

# **ASSESSMENT IN LITERACY: CASE STUDY**

Katie Visaggio  
RED 6540  
Dr. Ray  
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# RATIONALE FOR CHOICE

- The criteria I had for choosing a student were few but important:
  - I needed to find a student to whom I had quick and regular access.
  - I wanted a student old enough to articulate answers for me that I would not be able to observe due to not being in the classroom with the student.
  - I preferred to work with a student whose parents I am acquainted with in order to give more insight into the student's school behavior.
- Given the above factors, I chose to work with my preschool director's son.



# AGE & GRADE LEVEL

- My male student, C., is in eighth grade and is 14 years old.
- C. attends private school and has since preschool.



# FAMILY BACKGROUND

- C. comes from a middle class family consisting of both biological parents residing in the same home.
- C. has one older brother who is a sophomore in college.
- Both parents are working parents and the household would fall in the category of socioeconomically stable.
- C.'s mother taught at his school until two years ago.
- I can say personally that this family is very close-knit and functions well together.



# SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

## ○ Social/Emotional:

- From the experiences I have had with C., I can say he is well behaved, polite, humorous, and confident when talking with peers and adults.
- He is helpful and courteous at all times.
- Throughout our work together he carried on genuine conversation, never begrudging having to do “school work” outside of school to help me complete my coursework.



# SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Because C. is not a student in my classroom, I asked his mother to complete a questionnaire about her son to give me more background information. This questionnaire focused on the social and emotional development of her child from her perspective.
- Parent Questionnaire Response Highlights:
  - He enjoys making his friends laugh and goes out of his way to make others feel welcome and at ease.
  - C. enjoys playing basketball, football, soccer, and has been involved in drama productions since third grade.
  - C. loves playing XBOX and participating in fantasy football.
  - C. loves to be a leader and will participate in classroom discussions willingly.
  - “C. is a good friend and he treats others with kindness and isn’t one to judge others for being different than him. He is the kid that would include those who were not being included. I believe C.’s smile makes him approachable and that is a good quality when some kids can feel uncomfortable in a group.”



# SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

## ○ Physical Development

- C. is athletic, stocky, and maintains a healthy and active lifestyle.
- C. wear glasses but has no other physical ailments that would interfere with his learning.





Grade 8th  
 Date 1/31/11

### Denver Reading Attitude Survey

*Make a circle around the answer that is most true for you.*

How often do you do each of the following things?

- |   | Almost every day | Once or twice a week               | Once or twice a month              | A few times a year                 | Never or hardly ever |
|---|------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Get so interested in something you're reading that you don't want to stop. | A                | B                                  | C                                  | <input checked="" type="radio"/> D | E                    |
| 2. Read the newspaper.  | A                | B                                  | C                                  | <input checked="" type="radio"/> D | E                    |
| 3. Tell a friend about a good book.   | A                | B                                  | C                                  | <input checked="" type="radio"/> D | E                    |
| 4. Read on your own outside of school.  | A                | B                                  | <input checked="" type="radio"/> C | D                                  | E                    |
| 5. Read about something because you are curious about it.                     | A                | <input checked="" type="radio"/> B | C                                  | D                                  | E                    |
| 6. Read more than one book by an author you like.                             | A                | B                                  | <input checked="" type="radio"/> C | D                                  | E                    |
| 7. What kind of reader do you think you are?                                  |                  |                                    |                                    |                                    |                      |
| A. A very good reader.  |                  |                                    |                                    |                                    |                      |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> B. A good reader.                            |                  |                                    |                                    |                                    |                      |
| C. An average reader.   |                  |                                    |                                    |                                    |                      |
| D. A poor reader.   |                  |                                    |                                    |                                    |                      |
| E. A very poor reader.  |                  |                                    |                                    |                                    |                      |

(continued)

# DENVER SURVEY

Procedure: This is a self-evaluation assessment completed by the student.





# DENVER SURVEY

The following statements are true for some people. They may or may not be true for you, or they may be true for you only part of the time. How often is each of the following sentences true for you?

	Almost always	More than half the time	About half the time	Less than half the time	Never or hardly ever
8. Reading helps me learn about myself.	A	B	C	<input checked="" type="radio"/> D	E
9. I feel good about how fast I can read.	A	B	<input checked="" type="radio"/> C	D	E
10. Reading helps me understand why people feel or act the way they do.	A	B	<input checked="" type="radio"/> C	D	E
11. I believe that reading will help me get ahead when I am no longer in school.	A	<input checked="" type="radio"/> B	C	D	E
12. I feel proud about what I can read.	<input checked="" type="radio"/> A	B	C	D	E
13. Reading helps me see what it might be like to live in a different place or in a different way.	<input checked="" type="radio"/> A	B	C	D	E
14. Being able to read well is important to me.	A	B	<input checked="" type="radio"/> C	D	E
15. I can understand what I read in school.	<input checked="" type="radio"/> A	B	C	D	E
16. Other people think I read well.	<input checked="" type="radio"/> A	B	C	D	E
17. I learn worthwhile things from reading books.	A	B	<input checked="" type="radio"/> C	D	E

*Denver Reading Attitude Survey* by W. Alan Davis and Lynn K. Rhodes, 1991. Reprinted with permission of the authors.



# INFORMAL INTERVIEW

- I spent 15-20 minutes talking with C. about his reading habits and views on reading. I tape recorded the session.
- C. is required to meet AR goals in his literature class; however, this is not motivation enough for C. to pick up a book and read. He often only completes his AR goal due to prodding from his parents.
- He willingly reads *Sports Illustrated* magazine each month when it is delivered to his home.
- C. places a high value on reading to learn something—to gain information about a topic that interests him.
- C. mentioned that he enjoys reading online articles that are more succinct and can be finished in one sitting.



# INFORMAL INTERVIEW

➤ According to the “value-expectancy” theory, motivation to read is affected by one’s view of probable success and the value one places on the reading task. C. believes wholeheartedly that he is a good reader and can state ways to improve his reading ability. He does not often struggle with material that is assigned to him and reads magazines geared for young adults and adults alike. I believe the more central issue here is the value placed on the outcome. C. feels no motivation to read to meet goals that he is not setting willingly. On the contrary he will regularly choose to read material he values and glean information from it. He will read when he is curious and then feels a sense of pride when he has completed a reading task he has set out to accomplish.

➤ C. is a reader, but a self-motivated reader. When this student places a high value on the information he can gather from reading material, he is motivated to read without any trouble.

# SPELLING INVENTORY- STUDENT ANSWERS

8th 2/10/11

1. Switch
2. Smudge medicinal
3. trapped irresponsible
4. scrape succession
5. Knotted
6. Shaving
7. Skwirt squirt
8. pounce
9. scratches
10. Cratter crater
11. Saibr
12. village
13. disloyal
14. tunnel
15. humor
16. confidence
17. fortunate
18. visible
19. ~~at~~ circumference circumference
20. civilization
21. Monarchy
22. dominance
23. correspond
24. Illiterate
25. emphasize
26. opposition
27. chlorine
28. commotion
29. madisenal
30. irresoposible
31. succession

I administered this assessment like a spelling test. The difference being that C. had not see the word list prior to the test. I watched for signs of frustration at which point I would have stopped the assessment.

# DETERMINED SPELLING STAGE

- **Words spelled correctly: 25/31**
- **Feature Points: 65/68**
- **Total Score: 90/99**
- **SPELLING STAGE: Derivational Relations: Middle-Late**
  
- **C. is in the stage of spelling that will last for the rest of his life. This stage is focused on deriving meaning and spelling from familiar word bases and chunks.**

# FRY'S EIGHTH & NINTH 100 WORDS

- I presented C. with Fry's Eighth and Ninth 100 Words list to assess word identification skills. Without hesitation he read both lists in the entirety without so much as a small stumble.
- Out of 200 words C. pronounced each one correctly on the first attempt.
- Clearly C. does not rely upon context to figure out unknown words but uses his honed skills of word identification to read with automaticity.



# WORD IDENTIFICATION EVALUATION

- If I were C.'s classroom teacher, I would check his word identification skills using another measure such as a more authentic text reading with miscue analysis or a word list compiled from current lessons.
- As \*Caldwell (2008) points out, a better judge of this student's word identification at his age would be to use words presented in content area lessons as well as literature chapters.

\*Caldwell, J. (2008). Reading assessment: a primer for teachers and tutors. NY: Guilford.

# FLUENCY ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE & RESULTS

- I gave C. a section of Lord of the rings: fellowship of the ring by J.R.R. Tolkien on p. 66 to read. I had C. read aloud so I would have an audio recording of his oral reading ability. I timed C. for one minute.
- Through his oral reading and results, I determined C. read this text selection with 99% accuracy making this an independent level text choice.
- Correct Words Per Minute: 184
- Words Per Minute: 185





# INTONATION CHECKLIST

- Using C.'s tape recorded oral reading, I evaluated his intonation and prosody using \*Caldwell's checklist on pg. 171.
  - C. exhibited:
    - A natural rhythm and pacing
    - Notation of punctuation signals
    - Grouping of words into meaningful phrases
  - C. did not exhibit:
    - Vocal expression
    - Smooth reading without hesitation and repetitions
- \*Caldwell, J. (2008). Reading assessment: a primer for teachers and tutors. NY: Guilford.



# FLUENCY EVALUATION

- Using \*Caldwell (2008) as a guide, C. would be exhibiting some slight signs of choppy reading. “In choppy reading, the student hesitates often and repeats words and phrases” (Caldwell, 2008, p.165). While he did not hesitate often he repeated three phrases in total.
- Given this lack of expression, I would place C. as a monotonous reader who was paying seemingly little attention to making meaning while reading. “In monotonous reading, there is little variation in the student’s tone of voice. This lack of expression suggests that the student is paying little attention to meaning” (Caldwell, 2008, p.165-166). C. clearly falls into the category of monotonous reading.
- The combination of choppy and monotonous reading that C. exhibited shows that he lacks the good reader behavior of reading with fluency in the area of intonation. While he demonstrates two of the three parts of fluency: accuracy and automaticity, he greatly lacks in intonation and prosody.
- \*Caldwell, J. (2008). Reading assessment: a primer for teachers and tutors. NY: Guilford.

# COMPREHENSION ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

- After I explained to C. the purpose of this assessment (checking for comprehension), he read the story silently.
- I chose The Tell-Tale Heart by Edgar Allan Poe as C. had mentioned that he found Poe to be interesting.
- Next he retold the story while I tape recorded for accuracy. I let him talk without interrupting and allowed the option of lookbacks if needed.
- He did not need to reference the story to complete a thorough retelling.
- After his retelling we carried on a book talk about the title of the story and also the use of the word “madman.”



# EVALUATION CHECKLIST

- According to \*Caldwell's narrative retelling checklist (p.68) C. accurately completed the following components of a good retelling. Summaries of C.'s responses are listed below.
- **Identified main character:** unnamed narrator and elderly man he cared for
- **Identified the character's problem:** insanity; more literally the "vulture eye" and beating heart of the old man
- **Identified the setting:** elderly man's house and bedroom
- **Included steps for arriving at the resolution:** told of the narrator trying to evade the police and then ultimately being driven by the sound of a heartbeat to confess
- **Made inferences:** gathered that the narrator was delusional enough to believe he wasn't madman; also that the beating heart that drove the man to confess may have been his own nervous, guilty heart beating
- **Retold sequentially:** very detailed chronological retelling
- **Retold accurately:** used vocabulary from the story to add to the retelling
- **Offered personal reaction:** commented on how the title of the story gave more insight into how it wasn't the elderly man's vulture eye but his beating heart that ultimately led to his demise; brought up the point of the word "madman" and how he believed the narrator proved he was a madman though he spent the story talking about how he was so much more clever than a madman; he shared how he had gone to the school library to find a collection of Poe stories after reading one in literature class; he also shared that he knows reading is about gaining knowledge about something and that his parents don't view his reading magazines as "real reading"



# EVALUATION

- I was thoroughly impressed with C.'s understanding and depth of insight for a story of this reading level. He clearly understood and could take the text further through his discussion with me after his vivid and complete retelling making this an independent level reading text for him.
- What surprised me the most during our conversation about the text was how he was truly the “questioner.” He brought up discussion points and I responded. He was leading the discussion and even extended our book talk into how he reads at home and what he views the purpose of reading to be. By simply listening to him I was able to see that he not only utilizes good reader behaviors, he can take his thought process to a higher level without prompting.
  - Caldwell, J. (2008). Reading assessment: a primer for teachers and tutors. NY: Guilford.

# STANFORD ACHIEVEMENT TEST

- Testing Data: Stanford Achievement Test, 2010, Tenth Edition
- Test Date: April 2010
- Grade Level: Seventh
  
- I obtained a copy of the parent report from C.'s 2010 testing from his mom. I was given no other access to his classroom assessments that have been performed this year.



# TEST SCORES & EVALUATION

- **Reading Vocabulary:** student scored in the high range with 28 correct answers out of 30.
- **Reading Comprehension:** student scored in the middle range with only 40 correct answers out of 54. His PR-S is 70-6 which is lower than I would have anticipated.
- **Spelling:** student scored in the middle range answering 32 questions correctly out of 40.
- **Reading Vocabulary Clusters:** above average in the areas of multiple meaning words, context clues, and thinking skills. Average score in the area of synonyms.
- **Reading Comprehension Clusters:** Average score in the following areas: literary, informational, functional, initial understanding, interpretation, and thinking skills. Above average score in critical analysis and strategies.
- These test scores show that C. needs more instruction and practice with comprehension strategies. He appears to do well with higher order thinking skills but needs practice with the basic elements of literature.



# AREAS OF STRENGTH

## ➤ C. exhibits the following good reader behaviors:

- Use letter and sound patterns to pronounce unfamiliar words.
- Pronounce words accurately.
- Pronounce words automatically.
- Attach meaning to words.
- Learn new words and refine the meanings of known words.
- Connect prior knowledge with text information.
- Recognize text structure.
- Summarize and reorganize ideas.
- Make inferences and predictions.
- Construct visual images.
- Ask questions and read to find answers.
- Form and support opinions.
- Recognize author's purpose/point of view/style.
- Monitor comprehension and repair comprehension breakdowns.
- Read for enrichment.
  - Caldwell, J. (2008). *Reading assessment: a primer for teachers and tutors*. NY: Guilford. Pg. 17



# AREAS OF STRENGTH

I believe C.'s greatest strength is that he knows why he reads. He stated that his main purpose for reading is to learn something. For example, he read an article in *Sports Illustrated* magazine on a certain type of football receiving glove. He read the article and made his own opinion based on the new information he learned about this specific type of glove. He reads when he has the internal motivation to learn something new or has been sparked by something in a text.

# AREAS OF GROWTH

- **C. needs growth for the following good reader behaviors:**
  - Read fluently—specifically in the area of prosody.
  - Determine what is important in the text.
  - Synthesize information.
  - Read for enjoyment.
    - Caldwell, J. (2008). Reading assessment: a primer for teachers and tutors. NY: Guilford. Pg. 17

# INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

- Goal: to increase fluency in the area of prosody and eliminate choppy, monotonous reading.
  - Instructional changes:
    - Incorporate Readers' Theater, create "buddy reading" system with younger students in which C. would read aloud, have C. record his oral reading and rate himself using Intonation Checklist, use a variety of reading types during class (i.e. choral, echo, paired, teacher read aloud), give ample opportunities for rereading of texts.
    - Caldwell, J. (2008). Reading assessment: a primer for teachers and tutors. NY: Guilford. Pg. 171-172
    - Beers, Kyleene (2003). When kids can't read. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. Pg. 212-219



# INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

- Goal: to determine what is important in the text and synthesize information.
  - Instructional changes:
    - Model and teach the *Somebody Wanted But So* strategy by \*Beers, have C. use a rubric to evaluate his own retellings, have C. state author's purpose for writing before reading and revisit after reading, use graphic organizers after reading to isolate the most important information from text.
    - Beers, Kyleene (2003). When kids can't read. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. Pg. 144-158.



# INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

- Goal: to read for enjoyment.
  - Instructional changes:
    - Give C. a variety of texts from which to choose for independent reading, fill classroom library with various reading materials (i.e. magazines, internet articles, instructional manuals, comic books, short stories, journals, essays, poetry, recordings of speeches and interviews), allow C. ample opportunities to share and extend his independent reading of various text choices.
- “Investigations focusing on individual interest have shown that children as well as adults who are interested in particular activities or topics pay closer attention, persist for longer periods of time, learn more, and enjoy their involvement to a greater degree than individuals without such interest (p.153). They also found that giving students choices, ‘ even when seemingly trivial and instructionally irrelevant, seems to enhance interest’” (p.154)  
\*Allington, R. (2006). What really matters for struggling readers (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). NY: Addison Wesley Longman.



# Personal Reflection

Throughout this semester I was exposed to a vast number of assessment practices that I had never before utilized in a classroom setting. Before this case study project I would have used my “tried and true” assessments that were comfortable for me. After completing the case study, I feel increasingly more competent administering IRIs and checking for fluency using checklists to keep my assessment focused. Now I will be able to see exactly where my students are on the spelling stages continuum through implementing inventories for my struggling spellers. In the future I will be able to code word identification miscues so I know whether or not students’ meaning making is affected. I have a whole new view of teaching vocabulary and spelling using word sorts.

# Personal Reflection

More than anything I have learned to sort and categorize the enormous amount of items to be assessed in literacy using the good reader behaviors list. Before this case study, assessment seemed like such a huge piece of the puzzle that I didn't know where to begin. By focusing my instruction around good reader behaviors, I can pinpoint the purpose of my instruction to focus on certain behaviors, thus narrowing the scope of assessment into manageable and meaningful actions in my classroom. Prior to this case study I would have great assessments but not be able to use them to their fullest potential because I had not focused them on a certain aspect of literacy. This case study has shown me how to zero in on certain behaviors, assess them, and then allow those assessment results to guide my instruction. "If assessment is to be effective, it must be manageable. For this reason, it is crucial to have a realistic starting point. The good reader behaviors provide this starting point" (Caldwell, 2010, p.21). I am truly excited to have a set focus in my literacy instruction and assessment that will make my work of molding life long readers practical, effective, and successful.