**My Detailed Assessment Journal**

**By Julie Kalvels**

Friday, October 26th, 2012

Hi, this is Julie Kalvels here! I am starting my detailed journal on my experience with administering and interpreting the results of the required reading assessments. I enjoy journal writing, because it allows me to reflect on my actions. I have a journal at home I write in most nights. I find that it is fun to go back to look at what I’ve written. It is a paper and pen journal. I have thought about keeping it on a computer like I am doing with this journal, but there is something about lying down on my stomach writing in bed with my feet up in the air behind me that I really like. It’s a comfort that I’m not getting now as I’m typing. I am also aware that someone else will be reading my thoughts, and probably checking for spelling and grammar mistakes. The freedom to make grammatical mistakes is limited with using the computer.

I am excited to have the opportunity to work closely with another one of my colleagues. I thought hard about who it should be, a teacher from an older grade or one that teaches with me in Kindergarten. I decided to go with my Kindergarten colleague, Mrs. Ricks. She has been teaching with me for 2 years now, and has fifteen years of teaching experience. I choose Mrs. Ricks, because she is taking a class right now that’s called *Multi-sensory Reading Strategies*. The focus in this class is how to give running records and decide what to do next. I took a similar class last year, when I took a series of reading recovery classes. It is always nice to refresh my memory to confirm that I am doing it correctly. I explained to Mrs. Ricks today about my assignment, and she was happy to help me.

We decided that it would be best if we were both present during the reading. I would take the running record, and she would jot down notes or any constructive comments she thought of along the way. The hardest part was finding a time when we both could get together. We practically have the exact same schedule. We thought of maybe holding a child back from recess and testing during one of our breaks. We decided against this, because kids greatly value and need their recess time. We thought during Friday Fun day we could open up our rooms to let the children play between the two rooms while we tested. We have Para’s that could watch the one room for a bit while we tested near the doors. We decided against that because it would be noisy, thus not an ideal place to do our serious testing. We then thought about doing it before school on Monday morning. I teach two children that have mothers teaching at the school. Tadese, the PE teacher’s son, is always at school super early roaming the building with his brother looking for something to do. Perfect! I emailed his mom, and asked if I could borrow Tadese Monday morning and she said, “Of course, I will send him down at 8:00.” Yeah, I have it all confirmed. We are testing him on Monday morning. I’m glad I choose him because he is in my highest reading group, but is the lowest in the group. I have been selecting books at a reading a-z “D” level for him, and I would like to confirm that is the appropriate level for instructional purposes.

I hope this journal is not too detailed. I have nearly written one page and I haven’t even started the testing yet. Oh dear! I might as well fill this page up and start Monday now. I taught his brother 2 years ago when Tadese first came to live with them. They are very caring family. Tadese used to be shy, but he really blossomed in the summer and is now an avid talker. I can’t believe how much English he picked up so fast. He is a wonderful decoder, but his comprehension and attention to detail is his weakness. He is a perfect student for this project! It will also be nice to get another teacher’s opinion about what to do next.

Monday, October 29th, 2012

Today, Mrs. Ricks and I assessed Tadese. We are testing him on two separate assessments: a reading a-z leveled benchmark book, and the DRA2. This morning I choose the reading levels I thought were appropriate for Tadese. I know him better than Mrs. Ricks, so we agreed that I would pick the books. His group is reading the “reading a-z” books at a level D. Since he is the lowest of that group, I think reading a D book alone would be difficult for him. So, I grabbed the level B, C and D benchmark books. I am going to start him on a C and go up or down from there depending on his ability to read. As for the DRA, I grabbed a level 4 book. This book has some challenging words that I want to see how Tadese reads. The comprehension piece also starts at the level 4 books. I am very curious to see this part. The level 3 book is an easier predictable book based on the pictures. I had everything set out on my table ready to go when Tadese and Mrs. Ricks came into my room at 8:00. I am very organized, and I prefer things to be nice and tidy, so I always look professional. It makes me feel good to be organized. I once read that if your surroundings are clean and organized, then your thought processes will be too.

Mrs. Ricks was jotting down anecdotal notes on a sheet of paper while I was assessing Tadese. I started with the reading a-z book level C. As he was reading, I completed the running record sheet. I also made notes as I observed on the side of the sheet. For example as he read the first word he came to that he didn’t know he looked at me for help. I told him to use his reading strategies. He sounded the word out, but was not able to get it. He struggled for about ten seconds, and then I told him the word. I wrote down he was nervous. He was fidgety with the edges of his book. He picked them up and ran his fingers across and squeezed them. Then he put the page down, and he kept repeating this motion.

Overall he read this text well. He read at a normal pace and made four mistakes. His error rate was one out of every seventeen words. His accuracy rate was 94%. He self-corrected once. This is his independent reading level. I decided to give him a level D book to see how he would do. The level D was definitely too hard. He made thirteen mistakes, and self-corrected twice. He did what I was expecting. I just wanted to see what strategies he was using when he came to a word he didn’t know. I was able to obtain some great data. The next book we gave was the DRA level 4, “Where is My Hat?” I must say that if I had the chance to go back and do it over, I would have started with this book. This book has the comprehension piece, and I could tell while Tadese read this book he was getting a little tired. He read this text faster and made a lot of simple little errors that he did not make in the other two books. He made twelve errors, self-correcting twice. This level was too hard. However, I think it was harder, because he was tired and reading faster just to be done. He read or made up words that made sense to him and just kept going. For example, he read, “Ben looked under the bed” and the text actually said, “Ben looked under his bed.” So he replaced “the” for “his,” because he was reading quickly and it made sense in his head. I decided not to go down and give him a level 3 book, because he was done for now. I learned a lot about what we can work on from here, so I came to the conclusion that there was no need to give another test right now.

Now the fun part begins. After Tadese left, Mrs. Ricks and I talked about the assessments and interpreted the data. Mrs. Ricks started by saying that she wrote down that I was “very patient and encouraging and gave lots of praise even when he got something wrong.” That made me feel proud! Thanks Mrs. Ricks. We both agreed that on the last book he was too fast, and was making simple little mistakes. We talked about his strengths. He was excellent at using the reading strategies stretch & blend (sounding out the word), looking at the pictures for clues, and getting his mouth ready to make the first sound. When sounding out did not work he didn’t have any other strategy in place. He would look up at me and say I can’t get it. I noted on the side that he knew the sh, th, and ee blend well. When sounding out words he would say these blends accurately. Tadese was really good at seeing the beginning, middle and ending sounds in words. At the beginning of each book he would point, but then he would stop and start running his fingers nervously across the bottom of the page. He usually does not do that. Understandably, I think he did this because Mrs. Ricks was in the room, and he was self-conscious that we were evaluating his reading capabilities.

His errors were mostly “structure errors,” although he did make a few “meaning errors.” When he was sounding out the word giraffe he sounded out “girlfast”, then looked up at me. There was a picture of a giraffe, but it was on the next page. This particular book was talking about animals that run fast. The animal that runs faster was always pictured on the next page, but the word for the animal was on the page before. So, using picture clues was not an option with this book. He missed the words squirrel, antelope, and giraffe. He did well at trying to sound them out. He substituted turtle for tortoise, which tells me that he was using visual clues and meaning to read. But then another time he said, “A zebra can go” rather than “A zebra can run.” This makes sense, but not visually. All of his self-corrects were corrected by visual and meaning clues. He kept wanting to say “can you” at the beginning of the second book, because that was the pattern in the first book he read. Three different sentences he started with “can you” and then he went back and self-corrected to say “this is.”

During guided reading each day, I take anecdotal notes on the children while they are reading. I make notes of what the groups need to work on, and what strategies they are using or could use more work with. Mrs. Ricks and I both do this. I showed her mine and we talked about the kinds of things I wrote down. We looked at Tadese’s notes, and noticed they were similar in what we heard today in his reading. It was nice having Mrs. Ricks confirm that we are both doing the same thing evidenced by our posting similar types of observations.

We talked about some things to that Tadese could work on. He needs to make sure he points throughout the entire time when he reads. He needs to learn some of the other strategies like skip the word and go back, think- does it make sense, and flip and try to use the other sound. He stopped and sounded out a lot of the words. He is really good at this, but he needs to try and be more fluent. He needs to work on blending the sounds faster, and continue reading so he doesn’t lose out in the comprehension arena. I can teach him that the “g” sometimes makes the /j/ sound, and have him do some word work with manipulating words that make both the sounds. He knows that the “ing” makes the /ing/ sound, but in reading he did not apply it. He said “nighttime” for the word “nothing.” He needs some more practice work with the /ing/ sound.

When giving the DRA, Tadese had to go through the book looking at the pictures to tell us what was happening in the story. I was to note the use of connecting words like, and, then, and but. Tadese did not use any connecting words. He looked at the picture and said a random thing he saw, and he did not speak in complete sentences. He said, “bed,” “door,” and “playing stuff.” At the end of the book he could not retell what happened in the story. He looked at me and said “I don’t know.” I knew this was going to be the case. Tadese says this all the time. He has a hard time remembering or connecting why he does things. This is true not just for reading, but when he gets in trouble, and I ask him why he did something he says, “I don’t know.” I insist that he does know, and we talk about what happened by me asking around ten questions. At home his mom says that she always has to explain everything to him. Even if she just explained why they cannot do something, he still asks why-- and she would have to explain again! English is his second language, so there are gaps in his vocabulary. He understands and follows directions to everything I say. It’s just when he has to explain things he says, “I don’t know.” When playing with his friends, he talks in complete sentences. In general, Tadese is very talkative. Tadese was able to answer questions that I specifically asked him about the story, but I had to prompt him every time. He made no connections, and was not able to tell me his favorite part. He consistently replied, “I don’t know.”

Mrs. Ricks and I talked about what he needed to work on, and we came up with several ideas. It would be good for him to practice doing picture walks, and looking at the story before he reads. When talking about the pictures train him to use complete sentences. After looking at the pictures and talking about them, close the book and ask him to tell me something that he thinks is going to happen in the story. Then read the story. After the story, it would be beneficial for him to talk about the characters, and what happened in the text. Graphic organizers would be great for him to use. Sequencing pictures and having him tell about what is happening using complete sentences would be a great goal for Tadese. Retelling what has happened in the book after reading a book is hard for Tadese, so letting him go back and look at the pictures to help him recall events would be a reasonable step for Tadese at this time. Eventually, I would like him to retell the plot of the story without any prompts. He needs to do these things at home too. I will talk with mom, and give her these suggestions for them to do as they are reading at home.

I really enjoyed working together with my co-operating teacher to talk about the next steps with Tadese. I think we should do this more often. The hard part is finding the time. The conversation is great and I learned some helpful insights from this collaborative experience!