

Case Study: Final Analysis

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Part I: Pre-Assessment Data

The pre-assessment was helpful in understanding D.'s struggles as a reader. It did not solve all of the mysteries about why he is struggling so much, but it helped me find a starting point for my literacy instruction. He has many needs but also has many strengths that will be helpful as he moves forward in his literacy development and will help him overcome some of his needs.

First of all, he needs to learn how to take his time while trying to figure out new words. As indicated in his Letter Identification Test, where he scored 52/54 points, he knows his letters and which sound corresponds to each (give or take a couple). He should be able to search through a word and identify many of the sounds. His Word Test results demonstrate his habit of figuring out the first sound in a word and then guessing the rest of it without looking at the letters. In the five words he guessed incorrectly in this section, four of them started with the correct letter but dropped off from there. His phonemic awareness would be so much better if he learned how to take his time, stretch the words out, and find the sounds after the first letter. His needs in writing reflect those in his reading. He rushes his work making his handwriting illegible, he does not include spaces in the appropriate spots, and he rushes through figuring out how to spell unknown words. The writing samples from the Writing Vocabulary and the Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words demonstrates these needs. He was even unable to go back and read his own writing. He needs to slow down and search through each unknown word, just as he needs to do with reading, to sound out each part and find the corresponding letter. His handwriting and legibility would also improve if he slowed down.

Although he needs quite a bit of help, I do not imagine he will get too discouraged as he continues to learn how to read and write. His best strength that I have observed in the classroom and through this pre-assessment is his seemingly endless enthusiasm. During the Attitude/Interest Survey he was very thoughtful in his responses. I implemented a lot of wait time because I wanted to get honest responses from him. At first I thought he was lost in his own world or distracted by something in the room, but he always came up with an answer to my question. He said he did not know what kinds of books he would choose to read, other than his favorite train book, but he was open to suggestions and would read pretty much anything. He said he likes chapter books, which is a very common (and highly unbelievable) first grade response, but I know he is not at all ready for chapter books. After this pre-assessment I know that he is extremely deft at “reading” pictures. During his oral reading of the DRA-like books (“Look at Me”), he did not know the word “climb” and instead looked to the picture and saw the child climbing. This is a hard word and he never would have gotten it right without the picture but he was able to use his visual cues to figure it out. This is a great asset to him as he continues to develop his phonemic awareness. His greatest strength in his writing is also his enthusiasm. I handed him a sheet of paper that I had numbered 1-10 for his Spelling Inventory test. He spelled the first five words incorrectly. I did not want to make him feel bad by ending abruptly in the middle even though we did not technically have to continue, so I asked him if he wanted to keep spelling (thinking he would say no), and he gave me an enthusiastic “Yes!”. He got the next five wrong as well but enjoyed trying his best.

His needs and his strengths combined helped inform my instruction for D.. I tried to harness his enthusiasm, which was not hard to do, and help him work on slowing down to think

about the individual words before putting them together in a sentence. Shorter books with a very good one-to-one element turned out to be helpful because we could concentrate on individual parts of one short story longer than we could with a longer story. He got less frustrated because the stories were shorter and he was able to use the pictures for words he was unfamiliar with. I had to guess at which books he would be interested in reading, thinking even he would have a preference, and we eventually landed on a few books about a fun dog that he really enjoyed. Harnessing his enthusiasm, picking shorter books with a good one-to-one element, and having a known element (the dog character) in the books helped him concentrate on the phonemics instead of the plot, I think. This pre-assessment helped me figure out that his reading and writing were connected in many ways, namely the speed he was going (rushing through) and his ability to find the first sound in unknown words but his impatience in trying to figure out the next sounds. I was able to use this knowledge to connect the main teaching point from our reading to our writing lessons.

Part II: Analysis of Instructional Decisions

His fluency was not very strong during the pre-assessment *Observation Survey*. This being said, I was not expecting him to even read his familiar books very well. During the first familiar read of lesson one, I was surprised by how well he read the book "People Can Build". He had been reading it with his book group for about a week and was able to read it with great fluency. His memory was a bit fuzzy when it came to words like "Egyptians", which he pronounced as "Asians". Still, his ability to read so well gave me hope that I could influence him in the same way through my instruction. Aside from the familiar reading section of each individual lesson, fluency was not a huge focus of mine throughout the six individual lessons.

The stage of phonemic awareness that D. was at and his tendency to rush through his reading incorrectly made it more important to first encourage him to slow down and concentrate on decoding singular words instead of reading the entire sentence as one. As we progressed through the lessons, though, his fluency improved. This was due to finding the right level on which to read, giving the right amount of prompting during the introduction of the new book, and the focus I put on decoding, searching, and sight word recognition. Having the correct book, giving a detailed introduction, and focusing on these three strategies helped him start reading a bit faster and more accurately. His accuracy rate went from [a skewed] 56% to a 97%. He was improving every time we got together. Toward the end of the lessons he started to recognize more sight words and use his decoding and searching strategies faster so his fluency progressed with his other abilities. I think a lot of his improvement in fluency was due to introducing the right strategies and then practicing them a lot.

D. struggled with word recognition. He did not know a lot of sight words when we started these lessons and had trouble decoding unknown words. I started my instruction going off the idea that he knows his letters and sounds but does not take the time to read new words. My first lesson encouraged him to take his time “stretching out” the unknown words and “searching” for sounds. One of his first writing assignments was to try to spell a set of ‘d’ words. Since I knew he would be able to hear the first sound I explained that these are all d-words but they have different letters. You have to listen closely after the d-sound to hear them. We practiced listening and trying to spell them and he did alright but not excellent. I followed this lesson up with a series of different teaching points involving reading cues he could use to recognize words (meaning, syntax, and visual). The fifth lesson was about reading the

sentence and figuring out if the word gives the sentence meaning or if it does not make sense.

He mistakenly read “they” instead of “then” in the sentence “*Then* the leaves fall from the trees”. I had him go back and read the sentence again. It took a few tries but he eventually got the idea of meaning. We continued to work on this point, as he did not seem completely sure of it. We also went over plural and singular words and how to recognize the difference. During one writing assignment he wanted to write about how he likes to “swing” on the playground. He found the word “swings” in the text and copied it down. We went over how by adding the ‘s’ he was changing the meaning and we can recognize different words and meanings by looking for an ‘s’ at the end of a word. By using these strategies for word recognition, he was able to really improve. This helped his fluency, as mentioned above, and his comprehension.

D. was reading a level C or D book for each of our lessons. These books do not have a lot of depth in them. That aside, it was still important to me that I know D. was able to understand what he was reading. The introduction to the new book was vital to his understanding. As the lessons progressed and I learned that D. needed a more in depth introduction, he was becoming better at giving me a basic summary of the story after he was done reading it. The books were not very hard, but even at this low-level, comprehension is the most difficult thing for a beginning reader. The combination of my more detailed introduction, his increased fluency, and his improved word recognition helped his comprehension. After reading “Tiny Goes to the Library” D. not only told me the basic plot correctly, but he related the story to his life and his dog. He told me that he understood why Tiny was not allowed to go to the library because even his small dog would get in trouble for going inside the library, and Tiny is as big as a house. I am not sure if he was able to comprehend the book better because

he could relate to it, or if he could relate to it because he could comprehend it. It could be a little bit of both so I tried to get him to relate to the rest of the books as the lessons went on. As we did our picture walks during the introduction to the new book I would ask him questions like: "Have you ever experience wind so strong that it pushed you around?" and "What do you like to do in the fall? Jump in the leaves like these kids?" I also used the writing time to get him to relate the books to something in his life experience. I learned from interacting with him in the classroom and through the Attitude/Interest Survey that he loves sharing stories. He gets excited about the littlest things and this provides him with a lot of material to share with anyone who will listen. He did not ever have a problem coming up with something in his own life to connect to the story.

My instructional decisions were directly impacted by the previous lessons' results. I would take the analysis of the previous lessons and apply it to a teaching point that I thought would most benefit D.. After the first session went so horribly, with an accuracy rate of only 56%, I knew my main goal had to be finding the right type of book for D.. I took into account the familiar read that he did very well at the beginning of that lesson and compared it to the book my CT had given me that had failed so miserably. The familiar book was about one third as long, had fewer pages and fewer sentences on those pages, and seemed to have easier words. I found a book for the next week that met these new criteria and it went over a lot better than the first one; he had a 90% accuracy rate. After this, I decided we could read books that were a little bit longer but I would give him a longer introduction to the text. It seemed to work because his accuracy rate stayed in the 90s consistently and eventually improved to 97%. The ongoing assessment of his running records showed me how his accuracy was improving as I

gave him better and better introductions, and how his reading strategies were getting better each week as his meaning, syntax, and visual cues were consistently getting better. Eventually he was pretty much using all three cues when trying to figure out unknown words. His visual cues had always been consistently good but I was especially happy to see that our lesson on meaning cues in lesson five stuck with him and helped him improve his reading strategies in the last lesson we did together.

I definitely saw a major improvement in D.'s reading as I figured out the best ways to help him. It was difficult trying to figure out the appropriate level and instructional techniques to use with D. in such a short amount of time. I did not think I would see such an improvement in just six lessons, partly because I did not think I would be able to figure out the appropriate level of books and instructional strategies to use, but D. showed improvement and I am glad I found the right balance of book-level, scaffolding, and teaching points to help him.

Part III: Post-Assessment Data

-Letter ID – D.'s score went way up in the Letter Identification test. He was able to identify the name of the letter, the sound it makes, and a word that starts with that letter for almost every letter. His average score jumped 12 points and he moved up a stanine group. He was able to identify the sounds of four more letters (P, W, J, and I), still missing two (Q and X). Most impressively, he was able to identify words for seven more letters (K, W, L, X, E, V, T), only missing two (Q and q) this time: kick, water, like, pig, jet, not, x-ray, elephant, van, and the. He still get the 'q' and 'p' mixed up. He does have the habit of writing some of his letters backwards at first and I do not think he is used to seeing this type of 'q'. He might just need

someone to tell him that this is a 'Q' that looks a little different than we are used to seeing in the D'Nealian style of writing.

-Word Reading – D. scored the same as he did last time, 10 correct words out of 15, placing him in stanine group 2 for the Word Reading section. He used good decoding strategies and almost got many of the words right. He pronounced 'mother' like 'mahtr', getting at least three correct sounds. He was able to identify the '-ed' sound in 'shouted' and the 'h', 'e', and 'p' sounds in 'help'. He got all of the sounds in 'meet' but pronounced it 'met'. I was most proud of his pronunciation of 'away', which he stretched out as far as it was possible, making it sound like there were at least 20 letters in the word. He took his time and eventually pronounced the word correctly, without any help. The score and stanine group for the Letter Identification test stayed the same since the pre-assessment, but more decoding strategies were evident this time. He is very close to being able to decipher these more difficult words. He was able to identify the correct sounds in many letters after the initial sound, which he did not demonstrate during the pre-assessment.

-Concepts About Print – The biggest improvement seen in the post-assessment was in the Concepts About Print test, in which D. score three points better and jumped up two stanine groups. He still struggled with identifying the changes in the middle of the text, like change in word and line order. He also still has trouble identifying words as opposed to letters. He was less confused than last time, finishing faster and scoring better on this part, but when asked to show two words he still shows a two-letter word ('by', pointing to each letter when asked to elaborate). This is confusing because he was able to identify one letter (the letter 'h' in 'the')

and one word ('by'). From the pre-assessment to the post-assessment he consistently did this so I think there must be a communication issue behind this that is making him misinterpret the instruction. Overall he finished this test more quickly than he did during the pre-assessment and scored higher. He is getting better at being able to interpret text and comprehend what it says.

-Writing Vocabulary – There was a major change in D.'s ability to write words from his own vocabulary. Last time he was unable to get started by himself so I read him the words from the prompt list. He wrote 31 correct words and landed in the third stanine group. This time, he did not ask for any prompting and wrote 14 correct words completely by himself. He moved down a stanine group but I think he greatly improved. Last time he was unable to come up with any words on his own, and this time he was able to think of 14. He became tired, distracted, and ready to move on after the first five minutes and I did not want to push him so we moved on without completing the full ten-minutes. If we had had time to go back and do another five minutes I am confident that he would be able to write at least 10 more words all on his own.

-Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words – D. spelled every word but one correctly in the phrases I read to him. I had him write the same sentences as the pre-assessment because I mistakenly thought we were supposed to. This turned out to make for a great comparison in his improvement. The scores could not have been skewed. He has not seen the sentence since the first time he wrote it incorrectly during the pre-assessment; we did not go over the sentence at all after the initial test. In the pre-assessment he only scored a 31/37 (stanine group 3) and during the post-assessment he score five points and two stanine groups higher.

He only missed one phoneme by mixing it up with another sound; he switched ‘-ed’ with ‘-ing’. He did this during the Word Reading assessment as well, replacing the ending of ‘children’ with an ‘-ing’ sound. I look at this as a positive mistake, though, because during the pre-assessment he did not even recognize that ‘-ing’ was a special combination of letters.

-Oral Reading – D.’s results for the post-assessment Sentences for Initial Passage Selection was very similar to his pre-assessment results. He had one less error in Form A: Level 1, but we still had to start here because he had five errors. I expected him to improve his initial passage number but at least he improved the number of errors he made (he correctly read ‘got’ this time, instead of reading ‘goat’). D. made it through Level 1 without any errors; through level 2 with only one error; through level 3 without any errors; through level 4 without any errors; and then made 19 errors on level 6. I asked D. if he had read some of these books before and he picked out the ones he had. My suspicions were confirmed that he had already read the books from levels 3 and 4. This was a skewed sample now and I can only guess at which level he should be on now. I would say he is most likely on level 4 because he scored a 97% accuracy rate on level 2. Level 3 probably would have seen a couple more errors, putting him at a 93% accuracy rating, and then one or two more errors at level 4 if it followed the pattern, putting him at an instructional 91% or 92% accuracy rating. I could tell he was still using his strength of visual cues because on level 2, the only error he made was a misleading visual cue. He read the word ‘shampoo’ instead of ‘soap’ because he saw a big bottle with bubbles on it. Both words start with ‘s’ and have to do with bath time so it is a good mistake that uses meaning, syntax, and visual cues.

He continues to demonstrate that he has improved his strategy use as evidenced in the many improvements he has made in his test scores and the specific examples of improvements as mentioned above. He is making progress and sometimes that progress gets confusing, but he will continue learning and developing these essential skills and will continue to improve his literacy.

Part IV: Summative Reflection

Right from the start I was excited to work with a student one-on-one. I was also nervous to be doing so as a novice teacher, still learning the basic concepts of literacy instruction. When I chose to work with D. I was relieved because he is always so upbeat and positive. One of the hardest parts of teaching that I have experienced is trying to teach a student who is not interested in learning. D.'s enthusiasm helped me focus on the aspects of literacy development besides interest and engagement, like reading strategies and decoding skills.

The pre-assessment *Observation Survey* was difficult and I did not feel as though I was prepared to take on this student by myself. I did not know exactly what kinds of struggles I should be looking for or even what a first grader is expected to be able to do and know at this point in the year. After I went through the analysis of the *OS*, and the planning and implementation of the first couple of lessons, I felt more in control of figuring out the best way to develop D.'s literacy. It took a couple of lessons to figure out at which level I should have him reading. After I got this difficulty sorted out, I was able to more effectively pinpoint his

struggles and come up with corresponding teaching points that would develop his reading and writing strategies.

It was very helpful to be able to apply to a real life situation the concepts we were learning about in class. Analyzing the running records each week was very helpful in identifying what D. was struggling with. I was able to create a teaching point around his reading strategies and I saw improvement because of them. His use of meaning cues went up after our lesson on meaning during lesson 5.

Overall, I learned that each student is going to bring very different struggles and strengths to the reading table. It will, and should, take a bit of time to grow accustomed to their reading level and the strategies that could benefit them most. Applying the concepts we were learning in class to our one-on-one lessons really helped me learn them. I am now more confident in my ability to help students learn and I am confident that I will be able to carry these teaching strategies into my own classroom next year.