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Administration and Interpretation of an Informal Reading Inventory and Miscue Analysis

**Background**

**Purpose of the Assessment**

The purpose of an informal reading inventory is to both determine the accuracy rate and instructional reading level of a student and identify the student’s strengths and weaknesses in the process of reading (Morris, 2008). A miscue analysis further investigates the student’s reading in that each miscue from the reading inventory is analyzed in detail to find how the student is using visual, semantic, and/or syntactical cues when he/she encounters unknown words (Morris, 2008; Amendum, 2012).

The administration of the assessment requires leveled passages of at least 100 words. The student reads orally while the teacher listens, marking all miscues that the child makes. The student begins with a passage at a low level and then proceeds with increasingly more difficult passages until he/she reaches a frustrational level (Morris, 2008), or at the child’s instructional reading level if it is already known from another assessment, such as word identification in isolation (Amendum, 2012).

**Research and Theoretical Basis for the Assessment**

Reading is a complex process, and the best way to learn how a person reads is to listen to and record the reading process (Morris, 2008). The informal reading inventory is used to record word recognition in context, fluency, and oral reading (Morris, 2008; Amendum, 2012) and the miscue analysis is done to analyze the strategies a student does or does not employ while reading (Amendum, 2012). Which, if any, cueing systems a student uses while reading is important to know because good readers use all three cueing systems, semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic,

together to cross-check and monitor their own comprehension (Amendum, 2012). The main goal of the assessment is to establish the student’s instructional reading level and what strategies are employed when unknown words are encountered in order to make appropriate instructional decisions and recommendations for the individual reader, based upon the identified strengths and weaknesses in accuracy, fluency, and strategy use (Amendum, 2012).

**Process**

**Rationale for Conducting the Assessment with the Chosen Student**

Zachary, an African-American 2nd grader, was identified by his classroom teacher as a struggling reader. Having previously conducted an assessment of word identification in isolation, I established Zachary’s instructional reading level as primer, so this was the level of the passages that I administered from the *Qualitative Reading Inventory-5* (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) for the informal reading inventory and miscue analysis, in order to provide his teacher with specific information and also instructional recommendations for Zachary based upon the results. Since he is reading two levels below his current grade, this information is important so Zachary can receive appropriate interventions to help him progress and improve as a reader.

**The Assessment Session**

Zachary and I sat down at a table near the back of the room usually used for word sorts to conduct the assessment. I explained to Zachary that he would be reading two passages aloud to me while I took some notes as he read. Zachary acknowledged that he understood the directions and was ready, so we began. The class was doing a separate reading lesson, and Zachary was distracted twice during our session by outbursts from the class. Zachary read both the narrative and expository passages willingly, but not with ease. He struggled with many words, and he looked to me to supply him with unknown words sometimes with no attempts to decode on his own.

**Results**

**Summary of Results**

On the primer-level expository passage, Zachary made six errors while reading but a total of nine miscues, which is within the instructional range. His reading rate was 31 WCPM, and he scored between a one and two on the NAEP scale for prosody on this passage.

Zachary’s error rate was 1:20, his accuracy was 95%, and his self-correction rate was 3:1. This means that Zachary makes one error per 20 words read. His self-correction rate of 3:1 means that for every three errors he makes while reading, he catches and corrects one of the errors.

The miscue analysis showed that Zachary uses graphophonic cues 58% of the time when he meets unknown words while reading, and he uses sematic and syntactic cues 25% of the time.

**Interpretation of Results**

The results of the informal reading inventory and detailed miscue analysis confirm that Zachary, with 95% accuracy, is instructionally at the primer level. However, because he is in the 2nd grade, he is a below-grade-level reader and should receive instruction to improve his rate and prosody, which are both below the established norms for his age. The miscue analysis showed that Zachary relies mostly on graphophonic, or visual, cues while reading unknown words, focusing on the beginning sounds of words in attempting to decode them, as when he said *w-* but supplied no word for *walk*, and *be-* and *behi-* for *behind*. Zachary did not supply full words in the first two examples, but looked to the teacher for help, and did not utilize either context or the structure of the sentence to come up with an appropriate word. His other miscues were all self-corrected, but show a mix of Zachary using meaning, structure, visual, and no cueing systems or strategies, but his self-corrections themselves show that he is cross-checking and monitoring his comprehension at times when a sentence does not make sense as he reads it, but he is not doing this consistently.

**Conclusions**

**Reactions to the Assessment**

I have given informal reading inventories, or running records, many times in my teaching career, so that was not new to me, and I felt very comfortable administering it in this session as well. The miscue analysis was a new element of the IRI, but I did not have any problems completing it, and I appreciate the more in-depth information it provides about the student as a reader.

**Instructional Recommendations**

Based upon the results of this assessment, I recommend that Zachary receive targeted instruction in segmenting and blending, specifically activities like change one sound and read, write, and say, to work on these skills, enhance his phonics knowledge, and build his sight-word knowledge and decoding abilities. I recommend read-alouds with the teacher, one-on-one or with a small group, to model using syntax and meaning cues as reading strategies so Zachary does not rely so heavily on visual cues. The read-alouds will also give Zachary modeling and practice reading with fluency, which will help him improve his rate and prosody. Finally, I would like to administer a word analysis assessment to get a more specific and detailed picture of Zachary’s phonics knowledge.

**References**

Amendum, Steve. (2012). Informal Reading Inventory 1. [PowerPoint slides]. ECI 543. Lecture conducted from North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC.

Leslie, L., & Caldwell, J. S. (2011). *Qualitative Reading Inventory-5.* Boston, MS: Pearson.

Morris, Darrell. (2008). *Diagnosis and Correction of Reading Problems*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.