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Diagnostic Assessment Report for H.E.  
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2213: Diagnosis and Reading Instruction

Introduction

One of my main objectives this semester was to conduct a case study. The focus of this study was to diagnose the reading needs of a second grade student at Haine Elementary in Seneca Valley School District. In order to protect this student's confidentiality I will refer to her as H.E. To effectively determine the reading needs of this particular student, I have administered a series of assessments over the course of this semester. I am optimistic that I will be able to use this data analysis to guide the implementation of strategic interventions.

Before beginning sessions with H.E., it was essential to gather background information to better understand her reading history. My first source of information was H.E.'s individual performance profile from the DIBELS assessment. With this data I was able to see a clear depiction of H.E.'s progress from kindergarten through first grade. The area that I feel is most notable regarding H.E.'s DIBEL profile is the nonsense word fluency portion of the assessment. This portion of the assessment is used to illustrate a student's understanding of the alphabetic principle. Throughout kindergarten H.E.'s scores labeled her as a student with "some risk" in this area. Then, by the middle of first grade, she demonstrated strong progress and was placed in an "emerging" category. However, just five months later, H.E. regressed into the "deficit" category due to a twelve-point decrease in score. Another piece of data that has provided me with information about H.E.'s reading history is her NWEA MAP report. Each second grader at Haine Elementary completes this assessment at the beginning of the school year. H.E.'s results show that she is performing at or below the thirty-third percentile in the areas of reading critically across content areas and reading, analyzing, and interpreting literature. This assessment has also labeled H.E. as a beginning reader according to the Lexile scoring system.

In order to gain a complete picture of H.E.'s reading history, I supplemented the information from her test scores with input from her first grade teacher as well as my own observations of H.E. in her current classroom during a reading lesson. The majority of what I saw during my initial observation of H.E. was consistent with reading behaviors noted by her first grade teacher. H.E. is an extremely positive child who participates frequently in class. During my observation, she often raised her hand to volunteer to read aloud. However, after volunteering, she struggled through the paragraph. She read word by word and depended on her teacher to supply her with letter sounds, typically medial vowels, and to reiterate the meaning of what she had just read. I was also able to observe H.E. write responses that the class had developed together. H.E. was attentive throughout this exercise as she copied the sentences neatly from the overhead projector. Although she was focused on the task, H.E. repeatedly inserted or omitted letters. Most commonly she did not include the "s" that was necessary to pluralize the noun in the sentence. This

is consistent with a statement from her first grade teacher who explained that H.E. “will neglect to look at a word in its entirety, she will guess at endings.” It is important to note that when H.E. reread her sentences aloud, she read the nouns as plural even though there was no “s” written down. Also, she did not realize her omission until her teacher pointed it out to her. This suggested that H.E. was not be using letter knowledge to fully decode and encode words, but relying on her knowledge of syntax and semantics to read.

After these initial impressions of my case study, I was eager to begin our sessions together and to learn more about H.E. as a reader. During the past several weeks, H.E. has maintained a positive attitude and willingness to try new, sometimes challenging, reading activities. I believe that this positivity and work ethic is something that has been instilled in her by her parents, who have been very supportive of this analysis of H.E.’s reading behaviors. The assessments described below have provided me with important diagnostic information that will be used to guide my future instruction in order to ensure that all interventions are purposeful and target H.E.’s specific instructional needs.

### Assessments

<u>Assessment</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
<b>Boyd Test of Phonics</b>	<i>To determine how a student uses his/her knowledge of the alphabetic principle to decode nonsense words</i>
<b>Qualitative Reading Inventory Word Lists</b>	<i>To determine a student’s reading level based on the accuracy of reading grade level sight words</i>
<b>Writing Sample</b>	<i>To determine how a student is able to put his/her thoughts into written form</i>
<b>Elementary Spelling Inventory</b>	<i>To determine how a student encodes various orthographic patterns</i>
<b>Qualitative Fluency Testing</b>	<i>To determine a student’s rate and accuracy of reading</i>
<b>Basic Phonics Skills Test</b>	<i>To determine a student’s ability to attach phonemes with their corresponding graphemes</i>
<b>Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests: Grade Level 2 Form S</b>	<i>To determine a student’s ability to decode and understand grade level vocabulary words</i>
<b>Qualitative Reading Inventory-Comprehension</b>	<i>To determine if a student can construct meaning from a text he/she reads silently, reads aloud, or listens to</i>

### Data Analysis

#### **Boyd Test of Phonic Abilities**

This assessment was administered at the end of the day on September 28, 2010. To administer this assessment, I created flashcards so H.E. would be able to look at the nonsense words one at a time. When I began this assessment, H.E. asked if we were going to do *all* of the words, showing a sign of being overwhelmed. However, once I explained we may not finish all of them today and that was perfectly fine, her anxiety

diminished. After each group of nonsense words I asked H.E. if she was ready to do the next stack, each time she agreed and we completed the entire Boyd test in one sitting.

Her responses during this assessment were very quick. I had expected her pacing to be much slower because of the strangeness of the nonsense words. H.E.'s speed indicates that she was often guessing rather than using the words on the card to read the word. I also observed that as the nonsense words became more difficult, H.E. would glance at the card, say the initial sound, and then shift her glance up toward the ceiling and attempt to say the remainder of the word without looking at what letters appeared on the card. This may explain why she gave the correct sound for the first letter of all of the nonsense words except for twelve.

As the assessment progressed, the nonsense words became increasingly more complex. I feel that H.E. decoded the nonsense words well until they began to contain vowel digraphs. Typically, H.E. read the vowel digraphs as the short vowel sound for the first vowel shown in the digraph.

### **QRI Word List**

This assessment was administered at the end of the day on October 1, 2010. Because H.E. demonstrates such a positive attitude, I felt it was appropriate to start with the second level word list, which is H.E.'s grade level. Out of the twenty words on the list, H.E. read six accurately. However, it is very important to note that H.E. attempted to identify all twenty of the words automatically. This quick pace is consistent with what I observed during H.E.'s Boyd test. Another observation that is consistent with H.E.'s Boyd test is that although H.E. only accurately read six of twenty words, she accurately stated the first letter's sound for all twenty of the words. This is additional evidence that H.E. reads only the first letter of a word and then impulsively makes a guess to complete the word.

When I presented the first level word list to H.E., she paused to read only two of the words on the list of twenty, maintaining her rapid pace. This time she was able to accurately read twelve of the words, which was an improvement from the second level word list, but still placed H.E. at a frustration level. Again, H.E. read the first letter's sound accurately for all twenty words, but made her errors while completing the word. H.E. reached her instructional level when given the primer word list. On this list she read sixteen of twenty words accurately, and fifteen of those words were identified automatically. In addition, like the two previous lists, H.E. accurately read the first letter of all twenty words accurately. H.E. reached her independent reading level of the pre-primer 2/3-word list when she read eighteen of twenty words accurately.

### **Writing Sample**

To gain a writing sample from H.E. I read her the following prompt: *You are a dog, cat, or other animal in need of a home. Write a letter to your future owner, describing what type of home you would like and what kind of care you need.* After discussing what the prompt was asking for a few moments, I told H.E. that she could use the prewriting space on the paper to brainstorm, or she could begin writing on the lines.

She began in the prewriting section and then copied what she had written onto the lined section of the paper. While observing H.E. during this time I noticed that she was eager to finish the task and that she did not demonstrate much endurance or need to elaborate on her ideas through writing.

H.E. understood that they prompt wanted her to take on the identity of an animal, which she demonstrates through her appropriate use of the pronoun *I*. However, when I encouraged her to write more by asking her what she has to do to care for her own dog she added “I have to play with me.” This shows that she was unable to maintain a consistent voice throughout her writing sample. Looking at H.E.’s writing sample, I also notice that her ideas were structured into one sentence. The second sentence was added only after receiving encouragement to add more to her writing. As I examine H.E.’s ability to encode one of the most interesting errors occurred when H.E. wrote “beloul” for the word “pillow.” H.E. also wrote “blackl” to mean, “blanket.” I found it interesting that H.E. articulates the same sound at the beginning of “blanket” and “pillow,” yet encoded them with different initial graphemes.

### **Elementary Spelling Inventory**

I administered the Elementary Spelling Inventory at the end of the school day on October 5, 2010. Overall, I was impressed by H.E.’s endurance and optimism during this assessment. For this reason I made the decision to administer the assessment in its entirety, even though many of the words are above H.E.’s grade level. H.E. spelled 20% of the words accurately; however, she earned nearly half of the total possible feature points. After examining each word feature category more closely, I was able to deduce that H.E. is able to encode initial and final consonants, short vowels, consonant digraphs, and consonant blends. In fact, she did not miss more than one feature point in any of the aforementioned categories. This tells me that she has mastered the Emergent and Letter Name-Alphabetic stages of spelling and is currently in the middle of the Within Word Pattern spelling stage.

H.E.’s current spelling stage signals that she needs additional instruction on long vowel, other vowel, and inflected ending word features. I believe it is important to note that out of the possible 25 words, H.E. accurately encoded the initial grapheme of 22 words. This shows a consistency between her ability to decode and encode word beginnings. In many prior assessments, such as the QRI word lists, I have noticed that one of H.E.’s strengths is decoding initial phonemes; this strength was also demonstrated in her ability to produce the initial letter of a dictated word. However, when encoding, H.E. was able to provide the accurate final grapheme for 23 of 25 words. This tells me that when words are dictated H.E. is able to hear the initial and ending phonemes and accurately write the corresponding grapheme. This is interesting to me because in prior assessments I have observed H.E.’s tendency to make errors at the end of a word when decoding. This assessment is evidence that H.E. is able to recognize phonemes accurately at the end of a word. This also alludes the to the idea that H.E. is able to attend to each sound in a word’s entirety when she slows down and must produce the graphemes on her own. H.E.’s pace during this assessment was much slower than other assessments as she was responsible for listening to each phoneme and writing the appropriate graphemes

independently. I listened to H.E. repeat the sounds that each word contained and thoughtfully write each word.

### **Quantitative Fluency Testing**

While administering the Quantitative Fluency Testing, H.E. read three different passages while I timed her for one minute. Errors were not analyzed for the purpose of this assessment, as the main objective was to calculate H.E. rate and accuracy. After each cold read, meaning H.E. had never seen the passage before the assessment, I used the 2005 Hasbrouck & Tindal Oral Reading Fluency Data to find H.E.'s placement when looking at national fluency norms. The first passage H.E. read was a level two, nonfiction passage. While reading this grade level passage, H.E. was able to read 49 words correctly in one minute. Given a grade level fiction passage, H.E.'s correct word per minute count increased to 59 correct words per minute. These scores were used to find H.E.'s average correct words per minute, 54. Based on this average, I was able to find H.E.'s percentile according to the Hasbrouck & Tindal fluency scale, which fell slightly above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile.

During this assessment I also gave H.E. a passage that was one level lower than her current grade level. Due to the nature of the fluency norms, this reading cannot be used to find H.E.'s percentile; however, it is interesting to note that H.E.'s correct words per minute count increased to 70 words when the difficulty of the passage was lessened. I believe that H.E.'s rate correlates to how familiar H.E. was with the vocabulary in each passage.

### **Basic Phonics Skills Test**

The Basic Phonics Skills Test was administered on the morning of October 5, 2010. This assessment is divided into four sections: consonant sounds and name, consonant digraph sounds, short vowel sounds, and reading words containing various vowel patterns, blends, inflections, and polysyllabic patterns. Each section is presented separately as to not overwhelm the student. I also used a marker to help H.E. keep her place and focus on only the letters or words that were showing. In the first section of the assessment I was surprised that H.E. identified 17 out of 21 letter names accurately. When asked to name the letters shown on the page H.E. provided *x for z, d for b, d for b, and g for j*. Also during this section H.E. was asked to provide each letter's sound, which she did accurately for 19 of 21 letters. I found it interesting that H.E. did not name the letters *z, b, d, and j* correctly, yet she was able to identify the sounds that correspond to those letters. Her errors in letter sounds were made when she said that the grapheme *y* made a short */a/* sound and when she associated the */p/* sound with the letter *q*. However, when shown the grapheme *p* earlier in the assessment, H.E. accurately gave the sound */p/*. In addition, later in the assessment H.E. accurately provides the short vowel sound for the letter *a*, even though that was the same sound she had associated that sound with the letter *y* a few moments before.

In the second section of the assessment, H.E. accurately identified all consonant digraph sounds, including both pronunciations of */th/*. In the third section of the assessment, H.E. identified each short vowel sound, except for the short */o/* sound. She

gave the short /u/ sound for both the letter *o* as well as the letter *u*. Although she was able to identify 4 of 5 short vowel sounds, H.E. only read 5 of 10 CVC words accurately. This shows a discrepancy between H.E.'s ability to identify a short vowel sound in isolation and her ability to apply that knowledge when a short vowel is used in a word. During the remainder of the fourth section, H.E. demonstrated strengths in the areas of consonant blends and words with a final *e*.

However, as the assessment went on and became more challenging, H.E. was able to read the first letters of a word accurately, but was not able to accurately read the word ending. For example, shown the word *feed*, H.E. said *fen*; shown *burn*, H.E. said *bar*; shown *lawn*, H.E. said *lay*. It was also interesting that H.E. often read only the base word when shown a word that had an inflected suffix. For instance, H.E. read *fill* for *filled*, *let* for *letting*, and *rest* for *rested*. This provides further evidence that H.E. has difficulty attending to word endings while decoding. It is also important to note that during this assessment I observed H.E. looking for familiar word parts as a strategy for decoding unfamiliar words. In one case, she slowed her pace when looking at the word *ladder* and read *add*, then *adder*, and finally *ladder*. This is evidence that H.E. is able to examine word parts, including word endings, when she recognizes that the word is unfamiliar. It may be true that H.E. does not consistently monitor her own reading to be aware of when she needs to slow her pace and use this strategy.

### **Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests**

At the second grade level, the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test contains three subtests: Word Decoding, Word Knowledge, and Comprehension. I made the decision to administer only the Word Decoding and Word Knowledge subtests to H.E., as those are the areas that I have found to be the most problematic for H.E. During the Word Decoding and Word Knowledge subtests the student is required to look at a picture and choose the word that is most closely represented by the picture, given four word choices. The subtests aim to measure the student's ability to decode each word choice as well as the vastness of the student's vocabulary. Raw scores can then be used to determine percentiles and grade level equivalencies regarding these content areas, as this is a normed and formal assessment.

On the Word Decoding subtest, H.E. answered 19 of 43 questions accurately. This places her at the 18<sup>th</sup> percentile of second grade students. I feel that this score was largely in result of the speed with which H.E. completed the assessment. H.E. was allotted twenty minutes to complete this assessment; however, she was finished with all 43 items on the assessment in approximately six minutes. This means that H.E. spent approximately 8 seconds to look at the picture, read four word choices, and select her answer. H.E. maintained this speed when completing the Word Knowledge portion of this assessment. On this subtest she accurately answered 11 of the 43 items. This placed her at the 6<sup>th</sup> percentile and at the beginning first grade level for this skill.

To better understand these low scores on the assessment I felt it was necessary to review a portion of the assessment with H.E. Together we looked at the first twenty items of the Word Decoding subtest. For each item, I covered the word choices so that H.E. would be able to focus on the picture. After asking H.E. to describe what she saw in each

picture, I revealed the four word choices and asked her to find the word that matched what the picture depicted. Completing the twenty items in this manner, H.E. was able to answer 15 correctly immediately. H.E. also answered the remaining five items correctly; however, I prompted her to look at all of the letters and attempt to sound out each word choice entirely before selecting a final answer. Prompts were given after her first response was incorrect.

After analyzing both H.E.'s initial raw scores as well as the information I gained through reviewing a portion of the assessment with H.E., I was able to form a few conclusions about H.E.'s decoding ability and vocabulary. Her responses on this assessment, the speed with which she completed each subtest, as well as my past observations of H.E. support the hypothesis that for many of the items H.E. attended to only the first few letters and then guessed at the remainder of the word. This guessing caused her to be unsuccessful as all given word choices contain only slight differences (*juggle, jungle, jangle, jingle*). H.E.'s responses on this assessment also suggest that her vocabulary is not foremost reason that she found each of these subtests to be difficult, the immediate hindrance exists in the area of word decoding. I believe in many cases H.E. understood the concept being depicted in the picture, but she was unable to decode to minor differences between word choices to select the appropriate answer. For example, she selected *mounted* for *mountain*, even after identifying the picture as a *mountain*.

### **Qualitative Reading Inventory-5 Comprehension**

The purpose of this series of assessments was to determine if H.E. has any difficulty understanding text that she reads silently, reads aloud, or listens to. Passages were selected from the Qualitative Reading Inventory-5 based on the frustration, instructional, and independent levels that were found after administering the QRI-5 word lists earlier in the school year. H.E. read her independent level passage silently before answering the comprehension questions. Because she was able to decode this passage with ease, H.E. had no difficulty in answering all five explicit comprehension questions accurately, placing her at an independent comprehension level for the pre-primer 3 level.

After reading the primer passage, H.E.'s instructional level according to the QRI-5 Word Lists, H.E. was able to answer four of six comprehension questions accurately. This means that the primer level is H.E.'s instructional level in the area of comprehension. It is important to note that the two questions H.E. did not answer accurately were implicit and required her to think beyond what was directly stated in the text. This indicates that she may have been unable to allocate her attention between decoding and comprehension evenly, as decoding this instructional level passage used a great deal of her focus. Because H.E.'s attention was on decoding the passage, she was unable to simultaneously use higher order thinking skills to think implicitly beyond the text. However, because the majority of errors H.E. did make while reading the passage aloud did not change the meaning of the passage, H.E. was able to answer explicit questions pertaining to the text as well as generate a complete retell of the story.

The final passage was read aloud to H.E., as the text was at her frustration level. After listening to the passage, H.E. answered all six of the comprehension questions accurately. This shows that she is able to answer both implicit and explicit questions

pertaining to a level 1 passage, given she does not have to allocate her attention between decoding and comprehension. This was a very important finding in understanding H.E. as a reader because it shows that when H.E. does not have to allocate any of her attention to decoding difficult text, she is capable of using higher order thinking skills to think implicitly and gain a deeper understanding of the text.

### Instructional Recommendations and Focus of Instruction

One of my most frequent observations throughout this semester was that this student completes tasks very quickly. She is a very positive student who enjoys reading and often participates in reading lessons. However, after observing this student virtually every school day for approximately nine weeks, I feel that her eagerness to respond and participate is having a detrimental effect on her ability to decode words accurately. Evidence to support this claim can be found in many of the assessments that were administered.

The data that I feel best illustrates this claim is the data that was collected through the QRI Word List assessment. Given a grade level list, the student read 100% of the words automatically, yet she read only 30% of the words accurately. Her fast pace was also a negative factor during the Gates-MacGinitie Word Decoding and Word Knowledge subtests, which she completed in approximately one-sixth of the allotted time. In addition, data from the Boyd Test of Phonic Abilities and the Basic Test of Phonics also support that the student attempted to read words, even complex nonsense words, without hesitation.

Because of this consistent trend in H.E.'s reading behavior one of my main objectives for future instruction will be to help H.E. slow her pacing. Strategies to help mitigate this behavior include showing H.E. only one letter of a given word at a time, playing reading games in which H.E. cannot answer until a timer sounds, and modeling how to reread to check for accuracy prior to giving an oral or written response.

Another focus of future instruction will be to help H.E. accurately decode word endings. H.E. has repeatedly demonstrated her ability to accurately decode word beginnings, but has consistently misread word endings. I believe that by slowing her pace, H.E. will naturally make some progress in her ability to attend to and accurately decode word endings. However, I do believe that H.E. needs additional explicit instruction in this area.

I plan to teach H.E. grade appropriate suffixes (*-s, -es, -ing, -ed, -er*) to heighten her awareness of how changes can be made to the word endings. This will also help her to build her repertoire of familiar word endings. We will practice reading and writing words with various suffixes. H.E. will be exposed to these words both in isolation as well as within the context of short passages. We will also use letter cards to build words and then to manipulate and change their endings. Each time a word ending is altered I believe it will be essential to hold a meaningful discussion about how the meaning of that word has changed.

I will also use poetry to help H.E. notice how rhymes can be created when words have the same ending sounds. Word building and word scramble exercises will also be used to help H.E. attach each grapheme with the appropriate phoneme, no matter where that grapheme exists within a word.

## Conclusions

Overall, I am very optimistic that H.E. will be able to make strong gains in her reading abilities, specifically regarding her ability to attend to and accurately decode word endings. I believe that teaching H.E. to slow down when reading unfamiliar words and conducting tutoring sessions that give H.E. numerous opportunities to manipulate and change word endings will be key to her success.

I look forward to continuing my work with H.E. and helping her make the progress I truly believe she is capable of making. I am certain that with the aforementioned intervention strategies we will be able to make great strides together. I am fully devoted to helping H.E. develop her reading abilities and to amplifying her love of reading.