

Readingpen Case Study Observation

Date: Tuesday, April 12, 2005

Time: 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.

Teacher/Class: Suzanne L'Esperance, Grade 5

School: Northwest Elementary School, Manchester, NH

Class Activity Observed:

Students were asked to get a dictionary from the center of each table and a Readingpen. Each was asked to find 5 verbs in a specific letter of the alphabet that were new to them. They were asked to scan them with the Readingpen and compare definitions. They then selected at least one of the definitions where the word is used as a verb and wrote it on their paper. This concluded the Readingpen part of the activity. With respect to the use of the Readingpen the goal was to have the students practice/master using the dictionary feature of the Readingpen. The class has had the pens since 3/15/05. The overall goal of the lesson was to reinforce the concept of verbs and verb selection to enhance their writing. The transition from the Readingpen activity to the writing activity was smooth and without issue.

The students then wrote all their words on the blackboard, the teacher reviewed the meanings of many with the help of the students and praised the selection/collection. Then students were asked to go back to stories they had written previously and underline all the verbs, then see if they could use words on the blackboard to make their writing more interesting and/or more exciting with better verbs.

Suzanne explained that this is her higher language arts group, next time we plan the observation to see her more challenged students. Still many of the students are reading below grade level.

Student Use:

Some students opted to use the "trainer" when scanning, others did not, the teacher has left this up to student preference. Likewise, some students used the earphones, others did not, the noise level was never excessive. 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.

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.

One student mentioned that the feature he especially liked was the use of the word in a sentence in the definition.

Teacher Management/Logistics:

Suzanne has organized her pens in colored socks, gray socks = right-handed setting, purple socks = left-handed setting. When not being used the collection of 14 is stored in a small metal basket. Each pen is assigned to three/four different students, one each for the different groups she sees. If their assigned pen is being used, they must ask permission of another student to borrow an unused pen. So far the "half class" set or approximately 2 students for each pen ratio has not proven to be a challenge.

When using the pens in the classroom, the caps are stored in the case in the sock. So far, no caps have been lost in the classroom. (The one missing cap was lost on one of the pens that went home.)

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.

After about a week using the Readingpen, the students asked if they could take them home. Suzanne agreed to try this on a limited basis with select students and has had good success to date. If the Readingpen does not come back first thing in the morning, the student may not take it home again for a week. So far only one pen cap has been lost. So far all the Readingpens taken home have come in, on time the following day. The students have shown great care of and respect for the devices.

Curriculum Integration:

To date Suzanne has integrated the pens into all content areas and will all levels of students. For example in Social Studies, Suzanne has created a vocabulary list for a new chapter and then has the students use the Readingpens to learn the definitions. This provides practice looking at the multiple meanings and selecting the one that best aligns with the topic they will be studying.

She developed a pairs/partners game when they were first learning to scan works, 3 points for getting word on 1st scan, 2 points for getting word on second scan, and 1 point for accurate scan on 3rd try. She said the kids really enjoyed that one.

She has also used the pen for a number of activities on syllables and finding patterns for dividing words into syllables. I have copies of two activity sheets she created and she is developing a portfolio of activity sheets to share/discuss during the focus group.

Teacher Observations/Comments:

Words like amazing, exciting, and wonderful are some of the words that Suzanne used to describe the change in some of her insecure/reluctant readers. She has students completing homework assignments using the pen who were not likely to attempt homework independently before. She sees the Readingpen not only as a motivating factor, but the kids see that reading can be fun/enjoyable when they can quickly and easily get past troublesome words/vocabulary. Some of her lowest readers are reading twice as much as they did prior. Suzanne tracks the number of books each child reads independently and some of her most challenged students are now reading four extra books per week! She finds that she is able to send home books from her classroom inventory with the Readingpen and the students are then willing to tackle the extra reading assignments.

Suzanne stated that the kids are learning that there are multiple tools available to get their work done and they need to learn the value and strengths of each. When does the dictionary work better than the Readingpen and vice versa?

The principal has been invited in to observe and experiment with the Readingpens. He is also excited by his observations.

The teacher has already begun requesting that the principal budget for a class set for next school year.

Parent Comments:

One parent is so impressed with the interest her daughter has shown in reading since using the Readingpen, she has inquired about purchasing one. This is a student who was not reading much independently and is now taking the risk and attempting her assignments with the Readingpen, she takes it with her to all her classes. Email dialogs have already begun around this topic.

General Comments:

A few interesting facts about children/school dictionaries the students/teacher learned:

- 1) many of them syllabicate the words initially which makes scanning them difficult
- 2) some put the main word in red, again making it impossible to scan

The next visit we will try to schedule a different group of students 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.