

Case Summary and Analysis

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### Student Information

This student is male and entering seventh grade. He has difficulty with pronunciation related to speech. This impediment can make it difficult to identify errors. When we began our tutoring sessions, he expressed a lack of confidence in spelling. I observed that one reason why spelling may be difficult for him is because he cannot hear the subtle sounds in words like “ct”. He would often leave out a sound or add a sound. This student had been through the early, next, and higher steps programs at UURC. He was eager to learn and very focused on his errors and on improving his accuracy. He struggled with comprehension, even on lower level texts.

### Summary and Analysis of Student’s foundation for reading success at Baseline

The student began the UURC reading intervention program with 40 words correct per minute. This is compared to a desirable 120 wcpm ideal for his chronological age. In his last 3 sessions, he read with 96% accuracy in each session. However, his comprehension was an area of weakness. When performing the reading level assessments, his scores for three grade levels were 62%, 0%, and 80%. While comprehension scores do not affect reading leveling, his lack of comprehension of text below his reading level was concerning. He began the Summer session at a 4M reading level.

### Summary and Analysis of the Intervention

The Higher Steps lesson plans consist of five areas. The first is work with a word bank. In this student’s case, the word bank consisted of cards for each vowel. When presented with a vowel

card, the student would repeat a mantra for the short and long sounds of that vowel. Also included in the word bank were cue cards for closed syllable rule breaker patterns including -ind and -olt. The student would repeat a mantra for each to help him identify and remember the sounds that these rule breakers make. This student had already previously completed all of the modules that we worked on together. This meant that the mantras came easily to him and he would recite them automatically. The mantras were helpful with spelling and decoding words. The word bank typically took about one minute.

The second step was referred to as fluency work: repeated reading. The student would perform a third and fourth reading of the same passage read during the previous session. Each reading was timed to last two minutes. During that time, the student would read and the instructor would record any errors and the number of words read. These repeated readings were an area where this student would focus on the number errors. After each reading, the number of words read and the number of errors were recorded and graphed. Following the third reading, the instructor would review with the student all errors that were made. This student would often repeat the same errors. I found that if I pointed out the errors, asked him to read the word, then read the word in context, he was less likely to make the same error. The student enjoyed performing well and would often read at an increased pace. However, comprehension questions would indicate that he was only understanding a fraction of what he was reading.

The third step in the lesson plan was the assisted reading of new material. We would begin with a preview of the next which consisted of an overall introduction to what was going to happen, as well as a review of what had happened in the text previously. The preview was also a time to introduce difficult words or new vocabulary. This step was important in helping my student to

comprehend the text and to be prepared for difficult words. We would then echo read three passages. During echo reading, the student followed along while I read, then read the passage himself, with correction as needed. This step was valuable for my student, especially in helping him to be accurate and true to the text. Following the echo reading, the student would read a section of the text independently. This was referred to as the solo reading section. The instructor would still provide correction and support, as well as periodically check for understanding. During this section, I would often identify other difficult words or vocabulary that my student struggled with. Following the solo reading section, the rate and accuracy check would begin. A timer was set while the student read one hundred words. Errors were recorded, but not corrected unless he paused for three seconds. The student had become accustomed to knowing when he was being timed and reading more quickly. I tried not telling him, just to see if it would affect his performance. He read more slowly, but with more accuracy. However, he was frustrated with me for not telling him when I was starting, so we went back to letting him know with a star next to the starting word. Following the rate and accuracy, the student would continue to read with support both in reading and comprehension far enough to have the required number of words for the repeated reading section.

Advanced word study would follow the assisted reading section. During advanced word study, the lesson for the module was presented. The lessons included direct instruction, whiteboard work, an accuracy or fluency activity, and spelling. I found that my student had already been introduced to the modules, so we advanced through them quickly. I provided as many opportunities as I could for my student to participate in the whiteboard work. He particularly enjoyed the activities, especially when we would be on opposing teams. These activities also

increased his accuracy and prepared him for the word checks that would determine if he could advance to the next module. Once he had practiced the new concept, he would apply it in the spelling of four words. My student benefitted from tapping out the sounds in the syllable he was spelling. This technique was particularly helpful when he could not hear a sound or was inserting a sound.

The final section of the tutoring session was a repeated reading of the text used for the rate and accuracy, as well as the following text. I learned that I needed to be strict in keeping my student to the text. He tended to leave off suffixes, particularly the 's'. We would review errors before the final reading and graph the words read and the number of errors.

#### Summary and Analysis of the student's reading abilities at posttest

According to the Dibels assessment, my student increased from 40 wcpm to 89 wcpm, compared to a grade goal of 120 wcpm. The student did test out of one book at the 4M level, and was working on a second book at the end of the session. Due to his reading level being more than two grade levels below his chronological age, even after nearly 90 sessions at UURC, it was recommended that the Wilson program would be a good fit for him. I also recommended to his mother that he be held to the text, especially regarding suffixes. He had developed a strong understanding of the syllable types he had studied, and I encouraged him to use that understanding in his spelling and while decoding new words. He was also encouraged to continue his reading at home. I mentioned some comprehension strategies that might be helpful including mapping out the plot, illustrating the book, and answering questions.

### Summary and reflection of your own teaching practices

The Higher Steps program has been so informative in understanding the English language as well as ways to teach reading. So much of what we teach these students are things that I was never taught- syllable types, schwa, and spelling rules are specific examples. I honestly think that I am a better speller after taking the training! The reading program is designed to provide very specific direct instruction to support struggling readers. It was interesting to see how some concepts were picked up easily, while others really needed to be taught repeatedly. The process helped me to have more respect and compassion for students who are struggling readers. It was also very empowering as a teacher to know some of the research-based methods that I can use to support my students. I also learned to adapt to the needs of my individual students. This was particularly enjoyable for me because I had the luxury of working with one student at a time.