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TE 842 Week 11  
Sarah's Data

Sarah is a fourth grade student who could benefit from learning goals and strategies to increase her literacy development in the area of comprehension. She has been given an Elementary Spelling Inventory (ESI) and Qualitative Reading Inventories (QRI), one narrative and one expository. Both QRIs were Level Four which is her appropriate grade level text. Using the data collected, I have analyzed some of Sarah's literacy strengths and weaknesses.

According to Sarah's ESI, she has mastered late and early consonants, short vowels and digraphs, blends, long vowels and other vowels, inflected endings, syllable junctures, and unaccented final syllables. She has not mastered harder suffixes or bases/roots in accordance with the ESI Assessment found in *Assessment for Reading Instruction* (McKenna and Stahl, 2015, pg. 160). This assessment has placed her within the late stage of the Syllables and Affixes Stage. At the end of fourth grade students are expected to be in the middle of the Syllables and Affixes Stage, leading me to believe that Sarah does not have any problems with her spelling according to this assessment.

Sarah was given the QRI Narrative Level Four assessment titled "Johnny Appleseed." Before beginning this text Sarah did not have any background knowledge about who Johnny Appleseed is, she did have an understanding of planting fruit and apple trees to have food to eat, and knew a little bit about apple cider. While reading, Sarah had three omissions that did not change the meaning, a few insertions that did not change the meaning, and a few other miscues with pronunciations of "Massachusetts" and "frontier." I counted eight miscues, which would place her at the instructional level (in terms of comprehension) for this passage. Sarah read 71 WPM (words per minute) which is within the 57-115 range for the fourth grade. After

calculating her miscues, Sarah still had 69 CWPM(correct words per minute). This also falls within the fourth grade range of 54-112 for CWPM. During Sarah's retelling of the story, she recalled two goals and one event for a total of 3/47 retell ideas. Sarah's retelling is not at mastery level for this text. While answering questions about "Johnny Appleseed," Sarah could answer 3/4 explicit questions and 2/4 implicit questions. The total number of questions correctly answered out of eight was five. This data would place her within the frustration level for comprehension.

The second QRI Sarah completed was an expository text, "Early Railroads." Sarah was aware that this text would be informational and had very little background knowledge about railroads, trains, and traveling. While reading, Sarah did not make any omissions but did sound out or change the word given in the text for eight words. The majority of these miscues did change meaning in the text. The amount of miscues Sarah had places her within the instructional level for fluency. She read about 75 WPM which does fall within the 57-115 on fourth grade level. After her miscues are taken into consideration, her CWPM is 73 which also falls within the fourth grade range of 54-112. During her retell, Sarah could retell two details out of 57 ideas. Sarah could answer 3/4 explicit questions and 2/4 implicit questions. Out of eight questions, Sarah answered five correctly. This would place her within the frustration level for comprehension. According to the Common Core State Standards by the end of the fourth grade, Sarah should be able to "Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text" (Read the Standards) for an informational text. This is a weakness of Sarah's.

Based upon Sarah's Elementary Spelling Inventory (ESI) and Qualitative Reading Inventories (QRI), I believe Sarah would benefit from a Background Knowledge learning goal and Vocabulary learning goal. Both of these goals would help improve her comprehension.

Sarah has already accomplished her grade level expectations for spelling (late stage of Affixes and Syllables stage) and is at her appropriate WPM level for fluency (within 57-115 WPM). She has no issues with reading or spelling. The end goal of reading is comprehension. Vocabulary knowledge and Background Knowledge are a part of two out of three pieces that make up comprehension.

The first learning goal for Sarah is to build her background knowledge on the topic of texts she reads. According to the data collected, Sarah is at the frustration level for comprehension on both narrative and expository texts at her grade level. She can answer 75% of explicit questions where answers can be found directly in the text compared to 50% of implicit questions where she would have to create an answer based on the text and their prior knowledge. Sarah retold even less when just asked to retell details from the text that was read. This data shows that Sarah has very little skill in recalling what she has read but can recall more when prompted by a question. By establishing more background about what she is reading she can make connections and look for details while reading.

One strategy to help with Background Knowledge would be to incorporate a KWL chart with new texts and topics. This strategy would be especially helpful to Sarah for expository texts that are full of facts. They can be used to engage students in a new topic, activate prior knowledge, share unit objectives, and monitor learning (K-W-L Charts). Students begin by creating a chart that has a column for K(know) which is what a student already knows, L(learn) which is what we want to learn from the text, and L(learned) which is what they learned from the reading. As students fill in the K and L parts of the chart before reading, a discussion can be had regarding any misconceptions and the teacher can help guide Sarah to ask questions that are relevant to, and can be answered by, the text. Whether it is to learn about a specific person, an

event, etc. When students have prior knowledge and details to look for based upon what they want to learn, they have specific things to look for and pay attention to instead of simply reading the text for fluency. For example, if Sarah had made a KWL chart about “Johnny Appleseed” and she wanted to learn the importance of Johnny Appleseed and his goal of planting apple trees across the country, she could have been able to look for those details while reading. I believe this strategy would benefit Sarah because it would give her things to look for since she is a fluent reader who does not spend most of her time decoding words.

A second strategy for helping Sarah build her background knowledge would be to give Sarah a context to use for her reading. It is hard for students to figure out what they are reading when it is a cold read (Creating a Context for the Reading, 2014). There are a few ways to help build context and activate background knowledge that gives students a purpose for their reading. The teacher can ask Sarah a question about the main topic or idea and connect it to her personally. These questions should build curiosity and connections for students. A question relating to “Johnny Appleseed” could be “Have you ever picked apples or planted an apple tree?” or even simply “What uses do we have with apples?” Another way to build context and purpose would be to continue her prediction of the story and have a conversation as to why she thinks that and include a mini lesson on the topic. The teacher could also use a list of words from the story that are important or will be seen a lot, to build predictions about the story. Use familiar and unfamiliar words to challenge, without frustrating, the reader. Sarah could also scan through the text and determine which words she sees most often or words that jump out to her that determine the prediction about the text. The more context that Sarah has, the more she can relate and understand what she is reading because she will have prior knowledge of it.

This first goal of building strategic knowledge in the form of building background knowledge is a part of a pathway towards reading comprehension as seen in McKenna and Stahl's Cognitive Model (McKenna and Stahl, 2015, pg. 8). I believe this goal is important for Sarah, as she is a fluent reader who struggles with retelling details and answering questions in a text. Finding a purpose for her reading and building a context for her reading will help to activate prior knowledge of the main topic, as well as give Sarah a preview as to what the text could be about.

The second reading goal for Sarah is vocabulary. Based on the data, I believe this goal would be beneficial because the miscues she made in her QRIs were words that were special to the stories they were in. In "Early Railways," Sarah had to sound out "locomotive" and "Valve." These are both challenging words in a cold read, but with prior knowledge of these words they can become a part of her vocabulary. By building content vocabulary and background knowledge we can increase her vocabulary knowledge. This will then impact her amount of miscues and comprehension of the text. Vocabulary is directly connected to oral language comprehension.

One strategy for increasing Sarah's vocabulary is to preview the words in the story that are important, challenging, and/or new to her grade level. "Unfamiliar key words need to be taught to students before reading so that new words, background information, and comprehension can improve together" (Strategies for Vocabulary Development). In Strategies for Vocabulary Development it is stated that you should, "focus attention on critical academic vocabulary that is essential to understanding the big ideas in a text." By looking at words prior to reading a text we can identify their correct pronunciation, meanings, and uses in context. This gives students knowledge about the word when they come to it in a text and knowledge about its

meaning so that they understand it when retelling or answering questions about the text. Most students are able to find and identify words they previewed while reading a text. Stahl also says that teaching students synonyms are also helpful in introducing new words while previewing them (*Strategies for Vocabulary Development*). Sarah could make connections to words she already knows to words she is unfamiliar with, such as “train” and “locomotive.” Providing Sarah with examples as to how we might see a word written in a sentence would also help to determine the meaning and correct uses. The more a student reads a word, the more comfortable and familiar they will be. It would also be beneficial for Sarah to scan through a text and have her identify which words she feels would be important or that she does not know how to pronounce or what the meaning is.

A second strategy for vocabulary knowledge that is found in *Best Practices in Literacy Instruction* is the use of clustering techniques (Gambrell and Morrow, 2015, pg. 206-207). This activity helps students to relate words together based upon related sets of words and constructing definition maps. This clustering technique also works well with content specific vocabulary. When learning about “Johnny Appleseed” or “Early Railroads,” Sarah could get vocabulary support by clustering words that are related to important or challenging vocabulary within the text. This builds her connections and knowledge not only about the vocabulary used in the story, but the main ideas and topic of the text. After beginning the clustering on their own and writing down what they already know (activating prior knowledge), the teacher can help add details and discuss the connections Sarah makes to the new vocabulary and the text she will be reading. The clustering technique also gives the teacher an idea of what misconceptions the student may have about a vocabulary word or topic that will be seen in a text. Some words look very similar to

vocabulary words seen in text but have completely different meanings, making their connections unrelated.

I believe Sarah needs a Vocabulary Knowledge learning goal to help her fluency and comprehension in reading grade level texts. She has accomplished the grade level goal in spelling and is a fluent reader with minor miscues in content vocabulary. Using this knowledge, it would benefit Sarah to introduce her to new vocabulary and content specific vocabulary that relates to the texts she reads. Using the preview and clustering strategies, Sarah can make connections to what she already knows and will be exposed to various ways she could use her new vocabulary knowledge.

### Sources

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