

## Observation Survey

**Elementary Reading and Language Arts Curriculum and Instruction*****Observation Survey Case Study***

*Observation Survey* was administered to Ms. J in kindergarten at 10:10am until 10:40am and again from 12:55pm until 1:15pm on October 13, 2008. The survey was administered outside of the classroom in the kindergarten building Core. The following results were gathered.

Letter Identification:

This section of the survey proved to be one of Ms. J's more adeptly handled tests. Her total score for the test was 33 out of 54, which placed her in stanine group 2 for her age of just being over 5.5 years old. I began by asking her if she saw any letters she knew, and she identified upper case letters "A" and "I." Upper case letters proved to be more identifiable to Ms. J than lower case letters as she missed 8 out of 26 in upper case and 13 out of 28 in the lower case, but it is interesting to note that Ms. J did not make any incorrect attempts on the upper case letters while making three attempts on the lower case. During the testing, Ms. J made rather quick responses for letters of which she seemed confident, and she remained silent and waited for those of which she was unsure. In making her incorrect responses to the lower case letter, Ms. J seemed to feel confident that these were correct responses and did not hesitate in saying them. Over-all, her behavior during this test was very agreeable and mostly focused. She seemed to become somewhat distracted by looking around when given time to answer to which letter I was pointing if she did not know which letter it was, but she quickly returned to her task when I moved on to the next letter.

Word Test:

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This test within the survey proved more difficult for Ms. J than the Letter Identification, but you would not have thought this from her mood and eagerness in responding. Out of 15 items, she only identifies one word correctly (“I”), resulting in stanine group 2 placement. I chose List A because the sample word at the top was “the,” which we had discussed as a class earlier that morning. I felt that even if she had trouble with the rest of the test, she would likely recognize that word and therefore raise her confidence a bit. At first, Ms. J seemed to believe she should still be saying letters instead of trying to read words. This worked well for the first word (“I”), but then she said only “M” for “Mother.” I told her to try reading the whole word, not just the first letter in it. This is when Ms. J got creative with her interpretations of the text. She was not trying to play and fool around, nor was she laughing about the answers she gave. She was enthusiastic and satisfied in her responses, and I can speculate this might have been because she felt they were good guesses at the words. However, her actual responses had little resemblance to the words on the test. Most responses included the word “the” as part of the answer, such as “the week,” “the weekend,” and even “the day” which itself was given as a response on three separate occasions. The test word “meet” received the most detailed response: “Today I’m going to play on the swing.” Only one word among the items on the list was even closely identified, and that was the word “car.” To this Ms. J said, “A...C...R,” so she had correctly identified the letters which compose the word.

CAP:

This again was a more adeptly handled test in the survey, but Ms. J has plenty of room for definite growth in her understanding. Ms. J was placed in stanine group 3 for this test because she gave correct responses to 13 of the 24 items on the test. The early

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items on the test were easier for Ms. J to identify than others. The first item which proved difficult for her was the word-by-word matching section. Ms. J knew where to place her finger to begin, but even though I read the words distinctly and at a moderately slow pace, she remained on the first few words of the first line the entire time. And when it came to the text on page, Ms. J immediately identified that the text was upside-down, but pointed to the bottom left of the text as the beginning point of reading. This suggested that perhaps she did not notice or interpret the upside-down upper case letter.

Interestingly, Ms. J's responses to my questions about mistakes in the text had very little to do with the written form of the text and much more about what was happening in the story. In answer to, "What's wrong with this?" about the altered line order on page 10, Ms. J responded instead to the mention of the stick floating away in the story by saying, "It wasn't heavy enough." When questioned about the meaning of different punctuation marks, Ms. J hesitated and answered unsurely (and incorrectly) to all of them except the question mark. Also, the reversible words showed again that Ms. J was not connecting sounds with letters as she identified "mother" for the word "was," but she did make a better attempt at "no" by identifying "oh." Finally, she seemed to understand the concept of blocking off the sections of text I requested, but did something unique with the first and last letter of word item. She blocked in /My s/ for the first letter and blocked in /y shoes/ for the last letter. She physically moved the second card to box in the word "shoes," which suggests that she believed this was the correct way to do it and not just a lack of effort. Though we had been working for nearly half an hour at this point, Ms. J was still very responsive, enthusiastic, and agreeable toward the testing. I believe she made a genuine effort in her responses.

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Written Vocabulary:

The Written Vocabulary section of the Observation Survey was a challenge for Ms. J. The only word she could correctly spell was her own name, thus her score was 1 and this placed her in the stanine group range of 0 to 2. I felt that she is somewhere between 1 and 2 because she did understand that writing words meant forming letters from left to right and top to bottom. Also, she correctly wrote all the letters that compose the word “apples” which she recalled from a song but wrote the letters in the incorrect order, and she wrote “cac” when trying to write “cat,” which I felt was a good attempt. However, when prompted with the word “I,” Ms. J wrote “T.” This is interesting to note because she correctly identified both letters during the Letter Identification test and the Word test. Otherwise, Ms. J’s writing consisted of random letters strung together, with a high occurrence of the letters B, P, J, M, A, E, and O. When prompted with the word “no,” Ms. J wrote “OAMAO;” when prompted with “dog,” she wrote “BADB;” and when prompted with “car,” she wrote “PSEA.” After 6 minutes most of the page was full and she was asking if I would like to see her write her numbers, so she wrote “18” in the upper right corner. I felt this was a good point to stop because she was still willing to work but I did not want her to become frustrated or bored by the activity.

Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words:

Ms. J was about the same level of ability in this test as she had through the other tests. Out of 37 items, she correctly identified 4 letter sounds which placed her in stanine group 2. Again, the same issue as seen on the Written Vocabulary test occurred; writing the letter “T” instead of “I” in both places during the passage. Once again, the letters written had little correspondence to the words they were meant to express. A significant

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number of letters A, B, P, and M were used in this writing. I had little chance to ask Jada what she heard in the words because she started writing random letters as soon as I said a word. When I asked her to say the word and try to write what she hears, she said she was. The only word on which she actually stopped to consider the sounds was the word “school.” She erased the “P” she had written and changed it to a “S.” I asked her to say the word again and listen for any other sounds, but she said she did not hear any more. Then she wanted me to watch as she made the letters emboldened (which she did to the last few letters), but I told her we were all done. When my co-operating teacher saw the emboldened letters, she said that could mean Ms. J was frustrated, but it honestly did not seem that way. She was still in a very agreeable mood but did seem to want a change and felt more like drawing than writing.

Analysis:

Over-all, Ms. J has a lot of room for improvement in her literacy skills. Her understanding of letters and their names and sounds needs definite improvement, but she did show some consistency through the different tests. Within the Letter Identification, it became apparent that Ms. J was not as knowledgeable about lower case letters as she was about upper case letters. This was again made evident in the Concept about Print test in which she struggled at first to find lower case versions of W, M, and I. Also, in both her Writing Vocabulary and Hearing and Recording Sounds tests, Ms. J used upper case letters exclusively.

Also interesting to note was the difference in Ms. J’s letter knowledge among the tests. On the Letter Identification test, she correctly identified both the letters “T” and “I” and then again correctly named “I” in the Word test, yet always wrote a “T” when

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spelling “I” during the Writing Vocabulary and Hearing and Recording Sounds tests. Also, on the Letter Identification test, Ms. J could not identify the letter “L,” but she wrote it during the Writing Vocabulary test. She identified it as she wrote it in the word “APPLSE” (apples). She wrote this letter three times over-all, but it was always backwards like a “J” but distinct in that Ms. J always put a line across the top of her J’s. So, although she could not identify the letter in the first test, she was later able to generate it and name it on her own. Perhaps she only identifies the letter when written backwards.

Ms. J had a consistent use of only certain letters as she wrote. Over-all, these were B, P, J, M, A, E, C, and O. There seems to be a connection between her familiarity with these letters and her likelihood in writing them. On the Letter Identification test, it was these letters (among several others) for which Ms. J readily recognized both the lower and upper case forms. She even said “B” and “P” as incorrect responses to other letters. This suggests that she has some previous experience with these letters and thus falls back on them.

When writing, Ms. J made little connection between sounds and letters. She also had trouble identifying multiple sounds in one word. This became very evident during the Hearing and Recording Sounds test, but this helped to further explain her lack of one-to-one finger pointing during the Concepts about Print test. She did not recognize that the words were progressing with the sounds as I said them, so, although she knew that one reads from left to right, she could not follow the words as I said them.

Implications for Instruction:

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To begin Ms. J on the path to becoming a successful reader, as her teacher I would give her lots of opportunities to gain alphabetical knowledge and phonemic awareness. The Letter Identification test revealed that she still does not know all of her letter names or the sounds the letters make, and this is a good starting point from which to build. To go beyond merely writing or saying the letters, a motivating activity to practice letter identification and generation would be to use playdough. After rolling out a long cylinder, Ms. J could be asked to create certain letters out of the dough. This would give her both a physical as well as tactile connection to the form of the letters. However, I would not use this exclusively. I believe that creating word associations with letters and sounds through pictures would be very helpful to Ms. J. To make it more personal to her learning, I think using images that she chose for her word associations would help solidify the letter sounds and words in her mind.

As Ms. J develops her understanding of letters, she should participate in shared readings. Her difficulties on Concepts on Print test showed that she is not matching words one-to-one with their pronunciations as they are being read. Using over-sized text for whole group or a smaller text for side-by-side teaching, I would use a pointer to show one-to-one word matching by pointing to the first letter of each word and then lifting and moving the pointer along to the first letter of the next word as I said them. At this point, Jada does not seem to have a clear understanding on one-to-one word matching, so this would give her the chance to see that each word is distinct and that you have to progress through words in order to read.

As the idea of words in text become more familiar and letters and their sounds are more identifiable and understood, I would work with Ms. J on strategies to solve words.

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As was seen in the Word Reading test, Ms. J does not yet try to break down words into their letters or parts. She is barely even acknowledging the different letters, if at all. During shared readings or interactive read-alouds, I would cover words or parts of words to encourage Ms. J to use her background knowledge and visual clues to figure out the word that comes next. By covering and revealing parts of a word at a time to encourage sounding out and chunking, I think Ms. J should become more aware of the letters composing words and how to approach their pronunciations. With words that are partially covered, Ms. J would have a chance to sound out the letters that compose the words and progressively chunk them together to read the completed word. This activity would likely help Ms. J in improving her own understanding for performance on the Hearing and Recording Sounds test because she would be more aware of the composition of words.

Within a guided reading group, I would provide Ms. J and others with very simple Level A or possibly Level B books (depending on her progress); ones in which there is not much text but is highly repetitive. To begin, I would do a picture walk in which I describe the images in the text in such a way that it would make the text evident. I would discuss with and have the students identify any words that I felt were difficult or unclear before reading aloud a page or two from the book to get them started. During the reading, I would individually assess Ms. J and the other students by asking them to read aloud to me something they had finished reading in the book. Once finished, I would ask the group what they recalled about the text, what was challenging, what they did not understand, etc. After reading, I might ask my students to try writing a sentence using the repeated format from their guided reading book. This would hopefully improve Ms. J's

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Writing Vocabulary test as she practiced seeing and writing high frequency words found in early level readers.

Reflection:

To begin, I was very nervous about the process of administering this performance assessment. I still feel that I have room for improvement in my ability to give the assessment as it is ideally intended, but after practicing a bit and conquering my trepidation, I found that this assessment gave me greater insight into this one particular student than I had before. There is a broad range of abilities in the kindergarten classroom in which I have been placed. Some of the children are reading rather proficiently. One little boy in particular seems like he can read almost anything in the classroom, but an assessment such as this would actually give me the chance to see what he is truly capable of, rather than merely making assumptions based exclusively on the randomized times I have seen him read.

Before giving this assessment to Ms. J, all I had to go upon in understanding her abilities was what my co-operating teacher told me about her. I am not certain if it was my own expectations or the description of her abilities that was given to me, but I was surprised to find that Ms. J's levels were lower than what I had anticipated. The scoring method for this assessment is what helped me realize the level at which Ms. J currently stands. Without some kind of reference from which I could generalize her scores, I would have little idea of where she should averagely be for her age range. Seeing this helps me to understand that she likely needs more thorough instruction to help her progress to higher stanine levels.

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Analyzing this assessment gave me the opportunity to see that there are certain letters with which Ms. J is very familiar; she can identify them and uses them repeatedly throughout the assessment. Knowing this, I can use these letters as starting points to build her confidence in literacy activities, such as sounding out words like “mom” which is composed of letters she uses often. The assessment analysis also made me aware of inconsistencies in her understanding of letters such as her confusing letters “I” and “T” as well as her misconceptions about the way to identify “L” when it is backwards. Having found consistent errors across the tests such as these and others mentioned earlier, I have a better understanding of her deficiencies.

The most relevant use for this assessment is informing instruction, in my opinion. If I were to have gone off of my own assumptions of Ms. J’s abilities based upon my interactions with her and discussions with my co-operating teacher, I would have possibly started working with Ms. J at a level too far above her current abilities. This assessment has allowed me to see where she accurately stands and build from there. I also see re-administering this assessment as a standardized way to assess her improvement through instruction. I feel this way because using the same testing provides Ms. J with a way to show her improvement in a comparable form to her original assessment. In closing, I am excited to begin working with Ms. J and to see how far we can progress by the end of the semester!