Renee Hedges 12/3/2012

Final Reflection

1. Based on your reading, class activities, and your completion of course assignments, what are the **THREE** most important insights you have gained about the **READING PROCESS**?

First a foremost it is important to look at each struggling reader as an individual. I learned that this process is highly individualized and every student has a different experience with reading. Even though there might be commonalities with struggling readers every child has unique strengths and areas of need. It is important to assess a student’s attitude toward reading and get to know more about them. It is also important to get an overall assessment in every domain including word knowledge, miscue analysis, comprehension/fluency and spelling patterns. Analyzing a student’s area of need, and seeing patterns of mistakes can assist a teacher in choosing accurate interventions.

Reading is truly a cognitive process between the reader and text. An individual needs to be able to build upon prior experiences, tapping into schema during the process so the reader can make inferences. Also a skilled reader identifies words automatically (within one second) and makes meaning in order to comprehend and make connections to the text. These connections help us shape our opinions and make us think more deeply about our own lives. In addition, using reading strategies such as looking back, rereading and using context clues also helps develop meaning. All these skills are important to teach students, especially struggling readers. It is important to help make those personal connections and to show the purpose in reading, so students can make connections to the world around them (Weaver).

I also learned that a high percentage of students that have learning disabilities also have symptoms of Irlen Syndrome. This was very valuable to learn and answers many questions I have about students I work with. My hope is to get training in giving this assessment and share it with colleagues, especially school psychologist and administrators. Having Irlen can be a huge hindrance in the reading process and can perpetuate more negative attitudes about reading. For those that truly have this brain based processing issue, trying the overlays early could help alleviate some reading frustrations and improve reading achievement since the overlays “calm down the words on a page or screen.”

1. Again, drawing from your cumulative experiences in this course, what are the **TWO** most important insights you have gained about the **ASSESSMENT PROCESS**?

The assessment process is multifaceted. The purpose of assessment is to identify strengths and weaknesses. In addition, it is important to identify patterns of miscues or mistakes a student is making in the process, so purposeful intervention can take place.

In reading Allington, he stresses the need to have reading programming based on meaningful reading assessments. I agree with him that we need better trained teachers and provide time to reflect on our practices. Effective classroom programs for struggling readers are based on good assessment, balanced instruction (word identification, comprehension and vocabulary) including strategy building and should not be implemented to only improve test scores. I also agree that the struggling readers with the highest need should be given instruction, practice and continuous assessment after school hours and in the summer. Also, it is just as important to give students enough reading time during the school day. It takes good balancing and judgment on the teachers’ part to provide for all this. The key is assessment (informal, formal, formative, and summative) should guide instruction to improve reading achievement.

1. Based on your experience assessing and instructing one child, what is **ONE** most important insight you have gained about **TEACHING AND/OR LEARNING**?

The one thing that I have learned is that it is never too late to teach a student to read. You find where the student is at and identify their strengths and area of need, then provide meaningful intervention. If the intervention doesn’t work, then you try something else. It is better to focus on a few skills at a time, then to do nothing at all, even if your time is limited. It might just be those few word patterns, sight words, or comprehension strategies your student needs to feel better about themselves to continue making reading improvements.

1. Finally, what do you see as **YOUR OWN STRENGTHS** as a teacher? In what area(s) do you wish to target **FUTURE GROWTH**?

I would say that one of my strengths is making connections with students who struggle to learn. I defiantly will be able to use the tools I learned in class to be better at assessing my students reading competency. I will also be more exact in planning goals, interventions, assessment and instruction with the students I work with. Even though I know my time is limited with so many needs, I can truly focus on my top struggling readers and provide purposeful assessment, intervention and instruction. I really liked the interventions in the weaver book and plan on using them. I also plan on using activities like word sorts from Words Their Way. I feel that I will be better at narrowing in on a particular student’s need instead of fishing thorough the muck of trial and error.

In the future, I hope to be able to assess for Irlen Syndrom. I also would like to be able to continue in this area and obtain my reading endorsement, so perhaps one day, I can work as a Reading Specialist or Intervention Specialist specializing in teaching reading. I would like to get more proficient at implementing research based interventions and tracking progress better. After reading Allington, I am not sure what is researched based, but at any rate, I would like to become better at matching need with intervention instead of need with a direct service that might not be best practice or right for the student.