

## Readingpen Case Study Observation

**Date:** Tuesday, April 12, 2005

**Time:** 10:45 to 11:45 a.m.

**Teacher/Class:** Debbie Villiard, Grade 4 (also, Ms. Hubner, student teacher)

**School:** Northwest Elementary School, Manchester, NH

### Class Activity Observed:

Students were asked to get their spelling books out and select 15 words (eventually reduced to 10) from the list to scan with the Readingpen and then write down the definitions as their spelling homework for the day. Debbie borrowed a few of Suzanne's pen, so for the overview of the assignment and the review of how to find and "speak" the definition (use of the long press), each student had their own device. The students worked in this task independently for about 10 minutes, so each had an opportunity to get started with the assignment. Then Debbie called one small group of students to join her literature circle and Ms. Hubner called another small group to the front table to join a second literature circle. During these literature circles, students are assigned various roles such as summarizer, word finder, passage picker, artist, discussion director, and connector, with the main purpose being to discuss and clarify text within a given story. The remainder of the students worked independently at their desks on the spelling assignment with the Readingpens. The class has had the Readingpens since 3/15/05.

At one point, Ms. Hubner's group came across the word "lexicography" and one student quickly retrieved the Readingpen from his desk and scanned in the word to read the definition to the rest of the group. This was unprompted and very effective. The students discussed the meaning in context of how it was used and then moved forward with the task at hand.

### Student Use:

None of the students were observed using the "trainer" when scanning. In Debbie's class, some students opted to use the earphones, others did not. The noise level was never excessive, even with the two group discussions in process. Most all of the students were focused and worked very well independently with the Readingpen. Most scanned the word they were after the first time accurately. The students have learned easily how to switch the Readingpens between right and left-handed modes.

I observed that a few students with very poor handwriting (would imply some fine motor challenges) were able to scan with little difficulty and good accuracy. This is an area we might want to investigate further.

During the time when the two groups were in process, students raised their hands for my assistance if they were experiencing any scanning problems or had questions with the assignment.

While observing, a number of the students wanted to demonstrate their expertise to me with the use of the Readingpen, showing me all the features they have learned how to use. The students were using the pens appropriately throughout the observation.

### Teacher Management/Logistics:

Debbie has another creative strategy for organizing her Readingpens, they are in a large vinyl shoe holder that is thumb tacked to a bulletin board. There are enough "individual pockets" such that the Readingpens are in the top 15 pockets and the arithmetic calculators are located in the bottom 15 pockets. Each pen is assigned to multiple students, and they share/borrow as needed. Once again, the "half class" set or approximately 2 students for each pen ratio has not proven to be a challenge. As noted above, for the beginning of the class assignment, Debbie borrowed two Readingpens from Suzanne's class set.

I provided the teachers with 8.5 x 11 guide sheets for the core functions of the Readingpen in both right and left-hand modes. In addition to laminating the copies I provided, Debbie took that one step further and reduced the guides to make small, bookmark-sized copies that are stored in one of the pockets in the vinyl holder. During my observation I did not see any students using them, but she explained that they were used most when first

introducing the devices. Debbie provided me with a sample of the “practice sheet” she created when introducing the Readingpens to her class. She has single words and phrases in both larger and smaller fonts.

When using the pens in the classroom, the caps are stored in the case. So far, no caps, trainers, or earphones have been misplaced. Debbie has needed to replace the batteries in two devices so far.

The students know where the pens are kept and allowed to get one to use for an assignment at any time unless specifically told that the Readingpens will not be allowed for a certain activity.

To date, students in Debbie’s class have not requested to take the Readingpens home. The students have shown great care of and respect for the devices within the classroom environment.

#### **Curriculum Integration:**

To date Debbie has integrated the Readingpens primarily into her language arts curriculum. She has used them to introduce, practice, and/or master the concepts of syllables, parts of speech, and definitions.

The Readingpens have not been formally integrated into science or social studies activities, but I believe students may use them if needed during any reading time regardless of discipline.

Students are using the devices during their silent reading period each day as needed. Some of the students are reading the Harry Potter stories and the students told me all about how the Readingpens tries to pronounce some of JK Rowling’s made-up words! They thought it was pretty amusing.

#### **Teacher Observations/Comments:**

I spoke briefly with the student teacher and she was impressed by the devices capacity/functionality and the speed with which the students mastered the buttons and their functions.

Due to the multiple groups in process and the structure of the lesson during the observation, I did not have significant time to discuss anecdotal comments that Debbie may have observed during the first three weeks of experimentation and exploration. She quickly showed me the log of implementation that she has been keeping.

#### **Parent Comments:**

Debbie did not mention receiving any feedback from parents to date regarding the Readingpens.

#### **General Comments:**

The next visit we will try to schedule the observation during a different class period (not language arts) and also conduct a “mini focus group” with the students to obtain their input, thoughts, and suggestions. This would last for 15 to 20 minutes only.