

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 436 736

CS 013 788

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TITLE Using Patterns of Responding to "Follow the Child."
INSTITUTION Reading Recovery Council of North America, Columbus, OH.
PUB DATE 1997-00-00
NOTE 7p.; This article appears in ED 435 969.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052) -- Journal Articles (080)
JOURNAL CIT Running Record; v9 n2 p1,6-7,12-13 Spr 1997
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Techniques; Data Collection; *Early Intervention;
Instructional Effectiveness; *Observation; Primary
Education; *Reading Difficulties; *Reading Instruction;
*Student Needs; *Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS *Reading Recovery Projects

ABSTRACT

Reading Recovery teachers can determine the child's literacy performance by using patterns of responding, that is, what the child mostly does in reading and writing. The child's performance informs the teaching, and close observation is the key to being able to "follow the child." Observation is central to the idea of following the child. "Following the child" means observing what the child can do, determining what the child needs to learn to do, and providing appropriate learning opportunities. Reading Recovery teachers look for patterns of responding across the lesson to inform their teaching. Running records taken during a lesson provide examples of patterns of responses that inform teaching priorities, in particular the child's processing problems. Detailed analysis of two running records illustrates the process the teacher may go through to determine what the child can do and needs to learn to do: summarize the running record; look for patterns of responding; and provide learning opportunities that will move the child forward in the reading process. Contains 2 running records. (RS)

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Using Patterns of Responding to "Follow the Child."

by Rose Mary Estice

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The Running Record



A Review of Theory and Practice for
Reading Recovery Teachers
Spring 1997 • Volume 9 • No. 2

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The Running Record

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Using Patterns of Responding to "Follow the Child"

Rose Mary Estice, Clinical Trainer of Teacher Leaders
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"With problem readers it is not enough for the teacher to have rapport, to generate interesting tasks and generally to be a good teacher. The teacher must be able to design a superbly sequenced programme determined by the child's performance, and to make highly skilled decisions moment by moment during the lesson" (Clay, 1993b, p. 9).

Reading Recovery teachers can determine, "the child's literacy performance," by using patterns of responding, that is, what the child mostly does in reading and writing. The child's performance informs the teaching, and close observation is the key to being able to "follow the child."

In Reading Recovery training classes, continuing contact sessions, and other professional development opportunities, teachers often talk of "following the child." Certainly that concept is appropriate in

Reading Recovery, an individualized program which builds on the child's specific strengths. However, teachers need to have a clear understanding of what "following the child" means.

For example, "following the child" is not following the child to ineffective responses. If the child's only attempt at unknown words is to sound them out or to skip them, the teacher would not ignore these ineffective behaviors; rather, she would provide the child with alternative behaviors. "Following the child" does not mean following him/her to a dead end. If the child generates only short, safe stories, learning opportunities are very limited. Instead, the teacher would assist in extending the original story or engaging the child in genuine conversations that results in more interesting and complex stories.

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Similarly, "following the child" does not mean allowing unlimited free choice in selecting familiar books to read. If the child continues to choose books that are so easy he/she doesn't have to look at the print, or those that are not familiar enough to provide opportunities to read fluently with phrasing, the teacher would remove those books from the ones to be selected. The teacher would provide choices by carefully pre-selecting those books that best provide practice for orchestrating the range of strategies the child controls and then allow the child to choose from those.

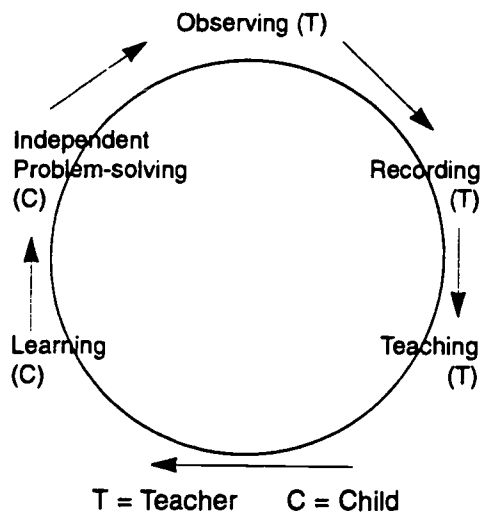
In "following the child," the Reading Recovery teacher thinks beyond the word or book to be read or the story to be written. The teacher will make decisions based on the child's current ways of responding and provide opportunities for this child to learn.

The Role of Observation

Observation is central to the idea of "following the child." One of the assumptions upon which Clay founded Reading Recovery is, "... that a programme for a child having difficulty learning to read should be based on a detailed observation of that child as a reader and a writer, with particular attention to what that child can do. The programme will work out of these strengths and not waste time teaching anything already known" (Clay, 1993b, p. 7). In other words, "following the child" means observing what the child can do, determining what the child needs to learn to do, and providing appropriate learning opportunities.

Clearly, recording observations on instructional records is critical. If the teacher does not have good records of her observations, it will be difficult to "follow the child." Additionally, thorough analysis of the records is important. Careful thinking about what the child is mostly doing, and neglecting to do, will enable the teacher to make good decisions for teaching on the run and for subsequent teaching. An on-going analysis of records is necessary as shifts in learning are recorded; this leads to shifts in teaching, since the teacher must always ask herself, "What next does this child need to learn?" The on-going process that leads to shifts in both teaching and learning over time might be described as the teacher observing,

recording, and teaching, and the child learning, and independently problem-solving (see figure below).



The teacher observes the child reading and writing, and she records the child's behavior on the lesson records. From these recorded observations, the teacher determines her teaching priorities and teaches for strategies. The child responds to the teaching and at first may inconsistently apply the new learning but, given more opportunities, the new problem-solving behavior becomes independent; that is, the child uses strategies to problem-solve without prompts from the teacher.

Behaviors related to this shift in learning are observed and recorded and the teacher again considers what the child can do and what he/she needs to learn to do next in order to determine subsequent teaching priorities. This diagram illustrates the essential process but is not intended to over-simplify what happens over time. The process is not necessarily always in one direction; however, the diagram may be useful in supporting conversations about shifts in teaching and learning.

According to Clay, "What the teacher will do is set some priorities as to which kinds of new learning she will attend to--just one or two things--and let the other behaviours that were incorrect go unattended at this time" (Clay, 1993b, p.15). How does the teacher use all of her observations to come up with just a few priorities? The answer to that question may be found in the title, "Using Patterns of Responding to 'Follow the Child.'"

Observing and using patterns of responding

Patterns of responding are simply what the child mostly does. Priorities in teaching need to impact the child's current way of responding, what he/she usually does at difficulty or at error. It is not helpful to teach to what happens only occasionally or to what is under control with an occasional lapse. It is not helpful to talk only about self-corrections. To really make a difference in a child's problem-solving, the teacher will attend to the major patterns of responding, not to the exceptions. In addition, the teacher will attend to the child's processing and not just to helping the child get the word right.

The teacher will look for patterns of responding across the lesson to inform her teaching. Here, I will use running records to explore the concept in some depth, since it is in the running records that patterns of responding are most easily seen. Clay states that we can infer from the child's errors, self-corrections and comments much of what he/she is attending to. The learning work is captured in a running record (Clay, 1993).

In order to see a pattern of responding, every error and self-correction must be analyzed. A true picture of the child as a reader is not possible without a complete analysis. After all the errors are analyzed, patterns of how the cues are used and neglected can be determined. Additionally, the teacher may notice patterns such as re-reading to problem-solve, appealing for help, checking to confirm, and the monitoring of errors without actually solving them. Such patterns of behavior, too, can inform the teaching.

Clay suggests that the running record be checked to detect processing problems and other potential learning points (Clay 1993b). The running records below provide examples of patterns of responses that inform the teaching priorities, in particular the child's processing problems.

What the child can do

Nicholas, the reader of *One Sock. Two Socks* (Running Record #1) can sometimes make all the cues match and sometimes search for further visual information to self-correct after using some visual information in the first attempt. He can monitor

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word did I help you with on this page? Try it again and if you get stuck, think about what is happening in the story and start over."

Prompting consistently for initiation of problem-solving on both the running record books and the new books for the next few days will help Nicholas move toward independent problem-solving. "Every time you get stuck, don't just sit and wait. Think about the story and quickly go back to the beginning."

Teachers may be tempted to return to *going/getting, started/stopped, or played/pulled* to try for self-correction. These examples represent good attempts up to the error and demonstrate that Nicholas can use more than the visual information. The priority, however, must be on the bigger pattern of not initiating problem-solving beyond sounding the first letter and not incorporating re-reading as a way to search for meaning and structure, ways of processing that may hinder the child's progress.

The self-corrections were easy ones for Nicholas and illustrate the kinds of processing that are independent and thus self-reinforcing:

The child reading to himself knows when he is more or less correct because 'one of the beautiful advantages of reading sense is that it provides its own feedback' (Smith, 1978). One way to describe this independence is that the child has learned how to work out new parts of messages for himself. He finds this activity rewarding. Once the child learns to search for cues to a word the reinforcement lies within the reading process, in the agreement he can achieve between all those signals and messages in the code. He no longer needs as much outside help to confirm whether his response is right or wrong. The activity of making all the cues fit, which is the challenge of the task, and eliminating any misfit, is rewarding to the child who succeeds. (Clay, 1991, p. 254).

What the child can do

Brittany can use all three cueing sources and mostly makes them match. She re-reads to self-correct, to confirm, and after a told. She can make multiple attempts at difficulty.

What the child needs to learn to do

Brittany needs to learn to monitor errors in which there are visual mismatches of final or medial letters. In order to self-correct errors, she needs to learn to search for further visual information (final

or medial letters) after making all the cues match in the initial attempt.

Analysis of errors and self-corrections

The summary at the top of this running record contains the following information:

- Using all three cues and mostly making them match
- Neglecting final letters as visual cues.

Pattern of Responding

Consistently Brittany used all three cues in an integrated way to read this text. She did not notice errors that fit all cues but were a mismatch visually in terms of the final letters.

Learning Opportunities

To read increasingly complex text, Brittany must learn to first monitor and then search for further visual information when errors fit all three cues. The processing problem here is not the errors, but neglecting to monitor the errors. The teacher will think again about what would be the clearest, easiest, most memorable example with which to establish this new response of monitoring. "Effective monitoring is a highly skilled process constructed over many years of reading. It begins early but must be continually adapted to

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Running Record #2 Rosie At The Zoo Level 13
Brittany 93% sc 1:5

Rosie At the Zoo Level 13

Pg 2 Accurate Reading ...

Let's go and see the monkey

Accurate Reading ...

Pg 3 We lifted Rosie up.

I like monkeys said Rosie

Let's go and see the lion

Accurate Reading ...

Pg 4 We lifted Rosie up

She looked at the lion

And R sc walked up and down

Accurate Reading ...

Pg 5 Accurate Reading ...

I don't like lions she said

Pg 6 Accurate Reading ...

and said me too me too

Pg 7 Accurate Reading ...

It lifted up its trunk

WOOOSH T

Accurate Reading ...

But you did get a shower

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encompass new challenges in texts" (Clay, 1993b, p. 41).

Brittany needs to adapt her monitoring to incorporate more visual information than just the beginnings of words. The clearest examples to return to probably would not be *monkey/monkeys* and *lion/lions*. The only difference between the word in the text and the child's substitution is the very last letter. It is likely that this child knows about *s* as a word ending. She may read it accurately the next time without even realizing she had ever made an error. Since the goal is independent problem-solving on increasingly difficult text, the teacher will think about learning opportunities to help Brittany reach that goal. Returning to *monkey* and *lion* would not help Brittany learn more about reading complex text.

If, on the other hand, the teacher returned to *thing/trunk* or *sorry wash/shower* by asking the child to, "Try this page (or part of a page) again," and then prompted for monitoring at a high level, Brittany would be learning more about adapting her monitoring strategies. "Were you right? Try that again and think what would look right." The child would slow down a bit and check the words in terms of how they looked. Even if Brittany could not correct the error, it is important to reinforce and encourage noticing it. Self-corrections will not occur if there is no monitoring first. Clay states, "Children must be given the responsibility to monitor their own text behaviour, guided by meaning. This mainly involves pausing on the part of the teacher or parent as if expecting the child to solve the problem or prompting them to check" (Clay, 1991, p. 336).

In addition, it may be helpful if the teacher returned to the reading work of *did dude/don't*. Here Brittany did monitor her reading when her first attempt fit all three cues, but didn't look completely right. (She probably noticed *do*.) It would be important to praise the noticing as well as the multiple attempts even though the error was not self-corrected. In this way, the processing is being supported. "The teacher is more concerned to reinforce how the child worked to get to the than whether the child arrived at

the precise correct response" (Clay, 1991, p. 343).

Returning to the error *see/like* probably would not help Brittany learn more about problem-solving. This substitution is an example of an occasional lapse where-by cues were not cross-checked one against another. Brittany has a strong pattern of making all three cues match so cross-checking on cues in general has been superseded by better quality substitutions (Clay, 1993b). Brittany self-corrected her reading a few times and thus reinforced her own processing. As mentioned before, it is usually not necessary for the teacher to attend to such examples.

Analysis of processing for teacher decision-making

The detailed analysis of the above two running records is intended to illustrate the process the teacher may go through to

- determine what the child can do and needs to learn to do;
- summarize the running record;
- look for patterns of responding;
- provide learning opportunities that will move the child forward in the reading process.

A few notes of clarification seem to be in order. The sections "What the child can do," and, "What the child needs to learn to do," are examples of what the teacher may be thinking as she completes her analysis of cues used and cues neglected and prepares to write the "Analysis of Errors and Self-Corrections" at the top of the running record. The "Analysis of Errors and Self-Corrections" sections are provided as examples of the summaries at the top of the running records for these children. Notice that patterns are emerging here. It is not helpful to note every kind of error, self-correction, or cross-checking on cues (if applicable). Instead look for what the child *mostly uses* and *mostly neglects*—the patterns of responding.

The "Patterns of Responding" sections also illustrate patterns of behavior that may support or hinder processing. When analyzing running records note the presence or absence of:

- monitoring
- appeals/tolds
- re-reading before appeals/tolds
- re-reading after tolds
- re-reading to search and self-correct

- re-reading to search, no self-correction
- re-reading, no searching (repeating original error after re-reading)
- re-reading to confirm
- no re-reading to problem-solve
- no re-reading needed to problem-solve
- taking words apart
- comments about processing.

Finally, the "Learning Opportunities" sections were included to illustrate the possible rationale for selecting (and not selecting) teaching points for these particular running records. The teaching points are in the wrong order here, as they would have been selected before any detailed analysis was done. However, with hard work and experience, it is amazing how quickly teachers can select teaching points which reflect the processing problems. When analyzing the running record after the lesson, it is helpful to also think about the teaching points and the prompts used to return to them. In this way, rationales and the level of prompts can be considered and selecting future teaching points will become easier.

"The teacher has a general theory in her head about children's responding. This is a theory she should check against what she is able to observe and infer from the individual child's responding, and which she should be prepared to change if the two are in conflict. So although reading behaviours are only signals of the inner control over reading that a child is developing, they are important signals which teachers should notice and think about" (Clay, 1991, p. 233).

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