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## Case Study

### Overview of Child

Sarah (name changed) is a first grade student who is very excited about about reading and writing though she does not often have the opportunity to practice with an adult outside of a school setting. She turned 7 a couple weeks into our tutoring program (which began in the end of January) and is of an average height and build for her age group. Sarah lives with her parents, two aunts, and three siblings at her house. She has one older (14 years) and two younger siblings (3 years; 2 months), the youngest of whom is an infant. At home, Sarah's family speaks English and Spanish. She communicates with her mother in Spanish as her mother is not fluent in English. Sarah's favorite subject in school is math and she loves centers. Her favorite subject to write about is animals and she loves reading stories featuring animals as well. In her free time, she enjoys reading to her baby sister and playing games with her friends. Sarah has a very positive outlook and exudes a friendly and pleasant demeanor; she is always excited to join us for reading club after school and is eager to share a new story or show off a new project she has completed. Sarah is very engaged in her work and stays on task without significant prompting.

### Motivation Interview

According to our initial assessment, Sarah scored 17/28 or 60.7% and on her final assessment, Sarah scored 18/28 or 64.3%. Although this was not a significantly different score overall, there are some key changes in her responses on each survey. I thought that the most notable change was that Sarah originally rated learning to read as "really hard" on the initial survey, and she rated it as "easy" during the final assessment. This change was the most significant as it denotes a shift in her attitude towards reading and her eagerness to progress in her reading. While she never complained about reading being difficult, she has gained significant confidence in herself as a reader and has also become less hesitant to read out loud in front of her peers. Sarah's improved confidence in reading will help her grow as a reader and become more willing to attempt more challenging texts and less discouraged when she encounters an unfamiliar word. Having more confidence in her reading skills and in her perception of her ability to learn to read helps prevent her from becoming frustrated and instead allows her to build upon her current skills.

Another interesting change to note is that she originally said that she preferred reading books and magazines and during the final survey she said she preferred reading schoolwork. This was another change of note as I believe Sarah's schoolwork is likely at closer to her reading level than books she may have access to outside the classroom. She also responded on both surveys that she does not bring any books home from school. Utilizing the school library or visiting her local library would be a great way for her to access appropriately-leveled reading material outside of school. I also found it fascinating that despite how excited Sarah gets when we open our Reader's Response Journals, she still said that she does not choose to write during her free time. As a result, I recommended to her that if she enjoys writing stories during reading club she could also write stories to share with her friends or with her baby sister.

She seemed amenable to the idea and hopefully this will help her to continue progressing in her writing.

### **Informal Phonics Survey**

During our initial assessment, Sarah originally scored 40/74 on the informal phonics survey. During our final assessment, Sarah scored a 60/74 on this survey. She displayed improvements in several categories within this assessment. During the initial survey, Sarah was able to identify a sound for each letter but only produced the “hard sounds” for G and C, and was not able to produce the soft sounds so she received a 21/23 for that section. During our final assessment she scored a 23/23 as she was able to identify which letters could produce multiple sounds. During both assessments, she successfully identified each of the consonant digraphs and scored 3/3 both times. She showed improvements in identifying consonant digraphs in short-vowel words and scored an 11/12 on the final assessment, which was an improvement over her original 10/12. Her difficulty was with the “in” pattern in both assessments. She incorrectly added an “ing” instead of an “in” to the word spin during the second survey. This may be a new pattern she is learning in school which may be the cause for the change. To reinforce the difference in the “in” pattern and the “ing” ending, I would recommend a lesson on identifying parts of speech. Sarah would benefit from being able to identify the difference between a pattern ending in a word family and a pattern ending that denotes an action. Sarah also displayed improvements in identifying short vowels in CVC words. She originally scored 6/10 on this section during our initial assessment and improved her score to an 8/10 on the final assessment. She had originally displayed difficulty with i/e confusion and switching o/u sounds but on the second she displayed i/e confusion. During the initial assessment she additionally exhibited difficulty with p/b/d letter identification which she did not have difficulty with on the final assessment. We had practiced p/b/d letter orientation using the word “bed” as a visual example to assist in identifying the orientation of the letter.

At the beginning of tutoring, Sarah scored a 0/4 on the section testing for understanding of the rule of silent e. After a great deal of practice during Rutgers Reading Club, Sarah improved her score to a 3/4, missing only one word: cute. This surprised me as cute is a more common word that Sarah would be more likely to encounter in typical conversation than the other three words: cape, tote, and kite. Her increased score reveals a significant improvement in Sarah’s understanding of different phonetic patterns and has helped her to become more successful at sounding out an unfamiliar word while reading. During the initial assessment, this was the point at which Sarah became frustrated with the informal phonics survey and I did not assess her on the final three sections. During our final assessment, Sarah was happy to continue and scored an 8/10 on the vowel digraphs section. The only two digraphs that she missed were sail and sue. She struggled a bit more with the section assessing vowel diphthongs and scored a 2/6. She successfully identified the words boy and oil. These words were also on Fry’s Sight Words and she correctly identified both words during the Sight Word Survey. I suspect that that was how she identified the words rather than having a full understanding of vowel diphthongs. She also received a score of 2/6 on r-controlled vowels and -al. She correctly identified hall and hurt. She read the word “port” as “part” so her error in this case was in the vowel sound and is not indicative of a misunderstanding of r-controlled vowels. While she has exhibited some progress in these two areas, she would benefit from additional practice with these two sections in particular. Sarah would benefit from additional practice both identifying patterns in diphthongs such as a word sort. R controlled vowels is a topic we had introduced during Rutgers Reading Club but we had focused more on blends and digraphs, as is indicative of her scores on her final assessments. Continued instruction and practice with the

rule of silent e and with short vowels would improve Sarah's word identification and decoding strategies. Sarah has made significant progress in several areas of her phonemic awareness and can both identify patterns more rapidly and with higher accuracy. She has also exhibited more confidence and has become more willing to attempt to sound out an unfamiliar word rather than skipping over it or asking for help. Sarah's improvement in her identification of phonics rules has had an effect on her reading as well. She has become a more confident reader and reads with less hesitation. Additionally, she has fewer breaks during which she asks for help with an unfamiliar word and does not need to pause to consult an illustration for assistance with decoding.

### **Phonological Awareness Test**

Sarah's initial score was a 42/42 during our first assessment. During our final assessment, her score dropped by one point to 41/42. The only category that she had difficulty with during the final assessment was phoneme substitution when she was asked to replace the first sound in man with /k/ she said cam instead of can.

Sarah's concept of spoken word remains strong and she wanted to invent her own sentences to continue practicing matching one chip to each word. She did not hesitate during the rhyme recognition assessment either. During the initial assessment, she repeated the words back to me prior to answering whether or not the words rhymed but during the final assessment she did not need to repeat them and was able to identify rhyme / absence of rhyme without repeating the words herself. This marks an improvement in her ability to recognize rhymes when spoken by another rather than needing to speak the words herself to determine if they form a rhyming pair. During the rhyme production portion of the assessment, she successfully produced words that rhymed with the given word. During the initial assessment, she answered using some nonsense words (as permitted by the assessment) but during the final assessment she answered using all real words. Since she was able to produce all real words during the final assessment, I believe her rhyme production has also become more sophisticated. Not only can she identify and follow a rhyme pattern, but she was able to connect the rhyme pattern to words she knew that contained the same sound. She was equally successful in completing the syllable blending and syllable segmentation during both initial and final assessments. For the phoneme isolation of initial sounds portion of the assessment, Sarah was quick to identify the initial sound. She has demonstrated a strong ability in determining initial sounds during her writing process as well and is able to successfully segment phonemes in a word to match the sound to a letter when sounding out a difficult word. Phoneme blending is another area of strength for Sarah. She demonstrated a strong ability in blending during both assessments and she is able to apply this skill when decoding new words in a text.

While I was modeling phoneme segmentation during the final assessment, I had to remind Sarah that we were focusing on sounds rather than letters because she originally wanted to assign a chip to each letter in the word dime. When I explained to her that we were only using chips for each separate sound we could hear she was able to complete the task easily. This was a change from the original assessment as she did not originally attempt to add chips for silent letters. I believe that this change was due to an understanding of the presence of silent e at the end of some words but she was able to focus on sounds rather than letters when prompted. The final category, phoneme substitution, was the only category in which Sarah lost a point on the final assessment. Given that we did not focus on the study of word families during reading club, this is probably the area that was reinforced the least for this assessment. Focusing on word families would be an instructional strategy that could supplement Sarah's future learning and practice with this task. However, Sarah has displayed

an ability to replace initial sounds and only struggled with the first one of the section. She successfully substituted the appropriate phoneme in the last three examples and was able to correctly replace the initial phoneme when prompted to make a second attempt. During Rutgers Reading Club, we focused on identifying blends and phoneme isolation while reading guided reading books and participating in practice games such as Phoneme Substitution Match Up, matching rhyming words, and using blending spinners to create words combining a blend and an ending to reinforce syllable blending.

### **Sight Word Inventory**

During our initial assessment, Sarah scored a 58/100 on her initial assessment of Fry's First 100 Sight Words. Throughout her initial assessment, Sarah did not seem extremely confident in her own sight word knowledge and hesitated before responding when reading several words from the list. She was increasingly likely to skip a word or become somewhat frustrated when she did not initially recognize a word. Sarah was also hesitant to attempt to decode a word that she did not immediately recognize.

At the culmination of our tutoring sessions, Sarah scored a 96/100 on her final assessment of Fry's First 100 Sight Words. She then continued onto Fry's Second 100 Sight Words and scored a 71/100. She progressed to Fry's Third 100 Sight Words and correctly identified 15 out of the first 27 of that list before she started to become frustrated. At this point she had either incorrectly identified or skipped several words in a row so we stopped the assessment. Although she became slightly frustrated when encountering several unfamiliar words in a row, she did not become upset as she realized how much progress she had made and recognized the number of words she had already identified correctly. A notable change is that Sarah was less risk-averse than she had been during the initial assessment in that she was willing to attempt to identify unfamiliar words without prompting. While administering the final assessment, it was clear that Sarah was much more confident and answered much more rapidly and confidently than she had during our initial assessment. She was also extremely excited when she completed each column and realized how far she had progressed.

Throughout our tutoring sessions, we practiced reviewing and using sight words in a variety of ways including independent practice, partner practice, and one-on-one practice with the teacher. This practice came in different forms including a Snowball Sight Word Hunt, BANG! Sight Word Game, Flyswatter Sight Word Capture, Bookland (a variation of Candyland requiring students to correctly identify a sight word to progress), and Connect 4: Sight Word Edition. Each of these sight word practice exercises came in the form of a game, which I believe influenced Sarah's motivation to practice and learn her sight words in a fun and engaging context. Sarah did a great job of staying focused on competing with herself rather than against others to improve her knowledge of sight words. As the sessions progressed, sight words that Sarah was able to quickly identify were retired and new sight words were added. Since there was a constant mix of review of some sight words mixed in with some unfamiliar, new sight words, Sarah was able to feel as though she had a certain level of mastery while also challenging herself to identify the new words. I found this to be a good blend to encourage her motivation while simultaneously broadening her current sight word knowledge. For her continuing practice with sight words, I would recommend incorporating practice through sight word games rather than simply rote repetition using a set of flashcards. The sight word flash cards could be used to play memory, go fish, or bingo to reinforce practice in an exciting and engaging manner. These games also involve a partner who could work with Sarah so they could both practice and improve their sight word knowledge by assisting each other. Sarah's increased sight word recognition likely had a significant impact on her reading as it enhanced

both her fluency and accuracy. As a result, Sarah was then able to progress to more complex texts that required a broader vocabulary. Slowly increasing Sarah's exposure to a greater variety of words will continue to further improve her vocabulary development and therefore her reading fluency as well. Sarah's continued practice with additional lists of sight words will further improve her reading ability.

### **Running Record**

During our initial assessment, Sarah was assessed as an instructional C according to the Reading A-Z Benchmark Passage. Considering that her teacher had assessed her as an instructional E, this is likely where her perception of reading as extremely challenging had been based upon. On a Level C, she scored an accuracy of 94%, with a self-correction rate of 1:3 and an error rating of 1:18.

When assessing Sarah at the end of tutoring, she was assessed as an instructional E according to the Reading A-Z Benchmark Passage. On a Level E, Sarah scored an accuracy of 93%, with a self-correction rate of 1:7. She had an error rating of 1:14. As compared to her initial assessment, Sarah's instructional reading level increased by two levels with a similar accuracy rating. She had 1 self-correction for every 7 errors on the final assessment rather than 1 self-correction for every 3 errors on her initial assessment which may initially appear as a decline however the errors in her final assessment did not have an effect on the meaning of the sentence so it did not detract from her comprehension. Given that the type of errors had changed, the numerical rate is not reflective of her comprehension and did not affect her reading to the same extent. The errors she made were primarily substitution errors rather than syntax errors and therefore had less of an impact on her comprehension as the errors did not significantly change the meaning of the sentence.

In my selection of texts for both guided reading and for interactive read alouds, I primarily selected books that were related to animals as this is a topic about which Sarah is passionate. While listening to the interactive read alouds, Sarah displayed excellent active reading skills and tracked the text as it was read and searched the illustrations for additional clues. She also responded to prompts to make a prediction, offer a connection, summarize a passage, or to make an inference. Sarah was engaged with the text and was able to think more deeply about the message it was attempting to convey. She became more adept at making accurate predictions and asking increasingly targeted questions as the tutoring sessions progressed.

During guided reading, Sarah was able to transfer many of the skills we practiced during the interactive read alouds to the guided reading texts with little or minimal prompting. On some occasions, she offered a connection or asked a question without prompting. In the beginning, Sarah had been hesitant to read aloud in front of her peer however she became more comfortable reading aloud in front of others as we progressed and she became a more confident reader. Sarah also exhibit signs of confidence in that she did not become embarrassed if she misread a word and was asked to take a closer look and try again. She also was more likely to reread the entire sentence replacing the incorrect word with the correct one to improve her comprehension, which was not a practice she had been using at the beginning of the tutoring sessions. Sarah would benefit from additional practice with appropriately leveled texts in a guided reading setting. She would also benefit from sustained independent reading using a Level D text as this is an independent level for Sarah. Reading to or with a parent or sibling at home would also provide an incentive for Sarah to practice reading different types of texts. Sarah has become more confident reading in front of others but she would benefit from additional practice. She would also benefit from having more interactive experiences with

higher level texts to further develop her higher order thinking skills as she develops her reading comprehension strategies.

### **Retelling**

During her retelling of her Level C text on the initial assessment, Sarah scored a 14/18 which qualifies as skilled for her level. A breakdown of each category reveals that her primary strengths are: identifying main ideas, supporting details, and retelling with accuracy as she received a score of 3 or complete in each of these categories. Her summary and level of prompting was reflective of a partial level of comprehension as she scored a 2 in each of these categories. She also received a score of 1 or fragmentary comprehension in terms of vocabulary.

During the retelling final assessment she scored a rating of 16/18 on a Level E text, which is indicative of a skilled reader. She scored a 3 in four categories during the final assessment as compared to three categories during the initial assessment. She improved her summary score from a 2 to a 3 during this assessment as she successfully identified all of the most important ideas in the text. She maintained a medium level of prompting, and again scored a 2 for this section. Her vocabulary score increased from a score of 1 on the initial assessment to a score of 2 on the final assessment. Although her score only increased by 2 points from the initial to final assessment, this did reflect improvements in 2 categories and progressed to a score of 3 or complete in one of those categories. It is also important to consider the increase of two guided reading levels in the context of these improvements.

During Rutgers Reading Club, we used a variety of reading comprehension strategies in the context of both guided reading level texts at an instructional level and in the context of interactive read alouds of a higher level text. The use of these strategies using both levels of texts is significant as Sarah could apply the strategies to a more complex text as well as a text that she could read herself. We began with making connections as this is more closely related to a strategy that includes a personal element. We then moved on to monitoring comprehension and asking questions of the text. Determining importance was then followed by summarizing and synthesizing information. We then returned to reinforce monitoring comprehension, practicing multiple of these strategies. Sarah's next steps to continue to practice and improve her retelling would be to practice using story maps or retelling texts she reads to her peers or even retelling a story to her parents or siblings at home. She could also benefit from using a retelling rope or the 5 finger retell strategy, which would require further instruction in using these strategies as well as practicing them until she becomes more comfortable applying them.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, I believe that Sarah benefited from our tutoring sessions a great deal. Multiple aspects of her literacy skills improved over the course of our sessions. She also had a notable change in attitude toward reading and her perception of her ability to read and her perceived competency. As a teacher, I learned how to collect data constantly to track Sarah's progress and to use this data to inform my instructional choices. While this would not be possible to collect this volume of data in a classroom of 20+ students, I plan to use periodic data collection to inform my instructional choices for all of my students. I also intend to integrate many of the strategies I used while lesson planning while considering how to best build upon different strategies I want to introduce. This experience was extremely valuable for me in that it will shape my future instruction. I also believe the experience was very valuable for Sarah as well

given her significant improvement in multiple areas of literacy as well as her personal motivation.