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ORGANIZING OBSERVABLE READING BEHAVIORS

Karl Koenke

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ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE/READING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

All teachers observe their students while they read. That is part of the job. The question is: How well organized is the observation? For example, when asked for information about the child who is being referred because of a reading problem, what can be said and how logically is it organized? Or, when facing the parent of a child with a reading problem, what information might be reasonable to have at hand?

Within the framework of the current emphasis on "Mainstreaming," how about the reading teacher and the classroom teacher who want to coordinate the reading instruction of the child who requires special instruction? What might the reading teacher look for, and how will she/he organize these classroom observations that seem to contribute to the establishment of a coordinated reading program?

The suggestion here is that both the classroom teacher and the reading specialist use a checklist of observable reading behavior as a device to facilitate the organization of and communication about the classroom reading behavior of the child with a reading problem. Specifically, the Reading Behavior Checklist which follows is meant to serve both the classroom and the special reading teacher as a guide in their attempts to organize their observations of classroom behavior related to the child's reading problem. The RBC has seven sections: oral reading, oral responses to questions about the material read, written and/or workbook type assignments, voluntary reading, behavior when in a learning group, test-taking behavior, and information from records or files.

Reading Behavior Checklist

Student: _____ Teacher: _____

I.

Oral Reading

| | | |
|-----------------|----------|----------------|
| Too Fast | OK | Too Slow |
| Word-by-Word | Monotone | Expression |
| Too Many Errors | OK | Without Errors |

II.

Oral Responses to Questions About Material Read

| Does Not Answer When Called Upon | Attempts to Answer When Called Upon | Volunteers Answers |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Answers Are Correct Infrequently | Answers Are Correct Sometimes | Answers Are Correct Almost Always |

III.

Workbook Type Assignments

| Almost Never Completed on Time | Usually Completed On Time | Completed Swiftly |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Answers Usually Wrong Or Incomplete | Some Answers Wrong Or Incomplete | Few to None Wrong Or Incomplete |
| Messy Printing Or Handwriting | Could Be Neater | Neat Printing Or Handwriting |
| Usually Needs Special Help with Directions | Sometimes | Dir. Usually Followed Without Special Help |
| Frequent Spelling Errors | Some Spelling Errors | Almost No Spelling Errors |
| Sentences And/Or Paragraphs Usually Incomplete | Sometimes | Sentences And/Or Paragraphs Complete |

IV.

Voluntary Reading

| Does NOT Choose To Read in Free Time | Sometimes Does | Usually Does |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Chooses Difficult Books | OK | Chooses Easy Books |
| Finishes Books Quickly | OK | Does Not Complete Reading Books |
| Reads on One Topic | Reads on Several Topics | Reads on Many Topics |

V.

Behavior When In A Group

| Frequently Does <i>Not</i> Stay On Task | Generally Stays On Task | Exerts Positive Leadership Role |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Disrupts Group | OK | Overly Quiet Daydreams? |

VI.

Test-Taking Behavior

| | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Completes Test Too Fast | OK | Does Not Complete Tests Usually |
| Test Must Be Read To Student | Some Sections Must Be Read To Student | Can Read Test |

VII.

Information From Cum. Records/Tests

| | | |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------|------|
| Latest Reading Test Score Is Low | OK | High |
| Absences Frequent | Few | None |
| Suffers From Chronic Physical Problems | What Is the Problem? | None |
| Reading Test Scores Have Been Low in Past | Average | High |

As can be seen, RBC is in fact a checklist of what can be observed. It eliminates a lot of writing, and at the same time makes certain that a variety of observable behaviors are considered. However, a caution is in order: No checklist should be treated as though it cannot be changed. Indeed, specific situations should demand modification of the RBC as it is presented here. But if the teacher keeps in mind that the purpose of this checklist is to aid her/him in organizing and communicating information about a child with a reading problem, then either use of the RBC as it is presented here or use with modification are appropriate.