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Background Information

Comprehension is important for students to be able to achieve while reading.

Comprehension is dependent on students understanding the meaning of words (Perfetti, 2010).

Students need to have successful decoding skills in order to build their comprehension.

According to the Cognitive Model, decoding skills and sight word knowledge affects fluency in context, which affects automatic word recognition, which leads to reading comprehension. As a teacher, the goal of reading instruction is to build reading comprehension.

For my Case Study I chose two students, Masy* and Becky*, to complete two lessons and multiple mini-lessons during my small group reading instruction, and evaluate progress of the students through out all lessons. My goal for the study was to gather information on two students' spelling skills and compare their initial results to determine how to better instruct them based on their orthographic knowledge. Understanding their orthographic knowledge assists in determining their decoding and word recognition knowledge. Decoding skills and sight word knowledge will affect fluency. Reading is rooted in the student knowledge of the spelling system and patterns (Solving Problems in the Teaching of Literacy: Best Practices in Writing Instruction, 2013).

Increasing fluency will increase their reading abilities and lessen the cognitive stress of the text and allow them to focus on comprehending a text. "Reading with fluency and productive comprehension depends integrally on having acquired deep and ready working knowledge of spelling-sound correspondences" (Samuels and Farstrup, pp. 4, 2011). By focusing on spelling and word recognition helps to determine where my students are at with their phonics, spelling,

and vocabulary that is important to determine where students' abilities are for interventions (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, and Johnson, pp. 1, 2011). Interventions are important for differentiation and meeting all student needs in the classroom.

I chose two girl students in my second grade class. Both students started the year with low spelling, fluency, and comprehension abilities. They were well below the proficiency mark of 85% mastery and above. The school district I work in uses Common Core State Standards. Common Core was adopted in the state of Tennessee in hopes of challenging students and preparing them for college (Gambrell and Morrow, 2015). Since beginning my teacher preparation courses I have used Common Core and think the standards are challenging and great for students to be upheld to. These standards require second grade students to have knowledge of “grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words” (English Language Arts Standards). The CCSS have specific skills that students need to accomplish by the end of each grade level and both students in my study needed intervention with these skills. Second grade students need to “distinguish long and short vowels when reading regularly spelled one-syllable words, know spelling-sound correspondences for additional common vowel teams, decode regularly spelled two-syllable words with long vowels, decode words with common prefixes and suffixes, identify words with inconsistent but common spelling-sound correspondences, and recognize and read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words (English Language Arts Standards).

Common Core State Standards also have fluency and comprehension standards. Students by the end of second grade, need to be able to read a grade level passage with accuracy, expression, and have purpose and understanding (English Language Arts Standards). Both students showed characteristics of poor readers as noted in Dr. Zhang's power-point

Characteristics of Diverse Literacy Learners. Each student showed less accurate and fluent decoding, limited sight vocabulary, and poor self-monitoring and evaluation (aZhang, 2017). Both students were possible RTI candidates in the fall for their oral reading fluency words per minute and their comprehension.

The literacy braid consists of reading, oral language, orthography, and stories and writing (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, and Johnson, pp. 1, 2011). Orthography is the knowledge of correct sequences of letters in a word. I chose to focus on orthography for my case study because this is the basis where many students struggle to make connections and recognize how morphemes and phonemes create words. Students in the second grade are working within the Letter-Name Alphabetic stage or working within the Within Word Pattern stage, where they are using knowledge from kindergarten and first grade where they are formally taught to read. They are segmenting phonemes to match appropriate letters and pairs of letters (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, and Johnson, pp. 11, 2011). The Late Letter-Name Alphabetic Stage is where students have the mastery of most short vowels, digraphs, and consonant blends. The two students I chose for my case study have struggled through out the school year with spelling and decoding skills. This study helped me to determine their spelling knowledge and determine the interventions needed to help them become successful in reading comprehension.

Masy* is a student who came into second grade at 7 years old and who was low in reading. She has not shown any academic affects from her physical disabilities with cerebral palsy, which affects her walking abilities. She has poor handwriting, which can be a trait of also being a poor reader (Solving Problems in the Teaching of Literacy: Best Practices in Writing Instruction, 2013). Masy* has high motivation to learn and do well in school, reading included. I chose to use Masy* for my case study because she could benefit from extra help in my class and

her spelling skills have affected both her fluency, and comprehension. Masy* has shown frustration with fluency and has averaged 20-30 words per minute on weekly fluency assessments. She does not get frustrated while reading, but does reread a word or two at times before moving on like she is getting caught on the words or is trying to process them. Instead of taking time to sound out words Masy* will either skip it or read it as another word that has the same beginning sound. This helped me determine she has mastered initial consonant sounds.

Becky* started second grade at 6 years old. When she was enrolled in school the school district she was in (prior to mine) they put her in first grade instead of kindergarten based on her age. Even though she would appropriately fall within the age range of a student beginning school this year. Becky* began the school year reading between 6-10 words per minute. If she was unsure of a word she would simply stare at it. I would encourage her to sound it out then move onto the next word and this process was very difficult for her. I think a small portion of this average can be credited to her shyness in moving to a new city and school. I do not think it was the main cause however. She had a reading aid in first grade and missed a lot of spelling base knowledge when she did not go through kindergarten. I had originally flagged Becky* as a possible student to place back into first grade after our first round of Pathdriver testing in late August. Pathdriver uses three reading tests where students read aloud into a microphone and their fluency is assessed. They also take a maze test to determine their level of comprehension. Becky* has made progress since school has started and receives a lot of help outside of school. Becky* does well with spelling skills week to week, but still has frustration with longer words.

My objective for using these two students in my case study was to target their current spelling stage and to help increase their spelling abilities, and sight word knowledge, in order to build their fluency (which was below grade expectation of 65 words per minute) and increase

their comprehension. I used small group instruction for the basis of my lessons. Direct and explicit instruction for students helps to build orthographic knowledge. Small groups are beneficial for these two students because it gives them the reinforcement to master lower level skills before moving onto higher-level skills (bZhang, 2017). Students begin learning long vowel and short vowel sounds in second grade and move into blends and inflected endings. Masy* and Becky* are two students that benefit from revisiting content a few times and given extra practice in order to help retain spelling concepts. Gambrell and Morrow state the importance of teaching a concept multiple times to encourage understanding (Gambrell and Morrow, 2015).

Lesson One

For the first lesson my objective was to determine what spelling stage each student was within. I began by reviewing skills covered in second grade up until this point. I began the lesson with a review of skills using dolce flash cards for first and second grade levels. The first grade list was a great review for them to demonstrate understanding of sight words for simpler words. We also had a discussion about vowel patterns and how the silent “e” makes a vowel say its name. Students then practiced spelling identifying words with dolce lists and spelling out words when given the word. Spelling out the words in between the two of them helped them to think and rely on the other student to help spell out the words (the game sparkle). Both students have good sight word knowledge for first grade words and most of second grade words. Masy* does occasionally say a word that begins with the same first letter but is not the correct sight word. This happens when she is rushing and does not take the time to decode the word. For example, she might say “white” instead of “with.” This is something she typically struggles with on her weekly fluency assessments as well.

The independent practice for the students to review the skills discussed in the lesson included five words the students had previously seen this year during different spelling units. The five words I chose were: father, lightning, boat, test, and mine. These words reviewed inflected endings, long and short vowels, and reviewed the areas that are on the Elementary Spelling Inventory that I used for the assessment. All of these spelling skills are taught in second grade. Becky* spelled four words correctly and missed the inflected ending –ing on “lightning.” Masy* spelled all five words correctly. I was surprised that Masy* had spelled them all correctly and Becky* had not because Masy* has not done as well on spelling tests and retaining spelling patterns as Becky*.

The assessment for the lesson was the Elementary Spelling Inventory (ESI). I chose to use the Elementary Spelling Inventory to determine which spelling stage each student was working in based on spelling skills they have mastered and which ones they are developing. Thought assessing their spelling knowledge would be a great insight to skills to target in order to build their sight word knowledge and increase their words per minute in fluency.

The ESI is from *Words Their Way*. This test places students within one of the five spelling stages. The stages are (in progressive order) Emergent, Letter-Name Alphabetic, Within Word Pattern, Syllables and Affixes, and Derivational Relations. Students first master initial then final consonant sounds. As students enter the Letter-Name Alphabetic stage they gain knowledge of short vowels and digraphs, then move into blends. The Within-Word Pattern stage is when students master long vowels, other vowels and gain knowledge of inflected endings. The Syllables and Affixes Stage and Derivational Relations are mastered in upper elementary grades where students master syllable junctures, unaccented final syllables, harder suffixes, and bases or roots. Students in the second grade are typically working within the Letter-Name Alphabetic

Stage through the Within Word Pattern stage. I have students working within both these stages and some higher level readers who are working within the Syllables and Affixes stage.

I tested the students together and went through fifteen of the twenty words to gather enough data and take note of spelling errors. I read the word twice, said the word in the sentence provided, then said the word one more time. The fifteen words I assessed the students on tested the students on words that would place students anywhere from late Emergent Stage to middle-late Within Word Pattern Stage depending on their level of mastery. Masy* spelled three words correctly. She mastered initial and final consonants, used 4/5 short vowels correctly, used 5/5 digraphs assessed correctly, used 6/7 blends correctly, then only used one long vowel, other vowel, and inflected ending correctly. This places Masy* between the late Letter-Alphabetic Stage and early Within Word Pattern Stage. Becky* spelled four words correctly as well. Becky* mastered initial and final consonant sounds, used 4/5 short vowels correctly, used 4/5 digraphs assessed correctly, 4/7 blends correctly, 1/5 long vowels correctly, and 2/6 other vowels correctly. I also placed Becky* between late Letter-Name Alphabetic Stage and early Within-Word Pattern Stage. Becky* has more knowledge of the use of “other vowels” than Masy*.

Lesson One Results

After the lesson students resulted in different levels of spelling stages. Each week we have discussed spelling patterns and practicing letter-alphabetic relationships and patterns such as digraphs. Both students have been progressing in their fluency as well. Masy* has been having frustrations with her fluency each week. She has been progressing but is still very inconsistent week to week. I have been implementing fluency even more into small group time as well. Masy* is building her sight word knowledge at a slower pace than Becky* and has not

been retaining the skills as well. Becky* has consistently building her sight word knowledge and fluency each week. Her comprehension has improved because of this as well. Becky* has a lot of support outside of school and has been showing more confidence in class discussions as well. It is easy to see how she has gained comprehension based upon her improved spelling and word recognition. She would never share answers in the first half of the school year and would rely on those around her to give feedback and answer questions about a text. Becky* has been raising her hand and participating in conversations multiple times a day and will be excited about her understanding of the content she is learning.

Lesson One Reflection

After completing Lesson One with my two students I had the opportunity to look back and reflect on the lesson. I think the overview section of the lesson was a great way to engage Becky* and Masy's* attention and help them to get into the mindset of the lesson. Reviewing the spelling patterns we have used this year assisted in activating back ground knowledge and reflecting on the skills and think about words that follow those patterns. During the presentation it was great hearing their responses to the questions and having a discussion made it possible to understand their opinion about reading and fluency. Since the lesson is focused on the students working through creating and decoding/recognizing words, I did not want a long presentation where it is mostly me talking while they listen. I think this worked out well in the lesson. Giving them the opportunity to practice the spelling skills and talking made it possible for me to constantly assess their knowledge through out the lesson. This helped me determine how the independent work and assessment (Elementary Spelling Inventory) would go. The words I chose for the independent work were words the students had seen during a unit of study. These words

were great in also determining which skills would need to be reviewed further in interventions. I knew I would want to keep the second lesson similar to the first lesson. It would keep the lesson and practice consistent in order to determine the growth made by both students. The first lesson results were beneficial in assisting me to plan small group interventions leading up to the second lesson as I had planned.

Small Group Interventions

Each week during small group time I make sure to give a lot of focus and practice with my lowest group. This group contains both Masy* and Becky*. Becky* has been showing so much growth and may not retain every spelling skill but has been showing a greater understanding of a text and the content. Spelling worksheets used to be difficult for Becky* to not only show proficiency, but to complete on her own. I had to guide her and have her sit next to me to complete assignments just so she did not sit and stare at the paper. Masy* has always shown an average to high level of proficiency when it comes to the spelling worksheets but as the rigor has increased through the school year she has not been “keeping up” as well as the others. Progress is not as noticeable week to week.

During our small group instruction together, we introduce and review spelling skills each week where students have a chance to create words that follow a spelling pattern. “Children love making words and in the process are learning information about phonics and spelling” (Gambrell and Morrow, 2015, pp. 176). I use consonant, vowel, and blend dice to roll and create words, as well as give students a pattern to focus on and find words that follow that pattern. For example, one week the focus was “ew” and Masy* and Becky* named words that had “ew” at the end. Masy* even made the comment that these words rhymed. Since the first lesson we have

reinforced long and short vowel sounds, studied spelling skills such as the suffix –er, homophones, ou and ow, suffixes –ly and –ful, prefixes re- and un-, and oo and ew.

Lesson Two

For the second lesson, I completed a lesson very similar to the first lesson. I wanted to be able to compare results from the independent work and from the follow-up assessment. I believed this would help me determine the progress that has been made and also determine which areas need reinforcement in small group instruction. This process has increased my ability to teach my students and differentiate instruction to meet their needs. I introduced the lesson to the students by reminding them it is important for us to become good readers. I asked them what helps us to become good readers. Masy* said knowing words and doing well on our fluency assessment each week makes us good readers. Using her response I discussed the importance of having good fluency but also the importance of being able to understand what we read. Both students said this was important. I asked them if they thought reading well would help them on their comprehension assessments in class. They both agreed that it would.

I began the lesson by reviewing the skills we had covered since the first lesson, as I mentioned above. The students were able to give me examples of adding –er onto a base word, homophones, ou and ow, suffixes –ly and –ful, prefixes un- and re-, oo and ew, and aw and al. Becky* has consistently been scoring 92-100 percent on her spelling assessments week to week and Masy* has been less consistent. She received a 63 percent on homophones, 70 percent on ou and ow and suffixes –ly and –ful, received an 82 percent on prefixes un- and re-. She did receive a 100 percent on the oo and ew skill. There are sixteen words on each spelling test and a bonus word I choose during the assessment to see how well they understand the skill of the week.

I continued the lesson by going through dolce cards for the second grade level, as well as first and third grade lists. This is a great review for students to use the skills practiced throughout the school year and build their sight word knowledge. The first grade lists are beneficial in review of simpler words and the third grade lists give a challenge and experience with more challenging words they are working towards recognizing automatically. We played sparkle with some of these words as well. This encourages the students to work together to spell out words. After reviewing the skills and having practice to spell words and demonstrate understanding I had students take a “spelling test” with eight words. I wanted to incorporate some skills from the beginning of the year and first lesson, as well as new material we have learned since the first lesson.

The independent practice for the second lesson was the “spelling test” of eight words. I encouraged the students to take their time and listen to the words as I pronounced them and used them in a sentence. This test consisted of the words: few, tall, town, mane, kindly, replay, best, and line. Becky* spelled 7/8 correctly and misspelled “mane.” She spelled it “maen.” This showed me she understood that the silent “e” makes the “a” say its name but incorrectly placed it before the consonant. Masy* spelled 7/8 correctly as well. She misspelled “few” and wrote “fouw.” She recognized the other spelling pattern that made the “ew” sound and used that instead of “ew”. This would have been a moment I had hoped she would recognize how odd the word looked.

After the independent practice and making corrections to their spelling tests we discussed the spelling patterns again. Both students were able to understand the spelling errors they made. I then had the students complete a second Elementary Spelling Inventory. The ESI was completed the same way the first one was completed. I read the word twice, used it in the sentence

provided, and then repeated the word. I tested the students on the same fifteen words as the first lesson in order to compare results.

Lesson Two Results

Masy* showed mastery with 7/7 usage of initial and final consonants, 5/5 usage of short vowels, 5/5 usage of the digraphs assessed, 7/7 of the blends assessed, 0/5 long vowels, 1/6 other vowels assessed, ¼ inflected endings assessed. Masy* remained constant in her knowledge of initial and final consonant sounds. She increased her knowledge of short vowels, digraphs, and blends since the first ESI. Masy* is working within the early Within-Word Pattern stage and has mastered the spelling skills of Emergent and Letter-Name Alphabetic stages.

Becky* showed mastery of 7/7 usage of initial and final consonants, 5/5 usage of short vowels, 5/5 usage of digraphs assessed, 7/7 usage of blends, 2/5 long vowels, 1/5 other vowels assessed, and ¼ inflected endings assessed. Becky* remained consistent with her mastery of initial and final consonant sounds. She increased her knowledge of short vowels, digraphs, blends, long vowels, and inflected endings since the first ESI. Becky* has mastered spelling skills from Emergent and Letter-Name Alphabetic Stages. She is working on skills in the early and middle stages of Within Word Pattern Stage.

Masy* and Becky* have made growth in their orthographic knowledge between the two lessons and through out the mini lessons and practice during small group instruction times. From where each student began the school year, Becky* has made the most progress with her spelling, fluency, and comprehension skills. Masy* is making progress as well, just at a very steady rate at the expectation for the grade level. Becky* has averaged 100 plus words on her weekly timed fluency tests and has shown more prosody in her reading. She has been able to focus on the

content of the text because her cognitive abilities have increased in her sight word knowledge. Masy* has been putting more pressure on herself to read more words during her fluency assessments. I encourage her to slow down and take her time so that she does not rush and miss a word or have to repeat words like she has in the past. She has been showing more confidence and has been reading between 50-60 words or more consistently. Masy* is motivated to become a better reader and has asked multiple times if she can keep practicing a passage after she reads it. She will also comment during small groups how fluency passages have been helping her and working on our spelling skills has been making her a better reader.

Lesson Two Reflection

After completing lesson two I was able to determine student growth. I did design a longer lesson than the first in order to review and practice word recognition and spelling patterns for a longer amount of time. This was important since we had more skills to review. I think keeping the lesson very similar to the first was beneficial to both Masy* and Becky*. They do very well with consistency. Reviewing the spelling skills assisted the students in activating background knowledge about what they already know about the spelling skills they have learned. Once again, keeping the presentation shorter was beneficial in allowing them to have more practice with decoding and using their spelling skills instead of simply listening to me talk. Asking them questions was helpful in reminding them the importance of using our decoding skills and word recognition to become better readers.

Becky* and Masy* have shown growth in their word recognition of the dolce cards and have both become better at recognizing letter patterns as we play sparkle. I think giving them this “hands-on” piece of the lesson was important. Spelling out the words and having to spell one

letter at a time with other students makes them think and have to rely on other students to spell out the word correctly. The words I chose for the independent work were words that the students have seen at some point this school year. I am glad I review skills from the first lesson and from recent weeks. They retained the skills very well. The assessment (ESI) went very well and I was glad to see how well both Becky* and Masy* have not only retained their spelling knowledge, but have both grown. Both mastered at 100% for many of the spelling patterns and have gained knowledge of ones they previously had little to no knowledge of.

Through out this study, I have had reinforcement of positive growth and orthographic knowledge for both Masy* and Becky*. Understanding where both students came into second grade with their academic, reading specifically, background has assisted in differentiating instruction for these two students. Constantly assessing spelling knowledge has helped in interventions and planning both lessons for these students. Fluency knowledge has increased since lesson one and lesson two for both students. Masy* has been reaching between 65-100 words depending on the passage and difficulty of words. Becky* has been reaching over 100 words consistently. Becky is now scoring 85% proficiency or higher on comprehension assessments, and Masy* is scoring 75-80% or higher on her comprehension assessments. This growth is monumental for both students who were scoring well below 50% up until the second semester of second grade.

Future Instruction

After completing two lessons and using small group intervention time with Masy* and Becky* I have reflected on their progress and been able to determine future instruction for both students. Both students have the capability to make growth in their orthographic knowledge and

build their word recognition skills in order to build fluency skills and comprehension skills.

Masy* and Becky* will continue needing intervention and small group instruction. The reinforcement of skills will need to be consistent and implementation of more challenging words and passages will lead to continued growth.

Becky* needs a consistent review of spelling skills taught during second grade, but also needs to be challenged with more difficult words. She will benefit from longer nonfiction passages that will challenge her to use her comprehension strategies. Her word recognition has grown which has reflected in higher comprehension. Second grade students have more difficulty with nonfiction than fiction. Choosing nonfiction texts will be beneficial to Becky's* continued growth. Becky* has shown the ability to learn new skills and retain spelling skills very well. This case study's results has reflected her continual and constant growth in reading.

Masy* will need a little more review and reinforcement of spelling skills than Becky*. Masy* has made growth in her spelling knowledge, but has not show as high of a retaining rate of spelling skills as Becky*, or other second grade students, has. Since Masy* has a lower fluency and does not have as much cognitive space as Becky* to focus on the comprehension piece of reading, using grade level passages and focusing on fiction texts will be beneficial to Masy* to practice reading. Masy* will need to continue having interventions in decoding words and building her sight word knowledge. I have also encouraged her to read more outside of the classroom to build her fluency skills.

Resources

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