



## **Content Enhancement Module: Reading K-5**

### **Part 3: Case Study First Grade Class**

#### **Background**

Ms. Corbett's first grade class has 20 students, including English language learners (ELLs), students with disabilities, and advanced students. Seventy-five percent of her students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. It is January, and Ms. Corbett has just completed the middle-of-the-year (MOY) benchmark assessments and needs your assistance to use the assessment data to make important instructional decisions.

Ms. Corbett administered the assessments provided by her school district to individual students to determine how well each student was progressing in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. Ms. Corbett knows that at this time of the year her students should be able to segment and blend the sounds of one-syllable words, identify all the letters of the alphabet and say their sounds, read words that follow typical phonics patterns, read some irregular words that she taught them, and comprehend when being read to as well as when reading independently. Vocabulary and oral language, both expressive and receptive, should be more sophisticated than when they began school, and the children should be writing some words using phonemically correct inventive spellings.

#### **Description of Reading Program**

Ms. Corbett's reading block is 90 minutes long, with no interruptions. All of the students participate in this core instruction. She has another 30 minutes devoted to writing instruction. Sometimes, but not every day, she has a teaching assistant or parent volunteer help her. Ms. Corbett uses the core reading program adopted by her district. It is based on research; however, it does not address all areas of reading difficulties some of her students display. Therefore, Ms. Corbett enhances her reading program with additional resources.

Most days, Ms. Corbett has about 45 minutes for small-group work, which typically means she can see three groups per day. While she works with the small groups, the other students work in literacy workstations or centers. It took Ms. Corbett about 6 weeks at the beginning of the year to teach the students how to work independently or with a partner and to follow all the procedures required while she worked with a small group. She has a large tag board with pictures of each station and the students' names next to their assigned station. After they learn where to start, students know which center to rotate to when the signal is given. Ms. Corbett is amazed at how these children,



who entered first grade with little discipline, now quietly and quickly clean up the center, complete their exit cards, and move to the next center. It was worth the time, she thinks, to practice this routine.

Ms. Corbett has several centers that provide practice on skills the students were previously taught and must apply with more automaticity. She changes the center activities about every 2 weeks, depending upon the needs of her students. Making the centers has become much easier since Ms. Corbett started to collaborate with her colleagues. Each first-grade teacher is responsible for creating one center every 2 weeks.

During center time Ms. Corbett works with a small group and continues to monitor the other students. At each center, one student has been assigned the role of problem-solver and helps the other students so that Ms. Corbett is rarely interrupted during her small-group instruction.

At the end of each small group session, Ms. Corbett takes a few moments to do a quick progress-monitoring assessment to determine if each student in the group learned the skill. For example, the students may read words following the pattern they have been practicing or answer a comprehension question about the text they have been reading. Ms. Corbett keeps a clipboard near her with each child's name, the date, and the skill listed so it is easy for her to keep a record of student progress.

### **Center Activities**

At this time, the centers Ms. Corbett has set up are:

1. **Vocabulary Center:** The students review new words, make graphic organizers, write stories using the words, find word families, and record themselves using the words. Ms. Corbett scaffolds the activity by having visuals of many of the words to support ELLs and providing sentence starters for some students, such as *I was envious when . . .* or *The boy was furious when . . .*
2. **Reading Center:** Students are assigned a partner and read together, taking turns reading, asking questions, and retelling. Sometimes, the students read silently, and they always have a way to be accountable for what they read. For example, they could complete an exit card on which they draw a picture of how a character feels at the beginning and at the end of the story.
3. **Computer Center:** Students are assigned specific programs to complete. This is especially effective for students who need additional practice decoding words or increasing fluency.
4. **Phonics Center:** Students create compound words from a selection of words written on sentence strips such as cow + boy = cowboy. They also make words using onset-rime cards such as c + at = cat; l + ake = lake.



5. Writing Center: In this center, students may trace letters, write independently, or draw pictures, depending upon their current level of performance. Often, the students will write a sentence about a topic, focusing on beginning with capital letter and ending with a period.

### **Response to Intervention (RtI)**

Ms. Corbett's school has implemented an RtI framework. Ms. Corbett knows that all of the students in her class are her responsibility and that effective core instruction is the best way to prevent learning difficulties. To ensure that her students learn, Ms. Corbett follows 16 elements of effective instruction. These elements guide her in deciding upon the **content** to teach, how to **design** instruction, how to **deliver** instruction, and how to provide **practice** opportunities for the students. She has the 16 elements of effective instruction posted in her room to remind her to implement them (see Attachment 1).

### **Assessment and Progress Monitoring**

The school administers benchmark assessments in reading and mathematics three times a year; they check progress in other subjects using a curriculum-based assessment such as unit tests. In first grade, each student is tested individually in reading. The assessments Ms. Corbett could use are listed in Attachment 2. Each assessment has a way to code whether or not the student is progressing as expected. For the purpose of this case study, Ms. Corbett decided to use **IN** to indicate additional **instruction is needed** and **B** to indicate the student has achieved the **benchmark** in the skill.

Assessing fluency rates is important because fluency is highly correlated with reading comprehension. In mid-first grade, Ms. Corbett could measure the students' fluency naming letters, segmenting words into phonemes, reading real and nonsense words, and reading connected text. By second semester of first grade, most students are ready to read connected text, and their fluency rate is a valid indicator of the progress they are making in acquiring basic reading skills. By the middle of first grade, students should be able to read about 40 words correct per minute (WCPM), reading text they have not read before. Most researchers feel that plus or minus 10 words is a reasonable deviation. So, if a student is reading above 30 WCPM, the student is probably making adequate progress, but the teacher will want to check frequently during the remainder of the year to ensure the student continues to progress.

Students reading below 30 WCPM by mid-first grade need targeted instruction. Students reading more than 40 WCPM probably are doing fine, but Ms. Corbett wants to be sure they are also comprehending what they read.



### **Using Data to Inform Instruction**

Let's review the scores of Ms. Corbett's students (see Attachment 3). Those who may be at risk are highlighted in yellow; highlighted in blue are those students who may need accelerated instruction. Based on these data, Ms. Corbett needs to decide how to group her students and what skills can be taught as a whole group and which students need small group instruction. This is called data-based decision making.

### **Ms. Corbett's Decision Making Process**

Ms. Corbett knows that instruction is most effective in small, flexible groups that change membership depending upon the skills the students need to learn. There are various ways Ms. Corbett could group her students. Let's look at phonemic awareness. Ms. Corbett appears to have done a great job teaching phonemic awareness skills to her students. However, Abby, Harry, and Viola are still struggling to segment and blend phonemes in words. Ms. Corbett and Abby's parents feel Abby may have dyslexia, a reading disability. Her parents recognized it early and were not surprised that Abby has difficulties with reading, just like her father and grandmother. Abby's expressive and receptive vocabulary is excellent. However, she has difficulty with the sequence of sounds in words, and she still does not know all the letters of the alphabet and the sounds of the letters. Ms. Corbett needs to concentrate on those areas with Abby.

Harry also has remarkable strengths and significant weaknesses. He is quite an artist, even at this young age, but he has difficulty holding a pencil appropriately, writing his name, and writing any words phonetically. He knows his letters and most sounds, but decodes very slowly, often forgetting what he decoded by the time he reaches the end of a word. Ms. Corbett hopes he will improve if he receives targeted instruction in her class.

Viola is an ELL who moved to this school after the winter break. She has not been in school before. Ms. Corbett feels she needs some intensive instruction before she can tell if it is Viola's limited English or something else that is causing her learning difficulties. The bilingual teacher says that Viola is a fluent Spanish speaker and has an adequate vocabulary in her first language.

Elizabeth and William could join this group. The review of phonemic awareness would benefit them, and they would provide a model for the others. Ms. Corbett knows that she needs to relate the phonemes to letters to solidify graphophonemic correspondences, a skill Elizabeth, William, Abby, Harry, and Viola need.

Russell is also an ELL, and he has been in school since preschool. He still reads slowly, although he seems to have a grasp of the alphabetic principle. He struggles with comprehension and oral vocabulary. Ms. Corbett wonders if this is because he is an ELL. Ms. Corbett decides to place Russell in a comprehension group with Frank, Lyle, and



Cathy. She could place Russell in the group with Abby to receive targeted instruction on phonics.

Cathy is an interesting student. She reads well, at least 65 WCPM, but with limited prosody, and she struggles with comprehension and language skills. Ms. Corbett is going to group her with Frank and Lyle and work on reading prosody, phrasing, and pausing for punctuation. She may have them practice a reader's theater script and present it to the class. She is also thinking of having them use a fluency program that includes tapes of someone reading with prosody for them to imitate. They can practice reading a passage several times, then record their reading and observe how well they added meaningful expression to the text.

Bruce, Cathy, Davie, George, Inez, and Jack seem to be doing well. They will participate in a reading group and with Ms. Corbett's guidance, will choose a book to read and discuss. Ms. Corbett will also teach them word study skills, including morphology and word etymology. Actually, Ms. Corbett thinks all of her students would be interested in that!

The other students seem to be progressing. Ms. Corbett will continue watching their progress. She will also group them according to their needs and interests.

### **Small-Group Instruction**

At this time, Ms. Corbett has formed four reading groups. She has decided that she will work with Groups 1 and 2 every day. She will work with Groups 3 and 4 twice a week, leaving her one 15-minute period a week to finish up progress monitoring or work with another group or individual students, as needed.



Group	Targeted Skills	Schedule
Group 1 Abby Harry Viola Elizabeth William	Phonemic awareness Alphabetic principle Graphophonemic correspondence	Daily
Group 2 Frank Lyle Cathy Russell	Fluency Comprehension Vocabulary	Daily
Group 3 Bruce Cathy Davie George Inez Jack	Advanced comprehension And word study Wide reading	two times per week
Group 4 Kathryn Monty Nick Paula	Fluency Comprehension Wide reading	two times per week



Steve		
Theresa		

### **Planning for Students At Risk**

Let's concentrate on the students who are struggling the most with the basic skills of phonemic awareness and phonics: Abby, Harry, and Viola. Here is some more information about each student and the skills they display in phonemic awareness and phonics.



Student	PA Skills	Targeted Skill	Phonic Skills	Targeted Skill
Abby	Recognizes rhyming words	Blend onset rimes Blend phonemes	Says most common sounds	Produce letter-sound correspondences
Harry	Blends onset rimes	Blend phonemes	Says most common sounds	Produce letter-sound correspondences
Viola	Blends onset rimes	Blend phonemes	Says most common sounds  Clarify sounds in Spanish & English	Produce letter-sound correspondences

Ms. Corbett carefully plans her instruction to target the identified skills. She follows the elements of effective instruction, and she assesses these students on fluency at least once per week.

Ms. Corbett knows that all students should be reading about 50 to 60 words per minute by the end of first grade (see the norms in Attachment 6). She knows that there are approximately 20 more weeks of school after she completed the MOY assessment so she worked out how many words per week the students must gain in order to reach the oral reading fluency goal of 50 words per minute.

Below are the gains per week the students must make to reach the goal of a minimum 50 words per minute. For example, William has to improve his reading rate 38 words in the 20 remaining weeks of school, or about two words per week.



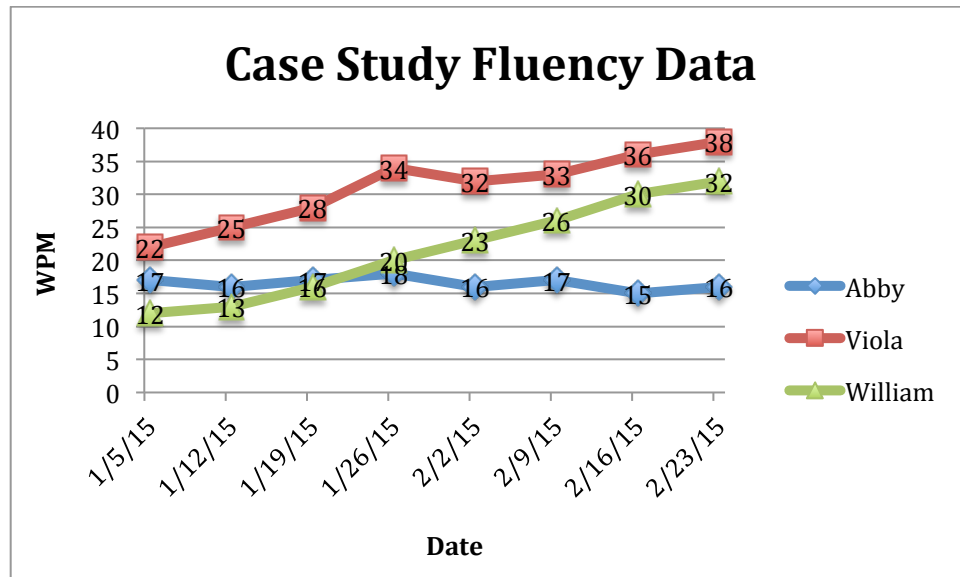


Student	MOY WCPM	EOY Goal WCPM	WCPM gain required to meet goal	Words per week required to meet goal (rounded up)
Abby	17	50	+33	2 words (1.65)
Viola	22	50	+28	2 words (1.4)
William	12	50	+38	2 words (1.9)

After about 4 weeks of instruction, Ms. Corbett carefully reviews her data (see graph below). Abby is not making gains, so she tries a different intervention with her on Feb. 2. The other students seem to be progressing with the current instruction.

After 3 to 4 more weeks of instruction, Ms. Corbett again analyzes her data. William and Viola have been improving more than two words per week, so the instruction Ms. Corbett is providing seems to be helping them; they should reach the goal by the end of May.

Abby's fluency rate, however, is about the same as when Ms. Corbett completed the EOY. Abby needed to gain 33 words per minute, or about two words per week. Clearly, the instruction Ms. Corbett is providing is not effective for Abby. Ms. Corbett decides to talk with the reading specialist to learn what more she could do in the core instruction class for Abby. The two teachers will also determine if Abby needs more intensive instruction from a reading specialist. The data Ms. Corbett has kept will help the teachers make decisions about Abby's instruction.



#### Your Turn

Ms. Corbett needs your assistance in designing instruction and measuring the progress of her other students. It is your job to:

- determine where the students are on the Continuum of Instruction (see Attachment 5).
- determine the next skills the students need.
- decide how you will monitor their progress.
- write four small-group lesson plans to teach those skills, using Attachment 4 as a guide. You may collaborate with another teacher. Specific directions follow.



### Application Directions

1. Pick either Group 2 or 3 or a group you formed.
2. Decide which of the skills on the Continuum of Instruction the students have mastered. (You can pick anything that is reasonable since you do not have available the assessment results in each area of reading).
3. Decide which skills you want to address during the small group instruction.
4. Decide how you will monitor student progress.
5. Create graphs for each student (there are several online sites you may use).
6. Refer to [www.fcrr.org](http://www.fcrr.org) and select three to four activities that you can use with this small group to provide explicit and systematic instruction that focuses on the skills you targeted.
7. Plan four small group lessons, each 15 minutes in length, to be delivered during center time. Be sure to include an assessment to determine if the students learned the targeted skills. The lesson plan should follow the attached model, Attachment 4.
8. Plan what the other students will be doing while you provide the targeted, small-group instruction. For example, describe the centers you will create for the other students to complete while you work with small groups.
9. Plot the data as you teach the small group lessons. You should have at least four data points. Because you are a great teacher, most students will make progress. However, for this simulation, be sure that one to two students do not display adequate growth.
10. Review the charts for the students who do not display adequate growth. What more can you do to ensure they learn the skills? Create a bulleted list indicating how you will:
  - provide more systematic and explicit instruction.
  - model the skill more precisely.
  - provide more opportunities for students to practice.
  - provide more immediate affirmative and corrective feedback.
  - monitor student progress more frequently.