

Notes from September 26, 2002

East San José Group

Sue raised the point that one of the articles said that teachers have been encouraged to use performance-based assessment, but really not by people in charge, like at the state department. She also noted on p. 37 where they talked about the role of the teacher - and how important it is to sometimes have the teacher have a more direct role.

Silvia liked how this technique combines learning and assessment and makes it a fun way for students to learn. These steps described in the earthquake example can be used even in kindergarten and with counselors. We related the use of this technique to situations where kids are scared about things like earthquakes to second language learners who are sometimes scared to express themselves in English. Also, it is important to connect it to students' interests. And it is also a way to scaffold their ability to express and for others to understand them. Some of the ways we could use visuals with kids are cutting out magazine, the internet, cartoons, walking through the community.

This seems to follow the constructivist approach, following children's interest. It also seems is consistent with multiple intelligences. We talked about the importance of being proactive with assessment at the school level -- seeing how we can integrate these kinds of performance-based assessment in portfolio assessment.

We got into a discussion about high stakes assessment. For example, how it can be difficult to be held accountable to the progress of students. How difficult it can be to get the message out about how wonderful we are doing. But, Julia reminded all of us how you don't always know what impact schools and teachers have, because she's known about East San Jose for several years, from a variety of sources, and had a very positive impact on her.

Whole Group - Anne Calhoon

Anne Calhoon came to talk with us. She is Eastern Cherokee, raised in Southern Ohio. She grew up bilingually and her husband is Lakota. Her daughter had hydrocephalous, but had a decoding vocabulary of over 200 words. That got her started in looking at reading education. She just began the UNM this year.

She approaches reading from a developmental perspective. She explained the different levels of the graphic on her handout, looking at different levels of skills and abilities.

The first level is linguistic sophistication. Then comes the phonological processor. She said that some children, have a very sophistication processor -- those are the kids that learn to read without help by 3-4 years old. Then some phonemic awareness, which starts with rhyming. In kindergarten most kids bring the ability to rhyme. We then need to build on that. First through third grades is when we really focus on learning to read. There is a big difference between third and fourth grade, in terms of learning to read and then

reading to learn. In fourth grade, what had been called word recognition then becomes called word recognition -- this added the aspect of comprehension. The emphasis on comprehension on comprehension grows over time.

She talked about her wish list. You need to be able to assess their language sophistication, their phonemic awareness, the level of ability in their native language (oral), life experiences, as tested on information and vocabulary subtests of the WISC, a book cover test (make a set of book covers, including some that are not real, and see which books they say they've read and know the titles of), and randomized cards (like a stack of playing cards) to assess letter name cards. She talked about the difference between writing, which is recall, versus reading, which is basically recognition. You also need to know how well they recognize words. You can use randomized cards to assess several different reading skills.

She talked about using homophones (like grown/groan) and psuedohomophones (i.e. grone). Anne said that the Four Blocks program has making words and using pretend words, which can help with that. Se said that grammar and punctuation may not have that much to do with ability to read and comprehend, but it is important in terms of what is tested. She talked about how spelling/writing and vocabulary is important to reading comprehension.

She then talked about how narratives can be constructed very different in different cultures. How, for example, Native American stories may not have the same structure as Anglo narratives and they may not fit into the way we teach children (i.e. story mapping).

She talked about the catch 22 of assessment, that uses test that are biased against culturally and linguistically diverse children. This brought us back to the end of our first discussion, of how to make classroom-based assessment have more weight, in terms of demonstrating students' real competence. We also talked about different strategies also for helping students take more control over standardized testing. For example, talking with them about how the tests are -- that they will have lots of problems that are made for older kids and that therefore, not to worry that there will be problems that they don't know how to answer. Also, there is research that shows that minority students do worse with unfamiliar examiners that dominant culture students. We talked about how this might influence students who are being test for gifted and also on the Johns test. maybe some people who will be doing testing (like Lupe and Diana) could come in as guest readers.

Rachel talked about some of the basic skills, like filling in bubbles can be difficult. Anne suggested that you can do different activities, like using Accelerated Reading. But Joyce cautioned that that shouldn't replace reading aloud.

Next week, Rachel and Lupe will bring in some develop graphic organizers to talk about. Anne suggested bringing in work at a grade level, and then sorting out the work into different levels and then developing a rubric based on that. We shared the rubric that the first grade team developed with her. She told us about how at her school they doubled the

number of books in the library with ethnocentric books and that parents began checking out the books for themselves and then the students could see them reading. Also, they used a local bookseller for their book fair. They set up a day early, so that kids got excited and bugged their parents. Also, with a local seller, if they didn't have money right then, they could get some later.

Joyce and Kristin

Joyce brought up the standard of students learning their own addresses.

Several different things that kids have to learn are:

- address
- phone number
- first and last name (does this mean to say it, write it, and/or recognize it)

Kristin suggested that for learning phone numbers you can make a big phone pad on the floor with tape and jump around on their phone number. Also, they can practice with a real phone (not plugged in). Joyce can set up a post office center, where they can write letters to each other. They can copy each others' names and short phrases or words (like Hi, how are you?). You can have their address on a piece of paper inside of a plastic sleeve, so they can trace it and you can wipe it off. You can either use a grease pencil or overhead pens.

Joyce talked about during the special person of the day activity, how students were "voting" for the picture they liked best and that some recognized that they didn't try their best. So we talked about how they could rate themselves on the things that she is trying to get them to do, like trying to draw their very best, or thinking about how they want to draw before they begin. They could use a checklist where they color in a smiley face or unhappy face.