

# Case Study of Struggling Readers

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TE 846

## **I. Brief Background and Reason for Project Focus**

According to Allington & Baker (2007), “Research illustrates that mastering phonics skills has a positive correlation with reading success in early childhood (Mandel Morrow, Tracey, & Renner Del Nero, 2011, pg. 75). As a first grade teacher, there are many skills that we assume/expect children have mastered by the time they come to me in first grade. These skills include: knowing all letters and sounds, hear sounds in words, segment and blend sounds, rhyme, be able to identify nearly 20 high frequency words, and be reading at a Fountas and Pinnell level C. However, nearly 2/3 of my class this year entered into my class this year below grade level in reading, not knowing what rhyming words are, and have a sight word vocabulary of under 10 words. Knowing that phonemic awareness and phonic skills are fundamental in terms of learning to read, I am worried for my class this year. I have to change what I usually teach year after year to meet the needs of my struggling readers, which are the majority this year. In addition to my struggling readers, one of my students I have selected for my project is an ESL student. “Vocabulary is a significant factor to literacy success, particularly for English language learners” (Mandel Morrow, Tracey, & Renner Del Nero, 2011, pg. 67). Along with phonemic awareness and phonics, my ESL student is lacking in vocabulary. Thus, this is another area of focus for my subjects.

## **II. Home and Family**

For this study, I have selected two students from my first grade classroom. I will refer to these students as Camryn and Armando. Camryn is a six-year-old Caucasian female born and raised here in Michigan. She is the eldest child in her family. She lives with her mom, dad, and younger sister. Just recently, her mother was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Due to treatments, her mother is very ill and Camryn is often being shuffled around between family members. Though her family is going through a stressful time, Camryn’s family still makes it a point to work with her daily. Every night Camryn reads independently for 15 minutes and then her family reads with her for another 10. They often do a lot of shared reading, having them read together or having her help figure out words. She has access to many fiction books.

Though Camryn loves to read during school hours, her parents say that they often struggle with getting her to take the time to sit and read. They also make it a point to read in front of Camryn to be good role models.

Armando is a six-year-old Armenian male. He was born in Armenia, but has spent the last 3-½ years in Michigan. He is an ESL (English as a second language) student, however, does not many services as he speaks English quite fluently. His parents speak English, however, they are self-conscious about speaking it, and speak Armenian in the home. He is the eldest child and lives with his mom, dad, and younger brother. At home, Armando reads with his family for 20 minutes a night during the week, but nothing on the weekends. He reads both fiction and nonfiction books. They know he struggles in reading, but are not really sure how to help him, but they try their best. Armando enjoys hearing stories, and often likes to hear the same stories over and over again.

## **II. Emotional Climate**

The transition from kindergarten to first grade is difficult for many of my students. This is due partially from the increase from a half of a day of schooling to a full day, as well as going from a lot of play time and center based learning to a reader's workshop model. We spend a lot of time reading in first grade. We do listening to reading, read alouds, reading to ourselves, reading with a partner, reading in guided reading groups, as well as reading one on one with the teacher. This transition is especially hard for the struggling readers. Due to their lack of reading ability, my struggling readers either can't read anything but the pictures, or are not engaged in their books due to lack of plot. I observed this behavior in both Camryn and Armando, but more so in Armando. In the beginning of the year I had to redirect Armando a lot during independent reading time. He kept looking at me and say, "I can't read. I don't know how." I had done many mini lessons on different ways to read, but I guess he did not understand. This could have been due to a language barrier. However, once I began reading one on one with him, or in a

guided reading group, he felt successful reading the books we read together and would read those books over and over again. This seemed to get him more motivated. He was/is always excited to listen to me read to him as well as read with me in group. He loves to point out words in knows in his books and his self confidence has seemed to increase. He needs less and less redirection to do his work. This to me tells me that as he becomes a better reader, his motivation to read will increase as well. Camryn on the other hand, is very dramatic and even when she didn't know how to read the words, was able to make up stories, or choose books read to her that she could retell. I never had to redirect her. However, her parents told me that at the beginning of the year, they struggled to get her to read at home. They did mention that now that her reading level has improved and she is bringing home books read in class, that she chooses to read and needs little to no reminders to do her reading every night. From observations, it seems to me that both children are beginning to feel successful. They are noticing their growth and in turn, their motivation has increased as well. They see their hard work paying off, and that is enough of a reward for them to keep up their hard work.

#### **IV. Literacy History**

Armando and Camryn's literacy histories are very different. Camryn attended two years of preschool where she was read to, learned letters, and engaged in literacy centers. After preschool, Camryn was enrolled in all day kindergarten. Armando on the other hand, was born in Armenia and did not move here until he was 4. He did not attend any schooling until last year when he was enrolled in half day kindergarten. Both sets of parents read with their children often. Even though Armando's family speaks another language, they read to him in English. In kindergarten, they both had exposure to phonemic and phonics instruction. Armando was pulled out a couple of days a week to receive extra support from one of our school's reading specialists.

In kindergarten, they struggled in reading, however, left kindergarten just barely reading at grade level. Over the summer, without reading instruction and books at their level, both dropped down levels.

## **V. Tests Given and Summary of Test Results**

In order to plan lessons that meet the needs of my two students, I assessed them in a variety of areas. I assessed their reading level using Fountas and Pinnell's Benchmark Assessment System as well as running records. These tests measure their accuracy, types of errors, self-corrections, comprehension, and strategies they are using. I assessed them in their ability to rhyme (both recognize and produce), segment/blends words, as well as letter sounds and capital and lowercase letter identification using the MLPP phonemic awareness test. Lastly, I assessed their sight word knowledge using Dolch Words. As I mentioned in my reason for this project, phonemic awareness and phonic skills are predictors of reading success. Thus, it was important for me to find out what areas they were struggling with to guide my instruction.

As required by my district, I assessed all of my students using the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System within the first couple weeks of school. This is a system that provides books that were designed for the purpose of reading assessment. The kit also includes recording forms to guide teachers through a running record. At that time, Armando read a level A test (the lowest level) with only 93% accuracy, making this is instructional level. He read the first page accurately. He must have thought he knew the pattern and proceeded to "read" the rest of the book by simply looking at the pictures and following the pattern. Thus, there were errors made. All of the errors were used because Armando was using both meaning and syntax cues. Camryn read a level A with 98% accuracy and when I moved her up to a level B, I ended up stopping her half way because she had so many errors. Her errors were random guesses and mostly on high frequency words. While I gained a lot of information about my two students as readers during these tests, they were created to be used only periodically throughout the year. Since my students are beginning readers and they move up levels very quickly, by the time I began to

plan the lessons for my students, the data collected from the original tests was no longer relevant. Thus, I did my own running records on them in quality texts that I selected. I do running records on all my lower level students at least once every two weeks. This allows me to continuously monitor my student's progress since it changes so rapidly to better guide instruction in small group. For the two students I selected, I performed a running record using a text that I would be using during my lessons. This acted as a pre-assessment to see what skills they needed to be able to successfully read the text.

**Camryn-** Camryn got everything correct on the MLPP assessment except for one phoneme blending when she said pet for pen. This surprised me since she was only reading a level A text. Camryn's Dolch word assessment showed that she only knew 11 words (the, to, and, he, a, I, you, it, in, she, and for). However, by the time I began planning our lesson, Camryn was already up to 45 known words. For Camryn, I selected an E level text. She had been reading level Ds with me and I had noticed that she was reading them with over 95% accuracy which let me know that D was no longer her instructional level, but her independent level. Thus, I knew I needed to move her up to the next level to reach her instructional level. Camryn read the text *Jumbo* to me. I gave her an introduction, but that was it. As you can see from the running record attached, during her first reading of this text she read 117/133 words correctly. That is 88% accurate. She had 16 errors and 3 self-corrections. When I looked closely at her errors, I found that 5 of her words had blends at the beginning, 4 were reading the word goes as gets, and the other mistakes show she was using the visual cue. Knowing what I had been teaching Camryn, I determined that in order to successfully be able to read this text, we needed to work on blends and taking words apart.

**Armando-** Just like Camryn, I was very surprised that Armando did everything successful on the MLPP assessment. He had all of the phonemic skills that help with reading, however was reading level A texts at an instructional level. Unlike Camryn, Armando only knew 5 words from the Dolch list (the, to, and, a, and I). This number increased to 23 by the time I began planning our lesson. For Armando, I selected a D level text. He has been reading Cs and Ds with me during guided reading. Like Camryn, I just gave

Armando an introduction. He read the text with only 83% accuracy. While normally I would consider an 83% a frustration level, when analyzing the errors, I noted that 8 of the errors were glove for mitten, and the only mistakes were also the same words used over and over in replace of another. Also, he was using meaning cues for almost all errors. Thus, I decided this was not a frustration level. He obviously comprehended the text because he was using words that made sense in his errors and was talking about the text to me as he read the story. Based on this assessment, I could see that Armando was focusing on just the meaning of text, and not using syntax or visual cues when reading. Thus, I believe that we need to work on cross checking for our lesson. That way, he could use meaning and visual clues at the same time to monitor his reading and figure out unknown words.

**Post Assessments:**

As a post assessment, I repeated the Fountas and Pinnell running records on both students as well as the Dolch word lists. I did not repeat the MLPP tests since they both got everything right in the pre-assessment. For the Fountas and Pinnel assessment, Armando read a D text with a 98% accuracy rate. I then had him read the level E text. He read the level E text with 85% accuracy. Thus, his instructional level is somewhere between and D and E. The D is too easy, whereas an E is too hard. What I have found by reading with him in group, is that D books seem to be his instructional level and that the test book from the Fountas and Pinnell kit is an easier level D book. Based on scores alone, Armando has made improvements in the past three months. He has gone from a level A to a level D. When I examined his errors in his tests, it shows me that he is still continuing to rely on meaning and not utilizing visual clues except for pictures to figure out unknown words. For example, during the reading or the level E text, he started by correctly saying the name Kate, but quickly changed her name to Meg even after being retold her name. He did not pay attention to the first letter in her name to figure out that he was

incorrect. Armando has also shown great improvement in his sight word vocabulary. He went from knowing only 5 words to 61.

I had Camryn read me the level E text in the Fountas and Pinnell kit. She read the text with 93% accuracy making it her instructional level. Thus, she went from reading a level A/B to a level E in the past few months. When analyzing Camryn's errors, 9 of her 13 mistakes were reading the wrong word for a sight word. More specifically, six of the errors were for the word want. Looking at her post assessment Dolch list, Camryn successfully read 85 words, however, want was still a word that Camryn did not know. In terms of longer words, Camryn successful broke apart the words blocks into bl-ocks and brother into br-other. Based on this, it appears that Camryn gained skills from our lesson together, but still needs to continue practicing her Dolch words in order to read more fluently and accurately.

## VI. Lesson Plan Matrix

Lesson Foci/Date	Objectives	Instructional materials	On-going assessment
*Blends *Taking apart words *Reading Text with 90%+ accuracy.  <b>11/19/12</b>	Student will be able to read a level E book with 90%+ accuracy by using known blends and taking apart words to figure out unknown words. 1. RFS.2: Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds 1.RFS3: Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words. RFS.4: Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension	*Word Sort *Magnetic Letters *Magnetic White Board *Level E book- "Jumbo"	Running Record Word Assessment Word Sort Observations

<b>Lesson Foci/Date</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Instructional materials</b>	<b>On-going assessment</b>
<p>*Cross Checking- Using meaning and letters/sounds</p> <p>*Read text with 90%+ accuracy.</p> <p><b>11/19/12</b></p>	<p>Student will be able to read a level D book with 90%+ accuracy by using cross checking to figure out unknown words.</p> <p>1. RFS.2: Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds</p> <p>1.RFS3: Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.</p> <p>RFS.4: Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension</p>	<p>Sentence Strip Markers Post-it Notes Level D book-“The Mitten”</p>	<p>Running Record Observations</p>

### **Outline for a Camryn's Lesson**

**Date:** 11-19-12

**Objective(s) for today's lesson:** Camryn will be able to read a level E book with 90%+ accuracy by using known blends and taking apart words to figure out unknown words.

RFS.2: Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds

RFS3: Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

RFS.4: Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension

**Rationale** In order to be able to read level E books and above, a student needs to be able to take apart and read multisyllabic words.

**Materials & supplies needed:**

- Running Record form
- *Jumbo* Book
- Magnetic White Board
- Magnetic Letters
- Expo Marker
- Pictures of flip flops, flag, flute, camera flash, fly, fruit, frown, fridge for word sort

**Procedures and approximate time allocated for each event**

- **Introduction to the lesson** (5 minutes)

**Academic, Social and Linguistic Support during each event**

We have been learning about digraphs and how they are letter chunks that stay together and make one sound. Today we are going to learn about chunks of letters that are like digraphs. They are called blends. Unlike digraphs, they don't only say one sound, but instead the sounds run into each other. Blends are two or three consonants that are not separated by a vowel. An example of a blend is FL. What does F say? How about L? Now if we say both sounds and blend them together, kind of like we are singing, we get FL. Like in FLIP. Say it with me, FL. When we see a big word that is not a wall word, we know that one strategy we can use is to find smaller words or parts we know in the bigger word. By doing this, we can figure out tricky words and be a better reader. Today we are going to work with the FL blend and then use what we learn to read the book *Jumbo* again.

• **OUTLINE of key events during the lesson** (15-20 minutes)

1. In the blend FL, the F and L blend together and say FL. Can you think of any words that start like this? (Repeat words back stressing the FL blend and writing them so she can see the blend).
2. Tell student we are going to listen to words that begin with the blends FL and FR. We are going to look at pictures and put them in two different groups based on whether they start with the FR or FL blend. Do one for the student so they can see how to do it. Hand them the pictures and tell them the word.
3. After completing sort, tell the student they are now going to work on building and taking apart words with the FL blend.
4. Show student the white board with the magnetic letters. Have the FL on the right side, and different word endings on the other side of the white board (-ap, -ick, -ash, -ip, -at). Tell student that we can take words apart to figure them out. When we see a blend, we can say that part first and then the rest of the word. See on this board, I pulled the FL off. I then have the word endings on this side. We say the blend first, then move on to the rest of the word. Let's try it. What does FL say? Let's move AP after it. What does AP say? Let's say them together FL-AP. What does it say? Continue will all of the words, but having her do it by herself, while offering support.
5. Next, put the word FLASH on the whiteboard. Ask student to break it apart into "chunks". Remind her that reading words in chunks helps us figure out longer

Give more examples of blends if necessary stressing blend.

If extra support needed, say the word for the student stress the beginning blend and then saying the blend titles. Does Frown sound like FR or FL?

Point to letters and slide finger to help guide them in stretching out sounds

If necessary, break into parts for them then have them stretch it out.

<p>words and makes us better readers. Practice with the words FLAP, FLICK, FLIP.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. After she has practiced manipulating the words, tell her she is going to read the book <i>Jumbo</i> again. Remind her of what she just learned. Tell her when she gets to a word she doesn't know, she can use her finger to help break apart words by finding chunks that she knows.</li> <li>7. Give book intro: <i>Jumbo</i> is very hot. He tries different ways to cool himself off. Let's read to find out how he stays cool.</li> <li>8. Take a running record when the student reads the book. If she runs into a word she doesn't know, remind her to look for a part she knows.</li> </ol> <p>• <b><u>Closing summary for the lesson</u></b> (2 minutes) Explain to child what you noticed they did that good readers do. Point out words that they were able to take apart and tell them how they did it. Tell them that to read bigger words they need to do this to help them figure out the trickier words. Tell them when they are reading books on their own that they should take words apart with their finger when they are struggling with a word.</p>	<p>When reading, if needed remind student to look for a part she knows or remind them to look for a blend. Tell them to use their finger.</p> <p>If extra support needed, make tricky word with magnetic letters and have them physically take apart the word.</p>
<p><b>Assessment</b> <i>Running Record, word sort</i></p>	

### ***Outline for Armando's Lesson***

***Date: 11-19-12***

***Objective(s) for today's lesson:*** Armando will be able to read a level D book with 90%+ accuracy by using cross checking to figure out unknown words.

RFS.2: Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds

RFS3: Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

RFS.4: Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension

***Rationale*** In order to read with accuracy, Armando needs to be able to monitor his reading by making sure words not only sound right, but look right.

***Materials & supplies needed:***

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sentence Strips</li> <li>• Post It Notes</li> <li>• <i>The Mitten Book</i></li> <li>• Markers</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Preparation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write some sentences on sentence strips and cover up a word. Example sentences:       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. My shirt is pink. (cover up pink)</li> <li>2. The dog is big. (cover up big)</li> </ol> </li> <li>• <b><u>Introduction to the lesson</u></b> (3 minutes)          When I have been reading with you, I have noticed that you are really good at using meaning when figuring out tricky words. You are always asking, “What would make sense?” and choosing a word that does make sense. That is what really good readers do. However, sometimes words make sense, but are not the correct word. That is why we have to ask what makes sense, but also look at the word and check and see if the word we are guessing looks like the word written. This is called cross checking. This way, we can check to see if what we are guessing not only makes sense, but is the correct word. I will show you an example.</li> <li>• <b><u>OUTLINE of key events during the lesson</u></b> (15-20 minutes)       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read the sentence, My shirt is pink. Show it to the student. Tell the student you are going to read the sentence. When reading it, pause at the word PINK like you are not sure what it says. Then guess the word RED. Then explain to the child you weren’t sure of the word PINK (point to it). Tell him you asked yourself what would make sense and guessed. Tell him you are going to check if you were right by doing a slow check and checking to see if the word “looks” like the word you red. Put finger under word and make the /p/ sound. “Hmmm... this word starts with the /p/ sound. Could this word be RED? No because RED starts with the /r/ sound and this word starts with the /p/ sound. Then, stretch out the sounds. P-I-N-K. Oh this word is PINK. Then explain what you did was called cross checking. You check the way the word looked with what made sense.</li> <li>2. Tell the student they are going to try it now. Place a sentence on the board and read it. Have the student suggest what the covered word could be. Write the suggested words on small sentence strips and place them next to sentence.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Academic, Social and Linguistic Support during each event</b></p> <p><b>Give more examples if needed so they understand.</b></p>

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Read the sentence using each word and ask, "Does that make sense?" If one of these words doesn't make sense, remove it.</li> <li>4. Next, remove the Post-It note which covered the first letter. Allow the student to give more words that make sense and start with the letter. Write these on sentence strips.</li> <li>5. Uncover the word. Let the student see if the word is one they suggested. Have a student point to the first letter of each word as the student reads the remaining choice to see which one looks right.</li> <li>6. Have the student point to first letter of each word as he/she reads the sentence.</li> <li>7. Repeat the process for each sentence.</li> <li>8. Tell the student he/she is going to practice cross checking in the book <i>The Mitten</i> to figure out tricky words. Remind him that when he makes a guess, he should look at the first letter/word and checks to see if the word could be correct.</li> <li>9. As the student is reading, remind them to do slow checks to see if the word looks correct. Taking a running record while reading.</li> </ol> <p>• <b><u>Closing summary for the lesson</u></b> (2 minutes)</p> <p>Explain to child what you noticed they did that good readers do. Point out words that they figured out cross checking. Remind them that when they are reading by themselves that they need to make sure the word they guess looks like the word written.</p>	<p>Some children may guess anything that begins with the 1st letter. Prompt by saying, "_____ begins with a _____, but we can't use _____ because (name) can't ride a _____."</p> <p>Remind student to check the first letter and ask if his guess matches that letter. Ask him to do a slow check. Ask prompting questions like can it be ___? What letter does ___ start with?</p>
<p><b>Assessment</b> <i>Running Record and observations</i></p>	

## VII. Reflection

### Camryn's Lesson:

For Camryn's lesson, I had her read the book *Jumbo* a week before our lesson as a preassessment to see what skills she was using without any interventions from me. From this

presassessment and through observations from my guided reading notes, I noticed that Camryn could benefit from work with blends and taking apart words. The levels A-E are mostly made up of high frequency words and CVC (consonant, vowel, consonant) words. However, many level Es and above are made up of longer words that contain common blends as well as compound words. Patricia Cunningham (2011) noted that “as children encounter more big words in their reading, they should learn to use morphemes to unlock the pronunciation, spelling, and meaning of polysyllabic words (Mandel Morrow, Tracey, & Renner Del Nero, pg. 202). Thus, in order to be able to read these books, Camryn needs to be able to read longer words. While students can stretch out the sounds for CVC words, this doesn’t work for longer words, thus, I choose a common blend to work on her with. It was also a blend used commonly in the book. I had previously worked on her with taking apart words with digraphs, so this was a nice tie in. When introducing what a blend was, I don’t think Camryn understood at first. I tried to get her to understand by connecting it to something in her own life. I talked about what a blender did. I also mentioned to her how blending was making it sound like a song versus a robot. I exaggerated the F and L sound to sound like a robot. When we went to create words, Camryn could only give me a couple of words. She said flower and flip. During the word sort, Camryn got all of the words correct. She clearly could hear the difference in the FR and FL blend. I watched her say the word slowly and put it under the blend it started with. She then read each word back to me. Next, we moved onto the white boards. This was a good way to manipulate the words. Camryn moved each ending and was able to segment the blend from the ending successfully reading all of the words. As she was stretching out the words to read them after she built them, she would forget what the FL blend said. She would then think about it and make the FL sound and get the word. After segmenting and blending, I told her how she could use this

strategy when reading using her finger to cover up parts of words instead of physically taking them apart. I then had Camryn reread the story we used as a preassessment. This way I could see within the same text, the strategies she used and compare them from before and after the lesson.

From my observations and the running records, Camryn was able to apply the strategy of blending and segmenting words to figure out unknown words. If you look at her accuracy, the first read was read with only 88% accuracy, and the second read was with 98% accuracy. While reading the text beforehand might explain for some of the improvement in score, it cannot account for all of it. The book was read a week before the second read, and I did not correct any of Camryn's mistakes or point any out. Also, the corrections made in the second read show Camryn using the strategy taught to figure out the unknown words. It was not all of the sudden she knew them. When she approached a word she got wrong in the first read, she did not know the word again, however, she would cover the ending and read the beginning blend or word she knew first, and then uncovered the ending and blending the two segments together. She did this strategy time and time again. This is evident in her reading. If you look at the running record of her second read, you can see that while reading, I noted that Camryn frequently covered up part of a word then uncovered it blending the two segments. This was done with the words today, flaps, goes, and trunk. These are words that in the first read she just made a guess at the word by using the first letter relying on a visual clue and ignoring meaning. Never once during the reading did I have to remind her of the strategy or to use it. She applied the strategy learned outside of a text to the text. This to me demonstrates that she understands the strategy taught since she is able to apply it.

The reason I believe that this lesson was a success for Camryn is because of two things. First, the blend was taught in multiple ways. We generated words, manipulated words physically taking them apart and putting them together, as well as listening for the sounds and breaking them apart when listening to words in the word sort. Secondly, this lesson was a continuation of previous lessons we had done with taking apart and chunking digraphs. Having that prior knowledge gave something for Camryn to attach her new learning to. Though the lesson was a success, there are some things I would still change. After the lesson, I should have gone back with Camryn and pointed out what she did. I should have gone back to the words she took apart and showed her how she did it. I think this would have made her conscious of how the strategy helped her as well as giving her positive reinforcement. I will continue to do more lessons on blends and segmenting with Camryn making sure to talk about different blends and chunks.

**Armando's Lesson:**

For Armando's lesson, I had him read the book *The Mitten* a week before our lesson as a preassessment to see what skills he was using without any interventions from me. From this preassessment, my beginning of the year assessments, and through observations from my guided reading notes, I noticed that even though Armando was reading at a level below grade level, he was able to do everything on the MLPP phonemic awareness assessment. Ehri & Nunes (2003) believe that "phonemic awareness is of the best predictors of success in learning to read" (pg. 200). Based on the MLPP assessment, Armando possessed all of the skills necessary to be successful in reading. However, when reading with him, I have noticed that while outside of texts Armando can segment and blend words, within text Armando is not as successful. Thus, I figured what Armando really needs is just lots and lots of practice using these skills within

books. From his first reading running record of *The Mitten*, I noticed that most of Armando's mistakes were all made using meaning and not paying attention to visual cues. He was able to successfully replace the unknown word with a word that made complete sense. This let me know that Armando comprehends what he is reading, or else he wouldn't have been able to use meaning. However, he showed me that for my lesson, we need to work using meaning and visual clues at the same time, i.e., cross checking, when reading. Since my lesson on cross checking involved reading a text, it was not only teaching a strategy for figuring out tricky words, but giving him practice at using all of his strategies within the text instead of in isolation.

To begin our lesson, I tried to gain an understanding of what Armando already knew about cross checking since we had learned about it as a whole group in the beginning of the year. As I suspected, he did not remember anything. Thus, I began by explain him what cross checking was. After explaining it, I could see he looked confused. I then decided that he needed a visual representation and example. To do this, I took a book and put a post it note in the book. I then drew an arrow from the picture to the word and then another arrow from the word to the picture. I showed how it made and X and this was why we called it cross checking. We were checking to see if the picture matched the first letter in the word and word matched the picture. He seemed to get that. Next, I bought out a sentence strip with the sentence, "The dog is {}." written on it and a picture of a dog. I covered the last word with a post-it note so he could not see the word. I then said that the covered word was the tricky word, a word I didn't know. I showed him how I read the sentence then paused to think of what would make sense. I told him I was going to look at the picture to help me. I made some guesses and said little, brown, and nice. I wrote these words on another post-it note. I read the sentence with each of the three words in its place and asked Armando if they made sense. He agreed he did. I told him that this

was checking the picture, but now we have to check it with the word. I uncovered the word. I pointed to the first letter in the tricky word and told Armando that I knew this word started with the /b/ sound. I then said I am going to check the words I guessed to see if any of them would start with the /b/ sound since I knew whatever word it was had to start with that sound. He helped me with this and guessed it was brown. I had him read the sentence with brown in it and then we together decided that it made sense and looked right. We did a slow check to make sure we heard all the sounds. Next, I had Armando try this with support from me. I gave him the sentence, Armando likes to ride in a []. I guided him through everything I had done. He was successfully able to guess the word bus. Next, I wanted to have Armando try this within a text. I used a level D book that we had never read before and covered a word. I had Armando try to figure out the words. He was successfully able to do this. Seeing how he was being successful, I decided he was ready to try reading *The Mitten* again and felt confident that he would be able to use cross checking to solve the tricky words.

Before reading *The Mitten* for a second time, I reminded Armando that when he gets to a word he doesn't know, that he should make a guess that makes sense and looks right. I also asked him if he knew what a mole was. This is an animal in the text that he did not seem to know in the first reading. Being an ELL I pointed it out and explained what it was to increase his vocabulary and build his schema. In the beginning of the story, Armando came to the word warm. This is a word he continuously read as cozy in the first reading. I was curious to see if he tried out his new skill. When Armando got to the word, he said cozy. He then paused and said comfy. While he got it wrong, I assumed that since he then tried to correct himself that he knew it wasn't right and was trying to figure it out. I tried to help him out by asking him to point to the tricky word. This way he was focused in on the word. I reminded him to check what letter it

started with and what letter his guess started with. This was enough for him to guess warm. We then did a slow check and decided it looked and sounded right. Knowing Armando has trouble within the text using his strategies, I expected he might need some extra support. He continued reading. When he got to the word mitten, he read it as glove. In the first reading, he continuously read glove for mitten. I again asked him to try out our new strategy. He made an effort by saying the first sound, /m/, but then said glove. I asked him what letter glove started with. He said /g/ and then continued to say it was glove. I then had to ask, “Do you think it says glove or mitten?” He then said mitten. I asked him how he knew that and he successfully answered by saying it started with the /m/ sound. Armando continued to read the story and came to the word pop. Again, like the first read, he read it as kaboom. I asked him to check the first letter. He then corrected himself and said boom. I then asked him to say the first letter sound and he said, “/P/ /O/ /P/...Pop!” He then finished reading the text.

If one looked solely at his accuracy rates, it appears that Armando took a lot away from the lesson since his accuracy went from 83% to 97%. However, this is misleading. Armando’s accuracy increased so much due to his misreading of the words mitten and warm accounting for nearly half of his errors in his first read. Since in the second read I helped him figure out these two words by asking him to use what he learned in the lesson, the two words only accounted for 2 errors. Thus, what it appears is that Armando has the skills in isolation, but is struggling to apply them within the text. If I give support to Armando during his reading, he is able to successfully use the skills as shown by him getting the words mitten and warm with prompting, however, I am not going to be reading every book with him. These are skills he needs to be able to use independently. If I were to teach this lesson to him again, one thing I would do differently is giving him a slow check card and teaching him how to use it. A slow check card is just a

piece of cardstock cut into a strip with the words slow check on it. A child uses it to cover up parts of a word to figure out tricky words. This might help him tune into the beginning sound of a tricky word. I think he learned what it means to cross check, however, I do believe that he needs more practice with this skill. Thus, I would continue this lesson by reminding him of the skill and reading another text with him. I would continue to give him support while reading him and prompting him to cross check. My hope is that he will need my prompting less and less. I think with Armando, he needs a lot more practice than other children. I am not sure if this is because he is an ELL or simply who he is as a learner. As mentioned, one of our Reading Recovery teachers works with Armando 2-3 times a week as well as reading with me in guided reading groups 4 times a week. I know that I am doing all I can for Armando, but it doesn't seem to be enough. As Richard Allington writes in *Best Practices in Literacy Instruction*, "Although such teachers dramatically reduce the incidence of reading difficulties, a few children typically continue to struggle even in these exemplary classrooms. Some children have enormous instructional needs that simply cannot be met in the day-to-day bustle of the classroom (pg. 99). I feel this is Armando. I believe in a couple of weeks he will be pulled into the second round of Reading Recovery and hopefully that 30 minutes of one on one everyday will give him that extra support he needs.

### **VIII. Recommendations to Teachers and Parents**

Camryn: Camryn has a great disposition towards learning and loves to please. She has made great progress over the past few months in both her sight word vocabulary and reading level. She is beginning to break longer/multisyllabic words apart and reads known words quickly, improving fluency. To make sure that Camryn continues to have success, it is important that

Camryn begins to monitor her reading and continue to build her sight word vocabulary. One way to do this would be when Camryn brings home her guided reading books and reads a word incorrectly, wait until she finishes the sentence and ask her if something she read didn't make sense. That way she is thinking about what she read and pointing out the part that was tricky. She should then try to figure out the word using meaning from the sentence and previous pages she has read as well as the other strategies she knows. She should also continue learning new blends and vowel digraphs.

Armando: Armando is able to blend and segment words, has the ability to rhyme, knows all of his letters and sounds, and has increased his sight word vocabulary to 61 words. When reading he is able to use meaning to figure out unknown words. While he has a lot of great skills, he struggles to use them when reading. When reading with him at home and at school, Armando would benefit from being prompted to check the beginning sound when he makes a guess at a word. Also, since Armando received normal classroom support, additional support from a reading specialist 2-3 times a week, and support from the ELL teacher 2 times a week to work on reading, I recommend that Armando be tested for Reading Recovery. He has received a lot of support inside the school. Though he has made great progress, he is still below grade level. Juel (as cited in Al Otaiba & Fuchs, 2002) "found that children who were unsuccessful readers in first grade remained poor readers in fourth grade" (pg. 300). I want to do everything possible to ensure that Armando does not end up continuing to struggle in reading. To help continue his learning at home, I would like to try to get the parents more actively involved. Since his parents do not speak fluent English, I would like to give a card with prompts on it that would help his parents when Armando reads his guided reading books to them at home. That way, when he

reads a word wrong, his parents could ask him to do a slow check and cross check. I will also encourage them to work a lot on sight words with him using magnetic letters and dry erase boards since he enjoys them so much.

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