

A STUDY EXAMINING HOW STRUGGLING THIRD GRADE READERS, AS  
MEMBERS OF A GUIDED READING GROUP, EXPERIENCE PEER-LED  
LITERATURE DISCUSSIONS (289 pp.)

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The purpose of this study was to describe how struggling third grade readers experienced peer-led literature discussions within the context of Guided Reading. Grounded in Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading and Vygotsky's social constructivist perspective on learning, this study used a multiple case design to discover patterns in the individual and collective experiences of five struggling readers. Having defined experience as evolving over time, qualitative data and descriptive statistics were analyzed to describe patterns of behavior (what students did) and thoughts (what students said) as they progressed through three discussion contexts culminating in peer-led literature discussions.

Over a 7-month period, students met in a Guided Reading group within which they participated in teacher-led, guided-practice, and finally peer-led literature discussions. Primary data consisted of discussion transcripts, corresponding videotapes, and student interview transcripts. Secondary sources included teacher interview transcripts, students' written artifacts (i.e., journal entries), parents' written questionnaire responses, and researcher's field notes including observational comments and analytic memos. Data analysis was recursive in nature, occurring throughout the study. Multiple layers of coding were assigned to the data resulting in the emergence of themes and patterns within and across cases.

Results found this group of struggling readers (a) took on unique roles in the discussion process; (b) were capable of engaging in peer-led discussions which advanced understanding; (c) became more independent and took on greater responsibility for their discussions; (d) built relationships with one another; (e) demonstrated an understanding of the discussion process; and (f) understood the purpose of peer-led discussions as being social and supportive in nature.