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Case-Study

Sue is a first grader whose reading ability appears to be above the ability of most other students in her class. She is a fun child to listen to. She loves to talk.

Unfortunately sometimes she just can not help but talk while the teacher is talking. Her teacher and I choose to do this case study on her because of her reading ability. Her reading impresses me. Her ability seems much higher than those of her classmates. Her confidence when she reads is very strong. I was curious to see how her writing and comprehension compares to her reading. I wonder if she actually applies herself to the writing or if she prefers to just get the task done. Maybe her inattention during instruction has to do with the assignments being too easy for her.

Sue is an only child; she lives at home with her mother and father. Her mother is a science teacher at the middle school. When "Meet the teacher night" occurred less than half of the parents showed up. Her mom was among the ones that did attend. It is good to see that she shows interest in her daughter's schooling. Her father is in a position that allows him to volunteer in her classroom. Her parents are both fully involved in her life.

Sue was an enjoyable student to work with. She is a generally happy child. She loves to talk. You never know what she is going to say next. To start our meetings together I asked her questions about herself. I used the "background information questionnaire" to pick questions. Her interests are like any other girl's at her age. Her favorite movie stars are Mary Kate and Ashley Owens. Her favorite music is anything with girl singers. Unicorns are her favorite animals, but she reminded me that they are

not real. I asked her who her favorite famous person was and her reply was “um, I’d have to say, the Statue of Liberty.” I thought that was so sweet.

I asked her about school. She likes to color in school. Her best friends are girls. Her favorite subjects in school are coloring and not eating bugs! She also said she enjoys math and science, which she can do in her mother’s class. She likes to read. She reads because she likes to do whatever makes mom happy. I am assuming that mom encourages her to read at home. One of the things she likes to do most is to make books. Her favorite book is Bunny Cakes.

I decided to start the assessments with the DeBerry reading Attitude Survey. I let her use her favorite color marker to mark the answers she was thrilled. I explained what the faces meant and then read each question to her. She is 82% positive when it comes to reading for fun. She is 97% positive when it comes to reading when required. Overall her reading attitude is 89.3% positive.

I had her fill out the “When I read Aloud..” sheet. I read her the questions and she marked her answer. I agreed with most her answers. She needed to work on expression when reading. She said that she always pays attention to the punctuation at the end of a sentence, but she does not know what the punctuation means. If she did she would be able to use more expression in her reading. We agreed that she would work on this.

Her next assessment was a Rhyming worksheet. I read her the directions and we went over the example. She did the whole sheet with confidence and quickness. She got every answer correct.

I choose to do an assessment about book handling and printing. I assessed her twice on this to see if she changed her ways since the first one. The first assessment

showed that she did not point to the words as she read, therefore she didn't point to the beginning, end or spaces between the words. Before her next assessment we discussed how pointing to the words while she read them would help her keep better track of where she is. It would slow down her pace so that she would correctly pronounce every word. The second time that I assessed her with this she did improve. She also pointed to each word as she read.

While she was reading this second time I filled out a Read-Aloud Checklist and Rubric. By doing this I discovered that she reads smoothly with out pauses. She sometimes self corrects. She does try to read with expression but she seldom pays attention to the punctuation at the end of sentences. From these observation and the read-aloud rubric I characterized her as a developing read. This means that she self-corrects most errors that interfere with meaning. She sometimes pays attention to punctuation. She also read with some fluency.

The next thing I was curious about was her comprehension of what she reads. She reads through stories pretty quickly and I wonder how much she is actually picking up from it. I used the story-retelling rubric to find this out. The results of her retelling were also developing. She had a very little to say about the important things that occurred in the story. In most cases she could tell me basic information, but was unable to go into any detail. For example, I asked her who the main characters were she was able to tell me the names. Then I asked her to tell me about them and so just said one was silly. They made her laugh.

During the same session I filled out an overview of her reading behaviors. This may provide me with a tool to determine why she may be having comprehension

problems. She tends to pay little attention to the pictures as she reads. She uses the picture clues as a quick last resort if she does not know a word. I do not see her referring back to the text at all. A few stories we have read have the same pattern of word in it. She still does not go back to see if she remembers that word on a page that she has already read it from. When she is reading she seems to have a very strong sight word vocabulary. She reads so quickly. Sometimes she will read words wrong and not notice. When she actually slows down and tries to work on a word she will realize when it does not fit and she will try again. If she has to try more than a few times she will get frustrated. Her frustration will show by her lack of accuracy and her quicken speed through the rest of the book.

I thought that she made need the practice of sounding out words. Not only would it benefit her ability to sound out words, but also I was hoping to encourage patience in sounding them out. I had read through a nonsense word sheet. She got through the first row with only one mistake. The next section she reached an immediate frustration level, so we moved to a different section and again she was not even putting in the effort to try. I asked her to slow down and try one part at a time, but she still did not put the effort in. She said it was too hard. I asked if she wanted to finish for the day and she said yes.

I decided to next test her patience and abilities with a Phonemic Awareness Assessment. We started with some rhyming. She again had no problem with that. We did some oral blending. In her classroom they do this kind of activity daily. She had no problem with that or the oral segmentation. She easily picks out first and last sounds in words. She can even say all the sounds in a word. The finally task was phonemic manipulation. I said a word then she was to replace the first sound to “s”. She did that

wonderfully. She knows her phonics. We just need to get her to slow down and try when the tasks get more complicated.

The next assessment was the Early Literacy Profile. Sue is a powerful reader. When she reads aloud there is momentum and confidence in her voice. When she read a word wrong she immediately stopped and figured the correct word out without even looking worried. Her sight word vocabulary is wonderful. When she read through the “100 Most Frequent Words in Books for Beginning Readers” She only missed four of them. I wonder if her abilities surpass the Early Literacy Profile. She knew the spelling words without hesitation. Asking her to do the Alphabet Recognition was similar to asking a teacher to do it. Why did I even bother? She knew every letter without hesitation. Sue missed one letter sound on that sound worksheet. I wonder if she just got confused because she went through it so fast. She missed the sound for the letter “Y”. She pronounced it “you”.

The rhyming assessment was no problem for her. She whizzed right through it. In my field placement last year I was in a kindergarten room. I never saw any rhyming there. I wonder if she learned to rhyme in school or if she learned at home. Her mother is a teacher. I suppose she encourages Sue in learning. Sue’s writing was easily read. She printed very nicely. She did miss a few words in her sentences. In her “I like...” sentences she did not write “that”. Her spacing between words was very appropriate. She looked so professional while writing about the story. She kept referring back to the book. I wonder if she was only referring to the pictures in the book while writing. Her last sentence says that she liked the sweet part. There was nothing written about sweets, only a picture with candy, cookies and cakes on the floor.

My last assessment was the IRI. I started the graded word list a few levels below her grade level. I started at the preprimer level. She read straight through the lists with confidence. There was really no pattern in the words that she missed. She went through them so quickly that she did not try to sound them out. She just gave a confident guess. After the graded word list we moved onto the oral reading section. She was supposed to read the story corresponding to the word list that she completed correctly, but she made mistakes in each of them. I decided to have her do the preprimer oral reading.

She read very well with little mistakes. She hesitated a few times and skipped words on a few occasions without even knowing it. Besides that she did well in her reading. The comprehension questions did not run as smoothly. She was not quick with her answers. When asked to identify the people in the story she only knew one. The story was about a play car and she said it was about the car. In the story itself "play car" is repeated a number of times. The last question was "What do you think Tom liked about his car?" Her exact reply was, "he likes cars." She was fairly confident in that answer.

For the silent reading part of this test again I had her start at the preprimer reading because of her poor comprehension of the last one. She read the story quickly and we began the comprehension questions. Her comprehension of this story was better than the last. She missed one question. The question wanted to know what one of the character's said. The answer was made up, but at least the answer that she came up with was appropriate for the story.

I read to her a primer level story. Her comprehension of the story was the worst of them all. By not reading the story herself her ability to comprehend it was hindered. A few of her answers were very off. I wondered where she got those answers. One of the questions she missed asked how many times had the character been on a plane before. The story was about the character's first ride in a plane. She answered the question "10." I think she had no ideal, but she was not willing to think about it for a little while before answering. I've noticed in some of her other assessments that she doesn't like to take a lot of time on getting a task done. She wants to get through it as fast as possible without concern of whether it is right or not.

Sue is above the rest of her class in reading. There is no need for extra help. I do believe that she should be challenged so that her ability will continue to grow. Sue needs to work on her writing more. If she could participate in activities similar to the activity we did, the reading then writing about the book, she would benefit. This would help better her writing and comprehension, while she continues to practice and grow as a reader.

By doing my case study on Sue I think I was encouraging her. She was so excited to be chosen out of everyone in her class. She was proud to be a "good reader". The assessments that I was conducting gave her more time to concentrate and build on to her abilities she already has. I would choose assessments that challenged her. That was she would not be bored, but she would also be learning more with each challenge.

In the classroom Sue's abilities can be utilized in group-work sessions. When that class breaks own into reading partners she can be paired with a partner that has a harder

time reading. I have seen her work with others and she is patient and offers help when they need it. This sort of peer tutoring may benefit both of the students.

Although Sue seems to be a very strong reader. Her teacher and myself have noticed that she rushes through her work. When she comes to a word that she doesn't know she quickly makes a guess and moves right on. A few times I have noticed that if she guesses wrong, and the word she says does not fit in the story, she'll go back and try again, but for the most part, she rushes.

I am trying to get her to work slower. When she works in her journal she tends to skip a word or two, I will have her go back and fix the mistake. I hope that this will show her that it is more work to fix it, then to actually do it right the first time. So far I have seen less missed words in her writing so I am guess it is working a little bit. I have her working on sounding out words. We tried to do a nonsense word list, and that did not go over well. She got so frustrated she stopped trying. She was not interested at all in trying to sound them out. I will not use the nonsense words consistently, because they are not real words and I think part of her problem with those is that they don't make sense. I will have her working on reading higher level books. This way she will become more encouraged to work through the difficult words. The more she gets used to sounding out words, the more apt she is to doing it herself more often.