

Student Growth:

A First Grade Student with a Developmental Delay

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Introduction

Rationale

The student of concern is in my first grade classroom. The student is quiet and reserved in the classroom, although he eagerly raises his hand to answer questions during class discussions. His answers to these questions are often incorrect and “off-base.” The student of concern is performing below grade level in both reading and math. He works hard, but has a low self-esteem when it comes to learning new concepts. The student is often focused on the lesson and listening as I am teaching, but will occasionally be off-task and distracted by something in his desk.

When asked letters and sounds, he is very inconsistent in his answers. Some days he will know almost all letters, the next he will know only 17. It is the same with letter sounds. He struggles to correctly identify letter names and sounds consistently.

Method

Subject

The student is a 6 year old, Caucasian student at Anne Mason Elementary school, in Georgetown, Kentucky. He resides with both his natural parents, as well as his younger brother and newborn sister. Parents have noted that the student is kind and caring. He interacts with his siblings well, is an excellent helper at home, and is kind and loving to others outside the home. He is currently not taking any medications. He is not currently working with an outside agency, but has graduated out of speech and occupational therapy with outside agencies.

The student’s mother typically attends his ARC meetings. She is actively trying to help her son succeed in school and has excellent communication with me, her child’s classroom teacher. The student’s father is also actively involved in the student’s home life, helping to support his mother in her work with the child. The family has also inquired about outside tutors.

In the classroom and at school, the student is typically a kind student. He is respectful of his teachers and other adults in the building. He is obedient and helpful at school. The student has also, however, shown some signs of struggling to adapt to the sudden changes of life. He has become very emotional at school, causing him to feel as though he cannot learn. He has also become physical with his peers, acting out in anger or losing control when playing with his peers.

In the classroom, the student’s learning struggle focused on in this report can be defined as struggling to consistently identify letter names and their sounds. His goal for his IEP is to correctly identify letter names and sounds with 92% accuracy by his next ARC meeting (May 2024).

Setting

I teach first grade and have 26 students in my classroom, 13 males, and 13 females. One student is an English language learner, 1 student has a 504 plan, and 6 students have disabilities and qualify for IEPs (2 for autism, 2 for developmental delay, 1 for speech, and 1 for social/adaptive). The classroom is set up with desks in groups facing the white board, with the teacher desk next to the white board. There is a horseshoe table used for small groups near the teacher desk. The student is in the middle group, sitting near a paraprofessional. She offers the student extra support as needed.

Operational Definition and Objective

The student’s cognitive learning struggles for this report focus on his inability to consistently identify letters and their sounds. When looking for measurable and observable data, I will be looking for a pattern of correctly identified letters and sounds. Is the student able to maintain consistency, or is he unable to recall the same percentage of letters and their sounds each day?

Accomplishing the objective of correctly and consistently identifying letter names and sounds will help the student perform higher on his academic tasks, as well as help build necessary skills used for learning.

During whole or small group activities, when verbally and/or visually given any of the 52 upper or lowercase letters of the alphabet, the student will access his cognitive and/or fine motor skills by accurately identifying the name, corresponding sound and/or writing with correct formation and size, the corresponding upper/lowercase letter with 100% accuracy, in 4 out of 5 trials, as monitored through weekly checklists.

Intervention

The student is performing below grade level in reading. Since he qualifies for Special Education in the area of Developmental Delay, he receives 20 minutes, 4 times per week of cognitive resource time in the special education classroom. He also receives 20 minutes, 4 times per week of co-teach time from the special education teacher. The student has also been placed in a reading group with a reading interventionist. He receives 25 minutes of small group reading instruction in a private setting each day.

When given assignments, I use clear, concise, simple language with the student. I often do whole-group activities. As the class works, I ensure the student is on task by checking his pages in between questions. The paraprofessional is also available to help the student as needed. She helps to make sure he is following along, has the correct paper out, and is understanding the assignment by helping to check his work.

During assessments, the student is pulled to the horseshoe table and read the instructions and questions/answers with a small group of students. I use observation to ensure he is following along and completing the assessment to the best of his ability.

When the student becomes discouraged or upset, I use positive thinking and power poses to help him remember that he can learn. He stands up, puts his hands on his hips, one foot forward, his chin in the air and recites the following words, "I am strong, I am smart, I am good-looking, and I can do it!"

Procedure

On August 25, 2022, the student was administered the NSGRA. He scored at Level A. He knew 15 out of 26 uppercase letters and 14 out of 26 lowercase letters. He knew 5 out of 30 lowercase letter sounds.

On November 2, 2022, the student was assessed by being shown visual flashcards of 4 upper- and lowercase letters (L, T, E, F) and asked to verbally produce both the name and the sound the letter makes. The student was not initially given all 26 letters of the alphabet because I believed that would be a point of frustration for him. I had planned to determine which of the 4 letters he knew in order to begin planning instruction for him. These four letters were chosen because they were all written with the same motion – down-right.

After assessing the student on these four letters and their sounds, I determined that further assessment was needed. He was able to name 96% of the lowercase letters, 100% of the uppercase letters, he knew 77% of the lowercase letter sounds, and 85% of the uppercase letter sounds.

I chose to work on the letter, "Ww," with him. The student was able to name both the upper- and lowercase letter, but for pronounced /qu/ for both the upper- and lowercase sounds.

A week after his initial assessment, we were able to begin lessons. The student was again shown flashcards and was asked to name the letters and their sounds. His scores were consistent with the initial assessment with 96% accuracy on lowercase letter names, 100% accuracy on uppercase letter names, 77% lowercase sounds, and 85% uppercase letter sounds.

Instruction began with the student looking at and tracing the letter "Ww" with his index finger on a

flashcard with raised letters formed with hot glue. We sang the song, “W says /w/. W says /w/. Every letter makes a sound. W says /w/.” I asked the student to think of words that begin with the /w/ sound. He then read an interactive book (Supporting Special Learners, n.d.) of items that begin with the letter “Ww.” The student first discussed the parts of the book (front cover, back cover, spine, title, spacing, etc.). We reviewed the sight words, “is” and “for,” as well. He then began to “read” the book, with teacher support. The pages were repetitive, making it simple for him to read, “W is for ____.” As he read each page, he placed the item on the page using velcro. I encouraged him to emphasize the /w/ sound as he read the words beginning with the letter. At the end of the book, we pointed to each picture, naming them, and again emphasized the beginning sound of each word.

During his second lesson, I again began with a quick assessment of letter names and sounds, as well as asked him to think of words beginning with /w/. The data can be found below in the “Results” section. We then reviewed the flashcard with the raised letter, “Ww,” sang the song, and reread the book from yesterday. After reading the book, the student was given a variety of items beginning with the letter “w,” as well as items beginning with the letter “v.” The student had to find the items in a box of beans, then sort the items onto a mat according to their beginning sound. Before beginning the activity, I gave him explicit instructions by demonstrating how to dig in the sensory box, find a picture, say the name of the item, emphasize the beginning sound, then determine which letter (w or v) the picture begins with. This lesson, as well as lesson 3, were designed as scaffolded instruction, building upon the skills taught in lesson 1.

The student’s third lesson began with the same activities as the previous two, a quick assessment, the flashcard, and book. We then practiced writing the letter, “Ww.” The student was expected to write the letter on 1” paper, within ¼” of the line. This is a standard writing expectation of all first-grade students. While the student did struggle a little, he did manage to accurately write both the upper- and lowercase letters.

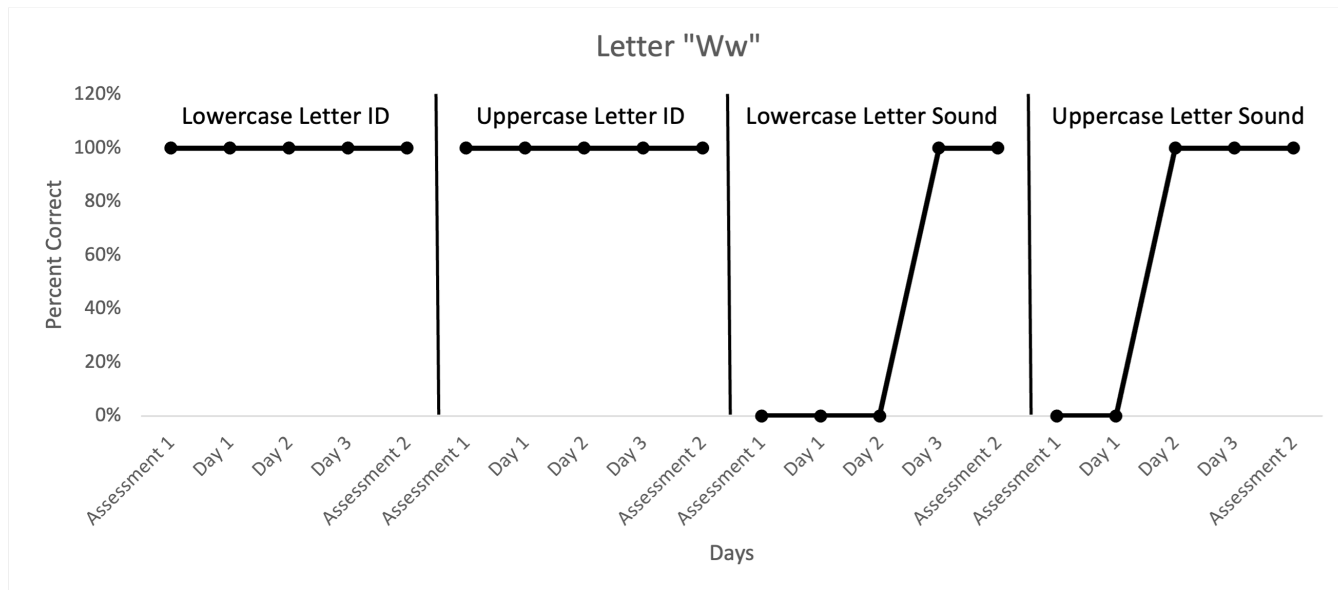
Along with the above activities, each lesson began with a quick review of the student’s learning goal. This goal, to recognize and name the upper- and lower-case letter “Ww,” and to say the sound of this same consonant, was discussed with the student, helping him to understand the importance of learning letter names and sounds. We discussed how it was important to learn these names and sounds so he can begin to recognize them in words. This will lead to him successfully reading.

High Leverage Practices were also used throughout the lessons. Some of the practices used were explicit instruction (HLP 16), scaffolded supports (HLP 15), use student assessment data (HLP 6), use strategies to promote active student engagement (HLP 18), provide positive and constructive feedback to guide the student’s learning (HLP 22), provide positive and constructive feedback (HLP 8), and adapt curriculum tasks and materials for specific learning goals (HLP 13) (McLeskey et. al, 2017). These practices were used to enhance the student’s learning and encourage his active engagement in the learning process.

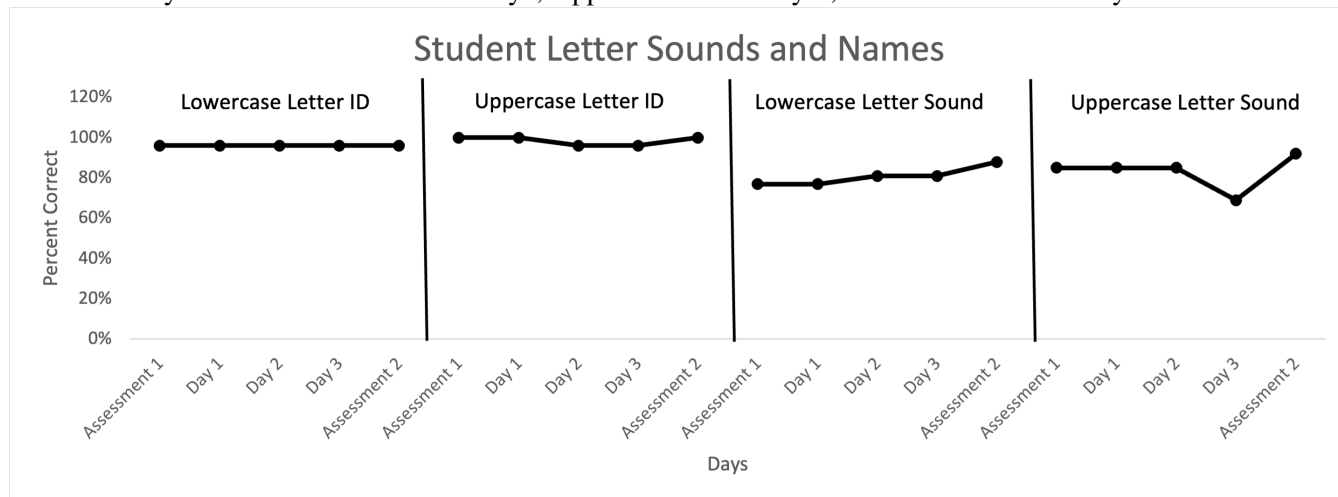
The final assessment was given the following school day, a Monday. The results can be seen below.

Results

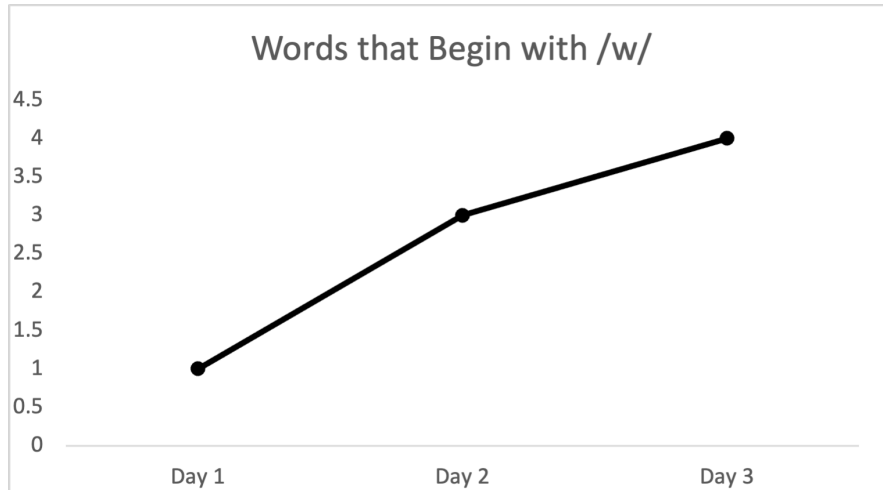
According to the data, the lessons and interventions did help the student learn the both the upper- and lowercase letter sounds for the letter, “w.” As evidenced by the data, he consistently was able to produce the name of the letter for both the upper- and lowercase letters. When we began the lessons, he was pronouncing the letter sound as /qu/ for both upper- and lowercase. By the end of Day 1, he knew the uppercase letter sound. By the end of Day 2, he knew the lowercase letter sound. The data shows he was able to consistently produce the correct letter sound for the remainder of the days he was assessed, including after a 2-day weekend.



Along with assessing the letter “Ww” each day, I also reviewed all 26 upper- and lowercase letter names and sounds. The student was shown a flashcard and asked to name the letter shown and produce it’s sound. His lowercase letter ID remained consistent at 96%. His uppercase letter ID fluctuated a little with scores of 100% and 96%. His lowercase letter sounds made a steady rise, setting a trend of improvement with scores of 77%, 77%, 81%, 81%, and 88%. His uppercase letter sounds remained steady at 85% for the first three days, dipped to 69% on day 4, then rose to 92% on day 5.



The final item assessed was the student’s ability to independently think of words that begin with the /w/ sound. Each day he was reminded to produce the /w/ sound. He was encouraged to look at my mouth as I pronounced the sound, then he was asked to make his mouth “look like mine” as he made the /w/ sound. As he pronounced the sound, I encouraged him to think of how his lips feel when he is making the /w/ sound. He was then asked to think of words that begin with the /w/ sound. The first day, he said two words, “boy” and “plant,” then was reminded to feel his lips as he said the words. His third attempt was correct, “window.” The second day, he started with the word, “box.” After another reminder, he was able to produce the words, “window” and “watch.” The fourth day, he accurately named four words that begin with the /w/ sound, “window, watch, white, whiteboard.”



Conclusion and Discussion

Summary

This student is in special education for cognitive and social/emotional skills. He is quiet and reserved in the classroom, but actively participates in class discussions. His answers, however, are usually incorrect. The student is performing below grade level in reading and math. He is a hard-worker, but struggles to maintain positive self-esteem when he is having a difficult time learning new concepts. He is also often distracted by objects at or in his desk.

During my initial assessment, this student knew 96% of his lowercase letters and 100% of his uppercase letters. He was able to produce 77% of the lowercase letter sounds and 85% of the uppercase letter sounds. After examining the data, I determined his greatest need was the letter "Ww." This was due to him pronouncing /qu/ for both upper- and lowercase sounds.

The student was assessed on a Wednesday. We began his lessons on the following Wednesday. This date was chosen because there was a Field Trip planned for Thursday, Tuesday was a scheduled day off (Election Day), and the district shut down schools on Friday and Monday due to staff and student illnesses and a substitute teacher shortage.

The lessons were scaffolded to build upon the previous day's skills. The activities included reading a book, emphasizing beginning sounds for words, sorting words beginning with the /w/ and /v/ sounds, and writing the letter. Each day the student was assessed on all 26 letters and asked to think of words that begin with the /w/ sound.

Strengths

After conducting the initial assessment, I analyzed the data and determined the letter the student needed the most support with. After choosing the letter, the first lesson was planned. The student did very well with this first lesson, reading the book, and was able to name one item that began with the /w/ sound. For the second lesson, I added in another element, sorting items according to their beginning sounds. The student did very well reviewing the book, sorting the items while isolating the beginning sounds, and was able to give me three additional items that begin with the /w/ sound. For the third lesson, the student completed the initial activities along with writing both the upper- and lowercase letters. He named four additional items that begin with the /w/ sound.

Weaknesses

In order to better serve the student, a quieter setting could have been used. The assessments and lessons took place in a general education classroom, with the other students present. The student is easily distracted by children and his surroundings, so moving to a quieter setting would have been beneficial to him.

Future Implications

As the year progresses, the student will continue to receive services for special education. He will continue to be pulled four times a week for 20 minutes to receive cognitive resource time and 25 minutes, five times per week for reading intervention. He will also continue to receive 20 minutes, four times per week of co-teach time from his special education teacher. These resource times have proved to make a great improvement on his skills this year.

In the future, I can continue to help the student in the general education classroom by ensuring he is following along with the class, actively participating in classroom assignments, checking his work, observing his behavior during large and small group activities, and actively assessing him periodically throughout the year. I will also be keeping notes and data on the student from his formal and informal assessments. These notes will be read, analyzed, and reviewed further, to ensure he is receiving the best possible support both in special education and in the general education classroom.

References

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