

Getting Started with Guided Reading: The First 6 Weeks

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These getting started routines are meant to orient your students toward classroom procedures and community building centered around literacy. The goal is a higher level of student responsibility and independence to enable well-organized learning station experiences and un-interrupted guided reading sessions.



Weeks 1 and 2:

1. Concentrate on welcoming and community building activities.
2. Introduce daily routine procedures (entering class, lining up, lunch, recess, etc.)
3. Lots of read alouds. There are many good read-alouds connected to friendship, respect, and school which are great to start off the year. Build procedures for respectful listening.
4. Reading assessments to determine what students know and are able to do (alphabet, letter sounds, concepts of print, sight words, text reading with running record).
5. Collect writing sample to assess letter formation ability, known words, sentence composition. Suggestion: Dictate a sentence. Analyze for left-to-right, return sweep, spacing within and between words, ability to write sounds that are heard in the words.
6. Introduce 1 or 2 center-type activities. Stress procedures such as where to play, noise level, cooperation, limits, how to clean up and put away. For young children, this could even be blocks, leggos, etc. because you are stressing cooperation and procedures at this point.
7. Start modeling writing via daily class message or news. Model letter formation, spacing within and between words, use of word wall, writing known sounds, how to mentally form a sentence before writing it, etc. Continue modeling!
8. Provide books for independent enjoyment. Baskets/tubs which are labeled are recommended. Group similar themes together (friends, animals, weather, Clifford, authors, etc.). Work on procedures for how to treat books, how/where to put them away. Gradually release more book tubs for students' reading rather than having them all out at once.
9. Post some procedures on class anchor charts.
10. Post an alphabet chart (large enough to be seen across the room). For first grade, the purpose is to display correct letter formation and show pictures beginning with these letters for reference. For 2nd grade, the same type may be needed to reach your lowest readers, or a desk reference sticker showing alphabet and other aids is good.

Weeks 3-4:

1. Finish reading and writing assessments.
2. Continue with daily read alouds. For 1st grade, utilize big books or enlarged poems so you can review concepts of print (where to start reading, which direction, return sweep, meaning of the period, how to use a picture to make predictions, title, author, etc.).

3. With read alouds, start to model strategies (reference Daily 5) such as how to check for understanding, how to cross check, and use pictures.
4. Work on independent and partner reading purpose and procedures. Where to sit, how to sit, what a reader looks and sounds like, how to take turns reading, how to build stamina, etc.
5. Start the word wall. Make it active and usable. Words should be those students will most likely use in writing. Aim for 4-5 words per week.
6. Start journal writing. If you have been modeling writing each day (see #7 above), then students should be able to try this. Stress ways to spell words they don't know without asking the teacher.
7. Alternate journal writing with writing mini-lessons. These are the "how to's" of writing issues you see from journal writing (spacing within and between words, stretching out sounds, using a word wall, spelling cvc words, getting ideas of what to write, ending punctuation, capitalization, staying on topic, etc.).
8. Continue shared writing experiences (use large chart paper, smart board, etc.). Write about various classroom experiences, story summaries, field trips, rules, math stories . . .
9. Introduce 1-2 more center type activities each week. Roam while they are playing to keep emphasis on procedures, cooperation, responsibility, and accountability.
10. If you have a basal program, follow the getting started lessons. Allow exploration of book to see what kinds of stories they will be reading. Decide how to utilize textbooks – how will they be passed out? Where are they stored? How to utilize the online version.

Weeks 5 and 6:

1. Continue with shared reading and listening procedures. Start modeling some reading strategies. 1st grade: Use pictures, finger point for one-to-one matching, look for sight words, segment sounds in cvc words. 2nd grade: Using first letter and picture, sight words, stretching sounds, looking for known chunks, checking for understanding, cross checking to make sure word looks right, sounds right, and makes sense.
2. Continue to model writing and provide time to write independently (so they can practice what they saw you model). Present several sentence frames so students can get started (I can ..., My mom ..., My friend ..., I like to . . .)
3. Introduce 1-2 more centers (or a better term might be work stations). Monitor students as they work at them to emphasize procedures.
4. How do readers select a good fit book? Not too hard, not too easy, but just right. What makes a book a good fit? Continue independent reading and partner reading routines.
5. Begin procedures for guided reading routine. Which ever rotation type model you choose, this is the time to practice, practice, practice. Do students know where to go? How to move from one station to another – and not criss-crossing the room? When to change? How to take things out and put them away? How to share? How to signal you for bathroom and drink? How to respect your sacred group time? What to do if computer station isn't working (plan B)? What happens with students who need time out? Do you need a chart that students can follow? Allow plenty of time to just practice while you monitor (without doing your teacher group yet). It will be well worth it.