

Literacy Learner Analysis

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I. Brief Background and Reason for Project Focus

I teach seventh and eighth grade Language Arts at a public school that is a suburb of Grand Rapids. My project focus is on a student who I perceive to be in a similar situation to many of my students whom I teach on a regular basis. The majority of the population of students come from homes that value education, are engaged as families, and encourage their students to do well in school.

One of the populations I often find difficult to assist is the population of students who seem to be on- or near- grade level, but just don't particularly care to read. Especially in the middle school ages, trying to help students grow in their reading lives can be so challenging. The report, *Teaching Children to Read*, published by the National Reading Panel, states "the more students read, the better their fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension" (Gambrell et al.,146). If students don't read independently, the contrary is also true. According to a report by the National Endowment for the Arts, "As individuals read less, they read less well, resulting in a decline in reading skills and lower levels of academic achievement" (Gambrell et al., 148). Students must read to continue to grow as readers, so assisting students to want to read is of utmost importance. The focus of my project is on a student who falls well into the category of reader who doesn't care to read, so will be challenged to build fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension as a result.

The focus of my project, "Julie" is a sixth grade student who just doesn't really like to read. She is a competitive gymnast and a student who has always prided herself on being at the top of her class, but when it comes to reading, she does not excel or push herself. Knowing how

a willingness, desire, and strong ability to read can set a person up for better success in life, I have a great desire to help “Julie” become a more successful and willing reader.

II. Home and Family

Julie is an eleven year old female. She is entering sixth grade in the 2015-2016 school year. She identifies herself as one of the top five readers in her class this past year, but also as someone who doesn't really enjoy reading and doesn't feel confident in herself as a reader. □She is a Caucasian, English speaking, upper middle class student. She enjoys competing in high level gymnastics competitions, for which she travels an hour to the gym multiple days a week for practice. Between school and gymnastics, Julie feels pressed for time and says that if there were a list with forty things on it that she needs to do, reading would be the last.

In the home, the literary practices pose an interesting dynamic. Julie states that her dad, an accountant, is an avid reader and reads many, many books that are “six hundred million pages long and they're really thick and they have teeny microscopic words” and are about history, which she doesn't really like. When asked if she would ever imagine herself wanting to read like her dad, Julie replied, “Not really. That looks pretty boring.”

When asked about reading magazines, Julie indicated that she likes looking at clothing catalogs, but that they don't have much reading material around the home. They don't receive any magazines in the mail, and they used to get the newspaper, but don't anymore.

Julie's mom, an elementary teacher for students with special needs, is a self-proclaimed non-reader. During my interview with Julie, her mother said, right in front of Julie and her younger sister, “We are not a family of readers. We don't read, do we girls?” Despite being an elementary school teacher, Julie's mom does not seem to put literacy as a priority. She said she

does take her daughters to the library so they can check out books, but she doesn't model the behavior herself.

Julie said that she does not have a reading routine at home. She reported that sometimes prior to bedtime, she will read in her room, but that her sister will come in and disrupt her. She is not required to read at home and is often busy with other things other than reading, and then when she does read, she is interrupted.

III. Emotional Climate

During the course of our initial interview, it became abundantly clear that Julie's literacy practices rely heavily on the emotional climate and attitude toward literacy provided by the classroom teacher. □

Julie's favorite reading experiences included book clubs that were set up by the classroom teacher in fifth grade, read alouds by the teacher in every grade, and when a teacher did book talks and read pieces of books aloud to the class to get them excited about reading. Julie said she liked book clubs best, because she and her group would read the text aloud together, then stop and talk about it. They did most of their thinking work together and answered discussion questions as a group. Julie found this to be "easier and more fun" than if she had to do it alone.

The second literacy practice that Julie identified as a favorite experience is a teacher reading texts aloud. Julie completed the "Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile reading survey" and responded that she would like for her teachers to read aloud in her classes every day. When

asked, she said she can picture things better when she hears a story aloud, and she always enjoys the stories a teacher selects.

The third literacy practice that was teacher directed was selecting texts to read. Julie said one of her biggest frustrations as a reader is that she can never seem to find a good book. She abandons most books that she begins. The only time this really changes is when a teacher recommends a book to her. Her fifth grade teacher often introduced the class to new books in the class in fun and interesting ways - the teacher would display the book on the smartboard and then read a section of it to the class, or she would show book trailers, and those things encouraged Julie to want to pick up the books that the teacher was introducing. Rarely, if it isn't selected by the teacher, does Julie begin a book, like it, and finish it.

IV. Literacy History

Julie has been raised in a public school setting in which literacy has been a primary focus. Her teachers have used guided reading, explicit strategy instruction and have helped her to move forward as a reader through reading assessments and appropriate leveled books. Her teachers through elementary sent home backpack books and reading logs for Julie and her family to complete together. The difficulty in Julie's literacy life is that she is moving to a phase of her education in which the school does not generally provide such explicit literacy instruction. She has been reading at grade level up through fifth grade, but will be losing the vast school-provided literacy experiences as she moves into the middle school.

Julie's family attitude toward literacy is one that is greatly influenced by outside sources. Julie's family prides itself on its competitive nature and goes to great lengths to meet benchmarks set by others. For example, Julie's family always read backpack books together when they were sent home in elementary school; they always completed the reading logs and reading projects; when extra tutoring in math was suggested, the family hired a tutor for both Julie and her sister. Even in terms of this tutoring session, Julie completed the homework I provided her with, but did not do any additional reading during the week between our lessons. If no outside pressure is put on the family, they do not spend time reading or talking about books. If the routine is required by an outside source such as a teacher or tutor, Julie's family meets the requirement. If left to their own, literacy practices fall by the wayside.

Julie reports that she has no routine or habit of reading at home. If she does read, she does so in her bedroom with the door open and her family disrupts her. Julie says she comprehends best if she reads aloud, so if her mother or sister hear her reading, they know where they can find her. Julie says that they interrupt her reading regularly.

V. Tests Given and Summary of Test Results

The pre- and post-tests given were the "Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile" and a running record to both assess the areas of strength and difficulty in Julie's reading and to help determine her independent reading level. Knowing that Julie is a self-identified reluctant reader, I used the "Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile" to try to identify some causes for Julie's reluctance. The running record was used to help assess specific struggles in Julie's reading.

A running record was completed using resources from Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project (Fountas and Pinnell guided reading level V and W). Coding for miscues

revealed that Julie self-corrects at a high rate of frequency and self-corrects for comprehension using context clues. In the pre-assessment, Julie self-corrected three times in the Level V reading and four times in the Level W reading. Each self-correction was completed after reading on in the sentence, then repeating back at the error. In regards to fluency, Julie reads at a Level one or Level two of the Oral Reading Fluency Scale. Julie reads primarily in two-word phrases with some word-by-word reading present. The pace of her reading was slow and showed little expressive interpretation. This low-level of fluency was noted as a particular trouble spot, especially as Julie is going to be required to read longer texts as she is progressing through her education.

When assessing for comprehension, Julie was able to retell level V with a great deal of accuracy. She also was able to answer the literal and inferential questions with accuracy. Level W was retold with accuracy, but without the depth that Level V was retold. Additionally, the inferential questions were not accurately answered in Level W. Julie's independent reading level was determined to be Level V.

The Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile reading survey revealed the following information about Julie. Julie identifies herself as a "good reader" and as someone who reads "a little better than my friends", but in the question of if reading is something she likes to do, she marked "not very often" and that her friends think reading is "fun". This juxtaposition that Julie sees in herself and her friends is noted. In the survey, Julie reports that reading is "very easy for me" and that knowing how to read well is "very important" yet as an adult she plans to spend "very little time reading". The survey results demonstrate another juxtaposition. Julie sees

reading as something to value, but does not see herself as someone who values reading enough to want to continue with it as a life habit.

Based on Julie’s relatively high comprehension yet low reading fluency rate and low motivation to read as an adult, I planned my instruction to focus on reading with increased fluency. Through focusing on increased fluency, reading will become more enjoyable and will in turn help Julie to want to do it more frequently. This increased enjoyment, and in turn, desire to read will help Julie to want to be a lifelong reader.

In the post-assessment, Julie was again given a running record using resources from Teacher’s College Reading and Writing Project (Fountas and Pinnell guided reading level V and W). No change was present in Julie’s reading level. Again, her self-corrections were at a high level and indicated that she is self-correcting based on context clues within a sentence, but she did not progress in her retelling to level W. As in her pre-assessment, she correctly retold the story and was able to answer the literal questions, but did not have great understanding at an inferential level.

Upon questioning, Julie did say that she had completed the homework tasks I provided her with (capturing audio of herself reading) but did not do any additional reading beyond that task. Julie did not care to make any changes to her “Adolescent Motivation to Read” profile. Again, this lack of reading as a habit in the home is noted.

VI. Lesson Plan Matrix

Lesson Foci/Date	Objective	Instructional materials	On-going assessment
Prosody in reading fluency	Student will read with expression, smoothness, good phrasing and conversational	250-word chunks of independent reading leveled text, an audio	Pre- and post-assessment by capturing audio of the

<p>(July 8)</p>	<p>pace in an independent reading-leveled text with a level 3 or 4 on the “Fluency Rubric”.</p> <p>RL.6.10 By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.</p>	<p>recording device, “Fluency Rubric”</p>	<p>first reading of the text, then capturing the audio of the same text after repeated practice</p> <p>Julie and I will assess the audio files together using the Fluency Rubric.</p>
<p>Phrasing in reading fluency (July 15)</p>	<p>Student will read with three- or four-word meaningful phrase groups. The majority of the phrasing in the student’s reading will demonstrate expressive interpretation. The pace is consistently conversational. Using the Oral Reading Fluency Scale, the student will read at a level 3 or level 4. RL.6.10 By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.</p>	<p>250 word chunks of leveled text that can be written on, an audio recording device, writing utensil</p>	<p>Pre- and post-assessment by capturing audio of the first reading of the text, then capturing the audio of the same text after repeated practicing</p> <p>Additionally, assessment of Julie’s ability to circle meaningful phrase groups in the text</p>

VII. Reflections on Differentiated Literacy Lesson Plans

The reading instruction done with Julie did make a meaningful contribution to the student’s overall reading process. Since fluency, “the ability of readers to read quickly,

effortlessly, and efficiently with good meaningful expression” (Glavach), is so important to comprehension , Julie will benefit from our experience of focusing on reading fluency(Rasinski, Rikli and Johnson, 2009).

The lessons chosen were based on a 2009 study on the effects of reading fluency and reading comprehension. In that study, it was stated that “...instruction aimed at increasing fluency may have a positive impact on reading comprehension”. The study further states, “If the ultimate goal of reading instruction is proficient reading comprehension, then reading fluency, both automatic word decoding and prosodie reading, need to be part of the instructional repertoire offered to teachers and students, especially struggling readers (Allington, 2000)” (Rasinski, Rikli and Johnson, 2009). If time is devoted to specific fluency and prosody work, students, especially struggling readers will benefit.

The prosody lesson of having Julie read a text into an audio-recording device, listen back to it, then practice and re-record with the Fluency Rubric in mind was chosen because Julie struggled with reading fluency which affected her comprehension. After time practicing and recording the audio of the grade-level text a second time, Julie had much more fluency. The opportunity for success and meaningful, immediate feedback was powerful.

Research shows that there is significance to providing immediate corrective feedback, and using the audio recording device allows a reader to do just that. “When corrective feedback is delivered in a consistent and immediate manner, the learner can resume his/her active responding more quickly, keeping number of opportunities to respond (or practice), high (Skinner, Shapiro, Turco, Cole, & Brown, 1992)” (Scheeler and Lee, 2002). Julie was motivated

to practice and then listen back to her re-recordings. This is evidence that the strategy was effective since motivation was a key missing component to her reading.

After reviewing the data from the lessons with Julie, it is evident that her reading fluency increased on the Fluency Rubric. She read at a level 3 in the category of Expression and Volume by reading with “volume and expression”, in the category of phrasing, Julie made the most progress and finished reading at a level 4 - with good phrasing, “adhering to punctuation, stress, and intonation”. Overall, Julie’s fluency improved which indicates that her reading comprehension did as well.

In order to support the student’s success during the lesson, I modeled for her both poor prosody and good prosody. After introducing Julie to the definition and examples of various levels of prosody through my modeling, I offered Julie the opportunity to try reading a text aloud. The method of modeling both a positive example and a non-example offered Julie the chance to hear a variety of fluency patterns.

The critical moments or choices made during instruction that impacted the direction of the lesson were when I asked Julie to try the task on her own and to read into the recording device. Julie’s willingness to do so demonstrated that she had received enough instruction to the task and that I had created a comfortable learning environment since she was willing to do as I asked.

The evidence that Julie achieved the instructional goal is that she was able to improve her prosody and fluency in the audio-recordings. She self-scored higher on the Fluency Rubric, and I would agree with her improved score.

If given an opportunity to teach this lesson again, I would perhaps teach the two lessons in reverse order. By focusing first on expression and secondly on phrasing, I found that I was overlapping some of my instruction. It would probably make more sense to begin the lessons with phrasing and considering how the text can be chunked into phrases and then later discussing the expression a reader carries with each chunk. However, it is equally possible that then I would be overlapping instruction in the opposite way.

Reading instruction for this student was developmentally appropriate. Julie's needs were met with reading a text at both her reading level and her interest level. The lesson incorporated technology which was also developmentally appropriate for Julie.

The aspect of Julie's reading lesson that demonstrated my newly learned techniques revolved around the focus of fluency. My increased understanding of fluency helped me greatly to meet Julie's literacy needs.

VIII. Recommendation to Teachers and Parents/Caregivers

These recommendations all revolve around efforts to making reading a positive experience. Motivation to read will increase Julie's reading time, which will increase her abilities as a reader.

First, I would encourage Julie's family to develop an overall more positive attitude toward reading. There are so many wonderful experiences a family can share through reading and it would be great to see Julie's family experience some of those. Julie's family could spend time just reading silently together, they could read aloud short stories to one another, they could listen to audiobooks in the car on the way to gymnastics, they could designate a reading time and reading corner for Julie and her sister. Beyond that, Julie's parents can just read in front of her

and have a more positive attitude about reading in general. Allowing Julie to see that adults read and gain enjoyment from books can be a very positive move in her life as a reader.

As for furthering Julie's comprehension, continued practice with reading with expression and fluency will serve Julie well. By providing her opportunities for repeated readings, she can grow in her fluency and build in her mind the ability to read with expression. With hope, Julie can be a more fluent reader without the feel that she needs to read text aloud in order to comprehend.

Lastly, Julie's teachers can continue to be a positive influence in her literacy life. Julie really listens to her teachers and follows their advice in books and recommendations for reading habits while at school. Julie's teachers can continue to model the excellent reading habits they have been, require reading logs of Julie and other students to help them track their progress, and they can offer book clubs and other experiences where reading is done in social settings. The more positive experiences that Julie can have at school with teachers the better her reading life will be.

IX. Appendices

Appendix A

Outline for Lesson 1

Date: 7/8/15

Objective for today's lesson: Student will build fluency by focusing on and rehearsing using prosody.

Rationale: Fluency is more than reading rate. There is a correlation between fluency and comprehension, engagement, and motivation to read.

Materials and supplies needed: 250 word chunks of leveled text, an audio recording device, progression of skills rubric

Procedures and approximate time allocated for each event	Academic, social, and linguistic support during each event
<p><i>Introduction to the lesson:</i></p> <p>The other day when we were reading, we were thinking only about comprehension and not thinking about how our reading sounded out loud. That made me think that there is an important skill to teach you. It's called prosody. Prosody is making meaning in what you read by using your voice - either in your head or out loud.</p> <p><u>Today I'd like to teach you how to grow your prosody, to grow how you can make meaning with your voice as you read. (2 minutes)</u></p> <p><i>Outline of key events during the lesson</i></p> <p>First, let's just read this text aloud into our microphone. (provide 250-word text at reader's independent reading level).</p> <p>Now let's listen back and listen for how your voice sounds. What we're listening for is pitch fluctuations, phrasing - basically we want it to sound like you're talking to a friend. Let's see what we hear. (listen to recording and discuss)</p> <p>Now, let's take that same text, but this time I've marked it with some places that would be natural pauses. Listen to me read it and notice how I use my voice to pause in those spots, and I try to change my pitch a</p>	<p>Point to a printed definition of prosody</p> <p>Model reading into the microphone.</p> <p>Provide support for student to help with this new technology.</p> <p>Point to text.</p>

<p>little bit too.</p> <p>Okay, now you try. Use this one that has the phrases marked. <i>(4 minutes)</i></p> <p>Now, I'm going to leave you for a few minutes. I want you to practice with this same passage really thinking about those phrasings, but also pitch and rate and the other parts of prosody. Record yourself when you feel like you're ready because your prosody has changed. <i>(Leave student to work independently - 5 minutes)</i></p> <p>Okay, now it's been a few minutes. Let's listen back and think about the different parts of prosody and see how you did. <i>(5 minutes)</i></p> <p><i>Closing summary for the lesson:</i> So today and everyday when you read, it's important to read with prosody. It will help you make more meaning from the text. <i>(1 minute)</i></p> <p><i>Transition to the next learning activity:</i> Now go swim in the pool! :)</p>	<p>Sit next to student to look at rubric together. Praise what the student does well.</p>
<p>Assessment</p> <p>The assessment for this lesson is reviewing the oral recording with the rubric "Fluency Rubric" modified from Tim Rasinski - Creating Fluent Readers. In this assessment, we are looking at the change from the first reading to the reading completed after practicing prosody.</p> <p>Next steps will be determined by growth in student's oral reading. If student progresses, a new strategy to grow fluency will be taught at our next lesson.</p>	

Homework: Practice and make three recordings.

Appendix B

Outline for Lesson 2

Date: 7/15/15

Objective for today's lesson: Student will grow fluency by working on phrasing while reading aloud

Rationale: More fluent readers read with phrasing that sounds like they are speaking to a friend, rather than choppy or word-by-word phrasing.

Materials and supplies needed: 250 word chunks of leveled text, an audio recording device, writing utensil

Procedures and approximate time allocated for each event	Academic, social, and linguistic support during each event
<p data-bbox="203 972 532 1003"><i>Introduction to the lesson</i></p> <p data-bbox="203 1018 894 1465">We have been working on a couple of fluency lessons for you because, like we've discussed, if reading is easier for you, it will be more enjoyable. If it is more enjoyable, then you'll choose to do it more. If you do it more, you will get better at it. This is a lesson that will help with that. One thing that really fluent readers do is chunk what they read, not actually reading every word individually. Today I want to teach you a strategy to help with that chunking, or phrasing. <i>(1 minute)</i></p> <p data-bbox="203 1625 699 1656"><i>Outline of key events during the lesson</i></p> <p data-bbox="203 1671 894 1843">First, let's think about what happens in your eyes as you read. You actually only read when your eyes stop on text, not when they are moving across a page so if you watch a reader read, you'll see their eyes pause</p>	

pause pause as they are reading. Watch me while I read. (Model). Now, let me explain about different kinds of readers. Beginning readers see only one word when their eyes stop each time and that's why when beginning readers read, it sounds choppy. When experienced readers read, it sounds more fluid and if you watch an experienced reader - someone who's been reading like 40 years and reads all of the time - you'll see that their eyes stop only like two or three times a line and that's why they can read as quickly as they can. They see more in each eye stop than a beginning reader.

A goal for us for today is to help you think about seeing more words per 'eye stop' to help you grow in your fluency.

Let's look at this text and think about where some natural phrase breaks might be (circle phrasing chunks together)

Now let's read this text and try to 'stretch our eyes wide' to see the phrases we identified as the chunks we can see all at once.

Now let's try to read this next piece, even without the circling, to see if we can do this with our eyes and try to see more than one word at a time. (6 minutes)

Closing summary for the lesson So today and every day when you read, one thing you can do is to try to see more words at a time to improve your fluency, and in turn improve your love of reading. (1 minute)

Transition to the next learning activity - now go have fun!

Model reading a text

With provided independent-reading-level text, work together to identify 2-4 word phrases - gradually releasing responsibility to the student as you progress through circling the phrases on the text

As the student reads aloud, listen for and praise the phrasing progress

Assessment:

Identifying if student can circle meaningful phrases independently, then when the student reads aloud - listening for more fluent phrasing according to the rubric “Fluency Rubric” modified from Tim Rasinski - Creating Fluent Readers

X. Bibliography

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