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Dynamic assessment and reading instruction

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DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT AND READING INSTRUCTION

BY
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DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT AND READING INSTRUCTION

BY

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APPROVED BY THE DEAN OF THE CENTER FOR
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ABSTRACT

DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT AND READING INSTRUCTION
BY
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California State University, Monterey Bay, May, 2003

The purpose of this action research was to discover if the dynamic nature of assessment could be incorporated into a classroom and successfully used in reading instruction. The research sought to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent is a student able to successfully read a book that is not, according to traditional (static) assessment, at their reading level when given assistance?
2. How is student performance affected when they self-select the reading text for assessment purposes?
3. How might the dynamic assessment protocol be used in conjunction with traditional (static) assessments to determine a student's reading level?

This was a case study involving six students in my 6th grade classroom in Spring, 2003. These students self-selected chapter books that were considered to be above their reading level. They were closely monitored as they read the books, receiving assistance when needed. When they completed the book, they took a computerized, multiple-choice comprehension test on the book.

The findings indicated that students can be successful with difficult reading material when they receive assistance. The students believed that much of their success was due to the fact that they were able to self-select the reading material for the assessment. It is recommended that other teachers use the dynamic assessment protocol in their classrooms.

DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT AND READING INSTRUCTION

Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE

Do I really need one more form of assessment? My first reaction would be a resounding "NO!" Sometimes I feel like all I do is assess my students, or use materials developed to make my students better test-takers. What if, though, the assessment would help me to help my students more effectively? Now, I think that's something I would like to know more about! That something is dynamic assessment.

Dynamic assessment, simply put, measures students' learning potential when they are being helped. It differs from traditional, or static, assessment where the student is tested without instruction. Dynamic assessment is focused on the process rather than the product. It allows the teacher to not only identify what reading strategies the student has already mastered, but by focusing on problem solving strategies in the reading process, it also assists the teacher in identifying those instructional procedures needed to help the student learn most effectively.

BACKGROUND

I became interested in this form of assessment a couple of years ago after reading about it for a class in the MA program. The book I read connected the dynamic form of assessment with the works of theorist Lev

Vygotsky (Dixon-Krauss, 1996). I was quite familiar with Vygotsky from work in another MA class on cognitive development. Vygotsky's theory of development is known as the sociocultural theory. This theory looks at how social and cultural influences affect a child's development.

An important aspect of Vygtosky's theory is the Zone of Proximal Development, or ZPD. The ZPD is the level at which a student can solve problems with support from an adult or more capable peer. "According to Vygotsky, the role of education is to provide children with experiences that are in their ZPDs – activities that challenge children but that can be accomplished with sensitive adult guidance" (Berk and Winsler, 1995, p. 26).

The concept of the ZPD is not only relevant with instruction. It can be applied to assessment as well. Vygotsky was concerned that children were only being assessed using a static model, which solely measures a student's performance on what he or she has already mastered. He believed that true assessment should also include the measurement of a student's potential or what the student is currently in the process of learning. When a student is engaged in a difficult learning task while receiving teacher guidance, we are able to see what skills and strategies he/she can use effectively and what

skills and strategies the student has not yet mastered. From there, we know what the child needs to work on in order to accomplish specific goals.

It is with this information that I decided that dynamic assessment might be something worth looking at. I am currently a 6th grade teacher. I have taught most of these same students for the last three years. I am fortunate in the fact that many of these same students function on or above grade level in reading. However, like so many other teachers, I have students that are well below grade level in reading. I have watched some of these students over the years struggle greatly with static assessments. The frustration that I see on their faces is, quite frankly, heartbreaking. I can't count how many times I've just wanted to go over to them and say "What can I do to help you?" I know that if I could assist them with sounding out a word here or figuring out a vocabulary word there, they may be more successful. It sounds simplistic, but I believe it could really help.

So, armed with all this information, I piloted a dynamic assessment model in my own classroom with one of my students two years ago. I gave the student a reading assessment at a level that was one grade level higher than where the student was performing. The student struggled through the assessment, having difficulty with accuracy (words read correctly), fluency

(correct words per minute read), and comprehension (meaning gained from the text). The next day we examined the text together. I read it aloud, modeling for the student. Then we worked our way systematically through the text, addressing questions that the student had and reviewing portions of the text that I had noted as being areas of difficulty. Several days later I administered that same assessment again. The improvement was significant. The student's accuracy went from 93% to 98%; fluency went from 60 correct words per minute (cwpm) to 63 cwpm; and the student answered 4 out of 5 comprehension questions correctly as opposed to the 2 out of 5 correctly answered the first time. I was pleased with the results achieved and knew that I would like to try it again with more of my students. From my experience I feel that with the proper intervention, students can work at a higher level. I believe I owe it to my students to help them progress instead of allowing them to be stagnant.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM AND PURPOSE

Decisions in the classroom that determine a learner's reading level and the selection of books to be read, tend to be based upon predetermined and inflexible assessments that may not accurately measure a learner's range of abilities associated with reading. The potential for pigeon holing some

learners into a prescribed reading level may not entirely address the needs and motivation of the learner to read material that is interesting to them, and from which they may benefit. The purpose of this action research is to discover how a dynamic assessment component can be incorporated into a classroom and successfully used in reading instruction. With this research, I will attempt to answer the following questions:

- To what extent is a student able to successfully read a book that is not, according to traditional (static) assessment, at their reading level when given assistance?

- How is student performance affected when they self-select the reading text for assessment purposes?

- How might the dynamic assessment protocol be used in conjunction with the traditional (static) assessments to determine a student's reading level?

PARAMETERS

This action research was a case study of six students in my 6th grade class for 2002-2003. Three of the students were English-only and three of the students were English learners. All of these students were classified as reading below grade level. There were three boys and three girls. One of

these students was a Resource Specialist Program (RSP) student. The research was gathered in Spring, 2003.

The results of this research were specific to the group being studied. It is not my intention to assume that the results would be the same for any other group. Research replicated with different populations may well yield different outcomes. However, it is my hope that this research will find its way outside of my four walls and into the classrooms of other teachers. By presenting this to the staff at my school, I may come across other teachers who would find this assessment beneficial for them and the students they serve. As others experience success with dynamic assessment procedures, the word may spread to other schools and perhaps other districts.

OVERVIEW

As I previously stated, this action research has attempted to discover the extent to which dynamic assessment in reading can successfully be incorporated into a classroom. Chapter Two takes a look at the major research that discusses the use of dynamic assessment in classrooms and a more in-depth look at Vygotsky's theory. Chapter Three describes the methodologies used in collecting the data with the six students in my classroom. Chapter Four presents the results of the data collected. Finally,

Chapter Five discusses the implications of the data and the potential for its

use by other teachers.

CHAPTER TWO

The word "assessment" provokes a variety of feelings in teachers. There is a feeling of pressure to "get through" an enormous amount of curriculum. The amount of time it takes to complete various assessments is of concern to many. There is also the question of what are we really trying to assess? Finally it's important to consider what will be done with the assessments when they are completed. Will scores be recorded and then never looked at again or will the assessment help guide teachers in meeting the needs of their students?

This chapter will discuss dynamic assessment, a type of assessment that allows teachers to get "up close and personal" with the academic needs of individual students. It will review literature that advocates its use as a valid assessment instrument in reading instruction. Dynamic assessment's theoretical underpinnings based on the works of Vygotsky will be intertwined in the review. I will then take a look at literature that advocates the importance of allowing students the opportunity to select their own reading materials. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a discussion about assessment and the implications it has for diverse populations.

VYGOTSKY

The dynamic assessment model is based on the work of Vygotsky and his concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). In this section of the chapter, we will take a look at the ZPD, mediation, and the social interaction that plays such a major role with both.

In his book Thought and Language (Vygotsky, 1986), Vygotsky reports on an investigation conducted by his student Zhozephina Shif. The investigation sought to discover how scientific and spontaneous concepts develop in childhood. "Scientific concepts originate in the highly structured and specialized activity of classroom instruction and impose on a child logically defined concepts; spontaneous concepts emerge from the child's own reflections on everyday experience" (Vygotsky, p. xxxv.) There were several studies conducted during her investigation. One study of particular interest to my own investigation involved looking at the mental development of a child by having him solve standardized problems. "The problems he was able to solve by himself were supposed to indicate the level of his mental development at the particular time. But in this way, only the completed part of the child's development can be measured, which is far from the whole story" (Vygotsky, p. 187). Shif attempted a different approach –a dynamic

approach. Two eight-year-old students were given harder problems to do, but this time assistance was given. "We discovered that one child could, in cooperation, solve problems designed for twelve-year-olds, while the other could not go beyond problems intended for nine-year-olds" (Vygotsky, p. 187). In both cases, gains were made. "The discrepancy between a child's actual mental age and the level he reaches in solving problems with assistance indicates the zone of his proximal development" (Vygotsky, p. 187).

According to Gallimore and Tharp (1990), there are four stages of the ZPD:

Stage I: Performance is assisted by more capable others.

Stage II: Performance is assisted by the self. This does not mean, though, that the performance is fully developed.

Stage III: Performance is developed, automatized, and fossilized. At this point, any sort of assistance is actually disruptive.

Stage IV: Deautomatization of performance leads to recursion through the zone of proximal development. Lifelong learning comes in here. At times assistance may be needed and more capable others will be sought out. Children and adults alike cycle back through the stages.

(pp. 184-186)

In classrooms teachers need to provide instruction that pushes students into their ZPD. Through this push, the inner developmental processes are at

work (Hedegaard, 1990). "Within the ZPD the child is not a mere passive recipient of the adult's teachings, nor is the adult simply a model of expert successful behavior. Instead, the adult-child dyad engages in joint problem-solving activity, where both share knowledge and responsibility for the task" (Diaz, Neal, Amaya-Williams, 1990, p. 140). It is through this process in dynamic assessment that teachers are able to see where the student is and where he/she still needs to go.

When a teacher is working with a student on a task that is within the student's ZPD, the assistance given can be referred to as mediation. "The role of the teacher as mediator is an active one and reflects the teacher's understanding that teaching supports learning; it can't force it to happen" (Goodman & Goodman, 1990, p. 237). Mediation is circular in nature. Teachers are continuously moving from one part to the next (Dixon-Krauss, 1996). Over time, as students' competencies change, different types of feedback are given to continually help students advance (Campione & Brown, 1987). The model consists of three components: purpose, strategy, and reflection. The purpose allows for the teacher to analyze the reader and text characteristics to decide what the student needs to do in order to comprehend the text. The teacher then uses the information he/she has

gained from the reader and the text to decide on the <u>strategy</u> to be used in order to help the reader comprehend the text. These could involve strategies for comprehension, word identification, or text structure. The teacher then guides the student in using the appropriate strategy. Finally, the teacher is able to reflect on the student's performance. This <u>reflection</u> enables the teacher to analyze whether the student comprehends the text. If so, he or she can move on to a new task. If not, the teacher will need to start the process again.

Effective mediation techniques are essential in dynamic assessment. It is through mediation that students are able to achieve more. Students are gradually guided to a level which is only possible if the teacher continues to update his/her assessment of evolving capabilities (Campione & Brown, 1987).

The social interaction that takes place between the adult/more capable peer and the student is the centerpiece to both the ZPD and mediation. "Vygotsky (1981) claimed that the intellectual skills children acquire are directly related to *how* they interact with others in specific problem-solving environments" (Moll, 1990, p. 11). This indicates how important it is for these collaborations to be positive and helpful for those

involved. If the student sees these interactions as being beneficial, the motivation to continue them will be there. These interactions are what make dynamic assessment such a positive experience for students and teachers.

DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT

Dynamic assessment measures students' learning potential when they are being helped. It differs from traditional, or static, assessment where the student is tested without instruction. According to Budoff (1987), the training provided within dynamic assessment helps students to understand what is being required of them and in turn they are able to respond to the test in a more effective manner. Dynamic assessment is focused on the process rather than the product. It allows the teacher to not only identify what reading strategies the student has already mastered, but also assists the teacher in identifying those instructional procedures needed to help the student learn most effectively.

According to Stanley (1996) dynamic assessment has been used in a wide variety of areas with children. Much of the focus of the literature reviewed was on the fields of psychology and reading instruction.

Forms of dynamic assessment have been used in the field of psychology since the 1920s. The interest stemmed from the dissatisfaction

of some psychologists with IQ testing. Many felt that these tests did not

"reveal meaningful information about learning ability "(Lidz, 1987, p. 1).

According to Feuerstein, Rand, Jensen, Kaniel, and Tzuriel (1987),

intelligence has been looked upon as something that is fixed. Once a

determination has been made, the attempts to push the student to a higher

level stop. Feuerstein et al. claim that students will not improve if demands

are not made for them to achieve more.

Feuerstein et al. (1987) developed the Learning Potential Assessment

Device (LPAD), a battery of tests and training procedures revolving around

measuring the potential of the student. Its goal is "to modify the cognitive

style characteristics of an individual" (p. 43). The LPAD follows a test-train-

retest procedure. This allows the student to become familiar with the

content of the test. Testing, which is generally rigid, becomes a more

interactive process for the tester and the student. The product is no longer

the primary focus – the process is of equal importance. The goal is for new

structures to form, which will affect and enhance the student's ability to

accomplish other tasks (Feuerstein et al., 1987). However, Feuerstein et al.

asserts, just because a student may do better on IQ tests conducted using a

dynamic approach does not mean that the success will translate into school

achievement. That achievement also depends greatly on the teacher and the programs available to the student.

The trends in reading education closely mirror the trends in psychology. In regards to school achievement, Campione and Brown (1987) suggest that much of the interest in dynamic assessment comes from dissatisfaction with static forms of assessment. These assessments give us only what the student can do at the moment. They don't tell us what processes the student used to solve the problem or answer the question. Stanley (1996) posits that tests that don't allow for intervention most likely place students at lower reading levels. Many teachers will take that result as the final word. If the student is low now, then he/she will be low always. "Diagnosis should not be used to pigeonhole students, but rather to provide information indicating how instruction should change over time" (Campione and Brown, 1987, p. 107). As stated previously, a dynamic form of assessment would allow the teacher to see what the student actually <u>can</u> do. According to Burns (1996) teachers indicate that their expectations of children's learning abilities are higher when they have had the opportunity to observe dynamic assessment. This indicates that "dynamic assessment may be an important tool for changing teachers' attitudes about low functioning

children" (Burns, p. 1). Mearig (1987) stated, "The emphasis, then, in dynamic assessment for young children should be on identifying and strengthening *emerging* cognitive functions rather than on correcting deficiencies" (p. 238).

WHAT DOES DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT LOOK LIKE?

Dynamic approaches differ in technique but the common goal they share is to enhance and modify the functioning of the student on a particular task during assessment (Feuerstein, et al., 1987). Stanley (1996) outlines dynamic assessment procedures that have been summarized from the works of Budoff, Campione, Brown, Feuerstein, Minick, and Kletzien and Bednar:

    1. Test the learner working alone (static mode) to provide a baseline measure (the highest level obtained without assistance) of skills on a task.

    2. Provide a controlled protocol of assistance and instruction (dynamic mode) while the child works on a comparable task.

    3. Posttest with an alternate form of original measure while the learner works alone (static mode) on the task.

    4. Compare test and retest measures to establish the learner's *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) (the range from the baseline to the highest level obtained with assistance).

    5. Analyze the learner's performance both *quantitatively* and *qualitatively* on both product and process.

    a. Identify the upper limit of the ZPD as expressed by mental age,

grade equivalent, or reading level (quantitative).

b. Investigate processing strengths and weaknesses and learning style
to determine the specific kind of assistance required to obtain
optimal performance (qualitative).

(Stanley, p. 140)

Research has been done on the validity of the dynamic assessment

process in predicting reading placement. Stanley (1996) indicates in his

writing that he, along with others, has done studies comparing a traditional

static method of reading placement, the Informal Reading Inventory (IRI)

with a modified IRI that is dynamic in nature. With the intervention

embedded in the dynamic approach, students were found to place two to

three grade levels higher than with the traditional method. "Data from the

studies suggest that current testing practices that do not incorporate trial

intervention are likely to underplace children for reading instruction"

(Stanley, p. 140). Other studies have been completed in reading and writing

that indicate that students do perform better and reach higher levels when

a dynamic approach to assessment is used (Burns, Delclos, Vye, Sloan, 1996;

Kozulin & Garb, 2001; Correia & Gamlin, 1996). This information is

confirmation for those who believe that this type of assessment can

transform learning for students. However, there is a very important point

that needs to be kept in mind. According to Kragler (1996), the assisted

reading levels as determined by the dynamic assessment model can place students at higher levels. However, teachers must help the students maintain these levels.

SELF-SELECTION OF READING MATERIALS FOR ASSESSMENT PURPOSES

As stated earlier, students will continue to strive for higher goals as long as they have the motivation to go on. Teachers need to attempt to motivate every student, no matter what their level. When it comes to assessments, that becomes difficult to do. Students are asked to complete tasks that have no meaningful context. They are given passages to read and then are required to answer questions. They have not had time to process what they read or to become familiar with characters or the plot.

An alternative to this would be to allow students the opportunity to self-select reading materials for assessment purposes. Allowing students to read what they are interested in reading is a powerful tool that doesn't get used enough. "Opportunities for students to read self-selected books is an indispensable part of a balanced reading program. In independent reading students are in charge of their own reading – by choosing their own books, by doing their own reading, and by taking responsibility to work through the

challenges of the text" (Routman, 1991, p.41). In his book <u>The Power of Reading</u> (Krashen, 1993), Stephen Krashen introduces the reader to the term free voluntary reading, or FVR. He defines this as "reading because you want to" (p. x). With FVR, students are allowed to read whatever they would like. There are no tests or book reports required once the book is completed. Krashen reports that vocabulary is built, spelling and writing are enhanced, and comprehension is increased when students are allowed to read what they want.

When students are encouraged to read what they want, something wonderful happens: they become motivated to read more. Krashen (1993) cites a case involving a 5th grade boy who was a very poor reader. In order to help him, his mother finally insisted that he had to check two books out of the library every week and report to her what he had read. The books he checked out could be of his own choosing. Because he had an interest in science, the boy checked out books about animals and nature. He ended up dramatically improving his reading and found the joy that books can bring. Krashen states "...because his reading was self-selected, the intrinsic pleasure of reading soon took over..." (Krashen, p. 44).

Had this boy been able to read animal or nature books in school and then had his assessments based on those books, he may have been a successful reader right from the beginning. Unfortunately, this isn't the type of assessment that exists in our schools. The text that students encounter generally has no meaning for them. It isn't based on anything that has meaning to the students. "Real reading is what the student does every day, so most of the reading assessment must come from authentic, continuous, meaningful text. Within that text, we need to be looking at how the student samples, predicts, confirms, and self-corrects while in the process of reading" (Routman, 1991, p. 405). This is definitely something to strive for.

DIVERSE POPULATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

"Assessment is undoubtedly one of the most heated topics of debate in education today "(LAB at Brown: Teaching Diverse Learners -Assessment, n.d.). As stated in the opening paragraph of this chapter, teachers are feeling the stress related to assessment. When we add the dimension of meeting the needs of diverse populations into the mix, things get even more stressful. For example, "teachers of English Language Learners (ELLs) are currently faced with addressing questions such as whether or not ELL's

should be included in local and large-scale standardized assessments and if so, the language(s) in which students should be tested" (LAB at Brown: Teaching Diverse Learners -Assessment:, n.d.).

The unfortunate thing is that standard tests rely on the assumption that all students come from a comparable background and have had the same opportunities to acquire information. This is a dangerous assumption for kids that are minorities or come from a disadvantaged background (Campione & Brown, 1987). According to Budoff (1987) children from non-middle class homes do not have as equal and frequent access to appropriate school-preparatory experiences. They also may learn differently and in ways that are not valued by the middle class attitude in our schools.

"The plight of disadvantaged minority students is perhaps the most glaring example of the negative consequences of using static measures of assessment" (Gamlin, 1996, p. 80). Standardized tests, in general, have been "soundly criticized as biased and unfair to minority students" (Dietel, Herman, and Knuth, 1991, p. 6). Often times these students don't do as well on the tests as do the white, middle-class students. However, there is a method of assessment that would be fair to use with the diverse populations in our school – dynamic assessment.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have explored what the experts have to say about dynamic assessment. According to them, it is a valuable means to assess students' reading. We've seen that, if used, it can be a critical component to a balanced reading program. We know that it helps to build confidence in students and can motivate them to work harder. In the next chapter, we will examine the methodology of this study on dynamic assessment.

CHAPTER THREE

This qualitative case study examined the effectiveness of dynamic assessment procedures in reading instruction. Six students from my 6th grade classroom in Spring, 2003 were followed closely as they each read from a self-selected chapter book. These chapter books were considered to be above their own reading level. Multiple forms of data were collected during the study.

SETTING

This research project took place at Sea Gull Elementary School in central California. The school is situated on a tree-lined street in a residential neighborhood. Over 90% of the students live within walking distance of the school. Many of the students and families in the neighborhood are low income. There are a large percentage of students at the school that receive free or reduced lunch. Sea Gull Elementary School is large. Approximately 800 students attend the school. Eighty-one percent (81%) of these students are Latino. A majority of these children are learning English.

Sea Gull Elementary School has been involved in several things the past few years that have helped to improve students' reading. The involvement of the school in the RESULTS program has been most significant. The RESULTS program was developed by the California Reading & Literature Project – CRLP – to help ensure that all students are able to achieve high standards of performance in reading and language arts. The various RESULTS assessments cover all areas of reading. There is a phonics assessment, which is used with students beginning in Kindergarten through approximately 3rd grade. There are spelling inventories, one primary and one intermediate, which assess a student's mastery of spelling conventions. There is a comprehension assessment that consists of short passages and questions that go along with each passage. This assessment checks to see if the students can read independently with comprehension. There are also reading passages that are grade-level specific. These are used in grades 2-6. These particular assessments determine whether or not students are reading grade level material with accuracy, fluency, and comprehension.

RESULTS has been used primarily at the school in grades K-3. I am one of three intermediate teachers who have been trained in RESULTS and currently am the only teacher in grades 4-6 using the assessments. It is

time consuming and in grades 4-6 we don't have an instructional aide to help with the students while we are assessing individuals.

What we have found at the school is that there has been an improvement in reading ability since using these assessments. Teachers are able to assist their students more effectively and to move them along more efficiently. My own experience indicates this as well.

Another program that is being used school wide is the Accelerated Reader program. Our school has an extensive collection of literature books that are part of this program. These books are leveled according to difficulty. Each classroom has a collection of books ranging from a grade level below to a grade level above and the library has a considerable collection appropriate for all students. When a student has finished reading a book, he/she then may take a quiz on it. The quiz is a computerized, multiple-choice comprehension test that generally consists of ten (10) questions. These questions are literal and inferential in nature. The students are considered to have successfully passed the test with a score of six (6) or more. Because the books are leveled, students of all levels are able to be successful and see improvement in their reading skills. This encourages them to keep reading!

We have also participated in the Governor's Reading program the past few years. All students keep track of books and/or pages read between October 1st and April 1st and record these on a form. As students turn in their reading logs, they are given tickets and once a week a drawing is held. Those students who are picked receive prizes. Last year the school received an award from the governor because as a school we had read over a million pages. At this point in the year, we are almost where we were at the end of last year. Currently in my class, I have several students who have read over 2,000 pages since October.

These three programs have enabled the students at Sea Gull Elementary School to become confident in themselves as readers and to see the act of reading as something that is not only pleasurable, but is also crucial to their success in school.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, I teach 6th grade. There are 29 students in my classroom. Of that 29, seven of my students are English learners. The English learners are currently in their third year of English-only instruction and are considered to be at levels 4 to 5 in English proficiency (A 5 is the highest). I have taught 70% of the students for the

past three years. I have had these students this long because I loop with another teacher in the school. This partnership with the other teacher enables one of us to move up to the next grade with our students. The other teacher then goes back down a grade and takes those students through the next year. We were able to add another year because a 6th grade teacher retired last year, leaving an opening.

I selected six of my students to participate in this study. Three of the students were English-only and three of the students were English learners. The group consisted of three boys and three girls. One of the students participated in the Resource Specialist's Program (RSP). He received additional help daily with difficulties in reading as part of a pull-out program. The students will be referred to hereafter by pseudonyms to protect their privacy.

Student #1 is Susana. She is 12 years old. Susana is a Level 4 English learner. According to the RESULTS assessment, she reads at a 5th grade level. Student #2 is Maria. She is 11 years old and is the youngest student in my class. Maria is a Level 5 English learner. She reads at a 4th grade level. Student #3 is Katie. She is 12 years old. Katie reads at a 5th grade level. Student #4 is Mark. He is 12 years old. Mark reads at a 4th grade level.

Student #5 is Louis. He is 11 years old. Louis is a Level 4 English learner. He reads at a 5th grade level. Student #6 is Peter. He is 12 years old. Peter is an RSP student. He has a disability in both reading and spelling. However, he is on grade-level in math and has above-average intelligence. Peter reads at a 4th grade level.

DATA COLLECTION

At the beginning of the study the students completed a Reading Interest Inventory (Appendix A). I also conducted an interview with each student (Appendix B). I was interested in determining their attitudes towards reading. The results will be shared in Chapter Four.

Next, the students were asked to select an Accelerated Reader book they would like to read but that would be considered to be above their reading level. I then selected a passage from the beginning of each student-selected book and conducted a Running Record assessment, a form of an Informal Reading Inventory, with each student (Appendix C). This assessment lets me know their accuracy, fluency, and comprehension of the passage. I documented any difficulties the student had with the text and those notes were placed into each individual child's folder. Following this assessment, each student assessed his/her own reading. In a journal he/she

answered the following questions: What problems, if any, did you encounter? What was easy? What was difficult? How did you figure out any unknown words? What did you like about what you read? What did you understand? Together we reviewed the written observations I made and their own written reflection. All questions were answered so that the students could begin reading their books.

From this point, the students read from the chapter book everyday in class. Three of them also read at night as well because they chose lengthy books. At the end of each daily reading period, the student wrote in his/her journal as described above. Based on their comments or questions, I provided feedback and individualized instruction. Some students needed help from me on a daily basis while others only needed help periodically.

Once a week I conducted a running record, selecting a passage from each student-selected book. I audio taped these sessions. I did this so that I would be able to determine what assistance, if any, I needed to provide each individual student. The students reviewed the tape, and critiqued their own oral reading and made improvements where they felt they needed to be made.

This process continued until the student finished reading the book. After completing the book, the student took the Accelerated Reader quiz for the book. When each child was finished with the quiz, we together went back over any questions missed to try to figure out what the problem was. This enabled us to see if the student missed vocabulary, literal, or inferential questions. The student also filled out a questionnaire concerning his/her experience with the process we followed (Appendix D).

DATA ANALYSIS

Reading Interest Inventory, Student Interview, Final Questionnaire

The results of the Reading Interest Inventory were tallied using a matrix. I ended up focusing on a couple of the questions because they seemed most relevant to my study: Do you like to read? What helps you to choose a book to read? The student interviews and final questionnaire were analyzed question by question.

Running Records

Accuracy, fluency, and comprehension were noted for each Running Record completed with a student. I also analyzed the errors made using a miscue analysis (Appendix E). I took anecdotal notes during these interactions with the students. This enabled me to provide the specific

assistance each child needed. The problem areas for each child were categorized.

Student Journals

Students' journal entries were read on a regular basis. I looked for themes that were emerging from each one. This helped me to not only see what specific areas they needed help with; it also helped me to see what their attitudes were about reading.

Accelerated Reader Quiz

The scores from the Accelerated Reader quizzes were recorded. Missed questions were categorized into vocabulary, literal, or inferential. Strengths and weaknesses were also noted.

CHAPTER FOUR

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will report the results of the data collected. I will first report the responses to the reading interest inventory, and the results of the student interviews and any trends that I noticed with all the students. Because the focus of the study then shifted to the progress of each student individually, the data involving the actual experiences the students had with the books they read will be presented as individual case studies. In each of the case studies I will look at the process the student went through while reading her self-selected book. Each student's baseline measure comes from oral passages read aloud for accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. This is a component of the RESULTS assessment. The results of the running records, information from the students' journals, any anecdotal notes, and the results of the Accelerated Reader quiz will be reported. Specific information from the reading interest inventory and interviews will also be noted if necessary. Finally, each student filled out a questionnaire after completing her book. The results from this questionnaire will also be analyzed and reported.

READING INTEREST INVENTORY

The interest inventory consisted of eight questions. However, I focused on the students' responses to only two of the questions because they were the most relevant to my study. The first question was multiple-choice and the second was open-ended.

When asked if they like to read, one student said yes, four students said sometimes and one student said no. These results indicate that reading is not necessarily a positive experience for these children.

When asked what helps you to choose a book, the majority of the students indicated that they look at the picture on the front and then read what is written on the back of the book. One of the students wrote that the length of the book was also important. These responses indicate that these students are carefully choosing books to read. Thought is going in to their selections. They are not just grabbing books off the shelf to read.

STUDENT INTERVIEW

After completing the interest inventory, each student participated in an interview. When asked what they thought was the most important thing about reading, three of the six students responded that actually knowing how to read was important. One student indicated that understanding what

you read is the most important thing. Another student pointed out that a person needs to know how to read to be able to read forms and fill them out. Still another student said that the most important thing was to be able to read faster.

When asked what they are trying to do while reading, all of the students indicated that they are trying to concentrate and focus on the reading material. This indicates that they understand the importance of paying attention to what they are reading.

The students' responses to what reading is were similar. Three of the students said that the act of reading was all about words and being able to read them. Another student added that a person needs to understand that letters make different sounds in order to put the words together. Two of the students indicated that reading was imagining what characters are doing.

The students were split down the middle on what they should do when they come to a word they don't know. Three said they just keep on reading and try to figure it out through clues in the story. The other three said that they either ask someone (the teacher or a peer) or they look it up in the dictionary.

Only one of the students felt it wasn't important to read every word correctly. The student reported that it was okay to just keep on reading. The other students felt that it was important to know every word. They added that the word may be important to what the book is trying to say. One of these students said that the word might be on the Accelerated Reader quiz.

When asked what makes a person a good reader, most of the students responded that a good reader reads everyday. They all focused in on the importance of practicing it. One even said that reading a book over and over again is important.

The final question asked if they thought good readers ever come to a word they don't know. All of the students responded yes to that part of the question. The second part of the question asked what they thought good readers do to figure out the word. Four of the students responded that a good reader would look the unknown word up in the dictionary. The other two students said that good readers would look at the surrounding sentences to figure out the word.

The responses the students gave to the interview questions indicate that the students have a good understanding about reading and what it takes to be successful.

INDIVIDUAL CASE STUDIES

The case studies are divided into six sections. The first section reports their RESULTS assessment scores. The second section details the book selected. The third section is a summary of the running records done. The fourth section provides details about problem areas noticed from the running records and from the student's journal. The fifth section reports the results from the Accelerated Reader quiz. The sixth section gives a final analysis of all the data collected.

Susana

RESULTS

The RESULTS assessment done in March, 2003 indicated that Susana reads at a 5th grade level. At that time, she read with ninety-seven percent (97%) accuracy and her fluency rate was 103 correct words per minute (cwpm). She struggled a bit with the comprehension, only answering three out of the five questions correctly.

SELF-SELECTED LITERATURE

Susana selected the book <u>The Wizard of Oz</u>, by L. Frank Baum. She selected the book because she has always wanted to read it but felt that it was too difficult for her because of its level. According to Accelerated Reader, it is leveled at a 7.0. This is the highest leveled book selected in the study. It is two grade levels above her assessed reading level.

RUNNING RECORDS Table 4.1

A passage was selected from each of the student-selected books and I conducted a Running Record assessment, a form of an Informal Reading Inventory, with each student. The results of these assessments are presented in table form for each student.

Running Record Session	Accuracy	Fluency
1	98%	111 cwpm
2	95%	132 cwpm
3	98%	118 cwpm
4	98%	121 cwpm

Susana's reading accuracy remained strong throughout the book. She made good improvement with her fluency.

PROBLEM AREAS

Susana consistently reported in her journal that she had difficulty with vocabulary words. On a daily basis we met for a brief period of time to discuss words she struggled with in her previous reading session. I noticed that her comprehension of the text was affected by her not understanding certain words. After each running record session, I would ask her to summarize what she had just read. This was always a bit difficult for her.

ACCELERATED READER QUIZ

Susana took the quiz for the book and got five out of ten questions correct. According to the Accelerated Reader program, this would not be considered a passing grade. I did look back at her scores from the books she had previously read. Of the four she had read this year, she scored five out of ten on three of them. These books ranged in level from 4.3 to 5.0.

As Susana and I looked back over the questions she had missed, one thing was evident in each. For every question she missed, there were one or two words in the actual question that she didn't understand. We discussed each word and what she needs to do when she comes across words she

doesn't know. I brought to her attention that in the interview she had indicated that when she doesn't know a word she just keeps on reading, hoping to figure it out at some point. We discussed that this strategy might not be the best for her. When I asked her what she should do, she immediately said she should get a dictionary and look up the words. If after our discussion of the unknown words she had been given the opportunity to take the quiz again, she would have only missed two questions.   However, she was happy with her final score. When we discussed her scores from previous books, she noted that this book was much harder than the others.

FINAL ANALYSIS

Susana improved her reading during this study. Her accuracy was a consistent strength for her throughout the process. Her fluency was also strong. Although Susana did not technically pass the Accelerated Reader quiz, she has shown great improvement in her comprehension. She was able to score the same on a 7th grade level book as on a 4th grade level book. Still, her comprehension is the area where she needs to continue to make some improvement. Pausing throughout her readings to figure out unknown words will be beneficial to her.

Maria

RESULTS

The RESULTS assessment done in March, 2003 indicated that Maria reads at a 4th grade level. At that time, she read with ninety-eight percent (98%) accuracy and her fluency rate was 101 correct words per minute (cwpm). She answered all five comprehension questions correctly.

SELF-SELECTED LITERATURE

Maria selected the book Ginger Pye, by Eleanor Estes. She selected the book because she thought that it looked funny. She expressed some concern about the level of the book and whether or not she would be able to be successful. According to Accelerated Reader, it is leveled at a 6.0. It is two grade levels above her assessed reading level.

RUNNING RECORDS Table 4.2

Running Record Session	Accuracy	Fluency
1	94%	103 cwpm
2	98%	112 cwpm
3	100%	115 cwpm
4	99%	115 cwpm

Maria made steady improvement. She was able to improve both accuracy and fluency.

PROBLEM AREAS

Maria's questions for me in her journal generally centered on unknown vocabulary words. We met a couple of times each week to work through the words she didn't know. At the beginning of the book, she had questions about quite a few words. As she continued reading, however, she had fewer questions. By the time she was three-quarters of the way through the book, she didn't really have any questions. After each running record session, I would ask her to summarize what she had just read. She easily was able to tell me about the story. She would even ask questions about the characters' motives for doing certain things. She was engaged by the book.

ACCELERATED READER QUIZ

Maria took the quiz for the book and got seven out of ten questions correct. According to the Accelerated Reader program, this is considered a passing grade. She was the last student to finish her book and was really nervous about taking the quiz. She didn't think that she was going to pass. After completing the quiz and receiving her score, she ran up and hugged me and said, "I did it!"

As Maria and I looked back over the questions she had missed, she was able to give me the correct response for each one. She kept saying to me, "I knew that was the right answer!" When I asked her why she didn't choose the correct response the first time, she said that she didn't know. As soon as we finished going over the quiz, she asked me if she could select another book at the higher level.

FINAL ANALYSIS

Maria made great improvement during the study. Her accuracy and fluency improved every week. She was also able to comprehend the text, even though she did experience some difficulty with the vocabulary in the beginning. In her interview, she indicated that you get better at reading the more you do it. This strategy will help her continue to succeed.

Katie

RESULTS

The RESULTS assessment done in March, 2003 indicated that Katie reads at a 5th grade level. At that time, she read with ninety-three percent (93%) accuracy and her fluency rate was 90 correct words per minute (cwpm). She answered four out of five comprehension questions correctly.

SELF-SELECTED LITERATURE

Katie selected the book <u>Blue Willow</u>, by Doris Gates. She selected the book because quite a few of the students in my class had read it and really like it. I also have told the students that it was one of my favorite books when I was their age. She really wanted to read it. Like Maria, she was concerned that maybe it would be too difficult for her and that she would fail. According to Accelerated Reader, it is leveled at a 6.5. It is one and a half grade levels above her assessed reading level.

RUNNING RECORDS Table 4.3

Running Record Session	Accuracy	Fluency
1	86%	63 cwpm
2	98%	108 cwpm
3	93%	106 cwpm
4	95%	108 cwpm

Katie improved greatly in the areas of accuracy and fluency between her first and second running record sessions. She was able to maintain these levels throughout the rest of the book.

PROBLEM AREAS

Katie really struggled in her initial running record session. The vocabulary was quite difficult for her and she spent too much time trying to figure out certain words. The second time she read, she showed a lot of improvement. However, vocabulary proved to be a problem for her throughout the reading of the book. She would write down words in her journal and we would discuss them. After several of our discussions, she would then say that now that she understood the word, a particular part of the story was clearer.

The other area that seemed to be a problem was her fluency. It was affected greatly during her first reading because she spent too much time on unknown words. However, it improved as she went along.

ACCELERATED READER QUIZ

Katie took the quiz for the book and got nine out of ten questions correct. According to the Accelerated Reader program, this is considered a passing grade. She was very excited and actually surprised that she had done so well. She kept saying throughout the process that the book seemed really easy, but she was worried she wouldn't pass.

The question that Katie missed was literal in nature. After reviewing the question, she was able to select the correct response.

FINAL ANALYSIS

In her interview, Katie indicated that it was important to read every word correctly. Her response sheds light on her initial running record results. She spent so much time on the unknown words because she believed that she needed to know them to be able to read the passage successfully. As we spent time together throughout this process, we worked on strategies she could use to figure out the words, such as reading the rest of the sentence or looking the word up in the dictionary. She slowly put these strategies to use and they paid off for her. Her fluency and accuracy improved.

Louis

RESULTS

The RESULTS assessment done in March, 2003 indicated that Louis reads at a 5th grade level. At that time, he read with ninety-five percent (95%) accuracy and his fluency rate was 60 correct words per minute (cwpm). He answered four out of five comprehension questions correctly.

SELF-SELECTED LITERATURE

Louis selected the book <u>Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets</u>, by J.K. Rowling. He has wanted to read this book for a long time, but I always pointed him in a different direction because it is a difficult book. He wouldn't even go see the movie because he wanted to read the book first. According to Accelerated Reader, it is leveled at 6.7. It is almost two grade levels above his assessed reading level.

RUNNING RECORDS Table 4.4

Running Record Session	Accuracy	Fluency
1	100%	114 cwpm
2	98%	112 cwpm
3	99%	85 cwpm
4	99%	100 cwpm

Louis's accuracy stayed steady throughout the book. His fluency took a fairly large dip between sessions two and three but then came back up a bit in session four.

PROBLEM AREAS

Louis did not take the time to record in his journal. He could never seem to find it or it was always at home when he needed it at school or at school when he needed it at home. This caused me quite a bit of concern because I only had the opportunity to interact with him during our running record sessions. However, he always did very well during our sessions. He was always very accurate in his reading and could always answer any questions I had about the book. His summaries were detailed and complete. I was pleasantly surprised to get so much out of him because he is extremely quiet and rarely talks to me.

ACCELERATED READER QUIZ

Louis took the quiz for the book and got nine out of ten questions correct. According to the Accelerated Reader program, this is considered a passing grade. The one question he missed was literal in nature. When we reviewed it together, he was able to pick out the correct response.

FINAL ANALYSIS

Louis made great improvement throughout this process. When I look at his scores on the RESULTS assessment done in March, his accuracy was fine but his fluency was extremely low. According to the benchmarks

established by the California Reading and Literature Project (CRLP), sixty (60) cwpm is the benchmark for 1st grade. This is precisely why I selected him for this project. I wanted to see if he could somehow improve and improve he did! Although his fluency dipped a little during the 3rd running record session, he was able to bring it back up during the 4th session. During that 3rd session, Louis paused a lot during the reading. When I asked him about that, he couldn't give me a specific reason. He just read a little slower that day. In his interview, Louis said that learning how to read faster was the most important thing about reading. He knows where his difficulties are and seems committed to doing what he needs to, reading more, to make the improvements necessary.

Peter

RESULTS

The RESULTS assessment done in March, 2003 indicated that Peter reads at a 4th grade level. At that time, he read with ninety-six percent (96%) accuracy and his fluency rate was seventy (70) cwpm. He answered all five of the comprehension questions correctly.

SELF-SELECTED LITERATURE

Peter selected the book Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, by J. K. Rowling. As with Louis, he has wanted to read this book for quite a while. He also deliberately ignored the movie because he wanted to read the book first. According to Accelerated Reader, it is leveled at a 6.7. It is almost three grade levels above his assessed reading level.

RUNNING RECORD Table 4.5

Running Record Session	Accuracy	Fluency
1	96%	103 cwpm
2	95%	93 cwpm
3	96%	76 cwpm
4	96%	90 cwpm

Peter's accuracy remained steady throughout the story. His fluency rate dropped between sessions one and two and two and three. He then picked up speed between the final two sessions.

PROBLEM AREAS

Peter's difficulties with reading have always been accuracy and fluency. At times, he reads very haltingly, almost sounding out every letter

of every word. Since he has begun receiving services in the reading resource room, he has made a lot of improvement. While he maintained a high level of accuracy while reading the book, he did have a dip in his fluency rate. As I looked back at the passages that he read, the third one had more difficult words that he needed to figure out. This was definitely a stumbling block for Peter.

ACCELERATED READER QUIZ

Peter took the quiz for the book and got all ten questions correct. He was really excited but said that he knew he could do it. He told me, "Now I know I can read anything."

FINAL ANALYSIS

Peter did an amazing job throughout this process. He worked very hard. Because the actual act of reading is difficult for him, I was really impressed with his commitment to finishing the book. Some nights he read close to thirty pages. That is a lot, especially when you look at the pages in the book. The print is relatively small and there are no pictures. Peter never doubted that he would be successful.

Mark

RESULTS

The RESULTS assessment done in March, 2003 indicated that Mark reads at a 5th grade level. At that time, he read with ninety-six percent (96%) accuracy and his fluency rate was seventy-four cwpm. He answered four out of five comprehension questions correctly.

SELF-SELECTED LITERATURE

Mark selected the book Blue Willow by Doris Gates. He selected the book because his friend had read it and told him it was really good. According to Accelerated Reader, it is leveled at a 6.5. It is one and a half grade levels above his assessed reading.

Shortly after selecting the book, Mark made the decision to drop out of the study. He told me that he didn't want to have to do extra work.

FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE

At the end of the project, the five remaining students filled out a questionnaire. When asked what they thought helped the most during the project, the students all felt that reading everyday was most important. One of the students also said that working with me helped too.

When asked how your reading has improved since the beginning of this project, one of the students responded that he was now able to read harder words. Another student said she no longer felt nervous about reading a more difficult book.

All of the students felt that they still have problems with their reading. A couple of the students pointed out that they need to read faster. The other three indicated that vocabulary was still an issue.

The students all felt that they have changed as readers since beginning this project. One said that she used to not really like to read but now she does. Another pointed out that he now reads faster than before. Still another indicated that now there wasn't the fear of reading a more difficult book.

When asked if being able to select their own book was helpful, the remaining five students all answered yes. When having to explain why they felt that way, they all pointed out that they could read something they were actually interested in.

The final question asked the students whether or not they would participate in a project like this again. They all responded yes. A couple of the students added that it was a lot of fun.

CONCLUSION

The results of the data analyzed indicate that the students all successfully read a chapter book considered to be substantially above their own reading level, and four out of the five passed a comprehension quiz for their books. Their attitudes toward reading seemed to improve throughout this project. In the next chapter, I will present my conclusions regarding the data.

CHAPTER FIVE

The results of this case study were amazing. Four out of five students were able to improve their reading level by one and a half to two grade levels, and the fifth student was able to improve her fluency and comprehension. There is something, though, that is even more astonishing. These students once saw themselves as poor readers. They had very little confidence in their abilities and didn't particularly enjoy reading. Now, however, they see themselves in a different light. They feel successful. They are ready to tackle other difficult books and have the confidence needed to be successful.

In this final chapter I will discuss the findings of this case study and how they relate to the literature reviewed and my three research questions. Next, I will discuss what for me were the most significant aspects of my research. Finally, I will provide recommendations for the use of dynamic assessment in other classrooms.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How Did Students Perform with Difficult Texts?

The first question that guided my research was: To what extent is a student able to successfully read a book that is not, according to traditional

(static) assessment, at their reading level when given assistance? The literature supports the idea that it is possible for students to be successful when attempting to do difficult work with the assistance of an adult or more capable peer. That is the premise of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD). In fact, Hedegaard (1990) indicates that students need to be pushed into their ZPD in order to develop their learning. According to the literature, teachers can do this by providing experiences for students that require them to challenge themselves to be able to successfully complete the tasks. When a teacher is mediating instruction for the students, they are able to achieve more (Campione & Brown, 1987).

The students involved in this study proved that they could successfully read a difficult book with assistance. Four out of the five students passed the Accelerated Reader quiz for their selected book. One student made a leap of one and a half grade levels, two students jumped up two grade levels, and one student made the extraordinary leap of almost three grade levels! They all worked incredibly hard. They listened to suggestions I gave them. They questioned me when they didn't understand something. I found them to be completely engaged in the process. The

assistance I was able to give them not only helped them for that particular

moment. They came away from the process with some new strategies that

will continue to help them in the future

How Did Self Selection Affect Student Performance?

The second question that guided my research was: How is student

performance affected when they self-select the reading text for

assessment purposes? The literature points to the importance of allowing

students to choose reading material that is of interest to them. When

students are allowed to do this, the motivation to read the book is there.

They are more likely to focus when they are reading, instead of perhaps

skipping a few paragraphs or even a few pages. As stated earlier, reading

assessment that comes from meaningful text should be used more often

(Routman, 1991, p. 405).

I can recall how excited the students were in the beginning when they

were in the process of selecting a book to read. They each spent a lot of

time looking in the school library and in our classroom library. They were

searching for the perfect book. They asked my opinion on different books.

They also turned to their classmates, asking them about different books

they had read. When they had made their final choices, they were so

excited to begin. They eagerly waited for the time to come when they would be able to take the Accelerated Reader quiz. At the end of the study, when they each realized they had achieved great success, the process began again. They are all now searching yet again for that perfect book!

I had no idea what these students would be able to accomplish at the beginning of this study. Obviously, my hope was that they would be successful. However, what I had seen over and over again with these students was frustration when they would not pass an Accelerated Reader quiz. My excitement, though, began to build when I saw how excited they were about what they were reading. I came to believe that it was really possible for them to be successful. They cared about what they were reading. The interest they had in the material was helping to guide them through the process.

How Might We Use Dynamic Assessment?

The final question that guided my research was: How might the dynamic assessment protocol be used in conjunction with the traditional (static) assessments to determine a student's reading level? Static forms of assessment do not give educators a complete picture of what a student is capable of doing. It is a mere snapshot of what he/she is able to do at that

particular time. A dynamic approach takes into account the whole child. It offers assistance where it's needed. Its focus is on helping the student improve in areas which may be causing them problems. However, it does begin with a static form of assessment. The first step is to assess the student alone so the teacher can have a baseline measure (Stanley, 1996).

What I discovered during the course of this study was that having a baseline measure is helpful for a couple of reasons. First, it was really important for me to see where each child was. I could easily pick out areas that were problems. It helped me to establish a starting point. Secondly, having that baseline was important for the students. They were each so amazed at the progress they made. One student in particular couldn't get over the fact that he started out so low with his fluency. He mentioned his improvement in that area several times on his final questionnaire. I also believe that the students will approach their next experience with a static assessment with a different perspective. They know where their weaknesses are and have learned some strategies to overcome those weaknesses.

THE BIG "A-HA!"

I came away from this study completely amazed with what my students were able to accomplish. I believe I knew in the beginning that they

would achieve some success. I just never expected them to all do so well. I also didn't anticipate my learning in this process. I was so focused on the students gaining knowledge that I completely ignored the fact that I was going to come away from this process with new knowledge too. What kept coming up for me was how important it was that the students chose their reading material.

I have always encouraged my students to read. I read aloud to my 6th graders every day. I require my students to read independently in class and at home. The books they read are always self-selected. However, I've always required them to read something at their reading level. I always discouraged the lower readers from reading books that would be difficult. Once we started Accelerated Reader at our school, I basically forbid them from reading more difficult books. I told them they needed to search for books at their own level because that was the only way they were going to improve. I couldn't have been more wrong.

From the moment my students began reading their self-selected books, I knew that I had come upon something important. What I was seeing was something I had never seen before. Students who, prior to this study, would do just about anything to avoid reading had their noses in their books

all the time. They were excited to share things with me every day from their books. They started out struggling with the material but as they became more engrossed with what they were reading, those struggles seemed to slowly disappear. I know that the assistance I gave them was partly responsible for this but the buy-in was stronger because they were reading something they wanted to read.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several things I would like to see happen as a result of this research. First I will describe what I plan to do in my own classroom and then I will discuss what I would like to see happen in other classrooms.

Dynamic assessment procedures worked for my students. They not only enabled them to perform better, but they also helped me to help my students effectively. When one of them needed additional help with vocabulary, I could point them in the right direction. When another student didn't understand what was happening with the plot, together we could go back in the story and figure out what was going on. With the success I had with these five students, I am looking forward to next year so that I can implement the procedures I followed in this study with all of my students.

Allowing them some choice when it comes to assessment will only benefit the students.

The beauty of dynamic assessment is that it can also be extended to other curricular areas. I began doing some dynamic assessment this year with some students in math. First, a static form of assessment was given to establish a baseline. After that, students worked with me or other more capable students while solving problems that were difficult. Working on these problems together provided the less capable student the opportunity to learn new strategies. When the time came for the students to solve problems on their own, they not only had the skills but also the confidence to do so successfully. I've had a few children go from D's to B's in math. This is something I will definitely continue with next year and beyond!

There are several things I would recommend other teachers do. First and foremost, I would like them to allow their students to self-select reading materials, regardless of the student's reading level. If there is a particular book that a lower performing student is interested in, let him/her have a chance to read it. A lot of times, books that are level-appropriate don't interest older students. They don't necessarily want to read about eight or nine year olds when they are eleven or twelve. They want to read

about things that mirror their own experiences or intrigue them. If the student will be reading the book for assessment purposes, it's extremely important that he or she has a desire to read the book.

Secondly, I would like teachers to set aside time during the school day for their students to read these self-selected books. I would recommend that students have at least twenty minutes of class time everyday to read what they want. I would also recommend that this time be sacred. Nothing else can be going on during this time. If the student knows that he/she will be expected to take an Accelerated Reader quiz when he/she is finished with the book, this time to read will be used properly. I definitely found that to be true with my students. Often times they begged to continue reading after their time was up. If a school doesn't have Accelerated Reader, students can still be motivated to read if they need to do a book report or a book talk about what they've read. The important thing here is that they read and enjoy it.

Finally, I would like teachers to use dynamic assessment procedures with their students. I would recommend that they begin with one or two low-performing students and then expand from there. The students can tape themselves reading a passage of their book once a week. The teacher can

first listen to the tape and determine the accuracy and fluency levels. Next, the teacher and student can listen to the tape together. This will allow both of them to figure out where the problem areas are. This was a really powerful part of my research. The students were able to critique their own reading and also ask questions of the teacher. This enabled them to work on issues, such as fluency and vocabulary, as they continued to read their books. This can be a time-consuming process at first but it's well worth it.

Dynamic assessment also allows students and teachers to become true partners. They are consistently working together to make improvements that will benefit the student. The opinions of both the teacher and the student matter. If the student feels he/she needs more work with fluency for example, then as a team the teacher and student can come up with a strategy that will help the student improve.

CONCLUSION

There is currently so much focus on improving students' reading levels. For the most part, the assistance they're getting involves the use of scripted reading programs. The use of these programs does not allow the students any choice in what they're reading. I believe this study proved that

student choice is crucial. The motivation it provided kept the students "in the game."

Students and teachers working together to make positive change is a goal all educators should have. The results of this case study prove that dynamic assessment really works. I believe that its implementation into classrooms would make a big difference for students.

Name _____ Date _____

Interest Inventory

Please ✔ the right spaces to help me get to know you!

1. Do you like to read?

_____ yes   _____ sometimes   _____ no

2. What kinds of books do you like to read? (√ as many as you want!)

_____ animal   _____ science   _____ true

_____ make-believe   _____ about people   _____ science fiction

_____ mysteries   _____ poetry   _____ funny

_____ series   _____ myths   _____ folktales

_____ plays   _____ riddles/jokes   _____ books with pictures

_____ scary stories   _____ books that tell how to make things

3. Who is your favorite author? _____

4. What is your favorite book? _____

5. What book would you like to read?_____

6. What magazines do you like to read?

_____

7. Which do you like best?

_____ hardcover books   _____ softcover books

Why? _____

_____

8. What helps you to choose a book to read?

_____

_____

_____

Name _____ APPENDIX B _____ Date _____

STUDENT INTERVIEW

1. What is the most important thing about reading?

   _____

   _____

2. When you are reading, what are you trying to do?

   _____

   _____

3. What is reading?

   _____

   _____

4. When you come to a word you don't know, what do you do?

   _____

   _____

5. Do you think it's important to read every word correctly? Why? Why not?

   _____

   _____

6. What makes a person a good reader?

   _____

   _____

7. Do you think good readers ever come to a word they don't know? If yes, what do you think they do?

   _____

   _____

Name _____ Date _____

RUNNING RECORD

Title of Book _____ Author _____

Page	Reading Performance	Errors M S V	Self-Corrects M S V
		TOTALS	

M = Meaning Cue   S = Structure Cue   V = Visual Cue

Name _____ Date _____

RUNNING RECORD SUMMARY

Title of Book_____ Author_____

Summary of Reading Performance

    Total # of Words _____   Total # of Errors _____   % of accuracy _____

Reading Level (Circle the one that matches the % of accuracy.)

    95%–100% = Independent   90–94% = Instructional   89% or lower = Frustration

    Total # of Self-Corrections _____   Self-Correction Rate 1:_____

NOTE: Self-correction rates of 1:3, 1:4, or 1:5 are good. Each ratio shows that the reader is attending to discrepancies when reading.

Summary of Observations

  1. What did the reader do when unknown words were encountered? (✔ all that apply)

    _____ made no attempt

    The reader made an attempt in these ways:

    _____ asked for help   _____ looked at pictures

    _____ used letter/sound knowledge   _____ used meaning

    _____ used structure (syntax)   _____ tried again

    _____ skipped it and continued reading   _____ looked at another source

  2. How often did the reader attempt to self-correct when meaning was not maintained?

    (Circle one.)   always   frequently   sometimes   seldom   never

  3. When the reader did self-correct, which cues were used? (✔ all that apply.)

    _____ letter/sound knowledge (visual)   _____ meaning   _____ syntax (structure)

Calculating Accuracy Rate

  1. Subtract the total # of errors from the total # of words in the text to determine the number of words that were correctly read.

  2. Divide the number of words correctly read by the number of words in the passage to determine % of accuracy.

    EXAMPLE: 58 total words – 12 errors = 46 words read correctly

                 46 words read correctly ÷ 58 total words = 79% accuracy

Calculating Self-Correction Rate

Use this formula: $\dfrac{\text{self-corrections} + \text{errors}}{\text{self-corrections}} = 1:\underline{\hspace{1cm}}$

APPENDIX D

End of Project Questionnaire

1. What do you think helped you most with your reading during this project?

2. How has your reading improved since the beginning of this project?

3. What problems do you think you're still having with your reading?

4. How have you changed as a reader since beginning this project?

5. Do you think selecting your own book was helpful? Why or why not?

6. Would you participate in a project like this again?

MODIFIED MISCUE ANALYSIS

Miscue Record of_____ Grade_____

Title and Pages_____ Date_____

M = Meaning. Does the miscue make sense?

S = Sentence structure. Does the sentence sound right?

V = Visual. Does the miscue look like the word?

Student	Text	Cues Used
		M S V
		M S V
		M S V
		M S V
		M S V
		M S V
		M S V
		M S V
		M S V
		M S V

Strategies Used _____

_____

Comprehension _____

_____

Fluency _____

_____

Needs to Learn... _____

_____

Adapted from Practical Assessments for Literature-Based Reading Classrooms by Adele Fiderer, Scholastic Professional Books, 1995.

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