

Reading Assessment

ARTFUL TEACHERS, SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS



EDITED BY
DIANE STEPHENS

Principles
in Practice

LITERACY ASSESSMENT

Staff Editor: Bonny Graham

Imprint Editor: Cathy Fleischer

Interior Design: Victoria Pohlmann

Cover Design: Pat Mayer

Cover Photo: Keith McGraw

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Contents

	Permission Acknowledgments	vii
	Introduction: The Art of Teaching.	ix
	Excerpts from the IRA–NCTE <i>Standards for the Assessment of Reading and Writing</i> , Revised Edition.	xvii
Chapter 1	Case Studies from Artful Reading Interventionists	1
	<i>Case Study 1: David, Repeating First Grader</i>	6
	Kathy Vickio	
	<i>Case Study 2: Rosalee, Third Grader</i>	9
	Lee Riser	
	<i>Case Study 3: Joseph, Fourth Grader</i>	13
	Anne Downs	
	<i>Case Study 4: Faith, Fifth Grader</i>	20
	Beth Sawyer	
	<i>Looking across Case Studies</i>	25
Chapter 2	Classroom Portraits of Artful Teachers	27
	<i>Preschool through Kindergarten</i>	30
	<i>Portrait 1: Tammy Yvonne Spann Frierson, Preschool Teacher</i>	31
	Julia López-Robertson with Tammy Yvonne Spann Frierson	
	<i>Portrait 2: Hope Reardon, 4K Teacher</i>	42
	Hope Reardon with Diane E. DeFord and Lucy K. Spence	
	<i>Portrait 3: Louise Ward, 5K Teacher</i>	54
	Tasha Tropp Laman with Louise Ward	
	<i>First and Second Grade</i>	66
	<i>Portrait 4: Ryan Brunson, First-Grade Teacher</i>	67
	Pamela C. Jewett, Kristy C. Wood, and Ryan Brunson	
	<i>Portrait 5: Timothy O’Keefe, Second-Grade Teacher</i>	81
	Heidi Mills and Timothy O’Keefe	
	<i>Third, Fourth, and Fifth Grade</i>	95
	<i>Portrait 6: Sandy Pirkle Anfin, Third-Grade Teacher</i>	96
	Robin W. Cox and Sandy Pirkle Anfin	

continued

Contents (continued)

<i>Portrait 7:</i>	<i>Erika R. Cartledge, Fourth-Grade Teacher</i>	104
	Jennifer L. Wilson and Erika R. Cartledge	
<i>Portrait 8:</i>	<i>Amy Oswalt, Fifth-Grade Teacher</i>	119
	Amy Donnelly and Amy Oswalt	
Chapter 3	Making a Difference	135
Annotated Bibliography: Outgrowing Our Former Selves		
	Learning about Assessment	143
	Diane E. DeFord and Lucy K. Spence	
	Learning about the Reading Process	146
	Diane Stephens	
	Learning about Creating Classrooms for Readers	147
	Robin W. Cox, Anne Downs, Jennie Goforth, Lisa Jaegar, Ashley Matheny, Kristi Plyler, Lee Riser, Beth Sawyer, Tara Thompson, Kathy Vickio, and Cindy Wilcox	
	Learning about Teaching Preschool Readers . . .	149
	Hope Reardon	
	Learning about Teaching Kindergarten and First-Grade Readers	150
	Pamela C. Jewett, Tasha Tropp Laman, Ryan Brunson, Louise Ward, and Kristy C. Wood	
	Learning about Teaching Second- and Third-Grade Readers	151
	Robin W. Cox, Heidi Mills, Sandy Pirkle Anfin, and Timothy O'Keefe	
	Learning about Teaching Fourth- and Fifth-Grade Readers	152
	Amy Donnelly, Erika R. Cartledge, and Amy Oswalt	
	References	155
	Index	161
	Editor	167
	Contributors	169

Introduction: The Art of Teaching

When I first started [the school year], I didn't know much about reading. Days and days and days I've been learning to be a strong reader. And now there is so much I can read. I am a thinking reader!

—Mathew,¹ age eight, at end of third grade

At the beginning of third grade, Mathew was reading more than a year below grade level and he did not like to read. By the end of the year, Mathew was not only reading at grade level, but he was also reading all of the books in Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series—for fun.

Mathew's teachers made this change possible. Mathew had a strong classroom teacher and strong supplemental small-group instruction from a reading interventionist. Both teachers had the support of a strong literacy coach. Mathew's three teachers, like all artful teachers, knew how to support and accelerate his progress as a reader. They had a broad and deep knowledge base—one founded on professional experience, deep reading, reflection, and conversations with others. They knew how children learn language, learn about language, and learn through language (Halliday, 1969, 1973, 1975, 1980); how to create learning communities (Peterson & Eads, 1990); and how to establish conditions for learning (Cam-bourne, 1987, 1995).

Mathew's teachers got to know their students and used this knowledge to inform instruction. To do this, they gathered data on a daily basis (including observations, interviews, and oral reading analyses) and systematically reflected on it (Whitin, Mills, & O'Keefe, 1991; Stephens, 1990; Stephens et al., 1996; Stephens & Story, 2000). Mathew's classroom teacher analyzed her data to determine the instructional focus for the whole class as well as for small groups and for individual students. For example, she learned that as a group, when her students came to an unknown word, they tended to substitute one that was visually similar even if it did not make sense in the passage, and so she taught whole-group lessons on the importance of predicting based on meaning and cross-checking using visual information. Similarly, she identified a subgroup of students who tended to skip words they did not know and keep on reading even though the text did not make sense. She

placed these and other students in flexible small groups based on their instructional needs. She also noticed unique needs (e.g., the one student who loudly declared that he hated to read) and arranged her day so that she could spend one-on-one time with those students to better understand their needs and support them as readers.

Meanwhile, the interventionist used her data about Mathew and other students from his and other classrooms—all of whom were reading below grade level—to form small, pull-out groups based on instructional need. She then provided instruction customized to those needs. For example, the 9:00 group focused on making sense of reading (instead of sounding out every letter); the 9:30 group focused on problem-solving unfamiliar words; and the 10:00 group focused on understanding the text demands of various content area texts. Simultaneously, the literacy coach observed Mathew and other children in both the classroom and intervention settings and shared her observations with their teachers to ensure that instructional focus was consistent.

Mathew succeeded because all of his teachers—from the classroom teacher to the reading interventionist to the literacy coach—were committed to his success. Each saw herself as responsible for his progress as well as for that of every child in her care. Teachers who take such a stance continually strive to expand their knowledge base and to improve their ability to gather, make sense of, and use assessment data to inform instruction.

Responsibility versus Accountability

Teachers like Mathew's, who assume responsibility for every child as a reader, positively impact students' academic and life trajectories. When this happened in a local school district that I work closely with, elementary school children who began the year reading below grade level and had the support of a classroom teacher, a reading interventionist, and a literacy coach made two months of growth for every month they spent with the reading interventionist (see Table 1). Not all students are as fortunate. Consider the trajectory of most children who come to school and are soon identified as being "below grade level" in reading. Check in five years later and many of those children are still considered to be reading below grade level. This happens, in part, because most classroom teachers are not asked to take responsibility for these children. Instead, following federal guidelines, teachers refer them for testing; once tested—assuming at least an average IQ—the children are labeled as "learning disabled" (Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Mecklenburg, & Graden, 1984) and subsequently receive reading instruction from a special education teacher who, in most states, is not required to have advanced course work in reading. Under these conditions, it is no wonder that children make little progress as

readers (Blachman, Schatschneider, Fletcher, & Clonan, 2003; Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2002; Torgesen, Rashotte, Alexander, Alexander, & MacPhee, 2003).

In the late 1980s, when the now familiar standards movement was in its infancy, Dick Bodine, then an elementary school principal in a small town in Illinois, commented that he thought that *accountability* forced the gaze of educators outward, whereas *responsibility* focused the gaze inward (D. Bodine, personal communication, 1989). He thought that the new-at-the-time emphasis on accountability caused teachers to focus on what their principal wanted; principals, on what their superintendents wanted; and superintendents, on what their school board and other politicians wanted. In contrast, he argued that responsibility meant that teachers were focused on students, principals on students and teachers, and superintendents on students, teachers, and principals.

I have told dozens of people about the point Dick was making; I think it is even more important now than it was twenty years ago. Today, policymakers and stakeholders seem wedded to an accountability that overshadows responsibility. Consider, for example, local, state, and federal efforts to tie teacher pay to test scores of groups of children—as if it were not the daily responsibility for the growth of every child that matters but rather the accountability for the average score of subgroups of children on a standardized test given at the end of the year. This kind of misguided thinking leads to child-harming practices such as curricular narrowing (matching the content of instruction to only what is assessed); retaining students at one or more grade levels; and encouraging children to perform well on end-of-year testing while barely mentioning beginning-of-year tests—a move designed to deflate scores at the beginning of the year and inflate them at the end.

Table 1. Months of Growth per Month of Supplemental Support as Measured by Oral Reading Passages from *Dominie Reading and Writing Assessment Portfolio*²

Year	Total number of students	Months of growth per month of support
2007–2008	244	1.9
2008–2009	243	2.7
2009–2010	241	2.4
2010–2011	206	2.4

Note: The total number of students decreased because two schools decided to use computer programs instead of reading interventionists, and a third school chose to have the interventionist work alongside teachers in the classroom instead of providing supplemental instruction.

The Politics of Choosing Responsibility

In 2004, as part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the federal government created a general education initiative known as Response to Intervention (RTI). RTI is a research-based alternative to the labeling of struggling readers as learning disabled. As part of RTI, districts can use up to 15 percent of their special education monies to ensure that all children receive the best possible reading instruction. This is a radical change in federal policy. Since the creation of the “learning disabled” label in 1963, large numbers of struggling readers have been placed in special education. The proportion of students receiving special education services for learning disabilities ranges from 10 to 20 percent and can be as high as 30 percent (Vellutino, Scanlon, & Tanzman, 1998). Nearly all of these students struggle as readers. In fact, Kavale and Reese (1991) estimate that 90 percent of the students identified as learning disabled before fifth grade read below grade level, while Nelson and Macheck (2007) found that 79 percent of the students did so. Batsche, Curtis, Dorman, Castillo, and Porter (2007) determined that, in Florida, the figure was 95 percent.

However, research conducted over the last fifteen years shows that the number of students who struggle with reading and who truly have specific learning disabilities is relatively small. For example, Vellutino et al.’s early research into this topic (1998) suggested that perhaps only 1.5 to 3.0 percent of all struggling readers actually have learning disabilities. The authors argue that, instead of having learning disabilities, children struggle due to “inadequate pre-literacy experience, inadequate instruction or some combination of both” (p. 369). Since then, this theory has been supported by a number of studies demonstrating that, when provided with appropriate intervention by qualified personnel, most students make considerable progress as readers (McGill-Franzen, Allington, Yokoi, & Brooks, 1999; Scanlon, Vellutino, Small, Fanuele, & Sweeney, 2005; Torgesen, Alexander, Wagner, Rashotte, Voeller, & Conway, 2001; Vellutino et al., 1998).

By allotting monies to improve reading instruction, RTI has the potential to help the field shift from a focus on accountability to those outside the classroom to responsibility for the children in our classrooms. The initiative provides an opportunity for schools to determine how well students respond to appropriate instruction *before* they are referred for testing and subsequently labeled as in need of special education services. Under RTI, it becomes the responsibility of classroom teachers, not special education teachers, to “identify students’ needs and help students succeed” (Wixson, Lipson, & Johnston, 2010, p. 6). Teachers who have an advanced understanding of the reading process are then able to provide supplemental instruction as needed. This supplemental instruction is often referred to as “Tier 2”; classroom instruction is considered “Tier 1.”

Determining how to implement RTI so that all children receive the best possible instruction has led to difficult conversations in school districts across the country. School psychologists have traditionally used a discrepancy formula to determine whether a child should be labeled learning disabled. According to this formula, if the child has an average IQ score but reads below grade level, she or he is considered learning disabled. RTI challenges that assumption and, in so doing, creates tensions among school- and district-level stakeholders. Although the law calls on all classroom teachers to take responsibility for the reading progress of all of their students, many special education teachers and the psychologists who test and label children have long felt that the children who struggle are solely their responsibility.

Fortunately, Mathew's teachers are part of a strong literacy community within their district. There are coaches and interventionists at each of their elementary schools and strong support for literacy from the central office. Still, they—and many other teachers—are occasionally involved in politically loaded discussions with special education teachers and psychologists about what constitutes effective assessment, who should be responsible for it, and how assessment data can be used to inform instruction. The teachers' opinions—that, as responsible educators, they should continually assess their students, as well as their own teaching; that effective assessment is instructionally relevant; that it provides information that allows them to customize instruction for their whole class as well as for small groups and individual children—are not always shared by the special education teachers, school psychologists, and central office administrators.

To support their opinions, Mathew's teachers, like other teachers across the country, rely heavily on their own research, published research, and documents from their professional organizations. One particularly helpful source is *Standards for the Assessment of Reading and Writing (SARW)* (IRA–NCTE Joint Task Force on Assessment, 2010). Teachers who choose to take responsibility for their students can rely on the standards themselves and on the narratives contained in the introduction and following each standard. The introduction, for example, defines assessment as “the exploration of how the educational environment and the participants in the educational community support the process of students as they learn to become independent and collaborative thinkers and problem solvers” (p. 2). Statements like these help teachers frame conversations about the definition of assessment in their districts and lead them away from debates about particular tests toward a discussion of what data are necessary to ensure success for all students.

Teachers who choose responsibility know they have the backing of the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) when they read in the SARW that the most useful assessments are “the formative assessments that occur in the daily activities of the classroom”

(p. 13) and that “teachers are the primary agents, not passive consumers, of assessment information. It is their ongoing, formative assessments that primarily influence students’ learning” (p. 13). The SARW further reinforce the teachers’ stance by stating that the field needs to “rely less on one-shot assessment practices and place more value on assessments of ongoing classroom performance” (p. 19).

When teachers are faced with arguments about the reliability or validity of teacher assessment versus standardized measures, they can again rely on the SARW. On reliability:

[W]hen a teacher observes and documents a student’s oral reading behaviors and uses that information to inform instruction, the data might not be as reliable, in a technical sense, as a norm-referenced test. However, in the context of a teacher’s professional knowledge, they are more likely to have productive consequences. Often assessments are chosen for technical measurement properties rather than for the likelihood of productive consequences. . . . (p. 24)

On validity:

[I]f any individual student’s interests are not served by an assessment practice, regardless of whether it is intended for administration or decision making by an individual or by a group (as is the case with tests used to apply accountability pressure on teachers), then that practice is not valid for that student. (p. 12)

Finally, to support their argument that assessment should be instructionally relevant, teachers have ample support from the SARW:

In the United States it is common to use testing for accountability, but the ultimate goal remains the improvement of teaching and learning. . . .

If an educational assessment practice is to be considered valid, it must inform instruction and lead to improved teaching and learning. . . .

The central function of assessment, therefore, is not to prove whether teaching or learning has taken place, but to improve the quality of teaching and learning and thereby increase the likelihood that all members of the society will achieve a full and critical literacy. . . . (pp. 15–16)

The introduction to the SARW and the short version of the standards themselves are reprinted on pages xvii–xxv of this book. Page numbers in cross-references, however, map to the published document, which is available online as a free download at <https://secure.ncte.org/store/assessment-standards-revised>.

Case Studies and Classroom Portraits by Teachers Who Chose Responsibility

It is not enough, of course, for teachers who choose responsibility merely to conduct and read research and to rely on documents like the SARW to help them put

into practice meaningful assessment measures. They must also get to know their students. Such teachers take the time to really *see* each of the children in their classroom and to know each one deeply as a small and wonderful being. They come to know their students via assessment and then use their knowledge to customize instruction to help every child grow as a reader, writer, and learner—every day, every year. They are teachers who have found an artful way to marry assessment and instruction.

Artful teachers all across the country are making a difference. Twelve of them are featured here. Chapter 1 focuses on four reading interventionists who provide supplemental (Tier 2) instruction; they have written case studies about the first-through fifth-grade students with whom they work. Chapter 2 features eight Tier 1 classroom teachers who have collaborated with university faculty to write portraits of their preschool through fifth-grade classrooms. Reading across narratives, it is clear that all of these teachers have taken responsibility for the literacy progress of their students. In doing so, they live the assessment standards established by IRA and NCTE (2010).

The case studies presented here are all written by teachers from one school district. In many ways, they represent an ideal. When their district asked them to become reading interventionists, it simultaneously offered them three years of onsite graduate course work designed to help them excel at providing supplemental instruction. The district also arranged for them to be visited once a month by an individual from the district or the university who had reading expertise and who served as their coach. For three years, ten reading interventionists worked closely together to build their knowledge base. They read the literature, collected data on their students, and reflected deeply about the reading process and their role as reading interventionists. They explicitly named the beliefs they held about reading and used those beliefs to guide both assessment and instruction. The interventionists and their students also had what most teachers consider a luxury—small-group instruction, every day, for thirty to forty minutes, for as many weeks or months as was needed to help the students experience and be able to maintain success as readers.

The supplemental instruction they provided was and is needed because, while the research shows that most students can make about a year's progress for every year they are in school, it also suggests that approximately 17–18 percent of students need more support than can be provided by the classroom teacher (Velutino et al., 1998). Under RTI, most often this support is provided to small groups of students in a setting outside of the classroom.

In Chapter 1, the case studies of the interventionists reveal the complexities and challenges of the children who, in the past, might have been considered

learning disabled and sent to special education. These case studies are presented first because they provide a close look at the progress of children who struggle the most; they also make clear that reading interventionists do not have some “magic box” of special tricks—they simply supplement classroom instruction. The children’s literacy futures are determined by the quality of the time they spend with their classroom teacher and with a reading interventionist. By taking a close look at each of the four children foregrounded in the case studies, classroom teachers who are reading this book will be able to make connections and see with new eyes the children in their own classrooms whom they worry about most.

In the classroom portraits in Chapter 2, classroom teachers and the university professors with whom they collaborated make explicit how classroom teachers have managed to do the same kind of “looking closely and listening carefully” (Mills, O’Keefe, & Jennings, 2004) as the interventionists were able to do in the case studies. They discuss their assessment tools, including talking, watching, and recording, and describe how they make sense of the data they collect and use it to inform instruction.

Following each of the case studies and classroom portraits is a list of the assessment tools and instructional moves used by that teacher. It is the deep hope of all of us as authors that these case studies and classroom portraits prove useful to other teachers who choose to take responsibility for the progress of every child in their classrooms.

Notes

1. Except for Louise Ward in Portrait 3, all teachers’ names are authentic. Except for Cameron in Portrait 5, all student names are pseudonyms.

2. The *Dominie Reading and Writing Assessment Portfolio* (DeFord, 2004) is a multifaceted reading, writing, and spelling assessment system. It allows the teacher to gather information on phonemic awareness, phonics (onset and rimes), letter knowledge, core reading and writing words, phoneme representation and spelling, story writing/composition, concepts about print and sources of information (narrative and informational texts), and oral and silent reading (accuracy, fluency, pace, self-correction, and comprehension). The oral and silent reading assessment consists of a series of paperback booklets, ranging from ten to twenty-three pages, and leveled from kindergarten through eighth-grade reading levels. The booklets are both fiction and nonfiction, and the topics, text characteristics, and genres are tied to grade-level expectations.



Case Studies from Artful Reading Interventionists

From 2007 to 2010, I worked closely with a group of ten reading interventionists¹ from School District Five of Lexington and Richland County in South Carolina and with Robin Cox, who, in 2007, was the coordinator for English language arts in that district. The reading interventionists were responsible for providing supplemental instruction to students who were reading below grade level. In a Response to Intervention (RTI) model, the interventionists were considered Tier 2.

Over a three-year period, the interventionists took graduate-level reading courses from me every summer and during the last year. For the first and second year, they took their courses during the year from adjunct faculty. For all three years, Robin, I, and, as applicable, the adjunct who taught their courses visited with the interventionists monthly to observe them working with children and to debrief with them afterward. The fourth year we met monthly to discuss the literature on RTI. Those years were a kaleidoscope of experiences—reading, thinking, teaching, observing, reflecting—and out of those experiences we co-constructed a list of our beliefs about what students needed to know and be able to do in order to progress as readers. We entitled that list “A Theory of What Matters for Readers” (WM; see Figure 1).

Figure 1. A theory of what matters for readers.

We believe that it matters that students:

1. Understand that reading is meaningful
 2. Believe in their ability to make sense of texts
 3. Consider reading a pleasurable event
 4. Spontaneously self-monitor
 5. Have knowledge, skills, and strategies to problem-solve to ensure meaning
 6. Use this information flexibly
 7. Use this information independently
 8. Use this information with increasingly sophisticated texts
-

We have come to believe that children need to have in place a three-part theory of themselves as readers: they need to understand that reading is a meaning-making process (WM 1), believe in their ability to make sense of print (WM 2), and find pleasure in reading (WM 3). When all three are in place, the child has what we consider a *generative* theory of reading. Children who have such a theory almost always spontaneously self-monitor—they stop when the text does not make sense (WM 4). When that happens, children need a repertoire of skills and strategies to problem-solve flexibly, independently, and with increasingly complex text (WM 5–8).

We were able to construct the “What Matters” list because we read the professional literature carefully and deeply and paid close attention to the readers with whom we worked. We noticed what they were doing, considered multiple possibilities, developed hypotheses, tested out those hypotheses, and made more observations. We continued this cycle until we had a theory about each child as a reader and then used it to plan instruction. This reflective framework is called the hypothesis–test process (Omalza, Aihara, & Stephens, 1997; Stephens, 1990; Stephens et al., 1996; Stephens & Story, 2000).

We also developed and tested a theory about how to best support the needs we identified. We concluded that our first responsibility was to help each child develop a generative theory of learning. We realized that if a child did not yet understand that reading was a meaning-making process (WM 1), we needed to help the child develop that understanding before she or he could progress as a reader. Similarly, if a child understood meaning-making but did not believe in his or her ability to make sense of text (WM 2), then we had to help the child shift that belief. If the first two aspects of the child’s theory were in place, we needed to determine whether the child found reading pleasurable enough to choose to read (WM 3).

If the child held all three beliefs, the child held a generative theory of reading and almost always self-monitored (WM 4). As appropriate, we could then begin to help the child develop and/or expand the skills and strategies she or he needed to problem-solve text (WM 5–8). This insight feels like common sense to us now, but in the beginning, we too often tried to teach problem-solving skills and strategies (e.g., “read ahead and come back to that part”; WM 5) to children who had not yet developed generative theories (WM 1–3) and were not self-monitoring (WM 4). We were trying to teach skills and strategies that children could not yet use.

As part of getting to know a child as a reader, we tried to find the conditions under which the child could be successful. For example, perhaps we noticed that when a particular child read a text in which she or he knew 92 percent of the words and came to a word she or he did not know, the child substituted a visually similar nonsense word and kept reading. If, in response, we varied genre and text demands and/or topics, we might find that the same child, when reading a predictable text written two years below grade level, accurately figured out unknown words or substituted a word that made sense. If we switched one or more of those factors, we found that the child abandoned meaning and reverted to skipping words. Once we understood the conditions under which the child problem-solved words and maintained meaning, we knew where to begin instruction. Sometimes, of course, there were no conditions under which this occurred spontaneously; when this happened, we had to create those conditions.

To help a child develop a theory of reading as meaning-making (WM 1), for example, those conditions could include reading to or with the child, having authentic conversations with him or her about a book, providing opportunities for the child to have meaningful conversations about a book with others, and/or making sure the child has extensive blocks of time during the day to read appropriate books of choice. Having the child spend an extended amount of time experiencing reading as meaningful increases the odds that she or he will come to understand and hold onto the meaningfulness of text when it becomes more complex.

For a long time, we thought of “appropriate” texts as “just right” texts. Over time, however, we started referring to appropriate books as “fun and easy.” We made this shift because when children talked about just right books, they seemed to associate them with the “work” of reading. We wanted reading not to be thought of as work but as something one did for pleasure. Referring to books as fun and easy helped us to help the children view books differently. To determine the “fun” part, we looked for signs in the child of interest and engagement. To determine the “easy” part, we looked for books in which children would know 98–99 percent of the words. When the books met these criteria, we increased the odds that we could simultaneously help the child focus on meaning (WM 1), build self-confidence (WM 2), and find reading pleasurable (WM 3).

This does not mean that we ignored skills and strategies (WM 5–8). To the contrary, we helped children learn about them. However, we did not do this so the child could master a particular skill or strategy, but so the mastery of those skills or strategies would enable the child to develop one or more aspects of his or her personal theory—that reading is a meaning-making process (WM 1), that he or she can make sense of text (WM 2), and that reading is pleasurable (WM 3). For example, in the first case study presented here, Kathy Vickio helps David develop his sight vocabulary and word attack skills, not as an end in itself but to help him build his confidence as a reader—to help reading feel “easy” to him. We have had considerable success with this approach, as we explained in Table 1. On average, children seen by the reading interventionists made two months of text-level growth, as assessed by the *Dominie* (DeFord, 2004), for every month of support they received.

Most of the children who have received intervention services in this district either did not yet approach reading as a meaning-making process or did not believe in their ability to make sense of text (see Table 2 for 2009–2010 and 2010–2011 patterns). In the case studies that follow, interventionists focus on children with these two most dominant needs. Kathy Vickio tells the story of David, a repeating first grader who did not believe in his ability to make sense of text. In the second case, Lee Riser explains the progress of Rosalee, a third grader whose family spoke Spanish at home and who focused more on getting words “right” than on the meaning of the text. Next, Anne Downs details her experiences with Joseph, a fourth grader who had made little progress in the past and considered reading a meaningless chore he had to endure. And finally, Beth Sawyer focuses on Faith, a fifth grader who, like first grader David, did not believe in her ability to make sense of text. Across all four case studies, the “What Matters” framework informs both assessment and instruction.

Table 2. Instructional Needs of Children Seen in Intervention, 2009–2010 and 2010–2011*Instructional needs of children seen in intervention***A. Year: 2009–2010 / Total number of students: 241**

Instructional focus	Percentage of K–5 students seen in intervention with that need
1 Understands reading is a meaning-making process	41%
2 Believes in ability to make sense of print	20%
3 Finds reading pleasurable	12%
4 Spontaneously self-monitors	15%
5 Has a variety of skills and strategies for problem-solving	4%
6 Uses those skills and strategies flexibly	3%
7 Uses those skills and strategies independently	3%
8 Uses those skills and strategies across increasingly complex text	3%

B. Year: 2010–2011 / Total number of students: 206

Instructional focus	Percentage of K–5 students seen in intervention with that need
1 Understands reading is a meaning-making process	28%
2 Believes in ability to make sense of print	14%
3 Finds reading pleasurable	14%
4 Spontaneously self-monitors	20%
5 Has a variety of skills and strategies for problem-solving	13%
6 Uses those skills and strategies flexibly	7%
7 Uses those skills and strategies independently	3%
8 Uses those skills and strategies across increasingly complex text	1%

Case Study 1: David, Repeating First Grader

Reading Interventionist Kathy Vickio

Instructional Focus: Does not yet believe in ability to make sense of text (WM 2)



David was a European American repeating first grader who was new to the school. In the one-on-one intervention setting, he was a delightful, pleasant child. In the classroom, he was often argumentative; he always wanted everything he did to be “right.”

On the first-grade *Dominie* (DeFord, 2004) “Core Reading Words” list, David knew one word. His text level was a 1B, which equates to the middle of kindergarten. When he “read” a book, he virtually ignored the print and told a story using pictures. He was reluctant to look at the words on the page. When asked to do so, he became nervous and most often refused. When he did attempt to read a word, he silently moved his lips, trying to sound it out, but often he was not successful and easily became frustrated. When I asked him why he did not want to try a word he had whispered (and which was correct), he looked at me and said,

“I don’t think it is right.” I felt that David was often unwilling to use the skills and strategies he did possess because to do so would be to risk being “wrong.”

I hypothesized that David had given up on himself and that he did not feel he could be successful as a reader. He preferred telling stories using pictures because he was good at it and it was safer. I realized that this meant I would need to be extremely careful with the books that David read. They needed to have highly predictable stories and vocabulary. In addition, the language I used with David during instruction would have to be thoughtful, positive, and supportive. If he felt he was struggling with a piece of text, he would react negatively.

I began using texts with David that I knew would be easy for him and that contained words I knew he could get “right.” I encouraged him to talk a lot about the story before he began to read and told him explicitly about some of the words he could expect to see in the book. So that David could feel successful as a reader, he and I read a lot of easy books when he was with me; his classroom teacher also greatly increased David’s time with easier books.

Slowly, David began to take more risks as a reader. Even so, when I used the *Dominie* (DeFord, 2004) leveled texts to document his progress, if he struggled with a single word, he immediately became frustrated and shut down. When I asked David how he felt when I used the *Dominie* texts, he first stated that they did not bother him. However, when I started reading the book introduction from inside the front cover (e.g., “This is a story about Tom and his dad. . .”), he immediately exclaimed, “That’s it. When you talk like that it makes me nervous.” I realized that I needed to modify my language during assessments so that David would feel more confident. From that point on, whenever it was time to document his growth using a *Dominie* text, I reviewed the book introductions before David entered the room. Then I simply talked to him about the book. This seemed to help David relax and to use with the *Dominie* texts the skills and strategies he already possessed and was learning from his teachers.

I also began asking David to write high-frequency words so that he would feel more confident with them. Each day I wrote a few sight words on a dry erase board and David would try to find them in books he had read. I also had him “make and break” other words from his books using magnetic letters. These tasks were easy for David. He loved doing them and they became his favorite activity when he came for reading. Although he did not immediately transfer his increased sight vocabulary to his reading, this word work helped increase his confidence—it helped him develop a generative theory.

By March, when I analyzed his miscues, David was using both visual and meaning cues when he read. At the end of May (the ninth month of first grade), David successfully managed a Level 7 *Dominie* (DeFord, 2004), which equates to a reading level of the ninth month of first grade. He had received twenty weeks

(five months) of supplemental support and was showing fifteen months of growth. On the *Dominie*, David was reading at grade level but was a year behind relative to age level. He had 97 percent accuracy and 100 percent comprehension. He was at the 65th percentile on his Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test (Northwest Evaluation Association, 2008). David no longer panicked or became frustrated when he had to stop to look closely at a word to figure it out. He was excited about reading, asked to take books home, and loved to talk about the stories he read.

I supported David over the summer and plan to work with him at the beginning of the next year. Now that he is consistently taking risks and problem-solving words, I want to help him continue to build his skills and strategies so he can use them flexibly and independently with increasingly complex texts. His success as a reader has helped reduce his frustrations in the classroom. I expect David to have a very successful second-grade year.

See Figure 2 for a list of the assessment tools and instructional methods I used to help David.

Figure 2. What Kathy did to help David believe in himself as a reader (WM 2).

Assessment Tools

Observation

Listening

Inquiry (asking questions to understand)

Dominie "Core Reading Words" list

Dominie "Oral Reading Passages"

Modified miscue analysis

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

Systematic reflection on data using hypothesis–test process

Instructional Moves

Used easy texts.

Talked about story before reading.

Introduced words that might be new.

Wrote high–frequency words.

Made and broke words.

Modified *Dominie* procedures.

Ensured that all teacher comments help develop agency.

Provided ample time for reading.

Case Study 2: Rosalee, Third Grader

Reading Interventionist Lee Riser

Instructional Focus: Does not yet understand that reading is about making meaning (WM 1)



Rosalee was a third-grade, Latina female in her first year of reading intervention. She was new to our school and had attended another elementary school in our district for kindergarten through second grade. Rosalee had a sister in fifth grade and another older sister in her twenties who had recently moved out of the house with her baby and into her own apartment. Rosalee's mother spoke Spanish and there was no other adult in the household. Therefore, Rosalee spoke predominantly Spanish at home. She was fluent in English, though she did not yet have a good handle on academic vocabulary.

At the beginning of the year, Rosalee was reading at the 2.2 grade instructional level as measured by the *Dominie* (DeFord, 2004). I used a modified form of miscue analysis (original by Goodman & Burke, 1972; modified by Stephens, 2005) to determine that, when Rosalee came to words she did not know, she used mean-

ing 33 percent of the time and some visual information 67 percent of the time. Because Rosalee was using meaning less than half the time and visual more than half the time (and not necessarily to figure out the same unknown word), her use of this information was inefficient and ineffective. Rosalee said that when she came to a word she didn't know, she "split the word up." She looked at the end of the word first, then at the beginning of the word, and put it all together. I asked her what she would do if that didn't work, and she said she would ask someone for help. It seemed that Rosalee was confused about how to problem-solve words visually. After reflecting on these data and talking with Rosalee, I was pretty sure that she thought reading was about getting words right.

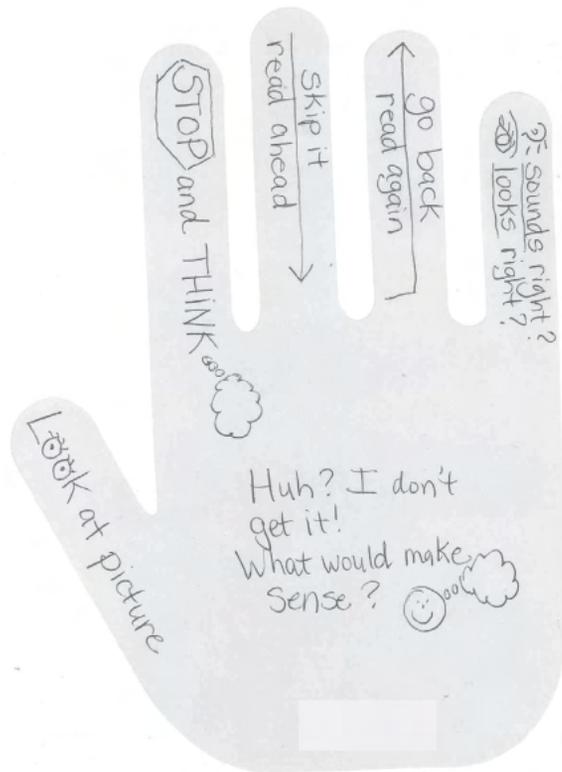
My first task was to make sure that Rosalee understood that reading is supposed to make sense. I put her in a small group with two other students who I felt shared her theory of reading, and I helped them select books they were interested in reading. They first read Alyssa Satin Capucilli's Biscuit series and, over the course of the next month, we established a Fancy Nancy book club based on Jane O'Connor's series. Rosalee and her group subsequently read all the books in the series. Because the series was easy for them, when they came to a word they did not know, such as *glorious* or *extraordinary*, they thought about what would make sense and were able to figure out the word or come up with a synonym.

Rosalee was also an active participant in selecting fun and easy library books each week. She discovered Mo Willems's Pigeon series, such as *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus* (2003). Rosalee soon got the other girls involved in reading the Mo Willems books and then went a step further by initiating an impromptu readers theater. The girls took turns being one of the two characters or the narrator.

Although my instructional focus was on meaning-making, Rosalee was simultaneously coming to believe in her ability to make sense of text and finding reading pleasurable. Once this generative theory was firmly in place, I used a variation of Kathleen Visovatti's (1994) bookmark strategy (see also Johnson, 2006) to make a paper hand with strategies on each finger that Rosalee could use to problem-solve unfamiliar words (see Figure 3).

Rosalee was reading at home almost every night because she really enjoyed doing so. She had discovered a new series—Kate DiCamillo's Mercy Watson mysteries. As she read more, Rosalee's use of meaning cues increased dramatically to 75 percent and her self-correction ratio became 1:2. By the end of the school year, Rosalee was reading at the 3.5 grade level, with 98 percent accuracy and 100 percent comprehension. She was learning to use a variety of problem-solving strategies flexibly and independently. Rosalee selected a variety of different book genres from our classroom library to read over the summer and obtained a public library

Figure 3. Rosalee's strategy hand.



card. She planned to check books out weekly. Rosalee was teaching her mother how to speak English and had begun to show her how to read with bilingual books from the school library. As Rosalee explained, "I am showing my mom how to read English with very easy books so she understands."

See Figure 4 for a list of assessment tools and instructional methods I used to help Rosalee.

Figure 4. What Lee did to help Rosalee understand that reading is a meaning-making process (WM 1).

Assessment Tools

Observation

Listening

Inquiry (asking questions to understand)

Dominie "Oral Reading Passages"

Modified miscue analysis

Systematic reflection on data using hypothesis-test process

Instructional Moves

Used easy texts.

Provided time for reading.

Provided time for talk about books.

Provided access to a range of books in the intervention setting.

Allowed students to choose high-interest books.

Encouraged synonym substitution.

Taught problem-solving strategies.

Encouraged reading at home.

Encouraged personal library card.

Provided books to take home.

Case Study 3: Joseph, Fourth Grader

Reading Interventionist Anne Downs

Instructional Focus: Did not yet understand that reading was about making meaning (WM 1)



Joseph was a fourth grader who originally came to Reading Intervention with three other boys, all African American. Most of the time, the students I see are quite at ease and eager to participate, but Joseph would not sit with the group. Instead, he sat away from us with his arms crossed; if asked to join the group, he would start crying and shake his head vigorously. For the first three weeks, Joseph continued to act upset, resistant, and disengaged. He was suspended within the first month of school for exhibiting violent behavior.

Joseph had been retained in the first grade, and much of his prior instructional history was focused on phonics and fluency. He started second grade reading on a 1.3 grade level and finished that year reading on a 1.5 grade level. In third grade, his reading progressed another two months, finishing the year at a 1.7 grade level. At the beginning of fourth grade, Joseph was reading with 96 percent accuracy a passage written at a second-grade level. He read large portions within a text without comprehending but understood enough of the words to answer the comprehension questions. To figure out an unknown word, Joseph used meaning 35 percent of the time and full or partial visual information 78 percent of the time

(75–80 percent is ideal for both). On the *Dominie* (DeFord, 2004), Joseph scored in the first stanine for both phonemes and spelling. He had not been labeled learning disabled because there was not a considerable discrepancy between projected reading level and his current reading level (which was two years below grade level). In our district, such children are referred to as “DNQ” (does not qualify for special education). Before coming to see me, however, Joseph had spent two years with a special education teacher in a small reading group.

I decided to work with Joseph one on one. In that setting, he was less upset and his body language was much more approachable. Slowly he became willing to talk with me about the books I read aloud to him. At first I did most of the oral thinking and reacting. Within two weeks, with prompting, Joseph started sharing thoughts and reactions two or three times per text. However, he had not yet offered thoughts or reactions independently. I decided to ask Charles, a boy from Joseph’s classroom, to join us. I had noticed in several school settings (i.e., regular classroom, lunch, recess) that Joseph and Charles had become friendly, and I thought that Joseph might share his thoughts and reactions more readily with Charles present. Charles was lower in accuracy and fluency than Joseph, but both boys lacked the understanding that reading is meaningful. I wanted to see if Joseph would feel confident enough to engage Charles in a meaningful conversation about books since he was, in some ways, a more sophisticated reader than Charles. Under these conditions, Joseph did in fact begin to engage with and react to text as we read independently. He was becoming a much more active and invested reader.

At the beginning of the calendar year, however, Joseph continued to view reading as something he had to “go through” in order to stay out of trouble with teachers. He also still thought that the point of reading was to get words right by sounding them out. This was particularly detrimental to him because using sound-symbol information was not one of his strengths.

To help Joseph shift from his theory that reading was about getting words right to a theory of reading as meaning-making, I asked him to tell me about a time he felt happy and successful reading a book. He said, “Once I read a Jimmy Neutron Christmas book [Beechen, 2003] and it was good. I liked that book.” Knowing that to help Joseph shift his theory I had to find text that he really cared about, I located several Jimmy Neutron books online. Joseph had substantial background knowledge about the books, as he had seen all of the episodes on TV. This helped him read the books with ease and enjoyment. We laughed a lot. He shared his knowledge with me so I could understand the books as well as he did. He helped me gain understanding, and once we named that together, Joseph was a different reader and person in the intervention setting. The focus on meaning—and his confidence—led him to actively, joyfully, and consistently make meaning with these texts.

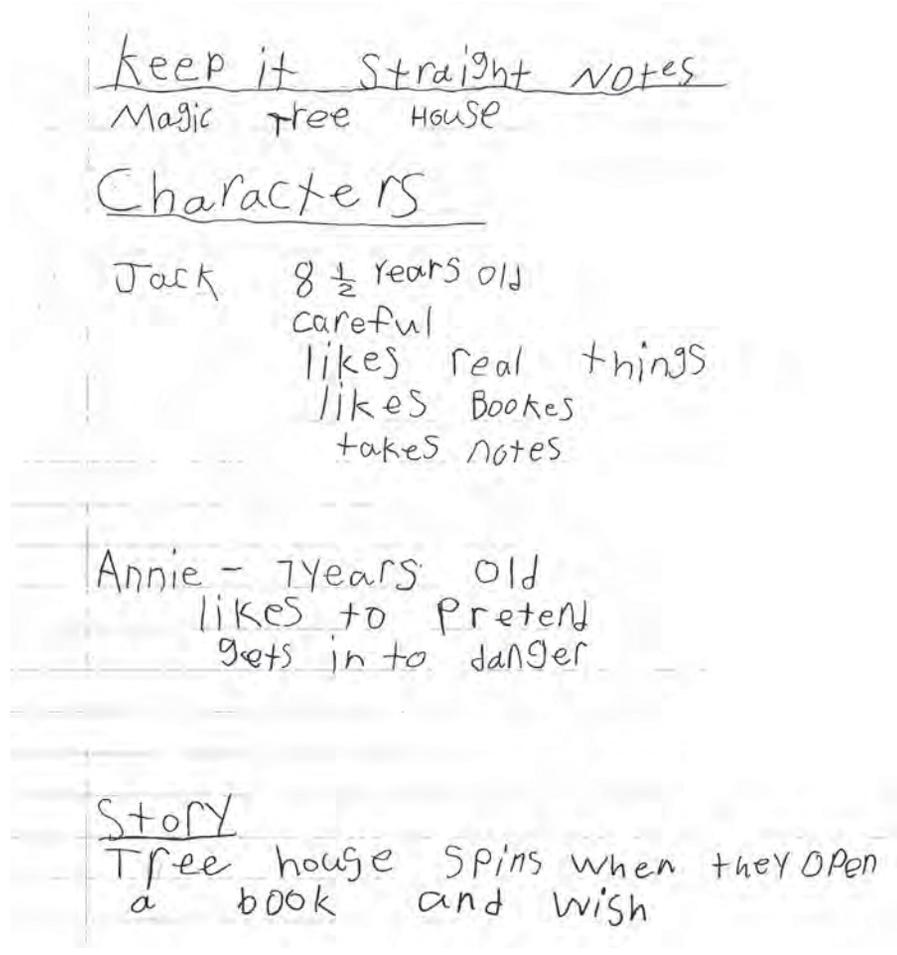
We spent four weeks reading all of the Jimmy Neutron books. During that time, I was able to show Joseph how to use meaning to solve words; I then released that responsibility to him and he took it on independently. Together, we named every skill and strategy he used. I modeled how to stop, think, and react during reading. Before turning a page, Joseph always made sure he understood all that he had read. He also understood and could talk about the tools that helped him read independently.

When we finished the Jimmy Neutron books and were discussing what we would read next, Joseph asked if he could read chapter books. I felt a strong need to honor his desire to fit in with the kid culture, but I was not willing to risk a move backward—to Joseph’s previous, visual theory of reading—by introducing books that were too difficult for him. He had only truly been making meaning for four weeks. I did, however, feel that it would be beneficial for Joseph to become interested in a series; I thought that building a foundational understanding of character, setting, and structure/format would serve him well as an independent reader. Seeking guidance, I went to his classroom during independent reading to see what the other children were reading. *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* books were the prevalent choice, but I did not think they would help Joseph learn to make meaning independently. The *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* books contain the random thoughts of a middle school boy; the narrative is disjointed and the structure is unusual. Before Joseph read something like this, I thought he should first experience success with text that has a common structure and connected, cohesive thoughts. For Joseph at this point, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* would have been better as a book on CD that he could “read along” with.

Two boys whom Joseph admired were reading Mary Pope Osborne’s *Magic Tree House* books; his teachers also read these books aloud to him and I knew that he enjoyed them. I researched the books and found that the first one in the series, *Dinosaurs before Dark* (Osborne, 1992), was leveled 2.5. I read the book and believed that Joseph could manage the text with help. The book did not represent Joseph culturally, nor did he have a personal interest in dinosaurs, but it was the first book in the series and contained a lot of necessary information about the series. When I mentioned the book to him, he was so happy that I decided to go forward. I read the first three chapters of *Dinosaurs before Dark* to Joseph as he read along. As I read, I asked, “If you had been reading alone, are there any parts that might not have been easy to read?” Joseph showed me two places where he thought it might not have been easy reading for him—both were names of dinosaurs; he did not possess enough background knowledge or oral vocabulary to have known them. We took notes on the characters that Joseph brilliantly named “Keep It Straight Notes” (see Figure 5).

We thought together and reacted together. I had preread the fourth chapter and explained to Joseph the meaning of one word, *mutant*, that I was worried would discourage him. With this information, a strong foundational understanding of the characters and settings, and an exciting, suspenseful feeling about these two children possibly being eaten by dinosaurs, Joseph read the fourth chapter as I read along and did a modified miscue analysis (original by Goodman & Burke, 1972; modified by Stephens, 2005). He read the chapter with high accuracy and limited expression but talked about what he was thinking as he did so. From then on, we shared reading responsibility. I preread the chapters so that I could read the

Figure 5. Joseph's "Keep It Straight Notes."



more challenging chapters as he read along. He read the less challenging chapters while I read along and did a modified miscue analysis. As we read this book, Joseph solidified his ability to solve unknown words flexibly and maintained a deep understanding of the text as he read. He had successfully read a chapter book. When we finished, his eyes were shining and he was smiling.

At Joseph's request, we progressed to another Magic Tree House book. Because he had shared with me his interest in civil rights, I selected *Civil War on Sunday* (Osborne, 2000a), which was leveled at 2.3. I read the first three chapters aloud and Joseph read along, making "Keep It Straight Notes" without assistance.

With this strong comprehension foundation, Joseph was able to read the rest of the book to me. During this time, we talked about and I modeled how expression and intonation help us better understand a story. Joseph's expression and intonation gradually began to match the text; he built the feeling of suspense with his reading and reactions. I modeled how to reread text to clarify when meaning broke down. Joseph began rereading text to clarify if he did not fully understand it on the first read.

Joseph was intrigued by the historical aspect of these stories and went on to read a level 2.2 book, *Revolutionary War on Wednesday* (Osborne, 2000b), independently and with high accuracy and thorough comprehension. He internalized, thought about, and reacted to everything he read. Joseph did not articulate a shift in his belief in himself at this point (that is not really who he is—he guards those deep thoughts), but his whole being had changed by the end of this book. He was more relaxed and definitely a happy, smiling reader.

From this point forward, Joseph came to me at all times of the day, asking for books he could read. On his own, he checked out graphic novels from the library that were about the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. Joseph held the key to his becoming a reader. He held it. He shared it with me. I listened. I really listened. Everything he said to me was of great importance. While we moved on to several other meaningful reading experiences, the important shift in Joseph's theory of reading happened in the experiences previously described. Joseph taught me to be careful not only to listen with a *miscue ear* (a colloquial term likely invented by Goodman, Watson, and Burke, based on their work with miscue analysis: Goodman & Burke, 1972; Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1987), but also to listen closely to who readers are as people. Joseph's path was Jimmy Neutron and fitting in with kid culture. I just guided him along.

By the end of the year, Joseph understood that reading is a meaning-making process. He was more confident as a reader and more engaged in reading. He was enjoying books that he was interested in and that were relevant to him. He understood that efficient readers think and react while they read—not just at the end of the text. When Joseph came to a word he did not know, 70 percent of the time he

used meaning and coupled that with visual information to achieve comprehension. I considered this a “balanced” use of cue systems. Joseph’s score on the *Dominie* “Sentence Writing and Spelling” assessment (DeFord, 2004) was in the fourth stanine; there were still many words he had not encountered in print. His Text Reading Level on the *Dominie* “Oral Reading Passages” assessment (DeFord, 2004) grew from an equated level of 1.9 to 2.9. While this may seem like “only” one year’s growth in one year, it is more than four times the progress he made in either of the two previous years (two months’ growth in second grade and another two months in third).

I will continue to support Joseph’s literacy learning next year. Now that he understands that reading is making meaning, believes in his ability to make sense of text, and finds reading pleasurable, I will focus on helping him problem-solve informational and content area reading. Because of the limited time Joseph had with texts prior to fourth grade, there are still many grade-level words that he has not encountered. With extensive independent reading and continued support from me, I believe he will make more than one year’s growth next year.

See Figure 6 for a list of assessment tools and instructional methods I used to help Joseph.

Figure 6. What Anne did to help Joseph understand that reading is a meaning-making process (WM 1).

Assessment Tools

Observation

Listening

Inquiry (asking questions to understand)

Dominie "Oral Reading Passages"

Modified miscue analysis

Systematic reflection on data using hypothesis-test process

Instructional Moves

Read aloud.

Thought aloud.

Talked about books.

Found a partner/friend.

Chose high-interest books.

Scaffolded to make books manageable.

Honored background knowledge.

Taught problem-solving strategies.

Modeled stop-think-react.

Named observed strategies.

Taught note-taking.

Introduced new vocabulary.

Demonstrated expression/intonation.

Case Study 4: Faith, Fifth Grader

Reading Interventionist Beth Sawyer

Instructional Foci: (a) Did not yet believe in her ability to make sense of text (WM 2); (b) needed to stay focused on reading as meaning-making as text demands increased (WM 1)



Faith was a European American fifth grader who had transferred to our school district during her fourth-grade year. She entered our school before end-of-year testing, and based on her MAP test results (Northwest Evaluation Association, 2008) and recommendations from her classroom teacher, the school assessment team recommended her for reading intervention.

When I began providing reading intervention services to Faith in the fifth grade, I gave her the *Dominie* (DeFord, 2004) Text Level 10. This text equates to a 3.5 grade level. She was successful on this assessment in all three areas: comprehension (88 percent), accuracy (96 percent), and fluency (3 out of 4 on the *Dominie* rubric). She had twelve miscues and six self-corrections. All of her miscues were meaningful and they were all very similar visually to the words in the text. The

only comprehension question Faith missed was related to vocabulary used in the story.

In my initial conversations with Faith, her comments suggested that she did not see herself as a “good” reader. She stated that she only liked books that she was interested in and that had short words. Books that were thick and had longer words were too difficult. Faith also believed that good readers know all the words, and that she knew such readers. She felt that if she read more, she would be a better reader and smarter, yet she was unwilling to read any more than she had to. Faith’s teacher had informed me that Faith was not completing homework reading assignments. When I asked her why she was not reading what she needed to for class, Faith said she could not read the books and would not pass fifth grade anyway. During the first few weeks of intervention, it appeared that Faith did not want to engage with text or with me. She often said that she was bored or not feeling well. She would put her head down or ask to use the restroom or to go the health room. She would sit with folded arms and a slouchy posture in her chair. It was difficult at times to get her to look at the page of text, much less read it. One day another teacher entered the classroom during the time that I was with Faith. Faith immediately told the teacher that the reason she was with me was that she could not read.

During this time, I was providing Faith with opportunities to read appropriately leveled text about animals, a topic in which she had expressed an interest. As she read aloud, I pointed out all of the things she was doing well in meeting the demands of the text and holding onto meaning as she read. This became part of our daily routine. I took notes about Faith’s reading and about my conversations with her. I reflected on these notes, trying to figure out under what conditions she could be successful so that I could teach to her needs using her strengths (see Figure 7). I concluded that Faith understood that reading was a meaning-making process but did not have the belief that she could make sense of text. She needed a boost in confidence that reading was something she could do.

Based on these conclusions, I decided to let Faith become more involved in choosing books that she wanted to read rather than books chosen by me or her classroom teacher. She needed to read books that she felt comfortable in reading and that she felt she could manage independently. She chose picture books, including those written by P. D. Eastman (e.g., *Are You My Mother?*). I was uncomfortable at first with her choices because they were below her instructional level. However, Faith enjoyed reading these books and would laugh and share parts she found humorous. She would also point out things she noticed and inferred about the story or the characters. Our conversations about text became less about what I wanted her to notice about text and more about what Faith wanted to share about her reading. She seemed more at ease with me and more willing to take risks in her reading and to share her now positive thoughts about reading. Then, while

Figure 7. Anecdotal notes about Faith.

Hypothesis - Test Sheet			
Name: <u>FAITH</u>		Grade: <u>5TH</u>	Date: <u>11/11</u>
Teacher: <u>SAWYER</u>		Observer: _____	Page: <u>9</u> of _____
Observations	Interpretations	Hypotheses	Curricular Decisions
(E) STATES THAT READING IS BORING BUT SOMETIMES FUN. ALSO, SHORT WORDS MEANS IT'S EASY TO READ, LONG WORDS MAKE IT HARD. IF SHE READS ABOUT PUPPIES AND KITTENS W/ SHORT WORDS THAT WOULD NOT BE BORING	- TO (E) BORING IS DIFFICULT - IF IT'S TOO BORING, IT'S EASY. - EASY IS HIGH INTEREST - (E) ONLY INTERESTED IN READING ABOUT WHAT SHE LIKES - DIFFICULT IS LONG WORDS, EASY IS SHORT WORDS	LOOKING OVER THE LAST 3 OBSERVATIONS THE QUESTION FORMS - UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS WILL (E) STAY ENGAGED WITH TEXT OR DISENGAGE	OBSERVE (E) READING APPROPRIATE LEVEL TEXT: - WHAT STRATEGIES DOES SHE HAVE IN PLACE? - WILL SHE STOP WHEN IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE OR DOES SHE DO ANYTHING AT ALL WHEN MEANING IS LOST?

Stephens, 1990

she continued to enjoy picture books, she also began to express an interest in short chapter books.

Faith's demeanor had also changed. Her attitude and outlook were very different from the fifth grader who entered my room at the beginning of the year. She smiled more readily, was more compliant when asked to read, and no longer said she was bored or not feeling well. She seemed to enjoy reading and was engaged in text. I remember watching her one day when she was in the classroom rocking chair in a relaxed position, with all of her attention focused on her reading. If I had had a camera, I would have taken a picture.

Now that her confidence seemed to be increasing, I decided to focus on Faith's skills and strategies. She seemed to believe that "good readers" got "all the words right," which made her reluctant to make meaningful predictions or semantically acceptable substitutions. I needed to help her rely more on meaning when she encountered unknown words. To do this, I continued to provide Faith with books that she found interesting—ones that she *wanted* to read—and I also made sure that these books were easy for her to read (no higher than a 3.5 grade level). When she came across a word she did not know, I encouraged her to use what she already knew about the text to determine that word or another one that was consistent with the meaning of the text. Once she was consistently doing this with me, I encouraged Faith to continue doing this when she was reading independently. I observed her during those times, and she and I chatted about her use of this strategy. As she took on this strategy, she stopped trying to get all the words right and shifted her focus to understanding the text.

By the end of the year, Faith was able to independently manage a *Dominie* (DeFord, 2004) Level 11B, which equates to a 4.3 reading level. Her accuracy was 99 percent; she received 4 out of 4 for fluency, and her comprehension was 75 percent. She missed items that referred to concepts she did not understand and that were not clearly explained in the text, such as *maiden voyage* and *second-class tickets*. During the four months I worked with her, Faith made seven months' growth on the *Dominie*. She was reading more difficult text with higher accuracy while maintaining the meaning of the text. She used meaning to predict unfamiliar words and then cross-checked to see if her predictions were correct.

When Faith first started reading intervention, she demonstrated a lot of avoidance behaviors—making trips to the restroom, attempting conversations unrelated to the reading, saying she was not feeling well, putting her head down on the table. These behaviors were no longer an issue. By the end of our time together, Faith and I were meeting for thirty minutes a day, and she read most of that time and seemed happy doing it. Some days she was disappointed when she had to *stop* reading.

At the beginning of our time together, Faith had commented that reading was “sort of fun” but that she did not like to read more than she had to. In May, as our time was ending, she was saying that reading *was* fun and that she was reading more than her teacher required. She was engaging easily with text, and the tasks associated with her classroom reading assignments were less intimidating. She was willing to at least give it a go and do her best.

It was a gift to see Faith grow as a reader and a person. She was much happier, more relaxed, and less angry. Faith underwent a shift in her thinking about reading. When I asked her at the end of the year what she thought the most important thing about reading was, she said that “reading has to make sense” and “you have to think about what you are reading.” Faith told me that she was “going to try to keep reading more,” and I gave her books to take home with her. My hope for Faith is that she will keep reading—that she will become the reader she wants to be, the one we know she is capable of becoming.

See Figure 8 for a list of assessment tools and instructional methods I used to help Faith.

Figure 8. What Beth did to increase Faith’s belief in herself as a reader (WM 2) and help her stay focused on meaning (WM 1).

Assessment Tools

Observation

Listening

Inquiry (asking questions to understand)

Dominie “Oral Reading Passages”

Modified miscue analysis

Systematic reflection on data using hypothesis–test process

Instructional Moves

Provided easy, high-interest texts.

Named and honored strategies used.

Encouraged synonym substitution.

Provided ample time for reading.

Provided books to take home.

Looking across Case Studies

The four children featured in the case studies—David, Rosalee, Joseph, and Faith—each received about five months (twenty weeks/one hundred days) of support from a reading interventionist across a school year. The majority of the children’s time during their thirty-minute instructional sessions was spent reading.

The interventionists’ classrooms are remarkably similar. They are all literacy-rich environments; every available space is filled with books. The classrooms range in size from “regular” (Beth’s) to small (Lee’s) to oversized offices (Kathy’s and Anne’s). Their rooms all contain a table and chairs at which they and up to four children can sit, a white or Smart Board, and chart paper on a stand. The larger rooms have couches and/or bean bag chairs.

All of the interventionists featured here collaborate with other members of the students’ “teams,” including classroom teachers, speech teachers, school psychologists, special education teachers, and the children’s parents or guardians. (To ensure the anonymity of the children, this information has been omitted.)

Perhaps most important, all of the interventionists share a commitment to assessment as inquiry, to reflection on data, and to instruction that is focused on needs determined by assessment. In this way, all four reading interventionists live the assessment standards established by *Standards for the Assessment of Reading and Writing* (SARW) (IRA–NCTE Joint Task Force on Assessment, 2010). They all want their assessment(s) to “serve, not harm, each and every student” (p. 11). They therefore choose assessments that “emphasize what students can do rather than what they cannot do” (p. 11). When they ask students to read an oral reading passage from the *Dominie* (DeFord, 2004), for example, they choose passages that they know the students can read successfully. They understand that the point of giving the *Dominie* (or any other leveled reading passage) is not to “get” a level but to document the child’s progress. To understand a child’s progress, these interventionists observe, listen to children read on a daily basis, ask genuine questions, listen to children’s responses, and reflect on all they have seen and heard. These informal assessments are “productive and powerful assessments” (SARW, p. 13) that “yield high-quality information” (p. 12).

These four teachers are the “primary agents, not passive consumers, of assessment information” (SARW, p. 13). They assign “meaning to interactions and evaluate the information that they receive and create” (p. 13). The teachers use the insights gained from reflection to inform their instruction. This rich description from the SARW captures the artfulness of these teachers:

Whether they use texts, work samples, discussion, or ongoing observation, teachers make sense of students' reading and writing development. They read these many different texts, oral and written, that students produce in order to construct an understanding of students as literate individuals. The sense they make of a student's reading or writing is communicated to the student through spoken or written comments and translated into instructional decisions. . . . (p. 13)

The result? After reading intervention, David, Rosalee, Joseph, and Faith felt better about themselves as readers and learners than they did at the beginning of the academic year. And they *were* better readers and stronger learners—they were better able to independently manage the text demands of the books they encountered in the classroom and the many books they will now choose to read independently.

Kathy, Lee, Anne, and Beth—like the other reading interventionists they work with and thousands of Tier 1 and Tier 2 teachers across the country—have chosen responsibility. In so doing, they have positively altered the academic and life trajectories of children. They are exemplars of our profession at its finest.

Note

1. The reading interventionists were Anne Downs, Jennie Goforth, Lisa Jaeger, Ashley Matheny, Kristi Plyer, Lee Riser, Beth Sawyer, Tara Thompson, Kathy Vickio, and Cindy Wilcox.

As part of NCTE's Principles in Practice imprint, this book draws on the *Standards for the Assessment of Reading and Writing, Revised Edition (2009)*, produced by NCTE and IRA, to explore how artful elementary teachers come to know their students through assessment and use the knowledge to customize reading instruction. Throughout, the teachers who are profiled (classroom teachers, reading specialists, and literacy coaches) work together to take responsibility for their students' learning, resisting the accountability to those outside the classroom that is often demanded by a narrow focus on standardized tests. Employing the Response to Intervention approach (RTI) approach, the teachers detail the assessment tools they use, how they make sense of the data, and how they use that info to inform instruction. The book features case studies by reading interventionists and classroom teachers working with university faculty. Excerpts from the Standards document will appear in the final version of the book; the complete Standards can be found at <http://www.ncte.org/standards/assessmentstandards>.

Diane Stephens is the Swearingen Chair of Education at the University of South Carolina, where she conducts research on assessment and decision making, teachers as learners, and the impact of large-scale professional development efforts. She led the smaller scale, three-year-long professional development effort with which the authors of this book were involved. This is her second edited book with NCTE; the first, with Jennifer Story, was *Assessment as Inquiry: Learning the Hypothesis-Test Process* (1999).

NCTE National Council of
Teachers of English

1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096

Phone: 800-369-6283 or 217-328-3870

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