

A key example of scaffolded support during guided reading instruction happens when the teacher interacts with students to guide them through trouble areas (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017).

Scaffolding is evident in guided reading practices as noted by one study which highlighted reading practices done in grade 2/3 classrooms (Tobin & McInnes, 2008). Scaffolded instruction was used in guided reading to help meet students' instructional needs. For example, one of the teachers noticed students were hesitant to begin their work. The teacher encouraged the students by scribing an initial idea or echo read

beginning sentences. She also had students reread and used visuals to help students decode unknown words. Intentionally, the teacher scaffolded instruction to monitor students' comprehension and use of reading strategies. Findings showed that differentiated instruction (i.e., scaffolding instruction in guided reading) helped struggling readers to understand and apply what needed to be learned to their instructional activities.

Scaffolding in guided reading is powerful and advantageous for students to meet instructional goals. One case study showed how a teacher provided scaffold support to her kindergarten students during guided reading instruction (Ankrum et al., 2014). Ms. Palmer helped students decode unknown words, prompted through questioning, modeled strategies and thinking aloud to help support her students. Her responsive efforts provided authentic opportunities for her to take her students further in their reading development. Similar to other scaffolding examples in guided reading, as discussed in Tobin and McInnes (2008), findings showed that providing differentiated instruction through scaffolding helped meet her students' needs.

While providing scaffold support is helpful in guided reading instruction, the absence of such support can negatively impact students (Fisher, 2008). Through an investigation on guided reading in three primary classrooms, it was discovered that one teacher did not provide scaffold support when students struggled to understand instruction (Fisher, 2008). For example, if a student responded with the wrong answer to the teacher's question, the teacher did not take that as an opportunity to scaffold the question to help the student make sense of what she was asking. Instead, the teacher responded with the correct answer (closed response) and moved on without providing a

reasonable explanation to the student's misunderstanding. Findings showed that all three teachers thought of guided reading as an opportunity to hear students read rather than providing instructional support (like scaffolding) to aid in students' reading development. Ultimately, missed opportunities to provide scaffold support did not help students in their abilities to read and comprehend text.

### Summary

The second section of this chapter presented research on teacher decision-making. Additionally, this section discussed teacher decision-making in guided reading and the ways in which teachers supported students in their learning within this instructional approach. As reiterated by Fountas and Pinnell (1996), teachers are required to make instructional decisions within guided reading that respond to students' contributions of learning. Responding to students' may involve adapting teaching, which allows the teacher to make the necessary changes to individualize instruction. One way teachers can provide such adaptive support is through scaffolding instruction. Providing scaffold support for students helps to meet their instructional needs (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). While this instructional support helps students in their learning, teachers cannot always pre-plan how to best respond to students in this way. However, scaffolding in guided reading proves powerful and advantageous for students in an effort to help them grow in their reading development.

## Components of Guided Reading Instruction

Guided reading is an instructional process designed to develop students' reading abilities (Clay, 1991; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; 2017). The National Reading Panel (2000) identified phonemic awareness, phonics, word study, vocabulary, fluency, and

comprehension as essential components of reading. The Panel also identified guided support, such as guided reading, as one instructional approach to teaching these components of reading and explored the implications and importance of teaching these areas of reading through best practices. Researchers have found that guided reading helps improve students' learning in various components of reading (Nayak & Sylva, 2013; Oostdam et al., 2015; Phillips, 2013; Reutzel et al., 2012; Tobin & Calhoon, 2009). Guided reading instruction also seeks to provide support through writing instruction, which helps in students' overall literacy development.

In planning for a typical guided reading lesson, the teacher carefully selects a leveled text for students that will allow for thinking and learning to occur—engaging them in the learning process (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017). The selected text is within the students' zone of proximal development in which the teacher guides students to proficient reading. From the selected books, teachers create lessons that include various components of reading instruction. "The goal of every guided reading lesson is to teach readers how to engage in strategic actions that they can apply again the next day and thereafter as they read other texts—they must learn to initiate a set of actions that parallel those of proficient readers" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017, p. 361). Within this small group setting, students can experience social interactions with other classmates and the classroom teacher. Teachers provide instructional support through modeling their thinking, which helps build students' metacognitive skills. Moreover, guided reading provides assessment data that drives instruction. In particular, assessment data "allows us to see the results of our teaching and to make valid judgments about: what students have

learned how to do as readers; what they need to learn how to do next; and what teaching moves will support them" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017, p. 210).

Each guided reading session involves several instructional components (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017). Typically, when guided reading is implemented, it is taught every day within a 20-30-minute period. The activities within guided reading include, but are not limited to, sight word study, an introduction of the book, text reading with prompting, teaching points after reading, discussion points after reading the story, word study, and guided writing. Not every activity happens during each guided reading lesson. For example, the activities mentioned above may span across three to five days before a new lesson is created. Generally, the classroom teacher leads and guides this instructional time, and the students respond through reading and application. Teachers make decisions about the most effective ways to build students' proficiency in the various components of reading and utilize instructional approaches that are grounded in research on the essential components of reading. The components of reading, as well as writing, are discussed in more depth in the following sections.

**Phonemic Awareness**

Several studies show that teachers' instruction in and students' understanding of phonemic awareness are a great predictor of future reading abilities in students (Davidson & Jenkins, 1994; Yeh, 2003; Yeh & Connell, 2008; Ziolkowski & Goldstein, 2008). Teaching phonemic awareness through shared reading experiences, an important practice of guided reading lessons, can help students understand that sounds of letters carry meaning in print and can also help students understand alphabetic concepts, crucial to the development of reading. Moreover, teaching phonemic awareness through shared reading

experiences can help with students' reading gains (Olszewski et al., 2018). Through shared reading, teachers engage with students at the beginning, middle, and end of a story to teach phonemic skills (Mol et al., 2009). Fountas and Pinnell (2017) note that, "…by participating in shared reading, they [students] are building the language and conceptual knowledge they need, along with specific, supported attention to print. They have a reservoir of experience to bring to their own independent reading. In this way, shared reading can lead guided and independent reading forward" (p. 70).

Shared reading also provides opportunities for teachers to make decisions about how to best scaffold instruction in phonemic awareness. As teachers scaffold instruction, not only are they breaking down complex content for students, they are also providing support through strategic instruction, with the hope that students will need less support over time (Ukrainetz et al., 2000). Several studies showed how experiences with scaffolding within shared reading provided opportunities to learn phonemic awareness (Mol et al., 2009; Olszewski et al., 2018; Ukrainetz et al., 2000; Ziolkowski & Goldstein, 2008). As teachers implemented phonemic awareness instruction, they made decisions to adapt their instruction by scaffolding lessons which included stressing, stretching, and repeating targeted words, prompting responses through questioning, confirming student responses, teacher modeling language to the student, and modeling think alouds. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2017), knowing alphabetic concepts such as phonemic awareness is an important step toward focusing on and understanding print. Guided reading, at its very nature, represents explicit instruction for students with similar developmental and reading needs and provides a time where components of reading, such as phonemic awareness, can be taught.

**Phonics**

Guided reading provides rich opportunities for additional instruction in phonics, as well. According to the National Reading Panel (2000), phonics instruction is one of the leading indicators of reading success in young students, especially those students struggling to meet grade-level reading demands. Phonics instruction can focus on the alphabetic principle, learning letter-sound combinations, and showing how those letters make words. These elements of phonics are typically taught in whole group instruction or in mini-lessons then later applied in guided reading, in which "students can engage in some kind of 'hands-on' application" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017, p. 405).

Students benefit from phonics instruction that occurs in guided reading groups. Dahl et al. (1999) conducted a study of phonics instruction in first-grade classrooms and found that when teachers made decisions that involved scaffold support through guided reading lessons in which teachers concentrated on reading aloud, tracking comprehension, decoding words, and discussing phonics strategies, students made progress. Although the study did not focus on teacher decision-making within contexts of phonics instruction, it did give scaffolding examples throughout observed teaching experiences. This research corroborates other studies (Ehri et al., 2001; Graaff et al., 2009) that showed gains in phonics when teachers made decisions to include instruction in decoding, phonemic awareness, phonological awareness, and spelling.

As shown in the Dahl et al. (1999) study of phonics instruction and student achievement, guided reading groups allowed for teachers to teach decoding skills and elements of phonics instruction with which children could engage in a rich discussion concerning these fundamental pieces. This study observed that, when teachers made

decisions to guide students to an understanding of phonics, the students had the opportunity to ask questions and learn through discussion. Teachers could then make decisions to scaffold these discussions to enrich students' understanding of words and language. Guiding and supporting students through the teaching of phonics instruction has the potential to propel students forward in their reading.

**Word Study**

Instruction in word study, also known as word work, can contribute to spelling and reading success. Word study helps students understand the orthographic principles of words (Stahl et al., 1998). Similar to phonics instruction, instruction in word study helps students understand the letter-sound relationship in words, but with more challenging concepts that require instruction on affixes and root words. Word work can typically be found at the end of a guided reading lesson in which the teacher focuses instruction on teaching students to look at parts of the word and their "distinctive features" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017, p. 416).

Word study can help students recognize words in reading and can also help students in spelling (Williams & Phillips-Birdsong, 2006). Joseph and Orlines (2005) conducted a study that showed that teachers made decisions to encourage students to self-correct and chose appropriate feedback to give if the student could not self-correct on his or her own, which contributed to students' learning and understanding of spelling and word recognition. While teachers may still rely on the older practices of rote memorization for teaching spelling, making the decision to teach words through word study helps students to become better spellers (Joseph & Orlines, 2005). Word study necessitates deciding which practical strategies will help students in the decoding of

words (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Teaching word study through guided reading groups allows teachers to make decisions that support students growing in their word knowledge.

**Vocabulary**

Fountas and Pinnell (1996) identified vocabulary as a component of guided reading and communicated the importance of teaching children to understand and make sense of various words they see and read. It is important to teach vocabulary through guided practice, allowing teachers to provide "examples and non-examples" of words (Nelson & Stage, 2007, p. 3). In guided reading, vocabulary instruction can also happen through read alouds, repeated readings, and through teachers giving direct instruction of specific words found in the texts students read. Such ways of teaching vocabulary instruction through guided reading enables teachers to teach meanings, explain, and provide adaptive teaching through scaffold support when students are struggling to understand word meaning.

***Read Alouds***

Research shows that reading a text aloud helps students to learn new words (Baumann, 2009; Biemiller & Boote, 2006; Elley, 1989; Nicholson & Whyte, 1992; Penno, Wilkinson, & Moore, 2002). Reading text aloud provides rich-vocabulary experiences for students to interact with and learn unfamiliar words. During read aloud experiences in guided reading, the teacher can decide whether or not scaffold support is needed to help students understand the meaning of new or unknown words.

***Repeated Exposure***

Research indicates that learning vocabulary words through repeated exposure of text helps to increase new words learned (Biemiller & Boote, 2006; McKeown & Beck,

2014; Penno et al., 2002; Sénéchal, 1997). When teachers teach vocabulary, and use stories multiple days in a row, students demonstrate an ability to learn vocabulary words (McKeown & Beck, 2014). McKeown and Beck exhibited that when teaching targeted words, generally, the teacher makes the decision to scaffold unknown words by producing a student-friendly meaning or explains specific words or groups of unfamiliar words, which connects to ideal vocabulary instruction within guided reading.

#### *Direct instruction*

Direct vocabulary instruction contributes to students' building of word knowledge and reading comprehension (Wanzek, 2014). Teachers can make decisions to scaffold support through the various types of vocabulary instruction given including defining the word, using a dictionary, giving examples and non-examples of the word, prompting through discussion, and using context clues (Wanzek, 2014). Spending time in vocabulary instruction within guided reading can help students build word knowledge.

### Fluency

In addition to increasing students' knowledge about letters and words, guided reading can provide instructional support in fluency (Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003). According to Fountas & Pinnell (1996), "When good readers read aloud, they are fluent and use phrasing" (p. 150). One approach to fluency instruction is through oral reading practice; another is to encourage students to spend time independently in text, which develops fluency with time and practice (National Reading Panel, 2000). Fluent reading entails more than just reading words; it involves a process that helps readers apply effort when trying to understand the text.

According to Fountas & Pinnell (2017), paired reading (also known as partner reading) serves as one instructional method for teaching fluency within guided reading. Research shows fluency instruction, using paired reading, has positive effects on students' reading abilities (Stahl & Heubach, 2005). Through paired reading, peer assistance served to help students when they encountered an unknown word in text. Moreover, peer assistance aimed to help students with broken fluency, in which the peer could provide scaffold support. The process of paired reading gives students the opportunity to listen to one another through multiple readings of text, which contributes to fluent reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017). As teachers make decisions to incorporate shared reading experiences throughout their guided reading instruction, they are choosing to support students' fluency.

**Comprehension**

Many researchers advocate teaching comprehension through guided practice, in which teachers can support students as needed (Bui & Fagan, 2013; Fleisher et al., 1979; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Pressley, El-Dinary, Gaskins, Schuder, Bergman, Almasi, & Brown, 1992). According to the National Reading Panel (2000), one of the best ways to teach comprehension is for the teacher to act as a guide to the reader. In this way, students can gain independence in working through the text and thinking through their thinking as well as problem-solving questions asked. Since guided reading is grouped based on the needs and reading level of students, the teacher can guide students through experiences that will help them to understand the text. Teachers may choose to guide students in comprehension instruction through building background knowledge, teaching instructional strategies, or by leading and encouraging discussion with students.

### *Building Background Knowledge*

Several studies indicated the importance of activating background knowledge before reading (Guthrie et al., 2004; Recht & Leslie, 1988; Spörer et al., 2009; Williams et al., 2009). Teachers may take on an adaptive role through scaffolding instruction to help students build connections to the texts they encounter. As stated by Fountas and Pinnell (2017), "The guided reading lesson is a setting that allows you to support students in making connections and, in the process, communicate to them the value of making connections" (p. 476). Students struggling to make connections with a text provide teachers with opportunities to respond by scaffolding to help fill in their limited knowledge gaps if such background experiences are nonexistent.

### *Strategy Instruction*

Good readers are strategic, using strategies before, during, and after reading (Paris, Lipson & Wixson, 1983). Strategies are tools used to help accomplish a task or purpose, and the teacher plays an important role in scaffolding strategy instruction, so students know when and how to use them in the context of reading. According to Pilonieta (2010), "Comprehension strategies are conscious, deliberate, and flexible plans readers use and adjust with a variety of texts to accomplish specific goals" (p. 152). Within guided reading, teachers teach several strategic actions that helps students to work with and take meaning from text (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017). When making decisions concerning strategy instruction, teachers must first consider each students' needs and how they can best support them in their learning.

### *Discussion*

Allowing students to discuss text enables students to experience printed words in a new way, in which meaning can derive from their perceptions and also through conversation with others. Gambrell and colleagues (2011) present the value of and argue for providing students opportunities to discuss text in that, small group discussions can develop students' cognitive abilities and give them opportunities to think critically. When considering discussion within a guided reading context, Fountas and Pinnell (2017) mention, "Students need the opportunity to provide their personal responses to the meaning of the text and to respond to each other" (p. 483). Discussion points throughout each guided reading lesson requires teachers to make decisions that prompt students to respond and allow room for conversation about the text and their learning.

## Writing

Another key element in guided reading lessons is writing. Guided reading groups allow for writing support to take place, in which students can work toward a place of independence in their writing. Fountas and Pinnell (1996) state, "Group or interactive writing, in which the teacher and children share the pen, is a powerful way to demonstrate writing processes for children—all the way from thinking of what to say (composing) to saying words slowly to determine sounds to quickly writing known words to comparing parts of words with other words" (p. 15). Effective writing instruction requires student support and teacher modeling.

One writing instructional approach is interactive writing (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). According to Pinnell and Fountas (1998), interactive writing is a "group experience that increases children's participation in the act of writing and helps them

attend to the details of letters, sounds, and words while working together on meaningful text" (p. 29). Studies have indicated benefits of interactive writing on phonological awareness and comprehension (Craig, 2006; Jones et al., 2010). As teachers make decisions to provide scaffold support by modeling thinking aloud and proper writing, students are able to develop necessary skills that transfer to reading achievement. Writing, a foundational knowledge of reading, helps develop print awareness in students and further teaches skills and processes needed in the development of a reader.

## Summary

As studies in this review have shown, guided support and practice are critical components to teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, word study, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and writing. Teachers make decisions in planning guided reading instruction in which students spend time in text engaging in these vital reading and writing components. Guided reading groups allow for skills and strategy instruction to happen, as well as opportunities for teachers to adapt instruction through scaffolding. The practices and techniques reflect previous theorists in that children develop through social, modeled, and guided instructional experiences so clearly reflective of Vygotsky (1978) and Rogoff (1990).

## Chapter Two Summary

Chapter two discussed the theoretical framework for teacher decision-making and adaptive teaching, all considered within the context of guided reading. This review considered how teachers make decisions concerning their instructional practices. While teachers make decisions in-advance of and in-the-moment of instruction, several factors influence these decisions with the mindset of considering meeting the needs of all

students. Furthermore, this review discussed the challenging endeavor teachers face in making necessary adaptations to meet the diverse needs of learners. Teacher decision-making emulates adaptive teaching and encourages reflective thinking for teachers to make instructional adjustments and help in the creation of future lessons.

Adaptive teaching happens when teachers observe, consider, and respond to students' answers and discussions. Teachers can provide scaffold support in these moments, but only in response to students' instructional needs (Tobin & McInnes, 2008). As mentioned in this review, scaffolding represents a primary way teachers make adaptations to instructional plans, which can contribute to helping students develop and accomplish tasks (Tobin & McInnes). Notable work by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) helps give clarity and meaning to scaffolding instruction in ways that best support students.

Further in this review, research showed that the components of reading are incorporated into guided reading instruction. Teachers make important decisions in teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, word study, fluency, comprehension, and writing through guided reading instruction. Teachers encounter various decisions in how they plan and deliver instruction, as well as respond to students by providing scaffold support. Teaching these components allows students to grow in reading areas crucial to their success.

# CHAPTER 3: METHODS

## Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how classroom teachers make decisions about guided reading instruction before and during the execution of instruction in a guided reading session. In a collective case study, a researcher seeks to learn and understand new information (Stake, 1995). Through this study, I sought to understand how teachers make in-advance decisions about how to group students and how to plan for and create differentiated instruction for each guided reading group. Furthermore, I sought to understand how teachers make in-the-moment decisions regarding feedback and support for students and how to adjust the guided reading lesson plans to better meet students' needs. At its outset, this study sought to provide professional educators with a greater understanding of classroom teachers' decision-making processes and increases knowledge about how to help support teachers in their instructional efforts with guided reading instruction so that teachers are prepared to make effective decisions that support student learning.

Chapter three includes a description of the methodology used in this collective case study. This chapter includes the research questions followed by a description of the research design. The role of the researcher is explained along with an explanation of the site and participants selection. I explain the data collection process that includes the observations, interviews, and lesson plans. Chapter three concludes with the data analysis process, the trustworthiness of findings, and a final summary of the methodological components of this case study. For the purpose of this study, all names are pseudonyms.

## Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

How do teachers make decisions about guided reading instruction? Two sub-questions were also considered for this study:

- How do teachers make in-advance decisions about grouping, planning, and assessing?
- How do teachers make in-the-moment decisions about (a) feedback and support for students, and (b) adjusting plans to better meet students' needs?

## Research Design

Merriam (1998) suggests that using a qualitative research method is the best way to understand and inquire about an interest in educational practices. She states, "research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education" (p. 1). A qualitative approach helps the researcher discover information and understand the participants' perspective. Information learned from the participants helps address the goal of the research (Creswell, 2014) and to understand the phenomena being studied (Stake, 1995).

This study suggests a collective case study design because the individual cases in the study share similar characteristics (Merriam, 2009). Individual case studies can lack "representativeness and rigor in the collection" (Hamel, 1993, p. 23, as cited in Merriam, 2009), and may show links to researcher bias. Barone (2004) suggests that a collective approach helps the principal investigator to gather data from several cases to study the inquiry. Scholars have suggested that having several cases is instrumental to the overall

study and provides an opportunity for great learning to occur (Barone, 2004; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Martella et al., 1999; Merriam, 2009; Stake 1995). According to Merriam (1998), “The more cases included in a study, and the greater variation across the cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be” (p. 49). For this reason, this study included several cases in classroom settings to create in-depth descriptions about teacher decision-making in guided reading instruction. The goal of this study was to collect comprehensive information through several cases that contribute to an extensive explanation of how teachers make decisions prior to implementing instruction. This study also provides an explanation of how teachers make in-the-moment decisions that respond to students’ instructional needs through adaptive teaching shown within the structure of guided reading.

Merriam (2009) mentioned that the goal of a qualitative study is discovering new things and taking meaning away from these new discoveries. Moreover, within the parameters of a case study, the researcher can begin to make sense of the phenomenon being studied and help provide insight on educational matters. Merriam (1998) suggests that new information learned from case studies can impact educational practices and research on future studies. Contributing to the field of educational practice stands as another goal of this case study. While there are several examples of qualitative research, a case study, in particular, is set apart by a “bounded system” (Barone, 2004; Merriam, 1998, p. 27). For this case study, the boundaries put in place include: an elementary school within a specific location, a second-grade teacher within that elementary school, and the teacher must implement guided reading as a part of small group reading instruction.

Using a qualitative case study design helped shape the methodology of this research. Collecting information through observations, interviews, and lesson plans from three primary classroom teachers helped to give adequate data and information for an in-depth analysis of the case. The use of this design helped shape the entire research process, including designing the questions and gathering the data that aimed at answering the inquiry.

## Role of the Researcher

As the sole researcher in this study, I assumed several roles that attributed to my gaining a greater understanding of teacher decision-making in guided reading. An important step in the beginning, was in gathering consent to conduct the research at this site fully and with the participants selected (Creswell, 2014; Glesne, 2011; Hatch, 2002). In this case, I gathered permission from the director of elementary schools in Polis County, from the school principal of the selected site, and all possible participants. Ensuring consent from the "gatekeeper" (i.e., the school principal) of the site was crucial to the start of this research (Maxwell, 2013, p. 90). Furthermore, I sought approval from the Doctoral Committee to move forward, and also from the Institutional Review Board, in compliance with the university's procedures and expectations.

A next step for this study was to gather relevant data through observations (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 1998). Conducting observations allows the researcher to gain a greater understanding of the case (Stake, 1995). As the researcher, I conducted several observations of the second-grade teachers in how they taught their guided reading groups. For these observations, I took on the role of a complete observer, in which there was no participation in the observations conducted (Martlella et al., 1999; Merriam, 2009).

Because of my previous teaching experience in Polis County and also because of my current role as a pre-service teacher educator, I needed to remain separate from the surroundings as much as possible. This separation was to ensure my role as a pre-service educator and the professional relationship I have with Minnie Hill Elementary would not be an influencing factor on the participants of the study. Furthermore, taking on the role of an outside observer is supported by methodologists who have written about researcher role (Martella et al., 1999; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995). To further ensure separation between myself and the participants, I continued to take on the role of a complete observer for all observations conducted within this study.

Taking on an outside observer position, I used a camera to record each observation after having received all necessary permissions. I set the camera on a tripod at the beginning of each observation. The camera was focused on the classroom teacher and the students within the guided reading group. Once observations were complete, I scheduled a time for the post-observation interview. Following each observation time and before the teacher interview, I reviewed the video data collected to identify areas in which the teacher was making decisions during the guided reading sessions. During this viewing time, I took on another role in which I transcribed the video recordings in all instances where the teacher was making a decision.

Furthermore, during the viewing, I descriptively wrote notes about the teachers' instruction, teacher-student interactions, activities, and any other noticeable action that showed teachers making decisions during guided reading instruction. Reflective notes, an important source in the study, included researcher reactions, assumptions, and "working hypotheses" (Merriam, 2009, p. 131) as well as documentation of thoughts and feelings

about the observations (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Documenting such thoughts and feelings was important for interpreting the data (Martella et al., 1999). Furthermore, I wrote initial questions with the intent that the interview sessions would bring about more discussion and questions with the teachers.

Another important role was in conducting interviews. Through the interview collection, I scheduled and conducted interviews with each of the teachers participating in the study. The interview process entailed creating a guide of questions for the initial interview and also for the post-observation interviews. My role as the interviewer was to ensure I had open-ended questions ready for the participants to answer, but also allowed the participants to further expound on their responses. This interview format allowed for a semi-structured approach to the interview process. Furthermore, this enabled me to hone in on the participants and what they had to say, which helped me to understand their perspectives and "avenues of inquiry" (Merriam, 2009, p. 104) that further answered the research questions. I made sure to keep track of the time spent on each interview to ensure I did not surpass the approximate 30 minutes of time I had originally communicated to the teachers. Moreover, I used a digital audio recorder to record all interview sessions to ensure accurate transcriptions could be completed. Assuming another role, I transcribed all audio files verbatim following each interview session. According to Merriam (1998), "Ideally, verbatim transcription of recorded interviews provides the best database for analysis" (p. 88).

Additionally, a further role was to gather lesson plans. Lesson plans served as important documents in the study (Merriam, 2009), in which I examined the pieces of the plans in accordance with the video recorded observations. Thoroughly looking through

the lesson plans proved helpful in formulating questions to ask teachers about their in-advance decisions, as well as decisions made during guided reading instruction. It was my goal to “develop an in-depth analysis of a case” (Creswell, 2014, p. 14) to understand how teachers made decisions for their guided reading instruction. Various data were collected to ensure there was enough information to discern common themes and patterns. As a result, the use of triangulation ensured that the examination of all sources of data revealed possible themes (Creswell, 2014). Moreover, triangulating the data helped improve the validity of the study.

A final role included protecting all participants of this research study. I kept all data in a locked office, and a password protected laptop. Per institution policies, the University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed all the information and requests. The IRB granted permission, and the teacher participants of the study signed the agreement acknowledging there was a small incentive for participating, and no risks were involved. Because students were also involved in this study, although not examined, a consent form was sent home to each student’s parent. Once parent consent forms were returned with a signature, I then gained verbal consent from each student allowed to participate in the research. IRB was put in place to protect the rights of the participants (Creswell, 2014) involved in this qualitative case study research.

**Researcher Bias**

As a former elementary school teacher in the Polis County School District and as a current pre-service teacher educator in the community surrounding Minnie Hill Elementary School, the chances of knowing the participants was high. While bias was possible in this study, I took steps to ensure there was a high standard of ethics in

observing and interviewing the participants (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Merriam, 1998). As a pre-service teacher educator, several classes that I taught were held at Minnie Hill Elementary School in accordance with a partnership between my institution and the school district. I utilized empty classrooms to teach pre-service methods classes. While teaching at the school, I did not interfere with or connect with the participants in this study, nor did the instructional settings in which I taught have anything to do with my research.

When gathering initial permissions from the principal at Minnie Hill Elementary School, I requested that the three teachers be second-grade teachers who teach guided reading. I also made sure that another criterion for selecting the participants was that the teachers were not former students of mine. The principal selected the second-grade teachers, and while I did have teaching experience in the Polis County school district, I did not teach at Minnie Hill Elementary school, nor did I have a personal or professional working relationship with the participants. However, in accordance with Yin (2014), I considered circumstances beforehand such as how my role and involvement as a pre-service educator could create participant bias within this study. I recognized how I could be perceived as an insider, even though I did not feel like I was. My position had the potential to cause participants to look at me as a figure of authority rather than a researcher. Therefore, to mitigate any bias with my presence in the school, I made sure to distinguish my role as a researcher. For example, during any and all observation and interview times scheduled, I made sure that my sole purpose in being at the school was for gathering data and did not conflict with my role as a pre-service educator.

Furthermore, I wore the school's visitor pass rather than my pre-service educator badge, and I made sure to contact the participants for scheduling and member checking purposes through email provided by the university in which I am receiving the doctoral degree. Additionally, I made sure that my attitude during the interviews was communicated as someone eager to learn. I did not want to come across as a teacher in the classroom, rather as a teacher as a researcher (Stake, 1995), in that I am learning new information to help educate others on a topic in which so little is known. Moreover, I took on the role of researcher as learner (Glesne, 2011), in which I reflected upon all the information gathered to sort through findings and new information learned. According to Merriam (1998), the researcher should "establish a rapport by fitting into the participants' routines, finding some common ground with them, helping out on occasion, being friendly, and showing interest in the activity" (p.99), all of which I tried hard to do. It was important to become acquainted with the participants since I did not have a relationship with them previously, in hopes they would be willing to open up more in the interviews (Martella et al., 1999). These strategies helped to draw clear boundaries (Stake, 1995) between my role of a researcher and my role of a pre-service teacher educator.

Because of my role as a pre-service teacher educator, I did not want the participants to feel as though they had to put on a show or teach in any other way than they normally do. I felt taking on the role as an outside observer (Merriam, 1998) would mitigate further bias, and this is why I chose to video record all classroom observations. Removing myself from the setting allowed the teacher to focus on her students and the instruction. Video recording the observations (Stake, 1995) was also a way I could go

back and review the data as much as possible to ensure I did not miss anything crucial to the study.

Also, in thinking about bias circumstances beforehand (Yin, 2014), I considered how my perceptions may create a bias toward the teachers and data I collected. First, I thought about my perception of Minnie Hill Elementary School. I knew the county considered Minnie Hill a “good” school; however, I did not make this same assumption with the participants in the study because I simply was not aware of which teachers the principal or district considered quality or highly effective. I continually reevaluated my perceptions of the school to ensure I did not place these same perceptions on the second-grade teachers. I made sure to carefully review the data and log thoughts, assumptions, etc., in a journal (Merriam, 1998). I found it necessary to write about such thoughts and perceptions so that I could “bracket” or set aside this thinking and assumptions before moving on with other observations and interviews within the research (Merriam, 2009, p. 93). As Stake (1995) mentioned, “Qualitative case study is highly personal research. Persons studied are studied in depth. Researchers are encouraged to include their own personal perspectives in the interpretation” (p 135). While I felt it okay to allow my personal experiences and knowledge to play a role in this study in how I interpreted the data, I also knew it was important to not allow those experiences to form criticisms or judgments of the information learned (Glesne, 2011).

Furthermore, I considered how my previous experiences with and knowledge about guided reading, specifically with Jan Richardson’s (2016) model of guided reading, could impact my thoughts and perceptions on the participants of the study. I made sure to approach the data collection and to transcribe subjectively (Hatch, 2002) so that my

previous experiences would not negate any new information learned. According to Maxwell (2013), “Recognizing your personal ties to the study you want to conduct can provide you with a valuable source of insight, theory, and data about the phenomena you are studying” (p. 27). Instead of thinking about judgments or criticisms, I focused on allowing the data to give insight into the information I collected.

Lastly, to further minimize bias, I made sure to transcribe, by hand, all interviews conducted and followed up with the participants through email so they could verify transcriptions were accurate, also known as member checking (Stake, 1995). Participants’ confirmed their responses through email once they had the chance to look over the transcriptions. Teachers made clear any misconceived perceptions. In this way, I mitigated bias, and handled all inquiry methods professionally and truthfully.

**Site and Participant Selection**

In considering the criteria for this study, I gave thought to which elementary schools in my area implemented guided reading. Because of my career in higher education and the involvement of my pre-service teachers in Polis County Public Schools, I quickly became aware of and familiar with the district’s educational practices for guided reading instruction. Moreover, as a former Polis County elementary school teacher, I was familiar with the guided reading practices implemented from when I taught in this district. In thinking about a site for this study, I considered the need for choosing a school that would evolve information-rich data (Merriam, 2009), would be hospitable to my inquiry (Stake, 1995), and would encompass manageable proximity (Hatch, 2002). These experiences and conditions helped me to select one elementary school from this school system. Focusing on one school was important to the feasibility of this research in

that time spent traveling to and from the selected site was manageable (Hatch 2002) while also serving in my current full-time role as a pre-service teacher educator. Furthermore, I allocated all of my attention to the teachers within one school which helped me to keep the data organized and ready to analyze at any given moment (Merriam, 1998).

As several methodologists explain (Glesne, 2011; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2009), choosing the context of the study is important to the overall qualitative design of the research. In identifying the study's site, I considered many factors that would affect and contribute to this research, such as the possible confusion of researcher role versus educator role (Hatch, 2002). Researching in a nearby setting posed as a possible concern, but I put several boundaries into place to help mitigate any possible bias (Glesne, 2011). According to Glesne (2011), "Backyard research can be extremely valuable" (p. 42) because of the benefits and meaningfulness of the research for the school and community.

## School District Context

Polis County Public Schools are based in a suburban area of Central Kentucky. In a district snapshot, Polis County serves approximately 8,000 students and is one of the largest school districts in the state. Polis County has seven elementary, two middle, and two high schools, while also serving students in their alternative and career-oriented schools. Out of the several elementary schools, one was chosen as the site selection for this study.

### *Jan Richardson Guided Reading Program*

All primary teachers (grades kindergarten through second-grade) in Polis County were required to undergo a six-hour mandatory professional development training on

guided reading before the start of the school year. Teachers were trained on the Jan Richardson method of guided reading using *The Next Steps Forward in Guided Reading-An Assess-Decide-Guide Framework for Supporting Every Student* (Richardson, 2016). According to the director of elementary schools in Polis County, all primary teachers were expected to follow Jan Richardson's framework explicitly, but the county recognized that teachers would need to make their own instructional decisions within that framework in response to students' reading and writing behaviors. Within this framework, teachers learned to assess, make instructional decisions, and guide students through their "optimal instructional area," also referred to as the Zone of Proximal Development (Richardson, 2016, p. 10; Vygotsky, 1978). Also noted by the county director, classroom teachers had to take anecdotal notes of their guided reading groups, progress monitor students every three weeks, and adhere to and respond to behaviors students exhibited during guided reading sessions.

Moreover, Richardson's (2016) framework describes the types of decisions teachers encounter as they implement guided reading instruction such as

- Determine a child's instructional level
- Identify the skills and strategies a student needs to learn in order to become a proficient reader
- Form flexible, needs-based groups
- Pinpoint an instructional focus
- Select texts that will compel reader to think and problem-solve
- Differentiate and evaluate reading instruction
- Monitor progress

- Introduce the text and state the learning target
- Scaffold and teach for strategies
- Incorporate word study and vocabulary instruction
- Connect reading and writing
- Engage readers! (pp. 10-11)

Teachers are encouraged to follow the "Guide" sections throughout the instructional framework text to lesson plan and prepare for guided reading group sessions with students (p. 11). Richardson has the lesson plans organized in a way that helps teachers to gather information on the instructional needs of students. Knowing this information helps teachers to make decisions in which they can "provide explicit instruction" throughout necessary components of reading (p. 11). Then, through writing instruction, teachers can make decisions to expand student learning through guided writing practice.

In using this guided reading method, teachers should extend what students learn from whole group instruction. Teachers make instructional decisions to scaffold what students learn in whole group to the instruction they receive in a small group- through guided reading. According to Richardson (2016), "Guided reading is the scaffold between modeling and independence" (p. 14). Teachers make decisions to incorporate read alouds, shared reading, and independent practice within instruction. Procedures within the framework seek to help teachers in decision-making by providing lesson guides that help them plan for specific stages of reading with their students. Within each reading stage, Richardson (2016) includes an explanation of what teachers should assess, how they should assess, and gives examples of decisions teachers may make. Moreover,

the framework provides instructional information on how a teacher should move through lessons in the Pre-A, Emergent, Early, Transitional, and Fluent stages of reading.

If and when teachers felt they needed extra support or help with their guided reading instruction, principals and county directors encouraged teachers to seek out the county's instructional coaches. Along with support from instructional coaches, the county also implemented an observation procedure, in which all primary teachers teaching guided reading had to undergo observations using Jan Richardson's assessment tools. These observation times allowed for instructional coaches and central office staff to see if teachers were implementing Jan Richardson's framework for guided reading with fidelity. Polis County district, along with their elementary school principals, reviewed school achievement data and benchmark assessments on each student to ensure teachers and schools were headed in the right direction and reflected upon the next steps needed.

**Minnie Hill Elementary**

The population of this school is nearly 500 students. Minnie Hill Elementary has approximately 48% of students on free and reduced lunch. Of the population represented, 84.4% are white, 6.28% African American, 4.49% Hispanic or Latino, and 4.83% categorized as other. Collectively, these students represent over 30 countries. Minnie Hill stands as a Title I school and serves students in first through fifth grades.

Seeking permission to enter into this elementary school started with a formal process of contacting the director of elementary schools for Polis County. Once I received approval from the director, I then contacted the principal from Minnie Hill Elementary. Receiving permission from a superior (i.e., the principal) of the school was crucial to the research of this study (Stake, 1995). I scheduled an initial meeting with the

principal in an attempt to obtain permission to conduct the research in her home school. Once the principal granted permission through email correspondence, she stated the name of the primary classroom teachers willing to participate in the study and met the selection criterion. I made immediate contact through email with those named teachers willing to participate in the research study.

It was important for this research to begin close to the start of the school year. Classroom teachers make various decisions from the beginning about how to group their students for guided reading groups and also in the instruction planning process. In considering the routines and instructional practices put into place from the beginning of the year on, it was important for me to start the study in the first half of the school year. The data collection timeframe of this study ran from October to mid-December of 2019, just before their winter break, in which I was able to observe and interview a considerable part of each teacher's first half of the school year. I included a timeline for this study's activities in Appendix C.

**Participants**

An important piece to the design of a research study involves choosing who and what the data will involve (Tracy, 2013). For this case study, the best process for sample selection involved purposeful sampling (Merriam, 2009) because I had specific criteria for the site and participant selection of this study. According to Patton (2002, as cited in Merriam, 2009), "…the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry…" (p. 230). The type of purposeful sampling used for this study entailed convenience sampling. The

site and participant selection were chosen according to the implications of convenience sampling (Merriam, 2009). Because of my efforts to continue in my full-time position as a pre-service teacher educator while also working on my doctoral degree, the site and participants were considered according to the allocation of time, proximity, funds, and willingness to be involved in the study (Hatch, 2002).

Accessibility to Minnie Hill was a factor, as well as the school's hospitality to my inquiry (Stake, 1995). Even though accessibility and convenience were factors in determining the site and participant selection, a significant determination involved following the criteria of the case. In thinking about my previous and current experiences in the Polis County School district and how my role as a pre-service teacher could contribute to the findings of the research, I considered similar methodological studies when organizing the boundaries and criteria for this case (Elliott, 1996; Smith, 2011).

To ensure a collective case study, I knew I needed to gather data from more than one teacher. Additionally, in considering the criteria for a collective case study, I knew collecting data from two teachers could result in more of a comparative case study (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, I felt choosing three out of the possible four second-grade teachers for this study would generate sufficient and manageable data for this study. One methodologist (Merriam, 1998) chose three cases to illustrate qualitative data collection within case study research, and other previous scholars have also used small sample sizes to study their inquiries (Elliott, 1996; Smith, 2011). For this collective case study, choosing three teachers seemed appropriate and fitting in gathering data reflective of the research questions.

The criteria for this case was limited to second-grade teachers within Minnie Hill Elementary school teaching guided reading as a part of their literacy block. It was important to select a primary grade level for the study since “the primary classroom is the laboratory in which children discover literacy…” (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. xvii). Since kindergarten is taught in a separate school, and most first grade teachers from Minnie Hill Elementary were former students of mine, I chose second-grade teachers to ensure no additional bias due to familiarity. Furthermore, in choosing second-grade as the level in which I wanted the study to happen, I considered instructional components of guided reading. Phonics instruction, for example, is typically completed by or within second-grade, and students are approaching a fluent stage of reading at this level (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017). Second-grade is also the year before students are required to complete state accountability tests, so teachers use guided reading in these classrooms in trying to meet the instructional needs of all students. The three second-grade teachers chosen for this study fit all criterion for this specific research.

***Mrs. Petrillo***

Mrs. Petrillo has taught second-grade for 16 years, even though this is her 29$^{th}$ year in teaching. Out of those 29 years, she spent five years as a high school teacher. Mrs. Petrillo holds both a master’s degree and Rank 1, in which she is certified to also teach special education. As a Minnie Hill Elementary second-grade teacher, Mrs. Petrillo received professional development on guided reading instruction. She received an initial two-day training at the beginning of the school year followed by two shorter trainings later in the year. All trainings happened during the 2018 school year, one year prior to the start of this research. When utilizing resources for guided reading instruction, Mrs.

Petrillo teaches from the Jan Richardson plan (2016), from *Treasures* (McGraw-Hill Education, 2016), and also pulls from the school's large book room where texts and other reading materials are kept. Based on her understanding of the difference between guided reading and whole group reading, Mrs. Petrillo stated, "Um, guided reading, I choose materials that are on their reading levels specifically. And, I can target very specific lessons that they may have a gap in." She also mentioned that her guided reading lessons include phonics skills and decoding, while also incorporating some writing instruction that is related to the reading.

### ***Mrs. Turtle***

Mrs. Turtle has taught elementary school for thirty-one years with twenty-one of those years at Minnie Hill Elementary. Out of the thirty-one years in teaching, Mrs. Turtle has taught only in primary grades—kindergarten, first, and second. She attended a local college for her undergraduate degree and later received a general master's degree from another university. As a Minnie Hill second-grade teacher, Mrs. Turtle received professional development on guided reading. Although she could not remember the dates of the guided reading training she had previously received, she did recall receiving professional development on the new Jan Richardson (2016) program teachers are using now in the district. When considering which resources she uses for her guided reading instruction, she mentioned *Treasures* (McGraw-Hill Education, 2016), *Scholastic* (Scholastic Inc., 2020), *Rigby* ® (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2020), basal readers, what is currently in the school's bookroom, and other curriculum. Based on her understanding of the difference between guided reading and whole group instruction, she said, "The main difference is just to be able to differentiate with the different levels of learners." She

continued discussing how she felt guided reading instruction allowed for her to break whole group instruction up into what she felt her students needed during the small group instruction time.

***Mrs. Slater***

Mrs. Slater has taught elementary school for ten years. Out of the ten years she has taught primary grades, three of those years have been in second-grade. She received her bachelor's degree in elementary education from a local university and completed an online program for her master's degree in literacy. For the 2018-2019 school year, Mrs. Slater received a two-day professional development on Jan Richardson (2016) before the start of the school year and also received follow-up days once the school year began. When discussing the instructional resources used for her guided reading groups, Mrs. Slater mentioned book sets, lesson plans, and the Jan Richardson (2016) program. She uses book sets that belong to her personally and also utilizes the school's book room for additional texts. When explaining the difference between guided reading and whole group reading instruction, she stated, "Guided reading is individualized, so each student is reading on his or her level, practicing the things they need, where whole group is basic second-grade instruction."

In addition to Mrs. Petrillo, Mrs. Turtle, and Mrs. Slater, all students within the teachers' classrooms were involved in the guided reading groups observed. The teacher placed each student into a small group according to assessment data used from the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (2010a) and Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA, 2020). Each second-grade classroom teacher taught four different leveled guided reading groups encompassing each student from the class. Moreover,

classroom teachers were not required to have experience with guided reading. Still, they did have to commit to this instructional literacy approach as part of the literacy block, as mandated by the district. Also, teachers selected were not required to have minimum years of teaching experience.

**Data Sources and Collection**

Several measures were used in this qualitative collective case study. This research entailed making observations, conducting interviews, and reviewing lesson plans with three second-grade classroom teachers to answer the research questions. I first collected data through an initial interview, in which my primary goal was to build rapport with (Merriam, 2009) and gather background information on the participants. Next, I collected data through video recorded observations of the participants' guided reading sessions. Following the recorded observations, teachers gave me copies of their lesson plans so that I could later analyze them. Watching the recorded observations helped in analyzing the lesson plans so I could determine if the teachers adhered to or adjusted their instructional plans. Finally, I interviewed each participant within one week of the recorded observation time to ask questions pertaining to the instructional decisions made in-advance of and in-the-moment of their guided reading sessions. This observation, lesson plan collection, and interview cycle was repeated four times. All data collected provided important information to the overall research.

**Observations**

Observations were conducted on four different instructional school days occurring over an eight-week period. The four observation days allowed for 47 total guided reading groups to be recorded, with one guided reading group session deleted due

to a student (who did not have parent consent) getting in sight of the camera. Each guided reading session lasted about 20 minutes, for a total of approximately 80 minutes each observation day. As the researcher, I planned to participate as an outside observer, in which I set up the video camera to record each guided reading session, left the classroom during instruction, and later watched the recordings to formulate thoughts and reflections that would generate interview questions. Keeping record of the account that took place along with additional notes contributed to detailed analysis following watching the recorded observations, as suggested by Stake (1995). Memo writing, also known as journaling, contributed to the study by way of providing information that reflected important information pertinent to the study (Merriam, 1998).

For observations conducted in this study, I followed a protocol similar to that of Creswell's (2014) observational protocol for qualitative research. I also followed Merriam's (1998, 2009) checklist for observations in case studies (see Appendix B). The four observations for each teacher occurred bi-weekly, in which I video recorded the three second-grade classroom teachers teaching guided reading lessons. Methodologists agree that researchers cannot know the number of observations needed and cannot previously determine how much time the researcher will need to collect data (Glesne, 2011; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2009). While I considered the uncertainty of how many observations I would need, I also considered several scholars' methodological processes of how they collected data in studies reflective of guided reading and decision-making. In several studies (Frey & Fisher, 2010; Ingram et al., 2004; Kruizinga & Nathanson, 2010; Ross & Gibson, 2010; Skidmore et al., 2003; Tobin & McInnes, 2008), researchers collected observation data on two to four occasions, which helped me to predict how

many times I would need to video record the participants' guided reading sessions. In considering previous research, I felt a good starting point would entail four observation times with the understanding that I could schedule more observations if gaps in the data existed.

Within the observational context, each second-grade teacher taught four guided reading groups that were homogenously organized, in which the students read at similar levels, had similar reading behaviors, and also included similar instructional needs (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). On the instructional day that I was scheduled to observe, I entered the classroom to set up the video camera and tripod since I had no plans to participate in the observation. I chose to take on the role as an outside observer because it is supported by methodologists who have written about the researcher role (Martella et al., 1999; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995), and I felt it would help mitigate any bias from myself or the participants. Moreover, previous studies on guided reading and decision-making included video recordings in their data collection process (Hanke, 2013; Rodgers et al., 2016; Westerman, 1991) and other studies have shown where video recording has successfully been used in the past for data collection (Fisher, 2008; Schall-Leckrone, 2018; Wong, et al., 1994). Since I took on the role of an outside observer, I wanted to make sure I placed the camera in a space where it would not cause disruptions or obtrusiveness to the students in the classroom. I set the camera up in a way that looked onto the teacher sitting at a kidney shaped table within arm's reach of each student in the group. This format was consistent for every observation with each second-grade teacher participating in this study.

While watching the recorded observations, I wrote notes about the guided reading groups so that I had information on the groups as they occurred. I recorded descriptive notes on each participant including dialogue that occurred, and a description of the activities that took place within the observational setting (Merriam, 2009). Furthermore, I documented the feedback that teachers gave their students during guided reading instruction (i.e., praise, strategy prompts, giving the word, etc.). I also recorded reflective notes (Creswell, 2014) that included my personal thoughts of assumptions, beliefs, and impressions I had as I watched each teacher teach the guided reading lessons. I kept all journal notes on a password protected laptop (Stake, 1995).

**Interviews**

Interviews were scheduled prior to leaving the building to ensure they were conducted within a one-week window of the initial observation. Scheduling the interview within a one-week timeframe allowed for time to transcribe the observation data collected so that I could use the information gained to create good interview questions (Merriam, 2009). Each second-grade teacher participated in four interviews following each video recorded observation for a total of 12 interviews. Collecting interview data for this research was important to understand the thought process guiding the teaching decisions made within the context of planning for and implementing guided reading instruction. I chose to conduct four interviews centered around the four classroom observations, but I knew I might need to conduct more interviews if my data indicated as such (Hatch, 2002). Interviews stood as one of the most important pieces of the data collection process, as I was able to gather pertinent information that revealed the participants' thoughts and beliefs on their instructional decisions (Merriam, 2009).

At the start of this research, I received permissions to conduct interviews throughout the timeframe of the study. All interviews occurred during the teachers' instructional planning period or after school between the hours of 3:00-5:00pm. All interviews were face-to-face, audio recorded, and lasted approximately 30 minutes each in a semi-structured format. A semi-structured format allowed me to create an interview guide with variance between less and more organized questions (Merriam, 2009) and also allowed for a more "conversational" design in which the participants could expound on their thinking (Glesne, 2011, p. 102). Furthermore, previous research in guided reading and decision-making showed where researchers collected two to nine interviews from their participants (Boschman et al., 2014; Phillips, 2012; Tobin & McInnes, 2008). For this research, I felt collecting 12 interviews would satisfy the study's inquiry but understood I could conduct more interviews if needed to gather more information (Hatch, 2002). Interview questions were based, in part, on watching the recorded observations and also in part of analyzing the lesson plans in trying to answer each of the research questions.

Teachers first participated in an initial interview during which I had the opportunity to learn about the teachers' background teaching experience and also their knowledge about guided reading (see Appendix A). Asking these specific questions provided an opportunity to build rapport with each participant (Merriam, 2009) and provided information for me to include about each teacher within this study. I interviewed each teacher bi-weekly during the eight-week study, following the observation of a guided reading session. Similar to other studies of guided reading (e.g.

Nayak & Sylva, 2013), I set a minimum of eight weeks for this study to ensure I could gather four observations and four interviews from each participant within this timeframe.

I developed an interview protocol per steps and suggestions of Creswell (2014) and Tracy (2013) (see Appendix A). As recommended by Merriam (2009), I made sure to create good interview questions from watching the video recorded sessions and from analyzing the guided reading lesson plans I collected. After the rapport building interview, the interviews included some questions reflective of the video recorded observations and lesson plans. I incorporated a video stimulated recall (VSR) component with the interviews to show short video clip sections so each teacher could recall and reflect upon previous instructional moments. The stimulated recall component of the interview did not entail the teacher watching entire sessions of their guided reading groups, rather they only watched the video clips that represented times I felt the teacher was making a decision and chose to ask them questions based on those decisions. As explained by Bloom (1953), the first to use and study VSR, "The basic idea underlying the method of stimulated recall is that a subject may be enabled to relive an original situation with vividness and accuracy if he is presented with a large number of cues of stimuli which occurred during the original situation" (p. 161, as cited in Gazdag et al., 2019).

During the interviews, I showed each teacher specific clips so I could gather more information reflective of her thoughts and beliefs about that particular moment (Gazdeg et al., 2019). For example, in one scenario, I played a short video clip showing where a student struggled with reading a word and as the teacher started to prompt the student, the student figured out the word. The teacher then responded to the student with positive

feedback. As part of a VSR component within the interview, after showing that particular clip, I asked the teacher what made her give that specific feedback to the student. Showing the teacher this particular clip helped her to examine the scenario accurately to determine a precise response (Gazdeg et al., 2019). In determining which clips to show for the VSR component, I focused on areas in the observation where the teacher made in-the-moment decisions reflective of feedback and support for students and adjusting plans to better meet their needs.

Along with the VSR component, I analyzed the guided reading lessons plans to create questions geared toward understanding the teachers' in-advance decision-making process. The in-advance questions focused on how the participants grouped their students, how they planned for guided reading instruction, how they used assessments with their students, and how they considered students' instructional needs when planning for guided reading instruction. I reviewed the lesson plans and compared them to the instruction I watched in the video recorded observations. Then, after comparing the two data sources (Hatch, 2002), I determined if the lesson plans were adjusted in any way. Thinking about how the teachers planned for their guided reading instruction and also how they adjusted plans helped me to create good interview questions related to the lesson plans (Merriam, 2009).

When I conducted the interviews, I made sure to put the question in bold for the purpose of reading ease (Merriam, 2009). As I conducted the interviews, along with using a digital device for audio recording purposes, I typed notes to ensure accuracies of the interview (Merriam, 2009). Participants granted permission for interviews to be audio recorded. Following each interview, I transcribed and analyzed all data collected. The

transcriptions allowed for member checking as I was able to send a copy of each interview transcription to the participant for further review and checking to ensure all interpretations were accurate (Stake, 1995). The teachers communicated with their feedback after reading through each interview transcription.

**Lesson Plans**

During the data collection phase, it was important to collect the lesson plans the second-grade teachers created for their guided reading instruction. Teachers' lesson plans showed various components of guided reading instruction in how they planned to teach each of their lessons. Analyzing these lesson plans helped me to understand how teachers plan for guided reading instruction and carry out these plans with fidelity, as encouraged by the district. Moreover, the lesson plans helped me to see if the teacher adapted the original lesson plan according to the video recorded observations of the actual lesson implemented. I asked the teachers, prior to each observation, for permission to make copies (Hatch, 2002) of their lesson plans and return their original copy. Kindly, the teachers provided copies of their plans and had them ready for me at each scheduled observation time.

As suggested by Creswell (2014), I gathered documents (lesson plans) to provide additional research information for this case study. Keeping the lesson plans organized with additional notes and reflections helped in accomplishing the goal of answering the research questions. When I collected each lesson plan, I made sure to label the plan according to the observation it connected with. According to Merriam (2009), lesson plans stand as a primary source in the data collection process and help in understanding information in educational studies. The lesson plans represented "unobtrusive data" that

contributed to this study and helped me to create open-ended questions in which the participants could share their decision-making processes in planning in-advance decisions (Hatch, 2002, p.119).

Following each recorded observation, I reviewed the lesson plan associated with that specific lesson. I first did this so I could be familiar with what I expected to see in the video recording. After watching the video recorded observation, I reviewed the lesson plan again to compare the instruction that took place to the instruction planned from the lesson (Hatch, 2002). I made notes (Merriam, 2009) of occurrences where the teacher adjusted the lesson plan by adding instruction or neglecting instruction previously planned. Considering these changes helped me to formulate good open-ended questions (Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2009) to ask the participants in a follow-up interview.

Furthermore, I analyzed the lesson plans to create interview questions that focused on the actual planning of instruction. For example, in reviewing a lesson plan, I noticed specific words written for word study instruction. Looking at this instructional plan led me to ask the teacher how she knew what words to focus on for that particular component of the guided reading lesson. An analysis of the lesson plans provided me with information to better understand teachers and their in-advance decision-making process with guided reading instruction.

**Data Analysis**

From this study, data was gathered through observations, interviews, and lesson plans—all important sources to support a case study, as suggested by Stake (1995). While the observations and interviews represented the primary sources of data collected, lesson plans provided additional information to inform the research questions. After each

recorded observation and interview, I reviewed the data I had collected. I watched the video recordings, took notes, and wrote reflections (Merrian, 2009) based on the guided reading sessions. Furthermore, I reviewed lesson plans to determine how teachers adjusted instructional plans according to the recorded observations and made a note in each space of the plan where the lesson had changed from the delivery of the instruction in the recorded video. Taking the time to review the data and make notes and comments helped me in knowing what to look for and what to ask for in each round of interviews and observations. Merriam (2009) suggests that the "preferred way" of data analysis in case studies is to analyze data "simultaneously with data collection" (p. 171). Reviewing the data after each recorded observation and interview helped me to analyze and think about findings, rather than waiting to sort through a culmination of data at the conclusion of the study. Once I collected all data from October-mid-December, a final analysis began in conjunction with a review of the research questions and purpose of the study (Merriam, 2009).

**Organizing the Data**

Maintaining a well-organized data collection process is a vital component of case studies (Merriam, 2009). A well-organized collection process assists the researcher in sorting through the data during ongoing analysis (Yin, 2014). This section explains how I organized all data sources collected, which ultimately helped in the analysis process for this case study. Instead of waiting until the conclusion of the study to begin the stages of analyzing, Merriam (2009) suggests that the researcher can begin analyzing from the start of the data collection process. According to Stake (1995), "There is no particular moment

when data analysis begins. Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations" (p. 71).

For this study, I collected video recorded observations, interviews, and lesson plans. Since observations occurred biweekly, this allowed me time to transcribe and analyze before collecting data through the follow-up interviews. I began organizing data after the first observation in which I transferred the recorded video footage immediately to my laptop. Furthermore, I stored the video footage on my password protected laptop and saved a backup file on an external hard drive (Stake, 1995). I kept the external hard drive in a locked office or on me at all times. Once I transferred the video footage, I began transcribing moments in the video where the teacher made a decision reflective of feedback and support for students and instances where the teacher adjusted plans.

I used Microsoft ® Word to document and store all transcriptions from the video recorded observations (Yin, 2014). To organize these documents, I labeled each folder on my desktop with Mrs. Petrillo, Mrs. Turtle, and Mrs. Slater. Within each of these teacher files, I had the observation and interview data categorized to the corresponding round (i.e., Round 1, Round 2, Round 3, Round 4). For example, I labeled the folder for the first observation and the first follow-up interview as Round 1 under each corresponding teacher's folder. Following each transcription of the video recorded session, I used Microsoft ® Word to create a reflection journal in which I recorded my thoughts, beliefs, and assumptions (Merriam, 2009). All journal entries were kept on a password protected laptop and also saved on an external hard drive.

I followed a similar protocol for the interview data collected. Immediately following each interview, I transferred the audio recording from the digital device to my

laptop. Since interviews were also biweekly, this allowed time for me to transcribe all interview data before the next round of observations. Again, I utilized Microsoft ® Word to complete all audio transcriptions. I stored all audio and transcription files on my password protected laptop (Stake, 1995), and saved all files to a backup location on an external hard drive. In following the same protocol for the data collected with the observations, I made sure to keep all interview data in a locked office or on me at all times. In keeping with an organized manner of the data (Merriam, 2009), I made sure all interview data were labeled under each corresponding teacher's folder and under each corresponding round. Following each interview transcription, I recorded thoughts, assumptions, and beliefs (Merriam, 2009) on a Microsoft ® Word document (Yin, 2014). I saved all journal entries on a password protected laptop and also saved a backup file on an external hard drive (Stake, 1995).

Lesson plans, however, were organized apart from the video and audio files, as well as the transcriptions. I kept an inventory (Yin, 2014) of lesson plans in a file folder, which were organized according to the round in which the lesson plan was implemented. For example, all round one lesson plans were organized together, all round two lesson plans together, and so on. The lesson plans had labels on them so they would easily be identifiable (Merriam, 2009) for the purposes of analyzing. I accessed each lesson plan as I prepared to watch the corresponding observation video. First, I reviewed the lesson plan to make myself aware of what the observation would entail. Next, after watching the recorded session, I made sure to review the lesson plan again and note any adjustments made in comparison to the actual teaching that occurred (Hatch, 2002). I hand wrote these adjustments on the observation transcriptions I had previously completed (Merriam,

2009) and I later recorded the number of times each teacher made an adjustment in their lesson based on the plan and actual teaching that took place.

The culmination of data included multiple observation and interview transcriptions, lesson plans, and journal entries. Methodologists agree that keeping an organized system stands as important to the overall case study (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014). A further way to organize data includes the system of coding, which serves as an important part of the case analysis (Saldaña, 2016). Within this study, I used several levels of coding to break apart the amount of data collected. Merriam (2009) suggests reviewing your data as though you are having a conversation with it—making notes, asking questions, and reviewing pieces that stand out. This conversational process initiated the beginning stages of coding.

**Transcribing and Coding**

Transcribing the data began immediately after each observation and interview. Following each teacher observation, I watched the recorded videos and transcribed all instances where the teacher made a decision within the guided reading session reflective of feedback and support of students and instances where the teacher adjusted plans to better meet their needs. Decisions teachers made involved but were not limited to asking students questions, extending questions, correcting, providing strategies, etc. Following the observation transcription, I then took notes on each teacher's observation about my thoughts, feelings, and assumptions of the recordings (Merriam, 2009). After the transcription was complete and notes were recorded for each observation, I then took time to read through the data to formulate open ended questions that guided each interview (Hatch, 2002). These questions provided a guide for me to follow with the

expectation that the teachers would respond in ways that elicited additional interview questions and answers, and in most cases, they did (Merriam, 2009). According to Merriam, “What is written down or mechanically recorded from a period of observation becomes the raw data from which a study’s findings eventually emerge” (p. 128). The data collected from each observation highly contributed to the study’s findings and how I went about analyzing the data.

As Merriam (2009) suggests, transcribing the recorded interview to its entirety is necessary to provide the best analysis. For this study, I transcribed all interviews precisely to ensue “intimate familiarity” with the data (Merriam, p. 110). Being familiar with each of the transcriptions helped in the coding process. Following each transcription, I recorded notes that included thoughts, perceptions, and assumptions of the data thus far (Merriam, 2009). The interview data collected helped me to understand teachers’ perceptions and why they made certain decisions in the planning of and in-the-moment of guided reading instruction. In many cases, the responses provided insight to the observation data in that my assumptions were either deemed right or wrong. Once transcriptions were complete, the process of coding the data began.

Coding seeks to define the data collected for the qualitative study (Glesne, 2011). For this study, I hand coded all data. Coding the data involved a conversational process in which I had to sort through and ask questions about the information I learned (Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2009). In looking at the data, I considered how pieces of the data connected to one another, how reoccurring words appeared, and how patterns began to develop. In analyzing the data collected through observations and interviews, I created codes based on the decisions teachers made in-advance of and in-the-moment of their

guided reading instruction. Even though there is no perfect way to approach the coding of qualitative data, I sought to code in a way that met the goal of working through and answering the research questions (Saldaña, 2016). First, I reviewed all data after the process of transcribing. Once I completed this, I used a first cycle coding method to work through the data (Saldaña, 2016) in which I created initial codes in looking at the observations and interviews.

In the initial round of coding, I had a start list that included codes used by Elliott (1996) in her study on teacher decision-making which included: to prompt, to plan, to confirm, to demonstrate, and to hold a tentative theory. These specific codes represented teacher decision-making for small group instruction. Because of this, these codes highlighted similar decisions teachers made within my qualitative study. After considering these specific codes and how they related to my study, I used open coding (Saldaña, 2016) to add to and revise the initial a priori list of codes (see Appendix E). Although the overall data in Elliott's (1996) study compared differently than the data in my study, there were some similarities which highlighted the types of decisions made within reading instruction with individual students. The a priori codes along with other codes created using an open coding method (Saldaña, 2016) helped me to create a list of codes reflective of the data collected in this study.

Open coding allowed for me to explore patterns that emerged from the data to begin constructing viable categories (Merriam, 2009) and consider possible themes. In working through the data using Microsoft ® Word (Yin, 2014), I assigned a code to each teacher response and decision-making event that occurred in the data. While I used a start list of codes from Elliott's (1996) study, I then used open coding to add to the codes from

the data gathered. The added codes included: to follow a school curriculum, to prepare, to reflect, to scaffold instruction, inserts new activity, to connect with whole group instruction, etc. A full list of the codes along with their definition and examples is provided in Appendix E. Using open coding in this research helped me to be open to all possibilities within the data. Once I completed the open coding process, I then reviewed all notes and codes to flesh out categories by way of refining the data in a precise way (Merriam, 2009).

Along with coding the observations and interviews, I coded the lesson plans and how they connected to the guided reading observations. I applied the same codes (see Appendix E for the full list) when reviewing each lesson plan by looking at each component of the plan. Most lesson plan templates showed instructional components in word study, comprehension strategies, discussion prompts, and a fluency check. I coded each component of the plan that resembled whether or not the teacher made decisions based on the same list of codes from Appendix E. Since the lesson plans represented decisions teachers made in-advance of the guided reading session, I used only those codes reflective of these in-advance decisions.

In the first cycle coding, I created a visual display (Tracy, 2013) of all the data. For example, I created charts that I organized according to the decisions teachers made within the guided reading sessions. Under the category of teacher decision-making, I wrote specific words and phrases to represent all codes from the data set, which included codes of adaptive teaching and scaffolding. On one chart, for example, I wrote codes encompassing teacher decision-making that included: to prompt, to plan, to demonstrate, to confirm, to hold a tentative theory, to follow a school curriculum, to prepare, to reflect,

and to scaffold instruction. These codes included the a priori codes as well as codes developed from open coding of the data. On another chart, I continued writing ways teachers made decisions through adaptive teaching in-the-moment of guided reading instruction. The codes representing adaptive teaching included: to go more in depth through questioning, inserts mini-lesson or a new activity, to connect to whole group reading instruction, to teach a skill or strategy, to correct students, used knowledge of students, used teaching experience, and time sensitive. From this first level of coding, I then created subcategories that related to each initial code (Merriam, 2009; Saldaña, 2016). For example, under the first level code of "to prompt," I had two subcategories labeled as to engage students in reading/writing and to guide students to problem-solve (see Appendix E). I based all codes off the data collected through each observation and each interview from this case study.

As I worked through a second cycle of coding, I used axial coding to discover how some of my previous coding needed "recoded because more accurate words or phrases were discovered for the original codes" and some codes were "merged" together due to their similarity (Saldaña, 2016, p. 234). Using axial coding helped to make sense of all the data collected to combine the many codes I had originally developed into two categories: in-advance decisions and in-the-moment decisions. For example, all of the teacher decision-making codes, including ways in which teachers adapted instruction, happened prior to instruction or during the guided reading session. Moreover, several of these codes shared similarities across the data in how the teacher planned instruction and also how they responded to students based upon observations. Fleshing out these categories and connecting similar codes helped to create a second level of coding (see

Appendix F)—a more refined list of codes (Merriam, 2009). For example, I condensed the first level codes of "to plan", "to hold a tentative theory", "to correct", and "student observations" to fit under one code of "used formal and informal assessment data" because these first level codes all fit under how teachers considered their informal observations of students when making in-advance and in-the-moment decisions. The data showed that teachers typically prepared students at each transition in the lesson, which resulted from teachers following the Jan Richardson (2016) framework; therefore, I collapsed the first level code of "to prepare" to "to follow a framework". I refined all of the codes within the data as I did with the previous examples so that a more succinct and organized list truly represented the findings of the data. For a full list of the second level codes, see Appendix F. Finally, I organized the codes, according to the data, in their respective category of in-advance decision or in-the-moment decision (see Appendix G for Revised Decisions).

Lesson plans highlighted in-advance decisions as each teacher had to spend time deciding what to teach within each component of the guided reading lesson. Teachers made in-advance decisions surrounding grouping, planning, and assessing. After considering these in-advance decisions, I then coded each lesson plan and each teacher decision according to the a priori and open codes (Merriam, 2009; Saldaña, 2016). The only codes fitting of in-advance decisions included: using assessment data, to follow a framework, and to connect (see Appendix G for Revised Decisions). Following this, I reviewed each observation and interview from Mrs. Petrillo, Mrs. Turtle, and Mrs. Slater for a third time to create tables reflective of the number of times they made in-advance

decisions for their lesson plans and based on their interview responses (see Appendix I and J).

Furthermore, I looked closely at the in-the-moment decisions teachers made based upon the feedback and support for students, and decisions about adjusting plans to better meet students' needs. I then considered these in-the-moment decisions according to the a priori and open codes created (Merriam, 2009; Saldaña, 2016). After careful consideration of the data, the coding was then revised to only show those codes relating to the in-the-moment decisions emerging from the data (see Appendix G for Revised Decisions). Codes related to in-the-moment decision-making included: to scaffold (to prompt, to demonstrate, to connect, to insert), to confirm, to make thoughtful decisions, and teachers felt time restrictions. After reviewing the data a third time, I considered each observation and interview from Mrs. Petrillo, Mrs. Turtle, and Mrs. Slater to create tables reflective of the number of times the participants made these in-the-moment decisions (see Appendix I and J).

Once I organized and sorted through all the data on my computer, I then made hardcopies of the observation and interview transcripts to spend time coding the data using highlighters and a pencil to mark up the transcriptions. A key represented all colors used which correlated to related codes found throughout all the data gathered. An aesthetic approach to coding (Tracy, 2013) the data helped me to visually see and understand the data I collected, which made it better for me to identify common themes. I took additional notes throughout the coding process and wrote meaningful words or phrases that correlated with the themes found. Yin (2014) suggests starting with an analytic strategy approach when coding the data, that it is helpful to "play" with the data

to see what new insights emerge (p. 135). As I played with the data, I put important information together and created categories for the information gathered from the interviews and observations. I also coded the lesson plans gathered to compare common language and determined additional codes that represented the in-advance decisions teachers made. Once I put information together and further examined themes that emerged from the coding process, I created a chart to show the various themes across the three teachers according to their in-advance and in-the-moment decisions (see Appendix H). The theory and research explained in chapter two of this dissertation helped inform the process of analyzing the data collected.

**Trustworthiness of Findings**

According to Merriam (2009), "All research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner" (p. 209). Securing that the research is truthful is crucial to the believability and goals of the study (Creswell, 2014). To ensure trustworthiness of the findings in this research, I put many methods and procedures into place. One protocol put into place was through triangulation in exploring several pieces of evidence gathered in the study (Merriam, 2009). The use of triangulation allowed for confidence in the study, an important component in the believability of the learned information (Stake, 1995). For the purpose of this collective case study, triangulation involved examining multiple data sources collected through observations, interviews, and lesson plans. A part of the triangulation process involved cross-checking each observation occurrence (Merriam, 2009). It also involved cross-checking interviews from each participant in that the teachers' perceptions of their decision-making processes within guided reading may reveal differences. Moreover, I made sure to ask for

clarification and interpretation of moments noted from the recorded observations that highlighted the participant's decision-making. This helped me to see if the decisions noticed throughout the recorded observations deemed accurate (Stake, 1995). I made sure to connect the observations, interviews, and lesson plans together to determine consistent findings (Yin, 2014). According to Stake (1995), "With multiple approaches within a single study, we are likely to illuminate or nullify some extraneous influences" (p. 114). Triangulating the data collected proved important to the reliability of the research findings, as will be discussed in chapter four.

To ensure dependability of the research, I made sure to transcribe all interviews and observations. As a part of the transcribing process, I made sure to include member checking by which participants had the opportunity to review and approve interview transcriptions (Merriam, 2009). Within 48 hours, teachers responded with their approval or disapproval on the information I had sent. Member checking allowed for validation of the participants in what I transcribed of the interview data gathered. Furthermore, member checking allowed for my observation speculations to be checked for accuracy (Stake, 1995).

Finally, to ensure trustworthiness of the findings in this study, I took necessary steps to mitigate any bias. I made sure to approach the data subjectively so that I could understand the interpretations of the information gathered. According to Hatch (2002), "Instead of pretending to be objective, the stance of qualitative researchers is to concentrate on reflexively applying their own subjectivities in ways that make it possible to understand the tacit motives and assumptions of their participants" (p. 9). Being subjective to the interpretations of the data proved necessary in understanding the

participants' perspectives and reasons for the decisions they made within their guided reading sessions. Instead of thinking about judgments or criticisms, I focused on allowing my experiences with guided reading instruction give insight to the data collected. Following these procedures proved not only important for myself, but also to the participants, as I have confidence that if this study happened again or in another setting, similar results would transpire.

**Summary**

Understanding teacher decision-making in-advance of and in-the-moment of guided reading instruction helps in knowing how to best give support to teachers and students. Chapter three outlined the methodology of this qualitative case study. It reviewed the research questions followed by the design on this study. I thoroughly discussed the role of the researcher for every step of the research process. Next, I explained the participant and site selection as well as the rationale for why I chose the school and teachers to be a part of the study. Following this, I explained the data collection process in how I gathered data through observations, interviews, and lesson plans. Then, provided information for how I gathered information for this study in an ethical and trustworthy manner. All of the information gathered was pertinent to the overall research study in helping me and others understand the decision-making processes of primary elementary school teachers in guided reading instruction.

# CHAPTER 4

## Findings

Teachers must use their experience and knowledge to make decisions before, during, and after instructional moments (Ford & Opitz, 2008). Making instructional decisions for students is a complex process, and guided reading instruction is an opportunity for teachers to provide guided support to students based on sound decisions reflective of students' differentiating needs (Schwartz, 2005). Within guided reading, teachers may provide instruction that is adapted to students' in-the-moment needs (Gibson & Ross, 2016). Little is known about how teachers go about making various decisions (Hoffman & Duffy, 2016), and this inquiry sought to discover more about the decision-making process teachers encounter within a specific teaching method.

This chapter illustrates the decisions teachers face in-advance and in-the-moment of guided reading instruction and reveals why teachers made these decisions. Chapter one introduced the topic and set a purpose for the study. In chapter two, I presented research that addressed teacher decision-making, guided reading, and how teachers respond to students through adaptive teaching. Chapter three described the methodology of the study and how research was gathered and analyzed. While this study sought to clarify teacher decision-making within the guided reading context, it did not investigate the impact of guided reading instruction on students.

This study sought to illuminate how teachers made decisions about guided reading instruction. More specifically, the study explored two sub questions that included: (a) How do teachers make in-advance decisions about grouping, planning, and

assessing, and (b) How do teachers make in-the-moment decisions about feedback and support for students and adjusting plans to better meet students' needs? My study focused on three second-grade teachers implementing guided reading instruction as mandated by their school district. All three teachers made various decisions concerning their guided reading instruction, which I further reviewed and sought to understand to satisfy the inquiry. Furthermore, in this work, I describe how teachers went about making these instructional decisions as well as decisions they encountered as they observed students in-the-moment of the guided reading instruction. These descriptions came from analyzing lesson plans, video recorded observations, and interviews that included a stimulated recall component. The interviews helped me to gain a better understanding of the instructional decisions made and helped me to flesh out prior assumptions or beliefs related to previous experiences. Finally, this chapter gives, in detail, an explanation for teacher decision-making involving guided reading instruction.

I have sequenced this chapter in a way that organizes the results from the data collected. This chapter includes several main sections, including (a) identifying the teaching contexts, (b) how teachers made in-advance decisions, (c) how teachers made in-the-moment decisions, and (d) the chapter summary. The beginning part of chapter four identifies the three second-grade teachers according to the teaching context. The second part reiterates the types of decisions teachers faced as they encountered guided reading instruction. Next, I review how teachers made in-advance decisions according to their lesson planning, grouping, and assessments used. Following this, I explain how teachers made in-the-moment decisions in ways that represented adaptations and

responsive teaching during the implementation of guided reading instruction. To conclude, I summarize chapter four in its entirety.

## Identifying the Cases

### *Case One: Mrs. Petrillo*

As a second-grade teacher at Minnie Hill Elementary School, Mrs. Petrillo incorporated guided reading instruction into her daily literacy block as mandated by the district and school. She had 23 students within her classroom, all at varying reading levels. As you enter her classroom, you are welcomed with a decorative sign on her door. A carpeted area takes up space to one side of the classroom where students gather for some whole group teaching lessons, read alouds, meetings, etc. Student desks were aligned family style in that several students face each other in a long row. Four total rows made up all of the student desks. In the back corner of the classroom, next to student cubbies where personal belongings were kept, sat a kidney-shaped table. At this table, Mrs. Petrillo conducted all of her guided reading lessons. This space also kept her guided reading materials—texts, white boards, markers, etc. The environment was inviting and conducive to learning although the space felt somewhat limited due to the number of students and classroom furniture throughout the room.

Mrs. Petrillo received professional development training on guided reading instruction using the Jan Richardson model (2016). When planning each of her guided reading group lessons, she used the Jan Richardson (2016) lesson plan template and made instructional plans based on the reading components within the template. Each lesson plan differed according to the reading level of the group; therefore, each group focused on a different text. Mrs. Petrillo utilized classroom books and books from the school's

bookroom to complete sets of texts she needed to conduct the guided reading sessions. Depending on the focus on the lesson, Mrs. Petrillo always had appropriate materials ready to go so that students could easily access what they needed for word study instruction and writing.

Each day at 10:20am, Mrs. Petrillo called order to her classroom and transitioned students to their literacy groups—each rotating to a guided reading group by the end of the literacy block. Mrs. Petrillo began each of her guided reading sessions with her highest achieving group with the fourth and final group of each day focusing on her students who are reading at the lowest levels in the classroom. Several of her low achieving students attended a response to intervention session while the first few guided reading groups happened; therefore, she saw these students as the last guided reading group of each day.

For each guided reading group session, Mrs. Petrillo very much tried to stay on track with her lesson plan and adhered to the 20-minute time frame suggested by the Jan Richardson (2016) method of guided reading instruction. From the video recorded guided reading sessions, I observed rare occasions where Mrs. Petrillo did not stick to her lesson plan or ran out of time in which she could not complete all components she had previously planned. In several instances, it seemed as though Mrs. Petrillo felt stressed and possibly rushed to get through all of the components she had planned, and I feel this was partially due to her being video recorded. She casually noted, as I was setting up for an interview, that being video recorded made her a little nervous. However, this did not stop her from attempting to follow through with each of her lessons. Without questioning or prompting, Mrs. Petrillo mentioned how she felt the Jan Richardson (2016) model of

guided reading benefited her students and allowed her to see great growth in their reading abilities.

***Case Two: Mrs. Turtle***

As a second-grade teacher at Minnie Hill Elementary School, Mrs. Turtle incorporated guided reading instruction into her daily literacy block as mandated by the district and school. She had 26 students in her classroom, all at varying reading levels. Adjacent to Mrs. Petrillo, Mrs. Turtle had an inviting entrance to her classroom highlighting a sports theme. Student desks were organized into several small groups around the room, with a particular sport hanging from the ceiling indicating that particular group name. Mrs. Turtle had a carpet area in the back of the classroom to the right of her desk. Shelves filled with books, manipulatives, and a rolling white board lined the carpet area. Mrs. Turtle used this space to read books aloud, had meetings with her students, taught various lessons, and had students spend time positioned at different times on the carpet for their independent reading. On the right-hand side, in the back corner of her classroom, Mrs. Turtle had a kidney shaped table where she conducted her guided reading group sessions. To the side of the table sat a smaller shelf where she kept resources and books for these sessions. Mrs. Turtle's bubbly and welcoming personality made her classroom environment feel warm and inviting.

Like her colleagues, Mrs. Turtle received professional development training on guided reading instruction using the Jan Richardson model (2016). When planning each of her guided reading group lessons, she incorporated Jan Richardson (2016) components, but used her own lesson plan document rather than opting to use the Jan Plan template. Although she used the same lesson plan document for each of her groups,

three of the four groups had a different lesson plan. Mrs. Turtle had two groups on the same reading level with similar reading needs; therefore, she had one lesson plan for two different groups of students. To account for the resources she used in each of her guided reading groups, Mrs. Turtle accessed the school book room for texts to expand on what she had in her classroom library. Depending on the focus of the lesson, Mrs. Turtle always had appropriate materials ready to go so that students could easily access what they needed for that particular group time.

Guided reading groups began at around 10:20am each day in Mrs. Turtle's classroom. On several occasions, groups began late since students were outside for their break time just prior to the beginning of guided reading. Mrs. Turtle adjusted her instructional plans accordingly, but always made sure to adhere to the 20-minute suggested time frame for each of her guided reading group sessions. She transitioned students from their morning break time to their literacy group rotations, in which she began her guided reading groups. Like Mrs. Petrillo, Mrs. Turtle began with her highest readers for her first guided reading group session since other students were receiving intervention support for their response to intervention time. Therefore, Mrs. Turtle ended the guided reading group time with her lowest level readers.

Each guided reading group session appeared different in Mrs. Turtle's room. On many occasions, Mrs. Turtle stayed on track with the lesson she had prepared for each particular guided reading group time. However, on several other occasions Mrs. Turtle strayed from the lesson plan, such as when she responded to students, or when she perceived a teachable moment. In fact, the majority of Mrs. Turtle's guided reading group sessions that I observed incorporated teachable moments and various in-the-moment

decisions not indicated on her lesson plan. While Mrs. Turtle did not appear stressed or anxious in the delivery of her guided reading lessons while being recorded on camera, she always kept her phone close so that she could keep a timer going for each session. In the many occasions Mrs. Turtle did not finish a day's lesson or get to the instruction she had indicated on the lesson plan, she always moved it to the next day or had an "I can get to it later" attitude because she felt her instructional time was always spent on responding to students and what she felt they needed in those guided reading instructional moments.

***Case Three: Mrs. Slater***

As a second-grade teacher at Minnie Hill Elementary School, Mrs. Slater incorporated guided reading instruction into her daily literacy block as mandated by the district and school. She had 24 students within her classroom, all at varying reading levels. Across the hall from Mrs. Petrillo and Mrs. Turtle, Mrs. Slater had a welcoming classroom. Hanging from the ceiling and above student desks were bundled balloons varying in color. Mrs. Slater had the desks arranged similarly to Mrs. Turtle's classroom, in that all students sat in small groups throughout the room. To the left and by the main teaching white board laid a carpeted area for students. Mrs. Slater usually conducted whole group instruction, read alouds, and held student meetings in this carpeted space. Moreover, this space welcomed students to read independently as they spent time in their various literacy groups. In the back of the classroom, directly in front of a window looking out onto the playground, sat a kidney shaped table where Mrs. Slater conducted her guided reading groups. Behind this table sat several book shelves where she kept her guided reading materials and resources. Students could access books from the classroom library around the room and visit their classroom pets—two hermit crabs. Mrs. Slater

created a positive classroom with the inspirational quotes and posters scattered throughout. With all of the classroom furniture and need for student reading areas, the classroom was organized tightly.

Mrs. Slater received professional development training on guided reading instruction, like that of her colleagues, in using the Jan Richardson model (2016). When planning each of the guided reading group sessions, Mrs. Slater used a mix of the Jan Richardson templates and her own lesson plan documents. Each lesson differed according to the group of students. She began each guided reading group with her highest leveled readers and ended with her lowest leveled readers. This sequence allowed for students reading at the lowest levels to receive instructional support during their response to intervention time first and later receive support through their guided reading time. Mrs. Slater utilized many books from within her classroom library but also utilized book sets from the school's book room. Depending on the focus of the lesson, Mrs. Slater always had appropriate materials ready to go so that students could access them during the instructional time spent in groups.

Mrs. Slater transitioned her students from break time, usually after a quick walk or jog outside, into their literacy groups at about 10:20am each day. On several occasions, Mrs. Slater did not begin groups until later than 10:20am, but she adjusted the recommended 20 minutes per guided reading group accordingly. Mrs. Slater utilized her lesson plans for each group, making sure to touch on and incorporate the instruction she had planned. Most days that I observed, her groups seemed consistent, in that they always began with word work or vocabulary then later transitioned into reading their leveled book. Mrs. Slater strayed from her plans frequently in that she spent the majority of the

guided reading group time teaching new words or asking several questions that prompted students to go deeper in their reasoning and thinking. Never did I observe a time where I felt Mrs. Slater seemed stressed or anxious that the lessons were being recorded. Rather, she seemed to not notice the camera and focused on her students. The students in her class knew the routines well and Mrs. Slater transitioned them to each of their literacy groups by singing the catchy tune, “Stop and stand, stop, stop, and stand.”

## How Teachers Made In-Advance Decisions

This section reviews the findings that emerged from my analysis of teachers’ in-advance decisions for guided reading. Findings from the observations, interviews, and lesson plans can be categorized under three overarching themes related to in-advance decision-making: utilizing formal and informal assessment data, framework for teaching, and making connections. Although evidence showed variation across the three teachers, they all exhibited similarities with in-advance decision-making across these three themes.

### Utilizing Formal and Informal Assessment Data

The first theme pertaining to in-advanced decisions that emerged from the data was that teachers used formal and informal assessment data to group students for guided reading and to make instructional plans. Throughout this study, teachers used assessment data for grouping and for some instructional purposes. However, it was not always evident how teachers used observations of students’ responses during guided reading for planning guided reading instruction.

#### *Formal Assessment Data*

Formal assessments were used to help determine students’ reading levels and specific instructional needs involving guided reading instruction. The school district

required that teachers assess students' reading level using the Benchmark Assessment System (Fountas & Pinnell, 2010a). Teachers were also required by the district to give a district level assessment called MAP (NWEA, 2021), and other district assessments that check for standard mastery.

When I asked Mrs. Turtle how she determined the guided reading group levels for her students, she said that she determines her groups:

> Based on our MAP computerized test that we give in the fall. And, we have that really early at the beginning of the year to get some good data from them. And then, I also looked at the benchmarks that actually were given at the end of spring of first grade to start the year.

In creating student groups for guided reading, Mrs. Turtle based her decisions on the formal assessment data she had on her students. Likewise, Mrs. Petrillo also used formal assessment data to determine students' reading levels and guided reading groups. "I start at the beginning of the year with their benchmark from the spring." Also like Mrs. Turtle and Mrs. Petrillo, Mrs. Slater used benchmark scores to make in-advance decisions about students and the appropriate groups in which they should be placed. When I asked Mrs. Slater how she knows students are on specific reading levels for each group, she said, "There are guided reading benchmark scores from the spring…" Thus, all three teachers used formal assessment data in determining the reading levels of students to then plan for student grouping.

Although teachers used some formal assessment data to place students in groups, evidence is limited that these formal assessments were used to meet specific instructional needs within guided reading instruction. When I asked the teachers what drove their

decisions as they sat down to plan their lessons, no teacher responded with using formal assessments such as the Benchmark Assessment System (Fountas & Pinnell, 2010a) or MAP (NWEA, 2021) for planning purposes. Furthermore, when I asked teachers specific questions about the fluency or comprehension components of their lessons, they did not tend to refer to specific examples from formal assessments.

***Informal Assessment Data***

While formal assessments were used primarily for grouping, teachers also used informal assessment data to help make in-advance decisions around grouping students. Teachers not only used informal assessment data for grouping, but they also used informal measures for planning instruction. Program-specific inventories and, to a much lesser extent, student observations informed teachers' planning.

**Program Specific Inventories.** Throughout this study's data collection process, it was observed in multiple settings that teachers utilized several assessments from Richardson's (2016) *The Next Step Forward in Guided Reading: An Assess-Decide-Guide Framework for Supporting Every Reader*. For example, teachers used inventories such as the Sight Word Chart for Monitoring Progress on reading levels A-I and the Word Knowledge Inventory to make in-advance decisions in planning for instruction fitting of students' reading needs. According to the participating teachers, they were trained to use these assessments, which then helped them create plans for sight word and word study instruction within each guided reading lesson.

**Sight Word Chart for Monitoring Progress.** In all cases, when I asked each of the teachers throughout the different interview sessions how they knew which words to focus on for sight word instruction, each mentioned the Sight Word Chart for Monitoring

Progress from Richardson's framework. All three teachers talked about how the Sight Word Chart helped them make in-advance decisions about which words to incorporate into the sight word component of their lesson plans.

Mrs. Petrillo used the Sight Word Chart for Monitoring Progress and indicated that she keeps a "running record" of the words she teaches in each of the groups. The running record chart she kept allowed her to see which words students needed additional instruction on. Richardson's framework suggests sight word activities such as writing the missing letter or mix and fix, which Mrs. Petrillo completed with her students.

Mrs. Turtle followed a similar format in that she gave the same Sight Word Chart for Monitoring Progress assessment from the Jan Richardson framework. When I asked her how she decided which sight words to teach, she said:

> I did at the beginning of the year an assessment on every child…um, that's pretty much with all of my groups…just to keep track of them and then I have a checklist so I know what child knows what and if half of them from last week are still missing that word, then I continue sometimes with that same sight word and just add one or two other ones, but keep to those if they are still having trouble with them.

The data from the Sight Word Chart was important for Mrs. Turtle to utilize as she made in- advance instructional decisions around sight word instruction.

Similarly, Mrs. Slater also used the Sight Word Chart for Monitoring Progress to assess students' sight word knowledge. I specifically asked how Mrs. Slater determined students needed practice with specific words. She said:

> Oh, I have the sight word inventory from it comes with Jan Richardson and I assess at the beginning of the year and determine which ones only a kid or two needs and which ones everyone needs. And, I just go through that list.

She then preceded to show me the exact chart she used for one particular guided reading group. As she showed me the chart she explained how she completes it, "So, this means I've taught it, this means I've reviewed it. And, sometimes you teach a word again and again and you find a different way to teach it because they still can't spell the word 'said'." I asked her specifically how she made the decision to plan instruction for teaching specific sight words and she said, "I started with what was prescribed by Jan Richardson in the plan and then just tweaked it over time." This example, along with others previously mentioned, indicated that using the Sight Word Chart from the Jan Richardson framework was especially helpful to these teachers.

**Word Knowledge Inventory.** Another way some of the participating teachers utilized assessments to help plan instruction was through the Jan Richardson Word Knowledge Inventory. Word study was a consistent teaching component in each of the teachers' lesson plans, even though the Word Knowledge Inventory was only utilized by two of the three teachers.

Mrs. Petrillo used the Word Knowledge Inventory to help plan instruction for word study in each of her lessons. She mentioned, "I used word study to focus on patterns like vowel teams, endings, suffixes, and prefixes." According to Mrs. Petrillo, this inventory helped her to know and decide which words she should focus on during this instructional component of each lesson.

Mrs. Slater also used the same word list as Mrs. Petrillo to help her determine which words she needed to teach during the word study instruction component of the lesson. “I used the Word Knowledge Inventory to determine which word chunks we need to learn, based on each group.” On another occasion, Mrs. Slater discussed that she decided which words students needed “from the inventory at the beginning of the year.” My question in asking how she determined the words to teach for word study instruction in each of her lessons elicited a repetitive response each time, “Same.” Both Mrs. Petrillo and Mrs. Slater utilized the Word Knowledge Inventory from Richardson to help make instructional decisions for word study instruction throughout their plans.

Unlike Mrs. Petrillo and Mrs. Slater, Mrs. Turtle did not use the Word Knowledge Inventory. Instead, Mrs. Turtle determined word study instruction from the Sight Word Chart for Monitoring Progress. When deciding which students needed which words for instruction, she mentioned:

> Their names are listed on a list and the words are going across and I check off if I know they have done those well. And, if not, I can make a note they had the beginning, middle, and the end, but missed the vowel. You know, those types of things.

Mrs. Turtle’s method for making in-advance decision for word study instruction was inconsistent with Mrs. Slater and Mrs. Petrillo in that she did not use the same Word Knowledge Inventory from the Jan Richardson framework.

In all cases, the teachers used formal and informal data to consider student grouping, and they used informal assessments to make some instructional plans for their guided reading groups. They relied on the program-specific Sight Word Chart for

Monitoring Progress and two of the three teachers also relied on the Word Knowledge Inventory.

**Student Observations.** All three teachers took at least some anecdotal notes on students' reading behaviors and responses during guided reading sessions. However, in this case study, in-advance decisions about instructional planning were not heavily influenced by teachers' documentation of individual needs. Instead, teachers used general information about the needs of the group or needs exhibited previously by the entire class.

Before each guided reading lesson was taught, all three teachers sat down (individually) to plan for their guided reading groups, however, teachers limitedly considered previous student observations and anecdotal notes. On several occasions throughout my interview sessions with each teacher, I asked things they considered as they sat down to write their lesson plans. I asked questions like, "How did you consider students instructional needs?" and "When you sat down to write this lesson plan, what things did you consider?" Sometimes, they indicated they relied on their observations of students, but I did not always see evidence of them using their observations to plan during the interviews. For example, Mrs. Petrillo indicated some of her lesson plans were recycled—lessons used from previous years, which indicated that she did not necessarily consider her current students' needs when making in-advance planning decisions for her students in using these particular lessons. When asking Mrs. Slater how she considered students' instructional needs for a particular lesson, she responded, "I was looking for a nonfiction text that had some good text features. And, there are a couple of boys in this group that they talked about big machines and so there was a connection there with them

individually." Although Mrs. Slater indicated that she considered students' interests to plan that particular lesson, other instructional needs were not mentioned.

Mrs. Petrillo did consider student observations when making decisions about placing students in guided reading groups, but she did not seem to use observations when making in-advance decisions about how to plan for various reading components within each lesson to meet specific students' needs. She discussed that when new students "trickle" in throughout the year she bases her reading group decisions on "listening to them read" and that helps her figure out the appropriate group for the student(s). However, Mrs. Petrillo's answers lacked substance when discussing specific needs of students in how she planned her guided reading lessons based on her observations or notes. After watching the first observation, I asked Mrs. Petrillo how she planned for the comprehension focus [retell] for the first guided reading group. She responded:

> Again, it's a weakness for some of the kids in this group. And, it was just that someone had handed me a little piece of information about the strategy and I was just wanting to try it out and to use it with the children and see how they reacted to it.

Specific students were not mentioned, rather a general statement was made about the students in her first guided reading group. Wanting to see students' response to a new strategy did not communicate that Mrs. Petrillo really considered each student from that particular group and their specific reading needs. When I asked how she determined the strategy focus for another guided reading group, she said, "My class as a whole does not do very good, very well with expression. So, they just need more practice." Again, Mrs. Petrillo generalized what this group of students needed based off a whole group

observation, rather than thinking about the specific needs of each of her individual students for that particular group

Furthermore, I saw that Mrs. Petrillo took notes as she was observing students throughout the various guided reading groups. In one interview, I asked what notes she takes and what she plans to do with that information. Mrs. Petrillo discussed writing notes that indicated students' decoding skills, errors made, and notes about comprehension or whatever skill they were working on, but never specifically mentioned how these notes help her to make in-advance decisions when lesson planning. Several interview sessions together led me to believe Mrs. Petrillo did not consider anecdotal notes when planning for instructional lessons because she could not speak to observations or notes that caused her to make specific in-advance plans for particular students.

Like Mrs. Petrillo, Mrs. Turtle used student observations to help aid her decisions with student grouping. She mentioned that she "…did listen to them read and answer questions. I also would make observations and notes when we would have whole group reading lessons as well." Also, like Mrs. Petrillo, it was not always clear how Mrs. Turtle used student observations and anecdotal notes to make in-advance decisions for future lesson planning. On several occasions, Mrs. Turtle discussed times in which she observed students' particular reading behaviors and what they needed to work on, but there was never a clear answer as to how she went about using these observations for future planning. For example, in several interview settings I asked, "Talk to me about your thought process in planning this lesson. When you sit down to plan, what things did you consider?" Sometimes, the teacher would stare at me for several seconds or pause for a brief moment. Those brief moments led me to pull out the teacher's lesson plan in hopes

that reviewing it would help her give a response. In these occasions, I never came away with a clear understanding of how Mrs. Turtle considered students' individual needs when making decisions about future guided reading group sessions.

As a part of observing students, Mrs. Turtle sometimes recorded anecdotal notes throughout her guided reading group sessions. When I asked her what types of notes she recorded and how she used them, she mentioned writing about a particular connection one student made and went on to discuss that "…if there's something that I see, if they're continuing to not do that, then I'll know 'Oh!' to star that and to hit them with it again." Although this response does demonstrate some use of observations to plan instruction, I did not note this as a regular practice for Mrs. Turtle. Out of the four observations, I only noted one time where Mrs. Turtle wrote anecdotal notes based on student observations and did not clearly see how Mrs. Turtle used those notes to make in-advance decisions for future instruction.

Like Mrs. Petrillo and Mrs. Turtle, Mrs. Slater focused on using informal observations when planning for student grouping. She said, "I have every kid read to me at the beginning of the year and I make adjustments. I also make adjustments throughout the year as I need to." She discussed her thought process in moving students to the next reading level or next group: "I do a scale out of 4, so when everybody is at a 3 or 4 on fluency and comprehension, we move to the next."

In addition, Mrs. Slater provided one of the few illustrations of how she uses her observations of students to plan her instruction. In one particular group, Mrs. Slater focused on monitoring for meaning as the comprehension focus portion of the lesson. When I asked how she chose this strategy for the lesson component, she mentioned:

> A lot of times I'll consider times that week that they read and didn't correct. You know, something didn't make sense and they didn't go back and fix it anyway. I feel like monitoring for meaning is the very beginning for comprehension. So, I will stick to that and come back over and over until I feel like they've got it. It's just a foundation, so if they're still reading words that aren't right and absolutely make no sense, then we'll come back to that. And, when they do fix it, we'll celebrate!

This example showed a rare occasion where Mrs. Slater relied on previous student observations when considering in-advanced lesson planning decisions. When I asked Mrs. Slater how she considered her students' instructional needs when planning lessons, she focused more on discussing trying to make connections with students rather than discussing her considerations of their specific reading needs. On one occasion, Mrs. Slater responded with, "I don't remember. I'm sorry" when I asked how she considered students' instructional needs for one of her guided reading groups.

Along with the uncertainty of how Mrs. Slater used student observations to make in-advance decisions, I was also left wondering what her purpose was in recording anecdotal notes. When talking through one observation where I watched her record notes after working with several students, I asked her how she determined what to record. She said, "I make in my notes when I hear everybody read. I note fluency and comprehension." She also mentioned:

> Most of it's fluency and comprehension. Every once in a while, it may be a word strategy, something that they've struggled with—either how they solved it or how I told them the word and that's something I need to focus on."

While Mrs. Slater discussed the kinds of notes she wrote, it was unclear how she used these notes when making in-advance decisions that gave attention to students' specific instructional reading needs.

In all three cases, it was evident that teachers used observations to help with student grouping, but it was not always evident how teachers used student observations and anecdotal notes to help them in making in-advance decisions concerning students' individual instructional needs. Little consideration was given to specific examples of students and how those observations or notes helped in making instructional decisions. Furthermore, it seemed as though teachers made instructional decisions based on general information more so than focusing on the needs of each student.

## Framework for Teaching

A second theme, related to in-advanced decision-making that emerged from the data, was that teachers utilized a program-influenced structural framework to make decisions about planning for guided reading instruction. This framework was supported by lesson plan templates, program-specific and other assessments, recommended time specifications, and the use of leveled texts in every lesson.

### *Lesson Plans*

The Jan Richardson (2016) model that elementary teachers used in Polis County included lesson plan templates ranging from Pre-A to the Fluent Guided Reading Plan (see Appendix D). As a part of this model of guided reading, teachers were trained in how to use these lesson plan templates, including planning for various reading components. According to Mrs. Petrillo, it is an expectation from the district that teachers use these templates when planning for guided reading instruction. Also, as a part of their

training, teachers learned to plan instruction in the various areas Jan Richardson includes in her model of guided reading such as sight word review, vocabulary, book introduction, reading with prompting, discussion prompt, teaching points, word study, and guided writing. Elementary teachers were expected to include these components within each lesson plan. As encouraged by the Richardson (2016) model, lessons include these components so teachers may instruct students in a way that helps them to take the next steps forward in guided reading. Collectively, the teachers within this study adhered to this specific model by either using the suggested lesson plan templates or by teaching on one or more of the lesson plan components mentioned previously.

Mrs. Petrillo was consistent in using the Jan Richardson lesson plan templates and filled them out for each guided reading group as she planned, even though some lessons were recycled plans from previous school years. She made the decision to use these specific lesson plan templates because she said, “Well, number one, I don’t have a choice. It [lesson plan template] was given to me. And, we’ve been doing Jan Plan for a couple of years now.” In another instance in which I asked about her decision to use the lesson plan templates, she mentioned, “That’s the way we were trained and those are the expectations. I think some teachers vary their lessons a bit.” It is important to note that Mrs. Petrillo perceived the Richardson (2016) framework was effective. During one interview, she mentioned how she had noticed her students’ reading growth and how the framework really worked for students. In each of my times observing Mrs. Petrillo, she closely followed a lesson plan from the Jan Richardson model and completed each reading component in her attempt to teach sight words, fluency, comprehension, etc.

Mrs. Turtle, on the other hand, used her own lesson plan documents, but the lessons incorporated similar instructional components as in the Jan Richardson template. When I mentioned in one interview how I noticed her lesson plans were not like the usual templates of the Jan Plan and asked her to expound on this, she said:

> There's probably about three or four different ones I use. It just kind of depends on when I'm writing them, which one kind of flows more and really, it's for me and so just to kind of, you know, do the plans so I am hitting everything that I want to.

Although the Jan Richardson lesson plan templates were not used, Mrs. Turtle did adhere to some program components by continuing to plan instruction in the areas of sight words, vocabulary, book introduction, fluency, comprehension, writing, etc.

Mrs. Slater used both the Jan Richardson lesson plan templates and a lesson plan document similar to that of Mrs. Turtle's lesson plans when planning for her guided reading groups. Mrs. Slater mentioned that she "does what works best for her," but understands it important to follow the district's expectations when considering lesson plans with guided reading sessions. She utilized the lesson plan templates found on the Jan Richardson website and also a website resource page that was accessed during a professional development training on guided reading. In the fourth and final observation, Mrs. Slater changed the entire format of her guided reading groups and created lesson plans written on post-it-notes. When I asked her why she decided to do this, she said:

> Because I didn't have all of the components. I wasn't looking at all of the components; I was looking at what did this story lend itself to. One was story

> structure, one was vocabulary, and one was some good open-ended writing. So, that's what I focused on.

Even though these lesson plans looked quite different from previous lessons, she still incorporated some components found in the Jan Richardson (2016) framework.

It was evident that both Mrs. Turtle and Mrs. Slater went about using their lesson plan resources differently than Mrs. Petrillo in that Mrs. Petrillo adhered to using what she felt was "expected" or recommended by the district and school administration. The fact that all three teachers incorporated the Jan Richardson components to whichever lesson plan template used indicated that the structure of the framework was important regardless of how their plans were recorded.

***Suggested Timeframe***

Across all three settings and with all three participating teachers, Mrs. Petrillo, Mrs. Turtle, and Mrs. Slater adhered to the suggested timeframe of spending approximately 20 minutes per guided reading group, per day. This timeframe is suggested throughout the Richardson (2016) manual, and is encouraged by the school district. I specifically asked Mrs. Petrillo how she determined the amount of time to spend on each group and she replied, "The suggested time is 20 minutes, and so I try to keep to that as much as I can." Similarly, Mrs. Turtle kept her phone within reach so she could set a 20-minute timer for each of her groups. When I asked Mrs. Turtle how she determined how long to spend with each guided reading group, she said:

> Pretty much we are required to try and at least spend 20 minutes each day with each group. Some days it may go over, it may go under. It just kind of depends on

> which group is on which lesson and what is all is entailed in that actual lesson, but I tried to stick to my timer so I didn't go over.

I also asked Mrs. Slater how she goes about planning how much time she spends on each guided reading group and she responded with, "I mean, we're told 15-20 minutes per group." She went on to discuss how sometimes she sets timers to help stick to the 20-minute suggested timeline, but that she doesn't "live by the clock" and gets done what she needs to within each group.

In planning for each guided reading group session, the participating teachers made an in-advance decision to plan for 20 minutes of instruction for each group. It seemed as though each teacher felt led to follow the suggested timeframe.

***Leveled Texts***

On several occasions, it was apparent that each teacher planned instructional components of their lessons by considering what the texts directly or indirectly suggested. In the first round of interviews, I asked Mrs. Petrillo how she planned instruction for certain components of the lesson plans. She responded with, "It just came straight from the book." In thinking about how she planned for the comprehension focus (ask and answer questions) from another group, she said, "Again, the story was really unusual, so I figured their little brains would be racing trying to put the pieces of the puzzle together." In these situations, the texts she chose allowed her to make decisions about certain components of the lessons she planned for students.

Similarly, I asked Mrs. Turtle how she came up with the discussion prompt for one of her group's lesson plans. She stated:

> That was just the basic, you know, overarching thing that it was really focusing on. Um, was how the pond was changing because of all the changes that were made in the neighborhood and on the streets and then what Kenny decided to do to help to save them.

In another interview, I brought up her lesson plans and asked how she determined a specific reading prompt with her group of students. Without hesitation, she discussed that this prompt "was just kind of the overarching too, the purpose of the story with the characters."

Likewise, Mrs. Slater also considered chosen texts to help in her lesson planning. When asking her how she determined a specific strategy focus in one of her groups, she said, "It's one that fits well with the book because it's got a lot of good dialogue and expression. So, that was based more on the books than the needs." She went on to discuss how that particular book helped her to decide to focus on one particular phrase in that it was "a play on words, a lot of the story is looking at something from a different perspective. And this really, in a nutshell, gets them to think about something from a different perspective than their own." In all three cases, it was evident how chosen texts helped them make in-advance decisions about specific instructional components within their lessons. Teachers seemed to depend on the chosen texts and the skills and strategies the text lent themselves toward for planning purposes.

**Making Connections**

A third theme related to in-advanced decisions was that teachers made instructional connections between whole group instruction and guided reading, and also between students and their interests. When teachers talked about their planning during the

interviews, there were several occasions where the teachers mentioned connecting their teaching in guided reading to some other factor, such as student interest, whole group instruction, etc. Many times, teachers talked about how they connected their guided reading group lessons to what students were learning in whole group reading instruction. At times, this was to further extend instruction, but other times warranted scaffolding instruction in smaller group settings based on the teachers' whole group observations of the students. In other cases, the teachers connected the types of books used within the various guided reading groups to students' interests.

#### ***Connecting to Whole Group Instruction***

When I asked Mrs. Petrillo how she decided which book to select in one of her first guided reading groups, she mentioned, "We have been working on using context clues for vocabulary and also context clues for making inferences, and so there was some good examples of that in the story." Mrs. Turtle mentioned connecting what was taught in whole group reading to her guided reading groups when considering lesson planning for students.

> One main thing is if we are currently working on certain reading skills, whole group, that I can pull together also in small group and then hit those skills. And, if it's something that I've already taught or if it's something I am just starting out as a new skill or not, if they need that.

Like Mrs. Petrillo and Mrs. Turtle, Mrs. Slater made connections to whole group instruction in planning for the instructional components of the guided reading lessons. After watching the second observation and looking at the corresponding lesson plan, I noticed the comprehension strategy focused on looking for information. I asked Mrs.

Slater to talk to me about this strategy—what she meant by it and how she determined it important to teach.

> In whole group reading, we had done a couple of weeks ago with informational text in ask and answer questions, so I had them pull out a fact and turn that into a question. And, these particular readers had trouble just with pulling out facts. And so, I will do that in small groups—look for specific facts. Then, maybe we can write questions, but let's get the facts first.

Her decision to plan for this instructional component in guided reading highlighted her attention to connecting whole group instruction with the guided reading group instruction. This decision also highlighted her discernment of students' needs that she observed during whole group instruction, which helped her to then connect what was taught earlier to the instruction within her guided reading groups. On another occasion, Mrs. Slater talked about a time where she tried to connect what they covered in guided reading groups to their lessons in whole group reading. When I asked her in the second interview what instructional needs she considered as she created the lesson plan, she said, "This connected with our whole group because we were doing fairy tales." It was evident how Mrs. Petrillo, Mrs. Turtle, and Mrs. Slater connected, several times, their guided reading group instruction to whole group reading instruction.

***Connecting to Students' Interests***

Sometimes, teachers considered student interest and how it connected to the books or lessons chosen for a particular guided reading group. In one interview session, I asked Mrs. Turtle her thoughts as she sat down to write one of her group's lesson plans. After handing her the actual lesson plan to refresh her memory, she said, "I think with

this one, just basically…an interest [animals] with them." Mrs. Turtle was also observant in the types of books her students were reading outside of the normal guided reading time and this helped her to consider which books students would be interested in reading. For example, she noticed several students reading *Frog and Toad* outside of the normal guided reading time and decided to use this text for a couple of her guided reading sessions.

> I had actually seen some of the kiddos in this group and the next group…had some of these books from their book tubs, that I noticed over the last few weeks, and I hadn't really seen them choose this before. So, I thought maybe this would be something they'd be interested in and then I knew it was a lot of dialogue with *Frog and Toad*. Cause I knew that, I was trying to hit that with all of the groups. So, I thought, 'Oh! That works'.

In thinking about other occasions where she considered student interests in the books she chose for her groups, she said, "Sometimes I go by interest that I see that different groups like, but then I also try to pick different genres, not to just stick with nonfiction or just stick with biographies, just switch it up a little bit." Mrs. Turtle considered how the texts she chose for her guided reading groups connected to students' interests, just like Mrs. Petrillo did. When discussing connecting books to students, Mrs. Petrillo said, "I either try to connect it to their own lives or something that we've already studied or talked about. I try to make sure they have a connection or it's something that's going to be highly interesting to them." Mrs. Petrillo also mentioned another time in which she chose a book about Native Americans for one of her groups and decided this because she knew "the interest level would be high".

Furthermore, just like Mrs. Turtle and Mrs. Petrillo, Mrs. Slater considered students' interests when choosing books for her guided reading groups. "There are a couple of boys in this group that have talked about big machines and there was a connection there with them individually." Collectively, all three teachers considered students' interests when selecting books and planning for their instructional lessons. This was important to each of them as evidenced throughout their discussion on how they made in-advance decisions with the book selections.

As demonstrated earlier, teachers did not always use their observations of students during guided reading as a predominate tool for in-advance decisions when lesson planning. However, examples of teachers connecting guided reading instruction to students' interest does show that teachers did sometimes consider their observations of students, more generally, to help them make decisions about text selection. Choosing books according to students' interests was important for teachers when considering how their students would most connect with the text they read.

**How Teachers Made In-the-Moment Decisions**

This section includes the findings that emerged from my analysis of teachers' in-the-moment decisions for guided reading. Findings from the observations and interviews can be categorized under four overarching themes: scaffolding instruction, confirming students' reading and writing behaviors, making thoughtfully adaptive decisions, and responding to time restrictions. Although the data exhibited variation across the three teachers, they all showed similarities with in-the-moment decision-making across these three themes.

Throughout my interviews with each of the participants, many in-the-moment decisions were discussed, and teachers explained how they came to these decisions. Teachers often referred to in-the-moment decisions in different ways. Mrs. Petrillo discussed how she had to make "an in-the-moment decision" as she responded to students and their instructional needs. Mrs. Turtle mentioned making "on the fly" decisions in-the-moment of instruction and Mrs. Slater talked about making "spur of the moment" decisions as instruction was happening. In-the-moment decisions were not ones the teachers could pre-plan, rather they were decisions that had to be made on the spot or on the fly.

**Scaffolding Instruction**

The first major theme pertaining to in-the-moment decision-making that emerged from the data was that teachers responded to students' instructional needs by scaffolding instruction. Each teacher made numerous decisions during the implementation of instruction in response to their observations of students. Responding to students meant that teachers noticed students' reactions and felt it was necessary to adapt instruction. Teachers' responses included but were not limited to prompting, in which teachers questioned students for deeper engagement and encouraged students to problem solve the task at hand. Furthermore, teachers demonstrated for students or modeled how to do something to address student misunderstanding or to enhance student understanding. Teachers also made in-the-moment decisions that connected guided reading instruction to whole group instruction or to students' background knowledge. At times, teachers made decisions to insert a new activity or mini lesson in-the-moment of instruction that was not previously planned.

### *Prompting*

The first subtheme related to teachers' scaffolding instruction for students was that teachers responded to students through prompting. The decision to prompt was observed when teachers questioned students for deeper engagement, or teachers encouraged students to problem solve so they could better understand the text they read. Teachers used their observations of students to make such in-the-moment prompting decisions. Several reading encounters lead teachers to prompt students in ways that encouraged them to grow in their understanding of the texts they read.

**Questioning for Deeper Engagement**. In one example, Mrs. Petrillo had the students in her group reading independently as she went around to hear each student read aloud. After one student had read aloud for several minutes, Mrs. Petrillo stopped the student.

> Mrs. Petrillo: Okay, so, why do you think the mother bear went up into that tree?
>
> Student: There were berries in the tree.
>
> Mrs. Petrillo: Did it say there were berries? It said that there were leaves up there, but why do you think she let her bear cub climb up there, too?
>
> Student: She's training them.
>
> Mrs. Petrillo: Yea, she's training them to be on their own someday.

Several minutes later, after Mrs. Petrillo listened to more students read, she continued asking them questions like the previous example. I asked Mrs. Petrillo what made her give so many prompts here—asking students questions and encouraging them to come up with other ideas about the bear. Mrs. Petrillo responded, "It was going to be their writing prompt for the next day."

In this instance, it was important for Mrs. Petrillo to prompt students with several questions to encourage deeper engagement that would help them on a future assignment.

In another example, Mrs. Turtle worked with one student that struggled with reading the text expressively. She prompted this student by asking him questions like, "How would he [the character] say it? And what would make you say it that way?". During our interview time together, I asked Mrs. Turtle what made her prompt this student with going in depth through questioning. She said, "I remember he seemed just a little unsure, really what the difference was. So, I just wanted to make sure that he knew that as he went on because it was the same thing we had been working on…"

Like Mrs. Petrillo and Mrs. Turtle, Mrs. Slater also prompted students on several occasions. Mrs. Slater spent time throughout each guided reading session prompting her students to achieve a greater understanding of the texts they read. In one guided reading session, Mrs. Slater worked with students on a particular writing task. One student in the group, "a bright student," as Mrs. Slater called her, seemingly put forth little effort in her writing and was the first to finish the task. Mrs. Slater prompted this student to go back to her writing and to add more details using her five senses. When I asked Mrs. Slater what her thought process was in prompting the student to engage more in the writing process, she said, "I think she said she was finished. She was the only one that said, 'I'm finished!' and she's one of my brightest, so I knew there was more that she could add to it." In this example, Mrs. Slater prompted the student toward a deeper engagement with her writing.

There were several occasions in which Mrs. Slater asked a question she had planned (according to her lesson plan), but continued asking students many more

questions (not on the lesson plan) that encouraged going deeper with the text. In one example, students were reading a text on Thomas Edison. After students had spent time reading, Mrs. Slater asked all of the students in the group to flip back to page nine in their text. After looking down at her lesson plan, Mrs. Slater then asked students questions.

> Mrs. Slater: What was unique about Thomas Edison's paper that he wrote? What made it special?"

As students were trying to respond, Mrs. Slater repeated the question and encouraged them to look on page nine in their text.

> Student: He had never done anything like that before.
>
> Mrs. Slater: Like what?
>
> Student: On the train.

Mrs. Slater used this student's response to continue discussing the answer to her original question—what was unique about Thomas Edison's paper. Mrs. Slater was discussing with students about how Edison's newspaper was on one of the trains he rode.

> Mrs. Slater: So, do you think Edison was on the train when he wrote it or that he wrote about the train?

This question was not in her lesson plan, rather it was an extension of the first question she originally asked from her plan. Mrs. Slater then looked back in the text as students began blurting out answers.

> Mrs. Slater: He was 14 when he did that. Do people normally get jobs when they're 14? Again, students shouted out answers and Mrs. Slater continued

discussing these responses with students. Later on, she then asked students what Thomas Edison's first job was and asked students how old he was when he did that. When I asked

Mrs. Slater her thought process in asking additional questions beyond the one(s) written in her lesson plans, she said, “In my opinion, comprehension questions are best if done on the spot, as part of the natural conversation.” Prompting students to go deeper with the text seemed like a natural process for Mrs. Slater as she observed students in-the-moment of instruction.

**Questioning for Deeper Understanding.** In addition to questioning for deeper engagement, teachers used prompting to encourage students to problem solve. When teachers encouraged students in this way, they posed a question or statement that helped students problem solve through challenges during the guided reading session. From one observation, Mrs. Petrillo listened to a student read. At the conclusion of the student’s reading, Mrs. Petrillo asked the student to come up with a summary of what she had just read.

> Mrs. Petrillo: What are the one or two most important items in that text?
>
> Student: Um, that Henry Ford, um, invented, um, Model-T cars.
>
> Mrs. Petrillo: Well, that’s not what that talked about right here; let’s go back and look at that again. He did. He made the Model-T car, but that’s not what that mostly was about. Mrs. Petrillo then encouraged the student to go back and read that section more. The student then proceeded to read silently as Mrs. Petrillo waited. After a minute had passed, Mrs. Petrillo asked another question.
>
> Mrs. Petrillo: Okay, so what’s this paragraph mostly about? What’s the big idea from that paragraph?

The student hesitated and Mrs. Petrillo picked up that she was continuing to struggle to find the most important items from the text.

> Mrs. Petrillo: Okay, so let's look at this one. This sentence says Ford used an assembly line to make his cars. Each worker had a specific job. And then it talks about all the specific jobs people had to put the car together. So, what's the big idea of that?
>
> Student: That he used an assembly line for cars.
>
> Mrs. Petrillo (excitedly): Uh huh! That's the big idea. People didn't do that before there was an assembly line. Before, when they were going to make a car, one group of people or one person would do it all. Like, you might have to put the wheels on, and the windshield wipers on, and the steering wheel, and the breaks. But this time, one person does the wheels, one person does the steering wheel, one person does the brakes, and you just push it on down the line. And so, you get faster and faster if you have one job to do. You get better at that job.

The prompting from this example helped the student to better understand what Mrs. Petrillo was asking in wanting her to talk about the big idea from the text. I asked Mrs. Petrillo what made her decide to respond to the student in this way and she said, "She does not have a lot of self-confidence, she's pretty timid. And so, encouraging her to find the answer for herself as much as possible is important." Even though Mrs. Petrillo intended to build confidence in this student, she also felt it important to encourage the student to problem solve by trying to find the answer herself by looking back in the text. Prompting students was an important way for Mrs. Petrillo to help address instructional needs she observed.

Mrs. Turtle also prompted students for problem solving. In one example, she was working with students on defining the word 'mammal'. Mrs. Turtle asked if anyone knew

what it meant. When one student raised his hand to say the word, the student mispronounced the word. She then asked the student to try the word again. During our interview time together, I asked her why she had the student try the word again instead of just correcting him. She said, "Just for them to take the time to figure it out, cause if I just tell them all the time, the next time they still might not know." Her prompts were meant to help students problem solve so they could apply this knowledge in future scenarios.

Like Mrs. Petrillo and Mrs. Turtle, Mrs. Slater also prompted students by encouraging them to problem solve. For example, Mrs. Slater listened to each student in one of her groups read aloud. One particular student was looking at something in the text and discussing with the teacher about an oil rig (an illustration in the text) and that he did not quite understand what was going on in the picture.

Student: What's an oil rig—what is this picture?

Mrs. Slater: It's like a big machine out on the ocean.

(The student continued discussing the oil rig with Mrs. Slater. She then encouraged the student to look back in the glossary.)

Mrs. Slater: Look back a page. How would you say this helps you understand what is going on?

Student: What do you mean?

Mrs. Slater: Well, what's the title of the book?

Student: *Under the Ground*.

Mrs. Slater: Uh hmm. And, seeing this illustration, does it help you see what's going on underground?

Student: (pointing to the picture in the text) This shows you.

Mrs. Slater: How does this add to it? What parts do you see?

Student: I see…(pointing to the picture in the text) it's big.

Mrs. Slater: It is big, isn't it? So, how would you describe this? These are…laying on top of each other? How would you describe them?

Student: They're like layers.

Mrs. Slater: Yea, good! So, tell me something that you learned.

Student: There are things that can mine coal.

Mrs. Slater: Uh huh. Good job!

Later, when I asked Mrs. Slater why she prompted this student with so many questions, she said:

> He had something on his face. There was some reason I knew he didn't understand what he was reading, I think it was his expression. And so, I was trying to get him to backup and reread and use the illustrations to figure out.

This example showed how Mrs. Slater encouraged the student to problem solve to figure out what was going on in the text to then help him make meaning from what he was reading.

Collectively, all teachers made in-the-moment decisions to prompt students as they responded to students' instructional needs throughout the various guided reading groups. It was evident they felt students needed the extra support, which led them to prompt students in ways that would help guide the students or encourage them to think more deeply about the text or problem solve the task at hand.

### *Demonstrating*

A second subtheme around teachers responding to students' instructional needs was through scaffolding. Teachers scaffolded during lessons by demonstrating to address student misunderstanding and to also enhance student understanding of what was being taught. Demonstrating to students involved showing how to do something or illustrating whatever students did not fully grasp. Another word for demonstrate is to model. In-the-moment decisions focused on teachers demonstrating examples to model for students a skill, strategy, or procedure needed to ensure students had an understanding of texts they read. In this case, decisions to demonstrate were modeled verbally or written in response to students' instructional needs.

**Addressing Student Misunderstanding.** One way in which teachers scaffolded was that they demonstrated instruction to address student misunderstanding of what was being taught. When trying to address students' misunderstanding, Mrs. Petrillo modeled during instruction as needed. For example, in one observation, students were trying to write the word 'of'. After several observations of students attempting to write the letter *f* as a *v*, Mrs. Petrillo modeled for students the proper way to spell the word 'of' to address their misunderstanding that this word was not spelled the same way it was pronounced. She continually said, "We make a candy cane then put a stick on it." As she said this to students, she took her small whiteboard and drew an "f" with her finger to show students how to write this letter. As students continued to struggle, she then drew the letter "f" with a marker on her small white board and continued saying, "I draw the candy cane and put a stick on it." By paying attention to her students' instructional needs, Mrs. Petrillo made in-the-moment decisions to demonstrate during instruction where it was necessary.

Similarly, Mrs. Turtle demonstrated in ways that addressed student misunderstanding. From one observation, it was apparent when Mrs. Turtle noticed a student not understanding how to write a contraction and chose to show guided support through modeling. The student was instructed to write the word 'didn't'. After noticing the student could not spell the word correctly, Mrs. Turtle took a small white board and modeled writing the word for the student making sure to stress the apostrophe in the contraction. During our interview together, I asked her why she chose to model for that particular student. She said:

> I think she kept putting different vowels in, if I remember right. I think she put an –e then erased it and put another letter. So, it wasn't like, I don't think she dropped a letter, pretty sure she kept it in there. So, then I was trying to show her and we've done contractions, and the word is not but you're hearing a sound, which one, but she would drop it, but wouldn't drop it in its place.

In that particular example, Mrs. Turtle modeled for the student how to write a contraction in the place of two words to address the student's misunderstanding. Other observations led Mrs. Turtle to demonstrate instruction in ways that helped clarify students' misunderstanding. For example, Mrs. Turtle spent time in each guided reading session reviewing sight words. In one particular session, Mrs. Turtle had students write the word 'have'. After careful observation, she noticed that one student tried spelling it 'hava'. Mrs. Turtle then took out a small white board and modeled writing the correct spelling to clear up the student's misunderstanding of how to write the word 'have'. Following this, Mrs. Turtle had the student rewrite the word to ensure she understood the correct way to

spell the sight word. I asked Mrs. Turtle about this scenario and why she decided to model the correct spelling. She said:

> I think she had an -a, but she might have meant to make it look like an –e, but her –a looked a lot the same and I think she's one that writes her letters backwards, or a certain way. I am trying to break some of those habits they've been doing for years and years. I'm pretty sure it looked like 'hava', instead of 'have', so I had her change it, if I'm remembering correctly.

It was important to Mrs. Turtle to address students' misunderstandings as she observed them throughout her guided reading group sessions.

Mrs. Slater also took time to address students' misunderstanding during instruction. In one interview session with Mrs. Slater, I showed her a portion of a video clip from one of her sessions in which she was listening to a student read from *If You Take a Mouse to the Movies*. As he was reading, the student said "his" instead of the printed word "he's" from the text. The student started talking with Mrs. Slater about a part of the book and asked her what a carol was (Christmas carols). She quickly answered his question then drew his attention to the contraction word he missed while he was reading.

> Mrs. Slater: (pointing to the word) What's this word right here?
>
> Student: His.
>
> Mrs. Slater: He's. It's a contraction. He's. He is.
>
> (She then had the student read the sentence with the word as if it was not a contraction.)

Mrs. Slater and Student: (reading together) Once he is (the text says “he’s”) nice and cozy…”

Mrs. Slater then stopped the student reading and addressed how the author made the word a contraction—that she used “he’s” instead of “he is.” She then moved on to the next part of the sentence in the text. When she pointed to the word “he’ll,” she asked the student what the word was.

Mrs. Slater: This is…

Student: He.

Mrs. Slater: (pointing to the word) This is…

Student: He’ll.

When I asked Mrs. Slater to talk to me about why she decided to work through this contraction with the student, she said:

> Because he had read just prior to that, he had read it incorrectly and it changed the meaning. So, I wanted him to back up and think about what the contraction was and what is the contraction for. It’s a book that had lots of contractions in it so he got to practice it a lot after that.

Mrs. Slater felt it was important to address this student’s misunderstanding of the word since it changed the meaning of the text. By addressing the student in this example, he was then able to read the word correctly and understand the context in which it was written. Her observation of this student caused her to react in a way that scaffolded instruction to address his misunderstanding.

As evidenced in each case, all three teachers made in-the-moment decisions to scaffold instruction by demonstrating in times where students originally misunderstood.

The teachers knew in those moments that being responsive to students' misunderstanding was necessary and crucial for students to not walk away from the instruction lost or confused.

**Enhancing Student Understanding.** Another way in which teachers demonstrated was in scaffolding instruction to enhance student understanding. In one observation, Mrs. Petrillo identified a word students would come across in their reading, then began to model how to pronounce the word by identifying the /ch/ chunk and the sound it makes. She then continued to model saying the word and discussed an example of that word. When I asked her why she felt it was important to teach that word, she said, "I wanted to model the sound of the /ch/ because they run into that fairly often."

In another guided reading group, she passed out the text and began telling students specific words—pronouncing them for the students and discussing the meaning of those words. When I asked her what her thought process in this was, she said:

> I do that with different groups. I tackle those words sometimes in a different way. This group is high. They're going to remember what they're reading. I try to connect it to the book to give them a scaffold to remember what those words mean.

In another instance, Mrs. Petrillo taught a new vocabulary word, 'proper'. As she taught this word, she broke down the meaning and gave examples for the meaning of this word. As Mrs. Petrillo pointed to a word, she said, "And this word is proper. We've used proper like in proper nouns, but proper means doing things in the right way." When I asked her what her thought process was in this—breaking down the word, giving examples, etc., she said, "If I can scaffold it or tie it to prior knowledge, then they're more likely to

remember it." She frequently demonstrated for students how to pronounce or spell a word. In one of Mrs. Petrillo's last observations, she modeled for a particular student how to say and spell the ending on a specific word. I asked her why she scaffolded instruction in this way and she said, "She is an ELL [English Language Learner] student and so she's quite fluent in English, but those endings trip her up." On several occasions, Mrs. Petrillo scaffolded vocabulary instruction by modeling the word(s) to enhance students' understanding of the words they encountered in the text(s) they read. She mentioned on several occasions trying to give students "a scaffold to remember what those words mean".

Mrs. Turtle also demonstrated to enhance students' learning. From one observation, she worked with a student struggling to spell a word. When the student struggled to determine which spelling was needed (clothes vs. close), Mrs. Turtle broke down the word and scaffolded instruction in a way that enhanced the student's understanding of the word. In another example, Mrs. Turtle worked with students on sight words. In one particular group, students were instructed to write the word 'said'. Mrs. Turtle looked to each student in the group to see if students were spelling the word correctly when she noticed one student struggling. She repeated the word multiple times to the student before she proceeded to break down the spelling of the word for the student so she could see how the word should be spelled. Intentionally, Mrs. Turtle made in-the-moment decisions to demonstrate to meet the reading needs of her students.

Mrs. Slater also demonstrated in times that warranted enhancing student understanding of the instruction being taught. During one observation, Mrs. Slater worked with a student struggling to spell the word 'anteater' correctly. Mrs. Slater talked

through strategies and scaffolded the word to help the student understand how to spell it the right way. Mrs. Slater reminded the student that she came across that same word earlier in her reading. She then flipped back a page in the student's book and showed her the same word.

> Mrs. Slater: Look here. It's not an ant heather, it's an ant…

After the student continued to struggle with the word, Mrs. Slater broke apart the word with her fingers and only showed the letters that spelled "eat."

> Mrs. Slater: What does "eat" spell?
>
> Student: Eat.
>
> Mrs. Slater: Let's put it all together.

Following this, the student was able to read the word correctly. When I asked her why she decided to break the word down in that particular way, she said:

> Well, she was putting an 'h' in there and it wasn't in there. So, I thought if she could see 'eat' and there's no 'h' in there, that she would be able to pull 'anteater' out of there instead of 'antheater'.

In many cases, Mrs. Slater sought to demonstrate during instruction to support her students in times where she felt her students did not understand. Her informal observations helped her to respond to her students and collectively. In fact, all three participating teachers demonstrated during their instruction to better meet the needs of their students—all making in-the-moment decisions to guide and support all students. Again, in all three cases, each teacher felt it important and necessary to scaffold instruction through demonstrating during moments of instruction to enhance student understanding of the lesson.

### *Connecting*

A third way in which teachers responded to students' needs in-the-moment of instruction was that teachers connected guided reading lessons to whole group reading instruction or to students' background knowledge. Because of this, students made connections between what they were learning in guided reading group to what they had previously learned in whole group reading (a skill or strategy). Moreover, teachers also helped students by connecting the guided reading lesson to some type of previous knowledge about the content being taught.

**Connecting to Whole Group Reading Instruction.** One way teachers connected is that they related their guided reading instruction to whole group reading instruction previously taught. In the first round of observations, Mrs. Petrillo had worked with a student struggling to understand the text he was reading (the student was absent the day prior). She encouraged the student to use context clues as he was reading to try and figure out what a particular word meant. Using context clues as a reading strategy was from a past lesson taught during whole group instruction. As Mrs. Petrillo kept working with this student, she continued to connect what he was struggling with to a previous strategy taught from whole group instruction. When I asked her about this and what made her guide this student in this way, she said:

> Some of the bright kids, they just have so much background knowledge that when they get to something they don't know, they don't know what to do with it. So, it's just practice to use context clues, even if you know what it means already.

Mrs. Petrillo's observation of this student helped her to respond by encouraging the student to use context clues. The student's response or lack of understanding caused Mrs.

Petrillo to make a connection between what was being taught or learned and what was previously learned with whole group instruction.

Mrs. Turtle also made in-the-moment decisions to connect her guided reading lessons to whole group reading instruction. In one example, Mrs. Turtle worked with students to discuss commas and their purpose. In showing her this clip as a part of a stimulated recall component, I asked her what made her stop the students from reading to discuss commas. She said, “We had actually worked on that in the morning and I think actually maybe even the day before about commas in a series or group of words.” She connected the guided reading lesson to previous whole group instruction in response to her observations of students during that session.

Similarly, Mrs. Slater also made in-the-moment decisions to respond to students by connecting guided reading group instruction to whole group reading instruction. In one of Mrs. Slater’s first observations, she worked with a student asking him to find evidence from the text to support what he said. I talked with Mrs. Slater about this instance and wanted to understand why she wanted him to do this. She said, “It’s a skill. Again, with this group, it’s just a critical skill that they don’t have yet.” This moment helped her to respond to the student by connecting what she wanted him to do with a skill that had been introduced in whole group instruction. As evidenced, each teacher was responsive to students during moments of instruction by connecting guided reading group lessons to those lessons previously taught in whole group instruction.

**Connecting to Students’ Background Knowledge.** Another component of teachers connecting involved teachers relating their guided reading instruction to students’ background knowledge. In one observation, Mrs. Petrillo introduced a book that

took place in Ghana. As she introduced the book, she took the time to talk about the country and showed students where the country was located on a globe. When I asked her what her thought process was in showing students the country on a globe rather than just talking about the location of this country, she mentioned their interest in globes because of previous lessons they had encountered.

> My calendar in the back of the room has flags on it this month. And, we're using a fraction lesson with it…And, so, they're really into the globe right now and so I get the globe out every day and look at the country.

Mrs. Petrillo made several in-the-moment decisions that made connections between the guided reading lesson and students' learning based on her observations of students and how she felt she should respond during instruction.

Like, Mrs. Petrillo, Mrs. Turtle also made connections between guided reading instruction and students' background knowledge. In an example, Mrs. Turtle discussed text features from the book they were reading. As she worked with one student in particular, she asked questions about the text features he noticed in the text. While he struggled to answer, Mrs. Turtle responded to him by guiding him to understand through asking several questions and connecting his understanding of text features to what he had previously learned. When I asked her why she did this, she said, "Sometimes I do that because I know they've had it before, so just to make sure they know so I'm not just telling them…" In that moment, Mrs. Turtle connected what she was trying to teach to this student to background knowledge he had so that he could identify text features in the text. She responded to the student during instruction based on her observations of what she felt he needed in that moment. During Mrs. Turtle's second observation, she worked

on contractions with students, giving them hints and clues to writing words with contractions. She said to students:

> Remember, we've practiced these before and since it's a contraction, if you need to write the two words that make up didn't, then say the contraction words to hear what letters you don't say, that's where you put the apostrophe—in its place.

When I asked her what her thought process was giving students these hints, she talked about connecting what they were doing to their background knowledge. She said, "Just to bring in that, you know, previous knowledge that they had already had, especially with like not, a lot of them want to put apostrophe 'nt' and keep did." Several of Mrs. Turtle's students' responses led her to make in-the-moment decisions which connected the guided reading instruction to students' background knowledge.

Mrs. Slater was similar in that she also connected the guided reading lessons to students' background knowledge. In one example, she discussed the word 'canopy', a word found in the text they were reading.

> Student: Canopy is like a shelter.
>
> Mrs. Slater: Yeah, we have one when we go camping in case it rains. It's like a giant umbrella. So, a canopy is the top layer of trees.

I asked her about what made her add on to the student's response by connecting the word to a camping experience and she had mentioned how much she talks about camping with her students. Mrs. Slater responded, "It just seemed to go with what she [student] said. And, I've talked about camping a lot with the kids."

In this moment, she decided to respond to students by bringing in their background knowledge so they could better understand the word from the text. Collectively, the

teachers all used students' responses to make in-the-moment decisions about connecting the guided reading group instruction to whole group reading instruction (skills and strategies) and background knowledge to better help them understand what they were learning.

***Inserting***

A fourth subtheme related to teachers responding to students' needs in-the-moment of instruction was that teachers inserted a new activity (not originally planned) or a mini-lesson into the guided reading session. These decisions were in response to students' reactions to the instruction, at times in which teachers felt inserting a new activity or mini-lesson would help students better understand the lesson.

In one observation, a student asked for clarification for the word 'dim'. The student was reading this word as 'dime', but knew it did not make sense within the context of what he was reading. Mrs. Petrillo worked with this student to discuss the word and how he could know if the word was pronounced correctly. She then went on to teach a mini-lesson about the words 'dim' and 'dime' and how using context clues can help determine the correct pronunciation of the word. When I asked her why she decided to take the time to teach the difference between the words and using context clues, she said, "I felt like he was just trying to guess at what the word was and that he really didn't understand the meaning of the word. So again, a self-monitoring kind of lesson there." Her insertion of the mini-lesson on context clues was based on her observation of him and what she felt he needed in that moment.

Mrs. Turtle also made in-the-moment decisions to insert a new activity or mini-lesson when she felt her students needed it as instruction was taking place. In one

observation, Mrs. Turtle inserted a mini lessons in-the-moment of instructing her guided reading groups. Mrs. Turtle worked with students on vocabulary words they would come across in the text as they read. One specific word (groan) tripped students up because they were not sure if Mrs. Turtle meant 'groan' or 'grown'. This caused Mrs. Turtle to respond to students' reactions and insert a mini-lesson on homophones. When I asked her about this teachable moment and what made her decide to insert the mini-lesson, she said:

> Just at the time, I knew I needed to because one little guy, it was all he could think of was the grown like you are growing. He was fixated on that. And I thought, 'ew'! Then, I thought they might get the same thing and that is not the same meaning of the word. So, I thought, 'Oh! Here we go, homophone lesson!'

It was important for Mrs. Turtle to stop teaching specific vocabulary words from the text to respond to students by inserting a mini-lesson to help them understand differences between similar sounding words.

While Mrs. Petrillo and Mrs. Turtle both made in-the-moment decisions to insert something different or new into their lessons, Mrs. Slater was observed mostly sticking to her originally planned lessons. There were few occasions where I noted a difference in her lesson plan and in the instruction that was delivered. Most of the reasons Mrs. Slater gave about making these few changes throughout the lessons dealt with time restrictions rather than her actually making insertions based on students' instructional needs. Therefore, there was not sufficient evidence that Mrs. Slater made insertions during her guided reading lessons in the ways in which the other two teachers inserted instruction. Responding to time restrictions is a theme that is addressed later in this chapter.

*Confirming Behaviors*

A second overarching theme showing how teachers made in-the-moment decisions involved teachers confirming students' reading and writing behaviors. Teachers were intentional about confirming students' behaviors by affirming them through praise, validation, and reinforcement of instruction. Many times, these affirmations led to opportunities for learning, in which teachers considered students' responses in-the-moment and used praise, validation, or reinforcement to affirm students' learning. In some cases, the teachers praised students to help make them more confident in the instruction. On other occasions, teachers validated students to support their responses of instruction or reinforced what students said to reiterate or strengthen something already mentioned.

**Building Student Confidence.** Affirming students was one way teachers confirmed students' reading and writing behaviors. Teachers confirmed students' behaviors by praising or affirming them and building their self-confidence. In one specific example, Mrs. Petrillo felt in a particular moment that one of her students needed encouragement. This student was struggling with reading. As Mrs. Petrillo was about to help her, the student figured out the word(s) from the text. Mrs. Petrillo said to the student, "Good job!" As the student continued reading, she continued to struggle. Mrs. Petrillo said, "Why don't we start at the beginning of the sentence so we can get the flow of the sentence?" When I asked Mrs. Petrillo what made her give the student this kind of feedback in that moment, she said:

> Number one, she's kind of a timid child, and so she needs some positive reinforcement. And, I think she was feeling defeated because she was losing the

> comprehension part of it because the decoding was challenging for her. So, by starting over, she gets to take a breath for a second and that comprehension will kick in a little bit.

Mrs. Petrillo wanted to build that student's confidence so she would no longer feel defeated in her reading efforts.

In another instance, students were instructed to respond to the text through writing. Mrs. Petrillo said to a student, "You did a good job of mixing up your verbs. You didn't use the same verb all the time. Good!" I asked her about this positive feedback and why she decided to say this to that particular student. She said, "He's a really reluctant writer, does not like to write. And so, he makes it as simple as he can. So, for him to think of something else, he needed a little encouragement there." In that moment, Mrs. Petrillo identified a need and felt giving positive feedback would encourage this student to write more varied and lengthy sentences in the future.

Similarly, Mrs. Turtle gave students feedback based on what she knew about the student and how her feedback may encourage the students in their learning. During the first observation, she responded to one particular student with praise and positive feedback. After spending some time in the text, Mrs. Turtle had asked students to share an interesting fact they had written down.

> Student: Sloths hang upside down for 24 hours a day.
>
> Mrs. Turtle: I thought that was a really interesting fact as well. Good job!

I asked Mrs. Turtle why she responded in this way and she said:

> My little guy, just because he gets some thoughts and ideas and sometimes doesn't express them written or verbally. So, I thought a little nudge and praise

> might go a long way that he picked out something out of the ordinary that I wasn't expecting him to catch.

Providing positive feedback to this student was important for building his confidence.

In another example with Mrs. Turtle, students were instructed to write in response to the text they read. As Mrs. Turtle observed students writing, she noticed how one student capitalized the beginning of his sentence, when normally he begins sentences with a lowercase letter. After she noticed, she said, "Good job! You remembered!" During our interview time together, I showed Mrs. Turtle the video clip of that particular guided reading session and asked her why she decided to give this praise to that particular student. She responded:

> Well, I know which little guy that is and he starts sentences out with lower case for proper nouns, so when he caught it on his own, I wanted to make sure to point that out and praise him.

Again, several examples show where Mrs. Turtle provided positive feedback in-the-moment of instruction because she felt it was important to her students' confidence in reading.

During one of Mrs. Slater's guided reading groups, she gave positive feedback to her students after they had mastered some sight words. In asking her why she told the students "You guys have rocked it. That's awesome," she said:

> Feedback is usually spur of the moment. I mean it's rarely so, with a higher group, according to Jan Richardson, they should not need sight words. But, I always assess the top level at the beginning of the year and work our way through

the ones that kids still need and I tell them that because they understand, you know, this is our goal, this is what we're working to.

In many scenarios, Mrs. Slater did not confirm students' reading and writing behaviors just to give praise, rather she had purpose behind her words—wanting to build students' confidence in reading. Her confirmations were not only affirming, but opportunities for learning. Each teacher felt it important to praise their students to build self-confidence in their learning.

**Validating Responses.** A second way teachers confirmed was that teachers validated students as they verbally responded to instruction. In one of Mrs. Petrillo's guided reading groups, she called on a student to discuss what a word [certain] meant.

Student: Sure.

Mrs. Petrillo (excitedly): Right! That's a great word. Sure means certain.

I asked Mrs. Petrillo why she gave this feedback. She said, "Well, if I don't, he's going to rattle on and on and I wanted to make it concise. I wanted to cut it right there." Even though her response indicated she was just hoping to cut the student's response short, her initial response to this student validated his answer in that she supported his interpretation of the word 'certain'.

Mrs. Turtle validated students' responses during instruction to support their interpretation of the text and instruction. In one example, Mrs. Turtle talked about how the text they were reading was fantasy because the story was not real. She then asked students a question.

Mrs. Turtle: What happened in the story that you know could not really happen in real life?

Student: So, the animals were acting like humans.

Mrs. Turtle: Ah, good connection! That was a good connection, buddy!

I asked her why she responded to the student in this way. Mrs. Turtle replied:

> Just if they connect it to whether it's text to text, text to world, or their own connections. I always try to point that out. And, for him to pull that in with the type of stories that we had been reading and he had brought that over to the table, to the group. I love that!

The teacher validated this student's response in a way that affirmed what he was thinking, but also in a way that reinforced how to make connections in texts they read. In another example, Mrs. Turtle validated a student's expressive reading. As Mrs. Turtle continued listening to this particular student reading, she said, "Excellent, excellent!" I asked Mrs. Turtle what made her respond to the student in that way and she said:

> She was getting what I wanted her to get out of the lesson, just with reading with expression and the difference with the text—whether it was dialogue or not. And, she was getting it!

It was important, in that moment, for Mrs. Turtle to validate the student's response to ensure the student knew her expressive reading was on target with fluent reading.

Like Mrs. Petrillo and Mrs. Turtle, Mrs. Slater also validated students when they used a skill or strategy to problem solve. In one example, she affirmed how a student used a fix up strategy when something he read did not make sense. When I asked what made her decide to give this type of feedback, she said:

> Because monitoring for meaning is the very first basic, first step of comprehension. And, if they read something that doesn't make sense and don't try

> and go back to fix it, that's huge. You cannot let that go. And, that group is still struggling with that, so any time I see them do that, I like to try and reinforce.

Validating students was important for Mrs. Slater as it supported students and their learning.

**Reinforcing a Skill for the Group.** A final way that teachers affirmed students during guided reading was to reinforce a skill, strategy, or behavior for the entire group. In one observation, Mrs. Petrillo gave specific feedback to a student after he had finished reading. She said, "That was beautiful expressive reading. Those characters were really talking to each other. You made them pop right off the page there." When I asked her what her thought process was in giving this feedback, she said, "Probably because he was more vibrant with expression, more so than the other students. So, I wanted to make an example of his response." This instance allowed her to make an in-the-moment decision to provide feedback to a student so that she could reinforce fluent reading to other students within the group. In another example, Mrs. Petrillo decided to give a student feedback about how he had "good monitoring" and how it was "really good that he did that". When I asked her why she decided to give this particular feedback, she said, "He doesn't do that particularly, but some other kids in that group don't monitor their reading. So, I was trying to point out his modeling that maybe it would rub off on others." Reinforcing this student's reading strategy allowed for other students to see and hear what good monitoring looks like.

Like Mrs. Petrillo, Mrs. Turtle reinforced a student's particular response to a question that was asked so that she could use this as an example for others. In this

example, Mrs. Turtle asked students what happened at the beginning of the story they were reading. One student responded.

> Student: Angora came. (The student gave a short pause after this response, then added more to her answer.) Angora came to Mrs. Periwinkle's store.
>
> Mrs. Turtle: Good! Did you hear what she said first (referring to the entire group with this question)? You know what she said first? She said that Angora came. And, at first, she just said that Angora came, so if she were to have written that on here and Mrs. Turtle would have read that on here, would I have known where Angora was? No! So, then she changed it. I love how she caught that. She said that she came to the store then specifically told me the name of the store; it was Mrs. Periwinkle's store.

I asked Mrs. Turtle why she made the decision to respond in this way—why she used the student's summary response to reinforce what they were to do during their guided reading group time. She said, "So they would know exactly what their task was to follow the directions. And a lot of times, they want to tell every single event and detail, and that's not summarizing."

Again, giving positive reinforcement was an important part of Mrs. Turtle's instruction and decision-making as she worked with groups of students. When showing her a stimulated recall component of a time when she responded to a student with "Good job!", I asked her why that was important for her to say. She responded:

> Just positive reinforcement right then and there and pointing out what they were doing correct because they were doing three sentences, so if I caught the first one they were doing together then I thought they would remember to do it for the

> other ones. Or, remember the punctuation at the end if they did the first one, to point that out so they wouldn't forget to do it with the other sentences.

Positive reinforcement was a way for Mrs. Turtle to confirm students, but also to help others in their learning as well.

Like the other two teachers, Mrs. Slater also confirmed students through reinforcement. In one example, Mrs. Slater was complimenting a student who used both the text and illustrations to take meaning from the text to state an example for other students. When I asked her why she decided to give this specific feedback, she said:

> They often think they are big second-graders and so they don't need to use the illustrations anymore, but there are often parts of the story that you can't learn by just reading the text, when it's a story with illustrations. And this is my top group, so they're most likely to think, 'Oh, I don't need the illustrations.' So, that was just to point out- look there are still parts from the illustrations you can still learn from.

In all cases, each teacher spent time throughout instruction praising students to build them up and encourage them. Moreover, each teacher validated and reinforced students' responses to not only support their answers, but also to help all students benefit from each other's learning.

**Thoughtful Decisions**

A third theme pertaining to in-the-moment decision-making was that teachers made thoughtfully adaptive decisions. When teachers make thoughtfully adaptive decisions they are cognitively thinking about students' responses and how to best problem-solve in those moments. Many times, throughout the observations, I noticed how

teachers were thoughtful in the decisions they made and reflective of students' responses during instruction.

From one observation, Mrs. Petrillo took notes after working with one particular student. I asked her about these notes and how she decided what to write. She mentioned, "I usually try to look for patterns so that we can address that next level they're struggling with. So, if it's something that's not in that pattern, I don't always record it or sometimes it's just too many."

Mrs. Petrillo also talked in one of our interview sessions together how she reflected during instruction about a particular lesson being too easy for the group she was teaching. She said, "In reflecting on this, it was a little bit easy for them." That reflective example took place in-the-moment of instruction when she considered how the lesson she was teaching was too easy for her students so that she could make future changes.

> In one guided reading group, Mrs. Turtle was listening to a student read.
>
> Student: (pauses while reading) That's weird!
>
> Mrs. Turtle: (stopped student as she was reading) Okay, when you were reading that, you said that was kind of weird. Is that a fact you can put on your post-it-note?

I asked Mrs. Turtle how she decided to stop this student while she was reading. Mrs. Turtle responded:

> She actually paused herself. She did it herself and then she stopped and went, 'That's weird.' So, I didn't know if she meant 'That's weird, I don't get it,' like, explain or help me. Or, 'That's weird,' like it was interesting. So, that's why I stopped her and asked her what she meant.

In that moment, Mrs. Turtle thought about the student's response and acted based on what she was thinking about—deciding to prompt the student to gather more information from the student's initial reaction to the text. Mrs. Turtle also displayed being thoughtfully adaptive with her instruction as she made an in-the-moment decision to change how she delivered the lesson from one group the next [Both groups were on the same reading and instructional level; therefore, they had the same lesson plan.] From the observation, I saw Mrs. Turtle teach group two a particular word. She spent a lot of time with this word and asked for students to join in on their guesses about the word [poacher]. However, in the third group, she decided to tell the students the word instead of having them interact with and discuss their inferences on what the word meant. I asked her why she decided to change her instructional approach between the two groups. She said:

> Pretty much because the group before had a little hard time and they're kind of on the same, you know, level, and I thought instead of spending all that time, I'd just go ahead." Mrs. Turtle was aware of her students' reactions to her instruction, which led her to make a thoughtful decision to adapt the lesson for her next group of students.

In one scenario, Mrs. Slater was working with a particular student listening to him read. This student read many words that included a contraction, which caused her to stop and think about the need for adding instruction on contractions into the lesson plan for the benefit of all students in the group. I asked her why she did this. Mrs. Slater said:

> It was very spur of the moment. So, after he had read the contraction and missed the meaning, I realized how many contractions were in this book. I thought, 'Oh!

> This is a really good book to talk about contractions!' So, that's why. It was just spur of the moment and thought it was a good teaching point and just ran with it.

Later on in this same guided reading session, Mrs. Slater had a specific activity for students to do that centered around the book *If You Take a Mouse to the Movies—Christmas Edition*. In her lesson plan, Mrs. Slater had written that students would work on sequencing by putting the events of the story in order. While she started explaining what students' upcoming task would be, she thoughtfully considered another direction she should take with her instruction. I asked her why she made this change to her lesson plan and she responded:

> So, then I realized if they have two things and I ended up putting the movie thing in the writing station the next day, so they did do that. I wanted to have the events just listed—movie, popcorn, you know, if you go to a movie, then he's going to want popcorn. And, then the next thing he asks if you give him popcorn then he's going to want…so I wanted each event so we could put them in circular order. I had noticed it was circular and we were just going to talk about it, but then I thought if we put these on cards, then we can literally arrange them in a circle.

Mrs. Slater was thoughtfully adaptive in her instruction in that she considered teaching circular events from the story rather than teaching on sequencing, and she reflected in that moment how a different activity with the book could help students visualize the story structure in a better way. Collectively, the teachers made thoughtful considerations in-the-moment of instruction that impacted how they responded to students.

## Time Restrictions

A fourth overarching theme pertaining to in-the-moment decisions was that teachers felt pressured by time to make in-the-moment changes in their plans. On several occasions, I noted instances in which the teachers did not follow the lesson plan or made a slight change to their instruction. Almost always, when I asked why they did not follow through with something originally stated in their plan or why they did not get to a certain part of their lesson, they referred to feeling time constraints or that they simply ran out of time. For example, Mrs. Petrillo had stated in one of her lessons that students would use sticky notes to write notes down after reading. After watching the video recorded observation and noticing she never passed out the sticky notes, I asked why she changed this. She mentioned, "It was probably a time issue." She then went on to discuss how students did complete this part of the lesson on the following day. In one of her first observations, Mrs. Petrillo gave a correction to one student's writing. When I asked Mrs. Petrillo why she decided to just tell the student what needed corrected rather than helping the student figure out something on her own, she said, "There's such a time crunch. You've got to move quickly. There's not time to labor over things." These examples showed that Mrs. Petrillo's in-the-moment decisions were influenced by her perceptions of time constraints.

It was apparent, through our interview discussions, that Mrs. Turtle felt similar time restrictions. In one observation, I noticed that Mrs. Turtle did not include a discussion prompt in her lesson, even though one was planned. When I asked her why she made this change, she said:

> Really, it was just time. I realized that my vocabulary went a little bit over and some discussion on that and then once I actually got to listen to them read and take notes on that, I just didn't get to that [the discussion prompt]. So, I just made a note of that to myself to make sure to get to it the next day.

Again, in another guided reading session, Mrs. Turtle did not follow her lesson plans exactly. When I asked her about the changes she made, she said, "Yes, just the time. I took longer, actually, for questions in small group. I mean, just individually and hearing them read to make sure they knew the difference in reading the text and reading the dialogue." These examples exhibited that in-the-moment decisions were sometimes made based on time constraints felt.

When I talked to Mrs. Slater about why there were certain parts of her lesson plan not seen during the actual implementation of instruction, she said, "Those I cut for the sake of time." In another guided reading group, Mrs. Slater changed her original plans of listening to each student respond to having the students share their answers in partners. When I asked her why she decided to make this change, she said, "I realized I wouldn't have time to hear everybody and I wanted everybody to share, so I was like 'Oh, hold on, we're going to run out of time'." In her third observation, she adjusted one of the lesson plans so that she could extend a part of the lesson. When I asked her why she decided to do this, she said that she "ran out of time".

In another observation, I noticed that Mrs. Slater was leaving out a part of her lesson that encouraged time for students to preview the new book they would read in their group. When I asked her why she chose to skip this part of the lesson, she said, "I don't know. I never discuss it. It's just one of those things for time sake. I probably

should consider whether, especially with my later groups, if we should do that because it would give them good schema." It was obvious the teachers felt time restrictions throughout their instruction, which caused them to make in-the-moment decisions to include or not include something originally planned.

**Summary**

This chapter's aim was to reveal how teachers made instructional decisions within guided reading. Three teachers meeting the criteria of this research revealed numerous teaching decisions happening in-advance of and in-the-moment of their guided reading instruction. One of the most significant findings of this study highlighted how teachers responded to students by scaffolding instruction, and these responsive decisions cannot be preplanned. Such responsive and methodical decisions existed in-the-moment as the teachers took notice of students and their reactions to the instruction within each guided reading session. The decisions seemed limitless.

Within the context of this study, teachers made in-advance decisions that included the planning of guided reading lessons, grouping students, and using assessments for benchmark and planning purposes. Many considerations occurred in selecting student groups and in choosing the right leveled texts for students within said groups. However, it was not always evident how teachers used student observations to make in-advance decisions about instruction that met the needs of each student.

Within guided reading instruction, teachers made various decisions occurring in-the-moment of instruction. Teachers decided, based on their observations of students' responses, to scaffold instruction when and where necessary. Scaffolding instruction highlighted ways in which teachers adapted their teaching within the lesson as they

reacted to student responses and adjusted lesson plans as needed. This scaffolded support helped teachers to prompt students through questioning for deeper engagement and by encouraging students to problem solve. Additional scaffolding involved teachers demonstrating or modeling to address student misunderstanding or to enhance their understanding, connecting the guided reading lesson to whole group instruction or students' background knowledge, and inserting a new activity (not originally planned) or a mini-lesson. Moreover, while teachers considered instructional decisions for teaching, they also considered how to support students through various forms of feedback such as praising students, reinforcing a comment or action, or validating something a student said. Finally, teachers were thoughtful in their decision-making and also made decisions during instruction based on time constraints that impacted how much and what instruction should occur within the guided reading timeframe. Guided reading entails decision-making that can be both preplanned and not planned and all of these findings show the various decisions teachers are faced in making in-advance and in-the-moment of instruction.

# CHAPTER 5

# Discussion and Implications

## Overview of the Study

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings and implications for this collective case study. Grounded in sociocultural and social constructivist theories, this study was designed to understand teacher decision-making within the context of guided reading instruction. The following questions were considered for this study:

How do teachers make decisions about guided reading instruction? Two sub-questions were also considered for this research:

- How do teachers make in-advance decisions about grouping, planning, and assessing?
- How do teachers make in-the-moment decisions about (a) feedback and support for students, and (b) adjusting plans to better meet students' needs?

## Discussion of Findings

### Instructional Framework Guided In-Advance Decisions

The following section provides an overview of the findings for the in-advance decisions teachers made as they prepared to teach guided reading. After careful analysis of these in-advance decisions, three themes emerged from the data: teachers grouped students and made some instructional plans based on assessment data gathered, teachers adhered to the Richardson (2016) framework when making various instructional decisions, and teachers made connections between students and whole group instruction and also between students and their interests. Overall, the data showed mostly that an instructional framework guided teachers' in-advance decisions.

### *Underutilizing Assessments for Instruction*

The first major finding pertaining to in-advance decisions that emerged from the data was that teachers used formal and informal assessment data to group students for guided reading and to a lesser extent to make instructional plans. It was evident that teachers made grouping decisions based on assessment data, such as assessments suggested by the Jan Richardson (2016) framework and informal observations. However, it was not always clear how teachers used informal assessments and observations to plan for guided reading instruction to address their students' needs. When I asked the teachers what drove their decisions as they planned each guided reading lesson, no teacher responded with using formal assessments such as the Benchmark Assessment System (Fountas & Pinnell, 2010a) or MAP (NWEA, 2021) for planning their instruction. However, there were few instances when teachers utilized the data from the Sight Word Chart for Monitoring Progress and Word Knowledge Inventory from Richardson's framework when they considered the sight word and word study component of their lesson plans. Furthermore, teachers rarely discussed how previous observations of students drove their decisions as they made instructional plans for their guided reading groups. In fact, some teachers used recycled lesson plans from past years when planning for their lessons, rather than considering students' instructional needs based on prior observations. Although teachers were seen taking notes of students throughout their lessons, they rarely spoke about how those anecdotal notes helped them make in-advance decisions for future lesson plans. Instead, they tended to make personal notes about students' reading and writing behaviors for their records and to consider for future instruction, even though it was not evident how these were used for planning purposes.

Previous research (Denton et al., 2014, Lyons & Thompson, 2012) indicates teachers consider student assessment data when making in-advance decisions about grouping students, guiding future instruction, and selecting appropriate texts in guided reading. However, although these studies showed examples of some in-advance decisions teachers are faced with when teaching guided reading, the studies provide limited information about how teachers used informal observations of students to plan for their instructional needs. This collective case study is consistent with prior research in that teachers are using assessment data to help in grouping students for guided reading when making in-advanced decisions. However, it was not always evident how teachers considered students' instructional needs when making in-advance lesson planning decisions.

Researchers contend that teachers have little knowledge about and preparation for how to best support their students in guided reading, like planning for and teaching effective strategies that help students (Kruizinga & Nathanson, 2010). Clay (1998) mentions that making instructional decisions requires the teacher to consider what the students already know in helping them to reach a level of independence. Having knowledge of students' instructional needs is a vital part of planning instruction. Teachers will not meet students' individualized needs if they lack consideration of their needs when planning, and instead, use old lesson plans from previous years. This study adds to the limited research in that it shows how teachers do not always consider students' individual needs when planning for guided reading instruction.

### *Utilizing Framework Components for Instruction*

The second theme pertaining to in-advance decisions emerging from the data was that teachers utilized a program-influenced structural framework to make decisions about planning for guided reading instruction in varying ways. This framework was supported by lesson plan templates, program-specific and other assessments, recommended time specifications, and the use of leveled texts in every lesson. One of the three teachers used the framework's lesson plan template consistently, while the other two teachers used them sparingly along with other lesson plan templates. Although teachers did not always use the framework's lesson plan templates, they incorporated teaching components into the plan that the framework suggested and indicated they did so because this is how they were trained. Moreover, all three teachers were consistent with the framework's suggested timeframe—each teaching the lessons in approximately 20-minutes. Additionally, the teachers incorporated the reading of leveled texts throughout each lesson. Even though teachers could make their own decisions about how to plan for instructional components such as sight words, word study, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, etc., teachers followed the overall Richardson (2016) framework because of their perceptions of district expectations.

Utilizing a guided reading framework can be important as the teacher can use it to scaffold their planning to make sure essential reading components are taught within each lesson (Iaquinta, 2006). Other researchers (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009) posit that teachers need an understanding of how the components and framework of guided reading works. They mention, "If we want teachers to implement guided reading in ways conducive to the growth of student reading capabilities, they need a deeper understanding of what

guided reading means as well as the procedural framework involved" (p. 303). This current study showed that teachers followed a suggested guided reading framework—using a lesson plan template, planning for specific instructional components, etc., because it was an expectation from the district and school administration.

It is important to note that one teacher also indicated that she followed the framework because she felt like it worked and had witnessed reading gains in her students.  Although this teacher indicated she closely followed the framework because it was an expectation of the district, she also believed that following the framework was useful for students. This same teacher articulated that she had witnessed reading gains in her students due to her following the framework. This illustrates that even though the teacher was adhering closely to the framework, she also was doing what she believed was best for her students.

Research (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009) indicates that teachers have difficulty with time management as they enact their lesson plans, but that was not always the case for the current study. The three teachers were consistent in keeping to the 20-minute suggested timeframe, even though there were times where they could not get to all they had planned in a single lesson. Usually, this was due to unexpected responses that required in-the-moment shifts. Decisions about these in-the-moment shifts will be discussed further in the section that follows. When the teachers talked about why they stuck to an approximate 20-minutes per guided reading session, they discussed that it was how they were trained and a timeframe their administration required.

Scholars have also indicated the importance of teachers having the knowledge and skills in selecting appropriate leveled texts for students (Makumbila & Rowland,

2016). Not selecting the right books for students could pose as an instructional problem if the text does not focus on instructional strategies students need. This study showed that teachers did not have challenges in selecting leveled texts for students. However, teachers created instructional plans based on ideas or skills the chosen book lent itself to, rather than selecting texts that matched specific instructional needs. For example, teachers selected an appropriate leveled text for their guided reading groups and after reading through the book once, the teachers then selected instructional skills or strategies to teach such as summarizing, predicting, etc.—skills or strategies indirectly suggested in the book. This collective case study showed that teachers chose books based on students' reading levels but did not always consider the skills or strategies their students needed. This study extends previous research in that teachers made text selection decisions based on what the text lends itself to rather than choosing a book based on skills and strategies the students actually needed.

Furthermore, this study is an extension of previous research (Ferguson & Wilson, 2009; Iaquinta, 2006) in that it shows how teachers often over rely on frameworks and materials more than they focus on students' instructional needs. While the teachers in this research implemented Richardson's (2016) framework, other guided reading structures (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001) are available and have been referenced (Iaquinta, 2006). Although teachers were encouraged by the district and school administration to utilize the Richardson framework, they had the freedom to make instructional decisions within the framework that best supported their students' reading and writing behaviors. An important part of instructional planning is considering students' interests, but also considering their learning gaps—which allows the teacher to provide support for students

in helping them achieve certain instructional goals (Rogoff, 1990; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). While this study did not seek to determine if utilizing a structured guided reading framework produced successful learning in students, it did assume the importance of considering students' needs when making in-advance framework decisions. If districts mandate specific instructional frameworks, it is important educators and administrators understand the criteria for making appropriate component and framework decisions that support students' reading and writing needs.

***Planning for Connections Based on Student Observations***

The last finding pertaining to in-advance decisions that emerged from the data was that teachers made instructional connections between whole group instruction and guided reading. During the post-observation interviews, there were several occasions where teachers discussed making connections to whole group and their thinking behind these decisions. During whole group reading instruction, teachers noticed when certain students did not understand the content. Time in guided reading allowed teachers to make lesson connections back to previous whole group lessons as a way to scaffold instruction for student understanding. For example, one teacher in this study discussed content she was teaching in whole group reading and how this helped her to plan for her guided reading groups—thinking she would be able to make connections for students and their previous learning. Although teachers did not generally use their observations of students for planning purposes, they did use their observations of students in whole group instruction to plan for reiterating content during guided reading groups on rare occasions.

Furthermore, teachers made lesson connections to their students' interests to ensure their interest level would be high in the books they were reading. While teachers

did not always use their previous observations of students to make in-advance instructional decisions concerning the lesson plan components, they did consider and make connections to students' interests when making decisions about text selection. For example, teachers noticed the types of books students read outside of guided reading or considered previous discussions where certain interests were mentioned. These noticings helped teachers to make decisions about text selection that matched students' interests. Scholars suggests that, in a guided reading context, teachers should select books that relate to students' interests and also introduces such texts in ways that encourages engagement and spurs curiosity within themselves (Pinnell & Fountas, 1998). This research indicates that teachers do indeed consider students' interests when selecting texts for guided reading.

Teachers make various in-advance decisions when planning for guided reading instruction. They must consider how to group students, how to select appropriate texts, and how to plan for instructional components within a guided reading framework. Scholars (Griffith & Lacina, 2018) suggest that having "knowledge of the learner" is an important part of making decisions (p. 502). Knowing students' instructional needs is a critical part to making appropriate in-advance guided reading decisions, and, without these considerations, teachers cannot meet individual needs. As this study showed, teachers did not always focus on individual needs when planning, rather their decision-making was influenced by other factors, such as the instructional framework, instructional materials, and time constraints when planning for guided reading instruction. This study extends what is previously known from research about how teachers make decisions prior to implementing guided reading instruction.

## Teachers are Responsive In-the-Moment

The following section provides an overview of the findings for in-the-moment decisions teachers made as they implemented guided reading. After careful analysis of these in-the-moment decisions, four themes emerged from the data: teachers responded to students through scaffolding; teachers confirmed students' reading and writing behaviors through affirmations of praise, validation, and reinforcement; teachers made thoughtful decisions as they adapted instruction; and lastly, teachers were influenced by perceived time restrictions. Although teachers relied heavily on a guided reading framework when making in-advance planning decisions, they used their expertise and knowledge of students to make responsive decisions by adapting their lesson plans in-the-moment of instruction.

### *Responding Through Scaffolding*

The first major finding pertaining to in-the-moment decisions that emerged from the data was that teachers responded to students in the midst of guided reading lessons by scaffolding instruction. In this study, teachers' scaffolding provided support for students to achieve goals and perform tasks beyond what they were capable of doing on their own (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Although teachers' observations of students did not seem to influence their in-advance decision making, teachers made various decisions during the implementation of guided reading in response to their observations of students. Students' initial responses, at times, warranted teachers' adaptation of instruction to better meet students' instructional needs. Teachers adapted instruction through scaffolding by prompting and demonstrating—in which the teacher modeled for students in ways that addressed student misunderstanding or enhanced student understanding. Other

adaptations included teachers making in-the-moment decisions to connect guided reading instruction to whole group instruction or to students' background knowledge. It was also noticed that teachers adapted their lesson plans by inserting a new activity or mini-lesson in-the-moment of their guided reading instruction.

**Prompting to Extend.** One subtheme related to teachers responding to students through scaffolding instruction was that teachers prompted students through questioning to elicit deeper engagement and to encourage students to problem solve. Teachers used in-the-moment observations of students to make prompting decisions. It was typical for teachers to pose a question after listening to individual students read. If students' responses showed little understanding of the text, teachers would prompt students by asking further questions in an effort to help them engage more deeply with their reading. Just as Elliot's (1996) study showed teachers making spontaneous decisions to adapt instruction by prompting students, this study extends what was previously known in that it goes further into understanding how teachers prompted students and their thinking behind these prompting decisions. Teachers made in-the-moment decisions to prompt because they knew their students needed to go deeper to gain a better understand of what they read, and on occasion, this was setting students up for success on future tasks. These decisions to adapt instruction by prompting students supports what previous research has shown in that teachers are aware of changes that need to be made to their lessons so they can respond to students' instructional needs (Randi, 2017; Vaughn, 2019).

Teachers also prompted students to help them problem solve through challenges they faced during guided reading sessions, working within students' zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). For example, several observations showed where

teachers asked a question, but the student responded with a wrong answer or a puzzled look of not understanding what was being asked. As teachers noticed these responses, they made in-the-moment decisions to adjust instruction to meet students' instructional needs. This supports what previous research (Vaughn, 2019) has previously stated in that part of adaptive teaching is the teachers' ability to notice when students need extra help to get through challenging tasks. While studies (Denton et al., 2014, Elliott, 1996) have discussed teachers making in-the-moment decisions to prompt students, this study adds to previous research because it illustrates what teachers were thinking as they adapted their instruction to prompt students during instruction. Teachers scaffolded instruction through prompting because they wanted students to further engage in the text or help them to problem solve challenging tasks as they encountered the text. Providing scaffold support through prompting gave students an opportunity to learn as they socially interacted with the teacher—reflective of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory.

**Demonstrating for Understanding.** A second subtheme related to teachers responding to students through scaffolding instruction was that teachers demonstrated so students could better understand instruction. Teachers scaffolded instruction by demonstrating to address student misunderstanding and to also enhance student understanding of the lesson. Typically, demonstrating involved modeling skills, strategies, or procedures needed so students could understand the texts they read. Again, this scaffolded support helped students work through challenges they would not have been able to otherwise (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Most always, the teachers in this study modeled through verbal or written instruction in response to students' needs. Making in-the-moment decisions to model instruction for students was important because

this showed that teachers paid close attention to students' responses so they could then use that information to adapt instruction accordingly (Gibson & Ross, 2016). It also showed that teachers were responsive to students' needs (Jaber, Herbster, & Truett, 2019). Modeling for students provided an element of scaffold instruction that supported all students and their instructional needs. In this study, teachers took on a supportive role to help students and guide them to a level of independence (Rogoff, 1990; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Research (Ankrum et al., 2014; Elliott, 1996) has already shown that modeling is advantageous for students. In fact, this study reiterates a similar finding from Elliot's (1996) previous research which also showed teachers' responsive decisions to model during instruction. However, this current study further extends what is known because it discusses teachers' thoughts about their decisions to model instruction for their students. Teachers made responsive in-the-moment decisions to model instruction—to address students' misunderstanding or to help in their understanding of what they were learning.

**Connecting to Better Understand.** A third subtheme related to teachers responding to students through scaffolding instruction was around teachers' connecting the guided reading lessons to whole group instruction or to students' background knowledge. This finding relates to Dewey's (1938) theory of social constructivism in that students can construct new knowledge from previous knowledge. Often, teachers made the decision to connect the guided reading lesson back to skills and strategies taught in whole group instruction or to their background knowledge if they noticed students were not grasping the content. Making these specific connections during the lessons was not something preplanned, rather decisions were based on noticing students (Gibson & Ross,

2016) and picking up on teachable moments, in which the teacher was responsive to students' cues (Boyd, 2012). Teachers made the decision to adapt instruction and go "off-script" because they felt it was important and because they knew when their students struggled to understand what was being taught. Previous studies (Vaughn, 2015) show that teachers provide adaptations during instruction to make connections between the instruction and students. Yet, there are very few studies showing how teachers adapted their instruction by making in-the-moment connections between students and learning during guided reading. This collective case study illustrates that teachers adapt during guided reading to make connections as a way to scaffold instruction to respond to students' needs.

**Inserting for Clearer Understanding.** A fourth and final subtheme related to teachers responding to students' needs in-the-moment of instruction was that teachers inserted a new activity or mini-lesson not originally planned if they felt this would help students to better understand the lesson. This showed that teachers adapted instruction based off students' contributions (Vaughn & Parsons, 2013). Teachers remarked on making these specific decisions based on their observations of students and how they felt they should respond to their instructional needs as the lesson took place. For example, when students were reading a text in one guided reading session, the teacher noticed them struggling to understand certain vocabulary words that had the same pronunciation but different meaning as other words. In that moment, she knew it was a perfect opportunity to adapt instruction by adding in a mini-lesson on homophones. The teacher felt this was important so she could help students understand differences between similar sounding words. In that moment, students' responses elicited opportunities for her to scaffold

instruction through inserting a mini-lesson not originally planned, which was the case for when other teachers made similar adaptations.

Previous research shows (Parsons, 2012) how one teacher adapted instruction by inserting a mini-lesson into the guided reading lesson. If and when students did not understand instruction, the teacher could then make the decision to adapt instruction in ways that best responded to students' needs. This current study adds to existing research because we can see how teachers made decisions to adapt instruction by making insertions to the lesson—they observed students struggling and felt their best response was to add to their preplanned lesson so students could better understand the instruction.

***Affirming Students Through Feedback***

The second finding pertaining to in-the-moment decisions that emerged from the data was that teachers confirmed students' reading and writing behaviors. Teachers confirmed students' behaviors by affirming them through praise, validation, and reinforcement during guided reading instruction. These affirmations were responsive decisions intended to give feedback to students. This feedback helped build students' confidence, validated students' answers, or reinforced what students said for the good of the entire guided reading group. Each teacher made the decision to praise students because they knew their students' needs and felt it was important to encourage them to build confidence in their learning. Likewise, each teacher made the decision to validate students' responses during instruction because they felt it was important to acknowledge their ideas and contributions to the lesson. Teachers also made decisions to affirm students by reinforcing a skill, strategy, or behavior for the entire group because they felt it was important to make examples of learning so everyone could benefit. It was evident

through follow-up conversation how each teacher thought intentionally about what their students needed during instruction that provided them with appropriate and purposeful feedback. The interactions between students and teachers and conversations that involved specific feedback helped students construct knowledge (Beck & Kosnik, 2006).

This finding reflected previous research showing teachers' efforts to confirm students (Elliott, 1996). While Elliott discussed teacher behavior in confirming students through praise, validation, or reinforcement, it was not understood how the teacher came to such decisions other than responding to students' reading and writing behaviors. This study extends what is previously known in that we now know how teachers came to such responsive decisions that involved giving students specific feedback. Teachers made decisions to confirm students through praise, validation, and reinforcement because they knew it was what students needed in-the-moment and felt, at times, it would benefit all learners during the guided reading session.

***Making Thoughtfully Adaptive Decisions***

The third finding pertaining to in-the-moment decisions was that teachers made thoughtfully adaptive decisions. It was evident throughout the guided reading sessions that teachers made thoughtful decisions during instruction because of how they responded to students. For example, adaptive teaching encompassed changing entire lesson plans from one group to the next or changing instructional activities completely because teachers felt it was what students needed. Teachers made decisions that were authentically in response to students' contributions (Kavanagh et al., 2020) as instruction occurred. Being thoughtfully adaptive meant that teachers considered students' instructional needs and responded to teachable moments (Boyd, 2012). This study

reiterated previous research (Vaughn et al., 2015) in that teachers are continually gauging students' understanding of instruction and making adaptations to the lesson that best support their learning. Each teacher made thoughtfully adaptive decisions during instruction because they were aware of students' instructional needs and felt it was important to address those needs.

Previous research (Parsons, 2012) indicates a lack of understanding about teachers' reflections on adaptations made during a lesson. The current study adds to existing research because it shares what teachers were thinking about the adaptive decisions made in-the-moment of guided reading instruction. They considered students' needs and responded accordingly. Through interview discussion, it was evident why teachers made the adaptive decisions they did, even though research suggests there is limited understanding of teachers' knowledge of what adaptive teaching actually involves (Vaughn et al., 2016) and that helping teachers to understand adaptive decisions is important to future research (Fairbanks et al., 2010).

***Feeling Pressured by Time***

The fourth and final finding pertaining to in-the-moment decisions was that teachers felt time restrictions. It was evident that teachers felt pressured by time to make changes to their plans as instruction took place. It was noted on several occasions that teachers did not always follow through with the lesson components they had previously planned. For example, teachers may have corrected students on missed words instead of giving them strategies to decode or left out discussion prompts from the lesson. In response to these instructional decisions, teachers discussed there being a "time crunch" and that "there is not time to labor over things". Furthermore, teachers talked about there

being a "time issue" in not being able to get to certain parts of their lesson or adjusting their plans entirely.

Scholars (Griffith, Massey, & Atkinson, 2013) have discussed that teachers make decisions based on various factors, including the teaching context. Additionally, teachers make decisions based on their knowledge of students' instructional needs. The current study adds to what we know about teacher decision-making in guided reading because we now know that teachers sometimes makes decisions based on the pressure they feel of time rather than considering students' needs in-the-moment of instruction. Inherently, time restrictions forced teachers to make quick decisions, which resulted in missed teaching opportunities with students.

**Summary of Findings**

Findings showed that teachers allowed a guided reading framework to help guide in-advance decisions more than they used their own knowledge and expertise when making instructional plans. Although teachers did utilize assessment data to make decisions about grouping and text selection, the study showed that teachers did not do much in depth thinking around lesson planning for their guided reading sessions. Instead, teachers allowed other factors, such as student interest, to help in lesson planning decisions, which did not always focus on students' instructional needs in the various components of reading (i.e. fluency, comprehension, etc.). Furthermore, teachers choosing to use previous years' lesson plans in their entirety also showed that teachers did not consider their current students' instructional needs when making preparations for their guided reading sessions. The guided reading framework did allow for engaging

lessons within a social context, but limited teachers decisions on providing support for meeting students' instructional needs (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978).

Although teachers do not always place a heavy emphasis on students' instructional needs in planning, they do make responsive decisions for students in-the-moment. A great similarity between each teacher was that, more often than not, teachers made in-the-moment decisions that were responsive to students as instruction occurred. Teachers considered students' current knowledge and how to guide them through their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) to reach instructional goals. On occasion, there were times where teachers did not always consider students' needs, and instead, allowed pressure they felt about the 20-minute timeframe to aid in their decision-making. However, overall, teachers used knowledge and expertise of students when making in-the-moment decisions. Collectively, teachers made adaptive decisions based on unanticipated student responses (Vaughn & Parsons, 2013) that allowed opportunities for students and teachers to work together to create learning (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978).

**Limitations**

Several limitations must be considered when interpreting the findings of this research. This study was limited to only three teachers and all the students they taught within their guided reading groups. As a result, it does not represent teacher decision-making for all elementary school teachers using guided reading instruction. Furthermore, the criteria limited the research to only second-grade teachers teaching guided reading and it cannot be determined that the decisions these teachers faced would also be the same decisions other grade level teachers would encounter in the context of guided

reading instruction. Additionally, the three participating teachers taught guided reading based on the experiences they encountered with professional development on Jan Richardson's (2016) method of teaching guided reading; therefore, it cannot be assumed that other teachers teaching guided reading teach in the same way or make similar framework decisions for instruction.

It also cannot be assumed that any student within a guided reading group would make similar contributions to instruction as the students within this study. For example, the students in this study attended a Title I elementary school, lived in a suburban area, and made up a predominately white population. A generalization cannot be made that teachers would make the same decisions with students representing similar or different demographics in the same ways the teachers did in this research.

This research included eight weeks of observations and interviews. Because I was the sole researcher while trying to manage my full-time teaching position, I needed time to watch each video recorded session and create interview questions prior to each face-to-face teacher interview. Because of this, typically a one week lapse in time occurred between the recorded observation and the interview. This time lapse created gaps in teachers' memories about planning decisions that they had made up to two weeks prior to the interview. Sometimes, teachers struggled to recall certain decisions. At one time or another, each teacher referred back to that particular lesson plan to jog their memory so they could answer the interview question. Perhaps if the face-to-face interviews occurred the same day or within 24-48 hours post observation, richer and more concrete responses would have been given. This caused me to wonder how responses would have differed in this research if I would have been in the classroom with the teachers as they were

conducting the lessons. I feel interview responses would have been more thorough, since watching the video recordings and transcribing of these lessons took so much time.

It is possible the data presented is limited by my assumptions about when decision-making occurred throughout the study. For example, I identified times from the video-recorded observations where I felt teachers were making decisions and later asked teachers questions during the interview based on these assumed decisions. The data could be limited to my assumptions because it is possible there were many decisions teachers were making that were not made apparent to me since I did not include a teacher think aloud component as a part of this study.

Furthermore, it is possible there are limitations in the data based on me waiting to ask interview questions about teacher lesson planning after they had taught the guided reading sessions rather than asking them before the actual lesson was implemented. Teachers may have grounded their in-advance lesson planning decisions more at trying to meet students' instructional needs rather than only considering students' interests or attempts at making lesson connections. Since I did not ask teachers questions about their lesson plans until the lesson was already taught, giving concrete answers seemed difficult for some.

A guided reading lesson at a second-grade teaching level typically lasts three to five days. Due to the teachers guided reading sessions occurring every day at the same time, I could only video record one observation per teacher per week. Because of this, I was only able to observe one instructional day of that particular week's lesson. It was possible decisions teachers made later in the week were a result of students' responses from earlier in the week. With only observing one instructional day of lessons, it is

possible I missed opportunities to see specific decisions being made in-advance of and in-the-moment of their guided reading sessions.

One way to prevent bias within the research was to serve as an outsider (Merriam, 2009), in which I used a video camera to record each and every guided reading session throughout the duration of the study. Having a video camera recording instruction could have caused the teachers to be nervous and not perform the guided reading instruction in the usual manner in which it is usually delivered. For example, Mrs. Petrillo appeared stressed and rushed to get through all of the components previously planned in some of the observations. Partially, I feel this was due to her being video recorded and perhaps this may have caused her decisions to not be clear or rooted in students' instructional needs.

**Implications for Practice**

The implications from this study suggest that teachers are faced with various decisions in-advance of and in-the-moment of guided reading. This is important for teachers and other stakeholders to understand because, as this study showed, teachers lacked consideration of students' instructional needs as they planned for guided reading lessons. Moreover, it was not always evident how teachers used data or observations of students to think about and make instructional decisions.

One implication suggests that more focus should be spent on how teachers can utilize formal and informal assessment data to create instructional plans. It was evident from this study that teachers were able to use framework assessments to aid in sight word and word study instruction for their guided reading lessons. However, it was not clear how teachers considered assessment data when creating lesson plans focusing on what

students most needed. It is important that teachers know how to analyze data in ways that support instruction on specific skills and strategies. For example, if students struggled with a particular strategy (i.e. making inferences), the teacher would then select a text highlighting this strategy, then make instructional plans that focus on strengthening students' abilities to make inferences. More preparation and consideration on lesson planning would make guided reading better for students as it would match what they most need in reading. As a result, this would help teachers guide students through their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) and help them reach independence in reading—a goal of guided reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017).

A second implication suggests that if teachers are expected to follow an instructional framework, that time must be spent on developing teachers' understanding of how to plan for the instructional components within that framework. Even though it was understood from this study that while teachers were expected to use the Jan Richardson (2016) guided reading framework, they could use their expertise and knowledge of students to create plans for the instructional components of each lesson. This is important for teachers and administrators to consider because if teachers have the freedom to plan instructional components within the framework, attention should be given to teachers on how they can best support their students' instructional needs as they use their expertise and knowledge to assist in the lesson planning process.

A third implication suggests that, when given the opportunity, it is important for teachers to make connections between their students and learning. For example, making connections with instruction may help students create new learning in guided reading based on previous knowledge that exists from whole group instruction—all reflective of

social constructivism from the works of Dewey (1938) and Vygotsky (1978). Additionally, making connections between instruction and students' interests may help teachers energize student learning and better engage them in the lesson.

Regarding decisions in-the-moment of instruction, another implication involves a refinement of teachers' skills in decision-making that would help empower teachers to guide students to understanding as instruction occurs. While the experienced teachers in this study demonstrated high levels of responsiveness, it is possible that newer teachers may struggle with making in-the-moment responsive decisions. Decision-making is a vital process of implementing guided reading and teachers must understand pedagogical knowledge that allows them to scaffold and provide additional support to students within this instructional method. As teachers adapt their instruction to better meet students' needs, it is important for them to understand how to prompt students in ways that encourage understanding and deeper learning. Moreover, this study implies that teachers must scaffold instruction based on students' responses that help to address any misunderstanding or to enhance understanding for that which is being taught. According to Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976), scaffolding instruction provides the support students may need during instruction. As teachers model for students, they are given opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and this is an important process in students applying new knowledge independently of the teacher (Ankrum, Genest, & Belastro, 2014).

A final implication is that districts and schools should consider guided reading instruction because it provides a small group social setting for learning, in which teachers guide students to understanding—addressing individualized needs and helping them to

mature and develop cognitively (Vygotsky, 1978). As Vygotsky noted, children can learn within their zone of proximal development as teachers come alongside them to support and guide as needed. This study implies Vygotsky's theory in that students learn and develop as they take part in guided reading instruction. This process involves teachers making decisions as they consider students' instructional needs. Throughout this study, teachers assisted students within their zone of proximal development through scaffolding instruction. This was demonstrated time and time again as teachers noticed when students were not understanding the texts they read or the instruction being taught. In order to respond to students' instructional needs, teachers had to be adaptive (Hoffman & Duffy, 2016; Pearson & Vaughn, 2013; Vaughn, 2015) from their professional noticing (Gibson & Ross, 2016) of students.

Teacher decision-making is complex, challenging, and requires careful consideration of students and areas in which they need to grow. The findings of this study supported this theory in that teachers must be adaptive and attend to students' responses. As seen through this case study, teachers' decisions were impacted by their observation of students' reading and writing behaviors (Elliott, 1996; Ross & Gibson, 2010). As mentioned from earlier research (Westerman, 1991), this study also showed that teachers made decisions before, during, and after instruction—decisions were constant. This study raises awareness for administrators and county policy makers about how to best support their teachers when planning for and teaching guided reading instruction. This support can be given through professional development or other resources that may influence instructional decisions within the context of guided reading instruction that will best support student learning in reading.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

For this section, I give several considerations for future research in the area of teacher decision-making and guided reading. First, since this research involved teachers teaching guided reading based on their experiences and training with the Jan Richardson (2016) framework of guided reading, I would recommend observing other teachers utilizing a different framework (i.e. Fountas and Pinnell, 2017) to see if decisions are similar or different—perhaps this would evolve into a comparative case study.

Moreover, in considering the Jan Richardson framework, future recommendations include researching other teachers teaching guided reading to gather a deeper understanding of guided reading instruction in how they were trained to utilize a specific framework. This may give a richer understanding to the types of guided reading decisions made and teachers' thought processes behind those decisions. Furthermore, research methods such as focus group discussions may reveal outside resources, such as a literacy coach, that may contribute to teachers' understanding of guided reading and the types of decisions they may face in planning for and implementing guided reading instruction. I would also recommend asking the question of what experiences do teachers have that enable them to teach guided reading successfully?

It is important to further study teachers' thoughts about their decision-making processes. While this study did show a glimpse of teachers' thought process as they made instructional decisions for students, it would help to have a more detailed understanding of teachers' thoughts and their perspectives that impacts decision-making. Teachers' responses in this study showed very little consideration to students' instructional needs when planning for guided reading lessons. Therefore, further research in this area would

provide insight to teachers' perspectives and their reflections on what factors they consider as they come to certain decisions.

Moreover, future research based on this study includes me analyzing the data in a way that investigates patterns around the thought processes that created the actions that teachers took. For example, throughout this research, when I saw a teacher make a decision—when I recognized a decision-making behavior, I chose to then ask them during the interview sessions about why they did that specific behavior. Teachers' responses typically communicated what they intended to do or what they wanted to do. In this study, I focused on the behaviors that resulted from the teachers' thinking and noticing, but additional research would provide light on examining patterns around teachers' professional noticings—what teachers are noticing about students that influences their decision-making.

Another area of future research could include examining student performance such as analyzing student assessment data and how guided reading proves advantageous to student reading success. It is important to consider student outcome data when thinking about guided reading instruction. Further research around the effectiveness of guided reading instruction and student reading achievement data could help fill research gaps that exist. Previous research (Denton et al., 2014) suggests guided reading does not always prove as powerful as other research-based teaching methods, so further research could nullify negative perceptions on this instructional method in the science of reading.

Lastly, I recommend future research that involves gathering information about the impact of teachers' decision-making from the students' perspective. Do the decisions teachers make seem helpful? Do students better understand the text once the teacher

helps them? It would be interesting to understand the students' experiences of guided reading to determine if this instructional approach seems helpful. These recommendations may give stakeholders ideas to process when considering effective professional development for teachers in preparing them for decisions they may encounter throughout the guided reading process. It is not only important to teach teachers how to teach guided reading, but also imperative to support teachers in how they approach decision-making in-advance of and in-the-moment of guided reading instruction.

## Conclusion

The focus of this study was to understand how teachers make decisions in-advance and in-the-moment of guided reading instruction. I provided a collection of three cases highlighting teachers making numerous decisions in preparation of and during the implementation of guided reading. In this chapter, I discussed information surrounding the findings of teachers' in-advance and in-the-moment decisions they made as they utilized a guided reading instructional framework. Implications of this study include more focus on supporting teachers' instructional planning as they consider students' needs, a refinement of skills in helping teachers understand how to best scaffold instruction as students respond to the lesson, and raising awareness to educators, administrators, and stakeholders alike how guided reading can provide supportive instruction to meet students' individualized needs.

Teachers face a seemingly unlimited number of decisions on a daily basis. Understanding their thinking as decisions occur helps one to know what it means to make methodical decisions in consideration of students' instructional needs. It is apparent that

teachers face challenges as they take into consideration their professional noticing of students and respond in ways that meets the instructional needs of all students. I encourage any reader to consider the decision processes that occur with planning for and implementing guided reading instruction. Furthermore, I encourage the reader to look for ways to support teachers as they make lesson preparations and respond to students' varying instructional needs in the elementary classroom.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

### A. Introductory Interview

(Participant),

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today. I know you are busy and appreciate your willingness to share insights from your teaching experience in guided reading instruction. I have several main questions to ask you today. As we talk, I may think of follow-up questions as well. If at any time you do not wish to answer a question, or would like to end the interview, please let me know. I anticipate that our conversation will take no more than 30 minutes and may be shorter than that.

As we get started here, would you confirm verbally that you received the consent form that was sent to you and that you recognize that this interview will be recorded. (Pause) Thank you.

As you know, I am researching teachers and the decisions they are required to make in-advance of and in-the-moment with guided reading sessions. Today, I just want to spend some time getting to know and your familiarity with guided reading.

**<u>Main interview (Teacher)</u>**

- Where are you currently a teacher and how long have you served in that role? How long have you served as a teacher in education?
    a. Where did you get your degree from? When?
    b. Graduate degree subject (if applicable): Institution: Year:
    c. Undergrad degree subject: Institution: Year:

- How long have you been an elementary school teacher?

- What grades have you taught?

- Have you ever received training or professional development on guided reading instruction? If yes, to what extent? If no, what other techniques of reading instruction have you been trained on?

- What instructional resources do you use when teaching guided reading?

- Based on your understanding, what is the difference between guided reading and whole group reading?

**Wrap-Up**

Okay, that's it! I appreciate your time today. After I look over the transcript of our conversation, may I contact you if I have further questions?

Thank you. If you have any further questions for me, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time. Do you have my contact information?

Excellent. Thank you so much for participating in this interview.

### B. In-Advance of Decision-Making in Guided Reading Interview

(Participant),

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me again today. I want to focus the majority of our time today asking you questions related to the decisions you make in-advance of meeting with your students for guided reading groups. Please answer the best you can.

- How do you group your students for guided reading?
- How often do your groups change (i.e., How often are students moving from group to group?)?
- How do you use assessments in guided reading?
- What type of assessments do you administer with your students for guided reading?
- What do you do with the assessment data and how does this guide your grouping process with students?
- How do you plan your guided reading instruction? Please talk to me about your step by step process of how you plan guided reading instruction.
- How do you ensure you have a differentiated lesson plan that meets the needs of your students in each guided reading group?
- What components are included in your guided reading lesson?

**Wrap-Up**

Okay, that's it! I appreciate your time today. After I look over the transcript of our conversation, may I contact you if I have further questions?

Thank you. If you have any further questions for me, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time. Do you have my contact information?

Excellent. Thank you so much for participating in this interview.

### C. In-the-Moment Decision-Making for Guided Reading Interview

(Participant),

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me again today. I want to focus the majority of today on looking at small clips of the video recording from the guided reading observation and talk about the decisions you made as you were teaching your group and working with your students.

The following is a list of possible questions the researcher will ask:

- Tell me about what was happening in the video.
- Talk to me about how you made this instructional decision.
- Why did you introduce the text that way?
- Why did you prompt that student?
- How did you know to prompt that student?
- Why did you interact with the student that way?
- How did you engage students into that discussion?
- What made you ask that discussion question?
- Why did you let students share their thinking?
- How did you know how to respond to students' thinking?
- How did you get the student to initiate effective actions?
- How did you time your lesson and know when to move on to the next component in your lesson?

- How did you work towards accomplishing your goals of this lesson?

- How did you know the students understood the strategy they were supposed to use when reading the text?

- How did you know your students were performing at a high level?

- How did you know your students were engaged?

- Why did you extend the student discussion instead of moving on to the next component of your lesson?

- How did you create teaching points in your lesson?

- Why did you change the direction of your lesson from what you originally had planned?

**Wrap-Up**

Okay, that's it! I appreciate your time today. After I look over the transcript of our conversation, may I contact you if I have further questions?

Thank you. If you have any further questions for me, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time. Do you have my contact information?

Excellent. Thank you so much for participating in this interview.

## APPENDIX B: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

The following steps are in accordance with Creswell's (2014) observational protocol in a qualitative study and Merriam's (1998, 2009) checklist of elements to observe in a case study:

| Action | Notes |
|---|---|
| Record information as it happens. | Divide a single page of paper in half to record observations as they are happening, but also record researcher's notes. Observations may include dialogue, description of the setting, events or activities happening. Notes may include the researcher's personal thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and speculations of teacher decision making. |
| Record Demographic Information. | Write notes that include the time, place, and date of each field setting in which the observation is taking place. |

**Observation Checklist:**

Step 1 The physical setting: What is the physical environment like? What is the context? What kinds of behavior is the setting designed for? How is space allocated? What objects, resources, technologies are in the setting?

Step 2 The participants: Describe who is in the scene, how many people, and their roles. What brings these people together? Who is allowed here? Who is not here who would be expected to be here? What are the relevant characteristics of the participants?

Step 3 Activities and interactions: What is going on? Is there a definable sequence of activities? How do people interact with the activity and with one another? When did the activity begin? How long does it last? Is it a typical activity, or unusual?

Step 4 Conversation: What is the content of conversations in this setting? Who speaks to whom? Who listens? Quote directly, paraphrase and summarize conversations. If possible, use a tape recorder to back up your notetaking. Note silences and nonverbal behavior that add meaning to the exchange.

Step 5 Subtle factors: Less obvious but perhaps as important to the observation are

- Informal and unplanned activities
- Symbolic and connotative meanings of words

- Nonverbal communication such as dress and physical space
- Unobtrusive measures such as physical clues
- What does not happen

Step 6 Your own behavior: You are as much a part of the scene as participants. How is your role, whether as an observer or intimate participant, affecting the scene you are observing? What do you say and do? In addition, what thoughts are you having about what is going on? (Merriam, 2009, p. 97-98).

## APPENDIX C: RESEARCH TIMELINE

| Timeline | Data Source |
|---|---|
| September 30- October 4, 2019<br><br>30 minutes | Initial Interview |
| October 7-11, 2019 | Fall Break |
| | |
| October 14-18, 2019<br><br>80 minutes per teacher (4 guided reading sessions at 20 minutes each) | Round 1 observations<br><br>Gathered guided reading lesson plans |
| October 21-25, 2019<br><br>30 minutes | Round 1 interviews |
| | |
| October 28-November 1, 2019<br><br>80 minutes per teacher (4 guided reading sessions at 20 minutes each) | Round 2 observations<br><br>Gathered guided reading lesson plans |
| November 4-8, 2019<br><br>30 minutes | Round 2 interviews |

| | |
|---|---|
| November 11-15, 2019<br><br>80 minutes per teacher (4 guided reading sessions at 20 minutes each) | Round 3 observations<br><br>Gathered guided reading lesson plans |
| November 18-22, 2019<br><br>30 minutes | Round 3 interviews |
| | |
| November 25-29, 2019 | Thanksgiving break |
| December 2-6, 2019 | Researcher attended Literacy Conference |
| | |
| December 9-12, 2019<br><br>80 minutes per teacher (4 guided reading sessions at 20 minutes each) | Round 4 observations<br><br>Gathered guided reading lesson plans |
| December 16-20, 2019<br><br>30 minutes | Round 4 interviews |
| | |
| January 6-10, 2020 | This week was set aside if extra time was needed for rescheduled observations and/or interviews. All observations and interviews happened according to schedule; therefore, this week was not needed. |

## APPENDIX D: LESSON PLAN TEMPLATES

### Early Guided Reading Plan (Levels D–I)

Students:

Dates:

| Title/Level | Strategy Focus | Comprehension Focus |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

| DAY 1 | DAY 2 |
|---|---|
| **1. Sight Word Review** *1–2 minutes* | **1. Sight Word Review** *1–2 minutes* |
| | New SW from Day 1 |
| **2. Book Introduction** *3–4 minutes* | **2. Reread Yesterday's Book** (and other familiar books) |
| Synopsis: | Observations or take a running record on one student. |
| New Vocabulary or Language Structures | |

**3. Read With Prompting** *8–10 minutes*

**Monitoring and Word-Solving Prompts**

- ☐ Reread and make the first sound.
- ☐ What would make sense and look right?
- ☐ Check the middle (or end) of the word.
- ☐ Cover the ending. Find a part you know.
- ☐ Do you know another word that looks like this one?
- ☐ Try the other vowel sound.

**Fluency and Comprehension Prompts**

- ☐ Don't point. Read it faster.
- ☐ Read it the way the character would say it.
- ☐ Teacher frames 2–3 words or slides finger to support phrasing.
- ☐ What did you just read? What happened at the beginning?
- ☐ Why did the character do (or say) that? What are you thinking?
- ☐ What have you learned?

**4. Discussion Prompt** *2–4 minutes*

**5. Teaching Points for Early Readers** (choose 1 or 2 each day) *1–2 minutes*

**Word-Solving Strategies**

- ☐ Monitor for M, S, V
- ☐ Reread at difficulty
- ☐ Attend to endings
- ☐ Use known parts
- ☐ Contractions
- ☐ Use analogies
- ☐ Break words

**Examples:**

**Fluency & Expression**

- ☐ Attend to bold words
- ☐ Reread page ____ for expression
- ☐ Read it like the character
- ☐ Attend to punctuation

| **6. Teach One Sight Word** *1–2 minutes* | **6. Reteach Same Sight Word** *1–2 minutes* |
|---|---|
| Word: | 1. What's Missing? 2. Mix & Fix 3. Table Writing 4. Write It (and Retrieve It) |

**7. Word Study** (choose one) *3–5 minutes*

- ☐ Picture sorting
- ☐ Making words
- ☐ Sound boxes
- ☐ Analogy charts

**7. Guided Writing** *8–10 minutes*

- ☐ Dictated sentences
- ☐ B-M-E
- ☐ Problem-Solution
- ☐ SWBS
- ☐ New facts you learned
- ☐ Other: ______

| **8. Next Steps** | Text was: Hard Appropriate Easy | Next Focus: | Students to assess and analyze: |
|---|---|---|---|

Complete the shaded boxes before you meet with the group. Add observations and notes during the lesson.

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# Transitional Guided Reading Plan (Levels J–P)

| Students: | | Dates: |
|---|---|---|
| **Title/Level** | **Strategy Focus** | **Comprehension Focus** |
| | | |
| **DAY 1** | **DAY 2** | **DAY 3** |
| **1. Book Introduction** *3–4 minutes* | **1. Introduce Next Section** *1–2 minutes* | **1. Writing Prompt** |
| Synopsis:<br><br>New Vocabulary<br>1. Define<br>2. Connect<br>3. Relate to Book<br>4. Turn & Talk<br><br>Model Strategy: | New Vocabulary (4 steps)<br><br>Observation/Assessments: | ☐ B-M-E<br>☐ Problem-Solution<br>☐ Five-Finger Retell<br>☐ SWBS<br>☐ Character Analysis<br>☐ Ask and answer questions<br>☐ Event—details<br>☐ Key word summary<br>☐ Compare/Contrast<br>☐ Cause-effect<br>☐ V.I.P.<br>☐ New facts you learned<br>☐ Other: ______ |
| **2. Read With Prompting** *10–15 minutes* | | **2. Plan** *3–5 minutes* |
| **Monitoring and Word-Solving Prompts**<br>☐ Does that make sense?<br>☐ Reread and sound the first part.<br>☐ Read on. What would make sense?<br>☐ Check the middle (or end) of the word.<br>☐ Break the word apart.<br>☐ Do you know a word with this part in it?<br>☐ How can you figure out that word? | **Fluency Prompt**<br>☐ Read it like the character would say it.<br>**Comprehension Prompts**<br>☐ What did you read?<br>☐ Why did the character say (or do) that?<br>☐ What was important on this page? Why?<br>☐ What caused ______?<br>☐ What are you thinking?<br>☐ What question do you have? | |
| **3. Discussion Prompt** *3–5 minutes* | | |
| | | |

| **4. Teaching Points for Transitional Readers** *1–2 minutes* | | | | **3. Write** *15–17 minutes* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Word-Solving Strategies**<br>☐ Sound 1st part<br>☐ Endings<br>☐ Use known part<br>☐ Use analogies<br>☐ Break big word | **Vocabulary Strategies**<br>☐ Look for clues<br>☐ Check the picture<br>☐ Use a known part<br>☐ Make a connection<br>☐ Substitute a word<br>☐ Use the glossary | **Fluency**<br>☐ Phrasing<br>☐ Expression<br>☐ Dialogue<br>☐ Punctuation<br>☐ Bold words | **Examples:** | Observations and Teaching Points: |
| **5. Word Study for Day 2** *3–5 minutes* (optional on Day 1 if time allows) | | | | |
| ☐ Sound boxes<br>☐ Analogy charts<br>☐ Make a big word | | | | |
| **6. Next Steps** | Text was: Hard Appropriate Easy | | Next Focus: | Students to assess and analyze: |

Complete the shaded boxes before you meet with the group. Add observations and notes during the lesson.

# Fluent Guided Reading Plan (Levels N and Higher)

| Dates | Title/Level | Comprehension Focus | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| **DAY 1** | **DAY 2** | **DAY 3** | **DAY 4** |
| **1. Introduce New Book** *2–3 minutes* | **1. Before Reading** *1 minute* | | **1. Writing Prompt** |
| Synopsis: | Review strategy: | Review strategy: | |
| **2. New Vocabulary** *1–2 minutes* | | | **2. Plan** *3–5 minutes* |
| Steps: 1. Define 2. Connect 3. Relate to Book 4. Turn and Talk | | | |

| p. | Word-Synonym | p. | Word-Synonym | p. | Word-Synonym |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

**3. Read and Respond** *10–12 minutes*

**3. Write With Prompting** *15–17 minutes*

*Observations and Teaching Points:*

**Model Strategy** *(if necessary)*

**Prompts for Fluent Readers**

*Explain what you just read.*
*Were there any confusing parts (words, sentences)?*
*How can you help yourself?*
*What are you thinking? Why do you think that?*
*What questions do you have? What are you wondering?*
*Summarize what you read. What's most important?*
*What motivated the character to do (or say) that?*
*How is the character feeling (changing)?*
*What caused _______? What was the effect of _______?*
*What is the theme/author's message?*
*Why did the author include this text feature? Explain it.*

**4. Discuss and Teach** *4–5 minutes*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

**5. New Word List** *1–2 minutes*

| Word | Definition | Word | Definition | Word | Definition |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

| **6. Next Steps** | Text was: Hard Appropriate Easy | Next Focus: | Students to assess and analyze: |
|---|---|---|---|

Complete the shaded boxes before you meet with the group. Add observations and notes during the lesson.

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## APPENDIX E: FIRST-LEVEL CODING CHART

| 1$^{st}$ level coding | Sub-coding | Example from Data |
|---|---|---|
| To Prompt | To engage students in reading/writing | Teacher: "Here's my question. What steps did frog take to help them have will power?" |
| | To guide students to problem-solve | The PI showed the video recording at 30:22. The teacher wrote the word "examines" and then had students chunk the word together to be able to say it. "Why did you have students do this instead of just telling them the word?"<br><br>Teacher: "Just one of those things I thought of as I went and I pictured "examples" and they know the word "examples," so I kind of wanted to see, you know, if they could do it |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | without me saying it." |
| To Plan | -to plan instruction | PI: How do you know students are on Level N?<br><br>Teacher: "They are guided reading benchmark scores from the spring." |
| To Demonstrate | | Student was struggling with understanding if you indent the first line of the paragraph or all lines. Teacher said, "Well, let's look in the book." The teacher showed the student an example from the book to answer his question. |
| To Confirm | To Praise | Teacher: "Ah, good connection! That was a good connection, buddy!" |
| | To Validate | Many students raised their hands to respond to the teacher. A student answered. The teacher said, |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | "That's exactly right." |
| | To Reinforce | "Good, and you really read those periods today. You didn't roll over them. You paused at those periods. Good job!" |
| To Hold a Tentative Theory | | PI: How did you know what would be a good book to teach them on their instructional level?<br><br>Teacher: "…they have a lot of good word call, but it's just getting it fluent and with expression, so really this level was okay for them. It may have been just a tad lower, but I didn't think it would hinder it. I thought it would be more helpful for their dialogue, so the vocabulary wasn't so difficult for them |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | to be able to read.” |
| To Follow a School Curriculum | | The teacher used the “Jan Plan” lesson plan template. |
| To Prepare | | Teacher: “What we’re going to do today is we’ve read the book and we’ve discussed it for a few days, so what you’re going to do today is writing. So, this is going to be your writing. Instead of writing in your notebook like we do every week on our writing day, after we’ve had our story finished. I actually have an actual form I want you to use for your writing. So, what we’re going to think about is what you’re actually writing and we’re going to focus on the main sections of the story…”. |
| To Reflect | To write notes on students | The teacher observed |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | students, then took notes. |
| | To tweak instruction | The teacher is discussing what circular text means. She then discusses with students the activity they are to complete.<br><br>Teacher: "Once he's inside, what's he going to ask for?" As the teacher looks back in the book she notices how many events there are and says, "We may have to do two each. That's okay." |
| | To address with students for future | PI: Not all students were seen/listened to during this group. How will you be sure to spend time with each student throughout this book?<br><br>Teacher: "I make notes and then I know who I've met with that week, so then the |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | next day, I'll get with the rest or sometime within that week I make sure I hear everybody." |
| To Scaffold Instruction | To address student misunderstanding | Student identified groaned as grown. The teacher wrote "grown" on the white board to help the student understand the difference. |
| | To enhance student understanding | The teacher writes vocabulary words on the small white board and says (pointing to the word cozy and then discussing the words stand back): "This probably goes with blanket, don't ya think? Coooooozy. And then stand back- that means to back up and look at something. To stand back, like if I wanted to see our whole board, I couldn't stand in front of it to see the whole |

|  |  |  |
|---|---|---|
|  |  | thing, so I'd have to stand back." |
| Inserts new activity |  | The typed lesson plan did not indicate students would write facts down from their reading, rather students would spend time making predictions and asking questions. The teacher wrote in a note on her lesson plan that she wanted students to write facts down on post-it-notes.<br><br>In asking the teacher about this, she said, "I thought maybe as they read it wouldn't take as much time once we got to that day to have to go back and reread the text as much if they already had some of the facts written down ahead of time." |
| Insert mini-lesson |  | The teacher worked with another student |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | and listened to her read. Teacher: "Wherever you see quotation marks, that means someone is speaking." The teacher then talked about an exclamation mark and that it means it should be read with excitement. The teacher continued talking about the difference in how you'd read a statement from an exclamatory sentence. |
| To go more in depth through questioning | | The teacher had asked a beginning question. Once students responded, the teacher asked, "And what did he think they were? Why was he reading the story to them?" |
| To connect to whole group reading/writing instruction | | PI: How do you determine which book to use? |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Teacher: "Sometimes that's related to our whole group reading and some weeks it's not as easy to find different levels that kind of hit that same whole group strategy that we're doing or that skill or concept." |
| To connect to student interests | | PI: How did you determine which book to use?<br><br>Teacher: "Sometimes I go by interest that I see that different groups like, but then I also try to pick different genres, not to just stick with nonfiction or just stick with biographies, just switch it up a little bit." |
| Student observations | | PI: How did you determine the writing plan?<br><br>Teacher: "We have been talking about |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | summarizing and picking out main events and stories, and for that group I knew they were kind of ready to go ahead and dive in with that.” |
| To teach a skill or strategy | | The lesson plan stated that the Day 1 Strategy was: “When you get to dialogue, read it like the character would say it.” |
| Time sensitive | Not enough time | Sight word review plans were written for the lesson for days 1, 2 and 3, but not to be taught on day 4.<br><br>PI: Why did you decide to review sight words on the fourth day?<br><br>Teacher: “I actually didn’t do day two because the vocabulary and introduction of day one took a lot longer. |
| | Follow a timeframe | PI: “In the lesson plan for Day 1, new |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Sight Word: many. You included this with the sight word review. Why did you make this change to your lesson plan? So, instead of telling students, you actually did it at the beginning with the sight word review."<br><br>Teacher: "Again, I just think I thought, "I'm going to go ahead and do that so then I'll have longer to listen to them read so I don't have to take out the white boards and do all that again. And, to be quite honest, I do that a lot. Just depends on time frame. And even that, I didn't get to word study with them. It's just time. Some days, I plan three things and I can get them all in and some days you get one and a half, but then you catch it, you know over the course of the week before we |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | put that book away.” |
| To correct students | | The teacher is working with another student. The teacher is helping the student and says the correct pronunciation of the word “trying” after the student mispronounced the word. |
| Used assessment data | | The teacher creates plans for word study instruction. One lesson plan indicated students would do word study with –sh. |

## APPENDIX F: SECOND-LEVEL CODING CHART

| Code | 2nd Level Coding | Definition | Example | Category |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| To Prompt | -to guide students to problem solve<br>-to engage student in learning<br>-to go more in depth | The teacher asks a question or makes a statement to engage the students in reading/writing, guides the student to problem solve, and/or goes more in depth through questioning. | Teacher: "Here's my question. What steps did frog take to help them have will power?" | Respond to students' instructional needs |
| To Demonstrate | -to model/scaffold | The teacher scaffolds instruction to address student misunderstanding and/or to enhance student learning. | The teacher writes vocabulary words on the small white board and says (pointing to the word cozy and then discussing the words stand back): "This probably goes with blanket, don't ya think? Cooooozy. And then stand back- that means to back up and look at something. To stand back, like if I wanted to see our whole | Respond to students' instructional needs |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | board, I couldn't stand in front of it to see the whole thing, so I'd have to stand back." | |
| To Confirm | -to praise<br>-to validate<br>-to reinforce | The teacher provides responsive feedback. "The decision praised, reinforced, or validated the child's thinking and reading and writing behaviors" (Elliott, 1996, p. 79). | Stimulated recall component: "Good! I like how you have "then" spelling correctly."<br><br>PI: Talk to me about why you gave this feedback.<br><br>Mrs. Slater: "Well, he was spelling it t-h-i-n the day before. So, I was glad when he transferred. I helped him do it the day before, but then to see him…" | Respond to students' instructional needs |
| To Follow a Framework | Jan Richardson (2016) method used | The teacher uses the Jan Richardson model of guided reading | The teacher used the "Jan Plan" lesson plan template. The teacher uses leveled | Follow a Framework |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | texts with groups of students. | |
| To Reflect/make thoughtful decisions | -anecdotal notes<br>-tweak instruction | The teacher takes anecdotal notes on students as instruction is happening; the teacher may think (in- the-moment) about something she should address with students, and/or the teacher may think (in-the-moment) about what she is teaching and decide to tweak instruction within that same lesson or for future lessons. | The teacher is discussing what circular text means. She then discusses with students the activity they are to complete.<br><br>Teacher: "Once he's inside, what's he going to ask for?" As the teacher looks back in the book she notices how many events there are and says, "We may have to do two each. That's okay." | Thoughtful decisions based on knowledge of students |
| To Connect | -to whole group instruction<br>-to student interest<br>-to background knowledge | The teacher links decision that was made to whole group instruction, to students' background knowledge, to students' interests, and/or to a skill or strategy. | PI: What was your thought process in creating these plans?<br><br>Teacher: "I think with this one, just basically I really thought | Respond to students' instructional needs |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | because I do the second and the third group on the same level, just an interest with them." | |
| To Insert | -skill/strategy<br>-mini-lesson | The teacher interjects (in-the-moment) a new activity or mini-lesson that was not originally on the lesson plan. | The teacher worked with another student and listened to her read.<br>Teacher: "Wherever you see quotation marks, that means someone is speaking."<br>The teacher then talked about an exclamation mark and that it means it should be read with excitement. The teacher continued talking about the difference in how you'd read a statement from an exclamatory sentence. | Respond to students' instructional needs |

| Timeframe | -ran out of time<br>-following suggested timeframe | A decision was made based on the teacher running out of time and/or she was trying to stay within the timeframe of each guided reading group session. | Sight word review plans were written for the lesson for days 1, 2 and 3, but not to be taught on day 4.<br>PI: Why did you decide to review sight words on the fourth day?<br><br>Teacher: "I actually didn't do day two because the vocabulary and introduction of day one took a lot longer." | Follow a Framework |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Assessment | -Sight Word Inventory<br>-Word Knowledge Inventory<br>-MAP<br>-Classroom Reading Tests<br>-observations of students | Teachers used formal assessments (MAP, Grade Level Reading Tests, Jan Richardson) and informal assessments (teacher observations) when planning for guided reading. | Jan Richardson's (2016) Sight Word Inventory was used to determine sight word instruction for all students in guided reading groups. | Follow a Framework |

## APPENDIX G: REVISED DECISIONS

### IN-ADVANCED DECISIONS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Used assessment data | | The teacher creates plans for word study instruction. One lesson plan indicated students would do word study with –sh. |
| To Follow a Framework | | The teacher used the "Jan Plan" lesson plan template. |
| To Connect | -to whole group instruction<br>-to student interest | The teacher links decision that was made to whole group instruction, to students' background knowledge, to students' interests, and/or to a skill or strategy. |

### REVISED IN-THE-MOMENT DECISIONS

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| To Prompt<br>(Scaffold) | -to guide students to problem solve | The teacher asks a question or makes a statement to engage the students in reading/writing, | Teacher: "Here's my question. What steps did frog take to help them have will power?" |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | -to engage student in learning<br>-to go more in depth | guides the student to problem solve, and/or goes more in depth through questioning. | |
| To Demonstrate<br>(Scaffold) | -to model/scaffold | The teacher models instruction to address student misunderstanding and/or to enhance student learning. | The teacher writes vocabulary words on the small white board and says (pointing to the word cozy and then discussing the words stand back): "This probably goes with blanket, don't ya think? Cooooozy. And then stand back- that means to back up and look at something. To stand back, like if I wanted to see our whole board, I couldn't stand in front of it to see the whole thing, so I'd have to stand back." |
| To Connect<br>(Scaffold) | -to whole group instruction<br>-to student interest<br>-to students' background knowledge | The teacher links decision that was made to whole group instruction or to students' interests | PI: What was your thought process in creating these plans?<br><br>Teacher: "I think with this one, just basically I really thought because I do the second and the third group on the same level, just an interest with them." |
| To Insert<br>(Scaffold) | -activity<br>-mini-lesson | The teacher interjects a new activity or mini-lesson that was not originally on the lesson plan. | The teacher worked with another student and listened to her read.<br>Teacher: "Wherever you see quotation marks, that means someone is speaking." |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | The teacher then talked about an exclamation mark and that it means it should be read with excitement. The teacher continued talking about the difference in how you'd read a statement from an exclamatory sentence. |
| To Confirm | -to praise<br>-to validate<br>-to reinforce | The teacher provides responsive feedback. "The decision praised, reinforced, or validated the child's thinking and reading and writing behaviors" (Elliott, 1996, p. 79). | Stimulated recall component: "Good! I like how you have "then" spelling correctly."<br><br>PI: Talk to me about why you gave this feedback.<br><br>Mrs. Slater: "Well, he was spelling it t-h-i-n the day before. So, I was glad when he transferred. I helped him do it the day before, but then to see him…" |
| To Follow a Framework | Jan Richardson (2016) method used | The teacher uses the Jan Richardson model of guided reading | The teacher used the "Jan Plan" lesson plan template. The teacher uses leveled texts with groups of students. |
| To Reflect/make thoughtful decisions | -anecdotal notes<br>-tweak instruction | The teacher takes anecdotal notes on students as instruction is happening; the teacher may think (in-the-moment) about something she should address with students, and/or the | The teacher is discussing what circular text means. She then discusses with students the activity they are to complete.<br><br>Teacher: "Once he's inside, what's he going to ask for?" As the teacher |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | teacher may think (in-the-moment) about what she is teaching and decide to tweak instruction within that same lesson or for future lessons. | looks back in the book she notices how many events there are and says, "We may have to do two each. That's okay." |
| Felt time restrictions | -ran out of time<br>-following suggested timeframe | A decision was made based on the teacher running out of time and/or she was trying to stay within the timeframe of each guided reading group session. | Sight word review plans were written for the lesson for days 1, 2 and 3, but not to be taught on day 4.<br>PI: Why did you decide to review sight words on the fourth day?<br>Teacher: "I actually didn't do day two because the vocabulary and introduction of day one took a lot longer." |

## APPENDIX H: CODES AND THEMES ACROSS DECISION-MAKING

| Participants | In-Advance Decisions | In-the-Moment Decisions |
|---|---|---|
| Mrs. Petrillo | Used Data<br>    Grouping, text selection, make some instructional plans<br>Follow a Framework<br>    Lesson plan template<br>    Timeframe<br>    Leveled Texts<br>    Framework<br>Assessments<br>To Connect<br>    Whole Group<br>    Student Interests | Respond to Students' Needs (Scaffolding)<br>    Prompt<br>    Demonstrate<br>        Enhance learning<br>        Address misunderstanding<br>    Confirm<br>    Connect<br>    Insert<br>Reflective/Thoughtful Decision-Making<br>Follow a Framework<br>    Timeframe |
| Mrs. Turtle | Used Data<br>    Grouping, text selection, make some instructional plans<br>Follow a Framework<br>    Lesson plan (used components of the template)<br>    Timeframe<br>    Leveled Texts<br>    Framework<br>Assessments<br>To Connect<br>    Whole Group<br>    Student Interests | Respond to Students' Needs (Scaffolding)<br>    Prompt<br>    Demonstrate<br>        Enhance learning<br>        Address misunderstanding<br>    Confirm<br>    Connect<br>    Insert<br>Reflective/Thoughtful Decision-Making<br>Follow a Framework<br>    Timeframe |
| Mrs. Slater | Used Data<br>    Grouping, text selection, make some instructional plans<br>Follow a Framework<br>    Lesson plan template<br>    Timeframe<br>    Leveled Texts<br>    Framework<br>Assessments<br>To Connect<br>    Whole Group<br>    Student Interests | Respond to Students' Needs (Scaffolding)<br>    Prompt<br>    Demonstrate<br>        Enhance learning<br>        Address misunderstanding<br>    Confirm<br>    Connect<br>Reflective/Thoughtful Decision-Making<br>Follow a Framework<br>    Timeframe |

| Collective Themes | 1.**Teachers used formal and informal assessment data to group students.** Teachers used inventories from Jan Richardson (2016) and other informal assessments to make guided reading grouping decisions.<br><br>2. **Utilized guided reading framework.** Teachers followed a framework to plan for instruction.<br><br>3. **Made connections.** Teachers made connections with whole group instruction/student interests to guided reading group instruction. | 1.**Teachers responded (are aware of/know) to students' instructional needs by scaffolding instruction.** Teachers prompted students to problem solve, demonstrated/modeled, confirmed students, made connections to instruction, 2 out of the 3 teachers inserted teaching points into the lesson based on student responses.<br><br>2.**Teachers confirmed students' reading and writing behaviors.** Each teacher confirmed students through affirmation of praise, validation, and reinforcement.<br><br>3.**Teachers made thoughtful decisions.** Teachers reflected on their instruction and on student learning. This allowed them to make in-the-moment intentional instructional decision.<br><br>4.**Teachers felt time restrictions.** The Jan Richardson's model of guided reading suggests 20-minute timeframe. Teachers were not able to complete all components of the lesson because of the 20-minute restriction. |
|---|---|---|

## APPENDIX I: OBSERVATION CODING COUNT

| Teacher | Years of Experience | In-Advance Decisions | Decision Count | In-the-Moment Decisions | Decision Count |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mrs. Petrillo** | 29 | Used Assessment Data | 25 | To Prompt | 91 |
| | | To Follow a Framework | 12 | To Demonstrate | 82 |
| | | To Connect | 41 | To Connect | 1 |
| | | **Total In-Advance Decisions** | **78** | To Insert | 1 |
| | | | | To Confirm | 45 |
| | | | | To Follow a Framework | 18 |
| | | | | Made Thoughtful Decisions | 28 |
| | | | | Felt Time Restrictions | 1 |
| | | | | **Total In-the-Moment Decisions** | **267** |
| **Mrs. Turtle** | 31 | Used Assessment Data | 31 | To Prompt | 140 |
| | | To Follow a Framework | 5 | To Demonstrate | 40 |
| | | To Connect | 15 | To Connect | 6 |
| | | | **51** | To Insert | 13 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | To Confirm | 53 |
| | | | | To Follow a Framework | 21 |
| | | **Total In-Advance Decisions** | | Made Thoughtful Decisions | 21 |
| | | | | Felt Time Restrictions | 0 |
| | | | | **Total In-the-Moment Decisions** | **294** |
| **Mrs. Slater** | 10 | Used Assessment Data | 36 | To Prompt | 166 |
| | | To Follow a Framework | 9 | To Demonstrate | 60 |
| | | To Connect | 10 | To Connect | 3 |
| | | **Total In-Advance Decisions** | **55** | To Insert | 6 |
| | | | | To Confirm | 74 |
| | | | | To Follow a Framework | 4 |
| | | | | Made Thoughtful Decisions | 12 |
| | | | | Felt Time Restrictions | 2 |
| | | | | **Total In-the-Moment Decisions** | **327** |

*Note. The above count is based on analyzing the lesson plans collected.*

## APPENDIX J: INTERVIEW CODING COUNT

<table>
<tr><th>Teacher</th><th>Years of Experience</th><th>In-Advance Decisions</th><th>Decision Count</th><th>In-the-Moment Decisions</th><th>Decision Count</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="9">Mrs. Petrillo</td><td rowspan="9">29</td><td>Used Assessment Data</td><td>45</td><td>To Prompt</td><td>24</td></tr>
<tr><td>To Follow a Framework</td><td>7</td><td>To Demonstrate</td><td>12</td></tr>
<tr><td>To Connect</td><td>43</td><td>To Connect</td><td>8</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="6">Total In-Advance Decisions</td><td rowspan="6">88</td><td>To Insert</td><td>2</td></tr>
<tr><td>To Confirm</td><td>9</td></tr>
<tr><td>To Follow a Framework</td><td>3</td></tr>
<tr><td>Made Thoughtful Decisions</td><td>12</td></tr>
<tr><td>Felt Time Restrictions</td><td>5</td></tr>
<tr><td>Total In-the-Moment Decisions</td><td>75</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Mrs. Turtle</td><td rowspan="4">31</td><td>Used Assessment Data</td><td>38</td><td>To Prompt</td><td>27</td></tr>
<tr><td>To Follow a Framework</td><td>2</td><td>To Demonstrate</td><td>8</td></tr>
<tr><td>To Connect</td><td>24</td><td>To Connect</td><td>7</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>64</td><td>To Insert</td><td>3</td></tr>
</table>

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Total In-Advance Decisions** | | To Confirm | 13 |
| | | | | To Follow a Framework | 4 |
| | | | | Made Thoughtful Decisions | 24 |
| | | | | Felt Time Restrictions | 9 |
| | | | | **Total In-the-Moment Decisions** | **95** |
| **Mrs. Slater** | 10 | Used Assessment Data | 53 | To Prompt | 4 |
| | | To Follow a Framework | 11 | To Demonstrate | 18 |
| | | To Connect | 15 | To Connect | 5 |
| | | **Total In-Advance Decisions** | **79** | To Insert | 1 |
| | | | | To Confirm | 6 |
| | | | | To Follow a Framework | 4 |
| | | | | Made Thoughtful Decisions | 7 |
| | | | | Felt Time Restrictions | 7 |
| | | | | **Total In-the-Moment Decisions** | **52** |

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**Professional Experience**

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| Assistant Professor: Asbury University | June 2016-Present |
| Online Instructor: Asbury University | 2014-2016 |
| Reading Interventionist: Breckinridge Elementary School | August 2014-June 2016 |
| KTIP Resource Teacher | August 2013-2016 |
| Classroom Teacher: Nicholasville Elementary School | August 2008-June 2014 |

**Education**

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|---|---|
| Asbury University: Master of Arts | August 2010-May 2012 |
| Asbury University: Bachelor of Science | August 2004-May 2008 |

**Recognition**

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| Spring Research Conference: Presenter | 2021 |
| Literacy Research Association Conference: Presenter | 2019, 2020 |
| Praxis Elementary Education Committee Member | 2014 |
| Teacher of the Year: Nicholasville Elementary School | 2012-2013 |

**Publications**

Lammert, C., Allen, K., Van Wig, A., & Worthen, B. (2021). *Beyond Anecdotes: Teacher Educator and In-Service Teacher Views of Literacy Teacher Preparation in the Science of Reading Era* [Manuscript submitted for publication]. Department of Teaching and Learning, University of Iowa.