Case Study #2 for Jamal

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Jamal's data was collected in January of his fourth grade year. This set of data includes the Elementary Spelling Inventory, three Fry Sight-Word Inventory lists as well as wordlists and scored passages from the Qualitative Reading Inventory.

The Elementary Spelling Inventory measures a student's progression through the various stages of spelling. McKenna and Stahl (2009) state that, "As children learn about written words, their attempts at spelling reflect this growing sophistication of their knowledge of orthographic patterns" (p.108). As students learn to master more spelling patterns, they will transfer this knowledge from the sounds they hear to the sounds they write. According to the National Reading Panel, knowledge of these patterns through phonics instruction will also aid in a child's ability to decode words when reading (2011, p. 201). When given the Elementary Spelling Inventory, Jamal successfully spelled words within the Emergent and Letter Name stages. Jamal progressed into the Within Word Pattern stage by correctly spelling blends, but struggled with long vowel patterns in the middle of the Within Word Pattern stage. Jamal showed signs for moving toward the next stage, Syllables and Affixes, but struggled with spelling inflectional endings and unaccented final syllables. When interpreting the results of this data, Jamal is meeting the grade level expectation by being at the Within Word stage (McKenna &Stahl, p. 142). In order to meet the Common Core State Standards in the strand of Phonics and Word Recognition, especially CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.4.3.A, and meet the grade expectations on the Elementary Spelling Inventory, Jamal would need to master long vowels and inflected endings as he nears fifth grade.

The Fry Sight-Word Inventory assessed the words Jamal could pronounce immediately. Sight-words are important for Jamal's growth as a reader because as he is able to decode more and more words instantly, he will be able to spend more of his thought process on higher-level

thinking to aide his comprehension (Madda, Griffo, Pearson & Raphael, 2011, p. 54-55). Jamal knew all words of the first 100 words, 97 words on the second list and 91 words on the third list. For mastery, Jamal still needs to learn the words he missed by practicing each word as a separate skill (McKenna & Stahl, p. 116). The Common Core Standards (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.4.4) requires Jamal to read narrative and informational texts accurately and fluently, so knowledge of these remaining words is essential for Jamal in order for him to meet these standards.

Similarly, the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI) Wordlist measures the words used within the QRI reading passages. As stated in "Purposes for Administering Wordlists," The wordlists can provide a number of different things, among them the knowledge of where a test administrator should begin when given the QRI reading passages (p. 40). When reading the words from the level 2 list, Jamal scored at the independent level, meaning he could read at least 90% of the words either automatically or by decoding. As a result, he was moved to the next wordlists. This was a good sign, as level 2 is used for students in grades 4 through 6. When scoring Jamal's knowledge of level 3 and 4 words, he was deemed instructional on both levels, and therefore progressed to level 5. Jamal hit the frustration level here, as he knew less than 70% of the words, so the administrator began him at level 3 for the reading passages based on these results. This is understandable, as the fourth and fifth level word lists are appropriate for student in grades 6 and above (p. 42). The QRI wordlists also gives us an understanding of which words Jamal can pronounce automatically (p.40-41). When considering the Modified Cognitive Model, we can predict that because Jamal read the majority of the words from the level 2 list, this would have been an easier passage for him to both read and comprehend (McKenna & Stahl, p. 23). In terms of the Common Core, Jamal will again be expected to

recognize more words as the complexity of texts increases in higher grades (see CCSS.ELA-

LITERACY.RL.4.10). Knowing more words in isolation will help him master these words in the

context of reading. Because this assessment also yields results of spelling patterns, like vowel

patterns and letter-sound matches, Jamal may be able to master more of the words he missed on

these lists as he progresses in the spelling stages suggested earlier (41).

Finally, Jamal was given two QRI passages at the level 3 based on his instructional level

results from the wordlists. His first passage, "A Special Birthday for Rosa," was a narrative text

while his second, "Cats: Lions and Tigers in Your House was" expository. Before reading both

passages, Jamal showed signs of potential difficultly with this passage, as he received a score of

being "unfamiliar" with the text in terms of background knowledge and vocabulary on the

Concept Questions. When reading the passage, Jamal demonstrated his strength in the top tier of

the Modified Cognitive Model by decoding most of the words within the passages. When

looking at his miscues, Jamal still read these passages above frustration level and read within the

grade level range for words per minute and correct words per minute, according to the QRI-5

Fluency Norms. However, Jamal's breakdown with the QRI passages appeared to be within his

understanding of the texts. When looking at the Modified Cognitive Model, Jamal seemed to

struggle within the middle and bottom tiers. As shown in the Concept Questions, background

knowledge and vocabulary were challenging for him, as was the knowledge of text structures.

This was noted in his retelling of the narrative text, when Jamal could only recall one idea from

the setting/background. Similarly, he could only recall four ideas from over forty listed for the

details in the retelling of the expository. Overall, the total number of retelling items was very

low for both texts. This could signal that Jamal needs support in his understanding of texts and

their genres. In addition, Jamal had a very difficult time with the questions after the reading for

both texts, especially explicit questions, or those taken directly from the text. If we look back at

Jamal's retelling of the text and the items he included, he was able to provided these answers

again during the post-reading questions. However, retelling details that were left out later led to

difficultly answering questions with either Jamal answering the question incorrectly or not

knowing the answer at all. The Common Core Standards, such as CCSS.ELA-

LITERACY.RL.4.1, are very demanding of their need for students to support information by

referring directly back to the text. While Jamal was able to read and decode a passage at level 3,

his knowledge of text structures and applying strategic knowledge appear to be holding him back

from comprehending this level of text (McKenna & Stahl, p. 23).

When considering Jamal's data as well as the grade level expectations he is required to

meet, is it important to think back to the Modified Cognitive Model. If we consider the top tier

and think back to the Elementary Spelling Inventory, Jamal appeared to be on track with meeting

grade level requirements. With a little support in these areas through daily instruction, Jamal is

likely to be successful in reaching the middle Within Word pattern stage by the end of fourth

grade. On a similar note, Jamal would benefit from mastering the remaining sight-words he

missed from lists 2 and 3, but with so few words to master, this does not seem to be the most

pressing goal for Jamal in terms of reaching overall reading comprehension. As noted with the

QRI passages, Jamal's breakdown in the Modified Cognitive Model appears to be in the middle

and bottom tiers. Thinking back to these assessments, Jamal's limited knowledge of text

structures and limited application of reading strategies prevented him from comprehending the

two passages.

One instructional goal for Jamal to grow as a reader is to increase his knowledge of text

structures. As McKenna and Stahl point out, a text structure is the "structural pattern in text that

are common to particular genres" (18). Jamal's low number of items in the retelling of the

narrative and expository passages was a red flag. When we look back at his retelling for

"Cats…" Jamal was only able to remember 9 out of 47 ideas. He did a good job of recalling the

main ideas provided in the text, but knew very few of the supporting details. When considering

Common Core Standards, Jamal will need to be able to determine the main idea of a text and

summarize it with supporting details (see CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.2). In addition, Jamal

may also have trouble meeting standards that require him to refer back to specific text details and

describe the overall text structure of informational text (see CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1 and

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.5). If we look back at Jamal's retelling of the narrative text about

Rosa's birthday party, Jamal again could only recall a very small number of story details. As

mentioned early, recalling items from the setting and background was especially challenging.

Jamal would most likely have a difficult time meeting Common Core Standards for Literature.

These standards require him to be knowledgeable of difficult text structures to complete tasks

such as describing certain parts of the story by referring back to the text (CCSS.ELA-

LITERACY.RL.4.1), explaining differences between texts (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.5),

and summarizing the text through by determining its theme (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2).

Within this goal, it is important to increase Jamal's confidence in recalling texts as well the

technique for providing a retell that support's the text's structure (McKenna & Stahl, p. 19).

        A second instructional goal for Jamal would be to improve his knowledge of strategies to

aid his reading comprehension. According to the National Reading Panel, "Instructing students

to monitor their reading, answer high-level comprehension questions, generate questions about

the text, identity and organize ideas based on the text's structure, and summarize the text

increases comprehension" (McKenna & Stahl, p.173). This need became apparent when looking

back at the QRI passages and would help Jamal's progression in the bottom tier of the Modified

Cognitive Model toward comprehension as the Panel suggests. Jamal had a difficult time

activating prior knowledge when answering the Concept Questions, when allowed us to infer that

is unfamiliarity may cause challenges for his comprehension. The questions he answered after

reading both passages also showed signs that he did not comprehend what he read. Because he

read both passages fairly accurately and fluently, it appears that Jamal was most likely struggling

to apply strategic knowledge and could benefit from direct instruction to meet this goal

(McKenna & Stahl, p. 172-173). Within the Common Core Standards for fourth grade, Jamal's

current comprehension may result in his struggling to meet a variety of expectations. Jamal may

have a difficult time referring to the text for explicit examples as well as inferring information

from the text (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1). When looking at informational text, Jamal's

growth toward this goal might help him in recalling and explaining ideas and procedures and

comparing and contrasting texts on the same topic (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1 and

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.3).

      To assist Jamal in reaching his goal of increasing his knowledge of text structures, one

instructional strategy that could be used would be the implementation of graphic organizers.

Although this strategy is one that is noted in several resources, Ogle and Lang provide a strong

analysis of the use of graphic organizers in their chapter of *Best Practices in Literacy Instruction*.

As the authors state, "Teachers may use a graphic organizer…to help students understand the

underlying structure of a difficult piece of text" (p. 144). This strategy would be easy to

implement, beginning with guided practice from the teacher and slowly working toward Jamal

completing a graphic organizer independently as he reads. The organizers could be modified to

reach Jamal's needs of recalling supporting details in expository text or separated boxes for the

setting, characters, problem, etc. for narrative texts. When using graphic organizers to better

comprehend a text, I would expect Jamal would begin to take more notice of the patterns of texts

and the way they are laid out. I would expect Jamal would need to start with easier texts to

understand the structure, but then be able to increase his ability to take on more challenging texts

as he learns structure patterns. Over time, I think the repeated use of graphic organizers would

help Jamal learn how independently retell orally in a more accurate way as well as be able to

summarize the texts, putting him closer to Common Core expectations (Ogle & Lang, p. 146).

An additional instructional strategy that would assist Jamal in understanding text

structures comes from the Reading Rockets website. Sejnost and Theise (2010) state this strategy

would be most helpful when using expository text. Teachers provide instruction on the five most

common structures in informational text: cause-effect, compare-contrast, definition-example,

problem-solution, and proposition-support. Using the Text Structure Signal Words (a chart is

provided in the article) the teacher would begin with guided practice in helping the student locate

signal words that relate to these text structures. Knowing these clue words will help students

better understand the text structures, as well as their ability to comprehend the text (Sejnost &

Theise, p.1). In Jamal's case, I would expect Jamal to need to refer back to the chart to gain a

better understanding of the different signal words but would overtime be able to make progress

toward meeting grade level expectations to terms of recalling information and explaining the text

structure. While this strategy is aimed at expository text, I think it would also help him meet his

goal of learn narrative text structures by helping his take notice of the various patterns within

texts.

When considering Jamal's second goal of developing his reading strategies to improve

comprehension, one instructional strategy McKenna and Stahl point to is the use of explicit

instruction. To implement this strategy, the authors suggest that, "Teachers begin instruction

with explicit teaching, model the application of the strategy…and provide guided practice before

asking students to apply the strategy independently (174). They model different "fix-up"

strategies, like monitoring, summarizing, activating prior knowledge, predicting and inferring

and then as time goes on, pass on the responsibility to students. In Jamal's case, he would

benefit from being taught these specific strategies and being able to practice them alongside a

teacher. As he became more independent, I would expect Jamal to be able to apply the strategies

to his own reading and then be able to better comprehend the texts he reads.

A final strategy Jamal could benefit from would also help in building his repertoire of

reading strategies would be to use Think Alouds. This strategy was found in several resources,

but explaining clearly by Reading Rockets in a way that would be easy to implement. When

using Think Alouds, students learn how to monitor their thinking while also clarifying what they

read to make sure they understand. Reading Rockets also suggest Think Alouds help students

apply learned strategies by having a conversation in their mind as they read. To use, teachers

would model their thought process while reading a text. Teachers might explain what they

would do when coming across an unknown word, what they would do if they didn't understand

what they read or what to do when they've read new information. During guided practice Jamal

would also "think aloud" his reading process, but overtime, he would be able to read silently and

apply his learned conversation about what he is reading in his mind. I would expect Think

Alouds would be helpful in meeting Jamal's goal to improve his use of reading strategies

through the practice of learning to have this internal conversation. He would also have the

modeled Think Aloud as a resource to understand what the thought process during reading

should look and sound like. As he becomes better at remembering to perform these reading

strategies, Jamal would become closer to his reading comprehension goals and meeting grade

level standards.

References

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