The Multidimensional Reading Instruction Observation Scale

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The Multidimensional Reading Instruction Observation Scale is a formative evaluative instrument which can be used to judge the quality of reading instruction by recording the nature of the interaction between the student and the teacher along three dimensions critical to quality instruction: cognitive processes, affective processes, and management skills. Cognitive processes are those behaviors which are directed toward acquiring strategies or skills (to improve reading). Affective processes are those behaviors which influence the self-concept of the learner. Management skills are those behaviors which demonstrate ability to utilize components of the learning environment effectively.

In part a response to Guthrie's (1987) call for a quantification of indicators of quality in reading programs and McGreal's (1988) plea for specificity of focus when making observations, the Multidimensional Reading Instruction Observation Scale (MRIOS) provides specific foci for evaluating reading lessons. According to Guthrie, "process indicators should be defined as metrics rather than as principles. A vague generality such as 'teacher warmth fosters learning' is an inadequate ground for an indicator" (1987, p. 13). McGreal (1988) noted that high quality evaluations are based on a specific focus and are descriptive rather than judgmental observations.

The indicators of quality reading instruction enumer-
ated in the MRIOS grow from other evaluative instruments
in the field of reading education as reported below. For ex-
ample, Burns and Womack (1979), McCormick (1979),
Criscuolo (1984), and Corboy and Mangieri (1984) reported
the use of checklists to which the evaluator responds with a
yes or no to components of a reading program. (Corboy
and Mangieri also included a column for comments by the
observer.)

While these yes or no checklists are useful because
they enumerate those factors which are important in read-
ing instruction, they fail to help teachers recognize their
areas of relative strength and/or weakness. For example, a
yes rating on a checklist on two successive observations
does not reflect progress in spite of the fact that instruction
may, in fact, have improved; a *no* response to an item does
not give the teacher specific enough feedback so that
instruction can be modified. An improved question might be:
"To what degree is the teacher using...?" A response to this
question would serve to demonstrate to teachers the extent
of their effectiveness in a given area, not merely to indicate
if the behavior was observed.

In one example of an improved format, Bagford (1981)
reported the use of a checklist on which a rating from one to
ten indicated teacher effectiveness in reading instruction. In
another example of an improved format, Blair and Rupley
(1980) encouraged teachers to rate their classroom reading
instruction by using two self-evaluation scales, noting that
by connecting the *x*'s indicating the ratings in these scales,
teachers can see a graphic profile of their strengths and
weaknesses. An advantage of both the Bagford and the
Blair and Rupley instruments compared to the other men-
tioned above is that the degree to which a given behavior is

present during reading instruction is indicated along a continuum.

Although not developed specifically for evaluating reading instruction, an additional example of an improved evaluation format is Ysseldyke's and Christenson's Instructional Environment Scale (1987). While this instrument does provide a structure for recording the degree to which a behavior associated with quality instruction is present and while numerous behaviors are included, the format of the page does not provide enough space to record ratings of specific sub-categories of behavior.

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The Multidimensional Reading Instruction Observation Scale (MRIOS) is an attempt to synthesize those indicators of quality reading instruction reported in the reading education literature in a format which avoids some of the problems noted above. Construct validity for the teacher and learner behaviors included in MRIOS has been established in the reading education literature through the work of Rowell (1972), Burns and Womack (1979), McCormick (1979), Rupley and Blair (1980), Bagford (1981), Rauch (1982), Criscuolo (1984), Corboy and Mangieri (1984), Hoover and Carroll (1987), and Stieglitz and Oehlkers (1989). Additionally, those behavioral indicators of effective instruction in general written by Rosenshine and Stevens (1986), Ysseldyke and Christenson (1987), and McGreal (1988) complete the rationale for the inclusion of the items in the MRIOS.

As McGreal has stated, "Evaluators can obtain reliable student information if they concentrate on describing life in the classroom rather than making judgments of the teacher"

(1987, p. 20). Since teaching should not be thought of as unrelated to learning, observation of learner behavior as well as teacher behavior during the time reading strategies are taught provides additional data on the probable effectiveness of the reading instruction. When using MRIOS, cognitive processes, affective processes, and management skills during reading lessons are observed from three perspectives: 1) teacher behavior; 2) learner behavior; and 3) time.

The MRIOS provides a framework for observation of life (the teaching/learning environment) in the classroom for one or for many learners. It is used to describe both teacher and learner behavior during one or during many formal reading lessons (such as DRAs) or less formal reading activities over a number of days, weeks or months depending upon the needs of the individual(s) observed.

In MRIOS a number of indicators of quality reading instruction and learner behavior are identified and a continuum is used to report the degree to which each is present during a reading instruction activity. Positive behaviors are listed on the left side of the continuum and negative behaviors are listed on the right side. During the lesson the observer records the behavior(s) by putting the day's date on the appropriate place between the positive and negative poles. The MRIOS can be used by teacher, student-teacher supervisors and administrators to evaluate instruction and learning.

Teachers. Upon completion of an activity, teachers can make a judgment about the effectiveness of their instruction as well as its effect on student learning using MRIOS retrospectively. (While this may be subjective, it does provide a baseline for self monitoring.) Groups of

teachers might also observe each other. When teachers decide to observe, the teacher observed and the observer each complete a MRIOS form for the session and comparisons are made. The teacher's perceptions are compared to the observer's recordings on the MRIOS and collegial discussions follow.

Student-teacher supervisors. When working within a clinical supervision framework, such as that described by Lindsey and Runquist (1983), the student-teacher supervisor can guide the neophyte teacher more effectively. By using MRIOS, expectations are clearly enumerated, strengths and weaknesses can be pinpointed, and a framework is provided so that feedback can be very specific. This is especially beneficial for student-teachers who may become so overwhelmed when assuming the responsibilities of management of actual students that they may not use skills taught during the teacher education program.

Administrators. A school administrator can use the results of MRIOS over a period of time with a number of teachers to determine staff needs. For example, if it is discovered that questioning techniques are an area of relative weakness for the staff of a school, then workshops can be planned to address that skill.

The use of MRIOS has two major benefits: 1) relative strengths and weaknesses of the teaching/learning situation are reported in an easily readable format, and 2) by using the original MRIOS form on subsequent observations both the teacher and the observer can immediately see progress over time in relation to a given indicator(s) of quality teaching behavior.

Dates of the observation(s) are recorded on the appropriate place on the line between the negative and positive behaviors instead of checks or numerical ratings; color coding of different dates makes a visual survey of the completed observation form(s) more graphic.

As an example, if on September 28th the teacher does not draw upon relevant experiences of the learner to provide readiness for reading specific material, the observer would put the date of the observation, *9/28*, using a green marker; on part *F* of "Section I: Cognitive Processes" toward the right side of the scale. If the teacher is a skilled questioner, than *9/28* should be entered also in green in the appropriate section close to the left hand side of the page. If the teacher is an unskilled questioner, than *9/28* should be entered close to the right hand side of the page on the appropriate line. In this manner, relative strengths and weaknesses become apparent for that session. If, on a subsequent visit, that teacher was observed to "draw upon relevant experiences..." frequently, then the observer would enter the date, say *11/3* in the appropriate place on the original scale, using a different color ink.

Since these behaviors may occur with varying degrees of frequency during a single observation, the observer can quantify each of those behaviors along with the date of occurrence. An example of such a code could be *10/4-4*, indicating that on October 4th, the behavior was observed four times.

The three dimensions (teacher behavior, learner behavior, and time) of MRIOS when viewed from the three perspectives (cognitive processes, affective processes, and management skills) provide the teacher, student-teacher

supervisor, and the administrator with a description of the learning environment.

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APPENDIX
The Multidimensional Reading Instruction Observation Scale

I. Cognitive Processes

The teacher...

A. clearly states objective of   _____   A. does not clearly state the
the lesson   objective of the lesson

B. provides an overview of the   _____   B. does not provide overview
learning activity   of the learning activity

C. provides an example of stra-   _____   C. does not provide example of
tegy to be taught (context clues,   the strategy to be taught
metacognitive activity, etc.)

D. uses "independent" level   _____   D. uses material which is too
material to demonstrate how the   difficult to illustrate how the
strategy can be used   strategy can be used

E. provides the opportunity for   _____   E. uses skill activities exclu-
transfer of the newly learned   sively; does not allow transfer
reading skill to the reader's text(s)   of the newly learned skill to the
                                                                  reader's text(s)

F. draws upon relevant experience   _____   F. ignores relevant experiences
of the learner to provide readiness   of learner when providing
for reading specific material   readiness for reading specific
                                                                 material

G. asks a variety of questions   _____   G. asks one type of question
(literal, interpretive, applied)

H. asks probing questions to   _____   H. does not use follow-up
follow an incorrect response   questions; goes immediately
                                                                 to another unrelated question
                                                                 without trying to elicit answer

I. rephrases questions which are   _____   I. does not rephrase questions;
too difficult   repeats original question

J. asks metacognitive questions,   _____   J. does not ask metacognitive
such as "what made you come up   questions
with that answer?"

K. provides "think time"   _____   K. answers own question; does
                                                                 not allow student time to reflect;
                                                                 calls on another student

L. often asks students about the   _____   L. rarely asks students about
accuracy of their predictions   accuracy of their predictions

The learner...

M. demonstrates awareness of the   _____   M. is not sure about what he/
purpose of the lesson   she is supposed to be learning

N. demonstrates the ability to use   _____   N. relies upon one word recogni-
a variety of word recognition strategies   tion strategy
(context, structural analysis, phonics)

O. demonstrates the ability to read   _____   O. does not demonstrate the
at the literal level   ability to read at literal level

P. demonstrates ability to read at   _____   P. cannot respond to reading
higher levels of comprehension   selection at higher comp. level

Q. demonstrates ability to   _____   Q. does not apply newly pre-
apply newly learned skill(s) to   sented skill material; continues

reading material

R. demonstrates ability to monitor _____ learning of objectives; says "I don't get it," etc.)

S. demonstrates ability to monitor _____ comprehension of passage (utilizes metacognitive strategies)

to get "answer" wrong

R. gives no indication of ability to monitor own learning of objective

S. gives no indication of monitoring comprehension; does not stop to reflect upon what has been read

II. Affective Processes

The teacher...

A. smiles; addresses learners _____ by name

B. makes eye contact with all or _____ most learners

C. treats learners with dignity _____ (says "thank you" and "please" when appropriate)

D. laughs with learners; enjoys _____ learner's humor

E. demonstrates a professional _____ interest in learners' personal well-being (asks "how are you feeling," etc. when appropriate

F. uses praise frequently _____

G. provides regular feedback _____ on learner success

H. expresses criticism in a posi- _____ tive manner; is constructive (says "Can you think of another answer?" "You're on the right track," etc.)

I. encourages all learners to parti- _____ cipate an express self; says "Yes that was a good question," etc.)

J. is enthusiastic _____

A. does not smile; addresses learner without using name

B. teaches to a small group of learners

C. does not treat learner with dignity

D. does not laugh at learner's humor

E. does not ask questions about learners' well-being when possible

F. rarely, if ever, uses praise

G. rarely, if ever, provides positive feedback

H. expresses criticism in a negative way; inculcates a feeling of "being dumb" (says "How could you think that?" "I never heard of such a silly answer," etc.)

I. is discouraging; frowns when an incorrect answer is given

J. is unenthusiastic

The learner...

K. makes voluntary contributions _____ to the group

L. accepts "corrections" grace- _____ fully; may nod head in agreement

M. helps others in room (if per- _____ mitted)

N. asks other learners for help _____ when necessary

O. interacts with the teacher _____

P. is not easily distracted _____

Q. asks to do additional reading _____

R. without being told to do so _____ does additional reading in class

K. rarely, if ever, contributes to the group

L. gets angry when his/her "error" is pointed out

M. refuses to help others

N. does not ask others for help; does not seek assistance from peers

O. doesn't interact with teacher

P. is easily distracted

Q. does not ask for more reading; finishes the task at hand

R. never does additional reading in class

S. mentions "outside"reading   _____   S. rarely, if ever, demonstrates "outside reading"

III.   Management Skills

The   teacher...

A. makes learners aware that a   _____   A. makes no attempt to make
learning activity is about to begin   learners aware that a learning
 activity is about to begin

B. makes good use of at least   _____   B. does not make good use of
two different types of media or materials   media or material

C. encourages all learners to   _____   C. makes no attempt to involve
become involved   all learners

D. calls upon volunteers in a non-   _____   D. calls upon volunteers in an
threatening manner   intimidating manner; learners
 feel "on the spot"

E. addresses the group as a whole   _____   E. communicates solely with
as well as communicating on an   group as a whole; rarely if ever
individual or small group basis   communicates on an individual
 or small group basis

F. seats learners so that they see   _____   F. seats learners so they can't
and hear comfortably   see and hear comfortably

G. arranges the room so that   _____   G. has arranged the room so
material is easily accessible   material is hard to get to

H. maintains a clutter free room   _____   H. maintains a room which is
 full of clutter

I. has clear record of test results   _____   I. has no clear record

J. employs a variety of tests   _____   J. uses one type of test
(formal and informal)

K. moves about the room to   _____   K. remains stationary; teachers
implement instruction   from one location

L. responds to requests for   _____   L. does not respond to requests
assistance in a timely manner   for assistance in timely manner

M. is able to provide for develop-   _____   M. is unable to provide instruc-
mental, corrective, remedial   tion for all types of readers
and accelerated readers

N. entices learners to read through   _____   N. fails to make reading "appe-
the use of "advertisements," such   tizing" through advertisements
as book jackets strategically placed,
dioramas, a circulation library, etc.

O. uses instructional time effec-   _____   O. does not use instructional
tively   time effectively

The   learner...

P. moves around the room in a   _____   P. rarely leaves his/her seat
constructive manner   for constructive reasons

Q. has an accurate, organized   _____   Q. does not have an accurate,
system of record keeping   organized system of record
 keeping

R. consults personal records for   _____   R. does not consult personal
strengths and weaknesses   records for strengths and
 weaknesses

S. appears to be involved in the   _____   S. does not appear to be
learning activity   involved in the learning activity

T. follows a sequence of learning   _____   T. does not follow a sequence of
activities   learning activities