

GYAs (Glad You Asked)

Q: Aren't GYAs just FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)? What's the difference?

A: Glad you asked. Frequently asked questions always seem like a bit of a fraud. Are the questions really asked often? Is the frequency of inquiry really what determines whether an answer is provided or not. If I am frequently asked what my favorite color is, but only asked a single time why literature extensions are listed as optional for guided reading for at-or-above benchmark students do I post the color question but not the literature extension question? No. With GYAs I will post the answers to the most relevant and interesting questions.

Q: I noticed that literature extensions are listed as a part of the structure for both guided reading for below-benchmark students and guided reading for at-or-above benchmark students. However, it is listed as optional for guided reading for at-or-above benchmark students. I always thought of literature extensions as more appropriate for guided reading for at-or-above benchmark students. Why is it listed as optional for them?

A: Glad you asked. One of the conclusions of the 2001 National Reading Panel's report was that there was not enough evidence in the research surveyed as to whether independent reading time is an instructional practice that produces gains in students' reading abilities. More recent thinking about this question says, "It depends." For those students who are self-extending readers, typically our at and above benchmark readers, it seems that independent reading is an instructional practice that produces gains.

The inverse appears to be the case for our below benchmark readers. Here's the logic. Below benchmark readers are typically not yet self-extending, meaning that they are not practicing reading independently in a manner that produces gains. This means that when these readers are given independent reading time, they are more likely to practice inefficient or ineffective strategies - the opposite being the case for readers who are self-extending.

Therefore, allowing our self-extending or at and above benchmark readers more independent reading time is a practice that can produce gains, so literature extensions are optional. Since this is not the case with below benchmark readers, we should strive to reduce the amount of time we give these students to rehearse inefficient and ineffective strategies - which they do during independent reading time. This means it is more critical that we send these readers from guided reading with some type of activity or purpose that creates a context where they must rehearse the strategies learned in the guided reading session.

Key Terms & Page: Guided Reading for Below-Benchmark Students, Guided Reading for At-or-Above Benchmark Students, Literature Extensions, pp. 25, 26.

Q: If I am meeting with my below benchmark readers in a literature discussion group, do I also need to meet with them in a guided reading group?

A: Glad you asked. The answer is a cautious and qualified "no-ish." The primary goal is to be sure that you are meeting with the below benchmark readers everyday. Another important consideration is to meet with these readers in a group size of three or less (which is the low limit of a literature discussion group size). By implementing this structure guiding reading becomes an intervention model, in that the frequency of instruction has been increased and the group size has been reduced for the below benchmark readers.

In general, the flexibility here increases with the grade level. In the primary grades, guided reading for below benchmark readers should be replaced with a literature discussion groups very infrequently. In the upper elementary this substitution may happen a little less infrequently.

Key Terms & Page: Guided Reading for Below-Benchmark Readers, Literature Discussion Group, pp. 25, 29.

Q: Do I need to conduct both a teacher conference and a guided reading group with each of my above benchmark readers every week?

A: Glad you asked. While it is great when that can happen, there are always time constraints to consider. What should be monitored is that you are meeting with each above benchmark readers in at least one component each week and that component should vary throughout the year. As you monitor this be cautious of having the only context you meet with an above benchmark reader be the teacher conference for consecutive weeks.

Key Terms & Page: Guided Reading for At-or-Above-Benchmark Readers, Teacher Conference, pp. 26, 27.

Q: I conduct all of the elements listed in the structure section of the guided reading pages, but I do them in a different order. Is the order of these elements flexible?

A: Glad you asked. Please notice that the structure section for the guided reading pages is a bulleted list. For other components the structure section is a numbered list. The bulleted lists indicate that there is greater flexibility in the order of the elements. A numbered list indicates that there is less flexibility in the order.

Key Terms & Page: Guided Reading for Below-Benchmark Readers, Guided Reading for At-or-Above-Benchmark Readers, pp. 25, 26.

Q: Is "tenacity" the same as "grit?"

A: Glad you asked. No, tenacity is not the same as grit, but they have similarities. Young children are not the only ones who overgeneralize new thinking. Adult learners also overgeneralize. Currently, grit is a popular concept in the education world. Angela Duckworth in a TED talk defines grit as "passion and perseverance for long term goals."

As educators start looking at their instructional maneuvers through the lens of grit, it becomes easy to lose sight of the long term aspect of grit. Soon the word grit become synonymous with effort.

Working hard at the task at hand, and seeing that it is done to completion in the highest quality manner possible is important, but it is not grit unless the task is one that is worked on over a long period of time - think years. Yet this determination to complete a shorter term task in a manner that pushes the boundaries of one's abilities is important to notice and name. Tenacity is used to describe this.

Key Terms & Page: Debrief and Closure, tenacity, pp. 30, 56.

Q: The text recommends providing book introductions that leaves most of the solving to the reader. Is this also true for the lowest text levels?

A: Glad you asked. At the earliest text levels it is appropriate to provide a more supportive book introduction. While the book introduction at these earliest levels might not leave most of the problem solving to the reader, it still should leave some.

Here is one guide to book orientations based on level. This is taken from the Benchmarked Instructional Guidelines (BIG) Report found at:

www.robertpottle.com/rapid

F&P text levels A - C: The teacher is providing the learner with a level of support for new book orientation which includes a rich discussion of the pictures and storyline.

F&P text levels D - E: The teacher is providing the learner with less support for new book orientation.

F&P text levels F - G: The teacher provides the learner with minimal support for new book orientation.

F&P text levels H - I: The teacher is allowing the learner to self-orient prior to reading a new book and assisting with this only as needed.

F&P text levels J - K: The teacher is allowing the learner to self-orient prior to reading a new book and assisting rarely.

Key Terms & Page: book introductions, Guided Reading for Below-Benchmark Readers, Guided Reading for At-or-Above-Benchmark Readers, pp. 25, 26.

Q: Isn't a literature discussion group a part of a guided reading session? or What is the difference between the group discussion during guided reading and a literature discussion group?

A: Glad you asked. As the grade level increases the distinction between the group discussion element of guided reading and a literature discussion group can begin to become less obvious. There are two distinctions between them that should be noted.

The group discussion element of the guided reading component is one of multiple elements. While this group discussion may consume a significant portion of the guided reading session, there are other distinct elements that are also conducted. These elements may be connected to each other by a common text, but each element has its own purpose.

The group discussion element of the literature discussion group has a more interwoven and central relationship to the other elements. Here all of the elements are either building up to or deriving from the group discussion. The elements build upon each other with the group discussion being the central and key element.

The second distinction is that fading support is critical to the group discussion element of the literature discussion group. One goal is that eventually students will be able to conduct these group discussions without any support from a teacher. While fading is also a factor of the guided reading group discussion, the teacher remains present to initiate and guide the discussion in a manner that leads the students to new thinking.

Key Terms & Page: Guided Reading for Below-Benchmark Readers, Guided Reading for At-or-Above-Benchmark Readers, Literature Discussion Group, pp. 25, 26, 29.

Q: What is your favorite color?

A: Not so glad you asked. My favorite color is dependent on many variables, including but not limited to: interactions with colors in close proximity,* object of said coloration, and current emotional state. I frequently present an inverse relationship to what is currently trendy. If you force me to answer with a single color I am going to be evasive and respond infrared.

* "Close proximity" is conditionally determined by field of vision.