

Case Study of
A Second Grade Reader
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Abstract

Grant is a strong second grade reader who has severe test-anxiety. Grant reads at a level DRA 28, however, his recall abilities are weak. I performed a series of assessments to narrow-in on Grant's comprehension, reading motivation, and phonics. I have observed Grant since August 2016 and have met with his mother and father on his test-taking abilities. We all agree that Grant allows his anxiety to interfere with his learning. We have taken careful steps to help him recover from his anxiety by allowing him to carry a stress ball and giving him safety time-outs when he is feeling overwhelmed.

A Case Study of a Second Grade Reader

Background

Grant is a seven-year old white male who began the 2016-2017 school year as an advanced reader, reading at a 28 DRA. I decided to have Grant as a case study because of his academic slip. Grant began to slip in comprehension and test-taking skills dramatically in November 2016. My mentor teacher and I decided together that we should move him to a lower reading group. Denver County Elementary is a platoon school and after discussion with his Math, Science, and Social Studies (MSS) teacher—we also decided to switch his literacy class to the afternoon and his MSS class to the morning because of the different classroom structures. MSS is an active classroom and Grant has recess and lunch following this class time. Grant switches to literacy after lunch. All of his teachers, including me, decided that literacy in the afternoon would give him the atmosphere to focus and settle into a quiet independent atmosphere.

Informal Diagnostic Reading Assessment Data

Grant was a member of my advanced reading group from September 2016 until January 2017. I was able to spend a lot of small group instruction and observation time with Grant before I chose him for my new case study. Grant showed little interest in answering comprehension questions during small group discussions. I assessed his attitude and I developed two reasons: (1) lack of interest or (2) unable to process an answer. This worried me because Grant and I formed a positive rapport where he typically showed enthusiasm toward learning and his attitude during guided reading did not parallel.

I discussed my thoughts with my mentor teacher and we made the decision to lower his guided reading group after a Partially Proficient score on his Nonfiction End of Unit Assessment in December 2016. Grant had just scored a 92% accuracy rating on a warm read of a DRA-level 30 fiction book—however, he had severe recall issues about what he had just read. We moved Grant from a DRA Level-28/30 reading group to a Level-24.

I decided to begin assessing Grant using the *Garfield Elementary Reading Attitude Survey*—it was necessary to understand his attitude toward reading at this point. I also completed an *Interest Inventory* through a one-on-one interview—this told me more about his family life, hobbies, and interests. My next step was conducting a *Phonemic Awareness Assessment* for rhyme choice, rhyme supply, onset and rime, phoneme blending, CVC short-vowel patterns, blends and digraphs, CVC combinations with distractors, and “r” controlled vowels with distractors. At this point, I wanted to eliminate anything he was successful at and narrow in on his inabilities. I wanted to begin to understand why he could read well but could not or would not retell or recall what he had just read.

I began to study Grant’s DRA data completed by my mentor teacher and the literacy paraprofessional. Grant had mastered the *Grade Two Sight Word Lists* 1-22 by November 16, 2016. Grant’s *iReady* Literacy score for February 2017 showed him at below Early Level 2. *iReady* diagnostic and growth reports suggested that Grant is rushing through the assessment. My mentor and I began speaking to Grant about the importance of these assessments and how he must try his best. At this point, Grant can

read but he is unsuccessful at making connections or inferences from the text he reads and unsuccessful at answering retell, implicit, and explicit comprehension questions.

Analysis

Garfield Elementary Reading Attitude Survey: Grant's composite score is 52. Grant is indifferent about reading. He may feel that reading is something that you do in school to learn but there are better things to do outside of school. Grant answered 63% of the Recreational Reading questions favorably and he answered 67% of the Academic Reading questions favorably. There is little difference in his attitude toward reading as compared to his composite score, the scores lean toward an indifferent attitude.

Interest Inventory: Grant's family is supportive and they love sports. Grant has an older and younger brother; his parents are married. Grant has chores to complete around the house and wants to be a vet or a police officer when he grows up. Grant is not permitted to watch TV every day and he completes his 20 minutes of reading every day for homework. Grant enjoys math, art, drama, and recess the most at school. When asked what makes a good reader, Grant responded, "Reading a lot. You can learn about a lot of stuff." When asked what causes a person to not be a good reader, Grant responded, "If they don't read. If they only read one page."

Phonemic Awareness Assessments: Grant needs to review /s/ and /qu/ blends with a short vowel /i/ and long vowel /i/ every day. Grant needs to review /ow/, /oa/, and /igh/ every day. Grant needs to review CVCe combinations every day. He is strong in identifying short vowels, however, the CVCe is confusing him. Grant needs to review /ir/ and /or/ controlled /r/ vowels every day.

Grant's overall strengths is reading to read and identifying short vowels quickly and accurately. Grant is strong identifying vowel combinations, he needs more exposure to his /ow/, /oa/, and /igh/. Grant's weakness is indentifying short vowels compared to long vowels /CVCe/ combinations. He needs to practice every day. For example, flash cards that say /not/ and /note/; /bit/ and /bite/; /hug/ and /huge/. He needs to understand the magic /e/ and quickly identify the difference in short and long vowel sounds for meaning.

On a final note, I noticed that Grant will recall information from a moving image and answer more thoroughly than from a written text. I noticed that Grant had answered questions more thoroughly when we watched a *Sneetches* video, rather than reading the book by Dr. Seuss. This was a red flag for reading comprehension, so this is where my focus will be for my *Plan of Instruction*.

Plan of Instruction

Grant began attending after school tutoring sessions for Orton-Gillingham phonics. The tutoring sessions are 45 minutes on Mondays and Wednesdays and focus on vowel combinations, blends and diagraphs, and VCVe. Tutoring will last for eight weeks and ends March 22. After Spring Break, Grant will work one-on-one with me on test taking skills, continued phonics as mentioned above, and reading comprehension to write responses to reading. I will include all of the above while tutoring Grant but will allow more time for comprehension and writing strategies.

Grant's biggest focus will be on written responses to reading to prepare him for the third grade. I want Grant to master the following second grade standards:

RL 10/RI 10	Proficiently read a variety of texts in the text complexity band for grades 2-3, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
RL 1/RI 1	Write and answer who, what, where, when, why, and how questions to show understanding of key details in text.
RL 2	Write to retell a variety of stories, including fables and folktales, using important detail.
RL 2	Write about the central message, lesson, or moral in a story.
RI 2	Write about the main topic of a multi-paragraph informational text.
RI 2	Write about the focus of specific paragraphs within a multi-paragraph text.
L 2	Capitalize holidays, product names, and geographic names.
L 2	Use apostrophes to form contractions and show possession.
L 2	Use spelling patterns to help spell other words.

Comprehension Strategies

Week One: Know, Want, Source, Learn

K-W-L

I will introduce Grant to organizing his thoughts before reading using a graphic organizer with three columns. He will fill out the graphic organizer while reading an informational text. He will begin with what he knows, what he wants to know, and what he learned.

K-W-S-L

After he understands the K-W-L graphic organizer, I will add another column, the source. This will help him understand that knowing where you learned something is important. This will include text evidence.

Week Two: Building and Revising Schema Chart

Grant will use an Alphabet Brainstorm graphic organizer to organize what he knows about an informational text. He will write one-word responses alphabetically to organize his thoughts. This is a Before-Reading strategy to help with comprehension. Grant will add to his Alphabet Brainstorm graphic organizer while he reads an informational text. This will help him organize and notice the things that he is learning from the text. He will then use the Alphabet Brainstorm graphic organizer to recall the informational text orally and in writing. He will answer implicitly and explicitly a series of questions that are at the (1) Factual Level, (2) Interpretive Level, (3) Applicative Level, and (4) Transactive Level. This will help Grant with his levels of comprehension and it will help me notice particular areas of strengths and weaknesses.

Week Three: Real-Life Application of TextText to Self, Text to Text, and Text to World

Grant will begin making connections to informational texts by making connections to his own experiences and then applying what he has learned to how it may connect to other people. Making connections with the text will help Grant with his recall issues and increase his comprehension of the texts.

Venn Diagrams to Compare and Contrast Two Different Texts

Grant will understand that making connections to two similar texts is an important strategy, especially when writing an opinion essay. I will show him techniques that will help him organize his thoughts about two different texts and help him compare and contrast those ideas.

Week Four: Recalling More In-Depth from a Text

Grant will begin using all of the above graphic organizers to answering Who, What, When, Why, and How. He will answer the questions orally for day one. He will then be given prompts to answer the same questions in writing.

Writing Strategies: Persuasion/Opinion Writing

Week One:

Web Organizer: Position/Opinion, Reason 1, Reason 2, Conclusion

Grant will use a graphic organizer to organize his writing. I will begin with precise direction and thorough explanations on the importance of staying organized as a writer. He will have a visual graphic organizer to help him structure a four-paragraph opinion piece. The goal is to ensure that he is not repeating himself and to have his writing make sense to the reader. He will read aloud his writing to ensure that it has flow and if it sounds correct orally.

Week Two:Organizing and Editing Writing:

We will go over editing techniques. One of Grant's weaknesses is he will spell a product name correctly once and misspell it throughout the rest of his writing piece. I will stress strategies for him to improve his indentation, capitalization, and punctuation. He will also learn that every good essay has an introduction, body, and conclusion and how important it is to have all three parts included and identified through indentation for assessments and class work.

Week Three:Revising Writing using a rubric: Self Assessment for tests

Grant will learn how to self-assess his writing. He will understand how important, difficult, and timely this can be. I will stress the importance between a draft and a published copy of writing. He will understand that it is all right to read his work more than twice to make corrections. I will also teach him that it is all right to move onto another area of learning and go back to check his writing later.

Week Four:Spelling Patterns

Grant and I will go over how to spell other words by using words he already knows. This will be a process of rhyming and making sense of the words. I will give him easy, mid, to tricky words and work with him one-on-one on phonic strategies to help him properly spell the word.

Conclusion

Grant is a vibrant second grader who is willing to learn new things. He enjoys one-on-one instruction because he tends to have issues with anxiety and perfectionism. His father has mentioned that he is methodical and his mother has always been a weak test-taker, so I will take these two characteristics seriously as I spend more time with Grant. I hope for Grant to master how to answer questions that relate to a text, how to recall important ideas from a text, and how to organize thoughts into a structured writing piece—while stressing strategies that will help him spell, capitalize, and punctuate appropriately. I think Grant’s weaknesses stem from his anxiety and his struggle for perfection, so I want him to feel confident and safe during his tutoring sessions and iterate that he is not learning to be perfect, he is learning to improve.