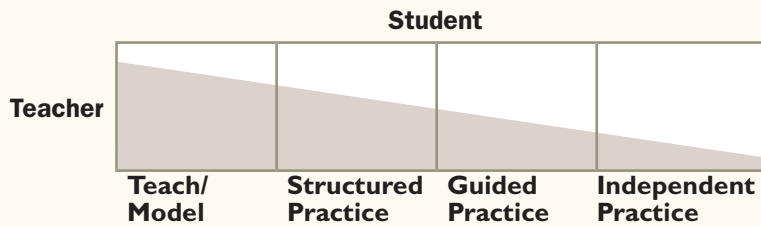# Structured and Guided Practice

Strategies for Structured and Guided Practice

Structured Practice and **Guided Practice** are steps in the direct instruction path and are central to the gradual release model, in which the teacher gradually withdraws support as the student becomes more competent in performing the skill. The path looks something like this:

Student

Teacher

| Teach/ Model | Structured Practice | Guided Practice | Independent Practice |

To use a driving analogy for the direct instruction path:

- **Teach/Model and Structured Practice** The teacher has her hands on the steering wheel and the student is along for the ride, but involved in the trip.

- **Guided Practice** The teacher lets the student steer, but is at the ready with feedback and support.

- **Independent Practice** The teacher hands over the keys because she is 85% sure the student will succeed.

As with driving, the difference between Structured Practice and Guided Practice is critical in teaching a reading skill in order to ensure success—and avoid crashes. Here's what it looks like in practice with a vocabulary activity.

Sample Lesson

1. Review

Review the concept with students. For example: Remind students that some words look similar because they have the same base word, but that a prefix or suffix can change the meaning of the word. Present examples from the book, and read them aloud to students.

2. Practice

Conduct Structured Practice. Its purpose is to involve students in the instruction as you demonstrate and work through the correct use of the skill. Make sure students hear, see, and say the correct answers. For example:

EXAMPLE	NON-EXAMPLE	WHAT'S WRONG?
• Post the word *sailor* and chorally read the word with students. • Cover the suffix *-or*. Read the base word *sail* and then chorally read it with students. • Uncover the suffix *-or* and have students use the chart to find its meaning. (one who) • Say: *I can put the word parts together to figure out the meaning of the word* sailor: Sailor *means "one who sails."* Lead a choral response: Sailor *means "one who sails."*	• Ask for volunteers to read the first word (sailor). • Call on a student to identify the affix and give the meaning. • Have students raise their hand if they know the meaning of the complete word.	In Structured Practice, it is important to avoid setting up a situation where students could fail; students should not be asked to answer a question on their own. For this reason, Structured Practice makes ample use of teacher-directed choral reading and responses.

In Guided Practice, students might work in pairs or alone to supply the answers. Have pairs report out or ask the students to write the answer on a response card and hold it up. This technique gives the teacher the opportunity to provide immediate corrective feedback and help the student avoid reinforcing an incorrect response.

EXAMPLE	NON-EXAMPLE	WHAT'S WRONG?
• Choral read the word *unclear*. • Ask students to write the prefix and its meaning on a card. Then have them write the meaning of *unclear*. • Have students hold up their cards so you can check for correct responses. • If some students give the wrong answer (or say nothing), say: *The base word/affix means* _____ . *The complete word means* _____ . *Let's say that together.*	• Have students work individually to complete the assignment. • Have students trade papers with a partner to correct any errors.	Though the goal of Guided Practice is for students to come up with the answer on their own, teacher support is still important. Teachers should monitor students' ability to perform the skill, and provide immediate corrective feedback as necessary. Independent Practice should come when teachers are about 85% sure that the student "owns" the skill.