Artifact #1

An Inquiry Project On Guided Reading

In my junior year, as a pre-service teacher in the Nazareth College Inclusive Elementary Education Program, I developed an inquiry project on the topic of guided reading to demonstrate my understanding of the importance of new information, implementing what works into the classroom, and the importance of doing research on a highly debated topic.

As I researcher this topic I thought about how guided reading really relates to the hands-on type of learning that Piaget and other constructivist where talking about. I also, referred to Piaget stages of development when I read about how children need to become responsible for their own learning.

As I learned about Danielson’s *Components of Professional Practice*, I began to recognize how this project showed I was learning how to “demonstrate my knowledge, content and pedagogy, and reflect on the teaching process.” Also, in my researching process there was the expectation that I would “Select instructional goals for the classroom and engage students in learning”

I think that what I learned most from this project was that teachers really need to keep up with newer and more effective ways to help students become better learners as well as to take out of the research as much personal information as possible.
Inquiry Project – Guided Reading
Nicole Slater

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Ann Monroe Balargin
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When thinking about math, science, and social studies one cannot help but also thinking about literacy. After all how is the student going to be able to read and write about math, science, and social studies if there were no literacy involved in teaching these subjects? Once you get into thinking about literacy the very important topic of guided reading comes into play. This is most likely the most important part of any subject area. Guided reading is when the students and teacher get together as a whole class or as small groups and read a text or book together. The student is in control of his or her own learning and the teacher is there to keep the group going and asses where the students are as far as comprehension is concerned. This has a lot to do with math, science, and social studies because teachers know that guided reading works in literacy based curriculum so why shouldn’t it be used in the other curriculums as well. First, let’s talk about how guided reading is used most effectively used and then we can see how it should be used in the math, science, and social study areas.

In the article “Guided Reading: Who Is In the Driver’s Seat?” by Susan Villaume and Edna Brabham, guided reading is in complete control of the students. Villaume and Brabham discuses how teachers try to control every aspect in the classroom. They even control guided reading, which is meant to be directed from the students. Teachers so often have to take control of the class at all times to ensure that learning is occurring and that the students are learning what the school boards want them to learn. In guided reading this is not allowed to be the case, by the definition of guided reading (helping students become independent, strategic, and self-extending readers using different reading strategies), it does not allow the teacher to do anything but guide to students (Villaume & Brabham 2001).
How can we ask students to become more independent readers and to think on their own, if we keep driving all of the questions, readings, and discussions? This is only one question that Villaume and Brabham (2002) bring up in their article. What we, as teachers, need to do is place the students in the appropriate reading levels (the reading level was the content is challenging, but understandable) and model how a reading group is to take place. Show them how to do picture walks, how to develop discussions on unfamiliar words, and how to pick out main themes in the books.

We recalled that picture walks invite young readers to talk about what they see in the illustrations before they begin tackling the print. In this activity, students sit in the driver’s seat as they identify topics and engage in spontaneous discussions of knowledge related to the text… We also realized that encouraging students to do the driving during this aspect of a guided reading lesson provided them with opportunities to practice careful observations and to build on one another’s knowledge by sharing their thoughts (Villaume & Brabham 2001).

Villaume and Brabham (2001), also bring up a good point to Venn-diagrams. When the students begin their discussion on two different something’s (dinosaurs, foods ect.) all that the teacher needs to do is draw the diagram on the board and start filling it in as the students continue their discussion. If they forget a part, such as the similarity part, then that is when the teacher guides them by asking them “what about this part?” And points to the center of the diagram. The students should be able to infer what is being asked without the teacher needing to be direct about it. Of course this would only happen if in the beginning of the year there was appropriate modeling of the graphic organizers. “We discovered that just pointing to different parts of familiar graphic organizers such as
Venn diagrams, K-W-L charts, and word maps provides subtle but sufficient prompts to keep students in the driver’s seat as they probe what they know about text-related topics.” (Villaume & Brabham 2001)

The real questions behind guided reading, for teachers, is how do we accept the students teaching themselves, and how much do we let them do? These continue to be the questions that are asked in schools today. The answers are not as easy, but try and learn is the theory behind Villaume and Brabham (2001).

By the definitions given in this article it would not be so hard to incorporate guided reading into the math, science, and social study area. Obviously science and social studies would be great and rather easy to use guided reading with. Math on the other hand would take some practice and a lot of creativity. The first thing that comes to mind, where math is concerned, is plenty of modeling. Then, I would use the technique of small groups arranged by students that math seems easy to with students that math is rather difficult for and let students ask their peers questions that they may not have been able to ask the teacher in a large group discussion. This would enable students another resource for questions and hopefully allow them to see different strategies that they may not have thought of by themselves.

The second article in the article “Reading For Meaning: A Guided Reading Approach” by Stephanie Malik, there were terrific examples of guided reading. Malik used guided reading at the beginning of each day in the form of a morning letter. This letter would consist of the day’s events, new events, and anything exciting that has or may happen in the class. This particular teacher started the year off practicing what was expected of the class when it came time to read the letter. They each needed to read the
letter individually, underlining all the words that they were unsure of, and then guess what that word or words might mean. They then are asked to check and see if their guesses are correct. “By self checking their guesses to decide if the guesses make sense, students become accountable for applying reading strategies” (Malik 2002).

Then the entire class was to read the letter and discuss the words that may cause some difficulty. “Instead of omitting these words or phrases, students identify them so they can use some form or word attack or meaning-building strategy” (Malik 2002). Malik then asks the students to summarize and explain the letter. At first the students that are poor at reading depend a lot on the readers who know how to use reading strategies to figure out what a word means. However, as the year progresses the poorer readers are also asked to retell what the letter means, so this makes them accountable for their own learning process. “The expectations for retelling help students understand that they are accountable for reading” (Malik 2002). This would force the poor readers to take control of their learning because the rest of the class would eventually depend on that student to read the letter.

This teacher believes that the role of the teacher is very important during this time because they are the “model for the expected behaviors and strategies that are to be used, but also in informally assessing students’ abilities” (Malik 2002). Guided reading is a perfect time for teachers to see what the students know and do not know.

Malik truly believes that guided reading works. For her students, they took the RITLS exam for the first time and it showed some discrepancies with recognizing negations, passive voice etc. But when she was finished with them at the end of the year the student’s scores increased an entire standard deviation.
This technique would be great to use with any subject area. My thought is, especially for current events. There are so many things happening in the U.S and the world today, this would be a great activity to do with the children to see how much they understand about what is happening. This would also give the teacher insight as to what he or she needs to address as far as conflict in the world. Are the children emotional capable to talk about war? What do the children already know about the war issue? How do the children react to discussions about President Bush and Sidam Husane? These types of current event morning letters could lead into history lessons about WWI, WWII, etc…

As far as science goes this could be a letter that addresses what the class will be covering that day in science. The letter could include terms the students may already know and terms that they may need to know that day’s science lesson. By doing this type of letter before the science lesson it will help get the children engaged in the topic as well as continuing to work on the most important part of the school curriculum, Literacy.

The third article that really relates to guided reading is “The Search For “Balance” In A Literature-Rich Curriculum” By Kathy Short